

OMAN
Observer
DAILY

WILL GOLD LOSE ITS SHEEN OVER SILVER?

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INBRIEF

DECREE RATIFIES
JOINT AGREEMENT

OMAN, IRAN DISCUSS EASING HORMUZ TRAFFIC

TRUMP THREATENS ‘HELL’ FOR IRAN OVER STRAIT OF HORMUZ

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued Royal Decree No 45/2026 on the ratification of an agreement between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the Government of the Republic of Belarus on establishing a joint committee for cooperation and investment, signed in Minsk on May 19, 2025. Article (1) ratifies the aforementioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree. Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

SPF CLARIFIES ON
FAMILY SUPPORT

The Social Protection Fund (SPF) clarified the procedures it takes to ascertain the disappearance of an insured person or pensioner, affirming that the support disbursed for the disappeared persons' families continues in all circumstances. The SPF said that Article (63) of the Social Protection Law stipulates the disbursement of a monthly allowance to the beneficiaries of a missing person, equivalent to the pension they would have received had they passed away, starting from the date the disappearance is confirmed. The SPF said that the procedures for ascertaining disappearance begin with a report to a police station and filing an official report detailing the incident and its circumstances. **DETAILS ON P2**

IN SUPPORT OF PALESTINIANS



An activist climbs the mast of a boat displaying a Palestinian flag in l'Estaque, part of Marseille's harbour, southern France, on Sunday, during a rally in support of a flotilla carrying activists from 'Thousand Madleens to Gaza' movement as they prepare to set sail. — AFP

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN and the Islamic Republic of Iran held a meeting at the level of under-secretaries from the two countries' foreign ministries, in the presence of specialists from both sides.

The meeting examined possible options for ensuring the traffic through the Strait of Hormuz amid the current circumstances in the region. Experts from both sides presented a number of insights and proposals in this regard.

Oman voiced its strong condemnation of the attacks that targeted the embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Syrian capital Damascus. Oman said that this assault constitutes a flagrant violation of international diplomatic norms and a breach of conventions that guarantee the inviolability of diplomatic missions and the safety of their staff.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Sunday, Oman affirmed its "categorical rejection of such acts that impact the security and safety of diplomatic premises." The Foreign Ministry's statement stressed the need to respect Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and importance of ensuring the protection of diplomatic missions at all times.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump on Sunday threatened in an expletive-laden post to strike Iran's power plants and bridges if it does not reopen the vital Strait of Hormuz, after announcing the rescue of an airman in a 'miraculous' operation.

Trump revealed on his Truth Social platform that the "seriously wounded" airman had been rescued "from deep inside the mountains of Iran".

He called it "one of the most daring Search and Rescue Operations in US history".

Iran said it had "foiled" the operation, and distributed images appearing to show the wreckage of several aircraft, but did not deny that US forces had extracted him.



A man gestures as he stands in front of a building damaged in an Israeli strike in Tyre, Lebanon, on Sunday. — Reuters

"Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all wrapped up in one, in Iran. There will be nothing like it!!!!" he declared. Later, Trump told Fox News that he believed there was a "good chance" that Iran would agree to a deal on Monday.

INFRASTRUCTURE HIT
Critical infrastructure across the Gulf came under attack from Iran again on Sunday, with

damage reported at civilian facilities in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait.

Armed groups also carried out two attacks on US diplomatic sites in Iraq overnight, the US embassy in Baghdad said.

On another front, Lebanon has increasingly been drawn into the conflict since the Hezbollah began targeting Israel. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

KUWAIT
PETROLEUM CORP
REPORTS DAMAGE
AT UNITS

AMERICAN
AIRMAN RESCUED
IN 'MIRACULOUS'
OPERATION

IRAQ THANKS IRAN
FOR ALLOWING
TANKERS VIA
HORMUZ

TEHRAN DESTROYS
SEVERAL 'ENEMY
AIRCRAFT' DURING
MISSION

BAHRAIN'S
PETROCHEMICAL
INDUSTRIES FIRE
UNDER CONTROL

CHINA, RUSSIA
WILLING TO WORK
TO 'DE-ESCALATE'
WAR

ISRAELI STRIKE
ON SOUTH BEIRUT
KILLS 4, HURTS 39

PHARMA LOGISTICS
IN DEMAND
AS WAR RATTLES
SUPPLY

120 farmers to benefit from value-added rose project

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: The completion rate of the project to enhance the value-added of the rose crop in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (the Green Mountain), Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, has exceeded 65 per cent. The project, which costs RO 150,000, is set to be completed by the end of 2026.

The project is being implemented by the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries

and Water Resources. It aims to prepare a study providing primary data on rose cultivation and its associated industries in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, as well as to establish a partnership with a small and medium enterprise (SME) involved in rose-related industries in the wilayat.

Furthermore, the project aims to support the cultivation of an additional five acres of local roses in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, introduce agricultural mechanisation,



The project aims to support the cultivation of an additional five acres of local roses in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

and improve certain agricultural practices by 50 per cent. It also involves conducting training courses for rural women related to manufacturing rose water products, including soaps, lotions and cosmetics.

Hanan bint Said al Sulaimi, Executive Director of the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund, said that 120 farmers from the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar are participating in the project. She pointed

out that it will contribute to raising the economic value of the rose crop by improving production quality and increasing quantities. It also focuses on developing associated manufacturing industries, such as rose water and cosmetics, alongside empowering farmers and rural women, creating additional income opportunities, and enhancing the presence of the Omani product in local markets, with the potential for future export. — ONA

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SHORT TAKE



A total of 16 disputed articles were discussed by the committee.

JOINT COMMITTEE
DEBATES DRAFT
ANTI-DRUG LAW

MUSCAT: The joint committee of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura held a meeting to discuss the articles of disagreement between the two councils regarding the draft law on combating narcotics and psychotropic substances, on Sunday.

A total of 16 disputed articles including articles in the original draft law referred from the Council of Ministers, in addition to a new article added by the Majlis Ash'shura, were discussed by the committee. The committee agreed on a number of the disputed articles, while differences remained on others. It will submit its report to the joint session of the two councils to complete the discussion and make a final decision on them.

SPF confirms continuity
of support to families

THE Social Protection Fund (SPF) has elucidated the approved procedures for establishing the disappearance of an insured individual or a pension beneficiary, reaffirming the system's continued provision of support to families under all circumstances.

The Fund stated that Article (63) of the Social Protection Law provides for the disbursement of a monthly allowance to eligible beneficiaries of a missing person, equivalent to the pension value that would have been payable in the event of the insured's death. This allowance shall be payable from the date on which the fact of disappearance is legally established, thereby ensuring the stability of the family's living conditions.

The Fund further explained that the procedure for proving a disappearance commences with notification of the competent police station and the drafting of an official report containing the details and surrounding circumstances of the incident. This is followed



The Social Protection Fund has elucidated the approved procedures for establishing the disappearance of an insured individual or a pension beneficiary. — ONA

by the issuance of an official certificate, which constitutes the legal basis for submitting an application for the allowance to the Fund. The Fund thereafter examines the application and disburses the allowance in accordance with the controls stipulated in the law and its implementing regulations.

The Fund also noted that the employer

bears the responsibility of reporting cases of disappearance upon becoming aware of them, as part of an integrated framework of institutional roles. With respect to the continuity of support, the Fund clarified that upon the lapse of four years from the date of disappearance, or upon the actual or judicial confirmation of death, the allowance is converted into a permanent pension, payable to eligible beneficiaries according to the legal entitlements.

The Fund confirmed that if the missing person is verified to be alive, the allowance will be suspended or the pension cancelled. Moreover, should it be determined that the disappearance was intentional, the individual shall be legally obliged to refund all amounts paid out, in accordance with the applicable legal procedures. The Social Protection Fund emphasized that these procedures are designed to safeguard the rights of families and preserve their stability in exceptional circumstances. — ONA

Parents' council committees to
support schools, students



The meeting reviewed the executive regulations governing Parents' Councils, outlining the framework that defines their roles and responsibilities.

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

MUSCAT, APRIL 5

Dr Hamad bin Said al Maamari, Wali of Muttrah, chaired the first meeting of the wilayat's Parents' Council, underscoring the importance of coordinated efforts to support the education sector and enhance student achievement.

The meeting reviewed the executive regulations governing Parents' Councils, outlining the framework that defines their roles and responsibilities. Discussions focused on activating the council's mandate in a structured manner that contributes to improving both educational outcomes and community engagement.

Members examined the scope of work of the council's three main committees, which form the backbone of its operations.

The Educational Committee will focus on monitoring students' academic performance, encouraging greater parental involvement, and supporting initiatives that improve school environments and learning

The Educational Committee will focus on monitoring students' academic performance, encouraging greater parental involvement, and supporting initiatives that improve school environments and learning outcomes.

outcomes. Meanwhile, the Social Committee will work to strengthen ties between the council and the wider community, organising events and initiatives that benefit students and their families while promoting positive social values.

The Financial Committee, on the other hand, will oversee donations and expenditures, ensuring transparency and accountability in managing the council's resources, thereby supporting the sustainability of its activities and programmes.

During the meeting, the three committees were officially formed from among the council members. A date for the next meeting was also set to ensure continuity, follow-up on action plans, and the effective implementation of proposed initiatives.

This step comes as part of broader efforts to reinforce the partnership between home and school, a key pillar in advancing the quality of education and fostering a more responsive and inclusive learning environment across the wilayat.

اوميفكو
OMIFCO

INVITATION TO
TENDER

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

Tender No	02-16066-2026
Tender Description	Installation of metallic FCW networks in Ammonia Plants and Storage area
Brief Details	OMIFCO has underground network system for fresh cooling water (FCW) network of (RTRP) Reinforced Thermosetting Resin Pipe. At present in existing situation, RTRP, FCW piping of multiple sizes is partially above ground & partially underground. Most of the part of RTRP, FCW piping is underground, which is to be replaced by metallic piping. 04 No's cooling water header of sizes 38" & 44" & their branch connections of various sizes are to be laid underground & some places above ground in their Ammonia-I , Ammonia-II and Ammonia Storage Plant at Sur, Oman.
Tender Collection	6 th April 2026 – 09 th April 2026
Site Visit	12 th April 2026 – 14 th April 2026
Tender Fees (Non-Refundable)	OMR. 250/= (OMR Two Hundred Fifty, only)
Bid Bond	OMR. 5,000/= (OMR Five Thousand, only)
Minimum Experience	Five (5) Years of experience in the subject filed in similar scope of work and scale.
Bid Submission due date	Not later than 3 rd of May 2026, 12:00pm (Oman time)

All bidders shall submit their offer in THREE (3) separate physical envelopes or Online Files as following:

Technical Bid and Un-Priced Commercial Bid.

Commercial Priced Bid.

Bid Bond valid for 120 days, with total amount as mentioned above.

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

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

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SHORT TAKES



The forum was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Hamoud al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Persons with Disabilities Affairs. — ONA

FORUM AIMS TO EMPOWER PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

MUSCAT: The activities of the “Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Forum” commenced on Sunday, organised by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and several disability associations.

The forum was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Hamoud al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Persons with Disabilities Affairs, with the participation of a number of officials, specialists and interested parties.

The forum aims to bolster efforts to empower persons with disabilities and highlight national initiatives designed to support and integrate this segment into various fields of life, in alignment with sustainable development goals and Oman’s future vision.

Manal al Rawahi, Head of Continuing Education and Community Service, stated that the current stage requires a redefinition of the role of persons with disabilities to ensure they are active partners in the development process rather than merely recipients of services. — ONA

TRAVEL AND TOURISM FIRM OWNER GETS PRISON, FINE



The court also ordered the defendants to refund the amounts paid by consumers, each according to their claim.

MUSCAT: The Muscat Governorate Primary Court convicted a commercial travel and tourism establishment, following cases filed against it by a number of consumers. The court sentenced the owner of the establishment to six months in prison and ordered the establishment to pay consumers refunds and fines amounting to RO 20,965.5.

The case is that some groups of consumers made agreements with the company to implement travel programs that included bookings at 4- and 5-star hotels, sightseeing tours, airport transfers and free excursions, in exchange for payment. The cases revealed that some consumers paid the full amount or in monthly instalments, only to discover, upon attempting to utilise the services, that the company had closed its doors in October 2024 and ceased operations.

The court also ordered the defendants to refund the amounts paid by consumers, each according to their claim. The total amount refunded to consumers was RO 16,565.5, and the total court fines amounted to RO 4,400, bringing the total amount refunded to consumers, including fines, to RO 20,965.5.

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE LOOKS AT ELDERLY SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

MUSCAT: The Supervisory Committee for the Elderly Sector Development Workshops held its first meeting on Sunday, chaired by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The meeting was convened to discuss the status of the elderly sector in the Sultanate of Oman and to work on its development in coordination with various partners from government and private entities, as well as civil society organisations. The committee reviewed the current state of the elderly sector in the Sultanate of



The meeting was chaired by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development. — ONA

Oman and the joint efforts between various government, private, and civil society institutions to identify the most prominent challenges and gaps facing the sector.

Additionally, the discussions covered legislation supporting the elderly and ensuring their community participation, alongside working to enhance health services provided to them and reviewing incentives offered to the elderly sector to provide job opportunities in projects suitable for their age group. The meeting also addressed the operational phases of the development workshops to ensure the achievement of the desired objectives and to elevate the quality of life for the elderly in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

PPP crucial for sustainable food system and safety

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

AN EFFECTIVE Public Private Partnership (PPP) is crucial for a safe and sustainable food system and the role of private sector is essential for a nation to achieve food safety, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR).

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the ‘Food Safety Week 2026’ held under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Dr Intisar hint Salem al Gharibi, Director-General of the Food Safety and Quality Centre at the ministry, said, “A safe and sustainable food system requires an effective partnership between the public and private sectors. The private sector is a strategic partner in enhancing product quality and innovation, while community awareness is the cornerstone.”

“Food safety begins with knowledge and translates into daily behaviours that protect the health of individuals and society. Food safety is a fundamental pillar of human health and societal stability. It has become a national imperative and a strategic priority, closely linked to public health, sustainable development and enhanced food security,” she added.

The Food Safety Week 2026, held with the tagline ‘Food Safety is Everyone’s Responsibility’ at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Suhar, is part of national efforts aimed at strengthening the food safety system and raising community awareness of its importance until April 11. The week will also feature a diverse program of activities, including the Food Safety Forum, which brings together specialists from various sectors to strengthen partnerships and exchange expertise. Additionally, the second edition of the Food Safety Marathon is being held in Suhar, supporting community participation and promoting health



‘Food Safety Week 2026’ was inaugurated under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

awareness.

“Organising Food Safety Week this year under the theme ‘Food Safety is Everyone’s Responsibility’ embodies the principle of partnership and integration among various entities. It underscores that achieving safe food requires concerted efforts and the commitment of all stakeholders within an integrated system that guarantees food safety and quality,” she said.

She explained that the ministry is giving considerable attention to developing the food safety and quality system in the Sultanate of Oman by adopting global best practices, strengthening legislative frameworks, and enhancing the efficiency of monitoring and inspection systems. This fosters confidence in food products and supports national food security.

Dr Naeema bint Khamis al Kharousi, Director of the Central Food Safety Laboratory, delivered a lecture entitled ‘The Food Safety System in Numbers,’ during which she reviewed the national efforts exerted in this field. She emphasised that the system in the Sultanate of Oman is one of

the fundamental pillars for protecting public health and enhancing food security due to its integration of effective oversight, precise laboratory testing, regulatory legislation and community partnership.

She also noted that the indicators reflect a significant improvement in the system’s performance, whether in the areas of oversight, qualification, or risk management, which has contributed to raising food safety standards and enhancing consumer protection.

A wide range of events, including a campaign titled ‘I Am Part of the Responsibility,’ will be held in the Muscat Governorate at The Village shopping complex, alongside specialised workshops, awareness-raising competitions, and field visits to food establishments. Additionally, several workshops, awareness competitions, field visits to food establishments and awareness programmes targeting schools and universities will be held as part of Food Safety Week, thereby strengthening the integration of national efforts in the field of food safety.

Conference discusses developments in immunotherapy

MUSCAT: The 16th Muscat International Oncology Conference, organised by Omani Society of Oncology and the National Oncology Centre in collaboration with Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre, discussed on Sunday the latest developments in immunotherapy and targeted therapy, along with the most prominent global research findings in oncology.

The opening of the conference was held under the auspices of Dr Saleh bin Salim al Rahbi, Adviser at the Diwan of Royal Court.

At the conclusion of its activities, the conference underscored the importance of relying on advanced genetic testing, such as Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS), to determine disease prognosis and select the most appropriate treatment for each case. It also emphasised the necessity of keeping pace with and implementing global recommendations and guidelines, particularly those issued by American and European authorities.

The conference underlined the advanced role of immunotherapy and targeted therapy in improving treatment outcomes for lung and breast cancers, in addition to several other tumours. It also highlighted the



Dr Saleh bin Salim al Rahbi toured the exhibition of participating companies, which showcased the latest technologies in the field of oncology. — ONA

importance of enhancing multidisciplinary teamwork to ensure the provision of integrated therapeutic care in accordance with the latest scientific standards.

Discussions focused on reviewing the latest therapeutic strategies, particularly in the fields of immunotherapy and targeted therapy, with an emphasis on updates in the treatment of lung cancer across its various stages. It additionally addressed the latest global research findings in breast cancer treatment and reviewed the most prominent recommendations issued by major international conferences, keeping

pace with the rapid developments in this vital field.

Dr Suad hint Sulaiman al Kharousi, Chairperson of the Omani Society of Oncology, affirmed that this scientific event has been a pivotal milestone in the journey of oncology in the Gulf region since its inception in 2009. She explained that organising the conference is the result of integration between the Omani Society of Oncology and the National Oncology Centre, in cooperation with the Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre. This reflects the keenness of health institutions to unify efforts and integrate roles to develop therapeutic services.

Dr Suad indicated that holding the conference amidst current global challenges—whether geopolitical, health-related, or climatic—embodies a firm belief in the importance of continuing the scientific journey without interruption. She noted that the organising committee successfully overcame numerous challenges, just as it did during the Covid-19 pandemic and previous severe weather conditions.

The conference discussed several advanced scientific themes, encompassing recent innovations in early diagnosis.

SPOTLIGHT

WILL GOLD LOSE ITS SHEEN OVER SILVER?



KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

WITH GOLD rates ruling the roost and parading like never before, slightly spiralling over the past few days, the pertinent question arises: how long will the sheen of the yellow metal last? Will silver take over the position, racing alongside gold?

In Oman, gold rates, after hitting the highest in March 2026, have experienced a slight decrease in the past few days. The 24-carat is sold in the retail market at RO 59.30 per gram; 22-carat at RO 55.35 per gram; 21-Karat (1g) at RO 51.30, while 18-Karat (1g) reached RO 45.30, showing clear volatility following significant price drops earlier in the month, often described as a ‘correction’ after previous highs.

On the other hand, silver prices in Oman are experiencing a

significant surge, outperforming gold in early 2026 due to booming industrial demand, specifically from AI and green technology, alongside supply constraints. As of early 2026, silver prices surpassed \$40-\$50 per ounce, with local rates in Oman reflecting this sharp upward trend. One gram of silver costs RO 0.902, while a kilo of silver bar is RO 902.471.

Gold is both an investment asset and a consumer good. It is also a growing component of central banks’ foreign exchange reserves. In times of risk, investors increasingly turn to gold. In times of economic growth, gold gains in attractiveness. It is sensitive to political decisions, particularly those regarding interest rates. For silver, industrial demand dominates its value.

Overall, it should be noted once again that silver and gold complement each other. Mining companies that hold both silver and gold should be in a strong position.



Gold is both an investment asset and a consumer good. In times of economic growth, gold gains in attractiveness. It is sensitive to political decisions, particularly those regarding interest rates. For silver, industrial demand dominates its value

Jihās Jabbar, Country Manager of Rizan Gold, says that demand for silver is very strong in the market, but chances are less that it would replace gold in the near future. “The trend is such that prices will shoot up in the future, but the value of gold will remain the same, even more so as the yellow metal has become an integral part of human beings,” Jihās said.

Dr Fatma, Marketing Manager of SeaPearls Gold and Diamonds, also admits that silver is emerging as the new hero - stylish, versatile and available in stunning variants like gold-plated designs that beautifully mimic the charm of gold. It is modern, accessible and trending.

“But despite all the innovation and alternatives, gold continues to shine — now in its newer, smarter avatars like 9K and 14K — making it more wearable, more affordable and more relevant than ever. No matter how markets evolve, no other metal can truly take its place.

Gold is not just an investment; it is a legacy, a symbol of trust and a part of our traditions,” she said.

Mohammed Nihās of Elite Jewellery opined that gold is always a strong metal, but people are now turning to silver because it is also in high demand and people find it easily affordable and a good investment as well.

Mohammed Rias, Country Manager of SeaPearls, too shared a similar sentiment, saying that in a time when gold prices are soaring higher than ever, its value in people’s lives remains unchanged — timeless, emotional and irreplaceable.

“Gold will not be replaced by silver any time in the future because it is not only an investment but also a matter of pride and part of life. No human being, especially Asians, who are the largest chunk of gold customers, can think of an auspicious occasion without the yellow metal,” said Rias.

SHORT TAKES



It will also discuss the proposals to designate some areas in Qurayat as tourist locations.

SHURA TO DISCUSS TRANSPORT AND TECHNOLOGY

MUSCAT: The third regular session (2025-2026) of the tenth term of the Majlis Ash-shura (2023-2027) will discuss several issues from April 7 to 9, including the ministerial statement on the transport, communications, information technology, logistics and artificial intelligence sectors.

It will also discuss the proposals to designate certain areas in the Wilayat of Qurayat as tourist areas, to establish a national centre to guarantee financing for small and medium-sized enterprises, to attract international low-cost airlines to Suhar Airport, to establish a centre for family studies and Omani women’s affairs and the the proposal to exempt families benefiting from the Family Income Support Benefit from paying electricity and water bills.

FSA DEREGISTERS ‘MAGANLAL’ FOR LEGAL VIOLATIONS



MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has issued a decision to deregister the firm Maganlal Thacker & Co from the register of accounting and auditing firms, due to violations related to the Law Regulating the Accounting and Auditing Profession and the International Standards on Auditing (ISA). The decision was published following the review of an appeal submitted by the firm regarding the FSA’s decision, which was ultimately upheld, thereby confirming the deregistration.

The decision was based on the firm’s violation of Article (9) of the Law Regulating the Accounting and Auditing Profession, which governs the conditions for registering foreign accounting and auditing firms. The firm failed to comply with the requirement to have a partner from the Sultanate of Oman actively participating in audit work, as well as the requirement to provide added professional value through the foreign firm’s expertise.

Science week commences in Al Sharqiyah North, Al Batinah South

IBRA: The activities of the National Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Week, held under the theme ‘Our Sciences Renewed’, began on Sunday in the Wilayat of Ibra, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. Organised by the Ministry of Education across all educational directorates in the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, the event features broad participation from various government, private, and civil sectors and will continue until April 9.

The event included the inauguration of an accompanying scientific exhibition at the Scientific Discovery Centre in the Wilayat of Ibra, featuring several scientific sections in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, with the participation of higher education institutions and schools from across the governorate. Additionally, the

event features the “Meteorites in Oman” exhibition, supervised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

Supervised by the General Directorate of Education in Al Sharqiyah North, the week will involve the implementation of numerous programmes and activities at multiple locations covering the various wilayats of the governorate. These initiatives aim to spread scientific awareness and culture, ensuring they reach various segments of society throughout the governorate.

In Al Batinah South, the activities of the fourth edition feature a wide range of purposeful scientific activities across various wilayats of the governorate with the participation of schools.

These activities cover all fields, such as energy resources, natural resources and wealth, environmental sustainability,



The event included the inauguration of an accompanying scientific exhibition. — ONA

Meeting focuses on elevating healthcare standards

MUSCAT: The Health Care Management and Regulation Committee held its first meeting of 2026 at the Ministry of Health’s headquarters, chaired by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The session focused on strategic plans aimed at elevating healthcare standards and unifying efforts to deliver integrated services that meet the aspirations and needs of the community.

A key topic on the agenda was the activation of the Poison Control Centre at the national level. Discussions highlighted the importance of poison control services, the development of toxicology medicine in the Sultanate



A key topic on the agenda was the activation of the Poison Control Centre at the national level. — ONA

of Oman, and the Centre’s role as an essential component of the emergency and disaster response system, contributing to national health security.

The committee also addressed the need for greater integration and unified efforts among health institutions across Oman through standardised treatment protocols and unified medical guidelines.

Enhancing the competence of

healthcare personnel was another major focus, including continuous training for physicians, pharmacists and nursing staff in managing poisoning cases, as well as providing specialised medical consultations for diagnosis and treatment.

The meeting reviewed the patient referral guidelines from primary healthcare centres and emergency departments across Muscat health institutions, alongside a presentation on the task force responsible for unifying waiting lists across various health facilities. The committee further integrated the steering committees of the five-year health plan (2026-2030) within its areas of responsibility. — ONA

Forum seeks empowerment for people with disabilities

IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

A NATIONAL forum dedicated to empowering people with disabilities brought together government officials, academics and community members at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Muscat, highlighting a growing push towards inclusion, accessibility and opportunity across Oman.

Held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Hamoud al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development for Persons with Disabilities Affairs, the forum aimed to raise public awareness of the rights and capabilities of people with disabilities while promoting their integration into society and the workforce.

Dr Khalid al Abri, Assistant Vice-Chancellor of the university, stressed that inclusion is not achieved through slogans but through tangible outcomes. “Diversity is not a barrier, but a gateway to innovation and integration,” he said, underscoring the forum’s theme of transforming differences into opportunities.

The forum featured a range of activities, including scientific research presentations, a panel discussion, an art exhibition and accompanying events showcasing talents and entrepreneurial ideas by people with disabilities.



“Diversity is not a barrier, but a gateway to innovation and integration

DR KHALID AL ABRI
Assistant Vice-Chancellor



The forum was held under the theme ‘transforming differences into opportunities’.

Dr Qassim al Ajmi, Head of Research and Consultation at the university, showcased a series of ongoing projects addressing various types of disabilities, including visual, physical and developmental conditions. He noted that many of these projects are still under development and reflect the growing role of innovation and technology in improving accessibility and quality of life. He emphasised that practical, research-based solutions are essential to addressing real-world challenges.

One of the highlights was an inspiring video story of Turki al Hosni, a deaf student at the university, who shared his journey of overcoming societal perceptions and personal challenges. His message

resonated strongly with attendees as he emphasised resilience, self-belief and the importance of creating opportunities rather than waiting for them.

“We are capable individuals with untapped potential,” he said. “We are part of this nation, and we contribute to building its future.” A panel discussion titled “Integration for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities” was moderated by Ahmed al Numani, a PhD researcher, and brought together representatives from multiple sectors. The forum concluded with a call for stronger partnerships and sustained efforts to shift societal perceptions, emphasising that true empowerment begins with awareness and collective responsibility.

TRUMP SAYS US AIRMAN RESCUED IN IRAN

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP said on Sunday that US forces had safely recovered a second airman downed in Iran, calling it “one of the most daring Search and Rescue Operations in US History”. Iran said it had “completely foiled” the rescue operation, without however saying it had captured the US serviceman or denying that US forces had extracted him. The US announcement came as Trump warned the Islamic republic had until Monday to cut a deal or face “all Hell”. The war, which erupted on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, has engulfed the Middle East and convulsed the global economy.

Trump said on Truth Social that the airman had been “behind enemy lines in the treacherous mountains of Iran, being hunted down by our enemies.” “He sustained injuries, but he will be just fine. “This miraculous Search and Rescue Operation comes in addition to a successful rescue of another brave Pilot, yesterday, which we did not confirm, because we did not want to jeopardise our second rescue operation.”

ABANDONED AIRPORT
The airman, a weapon systems officer, was equipped with a pistol, a beacon and a secure communications device to coordinate with rescuers, the New York Times reported. Two of the planes meant to transport him and his rescuers to safety were stuck in a remote base in Iran and had to be destroyed to prevent them from falling into Iranian hands, the New York Times and CBS reported. US forces then used three other transport planes to carry the airman and his rescuers out of Iran, the reports said.

Iran’s military said it had destroyed four US aircraft involved in the operation, which it said had made use of an abandoned airport in southern Isfahan province. Iranian media reported five people were killed in strikes during the operation. Footage released by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps was presented as showing charred wreckage of an American aircraft scattered across a desert area, with smoke still rising. Iran has said its forces downed the fighter jet from which the crew ejected, while US media reported only that the plane had been shot down. The US administration has not said publicly if it was downed or not.

STRIKES ON INFRASTRUCTURE
Iran has virtually blocked the Strait of Hormuz shipping lane, a vital conduit for oil and gas, and kept up a campaign of strikes on Israel and its Gulf neighbours. Critical infrastructure across the Gulf came under attack from Iran on Sunday with damage reported at civilian facilities in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait. US-Israeli attacks in Iran have hit targets that are key to the Islamic republic’s economy, with a strike on a petrochemical hub in the southwest killing five people on Saturday, according to the deputy governor of Khuzestan province.

BUSHEHR NUCLEAR PLANT
In Iran, a strike near the Bushehr nuclear plant on Saturday killed a guard and led Russia, which partly constructed the facility and helps



People walk on a street, near an anti-US billboard, in Tehran. — Reuters

operate it, to announce it was evacuating 198 workers and to condemn the strike as “an evil deed”. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned that continued attacks on the plant on the southern coast could eventually lead to radioactive fallout that would “end life in GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) capitals, not Tehran”. Bushehr is considerably closer to Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar than it is to the Iranian capital.

Rafael Grossi, head of the International

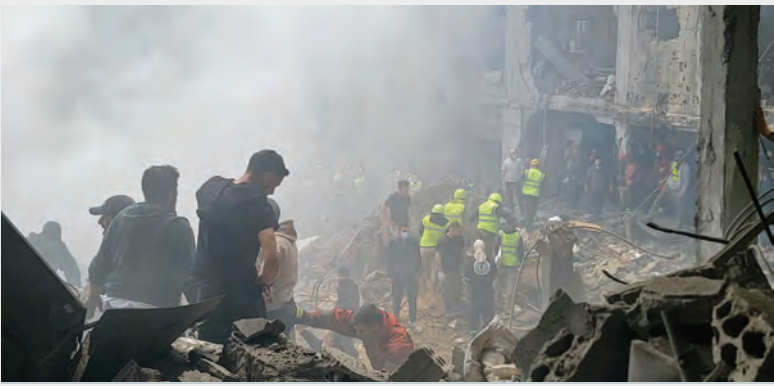
Atomic Energy Agency, (IAEA) wrote on X that no increase in radiation levels had been reported at the site, but nonetheless voiced “deep concern” at what he said was the fourth such strike in recent weeks. Against the backdrop of war, Iran has kept up a crackdown weeks after it quelled a massive wave of anti-government protests, with the judiciary announcing the execution of two men convicted of acting on behalf of Israel and the United States. On Sunday,

communications monitor Netblocks said Iran’s internet blackout was now the longest nationwide shutdown in history. A former director of the United Nations nuclear watchdog urged Gulf nations to prevent Donald Trump from turning the region into “a ball of fire” after the US president’s latest threat to Tehran.

“To the Gulf governments: Please, once again, do everything in your power before this madman turns the region into a ball

of fire,” Mohamed El Baradei, who led the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) from 1997 to 2009, wrote on X.

In a separate post also referencing Trump’s ultimatum to Iran that it will face “all hell” unless it strikes a deal, El Baradei tagged UN and European Union accounts, as well as French President Emmanuel Macron. “Nothing can be done to stop this madness!” he wrote, also tagging the Chinese and Russian foreign ministries. — AFP



First responders search for survivors, in Jnah neighbourhood of Beirut.

Israel renews strikes on Lebanon

BEIRUT: Israeli strikes on south Beirut and its suburbs killed at least four people on Sunday, a day after Israel threatened to hit Lebanon’s main border crossing with Syria, forcing it to close. The Israeli military also carried out deadly attacks on Lebanon’s south, one of which killed seven people including a family of six. Israel has launched air strikes across Lebanon as well as a ground invasion in the south since March 2, when armed group Hezbollah entered the war in the Middle East on the side of its backer Iran.

Hezbollah on Sunday claimed to have fired a cruise missile at an Israeli warship off the coast, but the Israeli military said that it was “not aware” of such an incident. One of Israel’s strikes in Beirut on Sunday killed at least four people and wounded 39 in the Jnah neighbourhood, the Lebanese health ministry said. It landed about 100 metres away from a public hospital, a medical source said. Another attack struck a building elsewhere in Jnah that the Israeli military had warned it would target.

In Syria, borders and customs public relations director Mazen Aloush insisted that the crossing, known as Jdeidet Yabous on the Syrian side, was “exclusively for civilian use and is not used for any military purposes”. Aloush said traffic through the crossing would be temporarily suspended due to the Israeli threat. Israeli attacks on Lebanon since the start of the war have killed more than 1,400 people, including 126 children, and displaced over a million, according to Lebanese authorities. — AFP

Iran attacks energy infrastructure across Gulf

DUBAI: Critical infrastructure across the Gulf came under attack from Iran on Sunday, with damage reported at civilian facilities in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Kuwait. Attacks by Iranian drones on Sunday resulted in “severe” damage to Kuwaiti oil and petrochemical facilities, the state petroleum company said. The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said a number of facilities of its subsidiary Petrochemical Industries Company were targeted in the attack which “resulted in the outbreak of fires at several of these facilities and caused severe material damage”. Earlier, Kuwait’s electricity and water ministry said two power and water desalination plants were damaged by a drone attack

from Iran, causing “significant material damage and the shutdown of two electricity generating units”.

Earlier, authorities in Abu Dhabi said they were battling fires at a petrochemical plant in Ruwais Industrial City on the UAE’s northwest coast. “Authorities are responding to multiple fires in Borouge petrochemicals plant, caused by falling debris following successful interceptions by air defence systems,” the Gulf emirate’s media office said. “Operations at the facility have been immediately suspended while damage is assessed. No injuries have been reported,” it added after the United Arab Emirates’ defence ministry earlier said it was responding to missile and drone attacks.



Aftermath of the impact of falling debris from an intercepted Iranian drone in Sitra, Bahrain. — Reuters

Pope Leo urges world leaders to end wars

VATICAN CITY: Pope Leo urged global leaders in his Easter message on Sunday to end the conflicts raging across the world and abandon any schemes for power, conquest or domination. The pope, who has emerged as an outspoken critic of the Iran war, lamented in a special message to the thousands gathered in St Peter’s Square that people “are growing accustomed to violence, resigning ourselves to it, and becoming indifferent”. “Let those who have weapons lay them down!” the first US pope exhorted. “Let those who have the power to unleash wars choose peace!”

The pope said that the story of Easter, when the Bible says Jesus rose from the dead three days after not resisting his execution by crucifixion, shows that Christ was “entirely non-violent”. “On this day of celebration, let us abandon every desire for conflict, domination and power, and implore the Lord to grant his peace to a world ravaged by wars,” Leo urged.

In his address from the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica on Sunday to the Square below, decorated with thousands of brightly coloured flowers for the holiday, Leo offered brief Easter greetings in



Pope Leo XIV gestures from the main balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica, at the Vatican. — Reuters

ten languages, including Latin, Arabic and Chinese. The pope also announced he would return to the Basilica on April 11 to host a prayer vigil for peace. — Reuters

DAMAGED INTERIORS



A visitor walks through the damaged interiors of the historic Golestan Palace in Tehran. — AFP

1

US-ISRAELI STRIKES HIT AIRPORT

US-Israeli strikes hit an airport in southwestern Iran on Sunday, state media reported.

2

US RESCUE MISSION

Iran’s military said a US operation to rescue a missing airman from a downed fighter jet had been “completely foiled”.

3

IRAN GUARDS KILLED

US-Israeli strikes killed five fighters with Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in the northwestern Ardabil province.

4

ISRAELI STRIKE KILLS FAMILY

An Israeli strike in southern Lebanon killed seven people including a family of six, a source from civil defence said.

5

RECORD WEB BLACKOUT

Iran’s internet blackout has reached 37 days, making it the longest nationwide shutdown on record for any country.

6

LEBANON URGES ISRAEL TALKS

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun renewed a call for negotiations with Israel, saying he wanted to spare south Lebanon.

7

BAHRAIN BLAZE

An Iranian drone attack sparked a fire at a storage tank belonging to Bahrain’s state energy firm.

8

ISRAELI WARSHIP TARGETED

Hezbollah said it had targeted an Israeli warship off the Lebanese coast with a cruise missile, the first such claim.

9

ABU DHABI PLANT ABLAZE

Authorities in Abu Dhabi said they were battling fires at a petrochemical facility caused by falling debris.

10

STRIKES ON KUWAIT

Two Kuwaiti power and water desalination plants were damaged by a drone attack from Iran.

OPINION

Material history is being destroyed, and rescued amidst war



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

WAR takes it toll on human lives, livelihoods and futures. But it also impacts remains of history in the form of monuments, museums and even old manuscripts encased in libraries. Knowledge of our past is being eroded and destroyed as wars continue to ravage the world. The only silver lining lies in the superhuman efforts made by individuals and organisations to retrieve and protect remnants of the past from complete extinction.

In Gaza, for example, Unesco-recognised heritage sites have been destroyed over the more than two years of bombing. These include the Monastery of Saint Hilarion, a 2,000-year old Roman cemetery, and the 600-year-old Hammam al Samara, the only active traditional bathhouse in Gaza. The broken stump of the minaret of the medieval Omari Mosque and a few external walls are the only remains of the 13th-century structure, which also housed a rich library of Islamic manuscripts.

In addition, the Rafah Museum, which had

a rich collection of cultural archives, was destroyed, obliterating records of ancient and contemporary history.

Gaza is a treasure trove of archaeological wonder. It has over 300 sites ranging in time from the prehistoric to the Ottoman period. This includes the famous Anthedon Harbour (Blakhiyeh), which is known as the first seaport of Gaza, used by Byzantine, Persian and Greek cultures over time. Today, excavation into this site is almost impossible owing to the ruins around it.

Strikes on Tehran are said to have destroyed parts of Golestan Palace, while strikes in Isfahan hit structures around Naqsh-e Jahan Square, including Ali Qapu Palace and the Masjed-e Jameh, according to sources.

Amidst such destruction and seeming obliteration of knowledge and the past, however, there is hope. Even as bombing continued in Gaza, there have been attempts at retrieving historical artefacts and salvaging manuscripts by the local population.

According to incoming reports, there have

been urgent attempts at retrieving museum pieces from under the rubble in Gaza, trying to rescue whatever pieces of history could be saved. Of course, this is a risky exercise as it often entails digging with almost no implements, just bare hands.

There is also the question of funding. Such rescues need knowledge, expertise and money. All of this is in short supply at the moment, with people still struggling with everyday life in Gaza.

But it is a testament to the dedication and bravery of those who still prioritise the preservation of the past for posterity that the work goes on.

Preserving history in all its forms is non-negotiable. The past is what binds us to our future and understanding this past through material objects like coins, sculptures and other forms of everyday life is central.

Humans may contribute to destroying symbols of the past, as has happened so often in history, but humans also strive against all odds to save this past. It is because of their dedication and commitment that the voices of history will continue to be heard.

MIDDLE EAST WAR HITS BRITAIN’S FISH AND CHIP SHOPS

ALI BEKHTAOUI

Before war erupted in the Middle East, fisherman Peter Bruce spent about £5,000 (\$6,600) on diesel to trawl the North Sea for haddock and cod, the main species used in fish and chips.

“Now, the last trip we spent about £10,000,” he said, despite his crew reducing the speed of the boat to save fuel.

Bruce, whose boat, Budding Rose, is based in the Scottish port of Peterhead, estimates the extra costs over a year could exceed £100,000. It was not yet clear whether the rise in energy prices would have an immediate effect on the price of fish, Bruce said. But he is worried that the hike in fuel prices will hit customer demand for the classic British meal that was already facing challenges on numerous fronts.

Bruce’s catch is sold at auction in Peterhead before being transported around Britain and abroad. He fears that customers “will stop buying so much fish and chips and they’ll stop going out for meals so much”.

The classic recipe for fish and chips - white fish deep-fried in batter, chips and mushy peas, often with tartare sauce on the side - dates back to the 1860s.

Fish and chip shops usually serve nothing else and most are take-away. There were around 10,500 fish and chip shops in the UK in 2024 - roughly the same as a decade earlier - according to Seafish, a public body supporting the industry.

This was more than the total number of outlets of the nine main fastfood dining brands - including KFC, McDonald’s and Domino’s Pizza, it boasted.

Easter is a particularly busy time for the sector since many Britons eat fish on the Good Friday holiday.

Andrew Crook, who owns a fish and chip shop in Lancashire, northwestern England, said the number of customers can more than double on Good Fridays.

Nonetheless, “we’re definitely under pressure,” said Crook, president of the National Federation of Fish Fryers. He blamed several factors.

“We’ve got extremely high fish prices, we’ve got energy prices; wages go up continually,” he lamented.

The war in the Middle East, now in its second month, caused a record monthly rise in petrol and diesel prices in the United Kingdom in March was caused by the conflict, according to data from the Royal Automobile Club (RAC), a British auto services company.

But there are other difficulties.

Stricter fishing rules to conserve species, as well as the war in Ukraine - Russia previously supplied 30 to 40 per cent of the country’s fish - had weakened the sector in Britain already, says Crook, and forced it to raise prices. — AFP

Pharma logistics in demand as war rattles supply chains

MEDICINES can stop pain, fight cancer and save lives, but are worthless if they get lost in the mail, spoil in a hot warehouse or are stuck on a ship. This is where pharmaceutical logistics comes in - a fast-growing sector in a world where key supply chains have been shaken by war, pandemic and trade chaos.

One of its European hubs is what Germany’s DHL calls its health logistics campus near Frankfurt, dedicated to ensuring drugs and other crucial medical products reliably get to where they’re needed.

As fears of medicine shortages grow amid the five-week-old Middle East war, its task is to ensure steady shipments to hospitals, pharmacies, labs and other customers across Europe and worldwide.

The company’s facility - the size of 14 football fields, with its roofs covered in solar panels - is located in Florstadt outside Frankfurt, itself a transport centre in the middle of Europe.

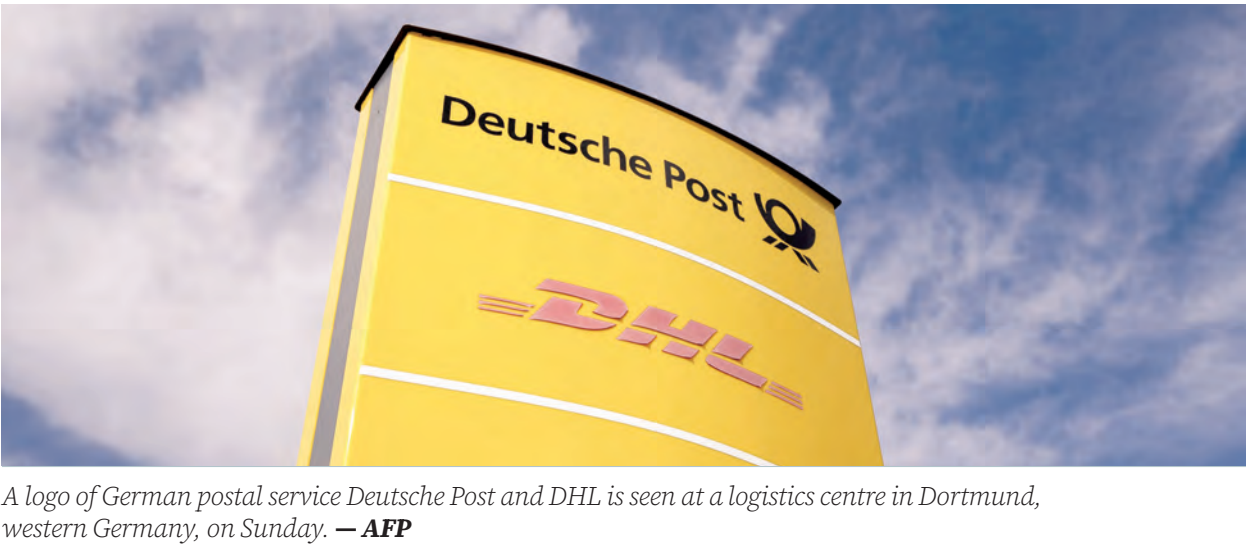
Products passing through the giant site range from insulin capsules and lifestyle drugs to medicated sunblock and drums of sulphuric acid.

Strict temperature controls and workers in protective suits ensure that medicines are handled under sterile conditions and in guaranteed cold chains.

“Our 600 employees are specially trained because they know that, ultimately, the patient is at the end of the supply chain and no errors are allowed,” said Katrin Hoelter, head of DHL’s logistics division in Germany and the Alpine countries.

As the US-Israeli war against Iran has impacted global shipping, “we are seeing that some customers are requesting increased storage volumes here, which are essential for their production, in order to ensure the availability of raw materials”, she said during a visit to the site.

The fragility of global supply



A logo of German postal service Deutsche Post and DHL is seen at a logistics centre in Dortmund, western Germany, on Sunday. — AFP



JEAN-PHILIPPE LACOUR

The writer is Economic Reporter for AFP, based in Frankfurt, Germany

chains remains a constant concern, even though Hoelter said the Florstadt site is less dependent on shipping through the troubled Strait of Hormuz than on the Suez Canal, which remains open. Despite repeated global crises, the logistics sector continues to expand, as does the drug industry.

According to healthcare data analytics firm Iqvia, the global pharmaceutical market could exceed \$2.6 trillion by 2030, driven by the United States as well as major emerging markets.

In the therapeutics sector, cancer and weight management treatments show the highest growth prospects, according to the LBBW bank.

For the DHL Group, also known as Deutsche Post, the logistics business - particularly in the pharma sector - is helping to offset losses from the decline in mail and disruptions to trade caused by conflict and tariff wars. In Florstadt, automated procedures coexist with manual handling at fixed workstations, such as preparing a single contact lens ordered by an optician for a specific patient for further shipping.

Strict safety and hygiene standards are key. Behind the glass of a sterile room, two employees in full protective suits could be seen extracting an insulin component from a large vat to send a test sample to a customer.

“We are able to simulate any regulatory requirements here,” said Hoelter.

“This covers all possible temperature ranges,” she said, adding that they can be dropped “as low as minus 80 degrees (Celsius) to account for the varying sensitivities of individual products”.

The first warehouse at the site opened in 2015, dedicated to distributing medications from a laboratory of the pharmaceuticals firm STADA. It has since grown into a four-building complex with storage capacity for 140,000 pallets and room for more.

DHL plans to invest two billion euros (\$2.3 billion) worldwide by 2030 in pharmaceutical logistics, about a quarter of it in Europe.

Half will go to North America, mainly the United States, where European drugmakers are relocating some production in response to President Donald Trump’s tariffs and his efforts to lower drug prices.

In five years, the DHL division’s revenue is expected to double, reaching 10 billion euros, compared to 84 billion euros for the group last year. Hoelter said this growth reflects a broader trend among drugs companies to outsource logistics and other work, so that they can “focus on their core businesses: pharmaceutical research and production”.

In a region on fire, Oman offers hope



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and a
communications
professional

IN A REGION that moves quickly from tension to escalation, the Sultanate of Oman has chosen to pause. Not out of hesitation, not out of weakness, but out of understanding. As the war between Israel and Iran grows, the region is being pulled in different directions at once. Every headline demands a reaction; every moment pushes towards a side. In times like this, stillness can look like absence. But Oman is not absent; it is present in a different way.

At the edge of the Strait of Hormuz, Oman stands where the world quietly depends on calm waters. Ships pass through carrying more than oil; they carry stability, continuity and the rhythm of global life. Oman understands that if this narrow passage begins to shake, the consequences will travel far beyond the Gulf. So, it chooses carefully.

While others respond to war with more noise, Oman responds by preserving space for thought, for dialogue, for something that often disappears too quickly in conflict: the chance to pause. It understands a simple truth: when everyone moves at once, someone must stand still.

Its voice has been consistent. It calls for a ceasefire not as a distant hope, but as an urgent necessity. It rejects the idea that war is the only language left between nations. Hence, it keeps its doors open, even when

others have shut theirs. This is not an easy position to hold. The pressure to align, to act loudly, to choose a side is constant.

In a divided region, standing in the middle can feel like standing alone. Some interpret this as silence, others see caution, but Oman sees responsibility. Over the years, it has built something both fragile and powerful: trust. Trust that allows it to speak across divides without being rejected. Trust that enables it to carry messages where others cannot. Trust that may one day form the first step towards ending what has started.

This is why Oman does not rush. To enter the conflict would mean losing that trust — becoming just another voice in the noise. In doing so, it would surrender the role that may matter most when the war begins to slow: the role of the bridge. Oman is not trying to win this war, but to help end it.

This is the quiet strength of a country that understands peace does not arrive suddenly. It is built slowly — in moments of control, in carefully chosen words, in doors left open when it would be easier to close them. Oman remains where it is; not in the spotlight, not in the fire, but in the space between.

Its neutrality is often misunderstood as distance or disengagement. In reality, it is a position designed to preserve its ability to act as a credible mediator. By maintaining open

At the edge of the Strait of Hormuz, Oman stands where the world quietly depends on calm waters. Ships pass through carrying more than oil; they carry stability, continuity and the rhythm of global life

channels with all parties — including Iran, Western actors and regional neighbours — Oman retains a rare diplomatic advantage. It can engage where others cannot, particularly when formal communication between enemies breaks down.

In times of war, such neutrality becomes an asset not only for Oman but for the region. Geography reinforces this role. Overlooking one of the world's most critical maritime corridors, Oman sits at the heart of global energy flows and trade. Any disruption in this passage would carry consequences far beyond the region. Economic stability here is attached to political stability — a reality that shapes Oman's urgency in supporting de-escalation.

Oman continues its tradition of quiet diplomacy. Muscat has long facilitated sensitive negotiations and backchannel discussions, particularly when formal engagement becomes politically impossible. These efforts may not be visible, but they are essential.

From the start, Oman's message has been clear: this war is not a solution, and its expansion will only deepen instability in a region already stretched. In choosing not to fight, Oman is not stepping back. It is stepping into a different kind of responsibility.

TRUMP’S AMERICA, AN IMPOSSIBLE ALLY?

MATHIEU RABECHAULT

Europe’s frustration over Donald Trump’s digs at Nato was laid bare when French President Emmanuel Macron lashed out at the US leader with some of his strongest language to date.

During a visit to Seoul, Macron - who has maintained a good working relationship with Trump - accused the US president of harming Nato by speaking too much.

“Alliances like Nato derive their value from what is left unsaid, namely the trust that underpins them,” he said last Thursday.

“If you sow doubt about your commitment every day, you drain it of its substance.”

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was founded by liberal democracies in 1949 in response to the threat posed by the Soviet Union. Analysts say Trump’s multiple attacks on Nato are eroding the alliance’s foundations and credibility, pushing Europeans to form ad hoc coalitions to manage crises, amid growing doubts about the reliability of their longstanding ally.

Olivier Schmitt, a researcher at the Royal Danish Defence College, pointed to the “exceptional character” of Nato compared with other historic alliances. “It is the only alliance that, until now, had a major player behaving like a benevolent hegemon, one that did not impose its actions on others by force,” he said.

By contrast, the Warsaw Pact, conceived as the Soviet Union’s answer to Nato, effectively provided Moscow with a pretext to intervene in the domestic and military affairs of allied states in Central and Eastern Europe, said Schmitt.

Trump has ripped up the rulebook, launching strikes against Iran without consulting or even informing his European allies, and then accusing them of “cowardice” for declining his request to help secure the Strait of Hormuz, whose closure by Iran has rattled the global economy.

“He simply ‘demanded’ that they do what he said. Trump doesn’t want allies - he wants vassals,” said neoconservative scholar Robert Kagan, a proponent of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

“As a result, friends and allies will be ever less willing to cooperate with the United States,” he wrote this week in The Atlantic.

Mistrust is increasingly taking hold. In January, Europeans were stunned when Trump threatened to annex Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark, a founding member of Nato. Last week, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier warned the damage inflicted on the transatlantic relationship since Trump’s return to the White House last year was so deep that even a future US administration might be unable to repair it.

“The rift is too deep, and the trust that has been lost in American great-power politics is too great,” Steinmeier said.

Analysts say that Europeans might be deluding themselves if they expect the United States to return to business as usual post-Trump.

“Why should America be the one to pay for European defence?” said Celia Belin, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. — AFP

Easter in Jerusalem hit by war and restrictions

IN THE usually lively alleyways of Jerusalem's Old City, silence reigned on Easter Sunday, with the holiday overshadowed by war and restrictions on access to the Holy Sepulchre. All shops in the area were closed, heightening the sense of emptiness.

“Happy Easter,” said the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, shortly after dawn as he entered the church surrounded by a modest group of clergy, according to journalists at the site. Outside, a few Catholics and Orthodox Christians tried to reach the church but were kept at a distance by security forces.

“How can you tell me I cannot go to church? It is unacceptable,” said one Catholic from Tel Aviv who had attended Easter worship at the site in previous years.

Security has been stepped up in the Old City, located in annexed East Jerusalem and home to sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Israel has also imposed restrictions on large gatherings as a security precaution due to the constant threat of strikes during the ongoing Middle East war.

“Here, inside this Sepulchre, we are not facing a symbol: we are facing a real emptiness,” Cardinal Pizzaballa said at the Easter mass in the church.

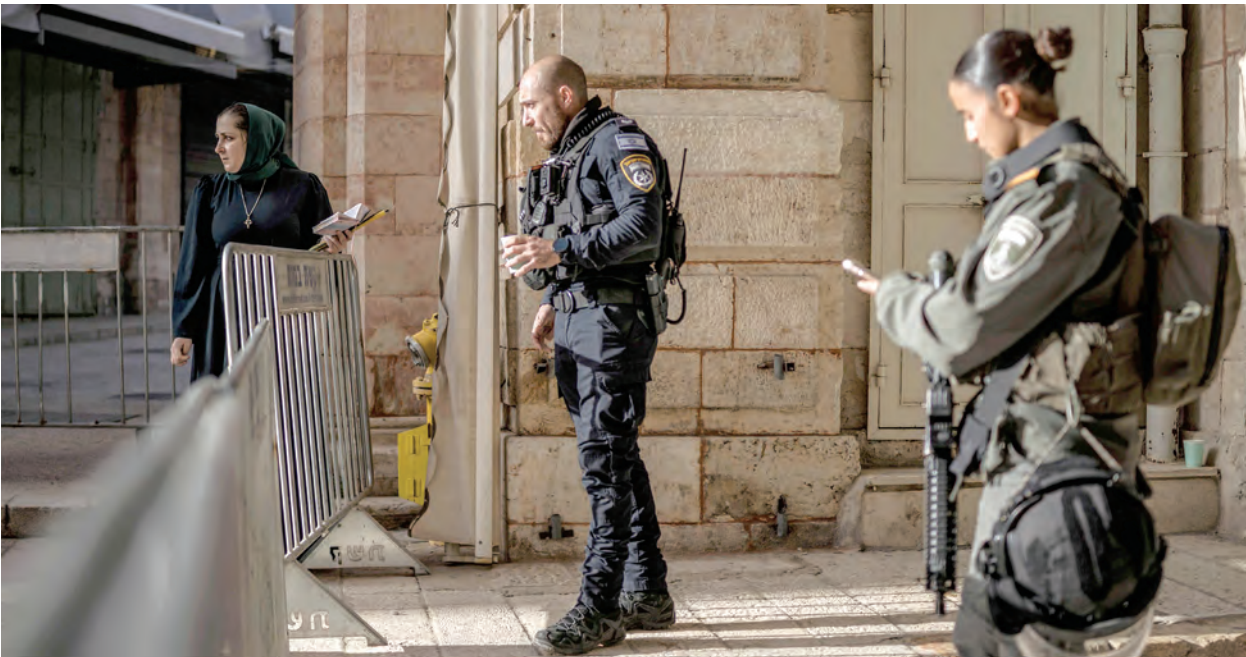
“We are standing in the place where the stone was rolled away, yet we know all too well that many stones remain sealed around us.

“Too many tombs have been dug again by hatred, violence and retaliation,” he said to a small group of clergy.

On Palm Sunday, Cardinal Pizzaballa was prevented by Israeli police from entering the Holy Sepulchre for mass, provoking outrage, before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered he be allowed in.

“In this land where the story began... we continue to steadfastly protect the freedom of worship for all faiths, especially at this sacred time,” Netanyahu said in a message marking Easter.

Since the start of the war on February 28, debris from Iranian



A Christian Orthodox pilgrim (L) looks on while leaning against a security barrier near an Israeli policeman and a border guard near the entrance of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem will celebrate Easter Sunday Mass, behind closed doors due to the ongoing war, in the old city of Jerusalem. — AFP



ANOUK
RIONDET

The writer is a
journalist with
AFP in Morocco

Security has been stepped up in the Old City, located in annexed East Jerusalem and home to sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims. Israel has also imposed restrictions on large gatherings as a security precaution due to the constant threat of strikes during the ongoing Middle East war

missiles or interceptors has fallen in the Old City, including near the Holy Sepulchre, Al Aqsa Mosque and in the Jewish Quarter.

Most Palestinian Christians belong to the Orthodox faith, which celebrates Easter on April 12. But for many other Christians, the curbs on worship have stripped Sunday’s Easter celebrations of substance.

“It’s very hard for all of us because it’s our holiday... It’s really hard to want to pray, but to come here and find nothing. Everything is closed,” said Christina Toderas, 44, from Romania.

Like many other worshippers, she had resigned herself to watching the mass at the Holy Sepulchre on television.

“Never in my lifetime did I imagine a day when we would be forbidden from taking those steps” to the church, said a Palestinian woman from Jerusalem, Huda al Imam.

“To have the Holy Sepulchre closed is to have the heart of our cultural and spiritual life stopped. Easter is not an event we attend - it is who we are,” she said.

Otmar Wassermann had also attempted to enter the Holy Sepulchre but failed. “I must say I was somewhat frustrated,” he said, recalling how the feast is generally

celebrated every year.

“The atmosphere is incredible,” Wassermann said, noting the music in particular. “People who go there, they have deep faith.”

Despite his disappointment, the 65-year-old Catholic acknowledged that if the authorities said there was “danger, then there might be danger”.

Father Bernard Poggi, who was preparing to attend mass in another church near the holy site, also said he understood the security measures but added that “it seems to be more and more that there’s an unevenness in how the laws are put into practice”.

Inside the Holy Sepulchre, the celebrations were being held behind closed doors in front of a very small congregation, a far cry from the crowds that usually gather.

Around the Old City, where hymns and processions usually dominate at Easter, only whispers could be heard among the faithful moving discreetly through its passages.

“It is really sad. I just hope the war stops,” said Julio Makhalfeh, a 25-year-old restaurant manager. “We had enough of all this. It is time to bring some normalcy back in our life.”

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, President of the Oman Handball Association.

AL BALUSHI INVITED TO IHF OPENING

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, President of the Oman Handball Association (OHA), has received an official invitation from the International Handball Federation (IHF) to attend the inauguration of its new headquarters in Basel, Switzerland, scheduled to take place from May 6 to 8, 2026. The invitation reflects the strong cooperation and growing relationship between the two organisations.

The visit is expected to further strengthen collaboration and support the continued development of handball in Oman, while enhancing the country’s presence on the international stage, particularly in beach handball.

During the visit, an official meeting is scheduled between representatives of the International Handball Federation and the Oman Handball Association to discuss preparations related to Oman’s bid to host the 2028 Beach Handball World Championships for men and women. The bid highlights the increasing confidence in Oman’s organisational capabilities and sports infrastructure to host major international events.

In addition, a delegation from the International Handball Federation is expected to visit Oman in May to inspect key sports venues and facilities, as well as review logistical arrangements. The visit will also include a series of meetings with officials from the Oman Handball Association as part of the evaluation process and to finalise the requirements of the hosting bid.

OOA organises a programme to promote Olympic culture and values

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

Yesterday morning (Sunday) marked the launch of the first phase of the Programme for Promoting Olympic Culture and Values (Olympic Values Torch Tour in the Sultanate of Oman), organised by Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), represented by Oman Olympic Academy (OOA), in cooperation with Olympic Solidarity. This initiative comes as part of ongoing efforts to reinforce the principles of the Olympic Movement and enhance its presence within society.

The programme commenced with its first workshop held yesterday at the Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm. The programme will continue across several governorates in Oman. The remaining workshops of the first phase will take place at the Directorate General of Culture, Sports, and Youth in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate over two days starting today, followed by sessions at Sultan Qaboos University on Wednesday and Thursday. This is part of a structured timeline aimed at reaching various segments of society.

The programme is considered one of the key projects supported by International Olympic Committee. It utilises educational materials and guides from the Olympic



The programme commenced with its first workshop held yesterday at the Special Economic Zone Authority at Duqm.

Values Education Programme issued by Olympic Solidarity. The initiative contributes to strengthening Olympic values and principles among young athletes, students, and youth of all ages and educational levels, through sports practices that emphasise learning and applying behavioural, educational, and ethical principles endorsed by International Olympic Committee. The programme is delivered by lecturer Hisham bin Salim al Adwani, Programme Director, and is supervised by Dr Ishaq bin Ahmed al Balushi, OOA Director. It targets a broad

JL ROUND 19 WITNESSES THRILLING WINS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

ROUND 19 of the Jindal League got underway on Saturday evening with a series of results that added fresh intrigue to the race across the table. Bahla continued their strong run with an emphatic victory over Al Shabab, Al Nasr produced an impressive attacking display against Ibri, while Dhofar edged past Saham in a closely fought encounter.

BAHLA THUMP AL SHABAB 4-1
Bahla maintained their positive momentum with a convincing 4-1 victory over Al Shabab at Seeb Stadium, underlining their determination to remain in contention during the closing stages of the season.

The breakthrough came in the 15th minute when Luki Vekemee finished off a low cross from Faisal to give Bahla the lead. That goal separated the two sides at the break, with Bahla taking a 1-0 advantage into half-time.

Al Shabab responded well early in the second half and restored parity in the 51st minute, when Hatem al Rushdi delivered a cross that was turned into the net by Maliko Kinyan.

The match, however, shifted decisively in Bahla’s favour shortly afterwards when Al Shabab’s Mahmood Mubarak was sent off after receiving his second yellow card. Bahla made full use of the numerical advantage, with Majid al Shukaili putting his side back in front in the 68th minute. Abdulsalam al Shukaili then extended the lead with a third goal in the 71st minute before completing the scoring with his second and Bahla’s fourth deep into stoppage time.

The result lifted Bahla to 31 points in fifth place, while Al Shabab slipped to third on 41 points.

AL NASR HIT FOUR PAST IBRI
At Nizwa Sports Complex, Al Nasr delivered one of the most entertaining performances of the round as they defeated hosts Ibri 4-2 in a lively contest marked by attacking quality.

Khalid al Sulaimi led the way with two goals for Al Nasr, while Abdullah al Musharafi and Awad al Shihri added the



Al Nasr’s attacking players in action during their entertaining 4-2 victory over Ibri



Bahla players celebrate during their emphatic win over Al Shabab in the Jindal League.

third and fourth to cap a strong offensive display.

Ibri attempted to fight their way back into the match through goals from Philip

Akah and Bisan Jacques, but their efforts proved insufficient against Al Nasr’s sharpness in front of goal.

With the win, Al Nasr moved into second place on 42 points, continuing the pressure on leaders Al Seeb, who sit top with 45 points. Ibri, meanwhile, remained in the lower reaches of the standings in 13th place with 14 points.

DHOFAR SECURE NARROW VICTORY OVER SAHAM
In another round 19 fixture, Dhofar claimed an important 1-0 win over Saham at Al Saada Sports Complex, a match largely balanced and cautious in its approach.

The decisive moment came in the 40th minute when Sultan Badr found the net after a well-weighted through ball from Abdullah Zaher, giving Dhofar a valuable lead before the interval.

Despite Saham’s efforts to respond, Dhofar held firm to secure all three points from a contest that remained tight until the final whistle. The victory moved Dhofar up to eighth place on 21 points, level with Saham, who are ninth on goal difference.

audience, including athletes, coaches, teachers, and national personnel working in sports institutions, federations, clubs, academies, and community teams. This wide outreach aims to maximise impact and promote the spread of Olympic culture across different environments.

The programme is divided into two main components. The first focuses on training Olympic Values Education trainers by preparing and qualifying “future trainers” through programmes that combine theoretical and practical aspects. The second component centres on Olympic culture and values initiatives, encouraging participants to apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired within their professional environments, whether in schools, clubs, or sports centres.

The implementation mechanism involves training participants over two consecutive days, during which they are introduced to the history, values, and symbols of the Olympic Movement, alongside practical activities that simulate the application of Olympic values in real-life situations. This is followed by a two-month field application phase, where participants independently implement their initiatives. These initiatives are later evaluated, and the top three projects are selected based on criteria such

as innovation, sustainability, and feasibility.

This programme aligns with the characteristics of Omani society and the objectives OOC in supporting the Olympic Movement.

It reinforces the concept of sport as a means of character building and values development, rather than merely competition, by promoting ideas such as joy of effort, striving for excellence, building friendships, and respect for rules and all elements of the sports system.

The programme also aims to expand its impact to include various educational and sports institutions, thereby strengthening the presence of OOC within the community and establishing collaborative relationships with entities involved in athlete development.

The project is being implemented in progressive stages across the governorates of Oman. It was previously carried out in 2024 in the governorates of Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah, Al Batinah South, Al Batinah North, and Al Sharqiyah South.

This year, it will be implemented in Muscat, Al Wusta, Al Sharqiyah North, Musandam, Dhofar, and Al Buraimi, as part of a comprehensive plan aimed at expanding benefits and ensuring the initiative’s sustainable impact.

SHORT TAKES



Wasim Ali

MIRZA’S MAIDEN ODI
TON POWERS OMAN TO
VICTORY OVER NAMIBIA

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

MUSCAT: stunning maiden century from Hammad Mirza, complemented by a career-best knock from Wasim Ali, powered Oman to a thrilling three-wicket win over hosts Namibia in their ICC Men’s Cricket World Cup League 2 match, sealing victory with five balls to spare at the Wanderers Cricket Ground in Windhoek on Saturday.

The win also marked a perfect start to Oman’s head coach Sulakshan Kulkarni’s tenure, who took over the reins in March. Oman’s opening match of the League 2 tri-series against Scotland was abandoned on April 2 due to wet outfield.

The two points from Saturday’s win strengthened Oman’s push for a top-four finish, taking them to 27 points from 22 games to keep them firmly in the hunt for the 2027 ODI World Cup Qualifiers. The top four from the ongoing League 2 will advance to the World Cup Qualifiers.

The USA top the table with 36 points from 24 games, followed by Scotland (31 from 25 games) and the Netherlands (28 from 24 matches).

On Saturday, Oman chased a challenging target of 269 in a closely-fought contest that ebbed and flowed until the final over. Player of the match Mirza delivered the winning blow with a six to seal the result. The 27-year old right-handed batter hammered his maiden ODI century, remaining unbeaten on 112 off 128 balls. His innings was studded with 12 boundaries and a six, and it anchored Oman’s response after a shaky start.

Jatinder Singh-led side lost both openers early, slipping to 45/3, before Mirza first stabilised the innings with a crucial 81-run fourth-wicket partnership alongside Mujibur Ali, who scored a brisk 43 off 42 balls.

The defining moment came with the sixth-wicket partnership between Mirza and Wasim Ali. Ali’s aggressive 62 off 49 balls shifted momentum decisively, with the pair adding 124 runs to put Oman firmly in control.

Mirza displayed remarkable temperament, pacing his innings perfectly—reaching his fifty in 76 balls before accelerating to his maiden century in 121 deliveries. Despite losing a couple of late wickets, Oman crossed the finish line in 49.1 overs.

Earlier, Namibia, put to bat first, posted a competitive 268/7. Willem Myburgh laid the foundation with a steady 43, while captain Gerhard Erasmus contributed a fluent 54 off 55 balls. Louren Steenkamp added 32, helping Namibia rebuild through the middle overs.

The innings gained momentum at the death through a 50-run seventh-wicket stand between Zane Green (42 off 22) and Dylan Leicher (30* off 17), taking Namibia from 198/6 to a strong total.

Oman’s bowling effort was led by Hassnain Shah (3/58), while Shakeel Ahmed impressed with 2/31, maintaining pressure through the middle overs.



Crowning the winners of the Horsera Show Jumping Championship. — Ayman al Harrasi

Horsira Show Jumping
Championship Concludes

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@RIYADHBALUCH

THE HORSIRA Show Jumping Championship concluded successfully yesterday at Horsira Equestrian Club in Barka, under the supervision of the Oman Equestrian Federation. The event was held under the auspices of Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidy and attended by Sayyid Mundhir bin Saif bin Hamad al Busaidy, Chairman of the Federation, along with officials and representatives of sponsoring organisations, led by Jotun, the official sponsor of the championship.

Held over two days, the competition witnessed strong participation from male and female riders representing both government and private stables. The event featured intense and competitive performances across various categories, attracting a large audience that added to the vibrant atmosphere. On the first day, Madeen bin Saeed al Yousufi claimed first place in the 130 cm category riding “Wadood,” followed by Mohammed bin Salim al Hadhrami in second place and Khalid bin Darwish al Subhi in third. In the 120 cm category, Bassam bin Nasser al Ghabshi secured first place riding “Fifty Fifty,” ahead of Shurooq Mahmoud and Ahmed al Shahat.

In the 110 cm category, Ahmed bin Hamood al Wahaibi took first place, followed by Sultan bin Mohammed al Harrasi and Khalfan bin Hamad al Hattali. The 100 cm



A shot of a competitor jumping over the 120cm barrier. — Ayman al Harrasi

category was won by Tariq bin Ziyad al Balushi, with Sayyid Abdulaziz bin Fahad al Busaidy finishing second and Mohammed Zakariya third. In the 70 cm beginners category, Sami bin Musab al Amri secured first place, followed by Ghadeer al Hamadani and Saeed al Abri.

On the second day, Madeen al Yousufi maintained his dominance by winning the 130 cm category again, while Bassam al Ghabshi repeated his success in the 120 cm category.

Saeed bin Humaid al Shukaili won the 110 cm category, while Khalfan al Hattali topped the 100 cm class. Anas al Nuaimi secured first place in the 90 cm category, while Abbas al Lawati won the under-16 division.

The championship also featured accompanying activities, including food outlets, equestrian equipment displays and entertainment areas for children, creating a family-friendly environment.

At the conclusion of the event, winners were honoured across all categories, with the main event champions crowned by the patron of the ceremony.

Tournament Director Abeer Sultan expressed pride in the successful organisation of the event, highlighting the growing number of participants, particularly among youth riders, as a sign of the sport’s development in Oman.

Bassam bin Nasser al Ghabshi expressed his satisfaction after winning the 120 cm category on both days, noting the high level of competition and praising the organisation of the championship.

Oman participates in Asian badminton General Assembly

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

Dr Abdulrahim bin Muslim Al Daroushi, Chairman of the Oman Racket Sports Committee, participated in the General Assembly meeting of the Asian Badminton Confederation, held on March 28, 2026, in Bali, Indonesia, with the attendance of representatives from 32 member nations and senior officials from both the continental and international federations.

The meeting addressed several key topics, including financial performance, development programmes and initiatives, as well as strategies to enhance the training

and qualification of technical and administrative personnel across Asia. Discussions also covered the action plan for the current year and ways to improve the quality of hosting developmental tournaments across the continent.

On the sidelines of the assembly, Dr Al Daroushi held a series of meetings with Asian federation officials to explore opportunities for technical and administrative cooperation.

He also presented several initiatives that the committee aims to implement in Oman, particularly in promoting women’s participation in sports, expanding the base of players, and increasing access for wider segments of the community.



Dr Abdulrahim bin Muslim al Daroushi.

He also discussed key strategic matters with the President of the Badminton World Federation, focusing on talent development, enhancing training programmes, and supporting specialised training centres in line with international best practices.

Dr Al Daroushi highlighted the significant progress achieved by the Asian Badminton Confederation in terms of the diversity and quality of its programmes, supported by increased financial investment in regional and international competitions, as well as development initiatives aimed at raising the standard of the sport across member countries.

He emphasised the importance of

benefiting from these programmes to promote badminton across Oman, with a particular focus on youth development as the foundation for building competitive future athletes.

Dr Al Daroushi also revealed the committee’s intention to host international tournaments over the next two years, noting that this proposal received strong support from Asian federation officials, further strengthening Oman’s presence on the continental and global sports stage.

This participation reflects the committee’s commitment to enhancing its international engagement and contributing to the development of badminton at both regional and global levels.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Washington Wizards guard Will Riley drives to the basket as Miami Heat forward Simone Fontecchio and forward Jaime Jaquez Jr. — **Imagn Images**

JAIME JAQUEZ JR, KEL’EL WARE HELP HEAT ROUT WIZARDS

Jaime Jaquez Jr scored a season-high 32 points and Kel’el Ware matched his career high of seven blocks, leading the host Miami Heat to a 152-136 win over the Wizards on Saturday afternoon.

The Heat (41-37) also got 24 points and a game-high 19 rebounds from Ware. Miami led by as many as 35 points before taking out its starters.

Washington, which has lost 21 of its past 22 games, was led by Will Riley’s 31 points on 12-for-17 shooting. The Wizards, who have the NBA’s worst record at 17-60, also got 20 points from Sharife Cooper and 19 points from Jaden Hardy.

Bam Adebayo, who burned Washington for 83 points on March 10 - the second- greatest total in NBA history - was held to 14 points this time. The Heat are just 4-8 since he had his 83-point game.

Norman Powell, who leads Miami in scoring (22.1), missed his second straight game due to illness and fourth in a row overall.

Jaquez made 12 of 18 shots as part of his busy weekend. He plans to be in Phoenix on Sunday to watch his sister, Gabriela Jaquez, play for UCLA in the women’s basketball national championship game against South Carolina.

Jaime Jaquez helped UCLA to the Final Four in 2021, but his team lost the semifinal to Gonzaga in overtime.

There were 10 lead changes in a first quarter that ended with Miami on top, 36-32. Miami shot 57.1 per cent and went 5-for-10 on 3-pointers. Washington shot just 44.4 per cent, including 2-of-4 from deep, but the Wizards remained close due to a 7-2 edge on second-chance points.

Adebayo, who had 31 first-quarter points on March 10, was held to five on Saturday.

Miami dominated the second quarter, shooting 68.2 per cent to take a 77-57 lead into half-time. Washington shot just 31 per cent. Jaquez led all second-quarter scorers with 12 points.

The Heat went over the century mark with 5:41 left in the third on a 3-pointer by Simone Fontecchio, giving Miami a 102-76 lead. By the end of the quarter, Miami led 122-91. Miami finished with a season high in points. The franchise record of 153 was set last season. — **Reuters**



Washington Wizards guard Will Riley drives to the basket as Miami Heat forward Simone Fontecchio and forward Jaime Jaquez Jr. — **Imagn Images**

Barcelona beat Atletico Madrid, eye title



FC Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski celebrates scoring their second goal. — **Reuters**

BARCELONA MOVE SEVEN POINTS CLEAR AT TOP

LEWANDOWSKI LATE GOAL EARNS BARCELONA 2-1 WIN

GONZALEZ RED CARD LEAVES ATLETICO SHORT FOR 2ND HALF

BARCELONA TAKE ADVANTAGE OF REAL MADRID’S LOSS

BARCELONA’S ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI came off the bench to score a late winner in a 2-1 victory away to 10-man Atletico Madrid on Saturday that moved the defending champions seven points clear of Real Madrid at the top of the LaLiga table. Barcelona had plenty of motivation after Real’s 2-1 loss at Mallorca earlier on Saturday, but it was the hosts who took the lead six minutes before the break through Giuliano Simeone. The visitors responded with a Marcus Rashford goal three minutes later and Atletico had Nico Gonzalez sent off on the stroke of half-time. Lewandowski was in the right place to net a fortunate rebound three minutes from time.

Atletico remain fourth in the standings on 57 points, 19 points off Barcelona and the sides will meet again at the Camp Nou on Wednesday in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final clash.

The first half brought plenty of chances at both ends, with Atletico’s all-time leading scorer Antoine Griezmann at the heart of the home side’s attacking threat. Griezmann created the first opportunity himself, weaving through the Barcelona defence, but sent his effort straight at keeper Joan Garcia and later fired wide after Alex Baena sent a low ball across the area.

Barcelona’s Lamine Yamal nutmegged Gonzalez before playing a perfect pass forward for Fermin Lopez who put his shot wide under pressure from Nahuel Molina. Yamal also had an attempted lob from a tight angle hit the upright.

ATLETICO STRIKE FIRST

The opening goal came when Simeone timed his run to perfection and controlled Clement Lenglet’s long pass before sending his shot from just inside the area beyond Garcia into the corner of the net. Barcelona were back on level terms after Rashford played a



Marcus Rashford celebrates scoring his team's first goal. — **AFP**



RCD Mallorca's Vedat Muriqi celebrates scoring their second goal. — **Reuters**

one-two with Dani Olmo and his strike went through the legs of keeper Juan Musso, before Gonzalez saw red for his foul on Yamal on the edge of the area. Barcelona appeared to have lost their numerical advantage less than one minute into the second half when Gerard Martin was shown a red card for a foul on Thiago Almada, but the referee changed the punishment to yellow after a VAR check. Yamal sent a shot wide after dribbling his way past four Atletico players and Musso made a point-blank save from Ferran Torres as the visitors piled on the pressure. Barcelona sprung Lewandowski from the bench with 11 minutes left and after Musso blocked Joao Cancelo’s shot, the ball cannoned off the substitute’s chest and into the net for a lucky but what could prove to be all-important winning goal.

With eight games remaining in the league for both Barcelona and nearest rivals Real Madrid, the Catalans are in pole position for a second successive title. — **Reuters**

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
8,275.791

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



A model of an oil pump is seen in front of the Opec logo in this illustration. — Reuters

OPEC+ DEBATES OIL OUTPUT HIKE AMIDST IRAN WAR PARALYSIS

MOSCOW/LONDON: Opec+ may approve an oil output increase on Sunday, four sources from the group said, a rise that will largely exist on paper as its key members are unable to raise production due to the US-Israeli war with Iran.

The war has effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz — the world’s most important oil route — since the end of February and cut exports from Opec+ members Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait and Iraq, the only countries in the group which were able to significantly raise production even before the conflict began.

Other group members such as Russia are unable to increase output due to Western sanctions and damage to infrastructure inflicted during the war with Ukraine.

Inside the Gulf, damage to infrastructure from missile and drone attacks has also been severe. Several Gulf officials have said it would take months to resume normal operations and reach production targets even if the war stopped and Hormuz reopened immediately.

At its last meeting on March 1, just as the war began to disrupt oil flows, Opec+ agreed to a modest output boost of 206,000 barrels per day for April. A month later, the largest oil supply disruption on record is estimated to have removed as many as 12 to 15 million barrels per day or up to 15% of global supply.

Crude prices have soared to a four-year high close to \$120 a barrel. Oil prices could spike above \$150 — an all-time high — if flows via Hormuz remain disrupted into mid-May, JPMorgan said on Thursday. Sunday’s meeting will discuss Opec+ quotas for May, sources said.

An increase will have little immediate impact on supply but would signal readiness to raise output once Hormuz reopens, Opec+ sources have said. — Reuters

Yamna boosts Oman’s hydrogen advantage

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

UK-BASED green energy developer Yamna’s recent announcement to expand into green data centre development positions the Sultanate of Oman as a potential frontline destination for this emerging segment.

Two factors underpin this outlook, according to market experts.

First, Yamna is a key member of a consortium that was awarded a concession in April 2024 to develop a giga-scale green hydrogen project in Oman’s Dhofar Governorate — currently the company’s principal energy investment in the wider Middle East.

Second, in announcing its new digital infrastructure business, Yamna indicated that its first flagship green data centre project is planned in the Middle East.

If confirmed, this could significantly broaden Oman’s green hydrogen value proposition beyond exports by anchoring local demand for clean energy and strengthening project bankability.

It would also reinforce Oman’s positioning as a dual hub for green energy and digital infrastructure, attracting additional foreign investment and supporting economic diversification.

Yamna is a key partner in one of Oman’s flagship green hydrogen developments, working alongside EDF Group and J-POWER on a large-scale project in Dhofar Governorate.

Awarded by Hydrom, the project spans approximately 341 km² and is designed to produce up to 1 million tonnes of green ammonia annually using

Yamna embarks on a strategic expansion into data centres, bringing our Power-to-X expertise to build clean and resilient digital infrastructure for the future. As AI drives unprecedented demand for both clean power and computing capacity, our integrated approach enables faster, more efficient and greener infrastructure that will underpin the digital economy.



Abdelaziz Yatribi, CEO — Yamna.

renewable-powered hydrogen production.

It will be supported by around 4.5 GW of wind and solar capacity, a 2.5 GW electrolyser and battery storage, with output supplied to an ammonia facility in the Salalah Free Zone for both domestic use and export markets.

Yamna said the launch of its digital infrastructure business marks a strategic expansion into green data centres, complementing its core green hydrogen and derivatives portfolio. The UK-based investor has until now focused on producing green hydrogen and Power-to-X derivatives — such as ammonia and e-fuels — at scale to support the energy transition.

Leveraging its existing capabilities, Yamna plans to develop integrated power-and-data campuses designed to support AI-driven, hyperscale computing workloads.

These campuses will combine renewable energy, battery storage and — where applicable — hydrogen-based power solutions to deliver continuous, low-emission electricity with built-in backup systems.

By offering fully integrated, end-to-end solutions, Yamna aims to accelerate data centre deployment while ensuring reliable access to green baseload power, addressing key infrastructure constraints in the sector.

Yamna CEO Abdelaziz Yatribi said: “Yamna embarks on a strategic expansion into data centres, bringing our Power-to-X expertise to build clean and resilient digital infrastructure for the future.

As AI drives unprecedented demand for both clean power and computing capacity, our integrated approach enables faster, more efficient and greener infrastructure that will underpin the digital economy”.

In a statement, Yamna added that it is actively assessing global locations where strong renewable energy resources, connectivity and infrastructure converge to create viable opportunities for green data centre development.

“The first mega flagship project is currently being developed in the Middle East, with significant development milestones already achieved”, the company said.

Oman’s electricity sector keeps pace with demand growth

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

Electricity and energy projects in the Sultanate of Oman continue to advance key strategic objectives, including energy self-sufficiency, sustainability, economic growth and greater reliance on renewable sources.

Latest statistics from the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) show that total electricity production rose by 14.6 per cent by the end of January 2026, reaching 3,256.5 gigawatt-hours (GWh), compared to 2,841.5 GWh during the same period in 2025.

Eng Alaa bin Hassan bin Mousa al Lawati, CEO of Nama Electricity Distribution Company, noted that the sector has seen significant progress, including the rollout of strategic generation projects and a shift towards renewable energy, which accounted for 9.46 per cent of total production in 2025.

In the transmission segment, line lengths expanded by 40 per cent, while the number of substations increased by 13 per cent. Distribution indicators



The rise in electricity production is also being driven by growing energy demand, particularly from industrial expansion.

showed a 13 per cent rise in network length and an 8 per cent increase in substations. The supply segment also underwent a digital transformation in billing, rising from 90 per cent in 2021 to full digitisation in 2025, with electronic payments reaching 78

per cent over the same period. The sector has also adopted artificial intelligence and data analytics to enhance customer experience, enabling real-time consumption monitoring through smart meters. Additional initiatives include upgrades to call centre services, expanded

e-services, streamlined billing and payment processes, stronger integration with government platforms, implementation of load-shedding systems to improve network efficiency, enhanced customer satisfaction measurement and upgrades to digital portals and applications.

Following recent adverse weather conditions in the Sultanate of Oman, authorities prioritised the resilience of electrical networks located in wadi beds.

The Authority directed a comprehensive review and redesign of affected infrastructure to improve safety and reliability.

Eng Al Lawati stated that all lines located in wadi beds have been assessed and are now in the design phase, paving the way for reconstruction to higher technical standards.

More than RO 30 million has been allocated for these upgrades, including relocating affected poles, reinforcing networks and constructing new substations.

The rise in electricity production is also being driven by growing energy demand,

particularly from industrial expansion. The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones reported that new investments in 2025 exceeded RO 1.4 billion, bringing total committed investments in its jurisdictions to RO 22.4 billion.

Eng Hilal bin Mohammed al Ghaithi, Director General of Energy at APSR, highlighted that rising electricity demand is being met alongside a strategic shift towards green hydrogen.

Oman is positioning green hydrogen as a key future energy source to reduce reliance on gas, enhance sustainability, cut emissions and diversify electricity generation in a reliable and cost-effective manner.

Oman has also inaugurated its first green hydrogen mobility station. In addition to hydrogen refuelling, it provides fast charging for electric vehicles and conventional fueling options in one location.

This initiative supports Oman Vision 2040 and the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 through the promotion of low-carbon mobility solutions.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The report highlights significant progress achieved by the bank across various sustainability pillars.

BankDhofar’s 2025 Sustainability Report highlights responsible investment

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the second-largest bank in the Sultanate of Oman in terms of branch network size, has announced the release of its 2025 Sustainability Report under the theme “Purpose-Driven Banking Enables National Development”. The report reflects the bank’s dedication to aligning its financial services, business strategy and community engagement efforts with Oman’s long-term economic and social ambitions. The report highlights significant progress achieved by the bank across various sustainability pillars, reinforcing its role as a key contributor to supporting sustainable growth within Oman’s financial sector.

Sustainability remains a cornerstone of the bank’s strategic vision, guiding its initiatives towards responsible banking practices, strong corporate governance and the creation of long-term, sustainable value for all stakeholders. The report also showcases the major achievements of the bank and its Islamic banking window, Dhofar Islamic, during 2025, while outlining ambitious future goals aligned with the principles of Oman Vision 2040 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals — affirming the bank’s commitment to fostering a more inclusive and sustainable development path. K Gopakumar, Acting CEO of BankDhofar, stated: “The bank has integrated environmental and social principles into its business model, helping to embed these considerations into decision-making processes and stakeholder engagement.

We are further strengthening the bank’s approach to environmental risk management, resource efficiency and sustainable financing — supporting responsible investments through enhanced operational sustainability. This reaffirms our commitment to advancing responsible banking practices that generate long-term value for customers, shareholders and society”. Throughout 2025, BankDhofar continued to reinforce sustainability across all levels of institutional operations. The Board of Directors and executive management adopted a comprehensive approach to embedding environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards within the bank’s policies and operational processes. The bank also renewed its commitment to supporting Oman’s transition to a low-carbon economy and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement, by channeling investments into green financing, energy efficiency initiatives, water conservation and innovative waste-management solutions.

Bank Muscat holds leadership forum, celebrates employees’ achievements

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to fostering a culture of recognition, rewarding excellence and continuous investment in human capital, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is dedicated to organising periodic meetings with employees as platforms for dialogue and discussions, as well as to cultivating a motivating work environment that values talent and encourages innovation, further strengthening its position as an employer of choice that attracts and develops top talent. In this context, Bank Muscat organised its Annual Leadership Forum 2026 under the theme “From Vision To Impact”. The forum brought together members of the executive



The forum brought together members of the executive management, regional managers, branch managers from across Oman.

management, regional managers, branch managers from across the Sultanate of Oman, department heads, as well as branch managers from Meethaq Islamic Banking. This year’s forum reflected an advanced stage in the Bank’s journey, where the focus has evolved beyond achieving success and milestones to maximising the

impact of these achievements on customer experience, operational efficiency and sustainable growth. The forum highlighted the importance of future-focused thinking, accelerating digital transformation and fostering a culture of innovation as key pillars for leading the next phase. The event also served as a

dynamic platform for dialogue and exchange of ideas, showcasing the Bank’s key achievements while discussing strategic priorities for the upcoming period. This approach aims to enhance integration across teams and translate the Bank’s vision into practical initiatives that deliver tangible impact on the ground.

During the Annual Leadership Forum, Bank Muscat also honoured the winners of the CEO Excellence Awards, which celebrate outstanding performance and high-quality initiatives that have made a real difference in the workplace and in service development. These awards reaffirm the Bank’s commitment to fostering a culture of excellence, encouraging initiative and promoting innovation that directly enhances customer experience and service quality. On this occasion, a number of the honoured employees expressed their pride in receiving this recognition, emphasising that these achievements are the result of teamwork and continuous support; and that the next phase holds even greater opportunities for innovation and impact.

Own the BYD Han with five exclusive benefits

THE all-electric BYD Han has redefined the luxury sedan segment in Oman, combining high-performance engineering with an unmatched level of sophistication. As the flagship model representing BYD’s core value of “technology for a better life”, the Han is now available with a suite of five exclusive benefits for a very limited time. This represents the ultimate opportunity for motorists in the Sultanate of Oman to transition to sustainable luxury while taking advantage of an ownership package designed to provide complete peace of mind and exceptional value.

Designed by the world-renowned German car designer Wolfgang Egger, the BYD Han is a visual masterpiece that reflects the “dragon face” design language. Its sleek, sporty appearance is accentuated by a dynamic waistline and an advanced lighting system that resembles dragon eyes. The exterior is further complemented by through-type LED tail lights inspired by traditional Chinese knots, ensuring the Han stands out as a head-turner on every road. This design is not just about aesthetics but also aerodynamic efficiency, contributing to a driving experience that takes performance to unprecedented levels. Inside the cabin, the BYD Han offers a sanctuary of luxury that benchmarks the craftsmanship of top German automobile designers. Drivers and passengers are welcomed by premium Nappa leather seats and a library-level quiet space that enhances the sense of refinement. The spacious dashboard is equipped with the signature BYD Heart shift lever, a 12.3-inch LCD display and a massive 15.6-inch 8-core rotatable screen that serves as the



The Han is now available with a suite of five exclusive benefits for a very limited time.

vehicle’s intuitive command centre. To complete the premium atmosphere, the Han features a 12-speaker Dynaudio system and multi-colour gradient ambient lighting, ensuring every journey is a first-class experience. Beyond its luxury, the Han is a powerful performer capable of accelerating from 0 to 100 km/h in just 7.9 seconds. It is equipped with advanced battery technology that delivers an impressive extended driving range of up to 565 km, easily meeting the demands of both daily commuting and long-distance travel. For added convenience, the Han supports 120 kW DC fast charging, allowing the vehicle to charge from 30% to 80% in only 30 minutes. This combination of speed, range and rapid charging makes the Han one of the most practical and exciting electric vehicles available in the Omani market today. To make this the best time to join the

BYD family, the current campaign offers five guaranteed benefits for every eligible purchase. These exclusive advantages include one year of free motor insurance, three years of complimentary roadside assistance and a comprehensive three-year free service package. Additionally, new owners will receive a free battery charger unit for convenient home charging. Perhaps most exciting is the inclusion of a grand raffle entry, giving customers a spectacular opportunity to win a BYD SEAL 7 DM-i Luxury hybrid sedan, which features the latest DM-i 4.0 technology and a total driving range of up to 850 km. This exclusive offer is reaching its final days, with the campaign officially scheduled to conclude on April 8. This is the final opportunity for everyone in Oman to secure these five premium benefits while upgrading to the power and elegance of the BYD Han.

Sohar International wins top brands in Oman award

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its position as one of Oman’s most dynamic and trusted financial institutions, Sohar International has been recognised as the ‘Best Brand in Oman’ at the prestigious Alam Al-Iktisaad Top Brands in Oman Awards 2026. This accolade highlights the bank’s continued success in cultivating a powerful, future-ready brand built on innovation, trust, and a commitment to delivering exceptional customer experiences. During the ceremony, Dr Mazin Mahmood al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer, was also honoured with the ‘Marketing Leader of the Year’ award, further underscoring the Bank’s leadership in shaping impactful brand strategies.



The recognition reflects Sohar International’s strategic vision of redefining banking beyond financial services.

The recognition reflects Sohar International’s strategic vision of redefining banking beyond financial services. Anchored in a customer-centric approach and driven by digital innovation, the Bank has consistently focused on creating

long-term value. By enhancing its offerings and delivering seamless, experience-led solutions, Sohar International has strengthened its brand equity, deepened connections with stakeholders, and solidified its position as a

leading partner of choice for individuals, businesses, and institutions across Oman. Commenting on this achievement, Abdulwahid Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: “Winning the Best Brand in Oman award reflects the strong trust our customers and partners place in our journey, and underscores the success of our approach in building a corporate identity grounded in sustainable value and purposeful innovation. The strength of our brand stems from the clarity of our vision and our commitment to delivering advanced banking experiences that align with evolving customer aspirations and empower them to achieve their goals with confidence.”

SHORTTAKES



People buy vegetables at a popular market in Alexandria, Egypt. — Reuters

WAR WEIGHS ON EGYPT’S PRIVATE SECTOR AS PMI HITS NEAR TWO-YEAR LOW

CAIRO: Egypt’s non-oil private sector deteriorated at its sharpest pace in almost two years in March, as the Middle East war drove up costs and dampened client demand, a closely watched business survey showed on Sunday.

The headline S&P Global Egypt Purchasing Managers’ Index fell for a fourth consecutive month, dropping to 48.0 in March from 48.9 in February — its lowest reading since April 2024.

The figure remained below the 50.0 threshold that separates growth from contraction, though it was broadly in line with the survey’s long-run average of 48.2.

Output and new orders were the chief drags on the index, with both measures also hitting their lowest levels for nearly two years. Firms frequently blamed the Middle East conflict for dampening client demand, partly through intensifying price pressures.

In a first, business expectations for the coming 12 months slipped into negative territory, with companies citing uncertainty over the war as a key reason for pessimism, though the degree of gloom was described as mild.

David Owen, senior economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, nevertheless noted that “the latest figure of 48.0 still relates to annual GDP growth of around 4.3%”, adding that “recent data suggests the domestic non-oil sector is on a solid underlying growth path”.

Cost pressures remained a serious concern, however. Input prices surged at their joint-sharpest pace in one-and-a-half years, as firms cited fuel costs and other war-related commodity price increases, compounded by a stronger US dollar.

— Reuters

Prime assets drive Oman property growth in H1

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

OMAN’S real estate market is set for steady, selective growth in the first half of 2026, supported by resilient non-oil expansion, disciplined development activity and sustained demand for income-generating assets, according to the 2025 Annual Market Report by Hamptons International.

The outlook follows a solid performance in the second half of 2025, during which Oman’s key real estate hubs — Muscat, Al Duqm, Suhar and Salalah — recorded varied yet complementary trends reflecting their distinct economic roles.

Muscat remained the most active and liquid market, underpinned by government-backed urban regeneration, infrastructure delivery and consistent end-user demand.

The report noted that prime assets continued to outperform secondary stock, as investors increasingly favour quality, efficiency and income security.

This trend is expected to carry into 2026, with capital values supported by well-located, income-producing assets, while secondary properties face heightened scrutiny over leasing risks and specifications.

Al Duqm continued to strengthen its position as a strategic industrial and logistics hub, driven by expansion within the Special Economic Zone, rising port activity and long-term government investment.

Demand remains focused on industrial land, logistics



Muscat remained the most active and liquid market.

facilities and infrastructure-linked developments. Hamptons International said the outlook for Al Duqm is “stable to positive” over the long term, with income-backed assets expected to outperform more speculative land-driven investments.

In Suhar, market conditions remained stable, supported by consistent demand for warehousing, manufacturing and port-related industrial space. Backed by an established logistics ecosystem, the city is expected to maintain steady performance, although upside potential remains limited without further asset enhancement or expansion.

Stable yields are likely to persist, supported by durable income streams.

Salalah, meanwhile, is showing improving momentum, supported by tourism-led investment and port-linked logistics activity.

The report highlighted

strengthening fundamentals across hospitality, mixed-use and logistics assets, driven by seasonal tourism growth and improving regional connectivity.

Performance in H1 2026 is expected to remain positive, particularly for assets aligned with tourism diversification and trade flows.

At the macro level, Oman’s economic expansion through 2025 has reinforced the sector’s outlook. Growth has been driven by logistics, manufacturing, tourism and non-oil private sector activity, in line with the country’s diversification strategy under Oman Vision 2040. Continued investment in ports, free zones and industrial clusters, alongside foreign direct investment inflows, is translating into sustained real estate demand.

Looking ahead, the report emphasised that transaction activity will remain selective, with investors prioritising assets

that offer predictable cash flows, long lease profiles and strong counterparties.

Development pipelines are also expected to remain disciplined, with feasibility increasingly influenced by construction costs, financing conditions and absorption risks.

Rental performance across most segments is forecast to remain stable, with modest upside in logistics, hospitality and prime mixed-use developments. Capital values are expected to hold broadly steady, supported by improving income fundamentals and limited oversupply, although yields may face pressure where asset quality or tenant strength is weaker.

Overall, Hamptons International said the market is transitioning towards fundamentals-driven growth, with increasing emphasis on institutional-grade assets and long-term, income-focused investment strategies.

CRs in Al Sharqiyah North surge by 25.2% in 2025

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 5

Al Sharqiyah North Governorate posted robust growth in business activity in 2025, with new commercial registrations (CRs) rising by 25.2 per cent to 1,665, up from 1,330 in 2024. The total number of CRs in the governorate reached 19,996 by the end of the year, underlining sustained expansion across its economic base.

Abdul Aziz bin Naseeb al Arimi, Director of the Department of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in Al Sharqiyah North, said the latest indicators reflect growing confidence among entrepreneurs and investors in the governorate’s business environment.

He noted that the strong uptick in registrations, coupled with the performance of the construction sector, points to accelerating



The total number of CRs in the governorate reached 19,996 by the end of the year.

development momentum across various wilayats.

Al Arimi added that ongoing efforts to streamline procedures, expand digital services and strengthen support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are helping attract higher-quality investments while advancing sustainable economic development

goals.

At the wilayat level, Bidiyah led new registrations with 531 CRs in 2025, followed by Ibra (298), Al Mudhaibi (289), Al Qabil (286), Sinaw (179), Wadi Bani Khalid (47) and Dima W’attayeen (35). The distribution highlights broad-based growth across the governorate, with activity concentrated in key

population and commercial centres.

In contrast, completed commercial licences declined to 11,050 in 2025 from 13,447 in 2024, although the cumulative total rose to 34,865 licences.

Similarly, licences completed automatically through digital systems fell by 17.1 per cent to 13,385, compared with 16,150 a year earlier, bringing the overall total to 43,731. The figures nonetheless indicate continued reliance on digital channels to facilitate licensing and business operations.

The construction sector emerged as a key growth driver. Licences for “general construction of residential and non-residential buildings” surged to 1,169 in 2025, compared with 412 in 2024 — a sharp increase of 183.7 per cent. The total number of licences in this activity reached 2,162, reflecting a pipeline of urban development and infrastructure

projects across the governorate.

Industrial activity also remained steady, with 1,780 industrial licences recorded during the year, bringing the cumulative total to 7,726. The sector continues to support a range of productive activities, including building materials, handicrafts and SME-led manufacturing initiatives.

Foreign investment activity showed modest growth. A total of 28 new foreign investment registrations were recorded in 2025, raising the cumulative figure to 668. In addition, 40 investment licences were issued during the year, bringing the total to 394 licences.

Overall, Al Sharqiyah North’s economic trajectory in 2025 reflects a strengthening business environment, supported by rising registrations, sectoral expansion and ongoing policy measures aimed at enhancing competitiveness and investment appeal.

ENERGY INFLATION

Türkiye hikes power, gas tariffs



Türkiye will raise electricity and natural gas prices by 25 per cent starting next Saturday, citing higher production and distribution costs. Residential bills will increase notably, with broader hikes of up to 24.8 per cent for industrial and commercial users.

Authorities linked the move to rising global energy prices, driven partly by supply disruptions through the Strait of Hormuz. — ONA

SUPPLY SECURITY

South Korea seeks stable Gulf energy



South Korea has urged Gulf nations to ensure stable energy supplies and safeguard Korean vessels amidst disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

Finance Minister Koo Yun-cheol met GCC envoys, who pledged continued cooperation. With the strait handling a share of global oil flows, the conflict has heightened supply risks and raised concerns over energy security and global economic stability. — Reuters

CRYPTO STABILITY

Bitcoin steadies amidst regulatory outlook



Bitcoin stabilised near \$67,000 amidst expectations of tighter regulation in the digital asset sector. Trading remained subdued over the weekend following a volatile week driven by geopolitical tensions.

It recorded modest gains despite declines, while most altcoins showed mixed performance, with Ethereum and Cardano edging lower and others posting limited movement. — Reuters

OPINION

Strategy is not a plan, it is a pattern of decisions



KAMLA AL RAHBI

The writer is a leadership and business strategist focused on decision-making, organisational clarity and cognitive frameworks in complex environments

EVERY organisation has a strategy. Most organisations also have a document that describes it — a carefully constructed statement of direction, priorities and intended outcomes that has been reviewed, revised and approved through a formal process. These two things are often assumed to be the same. They rarely are. The document describes what leadership intends. The pattern of decisions reveals what leadership actually values.

And in the gap between intention and decision lies one of the most consequential and least examined problems in organisational leadership.

Strategy, understood correctly, is not what an organisation says it will do. It is the accumulated logic of what an organisation repeatedly chooses — under pressure, under ambiguity and in the thousands of small decisions that never appear in a board presentation but collectively determine direction more powerfully than any formal plan. This distinction is not semantic.

It changes how leaders should think about strategy, how they should evaluate it and where they should look when it is failing. Tell me not what your strategy document says. Show me the last twenty decisions your leadership team made.

That is your actual strategy. Consider a common scenario. An organisation formally commits to long-term value creation. Its strategy document emphasises sustainable growth, investment in capability and the development of institutional knowledge.

These commitments are genuine. But when quarterly results fall short, leadership

consistently redirects resources from long-term development towards short-term recovery.

When talent development conflicts with immediate delivery pressure, delivery wins. When innovation initiatives require tolerance for early-stage failure, they are quietly deprioritised.

No single decision violates the stated strategy. The pattern of decisions systematically undermines it. This is not a failure of integrity. It is a failure of strategic coherence the alignment between stated priorities and actual decision-making criteria.

And it is far more common than most leaders recognise, precisely because each individual decision, taken in isolation, appears defensible. It is only when the pattern becomes visible that the problem is revealed.

The mechanism that produces this gap is rooted in how decisions are actually made under organisational pressure. In theory, strategic decisions are evaluated against long-term objectives.

In practice, they are evaluated against the criteria that are most visible, most measurable and most immediately consequential for the people making them.

Quarterly targets are visible. Capability development is not. This year's budget pressure is immediate. The compounding cost of deferred investment is abstract.

The career implications of missing a short-term number are concrete. The strategic cost of a pattern of short-termism accumulates invisibly, over years, until it is no longer invisible.

An organisation's true strategy is written

Strategy is the accumulated logic of what an organisation repeatedly chooses — under pressure, under ambiguity and in the thousands of small decisions that never appear in a board presentation but collectively determine direction more powerfully than any formal plan.

not in its planning documents but in the criteria its leaders actually use when a decision becomes difficult. For Gulf organisations navigating the current period of economic transformation, this distinction carries particular weight.

The transformation required towards knowledge economies, towards sustainable growth models, towards institutional capabilities that can compete globally demands a quality of strategic commitment that cannot be achieved through planning cycles alone.

It requires organisations whose actual decision-making patterns, at every level of leadership, consistently reflect the long-term direction that the formal strategy describes.

This requires something that planning processes do not typically produce: a shared and explicit understanding of the decision-making criteria that the strategy implies.

Not just what the organisation is trying to achieve, but how decisions will be made when achieving it conflicts with other legitimate pressures.

Which trade-offs will be resolved in favour of the long term and which will not. What short-term costs the organisation is genuinely prepared to absorb in service of its strategic direction.

Leaders who have developed this clarity who can articulate not just their strategy but the decision logic that the strategy requires make fundamentally different decisions under pressure than leaders who cannot.

Not because they are more disciplined in some abstract sense, but because they have a more precise instrument for evaluating choices. The question is no longer only whether a decision is defensible in isolation.

OIL-SHORTAGE FALLOUT WILL OOZE SLOWLY BUT SURELY

ROBERT CYRAN

Just as when oil spills, a shortage seeps slowly. Fallout from a blocked Strait of Hormuz, which typically carries 20% of the world's supply, will spread steadily across the planet.

The directional part is simple. Because days in transit cost money, ships prioritise geographically closer markets. Some 80% of oil flowing through the Strait goes to Asia, according to the International Energy Agency. About 95% of Japan's oil imports come from the Middle East.

Jet fuel is getting hit hard and other refined products are next in line. Gulf countries have been adding facilities to convert crude into feedstocks, lubricants and more. Many can no longer ship overseas.

Tankers that left the Gulf on February 27, the day before the United States and Israel attacked Iran, reached those ports.

Pain radiates from there. Exports to Europe are smaller, with even less destined to the Americas. Once these shipments stop, however, price signals will brighten. A gallon of US diesel retails for \$5.49, the American Automobile Association says. Although it's 46% higher than a month ago, it pales next to places like Singapore, where it's now more than \$15 a gallon. Coastal US producers are already exporting higher quantities, causing local prices to rise. Jet fuel is getting hit hard and other refined products are next in line.

Gulf countries have been adding facilities to convert crude into feedstocks, lubricants and more. Many can no longer ship overseas. The Middle East, for example, exported more than \$10 billion of kerosene tailored for aircraft engines last year.

Much of it is now inaccessible, leaving big importers like Europe critically short of supplies. Prices have more than doubled, even faster than Brent crude.

For unhedged airlines, their expenses will rise 25%, based on IEA figures, opens new tab and current prices.

Furthermore, Mideast crude tends to be denser and contains more impurities, making it cheaper. Asian plants are generally equipped to refine it. They must now pay up for pricier light, sweet oil and probably generate less output.

The goods that can be made also will vary. While refineries have some wiggle room, a barrel of WTI, the US oil benchmark, generates significantly more heavy naphtha, the main precursor to gasoline, than Arabian Heavy. — Reuters

The strategic enabler: Mandatory ESG in Oman

ENVIRONMENTAL, Social and Governance (ESG) concepts have become of paramount importance in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region in recent years. Investor interests, legislative changes and a significant increase in the acceptance of sustainable business practices are the observed driving forces.

There is an emerging shift surfacing in market expectations, investors and regulators are no longer asking only about what impact the company has on society and environment but are eyeing for answers to key questions like; firstly-the impact and sustainability risks on financial performance, secondly-how climate and ESG will be regulated and managed, thirdly and most importantly — what are the financial implications of transition risks, physical climate risk and stranded assets.

Future sustainability risks need to be quantified, linked to financial results and explainable in terms of business strategy. ESG data must be collected from multiple departments, tracked annually, audited through various ownership pathways and aligned concurrently across multiple frameworks.

Oman is currently ranked 50th out of 180 countries in the global Environmental Performance Index, having jumped 99 places since 2022.

In their Oman Vision 2040, Oman aims to be among the world's leading nations in environmental performance and to achieve this ambition, the country has begun taking concrete steps in policy, investment and enforcement.

In Oman, a recent administrative decision, 77/2025 AD, published in June 2025, has made it mandatory for companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) to disclose their environmental, social and governance (ESG) framework and practices.

Any listed public joint stock



ESG is closely aligned with Oman's long-term national priorities, as it aims to diversify the economy beyond oil.



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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

Oman aims to be among the world's leading nations in environmental performance and to achieve this ambition, the country has begun taking concrete steps in policy, investment and enforcement.

company (SAOG-Société Anonyme Omanaise Générale) is now required to publish ESG practices in the first quarter of the financial year for standalone companies and within 45 days for companies with subsidiaries.

Oman Vision 2040 positions sustainability as a pivotal driver of economic diversification, resilience and competitiveness through ESG compliance, which is now relevant across the supply chain, financial institutions and private-sector organisations.

ESG is closely aligned with Oman's long-term national priorities, as it aims to diversify the economy beyond oil.

All the listed companies are required to disclose performance across 30 ESG metrics. The guidelines align with the unified GCC ESG disclosure metrics.

ESG has grown from a reporting exercise to an ongoing enterprise-wide process. It is now a strategic enabler, with higher expectations for data quality, controls, consistency and audit readiness.

Behind the flashy reports are hidden concerns that require attention. ESG data is frequently scattered across emails, files and Excel sheets, with virtually no

audit trail. Because of this, there are hidden dangers of mistakes, selective disclosure and “made-to-fit” data that are difficult for investors and boards to confirm.

Most companies treat ESG reporting as a compliance checkbox and don't internalise or integrate it across the enterprise.

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) new requirement calls for both positive and negative ESG information to be presented accurately; companies that fail to do so will face fines and potential escalation to the Financial Services Authority.

Companies must also be watchful of greenwashing or the omission of material risks, as this could lead to legal and regulatory action and reputational backlash.

The ESG pressure is also trickling down the supply chain to the suppliers and vendors. Large companies now expect ESG data from suppliers and contractors.

Oman is already exploring the adoption of IFRS S1 and S2, which push ESG firmly into financial risk territory and demand much deeper integration with finance, risk and governance.

IFRS S1 and IFRS S2 are new global sustainability reporting standards issued by the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB).

The Muscat Stock Exchange's latest ESG reporting requirement underscores Oman's corporate community's commitment to Oman Vision 2040 objective of sustainable and diverse growth. As new standards like IFRS S1 and S2 develop, ESG is shifting away from ostentatious reporting and box-ticking towards strong, responsible financial transparency.

Companies that invest in early credible data, governance and strategy will attract capital, talent and trust in Oman's next economic chapter.

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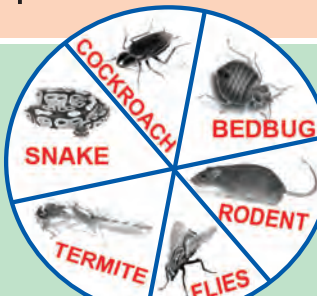
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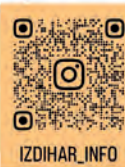
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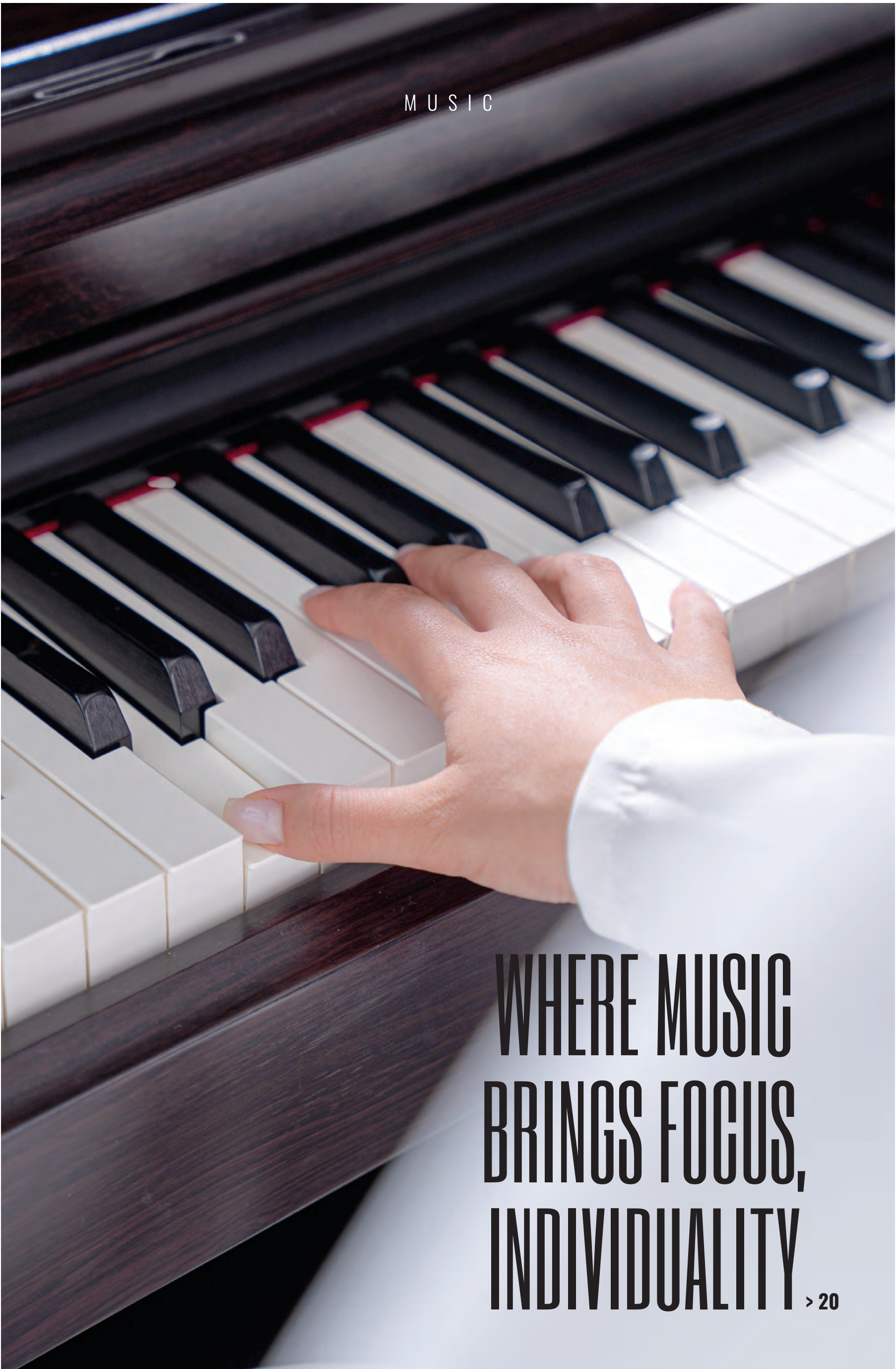


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WHERE MUSIC BRINGS FOCUS, INDIVIDUALITY > 20

ART PERFORMANCE

OPERA EXPLORES LIFE AFTER SCHOOL SHOOTING



Finnish conductor Susanna Mälkki conducts a rehearsal of “Innocence” — AFP

School shootings are a tragically common occurrence in the United States, but rarely do they reach the stage of one of the world’s premier opera houses. That changes as *Innocence*, the final work by Kaija Saariaho, debuts at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

The 110-minute opera explores how a devastating attack at an international school in Finland reverberates through survivors and the wider community. First performed at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in 2021, it has been staged around the world but carries particular resonance in the US, where multiple school shootings have already occurred this year.

For acclaimed mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, the timing made the production especially urgent. She said the importance lay in telling the story “in America in 2026”, describing the work as a way to shine a light on violence, injustice and suffering.

The opera shifts between a wedding in Helsinki and the moments surrounding the shooting. DiDonato plays Tereza, a waitress and mother of a victim who unexpectedly finds herself serving the groom’s family — relatives of the shooter — who fail to recognise her. The tension builds until she erupts in anger, forcing a confrontation with the past.

Across its 13 characters, the opera shows how lives are permanently altered. The shooter’s relatives face stigma and social isolation, while survivors are encouraged to move on despite the lingering effects of trauma.

DiDonato said she is “horrified” by shootings but sees the opera as addressing a broader normalisation of violence, from war to deportations. “It’s important to shine a light on inhumanity and suffering”, she said, adding the work reflects “the obscene glut of violence” in modern life.

The New York production marks the opera’s second run at an American house after performances by the San Francisco Opera in 2024. Tenor Miles Mykkanen, who plays the groom Tuomas, said the piece is unusually heavy, lingering with him even outside rehearsals.

Despite its bleak themes, DiDonato hopes *Innocence* can open minds.

Reflecting on her role in *Dead Man Walking*, she said such works can prompt audiences to reconsider difficult issues.

“These kinds of stories can crack open people”, she said. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



TRAVEL

Tourists and residents enjoy and visit Amsterdam city centre, during the Easter Weekend.

— AFP



HOLLYWOOD

Chilean actor Pedro Pascal performs for a scene of his new movie, “De Noche”, which is being shot on a street of the historic centre of Mexico City.

— AFP



PETS

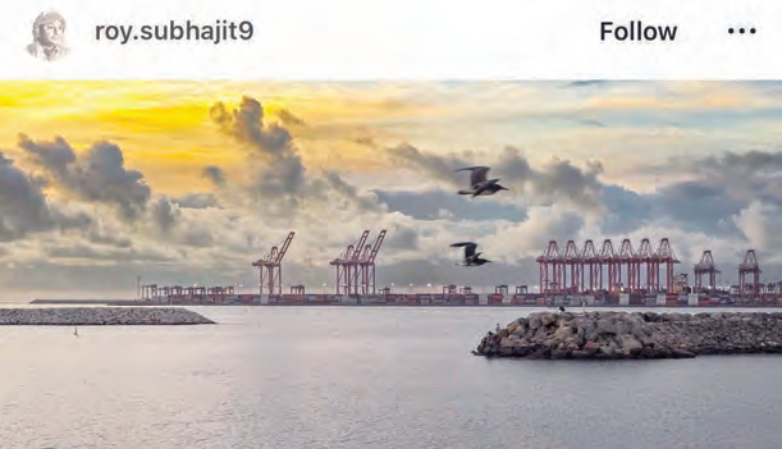
Dogs and their owners pose after the 2026 Corgi Derby at Musselburgh Racecourse in Musselburgh, Scotland, Britain.

— Reuters

INSTA PICKS



Osprey in flight mode



Dusk sinks over the unwavering Port of Salalah

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DIRECTOR LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA WILL MAKE MUSICAL ‘OCTET’ INTO MOVIE

Lin-Manuel Miranda, creator and original star of the 11-time Tony Award-winning musical Hamilton, is set to direct a musical film adaptation of Dave Malloy’s chamber choir work Octet as his next feature project, 5000 Broadway Productions announced on Thursday.

“I haven’t stopped thinking about ‘Octet’ since I saw Annie Tippe’s premiere production in November 2019”, Miranda, 46, said in a press release.

“Dave Malloy’s score is versatile, brilliant and grows more relevant with each passing year. It won’t leave me alone, so here we are”.

His comments reflect a deep personal connection to the material, which explores modern digital dependency through music and ensemble storytelling.

Miranda will reunite with producer Julie Oh, who collaborated with him on the 2021 Netflix musical film tick, tick...BOOM!, starring Andrew Garfield.

Oh is also joining 5000 Broadway Productions as head of film and television, signalling a strengthened creative partnership as the company expands its screen projects.

“Octet”, which premiered Off-Broadway in 2019, is an a cappella musical that examines internet addiction through the lens of an eight-person support group meeting in a church basement.

Known for its intricate vocal arrangements and emotionally raw themes, the piece has been praised for its timely exploration of technology’s grip on human connection.

Miranda remains one of the most decorated artists of his



generation, with three Tony Awards, two Emmy Awards, five Grammy Awards and a Pulitzer Prize for Drama, along with two Academy Award nominations. Beyond the stage, he has written songs for Disney’s acclaimed animated films Moana and Encanto, both celebrated for their memorable soundtracks and cultural impact.

He also created In the Heights and “Hamilton”, works that achieved global recognition for their innovative, sung-through storytelling.

“Hamilton”, in particular, became a cultural phenomenon for its genre-blending portrayal of American statesman Alexander Hamilton.

In 2020, the filmed stage production of “Hamilton” premiered on Disney+, followed by a theatrical adaptation of “In the Heights” in 2021, further cementing Miranda’s influence across stage and screen.

The upcoming “Octet” film marks his latest effort to bring bold, contemporary musical storytelling to wider audiences.



DINOSAUR COLLAGEN USED TO CREATE ONE-OF-A-KIND HANDBAG



SCIENTISTS AND designers unveiled on Thursday a handbag made with collagen derived from Tyrannosaurus Rex fossils from the US in a unique creation intended to demonstrate the value of laboratory-grown leather.

The teal-coloured bag was displayed on a rock in a cage under a replica of a T Rex at Amsterdam’s Art Zoo museum where it will be auctioned next month at a reported starting price of more than half a million dollars. Scientists behind the initiative said the material was developed using ancient protein fragments extracted from dinosaur remains that were inserted into an unidentified animal’s cell to produce collagen that was turned into leather.

“There were a lot of technical challenges”, said Thomas Mitchell, CEO of The Organoid Company, one of three companies behind the so-called “T Rex leather” bag. Genomic engineering firm Organoid and creative agency VML, another of the firms behind the project, previously collaborated on creating a giant meatball in 2023 by combining the DNA of a woolly mammoth with sheep cells. Che



Scientists have developed a handbag made with collagen derived from Tyrannosaurus Rex fossils from the US in a unique creation intended to demonstrate the value of laboratory-grown leather.



Canon, CEO of Lab-Grown Leather Ltd. that worked on producing the leather for the handbag from the engineered collagen, said the T Rex origin gave it extra “oomph”.

“It’s not just about a green alternative to leather, it’s a technological upgrade”, Canon said of lab-grown leather.

SCEPTICISM

Some scientists outside the project have expressed scepticism about the term “T Rex leather”, saying material from other animals would be needed.

Dutch vertebrate paleontologist Melanie During, of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, said collagen can persist in dinosaur bones only as fragmented traces that

cannot be used to recreate T Rex skin or leather.

Thomas R Holtz Jr, a paleontologist at the University of Maryland, similarly said any collagen identified in T Rex fossils comes from inside bone, not skin and that even perfectly matching proteins would lack the larger-scale fibre organisation that gives animal leather its distinctive properties.

“I would say that when you do something new for the first time, there is always criticism”, Mitchell said in response.

“And I think we’re really grateful for that criticism. It’s the bedrock of scientific exploration... I think this is the closest anyone has gotten and will probably ever get to create something that’s T Rex”. — Reuters

WHERE MUSIC BRINGS FOCUS, INDIVIDUALITY

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

IN MUSCAT, a new kind of music space is taking shape, one that prioritises focus, individuality and depth over traditional classroom structure.

For Saif bin Abdullah al Hosni, an Omani composer, educator, pianist and the founder of Chordat, music has always been more than performance; it is a means of shaping thought, refining the self and nourishing the soul.

This belief became the foundation of Chordat, a concept that challenges traditional ideas of music education in the Sultanate of Oman.

“Many people who are passionate about music struggle to find the right environment to truly grow. I wanted to create a space that offers a real, professional musical experience,” Al Hosni reflects.

Chordat is not a conventional music centre. Instead, it presents itself as an artistic space, carefully designed for both aspiring musicians and seasoned artists.

There are no group classes, no crowded rooms and no distractions. Each session is entirely individual, allowing musicians to immerse themselves fully in their craft, free from comparison and interruption.

Inside, the atmosphere is calm and intentional, almost meditative in its design. Whether it is the delicate touch of piano keys, the resonant pull of an oud string, or the breathy clarity of a flute, every sound is given space to unfold naturally. Instruments taught range from piano, violin, and guitar to qanun and flute, but the approach goes beyond simple instruction, encouraging musicians to build a deeper relationship with sound itself.

“We combine theoretical understanding with auditory training,” Al Hosni explains. “It is important for musicians not just to play, but to truly hear and understand what they are creating.”

This dual approach allows learners to move beyond memorisation, developing intuition, sensitivity and confidence in their musical expression.

This philosophy extends into how each learner’s journey is shaped.

Rather than following a rigid curriculum, progress is continuously

assessed through performance, listening and engagement. Each musician is guided along a path tailored to their abilities and goals, ensuring steady technical growth alongside a richer, more nuanced musical awareness.

The decision to offer only one-on-one sessions was deliberate. In a landscape where group learning often dominates, Chordat prioritises depth over scale. The result is a more focused experience, where time, attention and feedback are undivided, accelerating both skill development and personal confidence. For many, this creates a sense of ownership over their progress that is often missing in conventional settings.

Beyond teaching, Chordat serves as a quiet incubator for Oman’s emerging musical voices. It provides a space where musicians are encouraged to experiment, compose and explore their artistic identity. Whether someone is discovering music for the first time or refining a professional path, the space adapts to support that journey.

Like many unconventional ideas, the project faced early challenges. Communicating its distinct identity proved difficult at first, particularly in a context where traditional group-based learning is more familiar. “People are used to traditional models,” Al Hosni says. “So we focused on the quality of what we offer and the results our musicians achieve. That is what built trust over time.” Gradually, word of mouth and visible progress helped establish Chordat as a credible and sought-after space.

Looking ahead, his vision for Chordat is expansive. He imagines it evolving into a comprehensive musical platform, one that extends beyond education into mentorship, collaboration and creative production. Plans are already in motion to introduce new programmes and experiences that cater to a wider range of musical interests and levels.

In a city that is steadily embracing new cultural rhythms, Chordat stands as a reflection of a broader shift, one that values depth, authenticity and meaningful engagement with the arts. It is, at its core, a reminder that music is not only something to be learned, but something to be lived, shaped quietly, patiently and with intention.

