

O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y



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OMAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION REORGANISED

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued Royal Decree No 47/2026 on reorganising the Oman Human Rights Commission, reading as follows: Article (1) replaces the bylaw of the Oman Human Rights Commission attached to Royal Decree No 57/2022 on reorganising the Oman Human Rights Commission with the bylaw attached to this decree. Article (2) stipulates that the membership of the members of the Oman Human Rights Commission, as per Royal Decree No 76/2023 on appointing members of the Oman Human Rights Commission, shall remain in effect until such time as the Commission is reconstituted in accordance with the bylaw attached to this decree. Article (3) cancels all that contradicts the bylaw attached to this decree or contravenes its provisions. Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publication. — ONA

TULIP FESTIVAL!



This photograph shows a tulip during the annual Tulip Festival in Istanbul, Türkiye. — AFP

3D-PRINT DRESSING WINS AWARD

A pioneering research project has found better treatment of chronic wounds through 3D printing technology. It won the 12th National Research Award in the Health and Social Services field under the PhD category, organised by the Research and Innovation Authority. Dr Sulaiman bin Ali al Hashmi, Head of the Laboratory for Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine at the University of Nizwa, and his team developed a novel 3D-printed wound dressing made from a natural biomaterial known as carboxymethyl chitosan combined with tacrolimus, a bioactive drug. **DETAILS ON P2**

DEALS FOR RO 1.5M PROJECTS SIGNED

Twelve agreements were signed for the implementation of social investment projects in Al Dhahirah Governorate. The projects, which cost about RO 1.5 million, are part of initiatives undertaken by Minerals Development Oman in the wilayats of Ibri and Yanqul. The agreements aim to boost community partnerships and support sustainable development in the concession areas. They deal with the implementation of projects in the fields of education, innovation, socio-economic prosperity, environment protection and health. The agreements also include the establishment of a walkway, the implementation of initiatives for the empowerment of household businesses, paving internal roads, boosting street lighting infrastructure and implementing programmes to raise the awareness of school students about earth sciences and mining.

HM, leaders discuss regional developments

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, discussed during a telephone call the evolving situation in the region and its security and economic ramifications for nations and their peoples. During the conversation, the two leaders underscored the imperative of consolidating international efforts to safeguard the security of maritime navigation and to resolve the ongoing conflict through diplomatic channels, grounded in the principles of international law, in a concerted bid to ensure



the security and stability of the region and the world. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik also held a telephone conversation with Sanae Takaichi, Japanese Prime Minister. The telephone conversation reviewed the latest regional developments and their repercussions on the security of countries and the safety of their peoples. Japan's Prime Minister commended the Sultanate of Oman's efforts in easing regional tensions, reaffirming her country's commitment to resolving the conflict through diplomatic channels and reaching a final agreement. — ONA

TRUMP SAYS IRAN TALKS COULD RESUME

I S R A E L - L E B A N O N P E A C E T A L K S A ‘ H I S T O R I C O P P O R T U N I T Y ’

US BLOCKADE INVOLVES OVER 10,000 MILITARY PERSONNEL

STRAIT OF HORMUZ TRAFFIC BARELY AFFECTED ON FIRST DAY

ITALY SHIFTS AWAY FROM ISRAEL, US OVER MIDEAST WAR

IMF WARNS WAR DRIVING UP FINANCIAL STABILITY RISKS

US EXTENDS EXEMPTION OF SANCTIONS ON LUKOIL

NATIONS URGE ISRAEL, LEBANON TO SEIZE ‘OPPORTUNITY’

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump said on Tuesday that Iran talks could resume in Pakistan over the next two days, according to an interview with the New York Post. “You should stay there, really, because something could be happening over the next two days, and we’re more inclined to go there,” Trump was quoted as saying. Trump said Pakistan’s Army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, was doing a “great job” on the talks. “He’s fantastic, and therefore it’s more likely that we go back there,” Trump said. Meanwhile, the first full day of a US blockade on vessels calling at Iranian ports made little difference to Strait of Hormuz traffic on Tuesday, with at least eight ships including three Iran-linked tankers, crossing the waterway, shipping data showed. Trump announced the blockade on Sunday after weekend peace talks in Islamabad between the US and Iran failed to reach a deal. The blockade has created even further uncertainty for shippers, oil companies and war risk insurers. Traffic remains at only a fraction of the 130-plus daily crossings before the US and Israel’s war on Iran began on February 28, industry sources said on Tuesday. “During the first 24 hours, no ships made it past the US blockade,” the US Central Command said on X, adding that six vessels complied with direction from US forces to turn around to re-enter an Iranian port. The three Iran-linked vessels that transited the strait were not heading to Iranian ports and were not affected by the blockade.

DIRECT TALKS
US Secretary of State Marco Rubio called for Israel and Lebanon to seize a “historic opportunity” for peace as the first direct talks in decades between the two countries got under way in Washington. “This is a historic opportunity. We understand we’re working against decades of history and the complexities that have led us to this unique moment and the opportunity here,” Rubio said at the State Department as he welcomed the ambassadors of the two countries. “The hope today is that we can outline a framework upon which a current and lasting peace can be developed,” he added. Since then Israeli strikes - including an extremely heavy attack on Beirut on April 8 - have killed more than 2,000 people and



A displaced girl, who fled her home following Israeli evacuation orders, sits behind a truck at a makeshift encampment in Beirut, Lebanon, on Tuesday. — Reuters

displaced more than one million, despite international calls for a ceasefire. On the Lebanese side, President Joseph Aoun said he hoped the Washington talks will yield “an agreement... on a ceasefire in Lebanon, with the aim of starting direct negotiations between Lebanon and Israel.”

President Donald Trump’s administration insists on the disarmament of Hezbollah, but also respect for Lebanon’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, while simultaneously upholding Israel’s rights — positions that appear difficult to reconcile. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The campaign, which targets 2,200 participants, is being implemented in two stages during the current school year. — ONA

‘GREEN’ CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS ON LABOUR MARKET

MUSCAT: A campaign codenamed ‘Green’, launched by the Ministry of Education in partnership with the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), is gaining momentum as a public awareness drive across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Undertaken by the ministry’s Career Guidance and Student Counselling Centre, the campaign is implementing specialised awareness workshops targeting Grade 11 students with the aim of enhancing their knowledge about national trends in the green economy and employment opportunities related to future labour market needs.

The campaign, which seeks to build a generation aware of the requirements of the national labour market, elaborates on transition towards sustainability through three main themes: The first deals with raising the awareness of career guidance, the second theme focuses on raising the awareness of students about future employment opportunities and the third supports national trends towards achieving carbon neutrality in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

AL BURAIMI REVIEWS DEVELOPMENTAL ACHIEVEMENTS



The event is part of the governorate’s efforts to strengthen communication. — ONA

AL BURAIMI: Al Buraimi Governorate organised its 2026 media briefing on Tuesday under the theme “Al Buraimi Accomplishes” at the Al Salam Grand Resort in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi.

Held for the second consecutive year, the event is part of the governorate’s efforts to strengthen communication with the media and review its most prominent achievements and developmental projects. During the meeting, a visual presentation was delivered on the developmental trajectory of the governorate, including general performance indicators and major projects implemented across various sectors, as well as upcoming priorities and directions aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

It is mid-April, and the scene is set for Al Baram honey season in Oman. The popular trees of Oman, Al Samr (Acacia tortilis) and Al Salam (Acacia ehrenbergiana) trees have begun to bloom. For beekeepers, this is the most critical time of the year.

As the spherical “puffball” flowers open, the scent fills the air and is often strongest in the early morning and late afternoon.

Acacia flowers are called Baram and are important for Omani honey; elsewhere in the world they are used in perfumery as well. The bees

are active at this stage.

Mohammed al Baadi, a beekeeper, explained that the bees take honey from samar tree flowers, which are white in colour.

“The yellow flowers, which are from the Al Salam tree, prompt the bees to go to them only for pollination,” he said. The nectar collected right now produces Al Baram honey, which is dark, thick, and famous for its medicinal properties.

The recent rains ensure the trees have enough internal moisture that could result in abundant nectar.

The acacia trees are found across wadis and mountain tops. The bees have



The yellow flowers, which are from the Al Salam tree, prompt the bees to go to them only for pollination.

competition because camels and goats are also fond of the high-protein flowers and new green shoots, making it a popular fodder.

“We will now take our beehive to mountaintops or places that have a high concentration of acacia trees. The Al Baram season begins in mid to late April to May. It lasts for three to four weeks. The rains resulted in the sprouting of the fresh leaves, but usually for the flowers to bloom, there is a need for strong wind and higher temperatures where the leaves fall and flowers thrive,” noted Al Baadi.

One of the places known to produce the best of Al Baram

honey is the mountainous regions of Al Dhahirah Governorate. According to Al Baadi, “The quality of honey produced there is one of the best and is attributed to the high temperature prevalent over the mountains there.”

“The Baram honey produced in the coastal area is lighter. We are in Saham, and we take our beehive to the mountains. If the season continues, we might take our bees to Al Dhahirah.”

He also explained that the bees are already up in the mountains, as the rains have also made other wildflowers bloom. This year’s rain suggests a ‘vintage’ year for Omani honey.



PRESIDENT OF BOTSWANA VISITS SOHAR PORT, FREEZONE

SUHAR: President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana, along with his accompanying delegation, visited SOHAR Port and Freezone on Tuesday as part of a working visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the visit, the guest and his delegation were briefed on the integrated ecosystem of the port and freezone, which serves as a strategic gateway connecting business activities to regional and global markets. This is achieved by leveraging the site’s strategic location, advanced infrastructure, and state-of-the-art logistics services. The President also received a detailed overview of operational efficiency and competitive

advantages that reinforce SOHAR Port and Freezone’s position as a reliable and sustainable industrial and logistics platform.

The visit programme included a tour of several flagship investment projects, most notably the United Solar Polysilicon Manufacturing Facility and the Orion Solar Project, which specialises in the production of solar cells and photovoltaic panels.

The President of Botswana was accompanied during the visit by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, and other officials. — ONA

3D-printed dressing for wounds wins award

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

A PIONEERING research project has found better treatment of chronic wounds through 3D printing technology. It won the 12th National Research Award in the Health and Social Services field under the PhD category, organised by the Research and Innovation Authority.

Dr Sulaiman bin Ali al Hashmi, Head of the Laboratory for Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine at the University of Nizwa, and his team developed a novel 3D-printed wound dressing made from a natural biomaterial known as carboxymethyl chitosan combined with tacrolimus, a bioactive drug. The dressing was specifically engineered to combat bacterial infection, promote new blood vessel formation and support healthy skin regeneration, ultimately improving overall wound healing outcomes.

“Winning the National Research Award is a great honour for us. It represents national recognition and trust in the quality and impact of our research. This award motivates and encourages our team to go further while also placing a responsibility on us to ensure that our research moves beyond the laboratory and contributes to real solutions for patients. It challenges us to translate our scientific findings into practical



Dr Sulaiman bin Ali al Hashmi

medical applications that can improve healthcare and quality of life,” he said.

Laboratory tests demonstrated that the newly

developed dressing is safe for cells and effectively stimulates blood vessel growth while showing strong antibacterial activity. In animal studies,

wounds treated with the new dressing healed significantly faster than those treated with a commercially available wound dressing. The results revealed improved skin regeneration and enhanced vascular development, highlighting the strong potential of this bioactive scaffold for managing chronic wounds and offering a promising alternative to conventional treatments.

Dr Sulaiman recommended further testing in chronic wound models to confirm long-term effectiveness, as well as continued optimisation of the scaffold design to enhance healing performance and infection control. The research team also aims to advance the technology towards clinical translation and eventual commercialisation as an innovative medical wound care product.

The study was published in the Journal of Drug Delivery Science and Technology, a Q1-ranked international scientific journal with an impact factor of 4.9, reflecting the high quality and global relevance of the research. The project was conducted by a multidisciplinary team comprising Dr Sulaiman, Saeid Vakilian, Dr Fatemeh Jamshidi-adegani, Juhaina al Kindi, Fahad al Fahdi, Dr Abdullah al Hatmi, Habib al Jahdhami, Dr Muhammad Anwar, Dr Nasar al Wahaibi, Dr Asem Shalaby and Prof Ahmed al Harrasi.

SHORT TAKES



The symposium was held under the auspices of Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of Al Sharqiyah South. — ONA

Symposium highlights management of Ghaf trees

AL KAMIL W’AL WAFI: A three-day environmental symposium to discuss the management plan for the ‘Ghaf Trees Reserve’ commenced on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Al Kamil W’al Wafi, Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. The event is organised by the Environment Department in the governorate in cooperation with the Directorate-General of Biodiversity and Natural Reserves at the Environment Authority and the Environmental Center in Al Kamil W’al Wafi. Eng Zahran bin Ahmed al Abdulsalam, Director-General of Biodiversity and Natural Reserves at the Environment Authority, delivered a speech in which he explained that Ghaf trees are authentic components of the natural environment due to their pivotal role in maintaining ecological balance. He noted that these trees contribute to soil stabilisation, combat desertification and provide natural habitats for numerous organisms, in addition to their deep cultural and heritage value which has been linked to human life in arid environments throughout history. — ONA

‘What If 2026’ research and innovation forum on April 20



The forum will bring together students, researchers and innovators on an interactive platform.

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Chairman of the Research and Innovation Authority, and in the presence of Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Al Musannah is set to host the ‘What If 2026’ research and innovation forum on April 20. The forum will bring together students, researchers and innovators on an interactive platform aimed at transforming ideas into practical solutions that contribute to society and the economy. It reflects the university’s commitment to fostering applied research and innovation through a comprehensive program featuring specialised scientific sessions that explore collaboration between academia and industry, alongside student and research project presentations addressing real-world challenges in Al Batinah South. The event will also include an interactive innovation exhibition showcasing modern technologies such as robotics, drones and 3D printing, in addition to hosting Omani innovators who will share their experiences and success stories. A key highlight of the forum is the “Best Research Project” competition, focusing on implementable solutions, along with finals of innovation contests.

Oman participates in La Biennale di Venezia exhibition

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman continues to consolidate its international cultural presence through its participation in the 61st International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, taking place from Ma 9 to 22 November 2026 in Venice. Oman will be represented by a national pavilion commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, located at the Arsenale—one of the Biennale’s principal exhibition venues. This marks Oman’s third participation in the Venice Biennale, reflecting an evolving trajectory that underscores its commitment to strengthening its position within the global cultural landscape. The participation affirms culture as a vital platform for international engagement and as a meaningful channel for



Oman will be represented by a national pavilion commissioned by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, located at the Arsenale — one of the Biennale’s principal exhibition venues. — ONA

fostering dialogue and exchange across cultures. Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, said in a statement, “Oman’s participation in the 2026 Venice Biennale reflects a firm national commitment to strengthening its cultural presence on the international stage, and to

positioning culture as a key pillar of soft power and a vital avenue for fostering dialogue and mutual understanding among nations. Haitham al Busafi, Curator and Artist of the National Pavilion of the Sultanate of Oman for the 61st International Art Exhibition said, “Representing Oman in this global forum is an unmatched opportunity to bring forth the nuances of our deep culture through “In Minor Keys”, the theme of this Biennale, which calls for art that manifests in ‘quiet tones and lower frequencies’. A culture that adorns its horses is a culture that refuses to treat any companion as a mere instrument, but as an extension of the self. In our Omani culture, the Al zaanah teaches us that adornment is not about possession or display but is an act of recognition.” — ONA

Summer heat raises risk of food poisoning cases

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

FOOD POISONING cases in Oman have seen an uptick, with recent data highlighting an 82 per cent rise compared to 2023, according to data released by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI) quoting the Ministry of Health (MoH). Experts in food safety cite the major causes as bacterial contamination such as salmonella, shigella, bacillus cereus, or viruses in children like rotavirus from poor handling, improper food storage, and sudden changes in temperatures. Speaking to the Observer, Haitham Khamis al Kahaly, chief microbiologist and food inspector with Muscat Municipality, said that there has been a rise in violations which were dealt with suitably. “We have found an increasing threat of food poisoning mostly with 2nd class restaurants and coffee shops where poor personal hygiene of food handlers is seen. Additionally, the contaminated surfaces of the food outlets, storage issues such as inadequate refrigeration, particularly leaving cooked food at room temperature which allows bacteria to grow,” he said. Dr Mansour bin Mahfoudh al Qasmi, CEO, Oman Logistics Academy, said that while many people focus on restaurants or food handling at home, the real issue often starts much earlier — within the supply chain. “In simple terms, how food is transported, stored, and delivered plays a major role in whether it remains safe to eat. Logistics covers the journey of food from its source to the consumer. In Oman, much of our food is imported and travels long distances. This makes proper



How food is transported, stored and delivered plays a major role in whether it remains safe to eat.

handling especially important. If food — particularly items like meat, dairy, and seafood — is not kept at the right temperature during transport or storage, it can quickly become unsafe,” said Dr Al Qasmi. One of the biggest challenges is maintaining a reliable ‘cold chain.’ This means keeping food at the correct temperature at all times. “Another issue is the complexity of the supply chain. Food often passes through several hands before reaching the consumer. Without clear systems to track and monitor these movements, it becomes difficult to identify where problems occur when contamination happens,” he adds. Dr Neema Muhammed Ali, a dermatologist, flagged poor personal hygiene among food handlers and inadequate food safety training. “Rapid urbanisation, increased reliance on eating out and food delivery services have expanded exposure to mass food preparation environments, where lapses can affect large groups simultaneously. Some food services offer refunds

TIPS TO AVOID FOOD POISONING

ENSURE FOOD IS STORED AT THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE

AVOID REHEATING FOOD MORE THAN ONCE

CONSULT A DOCTOR IN CASE OF NAUSEA, VOMITING, OR HIGH FEVER

MAKE SURE FOOD, ESPECIALLY MEAT, IS PROPERLY COOKED

CHECK THE EXPIRY DATE OF READY-TO-EAT AND READY-TO-COOK FOOD

for delayed food delivery, which increases the risk of delivery of undercooked food to avoid losses,” Dr Neema said. Dr Dilip kumar Singvi, an internal medicine specialist, highlighted ‘the four Cs,’ which are Cleaning, Cooking, Chills, and Cross-contamination to prevent food poisoning. “Regular inspection of restaurants and supermarkets will ensure that these standards are maintained and food quality is not compromised, thereby enabling us to reduce the incidence of food poisoning, which usually happens during the peak summer months,” said Dr Singvi.

Central laboratory reflects Oman’s commitment to health security system

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will join the world in observing Medical Laboratory Day on Wednesday. The event lays emphasis on the significant role of laboratories in consolidating the modern health system. It also promotes recognition for the speciality of medical laboratory as a major contributor to the health of individuals and society. Dr Hanan bint Salim al Kindi, Director of the Department of the

Central Public Health Laboratory (Ministry of Health), said that the Central Public Health Laboratory, opened in January 2026, represents a strategic achievement that reflects the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to enhancing the health security system and improving the quality of health services. The laboratory, she added, constitutes a cornerstone in supporting epidemiological surveillance and early warning



systems by providing advanced capabilities for the rapid and accurate detection of infectious diseases and emerging health threats, including epidemics of global dimension. Dr Hanan added that the Central Public Health Laboratory is a national and regional reference that boasts the latest laboratory technologies and international standards. She pointed out that the Central Public Health Laboratory

contributes to standardising procedures and enhancing integration among relevant health institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. Dalal al Yahya’aee, a medical laboratory technician at the Central Public Health Laboratory, said that medical laboratories serve as the cornerstone of healthcare, being the department that provides accurate data for the early diagnosis and monitoring the biometric health environment. — ONA

Oman's Aviation Sector Soars with Strong Growth and Global Expansion



OMAN'S aviation ecosystem marked a year of strong performance and strategic expansion as Oman Airports, Oman Air, and SalamAir highlighted key achievements during their joint annual media briefing, underscoring the sector's growing role in strengthening the Sultanate's global connectivity and supporting tourism and economic diversification.

Oman Air, which launched a comprehensive transformation programme in 2023, reported an **EBITDA of OMR 3.2 million for 2025** - positive for the first time in 15 years. The airline also achieved a **OMR 27 million reduction in bank loans**, marking the first year the airline has decreased its level of debt since 2009. These achievements sit alongside a **6% reduction in CASK – or "Cost Per Seat"**, reflecting the ongoing impact of its transformation initiatives. In 2025, Oman Air carried **5.8 million passengers**, an 8% increase over 2024, while achieving an **82% load factor**, the result of its network optimization and fleet utilisation strategy. The result of its strategy to increase visitors into Oman, the airline also grew its point-to-point by 34% year-on-year.

Continuing to enhance global connectivity, Oman Air significantly expanded its international network in 2025 with the launch of direct routes to **Amsterdam, Baghdad, Copenhagen and Taif**, as well as a new direct route between **Salalah and Moscow**. **Five additional routes** have already been announced for 2026. The airline currently serves **45 destinations** with a fleet of **33 aircraft**, set to grow to **39 by 2029**.

Oman Airports continued to strengthen its position as a key operator and enabler of the aviation ecosystem, achieving notable growth in 2025. Passenger traffic across the Sultanate's airports reached approximately 15.2 million, alongside a 4% increase in air cargo volumes. This performance reflects

rising travel demand and ongoing improvements in operational efficiency.

As part of its commitment to enhancing air connectivity, Oman Airports supported the expansion of its route network by attracting new airlines and deepening partnerships with existing carriers. In collaboration with Oman Air, the company also advanced the development of strategic destinations, further strengthening Oman's links to regional and international markets. During the year, Oman Air launched new direct routes to key global cities, including Amsterdam and Beijing, reinforcing the Sultanate's position as an emerging international aviation hub.

At the passenger experience level, Oman Airports achieved significant international recognition. Both Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport were awarded the prestigious Airport Service Quality (ASQ) awards by Airports Council International, highlighting the high standard of services and the company's continuous commitment to enhancing the travel experience. Further enriching passenger experience, a range of new offerings were introduced to the aviation ecosystem, including limousine services, valet parking, and meet-and-assist services. The opening of the Majan Lounge at Salalah Airport also marked a key milestone in elevating comfort and convenience for travelers.

On the international expansion front, Oman Airports extended its expertise beyond the Sultanate by providing operational and consultancy services for the Karbala Airport project in Iraq. Meanwhile, Transom expanded its regional footprint by delivering ground handling services across several airports in Tanzania, while QX advanced aviation fuel services—demonstrating the integrated growth of Oman's

aviation ecosystem and its strategic direction toward increased global presence.

Meanwhile, SalamAir continued to reinforce its role as Oman's low-cost carrier, recording strong operational performance in 2025 by transporting **more than 3.4 million passengers** and operating over **22,000 flights** across a network of **more than 40 destinations**, while maintaining an **on-time performance rate of 83% and achieving a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of +17, reflecting growing customer satisfaction**.

The airline generated approximately **OMR 137 million in revenue**, reflecting its growing contribution to Oman's aviation and tourism sectors by offering accessible travel options and expanding connectivity with regional and international markets. SalamAir also continued expanding into emerging markets across **Africa, Asia, and Europe**, introducing destinations such as **Port Sudan, Nairobi, Kigali, Vienna, and Medan**, while progressing with fleet expansion plans to reach **18 aircraft by 2026** and **25 aircraft by 2028** to support future network growth.

Aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, Oman's aviation sector continues to play a vital role in strengthening international connectivity, supporting tourism development, and advancing economic diversification. The sector is also investing in national talent development and accelerating digital transformation initiatives aimed at delivering a seamless and modern travel experience.

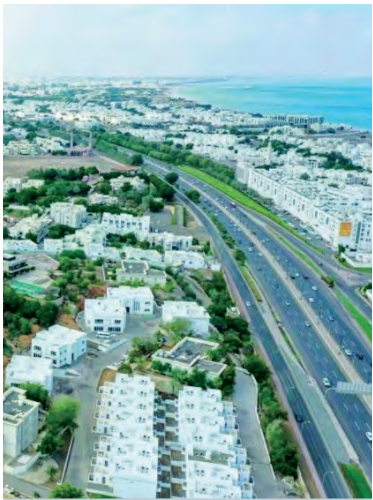
Officials from the three entities emphasized that the **2026–2030 strategic roadmap** focuses on building a resilient, integrated aviation ecosystem that enhances Oman's position as an emerging regional hub for travel, tourism, and global business connectivity.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY PROMOTES ALTERNATIVE GREENING

MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality has highlighted the importance of alternative greening as part of efforts to build a more sustainable and livable urban environment. The initiative goes beyond simply replacing trees, focusing instead on selecting plant species that are better suited to local conditions, particularly those that can withstand drought and salinity.

This approach is expected to significantly reduce water consumption. Officials said the strategy also contributes to improving environmental quality by reducing dust and



The initiative goes beyond simply replacing trees, focusing instead on selecting plant species that are better suited to local conditions.

air pollution, while increasing shaded areas and enhancing comfort for pedestrians.

In addition, the use of appropriate tree species can help lower street temperatures by between 3 and 5 degrees Celsius, improving overall urban conditions.

The initiative also supports traffic safety by improving visibility and creating safer road environments.

The municipality emphasised that such efforts are part of broader plans to develop greener, more sustainable cities and enhance the quality of life.

SALE OF VEHICLE / EQUIPMENT

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

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

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

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Invest in Oman's Future

Steady & Attractive Returns

Auction of 80 Million Bonds (with Up to 20 Million Greenshoe Option), 5 Years at 4.20% Per Annum

Government Development Bonds

On behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Oman announces the 83rd issuance of Government Development Bonds (GDBs) to be auctioned. The 83rd issuance of GDBs will be issued on **Thursday, 23rd April 2026**, carrying a coupon rate of **4.20%** per annum for a maturity period of **5 years (maturing on 23rd April 2031)**. These Bonds will be auctioned and priced on **Tuesday, 21st April 2026**. Investors may apply for these Bonds through licensed commercial banks by completing the application form.

Security of Capital

The GDBs are direct and unconditional obligations of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman.

Steady Returns

Interest shall accrue from the date of issuance and will be paid semi-annually on **23rd April and 23rd October** of every year until maturity. The first payment will be made on **23rd October 2026**. Interest payments will cease once the Bond matures.

Liquidity

The bonds will be listed and can be traded before maturity in the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) at the prevailing market price.

Collateral Advantage

The Bonds can be used as collateral security to obtain loans from any licensed commercial bank.

Who Can Invest?

The 83rd issuance of GDBs is offered to all categories of investors, residents and non-residents (irrespective of their nationalities).

How to buy the bonds?

Investors may obtain bonds through any licensed commercial bank operating in the Sultanate of Oman, upon the submission of an eligible application form. Investors must provide their MCD Investor Code in the application form.

Bank Account Details

The investor must provide the same Bank Account details registered with Muscat Clearing and Depository Co. S.A.O.C. (MCD).

MCD Investor Code

Anyone without an MCD Investor Code can obtain it from MCD's website (www.mcd.gov.om) or via the Oman Stocks app at least one day before applying through the commercial bank.

For any enquires:

Tel: +968 24822222

E-mail: mcd.support@mcd.om

You may also contact us via the "Contact Us" tab on the company's website.

83rd Issuance

Opens: Wed, 15th Apr 2026
Closes: Mon, 20th Apr 2026
Auction: Tue, 21st Apr 2026

The minimum subscription amount
Oman Rial 100

To view the prospectus for the 83rd issuance of GDBs, please visit the following websites:

Ministry of Finance | www.mof.gov.omCentral Bank of Oman | www.cbo.gov.om

Contact the Central Bank of Oman (Market Operations Department) or any commercial licensed bank for details.
Tel: +968 24777145 / 24777832 / 24777635
P.O Box 1161, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of OmanE-mail: mod@cbo.gov.om

تقدم بثقة
Moving Forward
With Confidence

رؤية عمان 2040
Oman Vision 2040

وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
148/2026	Providing supplies and tools for depositors at the Juvenile Affairs House	Companies specialized in the field of food and food services and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Monday 04-05-2026 02:00 PM	Sunday 24-05-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
149/2026	Purchase and renewal of licenses for paloalto-pa-440 firewall devices	Companies specialized in the field of designing, installing and maintaining information programs and systems / equipping information data centers / installing the alarm, security and safety system and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Monday 04-05-2026 02:00 PM	Sunday 24-05-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
156/2026	Supply and installation of hearing aids for people with hearing disabilities in (North Al Sharqiya Governorate - South Al Sharqiya Governorate - Al Dakhiliyah Governorate)	Companies specialized in the field of supplying medical supplies and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Monday 04-05-2026 02:00 PM	Sunday 24-05-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
158/2026	Supply and installation of hearing aids for people with hearing disabilities in (North Al Batinah Governorate - South Al Batinah Governorate - Musandam Governorate)	Companies specialized in the field of supplying medical supplies and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Monday 04-05-2026 02:00 PM	Sunday 24-05-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
159/2026	Supply and installation of hearing aids for people with hearing disabilities in (Dhofar Governorate - Al Wusta Governorate)	Companies specialized in the field of supplying medical supplies and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Monday 04-05-2026 02:00 PM	Sunday 24-05-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
162/2026	Supply and installation of hearing aids for people with hearing disabilities in (Muscat Governorate - Al Buraimi Governorate - Al Dhahirah Governorate)	Companies specialized in the field of supplying medical supplies and registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Monday 04-05-2026 02:00 PM	Sunday 24-05-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) . On **Wednesday 15/04/2026**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry"

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M I D D L E E A S T L A T E S T D E V E L O P M E N T S

TRUMP 'SHOCKED' AT MELONI'S STANCE

US President Donald Trump criticised Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, a political ally, for her unwillingness to help in the Iran war.

17 NATIONS URGE OPPORTUNITY

Foreign ministers from 17 countries urged Israel and Lebanon to "seize this opportunity" ahead of talks between the two nations in Washington.

STOCKS RISE, OIL SLIPS

Stock markets climbed and oil prices retreated on rekindled hopes for a deal to end the Middle East war.

RED CROSS SENDS AID

The international Red Cross and Red Crescent said a shipment of aid crossed the border into Iran, its first delivery since the start of the war.

IMF CUTS REGION'S FORECAST

The International Monetary Fund sharply reduced its 2026 growth forecast for the Middle East and North Africa to 1.1 per cent.

LEBANON, ISRAEL TO MEET

Israel said it was open to peace with Lebanon ahead of the first direct talks in decades, mediated by us Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

SHIPS DEFY BLOCKADE

At least two ships sailing from Iranian ports passed through the Strait of Hormuz despite a US military blockade.

NEW US-IRAN TALKS

Pakistan is working to bring Iran and the United States together for a second round of talks, senior Pakistani sources said.

HORMUZ MEETING ON FRIDAY

France and Britain will co-host a video conference on Friday of more than 40 countries ready to contribute to a "purely defensive mission" to secure the strait.

OIL DEMAND PLUNGE

Demand for crude oil will likely decline this year for the first time since the Covid pandemic, said the International Energy Agency.

US, IRAN MAY RESUME TALKS DESPITE PORT BLOCKADE

NEGOTIATORS from the US and Iran could return to Islamabad this week to resume talks to end the war, sources said on Tuesday, after the collapse of weekend negotiations prompted Washington to impose a blockade on Iranian ports. While the US blockade drew angry rhetoric from Tehran, signs that diplomatic engagement might continue helped calm oil markets, pushing benchmark prices below \$100 on Tuesday. The highest-level talks between the two adversaries since the 1979 Islamic Revolution ended in the Pakistani capital without a breakthrough at the weekend, raising doubts over the survival of a two-week ceasefire that still has a week to run. However, a source involved in the talks said on Tuesday both countries could return as early as the end of this week, and that a proposal had been shared with Washington and Tehran to resend their delegations. "No firm date has been set, with the delegations keeping Friday through Sunday open," a senior Iranian source said. US President Donald Trump said Iran had been in touch on Monday and wanted to make a deal, adding that he would not sanction any agreement that

Since the United States and Israel began the war on February 28, Iran effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz to nearly all vessels except its own, saying passage would be permitted only under Iranian control and subject to a fee. Nearly a fifth of global oil and gas supplies previously flowed through the narrow waterway, making the fallout widespread

allowed Tehran to possess a nuclear weapon. Since the United States and Israel began the war on February 28, Iran effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz to nearly all vessels except its own, saying passage would be permitted only under Iranian control and subject to a fee. Nearly a fifth of global oil and gas supplies previously flowed through the narrow waterway, making the fallout widespread. In a countermeasure, the US military said it began blocking shipping traffic in and out of Iran's ports on Monday. Tehran has threatened to hit naval ships going through the strait and to retaliate against its Gulf neighbours' ports. A day into the US blockade, there had yet to be reports of Washington taking direct action against shipping to enforce it. Shipping data showed at least three Iran-linked tankers transiting the Strait of Hormuz that were not heading to or from Iranian ports.

IMF CUTS GROWTH OUTLOOK The latest measures have further clouded the outlook for global energy security and the supply of goods that rely on petroleum. On Tuesday, the International Monetary Fund cut its growth outlook, citing price spikes and supply disruptions driven by the war, and said the global economy would teeter on the brink of recession if the conflict worsens and oil stays above \$100 per barrel through 2027.

The International Energy Agency sharply cut its forecasts for global oil supply and demand growth, saying both are now expected to fall from 2025 levels. The United States' Nato allies including Britain and France said they would not be drawn into the conflict by taking part in the blockade, although they have offered to help safeguard the strait by drawing



Iranian women walk past a residential building destroyed in a US-Israeli air strike, in Tehran. — Reuters

together a defensive multilateral mission to assist when an agreement is in place. China, the main buyer of Iranian oil, said the US blockade was "dangerous and irresponsible" and would only aggravate tensions.

US Vice-President JD Vance, who led Washington's delegation opposite Iranian parliamentary speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, said on Monday that Iranian negotiators had shown some movement

but fell short. He said Trump was adamant that any enriched nuclear material must be removed from Iran and a mechanism must be established to verify that Iran is not developing nuclear weapons.

CEASEFIRE STILL HOLDING

With the war unpopular at home and rising energy prices causing political blowback, Trump paused the US-Israeli bombing

campaign last week after threatening to destroy Iran's "whole civilisation" unless it reopened the strait.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted April 10-12, after the ceasefire was announced, showed that 35 per cent of Americans approve of US strikes against Iran, down from 37 per cent a week earlier. The ceasefire has largely held over its first week despite sharp rhetoric from both sides. — Reuters

AID GROUPS USE LAND ROUTES TO DELIVER HUMANITARIAN RELIEF TO IRAN



An Iranian boy walks amid the debris of a residential building hit by US-Israeli air strikes, in Tehran. — AFP

GENEVA: International humanitarian groups said on Tuesday they had sent emergency relief through overland routes to Iran, some of their first deliveries of aid since US-Israeli strikes began in late February. Aid workers say needs are high in the wake of six weeks of strikes, but stocks of emergency humanitarian supplies became stuck in Dubai warehouses as shipping and air routes were blocked by the expanding conflict. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said it had delivered some

200 trauma kits as well as tents and blankets on trucks sent along a new route from Turkey. The trucks crossed the Iranian border on Sunday and are set to arrive in the capital Tehran on Tuesday, said IFRC spokesperson Tommaso Della Longa. "For us it's very important as it represents a new route for getting aid into Iran and we're very optimistic to scale up," he told a Geneva press briefing. "Before it was very easy to take a flight or a boat and bring aid directly to Iran in a couple of hours." Separately, the International

Committee of the Red Cross said it had made its first shipment to Iran since the conflict began, with five trucks arriving from Jordan on Monday. Another nine are expected later this week. It also handed supplies to the Iranian Red Crescent, the only humanitarian group working across Iran, with 100,000 responders, four of whom have been killed in the war. "Needs are high, medical needs in particular, but also the psychological toll on people is immense," Della Longa said in a statement. — Reuters

US hosts Lebanese and Israeli envoys amidst tense strikes

WASHINGTON: Israeli and Lebanese envoys met in Washington on Tuesday as Israel pressed its war on Hezbollah, a diplomatic milestone overshadowed by conflicting agendas with Israel ruling out discussion of a ceasefire and demanding Beirut disarm the group. The meeting comes at a critical juncture in the crisis in the Middle East, a week into a fragile ceasefire between the United States, Israel and Iran. Iran says Israel's campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon must be included in any agreement to end the wider war, complicating talks mediated by Pakistan aimed at averting further economic fallout.

The conflict has snared global energy supply and spiked oil prices, piling pressure on US President Donald Trump to find an off-ramp. In a sign Washington wants to see progress in the talks, Trump's top diplomat and National Security Adviser Marco Rubio appeared at the start of the meeting alongside the Israeli ambassador to the US, Yechiel Leiter, and his Lebanese counterpart, Nada Hamadeh Moawad. State Department Counsellor Michael Needham, US ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz, and U.S. ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa, a personal friend of Trump, were also participating. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Tuesday said Israel-Lebanon talks in Washington were a historic opportunity, and while every complexity would not be resolved in coming hours, he hoped the parties would begin to move forward.

LEBANON SEEKS CEASEFIRE

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said in a statement on X as the meeting started that he hoped it would "mark the beginning of ending the suffering of the Lebanese people in general, and the southerners in particular." The Lebanese government led by Aoun and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam has called for negotiations with Israel despite objections from Hezbollah,

The meeting comes at a critical juncture in the crisis in the Middle East, a week into a fragile ceasefire between the United States, Israel and Iran. Iran says Israel's campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon must be included in any agreement to end the wider war, complicating talks



(From L to R) US State Department Counsellor Michael Needham, US Ambassador to the UN Mike Waltz, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, US Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa, Lebanon Ambassador to the US Nada Hamadeh Moawad and Israel Ambassador to the US Yechiel Leiter pose for a photo, at the State Department in Washington, DC. — Reuters

reflecting worsening tensions between the Shi'ite Muslim group and its opponents. Hezbollah opened fire in support of Tehran on March 2, sparking an Israeli offensive that has killed more than 2,000 people and forced 1.2 million from their homes, according to Lebanese authorities.

Lebanese officials have said Moawad only has authority to discuss a ceasefire in Tuesday's meeting. But Israeli government spokesperson Shosh Bedrosian said Israel would not discuss a ceasefire. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar told reporters in Jerusalem ahead of the meeting that

talks would focus on the disarmament of Hezbollah, which he said must take place before Israel and Lebanon could sign any peace agreement and normalise relations. He said Hezbollah was a problem for Israel's security and Lebanon's sovereignty "and this problem needs to be addressed in order to move to a different phase". "We want to reach peace and normalisation with the state of Lebanon," he said. The conversation would "scope the ongoing dialogue about how to ensure the long-term security of Israel's northern border and to support the Government of Lebanon's

determination to reclaim full sovereignty over its territory and political life". Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem on Monday called on the government to cancel the meeting, saying Hezbollah would continue to confront Israeli attacks on Lebanon. In Lebanon, the dead include 252 women and 166 children, the health ministry says. Sources familiar with the matter said on March 27 that more than 400 Hezbollah fighters have been killed. Since March 2, 13 Israeli soldiers have been killed in Lebanon, while Hezbollah attacks have killed two Israeli civilians. — Reuters

SYSTEMIC SHORTAGES

EU fears jet fuel supply issues in 'near future'



BRUSSELS: The European Commission said it fears Europe could face jet fuel supply issues "in the near future" with no end in sight to the Iran war roiling global energy markets. "There is no evidence for fuel shortages in the European Union at present, but supply issues could occur in the near future in particular for jet fuels," said spokeswoman Anna-Kaisa Itonken. "That remains our primary concern," she told reporters. — AFP



LONDON: British finance minister Rachel Reeves hit out at the "folly" of US President Donald Trump launching a war with Iran "without a clear exit plan". The comments to the Daily Mirror newspaper came as Reeves prepared to head to Washington for an International Monetary Fund meeting set to detail the economic impact of the conflict. Reeves is one of several British government ministers, to express growing exasperation. — AFP

GROWING EXASPERATION

UK finance minister slams Iran war 'folly'

FRAYED RELATIONS

Italy suspends defence deal with Israel



ROME: Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said her government had suspended a defence cooperation deal with Israel, reflecting frayed ties between previously close allies as the conflicts in the Middle East continue. Meloni's right-wing government has been one of Israel's closest friends in Europe, but in recent weeks it has criticised its attacks on Lebanon, which have killed hundreds and injured thousands. — Reuters

OPINION

The compass within: Finding direction when you feel lost



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

THERE ARE moments in life when direction does not disappear suddenly, but fades quietly in the background. On the surface, everything continues as expected. Responsibilities are met, roles are fulfilled, and life appears to move forward with structure and purpose. Beneath that, however, something feels off. A subtle disconnection begins to grow, one that is difficult to name yet impossible to ignore. Feeling lost is often mistaken for confusion about what to do next. In reality, it tends to run deeper than that. It is less about lacking options and more about being disconnected from the part of yourself that knows which option is true. Many people do not struggle because they have no direction, but because they have learned to override it. Modern life offers constant external guidance. Advice is everywhere, expectations are high, and success is often measured in visible ways. Following these paths can create stability, yet over time, they can also create quiet misalignment. It becomes possible to build a life that looks full from the outside, while feeling empty within. That emptiness is often the first honest signal that something is no longer aligned. The discomfort of feeling lost is rarely convenient, which is why it is so often avoided. Distraction becomes an easy

substitute for reflection. Work, routines and constant activity can fill the space just enough to prevent deeper, introspective questions from surfacing. Nonetheless, the absence of those questions comes at a cost. A life lived without inner alignment slowly loses its sense of meaning, even when it remains functional. There is a certain courage required to admit that something is not working, especially when nothing appears visibly broken. It challenges the belief that stability automatically indicates fulfilment. This leads to a more confronting question: “What if the life you are living no longer reflects who you are becoming?” Our inner compass does not operate through loud instructions or immediate answers. It communicates through subtle signals. A sense of heaviness that lingers in certain choices. A quiet resistance that appears without a clear reason. A feeling of expansion when something aligns, even if it defies logic. These signals are often dismissed in favour of what feels practical; however, they carry a deeper form of intelligence. Reconnecting with this inner guidance requires a willingness to pause and become aware. In that space, patterns begin to reveal themselves. It becomes clearer where decisions are being driven by fear, obligation, or the need for approval rather than genuine

The compass within asks us to choose truth over comfort and authenticity over familiarity. That choice is rarely easy; however, upon trusting that inner pull, something shifts.

alignment. This awareness is not always comfortable, yet it is necessary. Clarity does not arrive through urgency. It unfolds through attention. The more willing you are to stay present with the questions, the more refined the answers become. Movement also plays a role. Small, intentional steps often create more insight than waiting for certainty. Each aligned action rebuilds trust in yourself. There is a point where honesty becomes avoidable. Following your inner compass may require you to outgrow roles, relationships, or identities that once felt secure. This is where many hesitate, not because they lack understanding or focus, but because they recognise the cost of change. Being lost is often the moment just before realignment. Beneath the uncertainty, there is something steady that does not disappear. A quiet knowing that remains, even when everything else feels unclear. The compass within asks us to choose truth over comfort and authenticity over familiarity. That choice is rarely easy; however, upon trusting that inner pull, something shifts. We stop searching for direction outside of ourselves and start recognising that it was never missing. We were simply looking in the wrong place.

JAPAN POSTS LOWEST GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IN DECADE

Japan’s net greenhouse gas emissions fell 1.9 per cent in 2025 to hit their lowest levels in more than a decade, partly due to a slight uptick in nuclear and renewable energy, the government said on Tuesday. Japan is heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels and is the world’s fifth-largest single-country emitter of carbon dioxide, although it is aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050. In the 2024 fiscal year, which ended in March 2025, net greenhouse gas emissions reached 994 million tonnes, marking the first time the net total has fallen below the one-billion-tonne threshold, the environment ministry said. It is the lowest level since the 2013 fiscal year, when it recorded 1.39 billion tonnes. Japan uses that figure as its base to compare changes in emissions. But Mie Asaoka, president of the Japan-based NGO Kiko Network, which focuses on climate change, said that the shift to clean energy is not moving fast enough. “The decline in Japan’s emissions from fiscal 2023 to 24 is very small... (as) coal-powered electricity is not declining (much) while the increase in renewables is also small,” Asaoka said. “Japan needs to do more.” Environment ministry official Taichi Shirato said on Tuesday that the emissions fall was chiefly due to a drop in energy consumption linked to output declines in the manufacturing sector, as well as an uptick in renewable and nuclear energy sources in Japan’s energy mix. In the 2024 fiscal year, 67.5 per cent of the country’s electricity came from coal, gas and oil — slightly down from 68.6 per cent the previous year. Over the next 15 years, Tokyo wants that figure slashed to 30-40 per cent. Shirato said that “longer term, greenhouse gas emissions have been declining” despite GDP growth, due partly to Japan’s economy relying less on large-scale heavy industries. Japan aims to achieve a 46-per cent emissions cut by fiscal 2030 from the 2013 level, 60 per cent by fiscal 2035 and to realise carbon neutrality by 2050. But last month, the government said Japan plans to temporarily lift restrictions on coal-fired power plants as it seeks to ease an energy crunch caused by the Middle East war. Net greenhouse gas emissions are calculated by subtracting the amount absorbed by forests and other carbon sinks from the total. — AFP

Ingratiation’s hidden cost, impact in the workplace

IN MOST contemporary working environments, performance or innovation does not necessarily drive success. At other times, success is influenced by less obvious interpersonal techniques, with ingratiation being one of the most prevalent methods. In ordinary terms, ingratiation is the conscious application of flattery or assent in order to win over those in authority. Although it might seem harmless or even strategic, there are consequences to this action that are usually ignored. Today, the employees are more conscious of the possible benefits of ingratiation. In such a way, by identifying with the opinion of the leaders or being praised, they can get improved performance appraisals, promotions, or career advancements. This strategy may appear as a quick-fix in competitive settings. Studies have indicated that this kind of behaviour is common and is usually viewed as an efficient manner of manoeuvring through the hierarchies in the workplace. Though there is a cost attached to ingratiation, on the surface. To sustain this behaviour successfully, individuals must always control their behaviour and their emotions, and may have to appear in ways that are not fully authentic. This attempt can be exhausting to personal energy and diminish self-control. In the long term, employees who constantly use ingratiation can be subject to stress, exhaustion and even emotional burnout. Mentally and emotionally exhausted people tend to commit counterproductive behaviours like lying or lowering quality of work. That is, the same tactic that is meant to build a career can end up



DR MAISA HAMED AL KIYUMI

The writer is a family physician

Though it could have short-term benefits, ingratiation’s long-term impacts are detrimental both to individuals and organisations

compromising personal well-being and professional integrity. It also has a psychological toll. Highly ingratiating employees can start to feel resentment, either at themselves because of losing their genuineness, or at the leaders at whom they are attempting to ingratiate. This tension within may destroy self-esteem and job satisfaction. Meanwhile, leaders do not necessarily lack the knowledge of such tactics. In numerous instances, the flattery might be seen as artificial by the leaders, and thus it can destroy trust instead of establishing it, leading to a toxic work environment. Ingratiation affects not just individuals but also the organisation. Leaders who have a high degree of agreement and compliments may be overconfident in their judgements. Inappropriate decisions may be unquestioned unless constructive criticism or honest feedback is provided. In the long run, such behaviour may result in poor strategies and negatively impact the overall performance of the organisation. Additionally, a culture of condoning ingratiation is also one that may promote conformity rather than creativity. The employees may not be ready to present new ideas and raise their concerns because they may assume that resistance will have an adverse impact on their jobs. Such an environment discourages and demotivates innovation in the workplace. With these difficulties, organisations have to make proactive efforts to counter the challenge. The introduction of fair and objective performance evaluation systems is one of the best solutions. Once employees are evaluated

on the basis of specific objective criteria and not on subjective ones, then the motivation to take part in flattery will greatly decrease. Open systems ensure that merit, not external influences, determines success. Employee well-being is another concern. Organisations need to recognise the emotional load that is most likely to be placed on the workers and support them by providing them with an equal workload and wellness programmes. By addressing the emotional exhaustion at a tender age, the employees will escape the habit of indulging in negative behaviour. Leadership is a key element as well. The leaders can do this by encouraging open communication and valuing honest feedback to create an atmosphere in which employees can express their views openly. The promotion of honesty helps to shift the focus of the emphasis towards satisfying the individual in the role of authority, and to achieving significant results. Finally, organisations need to consider the impact of cultural pressures, specifically, power-distance, which refers to the extent of tolerance for hierarchical variations. In high power-distance workplaces, ingratiation can be perceived as a natural action. Nevertheless, in these situations, one must not confuse respect and overly submissive behaviour. To sum up, ingratiation is a common phenomenon. Though it could have short-term benefits, its long-term impacts are detrimental both to individuals and organisations. Identification of these insidious costs is the first step to a healthier, transparent and efficient workplace.

A reminder about health and wellness...



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

WE KNOW health is not just about the absence of illness, but about how we live every day. It is a state of complete emotional, mental and physical well-being. Our health is the first thing that will allow us to work wonders. If our health is poor or declining for any reason, we won't be able to concentrate on anything, including our work or business. Keeping good health can benefit us in many ways and extend our lifespan. Regrettably, what we observe today is an increase in stress and lifestyle-related illnesses.

The World Health Organization defines wellness as a comprehensive condition of vitality and inner harmony, which includes positive emotional well-being, social connections and the capability to adjust to changes in the environment.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights health and well-being as essential for attaining sustainable development. Goal 3, "Good Health and Well-Being," seeks to guarantee healthy lives and enhance well-being for everyone at every age.

International Wellness Day, observed on Wednesday, April 15, serves as a reminder that health is the result of daily choices rather than extreme measures. When individuals are healthy, they can work, study and contribute effectively to their communities.

It's a day focused on raising awareness about well-being and motivating people to embrace a healthy way of life.

"Wellness supports quality of life, protects human dignity, and empowers individuals

and communities to adopt sustainable lifestyles and safeguard resources for future generations," stresses the United Nations in a message.

According to the US-based Global Wellness Institute (GWI), wellness is not a passive or static state but rather an "active pursuit" involving intentions, choices, and actions as we strive towards an optimal state of health and well-being. It is linked to holistic health - that is, it extends beyond physical well-being and encompasses multiple dimensions that should function in harmony. This means that wellness is an individual pursuit - we are responsible for our own choices, behaviours and lifestyles - but it is also significantly influenced by the physical, social and cultural environments in which we live.

At the same time, the economic aspect of wellness is substantial. The global wellness market is a multi-trillion-dollar industry, so countries that become known as wellness hubs can attract significant tourism and investment. According to GWI estimates, the wellness industry is projected to reach \$8.5 trillion by 2027, growing at an annual rate of 8.6 per cent. These impressive figures are not surprising, as wellness now permeates every aspect of our lives — from what we eat and read, to the content we consume, and even how we unwind. "Not only that, the wellness industry accounts for over 6 per cent of the global GDP," it says.

However, wars and conflicts have a devastating, multifaceted impact on global well-being, extending far beyond the

Wellness is an individual pursuit for which we are responsible for our own choices, behaviours and lifestyles; however, it is also significantly influenced by the physical, social and cultural environments in which we live

immediate battlefield to affect physical health, mental stability and environmental integrity.

Conflict-related deaths and injuries significantly contribute to the global burden of disease, with indirect impacts — such as the destruction of health infrastructure and forced displacement — often causing more fatalities than direct violence.

Hospitals and healthcare facilities have become primary strategic targets in many war zones. The destruction of infrastructure and medical centres, combined with difficulties in obtaining clean water and access to medicines, has contributed to the resurgence of epidemic diseases in countries where they were previously eradicated.

Reports indicate that wars and armed conflicts have a profound and devastating impact on global well-being, with one in five people living in conflict-affected areas experiencing a mental health condition.

Conflicts in regions such as the Middle East — specifically involving Iran and Israel — have caused a significant decline in international patient movement and have targeted healthcare infrastructure.

As the United Nations states, "Change starts with us. Strive to resolve differences and conflicts at home, at work, and in your communities peacefully through dialogue and compassion. Treat others with respect, practice empathy and promote understanding."

So, the greatest wealth is our health and wellness.

It matters as it is multidimensional!

MIDEAST WAR REVS UP ELECTRIC CAR DEMAND IN ASIA

TRAN THI MINH HA AND JULIEN GIRAULT

Electric vehicle sales have jumped in Southeast Asia as cost-conscious buyers have poured into dealerships looking to dodge the fuel price spikes driven by the Middle East war.

Asian nations have been particularly hard hit due to a sharp fall in the crude shipments they rely on - and have few alternatives to replace them. Yet the energy crisis has been a windfall for Vietnam's leading electric vehicle maker Vinfast as well as Chinese manufacturers. Vietnamese office worker Do Thi Lan explained the simple math of the cars' appeal at a Vinfast showroom in Hanoi.

"We have to calculate our monthly expenses, as the money we spend on petroleum has been on the rise," she said.

She said her family owns a car that runs on petrol, but was considering buying an electric vehicle to save money. Dao Thi Hue, also at the showroom, was looking to go electric too.

"Driving an EV is so much better than driving a petroleum vehicle, in terms of costs and also in terms of saving fuel, queuing to fill up," the school teacher said.

Crude oil prices have soared by around 50 per cent since the start of the Middle East war and again exceeded \$100 per barrel on Monday, driving up the cost at the pump.

Vinfast, listed on the Nasdaq, saw a 127-per cent surge in annual sales in Vietnam in March, reaching 27,600 cars. About 40 per cent of cars sold in Vietnam in 2025 were electric, but the trend has been accelerating. "At this point in time, clients consider fuel costs a lot when making a decision on which cars to buy," said Pham Minh Hai, deputy head of sales at a Vinfast showroom.

"In March we sold 300-400 cars," he said, noting that the showroom normally sells between 200 and 250 cars a month.

Hai said more than 50 per cent of his clients changed from petroleum to electric cars last month, while the number of customers at the showroom was up by around 30 per cent.

He added that opening hours had been extended to deal with the rush. Outside Vietnam, Chinese manufacturers specialising in electric vehicles, particularly Tesla's main rival BYD, are booming.

At the Bangkok Auto Show earlier this month, BYD secured the most orders of any manufacturer, surpassing Japan's Toyota for the first time.

"I drive a lot, nearly 100 km a day... with the current fuel situation and no idea how long it will last, it's become a major factor pushing me to make the switch," said Pleng Navinatham, a 36-year-old pharmacist from Thailand.

BYD was also seeing increased sales in the Philippines. Mae Anne Clarisse Bacquiano, manager of a BYD showroom in the suburbs of Manila, said foot traffic at the dealership was "at another level". — AFP

The hidden price of the war with Iran

WHEN PEOPLE think about war, they often imagine distant battlefields, political leaders and military strategy. What is less visible, but far more immediate, is how conflict quietly reshapes everyday life across the world. The ongoing war involving Iran is not just a geopolitical crisis; it is already altering the global production of basic necessities such as food, water, energy and everyday household goods. One of the most immediate impacts has been on energy. The Middle East is central to global oil and gas supply, and the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important shipping routes, handles roughly 20 per cent of global oil and gas flows. Any disruption in this passage creates shock across global markets. Since the war escalated, oil prices have surged dramatically, in some cases exceeding \$100 per barrel in the United States, according to reports.

We are already seeing the consequences. Gasoline prices have risen significantly and electricity bills are beginning to increase as energy costs ripple through national economies. But the impact does not stop there. Energy is the foundation of modern production. From the plastic used in water bottles to food packaging, from heating systems to dryers and stoves, many everyday items depend on oil and gas. When energy prices rise, the cost of producing and transporting these goods rises with them.

The conflict is not only about oil, but it is also disrupting global supply chains for fertiliser, a key component of food production. The Gulf region plays a critical role in producing and exporting nitrogen-based fertilisers, many of which rely on natural gas as a primary input. In fact, according to the UN, around 30 per cent of global fertiliser trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz. As tensions escalate and shipping routes become unstable, fertiliser prices have already begun to climb sharply.

The consequences for food



A woman holds an Iranian flag during an anti-war rally at Enghelab Square in Tehran, Iran, on Tuesday. — Reuters



OMAN AL YAHYAI

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

production are serious. Fertiliser is essential for growing staple crops such as wheat, rice and maize. When fertiliser becomes more expensive or harder to access, farmers either reduce usage or absorb higher costs, both of which lead to higher food prices. Analysts are already warning that the war could contribute to global food insecurity and rising inflation.

This creates a chain reaction. Higher fertiliser costs lead to higher food prices, which in turn affect households worldwide. For people already struggling with the cost of living, even small increases in grocery prices can have significant consequences. The war, therefore, is not confined to the Middle East; it is being felt in supermarkets and households across the globe.

Water is also affected; producing and transporting clean water requires energy, whether through desalination, pumping, or purification systems. In many Gulf countries, desalination plants rely heavily on energy inputs. As energy prices rise, so does the cost of producing water, placing additional strain on infrastructure and public services.

Another sector already showing signs of strain is travel. Airplanes rely heavily on jet fuel, which is

directly tied to oil prices. As fuel costs increase, airlines are forced to raise ticket prices to offset expenses. Recent data shows that airfare has already begun to climb as jet fuel prices rise. For many people, this means that summer travel plans may become unaffordable or significantly more expensive than expected.

Yet beyond these immediate effects lies a deeper, longer-term issue: the economic cost of war itself. Wars are expensive. They cost governments millions, often billions, of dollars. This spending does not occur in isolation. It contributes to national debt, which governments must eventually address through budget cuts, higher taxes, or reduced public spending.

The consequences are felt domestically. Increased military spending often comes at the expense of healthcare, education and public services. Citizens, many of whom may not support the war, end up bearing the financial burden. This creates a cycle in which war abroad translates into reduced quality of life at home. The global economy is already fragile. Inflation remains high in many countries, wages are struggling to keep pace and basic necessities are becoming harder to afford. In this context, the war against Iran acts as an additional pressure point, accelerating economic instability.

What makes this situation particularly concerning is how interconnected everything is. Energy affects manufacturing and manufacturing affects food production. Food production affects global stability. A disruption in one region can quickly turn into a global crisis. The war against Iran is a reminder that modern conflicts are not isolated events. They are deeply embedded in global systems, economic, environmental and social. When those systems are disrupted, the effects reach far beyond the battlefield. Ultimately, the people most affected are not policymakers or military leaders, but ordinary citizens.

SPORTS

150 PLAYERS



The league is aimed primarily at developing players technically and in terms of skill.

OBA LAUNCHES ATHLETES DEVELOPMENT CENTRES LEAGUE

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

The Oman Basketball Association (OBA) has launched the Athletes Development Centres League, which will run from April 24 to May 16, underlining its focus on youth development while taking into account the academic commitments of school students enrolled in the programme.

According to an OBA press statement, the league will feature six training centres established in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) across several governorates. The participating centres are Seeb Club and Al Amerat Club in Muscat Governorate, Nizwa Club and Al Bashayer Club in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Salalah Club in Dhofar Governorate, and Sohar Club in Al Batinah North Governorate.

The centres include a total of 150 players, with 25 players in each centre, in addition to 14 Omani coaches. All matches will be staged at the sub hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Matches will be held every weekend on Fridays and Saturdays, with each centre playing two matches per week in a structure designed to develop players and give them competitive experience. The schedule was also prepared to suit school students, with fixtures set for weekends and the competition concluding ahead of final examinations.

OBA Chairman Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi said the league is part of the federation’s vision of investing in age-group categories and building a promising generation capable of representing clubs and national teams in the future.

He said the league represents an important step in the development of Omani basketball by providing a real competitive environment that helps measure players’ progress, sharpen their technical and physical skills and strengthen their mentality and competitive readiness. He added that the timing of the competition was carefully chosen to serve the best interests of student players.

QUALITATIVE STEP

Al Naabi described the league as a qualitative step forward for the Athletes Development Centres, saying it will raise players’ standards and also help Omani coaches evaluate performances, analyse matches and identify areas for improvement. He also praised the continued support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, noting its major role in the success of the association’s development projects.

For his part, Abubakar bin Ahmed al Jahwari, OBA Vice-Chairman and Head of the Centres Supervisory Committee, said the league is aimed primarily at developing players technically and in terms of skill, rather than focusing only on results. He added that the weekly matches are designed to serve as a development tool before being purely competitive, while giving coaches and players the chance to assess earlier training phases and improve performance.

Regarding the girls’ sector, Al Jahwari said the Bausher Girls Centre hosts a friendly match at the end of each week against schools or sports academies, with future plans to establish a new girls’ centre in Al Batinah North at Sohar Sports Complex.

Meanwhile, Ghassan al Busaidy, technical coordinator of the centres, said the programme was prepared on clear organisational and technical foundations, balancing sporting and educational considerations while helping document results, analyse performances and track player development.

OOC supports six athletes with continental grants

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

SIX ATHLETES from various sports were included in the Oman Olympic Committee’s continental grant programme, following the signing of support agreements on Tuesday at Muscat, aimed at strengthening Oman’s sporting presence at regional and international levels.

The signing ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Chairman of the Oman Olympic Committee, in the presence of board members, representatives of sports federations and committees and athletes.

The selected athletes represent a range of disciplines, include Hamza bin Abdullah al Jabri (Oman Athletics Association), Omaima bint Harib al Hinai and Nibras bin Mohammed al Touqi (Oman Taekwondo Committee), Mohammed bin Ahmed al Ghailani (Oman Triathlon Committee), Al Harith bin Salim al Harthy (Oman Fencing Committee) and Amer bin Salim al Khanjari (Oman Weightlifting Committee).

Ali bin Salim al Busafi, Acting CEO and Director of the Olympic Solidarity Department at the OOC, emphasised that continental support programmes play a vital role in developing the national sports system.

Al Busafi highlighted the committee’s commitment to providing an enabling environment for athletes in line with best technical and administrative practices, aimed at building a competitive generation capable of achieving honourable results.

UNITED EFFORTS

Acting CEO noted that the programme enhances partnerships with sports federations, ensuring unified efforts and optimal investment in young talent through long-term development plans.

Ali concluded that such programmes offer valuable exposure to diverse sporting schools, contributing to



The selected athletes include Hamza al Jabri, Omaima al Hinai, Nibras al Touqi, Mohammed al Ghailani, Al Harith al Harthy and Amer al Khanjari.



The signing ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Chairman of the Oman Olympic Committee.

improving athletes’ technical and physical performance, while enhancing readiness for major competitions.

The continental grant programme, supported by Olympic Solidarity, provides integrated technical and financial assistance, including training camps, long-term preparation plans, and participation in competitions over a four-year cycle. It aims to prepare athletes for regional, continental and international events,



The continental grant programme, supported by Olympic Solidarity, provides integrated technical and financial assistance for a four-year period.

including qualification pathways for the Olympic Games.

The initiative also includes continuous technical monitoring, specialised coaching support, and adherence to athlete welfare, anti-doping regulations and competition integrity standards.

The agreements mark a significant step in enhancing athletes’ readiness and reinforcing Oman’s presence on the international sporting stage.

Al Batinah North’s Al Karama School wins Schools Chess League, Al Selaif second

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

The team of Al Karama Basic Education School from the Al Batinah North Directorate General of Education clinched the title of the Schools Chess League, finishing first in the overall team standings after a series of strong and exciting contests. Al Selaif Basic Education School from Al Dhahirah secured second place in the championship.

The league was organised by the Oman School Sports Association (OSSA) in cooperation with the Oman Chess Committee (OCC), with the participation of 44 male and female students from Cycle One schools that had qualified from the educational directorates.

The winners were honoured on Tuesday under the auspices of Ahmed bin Darwish al Balushi, OCC Chairman, in the presence of Dr Yaqoub bin Khalfan al Nadabi, Director General of the Directorate General of Scouts, Guides and Student Activities, along with representatives of the OSSA and the participating schools.



The final stage featured 11 schools representing educational directorates across the governorates.

The ceremony was held at Park Inn Al Athaiba Hotel. The cooperation between the OSSA and the OCC in school chess activities is documented in Ministry of Education coverage.

The league rounds revealed the champions of the current edition following highly competitive encounters that determined the final standings. Ahmed bin Darwish al Balushi crowned the winners as follows: Al Karama School claimed first place, lifting the championship trophy, winning the gold medals and receiving a cash prize of RO 400. Al Selaif School came second and received the silver

medals and RO 300, while Lizq School from Al Sharqiyah North finished third, taking the bronze medals and RO 200.

INDIVIDUAL RESULTS

As for the individual board results, Mohammed al Siyabi of Al Awabi Basic Education School won first place on Board One, followed by Hamdan al Balushi of Al Karama Basic Education School in second, while Omar Ahmed al Sawafi of Al Selaif Basic Education School took third place.

On Board Two, Abdulaziz bin Khamis al Kahali of Al Karama School claimed first

place, Sultan al Qurashi of Al Selaif School came second and Abdulaziz al Kindi of Al Buraimi School finished third.

On Board Three, Noor al Maqbali of Al Karama School took first place, Tasneem al Shabibi of Lizq School came second and Aseel al Khawaldi of Dhahar School placed third.

On Board Four, Sarah al Maqbali of Al Karama School won first place, Al Zain Al Hinai of Al Selaif School finished second and Fatima al Shihi of Khasab School came third.

The final stage featured 11 schools representing educational directorates across the governorates. The league aimed to develop students’ mental skills, including concentration, strategic thinking and problem-solving, while also refining their personalities and boosting self-confidence. The preliminary qualifying rounds that preceded the finals also witnessed strong competition at the school level across the educational directorates, with a total of 1,080 male and female students from 284 schools across Oman taking part.

SEASON’S BEST



INDIAN CRICKETERS DOMINATE WISDEN HONOURS

LONDON: Indian cricketers, including men’s Test captain Shubman Gill and women’s star Deepti Sharma, dominated the Wisden cricket awards announced on Monday. The UK-based Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack, which dates back to 1864, is an annual record of all major cricket worldwide and is regarded as the sport’s ‘Bible’.

The publication named four Indian players who starred in a thrilling 2-2 drawn Test series in England last year among its five cricketers of the year. Batter Gill, spin-bowling all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant and fast bowler Mohammed Siraj were all on the list. The only English player in the group of five was former Test opener Haseeb Hameed, who led Nottinghamshire to the County Championship in 2025. Players can only receive the award once in their careers and it is based predominantly on performances during the previous English season.

Gill also received the Wisden Trophy for Test performance of the year after he scored 269 and 161 in the second Test at Edgbaston.

Deepti Sharma succeeds compatriot Smriti Mandhana as Wisden’s leading women’s cricketer of the year for her all-round performances in India’s 50-over World Cup triumph, with Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc receiving the men’s award. The prolific Abhishek Sharma was named Wisden’s leading T20 cricketer of the year.

Wisden editor Lawrence Booth, however, criticised the increasing Indian influence on English domestic cricket’s Hundred, with four of the eight franchises now linked to owners of Indian Premier League teams after a huge influx of private investment. “The competition’s new ownership structure risks turning The Hundred into an IPL proxy event, more for the benefit of Indian businessmen than English cricket,” wrote Booth. He also pulled no punches in labelling England’s woeful Ashes campaign as “feckless, reckless and legless”.

England, humiliated 4-1 by Australia, were criticised for insufficient planning, confused tactics and an over-relaxed approach to off-field behaviour, highlighted by reports of excessive drinking during a mid-tour break.

“In the game’s long history, it is hard to think of a privilege so carelessly squandered, a chance so blithely spurned,” wrote Booth. “England were feckless, reckless and legless. These were the wing-and-a-prayer Ashes and England got what they deserved. What a waste. What a shame.” — **AFP**



MUSCAT BADMINTON FRIENDS TOURNAMENT



Muscat Badminton Friends, a group of badminton enthusiasts in Muscat, in collaboration with Falcon Badminton Academy, organised a badminton tournament. More than 25 players participated in various categories. The winners received medals and trophies as prizes.



Sunrisers Hyderabad’s Praful Hinge celebrates the wicket of Rajasthan Royals’ Lhuan-dre Pretorius with teammates. — **Reuters**

Hinge swings door open for SRH against Rajasthan

15 YEAR-OLD Vaibhav Sooryavanshi fell for a golden duck in a rare IPL flop as his team Rajasthan Royals went down to Sunrisers Hyderabad by 57 runs as two debutants Praful Hinge and Sakib Hussain shined on Monday.

The teen prodigy has been the flavour of this season in the T20 tournament with two 15-ball fifties including in the previous match and key to Rajasthan’s four wins.

But he was overshadowed by a magnificent performance from pace bowlers Hinge, 24, and Hussain, 21, who between them took 8-58 in their first outings in the IPL.

Hinge wreaked total havoc with a triple-wicket first over — an IPL first — as he sent back Sooryavanshi, Dhruv Jurel and Lhuan-dre Pretorius, all three without scoring.

Opening at the other end, Hussain followed up by removing Yashasvi Jaiswal with his fourth ball and, in his next over, raised the roof at his home stadium in Hyderabad by having had Riyan Parag caught at slip.

The Rajasthan innings was in tatters at 9-5, the chase for Sunrisers’ 217 effectively over.

Hinge, who idolises Australia’s Pat Cummins, finished with 4-34 while Hussain lived up to his role of impact substitute by taking 4-24 as the 2016 champions bounced back after two losses.

“Last year, I had written somewhere that whenever I play my first match, I will definitely take four or five wickets,” said player of the match Hinge.



Sunrisers Hyderabad’s Sakib Hussain celebrates taking the wicket of Rajasthan Royals’ Ravi Bishnoi. — **Reuters**

“And I wanted to dominate as much as possible in the powerplay (first six overs when only two fielders are allowed outside the inner circle).”

South Africa’s Donovan Ferreira, who top-scored with 69, and Ravindra Jadeja, who made 45, then put on 118 before Hyderabad were bowled out for 159 in 19 overs.

It was Rajasthan’s first defeat in five games in this edition but they still top the 10-team table.

“There are definitely positives to take,”

said Rajasthan skipper Riyan Parag.

“It could have been a lot worse, and we had a strong partnership in there as well. It’s just a blip.”

SOORYAVANSHI FAILS

It was Sooryavanshi’s wicket that stunned Rajasthan as the in-form opener top-edged a rising delivery from Hinge with the ball going high and caught by wicketkeeper Salil Arora.

The baby-faced Sooryavanshi looked up to the sky and walked back disappointed only to see more trouble for his team in the big chase.

Sooryavanshi made history in last year’s IPL in a dazzling debut season highlighted by a 35-ball century, the second fastest in the history of IPL.

The new T20 sensation has mind-boggling numbers to his name, with 452 runs scored in 12 matches with a punishing strike rate of 228.28.

Earlier, Hyderabad skipper Ishan Kishan hit 91 off 44 balls to guide his team to 216-6 after being invited to bat first.

Abhishek Sharma fell for a first-ball duck off pace ace Jofra Archer and fellow opener Travis Head departed on 18 before the left-handed Kishan hit back.

Kishan, who hit eight fours and six sixes, put on 88 with Heinrich Klaasen, who made 40, to rebuild the innings and lay the foundations of the tall total.

Rajasthan’s England star Archer returned figures of 2-37. — **AFP**

Shetty hopes to inspire new generation of talent

BENGALURU: Ayush Shetty’s silver medal at the 2026 Asia Championships has given Indian badminton a new men’s singles contender as the country begins to shape its plans for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

In a cricket-dominated nation, badminton’s rise has largely been driven by women. Saina Nehwal’s bronze medal at the London Olympics, followed by Puskarla Sindhu’s back-to-back silver and bronze medals at Rio and Tokyo pushed the sport into the mainstream.

With Nehwal announcing her retirement in January and the 30-year-old Sindhu battling inconsistency, Indian badminton has been searching



India’s Ayush Shetty claimed silver medal at the Badminton Asia Championship in China. — **AFP**

for new talent.

While 17-year-old Tanvi Sharma emerged as a prospect after winning silver at last year’s World Junior Championships, the men’s singles category has lacked a clear torchbearer to follow former world number one Kidambi Srikanth and Olympian Parupalli Kashyap.

“It’s good for Indian badminton if there are more men’s players performing,” Shetty said.

“Whenever we perform, we gain recognition and people watch more badminton. It would be really good if my silver medal can inspire more people to follow the sport.”

The 20-year-old reached the

Asia Championships final by upsetting defending champion and world number one Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand and world number four Jonatan Christie of Indonesia. Lakshya Sen won silver at the All England Open in March and the Indian men’s team lifted the Thomas Cup trophy in 2022.

“I think Lakshya Sen had a fantastic tournament at All England... we are now trying our best to lead Indian badminton in the men’s singles,” Shetty said.

Shetty became only the seventh Indian to win a men’s singles medal at the Asian Championships, and the first since HS Prannoy’s bronze in 2018. — **Reuters**

SPORTS

SOLID START



Carlos Alcaraz eased to a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Finnish qualifier Otto Virtanen.

ALCARAZ BEATS VIRTANEN IN BARCELONA OPEN FIRST ROUND

BARCELONA: World number two Carlos Alcaraz eased to a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Finnish qualifier Otto Virtanen on Tuesday to begin his push for a third Barcelona Open title.

The Spaniard, who lost the Monte Carlo Masters final to new number one Jannik Sinner on Sunday, can reclaim top spot if he triumphs this week in Barcelona, as he did in 2022 and 2023.

Alcaraz, who finished as runner-up last year in Catalonia, started the first round clash slowly but found his rhythm in a dominant second set.

“I didn’t have much time to adjust in terms of training — this morning was the first practice session I’d done here in Barcelona, which makes it a bit hard to find good sensations at the start,” said Alcaraz afterwards.

“I’m happy to have come through the problems I had in the first set.

“Little by little I started feeling maybe a bit better, and I’m happy to win the match in straight sets and give myself another chance to try to feel a bit better in the next round.”

Alcaraz received some treatment from the physio on his forearm but said he hoped it was “nothing” and without time to rest between tournaments that it was normal to have “little niggles”.

World number 130 Virtanen started strongly in front of a full crowd at the court named after Spanish great Rafael Nadal, pushing hard on Alcaraz’s serve, while holding his own relatively comfortably.

However, Alcaraz broke in the 10th and final game of the first set to take the lead.

In the second set, the players exchanged breaks before Alcaraz broke to love and consolidated for a 4-1 lead.

Alcaraz opened up a triple match point on Virtanen’s serve and hit a cross-court winner to capitalise on the first of those.

The seven-time Grand Slam winner will face Czech Tomas Machac in the second round.

Earlier on, second seed Lorenzo Musetti defeated Martin Landaluce 7-5, 6-2 for his first win since the Australian Open.

Australian Alex de Minaur overcame Sebastian Ofner 7-6 (9/7), 6-4, while Karen Khachanov suffered a surprise 6-3, 6-4 defeat by Camilo Ugo Carabelli. — AFP

AL AHLI SET UP QUARTERFINAL MEETING WITH JOHOR DARUL TA’ZIM

AL HILAL LOSE 4-2 ON PENALTIES TO AL SADD FOLLOWING BENZEMA MISS

TRACTOR FC TO FACE SHABAB AL AHLI WHILE AL ITTIHAD MEET AL WAHDA

MAHREZ STRIKE PUTS AL AHLI IN ACL LAST 8 AS AL HILAL EXIT

TITLE holders Al Ahli squeezed into the last eight of the Asian Champions League Elite on Monday when Riyadh Mahrez’s 117th minute free kick secured a 1-0 win over Qatar’s Al Duhail as four-time winners Al Hilal exited on penalties against Al Sadd.

Mahrez bent home a stunning free kick to defeat the spirited Qataris, who had seen goalkeeper Salah Zakaria save a penalty from Ivan Toney late in the first half of extra time at the King Abdullah Sports City Stadium.

“It was a difficult game, I don’t think we played very good,” said Mahrez. “That’s why we went to extra time.

“They’re a good team, Al Duhail, but at the end we made it on a free kick and we’re happy to go through.”

Al Ahli struggled to find a way past an inspired Zakaria with Toney denied seven minutes into time added on at the end of the first period of extra time when the goalkeeper dived to his right to keep out the Englishman’s spot-kick.

But Mahrez found a way beyond the Qatar international three minutes before the game was due to go to penalties with a vicious left-foot free kick from outside the penalty area that gave Zakaria little chance.



Al Hilal’s Karim Benzema and Salem al Dawsari during the Saudi Pro League in Riyadh. — Reuters

BENZEMA MISSES IN SHOOT-OUT Al Hilal, meanwhile, were knocked out at the end of an enthralling clash with Al Sadd that ended in a 3-3 draw before Qataris prevailed 4-2 in a shoot-out as Roberto Mancini won his coaching battle with fellow Italian Simone Inzaghi.

Al Sadd fought back to level three times

during regulation time, the first coming after Sergey Milinkovic-Savic had put Al Hilal in front in the 29th minute only for Claudinho’s dinked finish over Yassine Bounou to equalise seven minutes later.

Salem al Dawsari restored Al Hilal’s lead 10 minutes into the second half but Rafa Mujica struck in the 58th minute and, while Marcos Leonardo hit the Saudi side’s third in the 67th minute, Roberto Firmino made it 3-3 with 20 minutes left.

Firmino hit the post with the opening spot-kick in the shoot-out but Karim Benzema’s wild miss saw the scores levelled before Saimon Bouabre hit the post with Al Hilal’s final penalty to set up Akram Afif to net the winner.

Al Sadd will take on Vissel Kobe from Japan in the quarterfinals on Thursday with Al Ahli meeting Malaysia’s Johor Darul Ta’zim on Friday.

The last-16 matches involving teams from the western side of the draw are being played as one-off encounters in Jeddah after the scheduled two-legged clashes were postponed last month due to the conflict in the Middle East.

Iran’s Tractor FC face Shabab Al Ahli and Al Ittihad play Al Wahda in the remaining last 16 ties on Tuesday. — Reuters

Zverev edges past Kecmanovic in Munich opening round

MUNICH, Germany: Alexander Zverev fought to a 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7/2) win over Serbia’s Miomir Kecmanovic in the first round of the ATP event in Munich on Tuesday.

Reigning champion Zverev seemed in control after taking the first set but the third-ranked German made a series of errors as Kecmanovic began to show more resistance.

World number 58 Kecmanovic rallied to win the second set and forced a final-set tiebreak against the top seed.

In chilly, windy conditions in the Bavarian capital, Zverev eventually



Germany’s Alexander Zverev in action during his Round of 32 match against Serbia’s Miomir Kecmanovic at Munich Open. — Reuters

shook off Kecmanovic after two hours and 18 minutes.

“Today is a very cold day so it was difficult to put on the pressure. At the end of the day, I’m happy I won,” Zverev said.

“Now we can get started. I can’t play any worse than I did in the second and third sets today. But I played my best tennis in the crucial moments, which is the main thing.”

The 28-year-old will face Canada’s Gabriel Diallo in the last 16. Zverev has won the Munich title three times, in 2017, 2018 and last year.

Kecmanovic, 26, is the only player other than Jannik Sinner to have defeated Zverev since his

semifinal exit at the Australian Open in January. He beat Zverev in the second round in Acapulco in February.

Also on Tuesday, world number 11 and third seed Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan fell to Slovak qualifier Alex Molcan in straight sets, going down in 6-4, 6-2.

Sixth seed Luciano Darderi beat China’s Zhang Zhizhen 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 6-1, while Denis Shapovalov defeated eighth seed Tallon Griekspoor 6-4, 3-6, 6-2.

Flavio Cobolli and Joao Fonseca also booked their spots in the second round with straight-set victories. — AFP

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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$102.92
BRENT \$99.16
LIGHT \$97.48



SHORT TAKES



Oman is implementing ambitious plans to develop its aviation sector through a 15-year strategy.

AVIATION STRATEGY UNDERPINS OMAN’S ECONOMIC GROWTH

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

Oman Airports and its subsidiaries have just wrapped up a strategic restructuring, driven by a new vision focused on maximising economic returns by increasing direct flights to the Sultanate of Oman, rather than relying on transit traffic, according to Saud bin Nasser al Habsi, Chief Operating Officer of Oman Airports.

He said the new direction reflects a strategic shift towards attracting passengers as a final destination, given its greater economic impact. He noted that the strategy’s key pillars include developing human capital, improving operational efficiency, diversifying revenue streams and increasing commercial income by attracting new markets.

These initiatives fall within the framework of the National Aviation Strategy, which serves as a roadmap for building a sustainable and competitive aviation sector, aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and aims to propel the civil aviation sector towards new horizons that support sustainable economic growth.

This strategy aims to reach more than 40 million passengers annually by 2040, transport approximately one million tonnes of air cargo, achieve cumulative private sector investments exceeding RO 1 billion and raise the sector’s contribution to GDP to more than 3.5%.

In this context, Oman Air is undergoing strategic international expansion, having joined the One-World alliance, which enhances the Sultanate of Oman’s connectivity to more than 900 destinations worldwide.

The national carrier has also launched new routes including Amsterdam, Baghdad, Copenhagen and Taif, in addition to increasing the number of flights on the Salalah-Moscow route during the 2025/2026 seasons.

This expansion is part of a comprehensive transformation plan aimed at enhancing financial performance, adding five new destinations and increasing the fleet size to 39 aircraft by 2029, thus supporting the national carrier’s competitiveness and strengthening the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a regional air transport hub.

Oman plans MRO hub with Indonesia tie-up

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

THE Sultanate of Oman is moving to deepen its aviation value chain with plans to establish a fully integrated aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility, alongside the launch of a regional airline to unlock underserved routes, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said at a joint media summit on April 13.

The proposed MRO facility — set to be developed through a partnership involving Garuda Indonesia — marks a strategic shift towards localising high-value aviation services. The initiative builds on existing capabilities in the Sultanate of Oman, including Oman Air Engineering, which already provides line and base maintenance for wide-body aircraft at Muscat International Airport.

“This year will witness the launch of the first fully integrated aircraft repair workshop in Oman. It will be a destination for aircraft maintenance not only for domestic flights but also for international flights”, Al Maawali said.

He added that the facility will initially provide light maintenance services before expanding into comprehensive MRO capabilities. “Gradually, we will offer all maintenance services in Oman”, he noted, signalling an ambition to reduce reliance on overseas providers and retain a larger share of aviation expenditure within the local economy.

Industry data indicate that maintenance remains one of the most significant cost components for airlines, often outsourced to specialised centres abroad.

By developing in-country capabilities, Oman aims to enhance cost efficiency for its carriers while positioning itself as a regional MRO hub aligned with the National Aviation



Plans for a MRO City at Muscat International Airport are also under discussion, reinforcing the long-term vision.



It will be a destination for aircraft maintenance not only for domestic flights but also for international flights. The facility will initially provide light maintenance services before expanding into comprehensive MRO capabilities.

ENG SAID BIN HAMOUD AL MAAWALI
Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

Strategy 2040.

The strategy targets more than RO 1 billion in private sector investment in aviation by 2040, with MRO identified as a key growth segment. Plans for a dedicated “MRO City” at Muscat International Airport — encompassing engine overhaul, component repair and airframe maintenance — are also under discussion, reinforcing the long-term vision.

Beyond commercial aviation, Oman already hosts specialised maintenance capabilities, including those operated by the Royal Air Force of Oman for military fleets, as well as technical service providers such as SGS Oman, which offer non-destructive testing and asset integrity services.

Complementing the MRO push, the ministry also confirmed plans to launch a regional airline targeting smaller aircraft operations to stimulate domestic and short-haul connectivity.

“You will see the launch of regional aviation this year... It will target small aircraft to revitalise destinations such as Masirah, Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands and Khasab”, the minister said.

The proposed carrier is expected to improve access to emerging tourism destinations and support regional economic activity, while also linking

secondary airports such as Suhar and Salalah to nearby international markets. Planned routes include connections to cities such as Abha in Saudi Arabia and, subject to conditions, destinations in Yemen from Salalah.

The regional aviation model is designed to complement existing full-service and low-cost operators by focusing on thinner routes that are not commercially viable for larger aircraft.

Analysts note that such connectivity could play a critical role in dispersing tourism flows and activating underutilised airport infrastructure.

From a broader economic perspective, the combined push for MRO localisation and regional aviation reflects a more integrated approach to sector development.

The MRO project is expected to generate skilled employment, enable technology transfer and stimulate ancillary industries, including training and specialised logistics.

As Oman advances its Oman Vision 2040 agenda, the twin initiatives signal a deliberate effort to move beyond passenger traffic growth towards capturing higher-value segments within the aviation ecosystem — positioning the Sultanate of Oman as both a connectivity hub and a technical services centre in the region.

Oman taps Africa’s supply chains with Botswana energy, mining deals

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

Oman has expanded its strategic economic push into Africa through a set of agreements with Botswana covering solar power, fuel storage and mineral exploration, in a move that signals a broader shift in how the Sultanate of Oman is deploying sovereign-backed capital abroad.

The agreements, signed during Botswana President Duma Boko’s visit to Oman, bring together three Omani entities — OQ, OQ Alternative Energy and Minerals Development Oman (MDO) — and place Oman in sectors increasingly seen as central to Africa’s next phase of growth: energy security, infrastructure and critical minerals.

Reuters reported that the deals form part of Botswana’s own drive to diversify beyond diamonds, while Oman is also seeking to broaden its economy beyond oil. Speaking to the Observer, a



A 500 MW solar power project, integrated with a battery energy storage system, is among a number of initiatives signed by the two countries this week.

specialist in financial markets, urban planning and energy said the significance of the Botswana agreements lies not only in their commercial value, but in what they reveal about Oman’s wider investment posture.

“What we are seeing is a more active Omani role abroad”, he said. “This is not just about

placing capital. It is about building positions in strategic sectors that can generate long-term value, strengthen economic diplomacy and extend the reach of Omani operational expertise”.

The clean energy component is among the most prominent. Oman’s Foreign Ministry said OQ Alternative Energy signed a power purchase agreement with Botswana Power Corporation to develop a 500-megawatt solar photovoltaic plant in Maun, integrated with a battery energy storage system.

The ministry said the project falls within a wider 3,000-megawatt cooperation framework agreed by the two countries in November 2025.

That project is significant in Botswana’s domestic context. Botswana Power Corporation says the country’s peak electricity demand is around 700 megawatts and that the government is targeting a 50 per cent renewable share in the national energy mix by 2030. On that basis, the

Maun project is not marginal. It is a large-scale contribution to Botswana’s energy transition and a sign of confidence in Oman’s ability to deliver utility-scale renewable assets overseas.

The second pillar is oil logistics and storage. Botswana Oil Limited signed a joint development agreement with OQ to build oil storage infrastructure in Walvis Bay, Namibia and in Botswana. The cooperation is intended to evaluate integrated storage and supply solutions that would enhance fuel security and create commercially viable investment opportunities.

That matters because Botswana relies fully on imported fuel. Botswana Oil’s published material says the country imports around 1.3 billion litres of fuel annually, underlining the strategic case for greater storage capacity and more diversified supply routes.

For Oman, the agreement gives OQ a role in infrastructure tied directly to energy resilience in

southern Africa.

Mining forms the third track. The exploration agreement targets vast unexplored areas covering roughly 70 per cent of Botswana’s territory, with interest in minerals including copper, gold, graphite and iron ore.

The agreement between Minerals Development Oman and Exploration Investment Company Botswana includes geological data exchange, technical cooperation and joint study of investment opportunities in strategic minerals.

Taken together, the deals suggest that Oman is moving beyond the model of a passive overseas investor and towards that of a strategic developer of real assets. For a country focused on diversification, that has wider implications: stronger access to future-facing minerals, exposure to cross-border energy infrastructure and new openings for Omani firms and expertise in external markets.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES

AL MOUJ MUSCAT
ANNOUNCES
LEADERSHIP
TRANSITION

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat’s Chief Executive Officer, Nasser al Sheibani, has stepped down after nearly two decades of service. His leadership has played a defining role in shaping one of Oman’s most distinguished integrated lifestyle destinations.

Nasser has been part of the Al Mouj Muscat journey since 2007, contributing from its earliest development phase through to its evolution into a fully established, award-winning mixed-use destination.

Since becoming Chief Executive Officer in 2015, he has led the organisation through a period of sustained growth and transformation, overseeing



NASSER
AL SHEIBANI

the delivery of more than 3,300 residential units across apartments, villas and townhouses, alongside four hotels, 96 retail outlets and 61 community amenities.

Under his leadership, Al Mouj Muscat expanded its masterplan with landmark developments including Golf Beach

Residences, Murooj Lanes, Azura Beach Residences and the Business Park, while maintaining a strong commitment to placemaking, with green spaces now accounting for 37% of the overall development. The destination has attracted buyers from more than 90 countries, with over 8,000 residents representing 90 nationalities now calling Al Mouj Muscat home.

During his time, the organisation also delivered significant commercial and operational growth, including revenue growth of more than 150%, customer satisfaction levels of 92% and a Customer Experience Index of 940 out of 1,000.

Al Mouj Muscat has further contributed more than RO 3.7 million to community initiatives spanning education, sport, environmental stewardship and social development, while supporting the creation of over 2,200 jobs, with an Omanisation rate of 67% and 40% female representation in senior leadership roles.

Saif al Yaarubi, Chairman of the Board of Al Mouj Muscat, said: “On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend our deepest appreciation to Nasser al Sheibani for his outstanding leadership and long-standing contribution to Al Mouj Muscat.

Nasser has been at the heart of this organisation since its early days, playing a defining role in its development and success.

His vision, commitment and steady leadership have helped establish Al Mouj Muscat as one of the region’s most respected integrated lifestyle destinations. We are especially grateful for the legacy he leaves behind and the foundations he has laid for the future”.

Reflecting on his tenure, Nasser al Sheibani said: “Leading Al Mouj Muscat has been one of the greatest privileges of my career, but what has made it truly meaningful is the people. Together, we have built something far beyond a development; we have built a community.

We have achieved a great deal as a team, navigating challenges, delivering milestones and shaping a destination we can all be proud of. None of this happens without dedication, belief and a shared sense of purpose”.

NBO
RENEWS
PARTNERSHIP
WITH
INJAZ OMAN

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman continues its collaboration with INJAZ Oman to deliver the More Than Money Programme, the Company Programme and the Competition, reinforcing its commitment to empowering young people across the Sultanate of Oman. Building on the strong foundation established in previous years, the partnership supports the delivery of structured financial literacy and entrepreneurship programmes to school students,



in alignment with the Ministry of Education’s academic guidelines. The More Than Money Programme introduces students to essential financial concepts, helping them develop responsible money management skills and informed decision-making abilities. The Company Programme and Competition engage older students in practical entrepreneurship, guiding them through business planning and the management of student-led ventures.

Sohar International hosts
MSX investor session

SOHAR International convened an MSX investor session on Monday, April 13, as part of its ongoing commitment to maintaining transparent and consistent engagement with the investment community. The session focused on presenting the bank’s audited financial results for the year ended December 31, 2025, while also providing a broader perspective on its strategic direction and priorities for the period ahead.

Held in coordination with the Muscat Stock Exchange and conducted virtually via Zoom, the session brought together shareholders and financial analysts for an in-depth discussion on key operating dynamics and market positioning.

The session was led by Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer, with Majid bin Nasser al Busaidi, Chief Risk Officer; Craig Barrington Bell, Chief Financial Officer; Fahad bin Akbar al Zadjali, Head of Sohar Islamic; and Azzan bin Mohammed al Jahwari, Head of Strategy Management, participating as panellists.

The discussion included a detailed presentation of the audited results, followed by an interactive Q&A session that enabled direct dialogue on key metrics, performance drivers and underlying business trends.



The discussion outlined the bank’s performance across key financial and operational indicator.

Commenting on the significance of the session, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer, Sohar International, stated, “Engagements of this nature extend beyond the presentation of financial results and reflect a deliberate approach to strengthening understanding between the bank and its investors. Sessions such as these provide a structured platform to connect performance with the decisions, frameworks and priorities that shape the institution’s direction. At Sohar International, we maintain a

long-term perspective across risk, capital and growth, supported by disciplined execution and clear communication. As the operating environment continues to evolve, we remain focused on delivering measurable value to our shareholders while staying aligned with Oman’s broader economic trajectory and the continued advancement of its financial sector”. The discussion outlined the bank’s performance across key financial and operational indicators, including trends in core operating income, asset quality, capital adequacy and evolving risk priorities.

BYD App: Control your drive. Anytime. Anywhere

MUSCAT: The automotive experience in Oman is reaching new heights of convenience with the integration of the BYD App, a sophisticated cloud-connected platform that acts as a direct link between the driver and the vehicle.

Designed to offer a unique smart experience, the app ensures that your BYD is always within reach, regardless of where you are in the Sultanate of Oman. By merging advanced technology with user-centric design, BYD is transforming the vehicle from a simple mode of transport into a fully connected digital companion that caters to



BYD is transforming the vehicle from a simple mode of transport into a fully connected digital companion.

the modern, fast-paced lifestyle of Omani drivers. One of the standout features of the BYD App is its comprehensive remote control capability, making daily vehicle use easier and more convenient than ever. Through a few taps on a smartphone, users can remotely lock or unlock doors, manage driver and passenger seat ventilation or heating, and even use the “flashing lights and whistle” function to locate their car in a crowded mall parking lot. This level of control ensures a worry-free experience, allowing

owners to manage their vehicle’s essential functions with unprecedented ease and flexibility. Recognising the unique climate of the region, the BYD App offers a specialised Preset function that allows for remote climate management. Before stepping out into the Omani heat, users can remotely turn the air conditioning on or off, set the desired cabin temperature and select the internal circulation mode. This ensures that the vehicle is a cool, welcoming sanctuary from the moment you open the door.

National Finance delivers unparalleled SME finance solutions

MUSCAT: Aligned with the nation’s economic diversification agenda, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, continues to strengthen its role as a catalyst for SME growth by offering a comprehensive suite of tailored financing solutions. Designed to support businesses at every stage of their journey, this diverse portfolio empowers local enterprises to scale with confidence and resilience. It underscores the company’s firm belief in the transformative impact of small and medium enterprises as key drivers of sustainable economic development and national prosperity. Covering a broad spectrum of financing needs, including



The portfolio is designed to support the operational and strategic ambitions of SMEs.

new and used vehicles, working capital, equipment and machinery, warehousing and sustainability-linked projects, National Finance’s SME Finance portfolio is designed

to support both the operational and strategic ambitions of small and medium entrepreneurs. Built on principles of flexibility, fast and accessible processes, these

solutions empower entrepreneurs to manage day-to-day requirements while confidently pursuing growth, innovation and long-term sustainability. In this context, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, remarked, “SMEs form a vital pillar of a nation’s economic landscape, driving diversification, strengthening economic foundations, creating employment opportunities, fostering community development and elevating quality of life. At National Finance, we position ourselves as more than a financing provider; we are a strategic Partner for Growth, committed to enabling SMEs to scale, adapt and succeed in a dynamic market environment.

Through our customised financing solutions, we empower businesses to realise their ambitions while contributing meaningfully to the nation’s continued economic progress”. Designed to help businesses navigate evolving market conditions and seize emerging opportunities, National Finance’s SME Finance solutions feature customised repayment plans aligned with business cash flows, quick approval processes and competitive rates. Complementing this, dedicated relationship managers provide personalised guidance and expert insight, enabling businesses to access funding seamlessly and translate it into meaningful, sustainable growth.

SHORTTAKES



Hotel revenues rose sharply by 18.5 per cent to RO 69.21 million.

OMAN 3–5 STAR HOTEL REVENUES RISE 18.5%

MUSCAT: Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) shows that Oman's 3- to 5-star hotels recorded solid revenue growth in the first two months of 2026, despite a modest decline in guest numbers.

Total guests stood at 439,287 by the end of February 2026, down 3.6 per cent from 455,733 recorded during the same period in 2025. However, hotel revenues rose sharply by 18.5 per cent to RO 69.21 million, compared to RO 58.38 million a year earlier, reflecting stronger pricing and improved yield management.

Occupancy rates also edged higher, reaching 68.4 per cent in February 2026, up from 67.6 per cent in February 2025, indicating steady demand in the upscale hospitality segment.

Visitor trends were mixed across key markets. The number of Omani guests declined by 5.3 per cent to 129,797. Arrivals from GCC countries dropped more significantly by 18.4 per cent to 22,396, while guests from other Arab countries fell by 11.6 per cent to 14,485.

In contrast, Asian markets posted growth of 4.5 per cent, with 61,581 guests, while arrivals from the Americas increased by 5.4 per cent to 16,911. European visitors — the largest segment — remained broadly stable, slipping marginally by 0.5 per cent to 172,072.

Other regions recorded declines, including Africa, down 12.4 per cent to 2,798 guests and Oceania, which saw a sharp drop of 46.9 per cent to 5,165.

The data highlights a resilience in Oman's hospitality revenues, supported by improved occupancy and stronger per-guest spending, even as overall visitor numbers softened. — ONA

Asyad Shipping bolsters fleet with 3 bulk carriers

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

ASYAD Shipping, the majority state-owned global maritime transportation services provider, has added three dry bulk carriers to its vessel portfolio in line with an ambitious fleet expansion and renewal strategy targeting between \$2.3 billion and \$2.7 billion in new investments through 2029.

The three Newcastlemax-class vessels — Ain Garziz, Ain Razat and Ain Athum — named after prominent natural springs in Dhofar Governorate, have been secured on long-term contracts, the publicly listed company said in a regulatory filing to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Originally built at Japanese shipyards, the vessels were acquired for a total consideration of RO 80.5 million (\$209 million), following an investment decision announced last September.

Each vessel has a capacity of 208,000 deadweight tonnes and is equipped with an Exhaust Gas Cleaning System (EGCS) and a Ballast Water Treatment System (BWTS). They also feature energy-efficient hull designs and engines optimised for thermal and mechanical efficiency, ensuring compliance with International Maritime Organisation (IMO) environmental regulations.

Commenting on the acquisition, Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi, CEO of Asyad Shipping, said: "The delivery of these Newcastlemax vessels



The three Newcastlemax-class vessels — Ain Garziz, Ain Razat and Ain Athum — have been named after prominent natural springs in Dhofar.

marks an important milestone in our fleet expansion strategy. These additions enhance our position as a leading dry bulk operator in the region, while their long-term charter arrangements provide immediate and stable revenue visibility.

We remain committed to disciplined growth, strengthening our global presence and delivering long-term value to our shareholders".

The delivery comes on the heels of agreements signed earlier this year for the construction of three Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) at a cost of RO 149.6 million

(approximately \$388.5 million). Hanwha Ocean, one of South Korea's 'Big Three' shipbuilders, is currently building the three VLCCs, each with a capacity of 300,000 DWT.

All three newbuilds will be dual-fuel ready, enabling operation on conventional marine fuel while allowing for future conversion to lower-carbon alternatives.

Also in January, Asyad Shipping announced the sale of four legacy LNG carriers that once played a central role in establishing Oman as a reliable LNG exporter. The partially owned vessels — Ibra, Ibri, Nizwa and Salalah — were built

around two decades ago at a total investment cost of RO 42.35 million (\$110 million). Earlier, the company had also disposed of its VLCC Saiq in a deal valued at RO 23 million (\$60 million).

Part of Asyad Group, Asyad Shipping manages a diversified fleet of around 80 vessels across multiple segments, including crude tankers, product tankers, dry bulk carriers, gas carriers and container vessels.

The company provides shipping, chartering and ship management services, supporting energy, bulk commodity and containerised trade flows across international markets.

Electric vehicle adoption: A practical and economical option

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 14

The Sultanate of Oman is witnessing a remarkable uptake in the adoption of electric vehicles, driven by the global shift towards clean transportation and the promising economic and environmental opportunities this presents. This trend is supported by a comprehensive national strategy led by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, aimed at establishing the use of electric vehicles as a practical and economical option for society.

According to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the total number of registered electric vehicles in the Sultanate of Oman reached approximately 2,182 as of November 18, 2025, marking a 138% increase compared to 428 vehicles during the same period in 2024. This reflects the



As many as 2,182 electric vehicles were registered in Oman as of November 18, 2025.

accelerating pace of the transition towards this type of sustainable transportation.

Electric vehicles in Oman offer numerous advantages to users, most notably lower operating costs, as the cost per kilowatt-hour is lower than the cost per kilometre of conventional fuel. They also contribute to reducing emissions within cities and neighbourhoods, positively impacting air quality and reducing noise pollution.

In addition, these vehicles are characterised by lower maintenance costs due to fewer moving parts, along with a smooth driving experience thanks to their immediate acceleration and remarkable quietness.

The local environment plays a supportive role in this shift, as multi-service industrial cities have become integrated platforms for promoting the adoption of electric vehicles. They provide a comprehensive system that

includes car showrooms, equipped maintenance workshops, financing and insurance services, as well as infrastructure capable of hosting charging stations, contributing to transforming the idea of adoption into a daily practice.

Regarding operational challenges and user awareness, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Badi, a car inspector and programmer, pointed out that the cost of electric chargers has become affordable for users, with the possibility of installing them at home without significant energy consumption. He also confirmed the availability of chargers on roads, while emphasising the need to raise user awareness about not using them for extended periods to ensure everyone benefits.

The Ministry is moving forward with implementing a comprehensive strategy to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles, which includes expanding the charging network, providing incentives for consumers,

developing a unified digital platform and ensuring compliance with technical and traffic safety standards. These efforts align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly its focus on a sustainable environment and integrated infrastructure.

The Zero Neutrality programme for the transport sector is a key pillar, aiming to gradually reduce carbon emissions to achieve full neutrality by 2050.

The strategy targets increasing the share of new electric vehicles to 25% by 2030, 66% by 2040 and reaching 100% by mid-century. This will be achieved by supporting investment in infrastructure and charging stations, promoting alternative fuels such as hydrogen and biofuels; and enhancing local manufacturing in partnership with the private sector.

Promising industrial investments in the battery sector further strengthen the Sultanate of Oman's position in global value chains.

PRICE EASING

Oil dips on Iran talks hopes



Oil prices declined as prospects of US-Iran talks eased supply concerns linked to the Strait of Hormuz disruption. Brent fell to \$99.16 per barrel, while West Texas Intermediate (WTI) dropped to \$97.48.

Despite the pullback, markets remain tight after recent sharp gains, with significant volumes still offline following attacks on regional energy infrastructure. — Reuters

SENTIMENT DROP

US small business confidence weakens



US small-business sentiment dropped to an 11-month low in March as a surge in oil prices because of the war in Iran overshadowed the benefits from low taxes. The optimism index dropped to 95.8, below its long-term average.

Uncertainty surged, while broader consumer sentiment also weakened, signalling mounting pressure on economic confidence amidst elevated energy costs. — Reuters

PRICE REBOUND

Gold rises as oil prices ease



Gold prices rebounded as easing oil prices and hopes for renewed US-Iran talks reduced inflation concerns. Spot gold rose to \$4,768 per ounce, recovering from a recent weekly low.

US gold futures for June delivery also climbed 0.5% to \$4,790.70 an ounce. Other precious metals posted modest increases, reflecting improved investor sentiment and a partial return to safe-haven demand. — Reuters

OPINION

Agentic AI: A new era of financial decision-making



DR KARIMA SAYARI

The writer is Associate Professor, Al Zahra College for Women

THE world of finance, one of the sectors most affected by financial technology, is in perpetual change and has continuously evolved as technology develops. Each new innovation has revolutionised the flow of money, types of financial assets and the way financial services or products are delivered through the global economy. The payment system has also evolved significantly over the last few decades, including the use of ATMs, mobile banking and electronic payment systems, which are already changing the face of business for individuals. However, today, a new technological shift is underway, one that could transform who makes financial decisions at their core. This new type of smart system, designated “Agentic Artificial Intelligence” (Agentic AI), is much more advanced than regular smart technologies. Agentic AI systems differ from regular AI tools in that they act on their own, set goals and make complicated financial decisions with little help from people. More and more experts are speculating that this marks the beginning of what they call the “Agentic AI Finance Revolution”. This revolution could soon see smart digital agents play a major role in managing money, negotiating financial deals and making the best investment decisions for individuals, organisations and even governments.

FROM ALGORITHMS THAT DON’T DO ANYTHING TO FINANCIAL AGENTS THAT DO For instance, banks have been employing AI technology for a while now. The technology is used to detect fraudulent transactions, assess customer creditworthiness, help traders analyse markets and even support customer service. However, these technologies are just a step towards helping individuals make a decision. The use of agentic AI is a huge step forward. Technology is designed to perform actions similar to those of an agent, such as controlling the economy, analysing financial options and pursuing goals aligned with its objectives. An AI agent will be tasked with ensuring the long-term stability of the financial system. The agent observes interest rates, market trends, inflation predictions and how people spend their money. The system may automatically rebalance the portfolio if better investment opportunities come up. One of the most interesting things about agentic AI is how it could change the way businesses compete in the financial sector. In the past, banks and other financial institutions used advertising, branding and marketing campaigns to encourage people to buy their products, such as loans, credit cards and savings plans.

THE GROWTH OF MACHINE-TO-MACHINE FINANCE Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly

A new technological shift is underway, one that could transform who makes financial decisions at their core. This new type of smart system, designated “Agentic Artificial Intelligence” (Agentic AI), is much more advanced than regular smart technologies. Agentic AI systems differ from regular AI tools in that they act on their own, set goals and make complicated financial decisions with little help from people.

shaping the financial sector, helping institutions generate insights from data, measure performance, make predictions and carry out real-time calculations. It is also transforming customer service and how information is accessed and used. In simple terms, AI brings together a range of technologies that enable financial institutions to understand markets and customer behaviour better, learn from digital interactions and respond in ways that increasingly resemble human thinking — only at a much larger scale. This new landscape could lead to a financial system in which autonomous agents transact, negotiate contracts and allocate capital with incredible speed and accuracy.

WAYS TO INCLUDE MORE PEOPLE IN FINANCE Supporters of agentic AI say that this technology could help make advanced financial services available to more people. Right now, only people with a lot of money can afford to hire professional financial advisors to help them with advanced wealth management strategies. More individuals could receive such assistance through autonomous financial agents. Financial literacy has always been an important factor affecting the ability to use new technology so people can manage their money, savings and investment alternatives and consequently receive the highest return of their investment.

When the world needed a mediator, two nations answered

DR UMAIR WAQAS

On the evening of April 7, 2026, with a presidential ultimatum counting down its final hours, a fragile diplomatic thread held the Middle East back from catastrophe. The world was watching Washington and Tehran. But those who understand how peace is truly made were watching somewhere quieter, the corridors of Islamabad and behind them, the enduring diplomatic architecture of Muscat. The ongoing conflict between the United States, Israel and Iran, now in its fifth week, has tested every assumption about regional stability, energy security and the limits of military power. It has also revealed something profound: in a world where traditional mediators have been silenced, sidelined, or struck, two nations have quietly shouldered the burden of peace. One of them, Pakistan, has captured global headlines. The other, the Sultanate of Oman, built the foundation upon which Pakistan now stands. Long before Pakistan entered the diplomatic theatre, Oman laid the groundwork. Under the wise stewardship of Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Muscat hosted the first high-level US-Iran nuclear talks on April 12, 2025, indirect negotiations conducted in separate rooms, with Omani mediators carrying messages between US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. Oman’s style of mediation is distinctive and, for those who live and work in this Sultanate of Oman, deeply familiar: it does not impose its agenda, it listens, convenes and facilitates. It does not seek credit. It seeks outcomes. When the war broke out on February 28, 2026, while those talks were still underway, Oman’s Foreign Minister publicly stated that active negotiations had been “undermined” despite being on the verge of significant progress. That principled statement, issued at personal diplomatic cost, underscored Oman’s unwavering commitment to dialogue over disruption. As Oman and Qatar found their traditional roles complicated by the escalating conflict, Pakistan stepped forward. The logic was compelling. Islamabad shares a 900-kilometre border with Iran. It holds a decades-old relationship with the United States. It maintains functional ties with both Washington and Tehran at a time when direct communication between them remains essentially frozen. Pakistan’s mediation did not emerge from ambition alone, it emerged from necessity, geography and a careful calculation of national interest aligned with regional stability. The evidence of Pakistan’s effort is concrete and documented. Islamabad hosted a quadrilateral meeting of the foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye.

Strategic implications of Oman’s credit upgrade

OMAN’S return to Investment Grade status in early 2026 is not merely a technical adjustment in sovereign ratings; it signals a structural shift in how the country is positioned within global capital markets. When agencies such as Moody’s, Fitch Ratings and Standard & Poor’s assign ratings of Baa3 and BBB with a stable outlook, they are effectively recalibrating Oman’s risk profile in the eyes of institutional investors. This level carries significant implications. It expands access to global pools of capital, reduces borrowing costs and allows Oman to re-enter portfolios governed by strict investment mandates that exclude non-investment grade assets. This upgrade reflects a cumulative process rather than a cyclical improvement. Over recent years, Oman has demonstrated measurable progress in fiscal consolidation, with public debt declining to approximately 36% of GDP by 2025, alongside improved fiscal balances supported by energy revenues and gradual expansion of non-oil income streams. Assessments by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank indicate that these developments have strengthened macroeconomic resilience and reduced sovereign risk exposure, forming the analytical basis for the rating upgrades. The strategic significance of this development becomes more pronounced when considered against its timing. The upgrade coincides with a period of elevated geopolitical uncertainty across the region, with direct implications for energy markets, maritime security, insurance costs and global supply chains. In such an environment, sovereign ratings are not interpreted in isolation; they become composite indicators of a country’s ability to navigate external shocks. Oman’s improved rating, achieved amidst



Oman’s improved rating, achieved amidst regional tensions, reinforces its image as an economy capable of maintaining internal stability despite external volatility.



DR ZIAD ALZAIDI

The writer is strategic management & organisational transformation consultant

Assessments by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank indicate that these developments have strengthened macroeconomic resilience and reduced sovereign risk exposure, forming the analytical basis for the rating upgrades.

regional tensions, reinforces its image as an economy capable of maintaining internal stability despite external volatility. At the same time, the current rating level underscores a degree of sensitivity. Being positioned at the threshold of investment grade implies that the margin for adverse developments remains relatively narrow. International experience suggests that sovereigns at this level are particularly responsive to shifts in external conditions, especially when fiscal revenues remain linked directly or indirectly with commodity cycles or when regional dynamics influence investor views. As such, sustaining the current rating is as strategically important as attaining it. Looking ahead, several plausible trajectories may shape the operating environment. A baseline scenario would see regional tensions contained within manageable limits, allowing trade and energy flows to continue without significant disruption. Under such conditions, fiscal stability could be maintained and the groundwork for further rating improvements could emerge. A more moderate scenario might involve elevated but contained risks, leading to higher logistical and financing costs, with manageable implications for fiscal and external balances. A more adverse scenario, though less likely, would involve significant disruptions to critical trade

routes or sharp market volatility, potentially triggering broader reassessments of sovereign risk across the region. Navigating these scenarios requires a policy approach that remains balanced and forward-looking. Continued fiscal discipline will be essential, not as a reactive measure but as an embedded principle, supported by prudent debt management and efficient expenditure frameworks. Equally important is the ongoing expansion of non-oil revenues and the deepening of economic diversification, particularly through the development of domestic and regional value chains in sectors such as manufacturing, logistics and advanced services. In parallel, Oman’s geographic position, outside major chokepoints, offers a strategic advantage that can be further leveraged to reinforce its role as a reliable node in global trade and energy networks. Amidst these dynamics, the current phase also presents tangible opportunities. As global supply chains undergo recalibration, investors are increasingly seeking conditions that combine stability, accessibility and credible economic governance. Oman’s investment-grade status, coupled with its relative geopolitical positioning, places it in a favourable category within this evolving landscape. If supported by consistent policy signaling and targeted investment frameworks, this positioning could translate into increased capital inflows, particularly in sectors aligned with long-term structural trends. Ultimately, the significance of Oman’s investment grade rating lies not only in the upgrade itself, but in how it is leveraged moving forward. The achievement represents a foundation rather than an endpoint. Its sustainability will depend on the continued alignment between fiscal policy, economic diversification and strategic risk management.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LOGISTICS Documentation Executive. Indian male, 25 years, BBA, PG Diploma in Logistics & SCM and have 2 years of experience in this field. Seeking a position in Logistics field Mob: +968 7506 9882 Mail: shafazhussain18@gmail.com

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

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

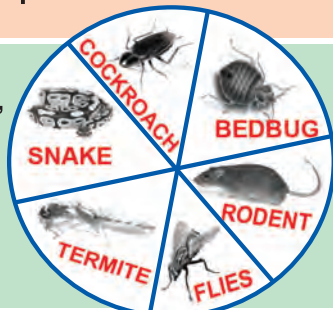
LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499



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

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

SIT. WANTED

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

A family Restaurant located in Al Khuwair require the following:
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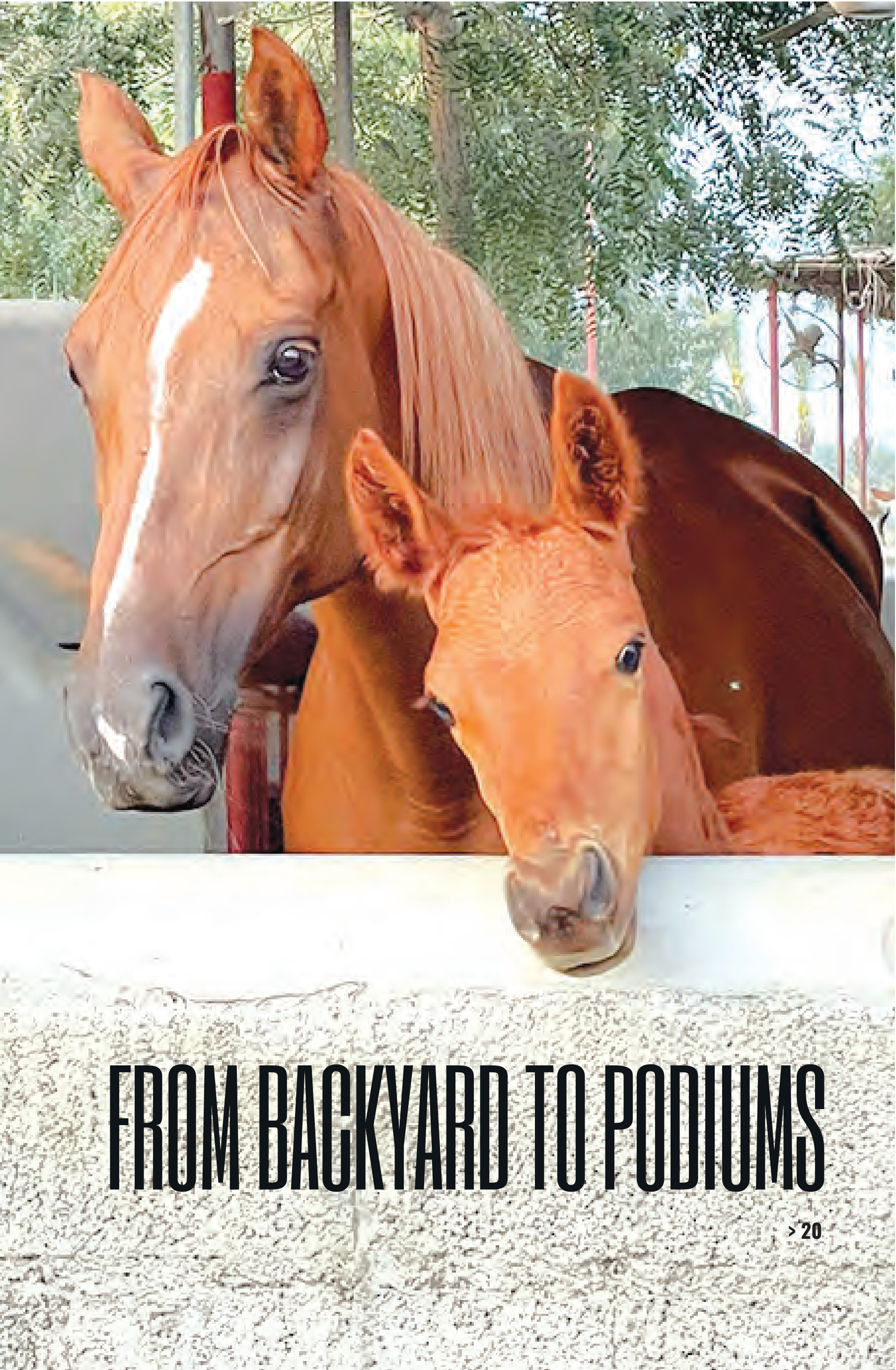


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ON SECOND THOUGHT

WHAT IT MEANS TO GROW UP TODAY



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

I have been paying closer attention this week, not just to the headlines, but to the pauses in between them. The way conversations shift when the topic turns to the world beyond Oman.

The way a phone is picked up, scrolled, then quietly put down again.

For young Omanis and for many young people living here, the world does not arrive gradually anymore.

It comes all at once. A conflict unfolding in real time. Images that are difficult to unsee. Opinions forming faster than facts. And somewhere in between all of that, the expectation to continue with life as normal: to study, to work, to plan ahead, as though the ground elsewhere is not constantly shifting.

What I've noticed, both online and in quieter, more personal spaces, is not panic.

It is something more measured. A kind of steady awareness. Young people in Oman are not detached from what is happening around them, but neither are they consumed by it. They seem to exist in a careful balance, informed, but deliberate.

There is a psychological term for this: ambient anxiety.

It is not tied to a single event, but to a constant sense that the world is unsettled. You do not always recognise it immediately. It shows up in small ways, difficulty concentrating, a need to step away, an underlying restlessness that is hard to name. And yet, what stands out is how instinctively many are learning to manage it.

I see it in the choices they make. Stepping away from the screen, even briefly. Replacing noise with routine: a workout, a walk, a conversation that does not revolve around what is going wrong elsewhere. These are not acts of avoidance. They are deliberate attempts to regain control over something, however small, in a world that often feels beyond it.

But there is a tendency, particularly among older generations, to look at this and assume resilience comes easily. That because young people are not outwardly overwhelmed, they are unaffected. I don't think that is true.

If anything, this generation is carrying more than we acknowledge. They are growing up in a time where awareness is immediate and constant, where distance offers little protection. The challenge is not simply understanding the world, but learning how much of it to carry. And that is where we, as adults, need to recalibrate.

Support does not always mean providing answers. Often, it means recognising the weight without trying to reduce it to something simpler. It means listening without dismissing and offering perspective without undermining what they feel. There is strength in this generation, certainly. But it is a strength that should be seen, not assumed.

For the youth themselves, the task is equally complex. To stay engaged, but not consumed. To care deeply, but not at the cost of their own stability. It is not an easy balance to strike, and yet, from what I have seen this week, many are already attempting it in their own way. Quietly. Deliberately. Without needing to announce it.

QUICK FEATURES



CELEBRATIONS

A reveller plays with water as people celebrate the Songkran holiday, which marks the Thai New Year, at Khaosan Road, one of the favourite tourist spots in Bangkok. — Reuters



HOLLYWOOD

US actress Mandy Moore attends the Sony Pictures Entertainment photo call during CinemaCon at The Colosseum at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Kevin Hart, Dwayne Johnson, Jake Kasdan and Jack Black, promoting "Jumanji", pose before a Sony presentation at CinemaCon, the official convention of Cinema United. — Reuters

INSTA PICKS



The elegant beauty of Muttrah



Reptilian under the Omani sun

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Expats to mark malayalam new year Vishu today



KABEER YOUSUF

Malayali expatriates in Oman are celebrating Vishu, a festival celebrating the Malayalam new year. The day signifies new beginnings, prosperity, and an occasion that marks the astronomical start of spring with Vishukkani and special feasts (Sadya). Supermarkets and shopping malls have stocked wide variety of fruits, vegetables and flowes to cate to the festival demand. “This time everything is ready-made and easy to cook hence less work is required to enjoy their Vishu celebrations,” an hypermarket employee said. Sales are also robust in the ready-made clothing market

where people shopped for special clothes at the last moment. Vishu falls on the first day of the month of Medam, the first month of the Solar calendar, signifying the solar new year as the sun moves into the zodiac sign of Aries. Among the various customs of Vishu, is the viewing of Vishukkani before sunrise, an experience that marks the first sight of the day and sets the tone for the entire year ahead. It is believed that the first things you see on Vishu will have a profound effect on your fortunes for the year. This practice is rooted in the belief that the new year should begin with positive thoughts and good omens.



‘Sartorial diplomacy’ on show in expo of late UK queen’s fashion

In a handwritten note on a sketch of an evening dress for her official visit to India and Pakistan in 1961, Queen Elizabeth II specified it should be sewn in “yellow satin”, a colour symbolising health and prosperity in the region. The sketch is one of about 300 items on display, some for the first time, at the exhibition “Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style”, which opened on Friday at Buckingham Palace. This unprecedented survey of the late UK monarch’s wardrobe throughout her life (1926-2022) reveals the important diplomatic role she attached to her outfits. The display in the King’s Gallery at the London palace features sheath dresses sparkling with sequins and swirling outfits in vibrant colours from the 1960s. There are also spectacular draped evening dresses straight from the atelier of Cristobal Balenciaga, maternity outfits and the military uniforms the princess wore during World War II. In a section called “the finishing touch”, the queen’s signature colourful hats are pinned up on a wall opposite the coordinating outfits. Tickets for the spectacular exhibition, which runs to October, have already sold out for April. Highlights include Elizabeth’s wedding dress dating from 1947 and the ornate embroidered gown she wore for her coronation, both created by British designer Norman Hartnell. Political aims “We wanted to pay tribute not only to her style but also to British fashion and designers”, stressed Caroline de Guitaut, the curator, who chose the outfits on display from an archive of some 4,000 items. A key attribute of the royal’s wardrobe was its political aims, the exhibition reveals, with fashion choices also playing a diplomatic role. This diplomatic dimension was



a recurring theme of Elizabeth’s wardrobe through her record-breaking 70-year reign. In 1954, while travelling in Australia, she wore a yellow stole delicately embroidered with the golden wattle, the national floral emblem. And in 1961, on a visit to Pakistan, she dined with President Mohammad Ayub Khan wearing a satin dress in the colours of the national flag of the country, a former British colony. “She was the undisputed queen of sartorial diplomacy”, said de Guitaut. The monarch’s aim was always the same: “to show respect for the country she was visiting”, the curator said, since her visits were made on government advice largely to countries with whom Britain hoped to build stronger ties. ‘Eye for everything’ This broke with the ancient tradition of royal clothing as a way to display wealth and power, historian Lisa Hackett said. Now confined to ceremonial roles, monarchs “no longer use their clothing to display their power” but instead want to convey respect and courtesy, said the academic from the University of New England in Australia. These were dress codes that Elizabeth mastered to perfection. “She was educated from an early age about her role and her wardrobe”, Hackett said. Elizabeth was also very involved in the design of her outfits. “She decided what she wanted to wear, chose her designers and even selected her suppliers”, said de Guitaut. Her handwritten note on the dress sketch for the trip to India and Pakistan was not exceptional: the exhibition shows that she added comments on several occasions. “She had an eye for everything. I think it’s fair to say she had almost complete mastery of her style”, said the curator. — AFP

FEATURES



Salim bin Said al Rashidi, owner of Al Mahamid Stud Farm, with one of the horses born at the farm.



SSR Al Fateh, the first production of Al Mahamid Stud



FROM A BACKYARD BEGINNING TO DUBAI 'S PODIUMS

A PASSION THAT BUILT AL MAHAMID STUD'S GLORY

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

At the heart of Arabia's enduring passion for horses, Al Mahamid Stud stands as one of Oman's most inspiring success stories. Founded by Salim bin Said al Rashidi, the stud has grown from a modest backyard setup into a leading breeding operation producing racehorses capable of competing on both regional and international stages. What began as a simple personal passion has evolved into a recognised name on prestigious racing platforms, including Dubai.

Al Rashidi traces the beginning of his journey to a life-changing trip to Egypt. Although he had always loved camels, his first experience riding a horse sparked a deep and indescribable connection. Upon returning to Oman, he pursued this newfound passion without hesitation. Despite not owning a farm at the time, he purchased his first horses and kept them behind his home, building simple shelters and caring for them with dedication. What started as a humble effort soon expanded into a larger vision, eventually leading to the establishment of Al Mahamid Stud, now recognised among the Sultanate of Oman's top horse breeding operations.

The stud today operates as a family-driven enterprise, with Al Rashidi's sons actively involved in its daily management. This close-knit structure gives the operation a distinct spirit and ensures that the passion for horses continues across generations. A strong sense of heritage is also embedded in the stud's identity, particularly in the naming of its horses. Each name is carefully chosen in Arabic, reflecting a deep respect for culture and reinforcing the connection between tradition and modern breeding practices.

Over the years, Al Mahamid Stud has achieved notable success both locally and internationally. Its victories in Dubai, including

races associated with the Dubai World Cup, highlight the capability of Omani-bred horses to compete on the global stage. The stud's first homebred horse, SSR Al Fateh, marked an important milestone in its journey, paving the way for standout performers such as SSR Ghazwan. The operation also features a strong lineup of breeding stallions, led by Wahshi, alongside notable names like AGS Onfwan, Wahaj, Al Waleed, Jasmin du Valgas; and Khalil, all representing carefully planned bloodlines aimed at enhancing performance and quality.

Yet beyond trophies and achievements, it is the emotional connection between Al Rashidi and his horses that truly defines his story. He recalls a moment when he decided to sell a horse that had been raised at the stud, only for it to refuse to enter the trailer, as if it understood it was leaving for good. Moved by this, he chose not to complete the sale. In another instance, he spent an entire night beside a sick horse, unable to leave despite exhaustion, simply because he felt it needed him. He also remembers a young horse that would follow him everywhere around the farm, creating a bond he would never forget and another that seemed to recover gradually from distress simply through his presence. One of the most touching moments came when a horse returned from an overseas race and went straight to the exact place where it had grown up, as if revisiting its memories.

Looking ahead, Al Rashidi remains focused on further developing local breeding and elevating Omani horses on the global stage.

He believes that success in this field is not driven by resources alone, but by patience, dedication and genuine care. For him, horses are not merely a sport or a business — they represent a profound human connection. Through this vision, Al Mahamid Stud continues its journey, blending tradition with ambition while reinforcing its place as one of Oman's leading names in horse breeding.

PHOTOS BY MOHAMMED AL YAHYAI

