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INBRIEF

OMAN CRUDE
OUTPUT SET AT
821,000 BPD

The Sultanate of Oman’s crude oil production is set to reach 821,000 barrels per day (bpd) in May following a fresh Opec+ adjustment aimed at reinforcing market stability amid evolving global supply dynamics. Oman, alongside seven other key producers — Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait, Kazakhstan and Algeria — agreed on a virtual meeting on April 5, to implement a combined production increase of 206,000 bpd beginning in May, 2026. The adjustment forms part of the wider 1.65 million bpd voluntary cuts first introduced in April, 2023. **DETAILS ON P13**

FOOD SUPPLY IS
STEADY IN OMAN,
SAYS OFFICIAL

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources (MoAFWR) has told people to just shop normally, avoid stockpiling, and trust the assurances given by the authorities. Speaking to the Observer on the current market conditions, Masoud al Azri, Director General of Marketing for Agriculture and Fisheries and the official spokesman at the ministry, said that the country’s food supply, which includes vegetables and meat, remains functional. “Authorities are actively managing import channels and strategic reserves to ensure essential items remain available on shelves.” **DETAILS ON P3**

CHERRY BLOSSOM SEASON



A woman takes pictures in front of blooming cherry trees at the Olympia-Park in Munich, Germany, on Monday. — Reuters

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

The activities of the National Obesity Awareness Week in the Sultanate of Oman will commence on Thursday. The initiative aims to enhance the partnership between public and private sectors and expand care services for obesity patients. Omani Diabetes Association (ODA), in collaboration with the National Diabetes and Endocrine Centre, is set to launch the National Obesity Awareness Week on April 9 to be held at Al Qurum Natural Park from 5:30

pm to 10:00 pm. Dr Noor al Busaidy of Oman Diabetes Association, asked the public to take advantage of the event. “The marathon will begin at 5.30 pm. After 7 pm fun activities will begin for children. This is where the adults will have educational sessions. At the national level, data from the 2025 National Survey in the Sultanate of Oman, conducted by the Ministry of Health, revealed that the overweight rate reached 32.1 per cent, while the obesity rate stood at 32.7 per cent, bringing the combined total to a significant 64.8 per cent of the population. The figures demonstrate



a clear gender disparity. The obesity rate among women is 39.3 per cent compared to 26.4 per cent among men, with the overall national obesity rate settling at 32.7 per cent. The National Obesity Awareness Week is organised by the Oman Diabetes Association in collaboration with the National Diabetes and Endocrine Centre. It encompasses a range of specialised activities, including a broad community awareness event at Al Qurum Natural Park. This is held in partnership with various relevant public and private health sectors

and in cooperation and coordination with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The event features a dialogue session discussing the challenges of obesity in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to an introductory and educational exhibition featuring the participating partners. Moreover, a national virtual dialogue session on the risks of obesity to individuals and society will be conducted, alongside a specialised workshop for healthcare cadres and a forum for pharmacists regarding the latest treatments.

No need to exit the country to change visa status

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has officially confirmed that a person currently on a visit to the Sultanate of Oman doesn’t have to leave the country to change visa status. The present confirmation comes in the wake of the indefinite

cancellation of some flight services in other countries which might have an impact on a person travelling out of the country for the same. What he or she has to do is submit a valid medical examination result saying he or she is medically ‘fit’ to be employed, along with other necessary documents. “All he or she has to do is just

a medical examination with a ‘medically fit’ stamp on it, and the potential employee doesn’t need to leave the country,” a source from the Public Relations Department of the ROP said. The ROP has earlier temporarily relaxed the rule to assist future employees and their employers to save them from the hassles of

travelling to switch to a work visa. “The relaxation has been granted in the wake of the cancellation of flight services by many countries due to ongoing tensions in the region.” The ROP had not issued any official announcement, but had responded to the Observer’s query regarding the same.

IRAN REJECTS CEASEFIRE AS DEADLINE NEARS

CALLS FOR LIFTING SANCTIONS AND SAFE PASSAGE IN HORMUZ

IRAN SAID on Monday it wanted a lasting end to the war with the US and Israel, and pushed back against pressure to swiftly reopen the Strait of Hormuz under a temporary ceasefire as the Americans and the Iranians weighed a framework plan to cease their five-week-old conflict. Iran conveyed its response to the US proposal for ending the war to Pakistan, rejecting a ceasefire and emphasising the necessity of a permanent end to the war, the official Irna news agency said on Monday. The Iranian response consisted of 10 clauses, including an end to conflicts in the region, a protocol for safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz, lifting of sanctions and reconstruction, the agency added. President Donald Trump, who has threatened to rain ‘hell’ on Tehran if it did not make a deal by 8 pm EDT on Tuesday to open the vital route for global energy supplies, rejected the Iranian proposal on Monday and said his deadline was final. “They made a proposal, and it’s a significant proposal. It’s a significant step. It’s not good enough,” Trump told reporters at an annual White House Easter event, referring to Iran. Iran responded to US and Israeli attacks in February by effectively closing Hormuz, a conduit for about a fifth of the world’s oil and natural gas supply. The waterway’s stranglehold on the global economy has proved a powerful Iranian bargaining chip and on Monday it showed reluctance to relinquish it too easily.



A woman walks past mockups of Iranian missiles along Valiasr Square in Tehran on Monday. — AFP

The Pakistani-brokered framework for ending the war emerged from intense overnight contacts and proposes an immediate ceasefire, followed by talks on a broader peace settlement to be concluded within 15 to 20 days, a source aware of the proposals said on Monday. Pakistan’s army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, was in contact “all night long” with US Vice-President J D Vance, special envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, the source said. Iran’s foreign ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei said on Monday that Tehran’s demands “should not be interpreted as a sign of compromise, but rather as a reflection of its confidence in defending its positions.” He added that earlier US demands, such as a 15-point plan, were rejected as “excessive”. Meanwhile, fresh aerial strikes were reported across the region on Monday, more than five weeks since the US and Israel began pounding Iran in a war that has killed thousands and damaged economies by sending oil prices surging. Iranian state media said the Revolutionary Guards’ intelligence chief, Majid Khademi, has died. Israel on Monday claimed responsibility for his death. A US-Israeli attack hit the data centre at Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, damaging infrastructure underpinning the country’s national artificial intelligence platform and thousands of other services, Fars News Agency said on Sunday. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

Obesity rate in Oman stands at 32.7%, says report

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Shireen Mahmoud Shaaban Yahya left her residence earlier on Monday.

ROP SEEKS PUBLIC HELP TO LOCATE MISSING GIRL

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has announced that a 15-year-old girl has gone missing from her home in Al Ghubra in the Wilayat of Bausher. In a statement, the ROP said that Shireen Mahmoud Shaaban Yahya left her residence earlier on Monday and did not return. Authorities have urged anyone with information about her whereabouts to contact the Police Operations Centre on 9999 or report to the nearest police station. The ROP expressed appreciation for public cooperation in assisting with the search.

AWARENESS EXHIBITION ON FOOD SAFETY OPENS



The exhibition is the outcome of partnership among various government departments. — ONA

SUHAR: The Wilayat of Suhar, Governorate of Al Batinah North, was the venue for the opening of an awareness exhibition for events of the “Food Safety Week 2026”. The two-day exhibition was organised by the Directorate-General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Batinah North Governorate.

The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Saud bin Mohammed al Hinai, Wali of Suhar. The exhibition is the outcome of a partnership among various government departments, including Al Batinah North Municipality, the Directorate-General of Health Services and the Directorate-General of Education. It reflects a model for institutional joint action aimed to promote food safety concepts and protect the health of the community.

The exhibition presents successful models and practical applications in the field of food safety, with the prime objective of establishing healthy food consumption habits. — ONA

WHEAT HARVESTING SEASON BEGINS IN AL MUDHAIBI



AL MUDHAIBI: The wheat harvesting season 2025-2026 began on Monday in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is lending support to farmers to help them achieve self-sufficiency and meet the ministry’s strategic objectives.

The ministry’s backing also takes shape in the consolidation of local food supply chains and the application of measures to secure a sustainable agricultural future.

Wheat cultivation area in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi stands at more than 8 acres. The crop is grown in areas known as ‘Wadi Qurayat 226’ and ‘Wadi Qurayat 110’. — ONA

Rehabilitated birds released in Al Batinah South

AL RUSTAQ: Represented by the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Breeding in the Wilayat of Barka, Al Batinah South Governorate, the Environment Authority is implementing quality programmes for the restoration of wildlife habitats.

The procedure is in pursuance of ongoing national efforts to protect wildlife, enhance ecological balance and maintain biodiversity.

The Centre for Wildlife



Birds of prey released include the Egyptian vulture, the lappet-faced vulture, spotted eagle and the steppe eagle.

Rehabilitation and Breeding in the Wilayat of Barka released a number of birds of prey in the area of Jamma in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, after providing the birds with healthcare in accordance with the best veterinary and environmental practices.

The birds of prey released include the Egyptian vulture, the lappet-faced vulture, the spotted eagle and the steppe eagle. The healthcare programme restored the birds’

natural fitness and secured their ability to survive and adapt to their habitat.

The Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Breeding receives and treats injured birds, either handed over physically by citizens or reported to the Environment Authority. The success of the initiative reflects the local community’s awareness about the importance of preserving wildlife. — ONA

Council reviews study on government performance



The subcommittee continued discussing the study, which aims to support the realisation of Oman Vision 2040.

THE subcommittee affiliated to the Economic and Financial Committee of the State Council, tasked with studying the ‘Framework for Developing the Government Performance Management System’, held a meeting on Monday.

The subcommittee was chaired by Mohammed bin Hassan al Shehhi, Head of the Subcommittee and the meeting was attended by Dr Dhafer bin Awad al Shanfari, Head of the Economic and Financial Committee and members of the subcommittee.

During the meeting, the subcommittee continued discussing the study, which aims to support the realisation of Oman

The other subcommittee discussed the study which explores ways to manage water scarcity in the Sultanate of Oman in a balanced and sustainable manner, given its connection to food security, public health, and economic and social stability.

Vision 2040, develop a methodology for government planning, establish an integrated institutional framework for performance management, enhance spending efficiency and boost productivity, achieve sustainability and improve the quality of services.

The subcommittee reviewed the views and observations presented by its members regarding the study, which supports the state’s efforts to develop performance management through a modern legislative and regulatory framework based on efficiency, transparency, and accountability, and promotes a culture of institutional excellence.

Meanwhile, the subcommittee of the State Council’s Technology and Innovation Committee, discussed a

study titled ‘Harnessing Technology in Sustainable Water Management in the Sultanate of Oman, at its meeting held on Monday under the chairmanship of Zaki bin Hilal al Busaidy, Head of the Subcommittee.

The subcommittee discussed the study which explores ways to manage water scarcity in the Sultanate of Oman in a balanced and sustainable manner, given its connection to food security, public health, and economic and social stability.

It also addressed the pressures facing water resources in the Sultanate of Oman as a result of population and economic growth, which necessitates strengthening efforts to conserve groundwater and improve its utilisation.

Residents restore mosque in show of unity

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

While adverse weather often leaves behind devastation, it can also reveal powerful stories of unity and resilience. In Al Hoqain, such a story has emerged in the aftermath of recent heavy rains, as residents came together to rebuild their community mosque.

The Al Hoqain Mosque was among the structures severely affected by the low-pressure system Al Masarat.

Torrential rains and flash floods between March 31 and April 2 submerged the mosque almost entirely, causing extensive damage.

The weather system brought heavy rain, thunderstorms, hail and strong winds across several governorates, including Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, Muscat, Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta and



People of Al Hoqain formed groups and distributed tasks for clean-up and rehabilitation.

Dhofar. The conditions led to widespread flooding, reduced visibility and the loss of more than 15 lives.

Despite the destruction, the people of Al Hoqain responded with determination. Residents — both citizens and expatriates — formed teams,

assigned responsibilities, and launched a coordinated effort to clean, restore, and rebuild the mosque.

“We formed groups and distributed tasks for clean-up and rehabilitation. Each team had a leader overseeing the work. Those days reflected

true dedication and mutual understanding,” said Abdullah al Khadouri, an HSE expert at OQ, who actively participated in the initiative.

Today, the mosque stands restored, symbolising the community’s resilience and collective spirit. Worshipers are preparing to return, with the mosque once again serving residents of the surrounding areas.

Residents expressed gratitude to all who contributed, including the Royal Oman Police, Al Rustaq Municipality, Ishraqah Foundation for Community Development, Al Hoqain Sports Team, Jama Volunteer Team, and supporters from outside the area.

The rebuilding of the mosque stands as a lasting testament to what unity and collective action can achieve in the face of adversity.

SHORT TAKES



The ROP warned the public not to pay any money before verification.

ROP WARNS AGAINST FAKE INSURERS

MUSCAT: The Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigation at Royal Oman Police (ROP) has warned of a novel scam method in which perpetrators use fake Instagram accounts to impersonate insurance staff to dupe their victims into paying money to insure their properties.

The ROP warned the public not to share personal or banking information and not to pay any money before verifying the legitimacy of the electronic accounts of the institutions and companies they are dealing with.

The Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigation said that it is closely monitoring emerging scam methods and takes legal action against anyone proven to be involved in fraud.

Warning against a significant increase in such scams, the ROP stressed the need for caution while dealing with online entities or through various communication channels, and advised against responding to any communication without verifying its credibility.

‘JISR’ INITIATIVE TO DEVELOP TALENT



MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) has completed the final phase of its Jisr initiative, training and placing 20 Omani nationals with insurance sector firms across Oman. This milestone follows the candidates’ successful completion of written and technical assessments, reinforcing the development of national talent to support the sector’s growth and sustainability.

Implemented in partnership with the National Programme for Fiscal Sustainability and Financial Sector Development (Estidamah), the Ministry of Labour, and the College of Banking and Financial Studies, the initiative empowers Omani youth with valuable training linked to employment.

Good Samaritans reward flood-hero with Umrah visit

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

While jumping into the gushing flash floods that wiped out trees and human beings on its way to the sea to save the people stuck in the car, rolling with the water force, Shahzad Khan, who knew no swimming, had never imagined whether he would come back alive, nor he would be able to save the people inside the car in the recent rains.

“In those few seconds between death and life, I didn’t have the time to think about anything because all



A group of people has come forward to honour 24-year-old Shahzad Khan to perform Umrah.

I knew was that there were people inside the car, which was about to sink into the water. Was it a call from above? Or the command of my grandfather from paradise who passed away without fulfilling his

dream of visiting the Kaaba to save the people in distress? I still don’t know. Khan is clueless.”

In a heartwarming display of community appreciation and cross-border solidarity, a group of

people has come forward to honour 24-year-old Shahzad Khan to perform Umrah at the holy land in appreciation of his heroic action, which saved the lives of two Indian nationals during devastating floods in Barka.

“I didn’t think about nationality or religion. I saw lives in danger and did it for humanity,” Shahzad shared during the ceremony.

The full-board Umrah Package will allow him an all-expenses-paid spiritual journey to Saudi Arabia, along with a generous financial award in recognition of his bravery.

FOOD SUPPLY STEADY

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

THE Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) has urged people to shop normally, avoid stockpiling and trust the assurances given by the competent authorities. Speaking exclusively to the Observer about the current market conditions, Masoud al Azri, Director-General of Marketing for Agriculture and Fisheries and the official spokesman at MoAFWR, stated that the country’s food supply, including vegetables and meat, remains functional.

“Authorities are actively managing import channels and strategic reserves to ensure essential items remain available on shelves. The Sultanate of Oman has not been significantly affected by the closure of ports and airports due to its diplomatic neutrality and direct access to the Sea of Oman, which is outside the primary conflict zone,” Al Azri said.



The Sultanate of Oman has not been significantly affected by the closure of ports and airports due to its diplomatic neutrality and direct access to the Sea of Oman, which is outside the primary conflict zone

MASOUD AL AZRI



The government and retailers are working with food suppliers to absorb pressures and maintain stable pricing for consumers.

“This positioning helps maintain supply continuity better than several neighbouring countries,” he added.

In response to reports of increased shipping costs and changes in insurance premiums due to the closure of important ports and airports in the region, Al Azri noted that logistics costs have seen some adjustment globally. “The government and retailers are collaborating with suppliers to absorb pressures and maintain

stable pricing for consumers,” he said. Al Azri expressed optimism that if the war stops or the situation eases in the coming weeks or days, supply chains are resilient and most trade routes and logistics networks can return to normal operations within a matter of weeks.

Al Azri stated that Omani fishermen operating in coastal and Sea of Oman waters are largely unaffected, and fresh fish remains available in local markets.

DISCUSSIONS ON PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION LAW CONCLUDE

MUSCAT: The Joint Committee of the State Council and Majlis Ash’Shura held a joint meeting on Monday to discuss items of dispute between the two councils regarding the ‘Draft Amendment to Some Provisions of the Personal Data Protection Law’ and the ‘Draft Amendment to Some Provisions of the Penal Code’, both referred by the Council of Ministers.

The ‘Draft Amendment to Some

Provisions of the Personal Data Protection Law’ referred by the Council of Ministers included modifications to 13 articles, of which six articles were subjects of dispute between the two councils. The committee concluded by reaching a consensus on all articles of disagreement between the two chambers and will submit its report for discussion during a joint session of the State Council and the Majlis Ash’Shura. — ONA

Oman highlights health innovation on World Health Day

MUSCAT: Oman will join the countries of the world tomorrow in marking the World Health Day, which falls on April 7 of each year. This year’s celebration is under the theme ‘Together for Health. Stand with Science’, affirming the importance of enhancing scientific research and innovation in the health sector, and supporting evidence-based medical decisions and practices to address contemporary health challenges.

Oman is witnessing a comprehensive developmental renaissance, with the health sector being one of its most prominent pillars.

The Ministry of Health continuously seeks to improve the quality of services provided to beneficiaries. These efforts are based on a national vision aimed at building a society that enjoys

sustainable health. It adopts a comprehensive health policy seeking to provide integrated and diverse care for citizens and residents, encompassing the areas of prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and health promotion.

The Ministry of Health affirms its keenness to develop the healthcare system in Oman by investing in national cadres and adopting the latest technologies and digital solutions. This ensures the provision of integrated and high-quality health services to all members of society, in the achievement of the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Investing in precision medicine and AI constitutes another pillar for improvement. The ministry is working on establishing a national genomic database to combat genetic diseases.

The employment of artificial intelligence in



MoH prepares to implement the 11th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030), which focuses on systematic transformation and execution management.

healthcare significantly contributes to improving medical diagnosis, data analysis, and the early detection of diseases.

Furthermore, 3D printing technologies and robotics assist in providing personalised healthcare, bringing about a qualitative leap in the accuracy and effectiveness of treatment, which reflects positively on patient experience and

satisfaction.

Oman continues its efforts in developing the health sector and enhancing the quality of provided services by expanding the application of digital solutions and innovation in healthcare delivery. This comes within the framework of broader directions of health transformation and building a sustainable health system.

In this context, several

virtual health services have been pilot-operated, most notably the teleradiology service. This allows medical images to be sent from various health institutions to the National Virtual Health Center for analysis and the preparation of medical reports for different types of imaging, contributing to accelerating diagnosis and reducing the need for patients to travel. The services also included a second medical opinion service in sub-specialities, such as haematology and thrombosis, aimed at supporting diagnostic accuracy and improving the quality of medical decisions.

Alongside this, a service for diabetic retinopathy screening and analysis using artificial intelligence technologies was launched. More than 25,000 patients have been examined since the service’s inception, significantly contributing to

the reduction of waiting lists.

It is expected that the current year will witness the operation of several new services, including virtual urgent care in general medicine, which aims to provide rapid healthcare to individuals in various locations. This is in addition to teleconsultation services for premarital screening, and a second medical opinion service in the specialities of emergency medicine, toxicology, and cardiology

Furthermore, 65 per cent of health institutions were linked to the PACS and Shifa systems, with a comprehensive plan to reach 90 per cent. Telemedicine services were introduced in six specialities, and more than 1,200 patients were monitored remotely. This direction represents a strategic pillar to improve access to services and reduce pressure on traditional clinics. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT



IN THE DIGITAL AGE, RUMOURS TRAVEL FASTER THAN FACTS - SHAPING BEHAVIOUR, ERODING TRUST, AND TESTING SOCIETY'S ABILITY TO DISTINGUISH TRUTH FROM NOISE

BALQEES
AL ORAIMI

IN AN AGE where information travels faster than verification, rumours are no longer harmless whispers — they have evolved into a powerful force capable of shaping public perception, unsettling communities, and influencing real-world decisions. Amplified by social media, a single unverified claim can ripple across society within minutes, often leaving consequences that are difficult to contain. Unlike in the past, rumours today are not confined to private conversations. They emerge on open digital platforms and gain traction at remarkable speed, particularly when tied to issues that directly affect people's lives — health, the economy, or public safety. Their potency lies in two key elements: ambiguity and emotional appeal. The less clear the information, and the more it provokes curiosity or fear, the more likely it is to spread. Dr Mohammed al Ghailani, a sociologist, explains: "Rumours tend to thrive in environments where there is a gap in information or a perceived lack of transparency. People naturally attempt to fill that gap with whatever explanations are available, even if they are inaccurate." He adds that while social media has accelerated the spread of misinformation, it has also underscored the urgent need for stronger public awareness and critical thinking. The impact of rumours extends far beyond misinformation.

INFLUENCE BEHAVIOUR

In many cases, they directly influence behaviour. A simple claim about a shortage of a product can trigger panic buying, disrupting supply chains and placing unnecessary strain on markets. Similarly, health-related rumours can fuel anxiety, prompting individuals to make decisions that may not be in their best interest. On a personal level, rumours can be even more damaging. In closely connected communities, an unverified story or misinterpreted

piece of information can circulate rapidly, affecting reputations and personal lives. Even when proven false, the damage often lingers, raising important questions about ethics and responsibility in how information is shared. At a broader level, the repeated spread of inaccurate information erodes trust — both between individuals and within institutions. Constant exposure to conflicting or unreliable reports can breed scepticism, making it increasingly difficult for accurate information to be accepted, especially during critical moments. Dr Al Ghailani emphasises that countering rumours requires more than simple denial. "It is about building a culture of verification and critical thinking," he says. "Education and responsible media play a central role in equipping individuals with the tools to question, analyse and confirm information before sharing it." At the same time, official institutions bear a significant responsibility. Timely communication and transparency are essential in limiting speculation. When accurate information is delivered clearly and promptly, it reduces uncertainty and narrows the space in which rumours can grow. However, the most decisive role still lies with individuals. Today, every user is effectively a publisher, capable of reaching wide audiences at the click of a button. This makes personal responsibility more critical than ever. A brief pause to verify a source — or even a simple question, "Is this information reliable?" — can prevent the spread of falsehoods. Ultimately, rumours are not merely about misinformation; they are a reflection of collective awareness. They test how societies respond to uncertainty — whether by amplifying noise or by seeking truth. In that choice lies the difference between a community that is easily shaken and one that remains resilient, guided by awareness, responsibility, and the power of credible information.

WHEN
RUMOURS
OUTPACE
TRUTH

SHORT TAKES



About 1,762 participants took part in coordinated field efforts across Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank.

COMMUNITY MOBILISES TO TACKLE STORM DAMAGE

IBRI: Al Dhahirah Governorate witnessed a strong wave of community mobilisation, as volunteers, government agencies and private sector entities joined forces to address the impact of recent weather conditions caused by the Al Masarat Depression. A total of 1,762 participants took part in coordinated field efforts across the wilayats of Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank, as well as surrounding villages. The initiative focused on clearing debris, restoring infrastructure and accelerating recovery to return normalcy across affected areas.

The campaign, carried out in coordination with municipal authorities and governors' offices, included cleaning main and secondary roads, removing sand and gravel, clearing fallen trees and draining water accumulations. Teams also addressed damage to road infrastructure using heavy equipment and modern machinery, reflecting the swift response of concerned authorities.

Participants highlighted that the initiative reflects the spirit of solidarity and cooperation that defines Omani society, noting that volunteerism plays a vital role in enhancing safety, protecting the environment and improving quality of life.

The effort saw participation from all age groups, with youth and adults working side by side — demonstrating a strong sense of national responsibility and reinforcing a culture of teamwork and civic engagement. Officials confirmed that operations will continue in the coming days, with a focus on the most affected areas to speed up recovery and ensure a safe, clean environment. — ONA

RIA OPENS REGISTRATION TO LIYSF UNTIL MAY 6

MUSCAT: The Research and Innovation Authority (RIA) has announced the opening of registration for higher education students wishing to participate in the 67th edition of London International Young Scientists Forum (LIYSF 2026). The RIA pointed out that registration to LIYSF 2026 will continue until May 6.

The forum is scheduled to be held in London from July 19 to August 1, 2026. LIYSF 2026, founded in 1959 as a non-profit social institution, contributed to empowering more than 22,000 students from different countries of the world. The forum provides a scholarly platform that combines learning and cultural exchange. It enables young people to broaden the scope of their knowledge and establish scientific networks.

LIYSF 2026 aims to raise the standard of young researchers by engaging them in high-quality international experiences and by giving them access to direct communication with prominent scientists and experts so that they could learn about updates in scientific disciplines. — ONA

Hyperbaric oxygen saves 82-year-old at SQU Hospital

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) has recorded a notable medical achievement in the treatment of acute poisoning, successfully managing a complex case involving an 82-year-old woman suffering from severe carbon monoxide poisoning. The case, treated using hyperbaric oxygen therapy, is the first of its kind to be documented in the Sultanate of Oman.

The patient was admitted to the Emergency Department with acute neurological symptoms, including impaired consciousness and difficulty speaking — initially



SQUH proceeded with hyperbaric oxygen therapy as an advanced intervention.

raising concerns of a stroke. However, advanced diagnostic tests revealed significantly elevated levels of carboxyhaemoglobin, a compound formed when carbon

monoxide binds to haemoglobin, preventing oxygen from reaching vital organs such as the brain and heart.

Further investigation traced the source of poisoning to the use of a charcoal heater in a poorly ventilated enclosed space. Dr Yasser al Lawati and his medical team promptly initiated treatment using high-concentration oxygen through conventional methods. While this helped reduce the level of toxic gas in the bloodstream, the patient's neurological condition showed limited improvement.

Given the lack of response, the team proceeded with hyperbaric oxygen therapy as an advanced

intervention. During a single session, the patient inhaled 100 per cent pure oxygen at a pressure approximately two and a half times higher than normal atmospheric levels.

This significantly increased the amount of oxygen dissolved in the blood plasma, enabling oxygen to reach affected tissues more effectively and accelerating the removal of carbon monoxide from haemoglobin.

The response was swift and remarkable. Following just one session, the patient regained full consciousness and her ability to communicate. She was discharged a few days later in good health, with no complications observed.

7 projects worth 33 m boost livestock sector

IBRA: Al Sharqiyah North Governorate is witnessing significant growth in its livestock sector, with new investments, expanding production and enhanced veterinary services contributing to the development of the agricultural economy in Oman. Dr Abdulaziz bin Ali al Mashikhi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources in the governorate, said that 7 new investment projects worth RO 33 million have been launched. These include ventures in animal



production, horse breeding, poultry and egg production, alongside ongoing projects in cattle, goat and camel farming, as well as dairy production. To further boost investment, 14

opportunities have been offered via the 'Tatweer' platform, primarily focused on horse breeding facilities across various wilayats. Additional proposals — such as Dutch rabbit meat production, ostrich farming

and fertilised egg production — have also been received, with several contracts already signed. Authorities are also developing large-scale livestock and fodder farming plans, including the 'Sabsub' project in Al Mudhaibi (4,000 acres, 14 plots) and the 'Al Nakdat' project in Sinaw (4,357 acres), alongside new plans in Sinaw and Al Qabil currently under study. The governorate's livestock population reached around 435,000 animals in 2025, supported by 7 government and 43 private veterinary facilities. — ONA

Omani innovator turns vision into global impact

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

AT A TIME when rapid transformation is reshaping global priorities and intensifying competition over the future, innovation has emerged as a defining driver of national progress. Within this evolving landscape, Omani talent continues to carve a distinct presence — transforming ideas into meaningful, lasting impact. Among them is Muthla bint Rashid al Flaiti, whose journey reflects not only personal achievement but a broader narrative of persistence, purpose and forward-looking leadership.

Her recent recognition as 'Outstanding Innovator' at the Global Innovation Institute Awards marks a significant milestone.

Yet beyond the accolade lies a deeper story — one rooted in years of exploration, self-discovery and a sustained commitment to building a culture of innovation.

"Innovation is not a destination, but a continuous journey of exploration, learning and impact."

Muthla's passion for innovation began early. As a student, she was naturally drawn to rethinking conventional approaches, constantly seeking new ways to present ideas. This instinct evolved into a more defined path during the Covid-19 pandemic. She accelerated her thinking — reflecting on how individuals recognise opportunities and why some succeed in transforming them into tangible outcomes while others do not.

She immersed herself in studying human thinking patterns, innovation methodologies and engaging with specialised centres. What began as curiosity gradually developed into a structured and purposeful journey.

A pivotal milestone came during her tenure at the College of Sharia Sciences, where she identified a



Innovation is not a destination, but a continuous journey of exploration, learning and impact. True innovation creates greater value, delivers better experiences and drives sustainable growth.

MUTHLA AL FLAITI

growing need for flexible education. Well ahead of its time, she proposed the introduction of a distance learning system — more than a decade before the global shift triggered by the pandemic. The initiative proved highly successful, attracting nearly 4,000 students worldwide in its first semester alone, underscoring the importance of anticipating future needs.

"True innovation creates greater value, delivers better experiences and drives sustainable growth."

Another defining moment came in 2018 following an inspiring encounter with Omani media figure Azza al Ismaili. The experience reshaped her understanding of success, reinforcing the idea that achievement is deeply personal and shaped by individual journeys rather than fixed benchmarks.

Her transition to the Ministry of Social Development marked a turning point, expanding her impact from individual initiatives to broader, community-driven transformation. There, Muthla began shaping an integrated ecosystem for social innovation — built on collaboration, training, and institutional alignment.

This vision materialised through a series of initiatives.

In 2019, she launched the 'Al Muthla Platform,' offering training and consultancy in innovation methodologies and design thinking across administrative, social and educational sectors. She also established a Scientific Innovation Club for children and youth, creating a practical environment to nurture creativity and experimentation.

Her contributions extended to institutional capacity-building, where she trained more than 100 employees within the ministry across various governorates, equipping them with tools to embed innovation into organisational practices.

"Clarity in understanding innovation is the first step toward meaningful implementation."

Despite these achievements, challenges were inevitable. One of the most persistent obstacles was the widespread misunderstanding of innovation as a concept — often conflated with digital transformation, quality management or change management.

In response, she prioritised awareness through workshops, articles, and dialogue sessions aimed at clarifying both the concept and its practical application.

Muthla highlights the immense potential of Omani youth, while emphasising the need for stronger awareness of innovation methodologies and supportive ecosystems that encourage experimentation and resilience.

She also calls for a renewed perspective — moving beyond admiration of Western models and reconnecting with the region's own intellectual heritage. Drawing inspiration from pioneering scholars such as Al Khwarizmi, Ibn Al Haitham and Ibn Sina, she underscores the deep historical roots of innovation within Arab and Islamic civilisation.

"Empowering youth with the right mindset and tools is key to building innovation-driven societies."

As for Omani women, Muthla sees their growing global presence as both inspiring and expected — no longer exceptions, but a reflection of their expanding role across sectors.

While she continues to develop future projects — currently under wraps - her vision remains grounded in a clear principle: innovation must serve people, address real needs and create sustainable value.

For Muthla, global recognition is not an endpoint, but the beginning of a greater responsibility — transforming personal success into national contribution.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To whom it may concern,
We hereby notify the General Public, as well as all our clients, suppliers, and partners, that **Mr. Satish Suria**, an Indian national holding **Resident Card No. 68515388** and **Passport No. Z3290854**, is no longer an employee of Al Tomouh IT LLC, located in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, effective from July 27th, 2025.

Mr. Satish Suria's services in his previous position were terminated as of the aforementioned date. Please be advised that although he remains in the Sultanate under the company's residency sponsorship for other reasons, he possesses no authority to represent Al Tomouh IT LLC or act on its behalf in any capacity whatsoever.

Any transactions, agreements, promises, or dealings entered into by Mr. Satish Suria, whether in a professional or personal capacity, shall be at his own sole risk and responsibility. Consequently, Al Tomouh IT LLC shall not be held liable or responsible for any actions, representations, or omissions - financial or otherwise - undertaken by Mr. Satish Suria after July 27th, 2025.

Al Tomouh IT LLC

- 1

4 KILLED IN IRAN ATTACK IN ISRAEL
Israel said the bodies of four people had been recovered in Haifa after it was struck by an Iranian missile.
- 2

6 WOUNDED IN KUWAIT
An Iranian attack on a residential area in northern Kuwait injured six people, the health ministry said.
- 3

1 INJURED IN ABU DHABI
The UAE said its air defences were responding to a missile and drone attack, with falling debris injuring one person in Abu Dhabi.
- 4

MORE SHIPS PASS THROUGH HORMUZ
More ships pass through Hormuz. A third Turkish-owned ship has passed through Hormuz. Indian-flagged LPG tanker also passed through the strait
- 5

YANBU ALTERNATIVE
South Korea will send five ships to Yanbu to help establish alternative oil supply routes avoid the Strait of Hormuz. Taiwan said it will also redirect ships to bring crude oil from Saudi Red Sea ports
- 6

OIL BENCHMARKS AROUND \$110
Oil prices made early gains on Monday but fell back following US President Donald Trump's latest threats against Iran.
- 7

OPEC+ HIKES QUOTAS -
The cartel agreed to again increase oil production quotas, by 206,000 barrels per day from May.
- 8

HEZBOLLAH STRIKES ON ISRAEL
Lebanese group Hezbollah said it fired a salvo of rockets at Israel, targeting towns in the north.
- 9

ISRAEL STRIKES ON LEBANON KILL 15
sraeli strikes on Lebanon killed at least 15 people on Sunday and wounded 39, officials said
- 10

IRGC TO AVENGE SLAIN INTEL CHIEF
Iran's Revolutionary Guards vowed to avenge the death of Major General Majid Khademi

DEFIANT IRAN RAMPS UP ATTACKS IN ISRAEL AND GULF

IRAN launched fresh attacks across the Middle East on Monday and threatened “devastating” retaliation, after US President Donald Trump’s expletive-laced warning that Tehran must reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Israel, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates reported a barrage of missile and drone strikes early Monday. The attacks came as Tehran ramped up rhetoric against Trump, with Tehran’s central military command warning of “much more devastating” retaliation if its adversaries hit civilian targets.

The warning came hours after Trump threatened to destroy Iran’s civilian infrastructure, demanding Tehran bow to his demands for a deal to reopen the Gulf to shipping.

Iranian missiles have hit Israeli cities and economic infrastructure in the Gulf, sending world energy prices soaring. Oil opened higher in early trading in Asia, with US benchmark West Texas Intermediate up 1.86 percent to \$113.62 a barrel and Brent above \$110.

While Trump told Fox News Iran was “close” to making a deal, security analyst Danny Citrinowicz said “the prospect of a negotiated agreement with Iran, at least under current conditions, is close to nonexistent.”

“Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all wrapped up in one, in Iran. There will be nothing like it!!!” Trump declared, prompting Tehran to accuse Trump of taking orders from Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Iran’s parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, posted on social media that “our whole region is going to burn because you insist on following Netanyahu’s commands.”

RUSSIA SLAMS TRUMP

Iran’s ally Russia also condemned Trump’s threat. Moscow said Washington should abandon “the language of ultimatums” and return to negotiations, according to a Russian readout of Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov’s latest call with his Iranian counterpart.

The New York Times reported that the rescued US airman, a weapons systems officer, was equipped with a pistol, a beacon and a secure communications device to coordinate with rescuers.

Two of the aircraft meant to transport him and his rescuers to safety were stuck inside Iran and had to be destroyed to prevent them from falling into Iranian hands, The Times and CBS reported.



Healthcare workers gather for a rally condemning attacks on health facilities by the US and Israel outside at Imam Khomeini Hospital in Tehran on Monday. — AFP

US forces used three other planes to carry out the airman and his rescuers, reports said. Iran’s military said it destroyed four US aircraft involved in the operation, which it said used an abandoned airport.

Iranian media reported five people were killed in strikes during the operation. Footage released by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps was presented as showing charred, smoking wreckage of an

American aircraft scattered across a desert area. Iran claims it downed the fighter jet and the crew ejected, while US media reported only the plane was shot down. Washington has not confirmed what caused the plane to

TEHRAN: Israeli strikes killed the intelligence chief of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, as the Islamic republic on Monday defied threats from US President Donald Trump to devastate civilian infrastructure if it does not reopen the Strait of Hormuz. The Guards posted on Telegram on Monday that their intelligence chief Majid Khademi (pictured) had been killed “at dawn” in US-Israeli strikes. Israel’s Defence Minister Israel Katz said his country’s military had been behind the strike, saying that it had



been a response to Iran’s attacks on civilian areas in Israel. Katz called Khademi “one of the direct perpetrators of these war crimes

and one of the top three officials in the organisation”, and said of Iran’s leaders: “We will continue to hunt them one by one.” In an attack on Trump, Iran’s parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, posted on social media that “our whole region is going to burn because you insist on following (Israel Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu’s commands.” In Tehran, many residents seemed outwardly indifferent to Trump’s invective, with young Iranians exercising, flying kites and holding

picnics in a large park in the city’s west on Sunday. The Israeli military and medics said a missile fired from Iran hit a residential building in the northern city of Haifa. Firefighters said two people had been killed and two more were missing under the rubble. In Iran, local media reported several attacks on residential areas over Tehran on Monday, while the state broadcaster said that gas outages hit parts of the capital after a strike on a university. — AFP

- 7

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IAEA: STOP STRIKES NEAR IRAN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT



A banner depicting a man holding up a heart gestures before missiles being fired, in Tehran on Monday. — AFP

THE chief of the UN nuclear watchdog on Monday warned attacks near Iran’s Bushehr nuclear power plant “pose a very real danger to nuclear safety and must stop”. Strikes near the operating plant “could cause a severe radiological accident with harmful consequences for people and the environment in Iran and beyond,” said Rafael Grossi, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), on X. He added that one recent strike hit just 75 metres (246 feet) from the plant’s perimeter. Tehran criticised the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in strong terms on Monday for inaction after repeated US and Israeli attacks near Iran’s sole nuclear power plant. In a letter to Grossi, Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization chief Mohammad Eslami criticised him for failing to condemn the latest attack near the Bushehr nuclear power plant strongly enough. This could encourage the “aggressors” to repeat these attacks, Eslami wrote, according to a report by the state-run news agency IRNA. But this is the fourth time since Israel and the US began the war in late February that a projectile has struck near the nuclear power plant or its premises. The facility is Iran’s only nuclear power plant and is located about 760 km south of Tehran on The Gulf. Its Russian-designed reactor has been generating electricity since 2011. The Russian state-owned nuclear company Rosatom is currently building a second reactor unit. Eslami said Iran’s only functioning nuclear power plant had so far been targeted four times, with the most recent attack in its vicinity on April 4 killing a security staff member and injuring others. — Agencies

ISRAEL SAYS STRIKING HEZBOLLAH IN LEBANON

BEIRUT: An Israeli strike hit Beirut’s southern suburbs on Monday as Israel’s army said it was targeting Hezbollah, with the raid sending a large plume of smoke billowing across the skyline. The state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported the strike on the Hezbollah stronghold, which has been largely emptied of residents following repeated Israeli attacks and evacuation warnings. Israel has launched strikes across Lebanon and a ground invasion in the south since March 2, when Hezbollah entered the Middle East war on the side of its backer Iran. Israel’s army said it was “striking Hezbollah terror targets in Beirut” on Monday. Shortly before the warning, an AFP journalist in the southern suburbs saw just a few shops open, including a bakery, a pharmacy and a barbershop, as well as a gas station belonging to the Al Amana fuel company destroyed in a previous raid. The Israeli army said on Sunday that in recent days, it had struck two Al Amana petrol stations “which were controlled by Hezbollah and served as significant financial infrastructure” supporting the group’s activities.

Fresh portraits mourning Iran’s former supreme leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the US-Israeli attack on February 28 that triggered the Middle East conflict, were visible along main roads in the southern suburbs. The NNA also reported deadly strikes in the country’s south and east on Monday. A day earlier, Israel repeatedly struck the southern suburbs and also hit a site in Beirut’s Jnah neighbourhood near the country’s largest public medical facility. The health ministry said that strike killed five people, including a 15-year old girl and two Sudanese nationals. Another strike on the town of Ain Saadeh, east of Beirut, killed three people including two women,



A man stands on a destroyed vehicle at the site of Israeli strike on a building in Beirut on Monday. — AFP

authorities said. Among the dead were Pierre Mouawad, a local official in the Lebanese Forces, a Christian party strongly opposed to Hezbollah and his wife. Residents of the building told local media that the strike hit the apartment above Mouawad’s.

Israel’s military said on Monday that it had struck a “terrorist target” east of Beirut. “Reports of casualties among Lebanese civilians not involved in the fighting are being examined. All details of the incident are under review,” it said. — AFP

OPINION

How conflict is costing civilians and the global economy



THE ongoing war in the Middle East is not just a conflict between the militaries of two countries; it is a war waged by two or three militaries against hapless civilians. Right from the first day of this war on February 28, the targeting of a school in Iran resulted in the deaths of over 200 schoolchildren, adding to the hundreds of other civilian casualties recorded so far.

Such actions stand in direct defiance of the Geneva Convention of 1949, which dictates that persons taking no active part in hostilities — including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms or are hors de combat due to sickness or wounds — shall in all circumstances be treated humanely.

International law is clear: Any party to a conflict may establish shelters, either directly or through neutral states and humanitarian organisations, to protect wounded combatants and civilians who perform no work of a military character.

Furthermore, civilian hospitals organised to care for the wounded, the sick, infirm, and maternity cases may under no circumstances be the object of an attack; they must be respected and protected at all times. Yet, as of early April 2026, the conflict has resulted in staggering casualties.

Reports indicate that between 1,900 and 3,500 people have been killed in Iran, with Human Rights Activists in Iran

(HRANA) citing upwards of 3,540 deaths alongside thousands of injuries and massive infrastructure damage due to US-Israeli strikes.

These figures represent only the approximate toll within Iran. Thousands of civilians have also been killed in Israel and during related attacks across all Gulf states, including Oman.

The tragedy, however, extends beyond those in the immediate line of fire. Higher oil prices are threatening to push global economies into recession, triggering an inflationary crisis that severely impacts household finances and business stability.

As global economic activity grinds to a halt, the world becomes poorer. When citizens and businesses are forced to spend more on fuel and expensive electricity, spending on other essential needs is drastically reduced.

This fuel crisis inevitably drives up food prices; increased transportation costs and rising fertiliser prices make it harder for families to put food on the table. Furthermore, travel and tourism — major sources of income in recent years — will be badly affected by air travel disruptions, safety advisories, and fuel shortages. This shift leads to widespread job losses in both organised and unorganised sectors, proving that in modern warfare, the entire world is forced to pay the price.

The World Travel & Tourism Council

The fuel crisis inevitably drives up food prices; increased transportation costs and rising fertiliser prices make it harder for families to put food on the table. Many companies will seek to cut costs by reducing their workforces

(WTTC) estimates that the crisis is costing the region roughly \$600 million per day. The losses are being driven by declining traveller confidence, flight suspensions and operational disruptions at key airports.

WTTC warned that even short-lived instability can carry significant economic consequences, affecting national economies, private businesses and employment across the sector. European estimates suggest that if the conflict continues, tourism-related losses could surpass €40 billion, with international visitor numbers potentially falling short by 23 to 38 million compared to earlier forecasts.

Much more than the Russia-Ukraine war, the impacts of this war on global fertiliser production and trade are given their importance in agricultural productivity and food security. The Gulf is a big production and exporting hub for fertiliser nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphate, which can hurt food prices.

Any sustained reduction in LNG production and/or shipments from the Gulf (Qatar supplies around 10 per cent of globally traded natural gas) will have significant implications for nitrogen fertiliser production worldwide. Natural gas is both a key feedstock and the primary energy source for producing ammonia, the building block for all nitrogen fertilisers.

So the casualties and the impact of this conflict have already crossed geographical limits.

ORBAN STOKES ANTI-UKRAINE SENTIMENT

EDE ZABORSZKY & ANDRAS ROSTOVANYI

Hungary’s Viktor Orban has used disinformation to make Ukraine the scapegoat of his election campaign, analysts said, with some suggesting he is receiving covert help from Russia against an unprecedented challenge to his 16-year rule.

The nationalist premier — Moscow’s closest ally in the European Union — has used AI-generated images to help whip up sentiment against Ukraine, which is fighting off a Russian attack.

Analysts argue Russia is aiding him in shifting the conversation away from the bread-and-butter issues that have propelled opposition leader Peter Magyar’s party to the top of the polls ahead of Hungary’s April 12 vote.

“The campaign’s rhetoric is deliberately binary — peace versus war —portraying Ukraine as a risk and the incumbent Hungarian government as seeking stability and rationality,” Csilla Fedinec, a historian from ELTE University’s Centre for Social Sciences, said.

The two neighbours have been at loggerheads after Orban accused Ukraine of stalling the reopening of a pipeline carrying Russian oil to landlocked Hungary, with Kyiv saying the pipe was damaged by Russian air strikes in January.

Hungary, a EU member, has also been holding up a \$103-billion EU loan to war-torn Ukraine and a new round of sanctions on Russia over its attack.

Last month, Hungarian counter-terror forces temporarily detained Ukrainian bank employees, seizing valuables passing through the country.

Tabloids affiliated with Orban’s Fidesz party published pictures generated by artificial intelligence that exaggerated the amount of cash and gold involved.

Posts involving the images garnered unusually high engagement on Facebook, with many accounts having non-Hungarian names, lacking public information or profile photos — typical signs of fake profiles used in coordinated bot campaigns.

Weeks earlier, fake images began circulating online purportedly showing a Hungarian memorial in Transcarpathia — home to Ukraine’s ethnic Hungarian minority — defaced with anti-Hungarian and anti-Orban slogans, as well as Ukrainian nationalist symbols and a swastika.

While the monument has been vandalised several times in the past, the images were found to have been made by AI. — AFP

Fate opens the door, but choice leads the way

PEOPLE

LOVE to blame fate. It has become the easiest escape button in life. A person forgets to do his work, then proudly says that destiny blocked his way. Another person repeats the same mistake every month, then explains with great confidence that fate simply refused to help him. If destiny had a customer service office, the queue would reach the airport.

Islam teaches something a bit more serious. Destiny is real. Allah knows everything before it happens. But this does not mean that a person can sit on the sofa and wait for blessings to walk through the door like polite visitors.

Allah’s knowledge does not push anyone. A person must still make an effort. The Prophet, PBUH, said that we must tie our camel first, then trust in Allah. Many people love the trust part. The camel part becomes a problem.

Life contains events that we cannot control. No one chooses their family. No one chooses surprise challenges. These things belong to Allah’s wisdom. But our choices are still our choices. The Quran says that Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves. This is a polite way of saying, ‘Please move.’

Stories throughout time make this clear. In the old Greek plays, the hero tries to run away from a prophecy. The poor man runs in circles, but every decision he makes pushes him towards the very thing he fears. His problem is not destiny. His problem is that he thinks too much and listens too little.

Shakespeare adds more examples.



DR KHALFAN AL HARRASI

The author is an academic and researcher

Daily life gives us more examples than we need. A person acts from pride or fear, and when the results appear, he says that it was fate

Macbeth hears a prophecy, but the real problem is his ambition. Romeo and Juliet blame the stars, but their speed is faster than any star in the sky. Fate may open the curtain, but people still perform their own dance.

Modern books show the same idea. In ‘The Alchemist’, destiny calls to the hero, but he still needs to walk, think, try and try again.

Some characters move forward. Others sit in their comfortable corners, drink tea and then complain that destiny forgot to knock on their door. Islam would call this ‘creative excuses.’ Scholars remind us that belief in destiny is meant to bring calm, not to help us avoid responsibility.

Daily life gives us more examples than we need. A person acts from pride or fear, and when the results appear, he says that it was fate. It sounds deep and looks wise. But it is nothing more than a polite version of ‘I do not want to admit my part in this.’ A story like ‘The Necklace’ shows this very clearly. One decision based on pride leads to years of difficulty.

People cry and say it is unlucky. But if we follow the story step by step, we see the decision walking in front and the luck trying to catch up.

Even technology tries to join the discussion. Algorithms suggest what we should watch, read and buy. If we follow everything, technology becomes our new destiny. But one different choice sends the whole system into confusion.

This simple act reminds us of the Islamic principle. Action first. Trust second. Allah guides the steps, but the person must lift their foot.

Islam gives us a balanced view. What comes to us is part of Allah’s wisdom. But what we do next is our job. Some people use the phrase ‘It is written’ whenever they want to escape effort or apology. But the Prophet never used destiny to avoid action. He encouraged planning, patience, courage and trust. Destiny is a source of strength, not a secret exit door.

Many people say ‘fate’ when they really mean fear. Fear of change or effort. Fear of taking responsibility. So they place this fear inside a religious word and hope everyone will leave it alone.

But Islam calls us to honesty and courage. People often say that the road opens for the one who walks. It is true. The road does not open for the one who waits for fate to build a bridge. Fate may open the door. It does not push anyone through it. Some people step in and find that Allah’s mercy is wide for those who try.

Others wait outside and say that destiny did not invite them. But destiny is not the problem. Hesitation is. When we stop using qadar as a hiding place and start using it as a source of courage, life becomes lighter. The path may not be fully ours, but the steps are. And Allah, in His kindness, rewards the one who walks.

A morning greeting that woke me up



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is senior editor of Observer

MY FRIENDS and I have a habit of exchanging morning greetings on mobile phones. And this message came from a friend: “Ant never has dreams because they never rest. Butterflies don’t celebrate a birthday since they live only 47 days. Snails can sleep for up to 3 years.

“So remember, all are special creatures, and let’s appreciate the true meaning of the word thankful.”

I sat up, with words going through my mind in bold fonts and exclamation marks, and had to find out more.

It is true — certain land snails can enter a state of deep dormancy (aestivation during hot climate or hibernation during winter) for up to three years to survive extreme drought, heat, or cold. During this time, they seal themselves in their shells with mucus to conserve moisture and energy. Imagine this mechanism. And during these three years, they are not consuming food.

So how do they survive?

Apparently, snails slow their metabolism dramatically, effectively “shutting down” until favourable conditions return.

More than 195 health conditions are related to obesity. Metabolism dictates how the body converts food into energy, acting as a key driver in weight management. According to health experts, obesity often results when caloric intake exceeds expenditure, a process worsened by slow metabolic rates, hypothyroidism, or hormonal imbalances like Cushing syndrome. While obesity can lead to

metabolic dysfunction (eg, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes), metabolically healthy obesity can exist, though it may change over time.

Obesity is characterised by reduced lipid oxidation and low resting energy expenditure (REE). When the body’s metabolic rate is lower, less energy is burned at rest, making weight gain easier. Now, none of this is impacting the snail when it goes into a resting period to protect itself from a drought.

They stay sealed by producing, apparently, a protective, mucus-based layer called an epiphragm to seal their shell opening, reducing water loss.

Now, maybe that is good for our skin, too.

On closer research, I found out that they are not actually “sleeping,” as we know it, and instead, this is actually a specialised survival mechanism. Oh, but snails do sleep quite a bit — about 13-15 hours if it is an active snail.

This survival ability, they say, is most common in specific land snail species facing harsh environments.

Their motion is known as pedal locomotion, which involves secreting a lubricating mucus to reduce friction, allowing them to traverse diverse surfaces or climb vertically. It is their muscular foot that makes all the difference.

The entire underside acts as a single, muscular foot that ripples to propel the body forward. From tail to head, they move in pedal waves as the muscles contract and relax. As they glide, the snails secrete mucus, creating a smooth surface; thus, they can easily climb and cover uneven terrain.

So butterflies have always been used as

According to health experts, obesity often results when caloric intake exceeds expenditure, a process worsened by slow metabolic rates, hypothyroidism, or hormonal imbalances like Cushing syndrome

metaphors. Now we need to compare the qualities of snails. Slow as a snail, you might have heard, but did we know that snails are methodical, focusing on stability over speed?

I feel better for everyone who is looked down upon as a slow driver.

And now I wanted to check on the ants.

Don’t they sleep? Are they sleep-deprived? They seem to be on the move constantly.

This is what I found: ‘Ants do rest and sleep, but they use a polyphasic sleep pattern consisting of hundreds of short “power naps” rather than one long sleep period. Worker ants take roughly 250 naps daily, lasting about a minute each, totalling nearly 5 hours of sleep, while queen ants sleep longer, averaging nine hours through 6-minute naps.’

So when that working ant stopped for a while, was he taking a short nap?

Now we need to add an ant nap along with a cat nap. Scientists explain that ants do not experience typical “loss of muscle tone” or “reduced sensitivity to stimuli” in the same way humans do when sleeping.

It probably has to do with the duration of the sleep. Does sleep deprivation cause obesity?

Yes, according to experts, chronic sleep deprivation is a significant risk factor for obesity. Sleeping less than seven hours a night disrupts hormones that regulate hunger (increasing ghrelin, decreasing leptin), causes higher stress levels (cortisol), and reduces physical activity (because we feel tired), all of which promote weight gain and fat accumulation.

HOW A PERILOUS US RESCUE MISSION NEARLY WENT OFF COURSE

PHIL STEWART AND HUMEYRA PAMUK

The rescue had unfolded with near-perfect precision. Under cover of darkness, US commandos slipped deep into Iran, undetected, scaled a 7,000-foot ridge and pulled a stranded American weapons specialist to safety, moving him towards a secret rendezvous point before dawn on Sunday. Then everything stopped.

Two MC-130 aircraft that had ferried some of the roughly 100 special operations forces into rugged terrain south of Tehran suffered a mechanical failure and could not take off, a US official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Suddenly, elite commandos risked being stuck behind enemy lines.

Their commanders made a high-risk decision, ordering additional aircraft to fly into Iran to extract the group in waves - a decision that left the elite commandos waiting for a couple of tense hours. “If there was a moment, that was it,” said the official, who credited quick decision-making with saving the day. The official, along with others who spoke to Reuters for this story, was granted anonymity in order to speak candidly about the operation.

The gamble worked. The rescue force was pulled out in stages, and US troops destroyed the disabled MC-130s and four additional helicopters inside Iran rather than risk leaving sensitive equipment behind. The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The successful extraction ended one of the most perilous episodes of the five-week-old conflict, averting what could have been a catastrophic loss of American lives and easing a mounting crisis for President Donald Trump as he weighs whether to escalate a war that has already killed thousands.

The rescued US weapons specialist was the second of two crew members on an F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jet that Iran said on Friday had been hit by its air defences. The US official said the plane was flying over Isfahan province when it was brought down and the two airmen ejected separately. The pilot was rescued while the second airman remained in Iran.

US air crews are trained in Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) techniques if downed behind enemy lines, but few are fluent in Persian and face a challenge in staying undetected while seeking rescue.

A US source familiar with some of the operational details said the American officer, whom Trump said held the rank of colonel, sprained his ankle and hid in a crevice on a hilltop.

The official said the airman later established contact with the US military and authenticated himself - a critical step to ensure rescue forces were not walking into a trap. — Reuters

Targeting ‘game changer’ air defence system by 2027

FIRE POINT, maker of Ukraine’s Flamingo cruise missile, is in talks with European companies to launch a new air defence system by next year, a senior executive said, creating a low-cost alternative to the increasingly hard-to-get Patriot system. With governments seeking to defend their skies as the wars in Ukraine and Iran sow global instability, Fire Point’s co-founder and chief designer Denys Shtilierman said it aimed to slash the cost of intercepting a ballistic missile to below \$1 million.

Shtilierman also said Fire Point was awaiting government approval for an investment by a Middle Eastern conglomerate that valued the company at \$2.5 billion and would open the door to new business opportunities, including low-orbit satellite launches.

Years of know-how gained on the battlefield fighting Russian forces have made Ukraine a leading innovator in low-cost defence tech. With the outbreak of war in the Gulf, Kyiv has leveraged that expertise to sign security agreements with governments across the region.

Many Ukrainian defence firms are now seeking to export their excess capacity and cash in on a global boom in military spending. While the government recently loosened wartime export restrictions, each proposed deal is still subject to stringent checks and state approval.

Ukraine and many other Western-allied nations rely heavily on the US-made Patriot system to stop ballistic missiles.

But Patriot missiles are in increasingly short supply amid extensive deployment in the Gulf against Iranian attacks. And Europe’s only anti-ballistic system, the Italo-French SAMP/T, is produced in relatively small numbers.

To bring down a ballistic projectile, the Patriot system - manufactured by Raytheon and Lockheed Martin - often requires two or three air defence missiles,



Employees work on an FP-1 drone at a production facility of Fire Point company in an undisclosed location in Ukraine. — Reuters



MAX HUNDER

The writer is a journalist with Reuters in Kyiv



DANIEL FLYNN

The writer is a Global Spot Enterprise Editor for Reuters

each costing several million dollars, Shtilierman said.

“If we can decrease it to less than \$1 million, it will be... a game changer in air defence solutions,” he said in an interview. “We plan to intercept the first ballistic missile at the end of 2027.”

Shtilierman declined to name the European companies involved in the discussions to develop the new system but said Fire Point is “deeply interested” in collaboration on radar, missile target-seeking and communications systems - areas where it lacks expertise.

European companies including Weibel, Hensoldt, SAAB and Thales have good radar solutions, he noted. Founded after Moscow’s 2022 attack, Fire Point is Ukraine’s biggest maker of the long-range drones used in the majority of strikes deep inside Russia.

In recent months, its FP5 long-range cruise missile - commonly known as the Flamingo - has also been used to hit Russian military facilities and arms factories, including a ballistic missile plant nearly 1,400 km inside Russian territory.

Shtilierman said Fire Point was now in the final stages of developing two supersonic ballistic missiles.

The smaller FP-7 missile, with a range of around 300 km, will have its first military deployment “in the close future”, he said, describing it as

similar to Lockheed Martin’s ATACMS short-range ballistic system.

The larger FP-9, capable of carrying an 800 kg warhead up to 850 km, is about to enter testing and would place Moscow within range of Ukraine’s ballistic arsenal, he added.

Shtilierman said strikes on Moscow, which is ringed by some of the world’s most formidable air defences, would cause a “mass shift in the Russian mind and the mind of top guys in Russia.”

Russia’s defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Fabian Hoffmann, a missile expert and senior researcher at the Norwegian Defence University College, said that, while Russia has experience in successfully downing ATACMS, more widespread use of ballistic missiles could stretch Russian air defences, already degraded by Ukrainian strikes.

And while Fire Point’s 2027 target for launching a low-cost air defence system was “ambitious”, he said that, beyond Ukraine’s own military needs, there would be strong demand from governments even if its kill rates per missile were less effective than the Patriot’s.

Ukraine’s anti-monopoly authority has until around October to decide on the proposed \$760-million acquisition of a 30 per cent stake in Fire Point by the Middle Eastern investor, Shtilierman said.

Shtilierman said the country’s location next to the Indian Ocean and geographical conditions were favourable for space launches.

“We built a carbon winding machine, which allows us to wind a big solid rocket booster for satellite delivery,” he said, noting the project remained at the conceptual stage although there were already agreements “with a couple of Western companies”.

Regardless of whether the deal proceeds, Shtilierman said Fire Point would not take on further investors until after it had demonstrated success with its missile defence system, which will use the company’s FP7 missile.

SPORTS

NEWCALENDAR



The Super Cup will feature four clubs: Oman Club, Seeb, Al Amerat and Nizwa.

OHA REPLACES MINISTRY’S SHIELD WITH OHA CUP

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
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MOHAMMED BIN SULAIMAN AL DHAOURI

The Competitions Committee of the Oman Handball Association (OHA) has approved the calendar for the 2026–2027 season, submitting its recommendations to the Board of Directors following a meeting chaired by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Dhaouri. The move

aims to ensure early organisation of competitions and enhance competitiveness among the OHA’s 43 affiliated clubs across the country.

The new season will begin with the youth league for players born between 2010 and 2012 on August 21, 2026, followed by the junior league for players born in 2008 and 2009 on August 28. The schedule is designed to provide structured opportunities for different age groups to develop and compete.

The Super Cup will feature four clubs: Oman Club, Seeb, Al Amerat and Nizwa. Oman Club will face Al Amerat directly, while a draw between Seeb and Nizwa will determine the remaining match-up. The date of the competition will be announced at a later stage.

The OHA Cup, which replaces the former Ministry’s Shield, is set to begin on October 9, 2026. The second division league will start on October 23, followed by the first division league on November 13.

The season will also include the women’s indoor league and the youth beach handball league, both scheduled for April 2027, as part of efforts to expand participation and strengthen the sport’s presence. The committee confirmed that detailed regulations for each competition will be issued after finalising the list of participating clubs, ensuring clarity and fair competition. New regulations will allow the registration of foreign players, including goalkeepers, and permit the participation of four youth players in the junior league to support talent development.

These steps are part of the OHA’s broader strategy to enhance competition standards and further develop handball in Oman.

Separately, five clubs have confirmed their participation in the upcoming women’s indoor handball league: Salalah, Al Ittihad, Masirah, Al Amerat and Sohar. The league is set to begin in mid-month, with fixtures and regulations to be announced in the coming days, marking the conclusion of the 2025–2026 season.



The Competitions Committee of the Oman Handball Association (OHA) has approved the calendar for the 2026–27 season.

Oman qualify for Asian Games with third win

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

OMAN’S NATIONAL hockey team continued its impressive run in the 2026 Asian Games Qualifier with a third successive victory, defeating Hong Kong China 2-1 at the Royal Thai Air Force Hockey Field in Bangkok in Group A. With this third win in a row, the Red Warriors not only maintained their steady progress in the group but also secured qualification for the next stage after collecting a full nine points from all three matches, thereby confirming their place at the 2026 Asian Games.

Oman entered the match with clear focus and made the most of an early opportunity when it earned a penalty corner in the 10th minute.

A minute later, Asama Barazahan converted from a pass by Khalid al Shaibi to put Oman in front and hand the Red Warriors an early advantage in the opening quarter. Barazahan was later named player of the match for his influential display.

In the same period, Hong Kong China’s Tsang Kin Kan received a green card in the 11th minute, while Oman remained defensively balanced and closed down the spaces well.

Aliyas al Noufli also came close to doubling the lead in the closing moments of the quarter, but his effort on the counter-attack went just wide.

In the second quarter, Oman maintained their tactical discipline and succeeded in limiting the threat of its opponent, despite Hong Kong China’s attempt to respond through a penalty corner in the 16th minute.

The quarter also saw Barazahan show a green card in the 18th minute, while Oman earned two penalty corners in the 23rd minute, but was unable to make the most of them.

Hazaa al Balushi then received a yellow card in the 27th minute, while Hong Kong China’s James Shepherdson was shown a green card in the 25th minute, as Oman took a 1-0 lead into half-time.

ATTACKING PLAY

At the start of the third quarter, Oman increased the tempo of their attacking



Oman collected full nine points from their three matches in Group A.



play, and Aseel al Maaini scored the second goal in the 40th minute, giving the side a stronger advantage. The period also saw Rashid al Alawi receive two green cards in the 42nd and 48th minutes.

Hong Kong China increased the pressure and won several penalty corners in the 34th, 43rd and 44th minutes, but Oman’s defence and goalkeeper dealt well with the danger.

Hong Kong China eventually pulled one back through Felix Chi Him in the 44th minute. In the final quarter, Oman sought to manage their lead calmly while keeping danger away from their defensive zone, as Hong Kong China pushed for an equaliser. The Red Warriors earned another penalty corner in the 52nd minute, but could not add a third goal. Oman, however, held firm until the final whistle to seal another important victory in their campaign.

Seeb edge Samayil to extend lead on top of JL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

Seeb strengthened their hold on top spot in the Jindal League after a hard-fought 2-1 win over Samayil at Seeb Stadium in Round 19, while Sohar were held to a 1-1 draw by Al Khabourah at Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Seeb made an early breakthrough in the ninth minute when Abdulmajid al Balushi rose well to head home a high ball beyond Samayil goalkeeper Alaa al Hamadani. The home side looked settled after the opener, but Samayil responded positively and began to grow into the match through the movement of Dawood al Jabri, Musab al Lamki and Hazza al Mushaifri.

Their pressure paid off in the 23rd minute when Muhannad al Hishami fired in the equaliser to bring Samayil back into the contest. Samayil continued to threaten as Seeb briefly retreated into their



Seeb and Samayil players in action during the Jindal League.

own half, while the leaders also searched for a second goal through a series of attacking attempts and set-piece situations. Both sides created chances in an evenly contested

first half, which ended 1-1.

Seeb returned after the break with greater urgency and pushed forward in search of the winner, relying on the attacking presence of Omar al Malki, Abdulmajid al Balushi and Zaher al Aghbari. Their persistence was rewarded in the 62nd minute when Zaher al Aghbari converted from close range to restore Seeb’s lead.

Samayil tried to respond, but Seeb managed the game well in the closing stages and made several substitutions to preserve their advantage. The victory lifted Seeb to 48 points at the top of the standings, while Samayil remained 10th on 19 points.

SOHAR, AL KHABOURAH SHARE POINTS

At Al Rustaq Sports Complex, Al Khabourah and Sohar shared the points in a 1-1 draw. Al Khabourah, who had shown mixed form in recent rounds, took the lead in the 11th minute when Yousuf al Saadi

headed in from a corner.

Sohar gradually worked their way into the game and created several opportunities before the break through Mohammed Ihab, Ammar al Rashdi and Victor Owen, but Al Khabourah held on to their lead going into half-time.

The visitors started the second half strongly and nearly levelled through substitute Dwayne Carl, whose first effort drifted over before he forced a save moments later. Sohar eventually found the equaliser in the 50th minute through Keita.

The match then opened up, with both teams trading attacks in search of a winner. Sohar came close late on through Abdullah al Mashaykhi, while Al Khabourah also threatened through John Paul, but neither side could find a second goal.

The draw moved Sohar to 32 points in fourth place, while Al Khabourah advanced to 16 points in 11th.

FINAL HONOURS



Bousherian Blasters won the Girls U19 League.

DANUBE WOMEN, BOUSHERIAN BLASTERS EMERGE CHAMPIONS

MUSCAT: The Women’s League Final between Danube Women and ISWK Women delivered an exciting and high-quality contest, with Danube Women emerging as champions following a clinical run chase.

ISWK Women posted a competitive 123-2 in their 20 overs, led by a superb 67 off 60 balls from Jayadhanyha Gunasekar, with Pia Sharma contributing 17, while Danube’s bowlers Suranjie Dias (1-24) and Merita Pinto (1-11) ensured the total remained within reach.

In response, Danube Women chased down the target comfortably in 18 overs, finishing at 124-2, courtesy of a match-winning 70 off 59 balls from Priyanka Mendonca, well supported by Trupti Pawde’s 29 off 37. Despite a disciplined effort with the ball from Jayadhanyha Gunasekar (1-18), Danube Women maintained control to secure a well-deserved title.

Priyanka Mendonca was named player of the final, while the individual honours for the tournament saw Nitya Joshi awarded best batter, Fiza Javed named best bowler, Disha Pradeep recognised as best all-rounder and Jayadhanyha Gunasekar crowned player of the tournament.

BLASTERS TAKE TITLE

In the Girls U19 League conducted by OC for the first time, Bousherian Blasters capped off an outstanding campaign by finishing at the top of the points table with four wins to be crowned undefeated champions while ISWK Women’s were runners-up with three wins out of four.

The success of the tournament reflects the growing strength of the youth pathway in Oman, with several promising players making their mark and reinforcing the positive trajectory of girls’ cricket development in the country.

Among the individual award winners, Eshal Siddiqui was named best batter, Khushi Muthukumari claimed the best bowler award, Katherine Binu was recognised as best all-rounder and Disha Pradeep continued her excellent run by being adjudged player of the tournament.

The presentation ceremony was graced by Alkesh Joshi, Treasurer and Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer.



Danube emerged champions in the Women’s League after beating ISWK Women in the final..



Salalah players celebrate with the Oman Youth Basketball League trophy after beating Seeb in the final. — **Khalfan al Ruzaiqi**

Salalah clinch maiden Youth League crown

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

SALALAH CLUB were crowned champions of the Oman Youth Basketball League (Under-18) for the 2025-26 season for the first time in their history after a deserved 81-70 victory over Seeb in the title-deciding clash at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex hall in Bausher on Sunday evening.

In the third-place playoff, Al Amerat edged Nizwa 61-57 in an exciting encounter, as the season concluded in the presence of basketball officials and club representatives.

The final lived up to expectations, with both teams producing a competitive and high-tempo contest from the opening quarter. Seeb made the stronger start and finished the first period 19-17 ahead after taking advantage of early scoring chances through Salim al Mahrouqi, Jaid al Kindi and Abdulrahman al Maamari.

Salalah, however, gradually settled into the game and found their rhythm in the second quarter. The team turned the momentum in its favour through disciplined defence and effective finishing, with key three-pointers helping it open a useful gap before half-time. Salalah went into the break with a 43-33 lead.

Seeb responded strongly after the interval and managed to cut the deficit to just two points during the third quarter, but Salalah regained control in the closing stages of the period and moved 60-52 ahead. In the final quarter, Salalah maintained their composure, widened the margin through organised attacking play and eventually sealed an 11-point win to lift the title.

At the end of the championship, OBA Chairman Eng Khalfan al Naabi, crowned the



Action during the final.

top three teams. Salalah received the league trophy and gold medals, while Seeb collected silver and Al Amerat took bronze. Individual awards also went to Qaisar al Balushi of Salalah as best playmaker, Abdulrahman al Maamari of Seeb as best centre, Mazin al Owaisi of Al Amerat as best three-point scorer and Mishal Kafkaf of Salalah as the championship’s top scorer.

LEAGUE FOR ATHLETE CENTRES

After the awards ceremony, Eng Khalfan al Naabi, OBA Chairman, congratulated Salalah on winning the title, praising the team’s performance in the final against Seeb and noting that the triumph was the club’s first in the league.

He said the achievement reflected the progress and hard work of the Dhofar-based side, adding that Salalah has the potential to continue supplying talented players to the national teams.

He also said this season’s Youth League was marked by strong competition and good sportsmanship, pointing to Al Amerat’s comeback win over Nizwa in the third-place playoff as another highlight.

Al Naabi stressed the importance of investing in age-group categories, describing youth and junior levels as the foundation for building the future of sport, while also underlining the role of athlete development centres in nurturing talent with continued support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY).

He added that a dedicated league for athlete development centres is expected to be launched in the coming period, a step aimed at strengthening competition, raising player standards and supporting both clubs and national teams.

Speaking after the title win, Salalah player Muhab al Radhwan said the team deserved the championship after a long journey of hard work.

He said the players entered the league determined to win the title and delivered when it mattered most against Seeb through teamwork, belief and strong spirit.

Muhab al Radhwan added that the achievement would give the team a major boost in the coming seasons.

Royal Cavalry’s Ashraf RC wins bronze at Dubai Championship

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbhaluch

Ashraf RC, representing the Royal Cavalry, secured the bronze title in the colts category at the 23rd edition of the Dubai International Arabian Horse Championship 2026, held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, with the participation of elite Arabian horses from around the world.

The colt delivered a strong performance throughout the competition, finishing third in the



Ashraf RC, representing the Royal Cavalry, secured the bronze title in the colts category in Dubai.

qualifying rounds to advance to the final. He maintained his form in the deciding stage, claiming third place in the colts category for horses aged two to three years to earn the bronze title. D Borkan, owned by Dubai Arabian Horse Stud, claimed the gold title after securing first place, while Azzam al Amal, owned by Shaikh Mohammed Saud Sultan al Qasimi, finished second to take the silver title. The championship is regarded as one of the most prestigious events in Arabian horse beauty competitions, featuring the

participation of 155 horses from various countries. Competitions were held across six categories, including yearling fillies, fillies aged two to three years, mares, yearling colts, colts aged two to three years and stallions.

This achievement reflects the high standards reached by the Royal Cavalry’s horses and highlights their strong presence in international competitions, supported by ongoing efforts in breeding and developing purebred Arabian horses according to the highest global standards.

SPORTSFESTIVAL



INDIAN SCHOOLS TO HOST ‘AMBASSADOR’S SCHOOLYMPIC’

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

The ‘Ambassador’s Schoolympic’ for students of Indian Schools in Oman — an initiative of the Board of Directors of Indian Schools in Oman — launches at the weekend in Muscat. The two-day event aims to engage students constructively and promote sportsmanship among the student community.

Syed Ahmad Salman, Chairman, Board of Directors, said: “This event has been conceived to provide a platform for the students of all 22 Indian schools across Oman to participate in athletic competitions and experience the spirit of sportsmanship, teamwork, and healthy competition.”

The event will be hosted by four schools in the capital region: Indian School Muscat, Indian School Wadi Kabir, Indian School Seeb and Indian School Bausher during April 10 – 11, 2026. The major finals of the event will be held at Indian School Muscat on April 11 in the presence of GV Srinivas, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman.

Due to the geographical dispersion of Indian Schools across the country, opportunities for large-scale inter-school sporting events have been limited.

However, the Board Sports Committee initiated the Ambassador’s Schoolympic to bridge this gap by bringing together students from all schools for an annual athletic meet focused primarily on track and field and games.

Through this initiative, the Board seeks to encourage wider participation in sports, promote physical fitness and healthy lifestyles, and inspire young students to consider sports as a potential career pathway. The Ambassador’s Schoolympic is also expected to foster unity among students, schools, and the wider community while identifying and nurturing young sporting talent within the Indian Schools system in Oman.

The chairman affirmed, “the initiative is envisioned to enhance the standard of sporting activities among students and to instill a culture of teamwork, discipline, perseverance, and fair play. It is also envisioned to provide opportunities for students who have not previously represented their schools in cluster-level competitions to showcase their abilities and participate in competitive sports.”



Inter Milan’s Lautaro Martinez celebrates scoring their third goal against AS Roma with Marcus Thuram at San Siro, Milan, Italy. — Reuters

Inter close in on Serie A title by thumping Roma

MILAN, Italy: Inter Milan took a big step towards winning the Serie A title by thrashing sorry Roma 5-2 on Sunday, ending a late-season wobble and moving nine points clear at the top of the table.

Closest challengers AC Milan travel to champions Napoli on Monday with both bidding to see who might stop Inter from securing a 21st league crown.

But the return of Lautaro Martinez, who scored twice after nearly two months out injured, and a first club goal since early February from Marcus Thuram helped Inter emphatically end a mini-slump.

Inter had collected eight points from their five league matches played since Martinez suffered a calf injury against Bodo/Glimt in the Champions League.

“Tonight was a big match for us... we had to come out with the right attitude and personality,” said Martinez.

“I’m happy for my teammates, because it was the win we deserved.”

Hakan Calhanoglu’s swerving rocket on the stroke of half-time and a second league goal of the season from Nicolo Barella made sure of a win which was also another blow to Roma’s Champions League hopes.

Roma sit sixth, three points behind Como who are fourth and visit Udinese in Monday’s early match, and level with fifth-placed Juventus ahead of the Turin giants’ home fixture with Genoa.

“It was game of two halves, in the first I saw a lot of good things, even if the final result makes everything look different,” said



Inter Milan’s Lautaro Martinez celebrates scoring their third goal against AS Roma at San Siro, Milan, Italy. — Reuters

Roma coach Gian Piero Gasperini.

“Losing in Milan to this Inter team can happen, even if it shouldn’t be by such a margin.”

Inter are a different team with captain Martinez, and the Argentina striker smashed Inter ahead from Marcus Thuram’s neat pass with barely a minute on the clock at the San Siro.

Calhanoglu’s ferocious strike from more than 30 metres put Inter back ahead on the stroke of half-time, just as Roma seemed to be heading into the tunnel level following

Gianluca Mancini’s header in the 40th minute.

That goal galvanised Inter who came out for the second half as fast as they did for the first, and the match was as good as over 10 minutes after the restart thanks to Martinez and Thuram.

Martinez calmly stroked home his 16th league goal of the season in the 52nd minute from another Thuram pass, who moments later glanced in a perfect header from Calhanoglu’s corner.

Barella made the most of more sloppy Roma defending just after the hour, bundling through before firing home the fifth which made Lorenzo Pellegrini’s smart low finish for Roma in the 70th minute a mere consolation effort.

At the other end of the table Cremonese slipped into the relegation zone after being beaten 2-1 by Bologna while Pisa slid closer to the drop with a 1-0 home defeat against Torino. — AFP

ITALIAN SERIE A RESULTS ON SUNDAY:
Cremonese 1 (Bonazzoli 90+1-pen) Bologna 2 (Joao Mario 3, Rowe 16)
Inter Milan 5 (Martinez 2, 52, Calhanoglu 45+1, Thuram 55, Barella 63) Roma 2 (Mancini 40, Pellegrini 70)
Pisa 0 Torino 1 (Adams 80)
Played Saturday
Sassuolo 2 (Garcia 50, Pinamonti 78) Cagliari 1 (Esposito 30-pen)
Verona 0 Fiorentina 1 (Fagioli 82)
Lazio 1 (Noslin 77) Parma 1 (Delprato 15)

Oman Sail’s young sailors honoured for impressive year of excellence

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth honoured 20 sailors from Oman Sail during the recent annual Youth Excellence Awards Ceremony held at Sheraton Oman Hotel on Wednesday. In a year when Omani sailors won a total of 47 medals, the awards celebrated their outstanding achievements with the national sailing team across Gulf, regional and international championships throughout 2025.

This recognition reflects the progress made by Oman Sail’s sailors and their dedication while representing the nation, and highlights the organisation’s continued role in developing national talent capable of competing and excelling on the global stage. It also underscores the sustained



The Oman Sail team during the Youth Excellence Awards Ceremony.

support for the sports sector in the Sultanate of Oman, in line with Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises empowering national capabilities and strengthening their presence internationally.

The honour comes at the culmination of a successful season that further elevated Oman’s profile in sailing at both regional and international levels. Oman Sail sailors delivered strong

performances across several key events, including the second Arab Women’s Sailing Championship, held in Kuwait from December 2-5, 2025, where the national women’s team secured multiple medals, including a silver in the Optimist class and two bronze medals in the ILCA 4 and ILCA 6 classes, reflecting the continued progress and competitiveness of Omani female sailors on the Arab stage.

On the international front, the Oman Sail High Performance Team maintained its strong presence through participation in the Star Sailors League (SSL). The team topped its group at the Asian Continental Qualifiers in Thailand, securing qualification for the SSL Grand Final, scheduled to take place

in November in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Reaching the final and qualifying with a perfect record highlighted the team’s high technical readiness and strong team spirit.

At the Gulf level, the national team also delivered an impressive performance at the third GCC Beach Games 2025, held in Oman from April 5-11. The team secured a total of eight medals, including three gold, three silver, and two bronze.

Commenting on the achievement, Abdulaziz Al Shidi, Acting Director of Sailing at Oman Sail, said: “These achievements are a testament to the continuous efforts made by Oman Sail in developing the sailing ecosystem - from identifying and nurturing talent to enabling athletes to compete at the highest levels.”

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
8,276.452

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$118.72
BRENT \$108.71
LIGHT \$110.72



SHORTTAKES



Oil pump jack is seen in front of displayed US flag in this illustration. — Reuters

US crude premiums climb to record levels as Asia, Europe compete for supply

SINGAPORE: Spot premiums for US West Texas Intermediate crude have jumped to all-time highs as competition between Asian and European refiners for supply heats up to replace Middle Eastern oil flows disrupted by the Iran war, industry sources said.

Europe is typically the largest importer of US crude, but competition has escalated with Asian buyers scouring for supply from the Americas to Africa and Europe to replace Middle Eastern oil that is unable to move through the Strait of Hormuz.

The jump in crude prices is driving up costs and widening losses for refiners on both continents, sources and analysts said, putting severe pressure on companies including state-owned firms that are required by governments to keep producing fuel for national security.

“Asian refiners, shut out of Middle Eastern supply, are bidding aggressively for every available Atlantic Basin barrel”, said Paola Rodriguez-Masiu, chief oil analyst at Rystad Energy, in a note dated April 3.

Offers for WTI Midland crude delivered to North Asia in July on very large crude carriers had premiums of \$30 to \$40 a barrel, depending on the benchmark used, traders said.

One trader pegged the premium at \$34 a barrel to Dubai quotes while another put it at \$30 a barrel above dated Brent. Two others said offers have gone closer to \$40 a barrel above an August ICE Brent basis.

Those levels are up from premiums of close to \$20 a barrel for deals concluded in late March and early April, when Japanese refiners including Taiyo Oil purchased WTI crude, traders said. — Reuters

Oman output set at 821,000 bpd under Opec+ plan

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

OMAN'S crude oil production is set to reach 821,000 barrels per day (bpd) in May 2026 following a fresh Opec+ adjustment aimed at reinforcing market stability amid evolving global supply dynamics.

The Sultanate of Oman, alongside seven other key producers — Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, the UAE, Kuwait, Kazakhstan and Algeria — agreed on a virtual meeting on April 5, to implement a combined production increase of 206,000 bpd beginning May 2026.

The adjustment forms part of the wider 1.65 million bpd voluntary cuts first introduced in April 2023.

Under the latest allocation, Oman will raise output by 5,000 bpd, bringing its required production level to 821,000 bpd. This modest increase reflects the country's measured approach within the Opec+ framework, balancing revenue optimisation with collective efforts to stabilise oil markets.

Saudi Arabia and Russia account for the largest increments, each adding 62,000 bpd, with Saudi output set at 10.228 million bpd and Russia at 9.699 million bpd. Iraq will increase production by 26,000 bpd to 4.326 million bpd, while the UAE will raise output by 18,000 bpd to 3.447 million bpd.

Kuwait's allocation rises by 16,000 bpd to 2.612 million bpd, Kazakhstan by 10,000 bpd to 1.589 million bpd and Algeria by 6,000 bpd to 983,000 bpd.

The incremental adjustment signals a calibrated easing of earlier cuts, as Opec+ seeks to fine-tune supply without triggering



The Sultanate of Oman, alongside seven other key producers, agreed to implement a combined production increase of 206,000 bpd beginning May 2026.

Oman's strategic location along major global shipping corridors amplifies the importance of these concerns. Ensuring uninterrupted energy flows aligns with the Sultanate of Oman's broader role as a logistics and energy hub in the region.

market volatility.

The group emphasised that the broader 1.65 million bpd voluntary reduction may be reversed gradually — either partially or fully — depending on market conditions.

For Oman, the revised production level underscores its continued alignment with the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC), reinforcing its position as a disciplined and reliable participant in the alliance.

Oil revenues remain central to the country's fiscal framework, making price stability a key economic priority even as diversification efforts under Oman Vision 2040 gather pace.

The participating countries also reiterated their commitment to full compliance with production targets, including compensating for any overproduction since January 2024. This mechanism is expected to strengthen adherence

and enhance the credibility of the Opec+ framework.

In addition, the group highlighted rising concerns over energy security, particularly the risks to international maritime routes and critical infrastructure.

Disruptions to supply chains, whether through attacks on facilities or shipping lanes, were flagged as key factors that could heighten market volatility.

Oman's strategic location along major global shipping corridors amplifies the importance of these concerns.

Ensuring uninterrupted energy flows aligns with the Sultanate of Oman's broader role as a logistics and energy hub in the region. The Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) will continue to oversee compliance and market developments, with monthly meetings scheduled to assess conditions. The next review is set for May 3, 2026.

Circular economy projects unlock value from waste streams in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

Oman Environmental Services Holding Company SAOC (be'ah) has announced significant headway in advancing a number of circular economy initiatives designed to recoup value from waste, while reducing the volume of commercially useful resources ending up in landfills.

In its newly released 2025 Annual Report, be'ah highlighted key initiatives spanning energy recovery, organic waste utilisation, alternative fuel development and specialised recycling programmes, all aimed at promoting sustainable resource use and environmental protection across the Sultanate of Oman.

A key highlight is the national Waste-to-Energy (WtE) framework, under which feasibility studies have been completed for large-scale plants in Muscat, Al Batinah South and Al Batinah North Governorates.

In August 2025, Nama Power & Water Procurement Company — the sole buyer of power and water — issued a Request for Qualification (RFQ) for the Barka



Used tyre processing facility in Saham.

WtE project, marking the start of the bidder prequalification process ahead of the Request for Proposal stage.

Significant headway was also made with regard to be'ah's Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) initiative, with studies confirming its viability for energy recovery in industrial applications.

Efforts are currently being advanced in Muscat and Dhofar

in collaboration with cement industry stakeholders, supporting landfill diversion and the adoption of alternative fuels, the waste management utility said.

In 2025, be'ah expanded its used lead-acid batteries (ULAB) collection programme, maintaining 21 contracts with waste generators and three with licensed recyclers. Around 584 tonnes of used batteries were

channelled to approved local recycling facilities, promoting safe handling and resource recovery, the agency said.

The company also strengthened its Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) management efforts by partnering with national firms to enhance the collection and diversion of electronic waste into value recovery streams.

The initiative promotes best practices in the safe handling, storage and recycling of e-waste, helping to mitigate environmental risks and reinforce responsible e-waste management across the Sultanate of Oman.

Some of the biggest gains in waste resource recovery were reported in the green and bulky waste segment. With the aid of nine shredding machines, waste was processed and channelled to specialised offtakers for composting, biochar production and animal feed manufacturing.

The largest offtaker was Nakheel Oman, which lifted over 4,740 tonnes of green waste for processing into compost and animal feed at its Raysut facility.

Other recipients included Omani greentech startup NTZ Solutions,

supporting its initiative to convert green waste into biochar using advanced processing technologies. More than 100 tonnes of green waste was processed last year.

BioProduct, which operates a specialised feed manufacturing plant at Khazaen Economic City, processed agricultural residues into livestock feed.

Likewise, offtake arrangements with Al Batinah International enabled the conversion of over 600 tonnes of green, wood and bulky waste into compost.

Also during 2025, be'ah continued to shred End-of-Life Tyres (ELT) for recycling and industrial use. Offtakers included Oman Cement, which uses this resource as an alternative fuel in cement production.

Significantly, around two million tonnes of Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste were managed last year via an integrated network of reception, processing and recovery facilities.

Recovered resources are reused in concrete block manufacturing, interlock production and infrastructure works, supporting circular economy objectives, said be'ah.

ALIGNMENT KEY TO

LABOUR MARKET

OMAN VISION 2040 GOALS

QASIM AL MAASHANI

OMAN’S LABOUR MARKET challenge is often discussed in terms of one simple question: Are there enough jobs? But for an economy trying to accelerate diversification under Oman Vision 2040, the more important question may be whether the labour market is producing the skills, mindset and productivity needed to support growth.

A training and development specialist said the issue goes beyond vacancies alone. In his view, labour market performance depends on how well policy, education, training and workplace culture are working together.

That link matters because economic growth is not driven only by investment and new projects. It also depends on whether businesses can find the right people, whether employees can contribute effectively and whether workplaces are able to turn skills into real productivity.

He said job creation is closely tied to the wider business environment. When regulations and policies support company growth, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises, hiring is more likely to expand. But when businesses face limits to growth, employment opportunities also become harder to create. At the same time, he said, there remains a gap between what many employers need and what many graduates bring into the market.

A large number of graduates, he said, leave academic institutions with theoretical knowledge but without the practical readiness that allows them to move smoothly into the workplace.

Employers are increasingly looking for candidates who can adapt quickly, solve problems and perform from the start, rather than relying only on academic credentials. This mismatch, he argued, should not be seen only as an employment issue. It is also an economic issue.

For Oman, which is pushing to strengthen the private sector, raise competitiveness and build a more dynamic non-oil economy, a weak match between skills and demand can slow growth, reduce productivity and raise the cost of hiring and training. Training is often presented as the answer, but the specialist said its impact is frequently weaker than expected because it is not always designed around real labour market needs.

Too often, he said, training is treated as a short-term event rather than part of a longer process linked to hiring, expansion or performance improvement. When programmes are delivered simply to consume budgets or fill schedules, they may end with certificates but not with jobs. He said training becomes valuable when it is tied to a clear purpose inside institutions, such as expansion plans, succession needs, role-specific gaps or replacement hiring. Without that link, it risks becoming an administrative exercise rather than an investment in employability and output. The challenge, he added, is not only about programme design.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Some training courses still need updating to keep pace with digital transformation and the changing needs of the workplace. At the same time, some trainees still assume that completing a programme should by itself guarantee them a job. In reality, he said, training can improve readiness, but it cannot replace self-development, initiative and the willingness to keep learning.

That is becoming more important as employers place greater value on broader workplace capabilities. Beyond technical know-how, businesses increasingly need people who can think clearly, solve complex problems, manage themselves, work well with others and use modern digital tools effectively. These capabilities are becoming more important as companies focus more closely on efficiency, adaptability and execution.

In that sense, he said, the labour market challenge is also tied to work culture.

The issue is not always whether a position exists, but whether employees and institutions are approaching work with the right expectations. A culture of waiting, entitlement or minimum effort can weaken productivity even when opportunities are available. By contrast, a culture built on initiative, responsibility and value creation can make both workers and institutions more competitive.

That becomes especially important when organisations expect training to raise productivity but fail to create the conditions needed for improvement.

According to the specialist, skills alone do not guarantee better performance. Employees may attend courses and gain knowledge, but the results can quickly fade in workplaces that lack clear performance systems, supportive leadership or a culture that allows people to apply what they have learned.

Productivity, he said, is usually shaped by a combination of capability, workplace environment and leadership quality. That puts management at the centre of the issue. A capable employee in a poor environment may lose motivation, while an average employee in a well-managed institution can improve over time and create real value.

Leadership, therefore, is not only an internal management issue. It is part of the wider economic picture because it affects efficiency, retention and output. He also linked personal financial pressure to workplace performance.

Employees facing constant economic stress, he said, are often less focused and more vulnerable to burnout. That can weaken engagement, reduce productivity and affect long-term job stability.

In this sense, financial awareness is not separate from labour market performance; it can influence how effectively employees function at work. Taken together, these challenges suggest that Oman’s labour market cannot be strengthened through education or training alone.

What is needed, he said, is better alignment across the system: policies that help businesses grow, education that develops relevant skills, training that responds to actual demand and workplace cultures that reward productivity and continuous improvement.

For Oman Vision 2040, that alignment is becoming increasingly important. Diversification will depend not only on infrastructure, sector strategies and investment flows, but also on whether the labour market can supply people who are ready to support a faster-moving, more competitive economy.

SHORTTAKES



The agreement focuses on enhancing joint work in scientific research, statistical capacity building, and the exchange of knowledge and technical expertise.

OMAN ADVANCES GCC STATISTICAL COOPERATION

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

Oman is strengthening its role in regional data-driven policymaking following a cooperation programme signed between the Statistical Centre of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Arabian Gulf University.

The agreement focuses on enhancing joint work in scientific research, statistical capacity building and the exchange of knowledge and technical expertise — key pillars in supporting evidence-based decision-making across GCC economies.

The programme outlines several areas of collaboration, including the exchange of studies and research, implementation of specialised training programmes and the organisation of joint scientific conferences and workshops. It also provides for technical and advisory visits aimed at strengthening institutional coordination and sharing best practices.

A joint committee will be formed to oversee implementation and develop an action plan for the proposed initiatives. This structured approach is expected to ensure effective execution and measurable outcomes, while supporting the development of an integrated Gulf statistical system.

The initiative aligns with the GCC’s strategic plan for joint statistical work (2026–2030), which seeks to build a smart and reliable statistical ecosystem, enhance academic partnerships and develop a qualified workforce capable of leveraging data science and advanced analytics.

The partnership also reflects a broader push by the GCC Statistical Centre to expand collaboration with academic and research institutions, bridging the gap between statistical production and practical applications.

Oman solar chain tops $\text{RO}1.153$ bn investments

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 6

THE Sultanate of Oman has completed a fully integrated solar module manufacturing chain, with total investments reaching RO 1.153 billion, marking a significant milestone in the localisation of its renewable energy sector.

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) said, in the latest edition of *Duqm Economist* magazine, the project implemented between 2024 and 2025 in partnership with private sector investors, cover the entire solar production value chain — from metal silicon and polysilicon to ingots, wafers, solar cells and photovoltaic (PV) modules.

At the upstream level, Green Ferro Alloy (FZC) invested approximately RO 69 million in a metal silicon facility, creating around 180 direct jobs with an Omanisation rate of 50 per cent.

The largest share of investment came from United Solar Polysilicon (FZC), which committed about RO 520 million to a polysilicon production plant. The project is expected to generate 2,000 jobs, with Omanisation reaching 70 per cent, making it one of the most significant industrial investments in the sector.

In the midstream segment, Sahara Solar Energy SPC (FZC) invested roughly RO 78 million in ingot and related solar module production, supporting around 280 jobs with an Omanisation rate of 40 per cent.

Further downstream, Orion Solar (FZC) SPC allocated close to RO 217 million to solar cell and integrated PV module



The projects cover the entire solar production value chain — from metal silicon and polysilicon to ingots, wafers, solar cells and photovoltaic (PV) modules.

manufacturing, creating 808 jobs with 35 per cent Omanisation.

In addition, Jietai New Energy Technology (FZC) invested about RO 269 million in solar cell production, generating approximately 864 jobs and achieving an Omanisation rate of 40 per cent.

Combined, these projects have created 4,132 direct jobs, with Omanisation rates ranging between 35 per cent and 70 per cent, underscoring the sector’s contribution to workforce development and skills transfer.

OPAZ stated that completing the full solar manufacturing chain strengthens Oman’s ability to meet domestic demand for solar energy projects, while significantly reducing reliance

on imports. The localisation of production is also expected to enhance cost efficiency and improve supply chain resilience.

The Authority emphasised that this development reflects a broader qualitative shift in the Sultanate of Oman’s renewable energy landscape, positioning Oman as an emerging regional hub for clean energy industries.

The integrated ecosystem provides a strong foundation for attracting additional investments, particularly in advanced manufacturing and energy-intensive industries.

Moreover, the availability of locally produced solar components enhances readiness for upcoming utility-scale solar projects, ensuring that key materials and technologies can

be sourced domestically in line with sustainability targets.

The initiative aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises economic diversification, industrial expansion and the transition towards a low-carbon economy. By establishing a comprehensive solar manufacturing base, Oman is not only strengthening its energy security but also creating new avenues for export-driven growth.

As global demand for renewable energy technologies accelerates, Oman’s RO 1.153 billion investment in solar manufacturing positions the Sultanate of Oman to play a more prominent role in regional and international clean energy supply chains.

JPMorgan warns Iran war may drive inflation and interest rates higher

NEW YORK: JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon warned on Monday that the war in Iran risks oil and commodity price shocks that could keep inflation sticky and push interest rates higher than the market now expects.

The warning came in an annual letter to shareholders a day after US President Donald Trump ratcheted up pressure on Iran, threatening to target its power plants and bridges on Tuesday if it does not reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway.

Dimon, 70, who has run JPMorgan, also said the private credit sector “probably” does not present a systemic risk, despite investors’ recent moves to pull back from such funds amidst worries that advances in AI will hurt underlying borrowers.



Jamie Dimon, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of JPMorgan Chase & Co, speaks during the America Business Forum at Kaseya Centre in Miami, Florida. — Reuters

“The challenges we all face are significant”, Dimon added, citing geopolitical risks such as the war in Ukraine, broader hostilities in the Middle East and tension with China.

“Now, because of the war in Iran, we additionally face the potential for significant ongoing oil and commodity price shocks, along with the reshaping of global supply chains, which may lead to stickier inflation and ultimately higher interest rates than markets currently expect”.

Time will tell whether the Iran war achieves the United States’ objectives, Dimon said, adding that nuclear proliferation remains the greatest danger from Iran. War-driven inflation worries have led markets to largely rule out interest rate cuts this year, after

monetary easing fuelled record equity highs last year.

Dimon said the US economy continued to be resilient, with consumers still earning and spending, though with some recent weakening and businesses are still healthy.

But he cautioned the economy had been fuelled by large amounts of government deficit spending and past stimulus, while increased expenditure on infrastructure remained a growing need.

The fiscal stimulus from President Donald Trump’s “Big, Beautiful Bill”, deregulation policies and artificial intelligence-driven capital spending are other positives for the economy, Dimon said.

Dimon said the \$1.8-trillion private credit market is relatively

small. But once the credit cycle weakens, he warned, losses on all leveraged lending will be higher than expected as credit standards have been weakening modestly across the board.

Private credit also does not tend to have great transparency or rigorous valuation loan “marks”, increasing the chance that investors will sell if they think the environment will worsen, he said.

Dimon also used the letter to sharply criticise revised capital rules proposed by US bank regulators last month, decrying some aspects as still “nonsensical”. JPMorgan was among the banks that fought hard to water down 2023 drafts of the so-called Basel-III and GSIB, or Global Systemically Important Banks’ surcharge rules. — Reuters

MARKET PRESSURE

Gold falls as rate cut hopes fade



Gold prices declined on Monday as a stronger US dollar and reduced expectations of Federal Reserve rate cuts weighed on sentiment. Spot gold fell to \$4,631 per ounce. Other precious metals fall as well.

Strong US jobs data and rising Treasury yields added pressure, while higher oil prices linked to the Iran conflict further dampened prospects for monetary easing. — ONA

FUEL SURGE

UK petrol prices hit two-year high



Petrol prices in Britain have surged to a two-year high amidst Middle East tensions, with diesel up 30 per cent since the conflict began.

Some petrol stations across the UK recorded prices near £3 per litre as demand spiked during the Easter holiday. Analysts described March increases as unprecedented, with fuel costs rising faster than during the Ukraine crisis. — ONA

SUPPLY STRATEGY

India delays refinery shutdowns on demand



Indian refiners have postponed planned maintenance shutdowns to meet rising domestic fuel demand, according to officials.

Indian Oil and Bharat Petroleum deferred outages, while Nayara Energy will proceed with maintenance at its Vadinar refinery from April 9. The move is expected to tighten LPG supply, as earlier delays were linked to difficulties in sourcing equipment. — Reuters

OPINION

The insurance industry in light of geopolitical challenges



MURTADHA MJ IBRAHIM AL JAMALANI

The writer is a Muscat-based insurance expert and specialised economic researcher.

AMIDST escalating geopolitical challenges and an increasingly complex regional and global landscape, the insurance and reinsurance industry stands out as the first line of defence against unforeseen risks, particularly those related to war perils and disruptions in global supply chains. The Strait of Hormuz lies at the heart of this landscape as one of the world's most vital arteries for trade and energy, where economic interests intersect with considerations of security and stability. In this context, risk management is no longer merely a technical function; it has become a strategic imperative that compels insurance markets and regulatory authorities to adopt innovative solutions and explore new models of regional integration. Such approaches are essential to balancing business continuity with maritime security, while unlocking sustainable economic opportunities. The insurance and reinsurance sector is widely recognised as a fundamental pillar of the national economy, playing a pivotal role in supporting economic growth and enhancing financial stability. The sector contributes effectively to providing protection against a wide range of risks, thereby supporting sustainable development and strengthening confidence in the investment environment. It also offers an integrated framework for managing both financial and non-financial

risks through professional mechanisms aimed at mitigating risk impacts and delivering tangible protection to individuals and institutions alike. With respect to specialised risks such as war, hijacking and similar perils, these are typically underwritten within specialised insurance markets, particularly the marine insurance market, which possesses the expertise and technical capacity to handle such complex risks. The General Arab Insurance Federation (GAIF), in collaboration with the Financial Services Institute in Cairo, recently organised a webinar entitled, “The Current Geopolitical Situation and Its Impact on the Insurance Industry”. During the seminar, speakers addressed the evolving situation in the Arabian Sea and the Arabian Gulf, focusing on war risks, pricing levels, insurance coverage and the role of the Arab War Risks Insurance Pool, headquartered in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It is worth noting that approximately 20% of global oil supplies pass through one of the world's most critical strategic chokepoints — the Strait of Hormuz. The Strait is one of the most strategically important maritime passages globally, located at the entrance of the Arabian Gulf, bordered by the Sultanate of Oman to the south and the Islamic Republic of Iran to the north. Both countries bear responsibility for overseeing, regulating and securing navigation through the Strait, in accordance

Risk management is no longer merely a technical function; it has become a strategic imperative that compels insurance markets and regulatory authorities to adopt innovative solutions and explore new models of regional integration.

with international maritime law and relevant treaties and conventions. In light of geopolitical tensions, some insurance companies and Protection & Indemnity (P&I) Clubs have withdrawn war risk coverage, while others have issued notices providing limited grace periods — typically seven days — during which coverage remains in force, followed by a reassessment of terms and pricing. Historically, the idea of establishing the Arab War Risks Insurance Syndicate (AWRIS) was initiated by the Iraqi Reinsurance Company during the Iran–Iraq War in 1980, with the objective of providing specialised insurance coverage for war risks. The pool commenced operations in 1991, later relocating its headquarters to Cyprus and eventually settling in the Kingdom of Bahrain in 1994. Today, AWRIS comprises approximately 208 insurance companies from 16 Arab countries, all members of the League of Arab States. The pool monitors market conditions, terms and pricing — particularly those of the London insurance market — to ensure alignment with international best practices. Currently, AWRIS faces several administrative and technical challenges amidst rapidly evolving geopolitical dynamics and the complexities of the global insurance market. This necessitates strengthening governance, enhancing technical capabilities and improving coordination among members to effectively respond to these challenges.

FIRST-CLASS AIRLINE BET IS ECONOMICALLY WELL-TIMED

OLIVER TASLIC

United Airlines is giving new meaning to sitting at the “front” of the plane. The \$31 billion US carrier held a splashy event in late March to showcase its planned premium services — one of which has so many upmarket seats they stretch all the way to the back of the wing. It's part of a wider global battle to lure wealthy fliers by offering fancy pyjamas, vintage champagne or extra space. The move seems to jar with austere warnings of potential jet fuel shortages from the likes of Finnair. But recent history suggests that racing upmarket in troubled times makes sense. The post-pandemic “premiumisation” trend has been a blessing for groups like United, \$44 billion Delta Air Lines and \$22 billion British Airways owner IAG. Business travel was whacked by Covid-19 and videoconferencing means much of it may never return, with IAG's finance chief dismissing comparisons with 2019 as “ancient history”. Fortunately, wealthy holidaymakers wanting to travel in style have more than offset the shortfall, with Air France-KLM CEO Ben Smith last year pointing to “unbelievable” spending from Americans vacationing in Paris. Catering to the better-off has been a winning strategy, with shares in more premium-oriented Delta and United outpacing rival American Airlines in recent years. True, focusing on swanky lie-flat seats might seem odd given the global industry's current backdrop. Jet fuel prices averaged \$195 a barrel in the week ending March 27, according to IATA, almost double the level a month earlier. United has made plans that assume oil rises as high as \$175 a barrel, while airlines in more Gulf-dependent regions like Europe and Asia are worrying about shortages. Vietnam Airlines said it would suspend several routes for lack of fuel. Oil prices rose around 7% on Thursday, as President Donald Trump said the US would keep up attacks on Iran without committing to a specific timeline to end the war. Nonetheless, recent history shows premium resilience even in times of economic stress. In the third quarter of 2022, amidst higher oil prices following Russia's war in Ukraine, Delta reported main cabin revenue 2% below the same period in 2019. Premium sales were 8% higher. When regular US consumers braced for turbulence after last April's “Liberation Day” tariffs, IAG reported a disappointing summer for transatlantic economy travel. More upmarket seats, however, held up well. — Reuters

Viksit Bharat 2047, Oman Vision 2040: Co-creation

INDIA'S Viksit Bharat 2047 and Oman Vision 2040 are not identical projects, but they are unusually compatible. India's ambition is to become a developed nation by the centenary of its independence. Oman's ambition is to transform itself into a more diversified, productive and globally competitive economy by 2040. One is a continental-scale economy trying to move up the value chain; the other is a strategically placed Gulf state redesigning its economic model for a more complex future. Taken together, this is more than a narrative it is a practical economic opportunity. For too long, discussions of India–Oman relations have been framed in narrow terms: energy flows, labour mobility and old commercial ties across the Arabian Sea. Those links remain important, but they no longer capture the full picture. What is taking shape is a broader partnership between two countries that increasingly need from each other what each is trying to build at home: resilience, industrial depth, logistical advantage and credible long-term growth. The hard numbers already justify closer attention. India's official bilateral brief shows that India–Oman trade rose to about \$10.6bn in fiscal year 2024–25, up from roughly \$9bn a year earlier. Oman ranked as India's 28th-largest trading partner in that period. Indian exports to Oman reached a little over \$4bn, while imports stood near \$6.5bn, underlining the importance of Oman's role in India's energy and industrial supply chain. There are more than 6,000 India–Oman joint ventures in the Sultanate of Oman, and one flagship project—OMIFCO, the Oman India Fertilizer Company in Sur—stands as a clear example that this relationship can build long-term industrial assets, not just facilitate trade.



Viksit Bharat 2047 is not simply a growth target. It is India's attempt to build the physical, digital and industrial foundations of developed-country status. — Reuters



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

That matters because both countries are now thinking in far longer horizons. Viksit Bharat 2047 is not simply a growth target. It is India's attempt to build the physical, digital and industrial foundations of developed-country status: better logistics, stronger manufacturing, cleaner energy, deeper technology capability and more competitive exports. Oman Vision 2040 has a parallel logic. It seeks to reduce dependence on hydrocarbons, expand logistics and industry, improve governance, strengthen human capital and create a more balanced and sustainable economy. In other words, both visions are about moving from dependence to capability. This is why the relationship deserves to be treated as strategic economic architecture rather than routine diplomacy. Geography is the first reason. Oman sits at the mouth of the Gulf and along some of the world's most important maritime trade routes. India, for its part, is both a huge market and an increasingly ambitious production base. Between them lies one of the oldest commercial seascapes in the world. At a time when supply chains are being rethought, this geography is becoming valuable again in very practical terms.

Energy is the clearest area of complementarity. India still needs reliable hydrocarbon supplies, even as it pushes ahead with renewables, electrification and green industry. Oman, meanwhile, is not standing still as a conventional energy producer. It is positioning itself in green hydrogen, green ammonia, advanced materials and cleaner industrial production. This opens the door to a more evolved partnership moving beyond buyer–seller dynamics toward co-investment in future energy systems. If India wants decarbonisation without deindustrialisation, and Oman wants diversification without dislocation, then energy cooperation must evolve accordingly. Logistics is the second pillar. India's development ambitions will rise or fall in part on the cost of moving goods. Oman's future, likewise, depends heavily on whether it can turn its ports, free zones and industrial cities into a genuine transshipment and production network. Duqm, Sohar and Salalah are therefore not simply Omani infrastructure stories; they are platforms that can serve Indian manufacturing, trade and food-security interests as well. The more India looks westward to the Gulf, Africa and Europe, the more useful Oman becomes—not just as a destination, but as a node. Food security and industrial inputs form a third frontier. India's agricultural scale gives it enormous weight, but also leaves it deeply exposed to fertilizer, logistics and climate pressures. Oman has already proved through OMIFCO that bilateral cooperation can be built around strategic inputs. There is scope to go further: in agri-processing, fisheries, cold chains, food storage, aquaculture and resilient supply systems. The old trade in commodities can give way to a newer model built on integrated value chains.

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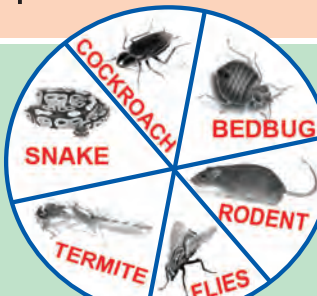
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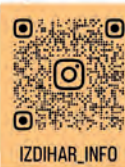
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ART/LIFE

O M A N B U T T E R F L Y



WHEN NATURE TRANSFORMS INTO LIVING WORKS OF ART

> 20

FILMFESTIVAL

TRAVOLTA RETURNS TO CANNES WITH DIRECTORIAL DEBUT



'Propeller One-Way Night Coach' is an adaptation of John Travolta's own book published in 1997. — AFP

US movie legend John Travolta will present his directorial debut “Propeller One-Way Night Coach”, about a young boy’s journey in the “golden age of aviation”, at the Cannes Film Festival in May, organisers said on Thursday.

The film, to make its world premiere, is adapted from the 72-year-old star’s own 1997 book, inspired by his lifelong passion for aviation, the festival said.

The actor, who grew up not far from LaGuardia Airport near New York, is a professional pilot and began flying when he was 15. He was the first private pilot to fly an Airbus A380.

Among the three Travolta films showcased at the Festival de Cannes in the past was “Pulp Fiction” (1994), famed for the actor’s two-fingered swipe in its cult dance scene.

“The unforgettable Vince Vega of Pulp Fiction returns to the Croisette for an event as unexpected as it is exciting: his very first film as a director”, the festival said.

Travolta wrote the book for his son Jett, who suffered from epileptic seizures and died in 2009 at the age of 16.

The film follows a young airplane enthusiast Jeff and his mother embarking on a one-way journey to Hollywood.

“The story unfolds as a nostalgic journey set in the golden age of aviation”, the festival said.

“The journey unfolds in moments both magical and unexpected, charting the course for the boy’s future”, the statement said, adding that one of the flight attendants is played by the star’s only daughter, Ella Bleu, 25.

The actor, who grew up not far from LaGuardia Airport near New York, is a professional pilot and began flying when he was 15.

“Travolta is certified to fly Boeing 707s, 737s and 747s, Bombardier’s Global Express and was the first private pilot to fly an Airbus A380”, the festival said.

Travolta has become a pop culture icon, celebrated for his roles in films such as Saturday Night Fever (1977), Grease (1978) and Hairspray (2007).

“Propeller One-Way Night Coach” will make its global debut on Apple TV in May. — AFP

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



NATURE

Visitors ride boats on the Chidorigafuchi moat covered with fallen cherry blossom petals in Tokyo, Japan. — Reuters



CELEBRATION

People participate in the annual Easter Parade and Bonnet Festival on Fifth Avenue in New York City. — AFP



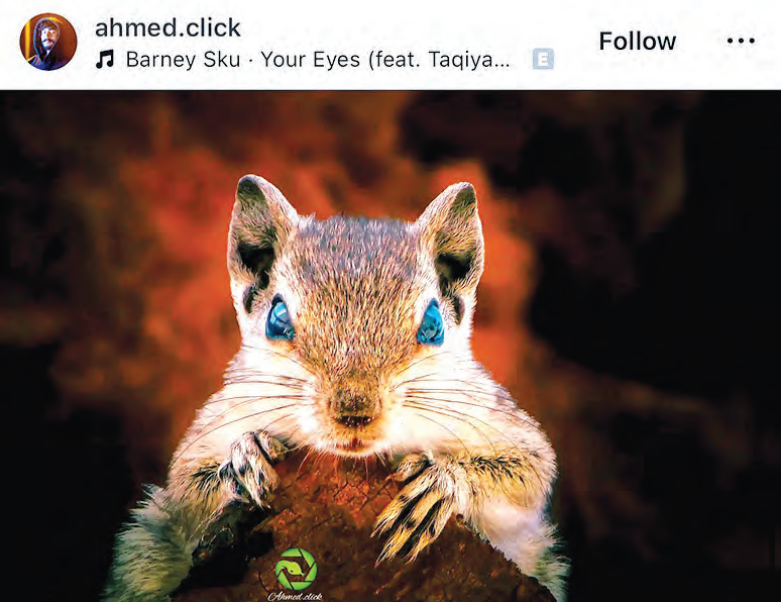
COMMUNITY

People play a game of Dominoes as they sit at a roadside cafe before closing in downtown Cairo. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



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Omani palm squirrel, up close and personal

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AI IS REWIRING THE WORLD’S MOST PROLIFIC FILM INDUSTRY



Employees at work at Galleri5, the tech studio arm of Bollywood talent agency Collective Artists Network. AI is enabling studios in India to slash production timelines and costs, industry figures say. — Reuters

India’s film industry is rapidly embracing artificial intelligence to cut costs, accelerate production and expand into new markets, even as concerns persist over creativity and audience acceptance.

In Bengaluru, talent agency Collective Artists Network is using AI tools at its Galleri5 studio to produce films based on Hindu mythology, including adaptations of the “Ramayana” and “Mahabharat”. Traditional film sets filled with cameras and crews are increasingly replaced by coding floors, motion-capture suits and AI-generated characters.

India, the world’s most prolific film producer, is turning to AI as shifting audience habits and the rise of streaming platforms put pressure on revenues. Cinema attendance fell to 832 million in 2025 from 1.03 billion in 2019, according

to Ormax Media, even as box-office earnings hit a record \$1.4 billion last year.

Studios are deploying AI at scale — producing fully AI-generated films, dubbing content into multiple languages and even altering older movies to boost sales. Industry figures say AI can reduce production costs to one-fifth and cut timelines to a quarter for genres such as mythology and fantasy.

The approach contrasts with Hollywood, where union agreements restrict the use of AI. In India, studios are pushing ahead with aggressive experimentation. Eros Media World, for example, re-released its 2013 film “Raanjhanaa” with an AI-altered ending, replacing its tragic conclusion with a happier one. While the move drew criticism from lead actor Dhanush, it still attracted audiences and ticket sales.

— Reuters



Shalwa al Adwan from Qatar’s al Jumail Stud won the gold medal



MUSCAT HOSTS GLOBAL EQUESTRIAN CHAMPIONS ARABIANS TOUR

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT has successfully hosted the third stage of the 2026 Global Champions Arabians Tour (GCAT), held from March 31 to April 2 at Al Mouj Muscat near The St Regis hotel. The three-day event brought together breeders, owners and enthusiasts from across the region for competitions celebrating the beauty and heritage of the Arabian horse.

The championship marks the third consecutive year that the international tour has been staged in Oman, reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman’s growing presence as a host for global equestrian events.

Alongside the competitions, organisers set up a traditional souq-style village at the venue, offering visitors the chance to explore Omani crafts, food and local products. Families, residents and tourists attended the event over the three days, turning the championship into a social gathering as well as a sporting event.

Several categories were contested during the championship. In the Yearling Fillies category, Shalwa al Adwan from Qatar’s Al Jumail Stud won the gold medal, followed by Julnar al Shaqab with silver and Malikah al Arab from Hleetan Qatar Stud with bronze.

In the Yearling Colts Championship, AJ Fayed from Ajman Stud in the UAE took gold, while Dinar al Shaqab finished second and ES Ghanem from Amara



The competition in the arena was marked by both intensity and exceptional quality.

Stables placed third.

In the Junior Fillies Championship, al Aryam Harbah, owned by Sheikh Khalifa bin Tahnoon bin Mohammed al Nahyan of the UAE, secured gold. D Rowa from Dubai Arabian Horse Stud took silver and Expectations Al Wajba from Al Wajba Stud in Qatar finished third.

Synatra from Al Shaqab won the Junior Colts category, followed by Aesar al Wajba with silver and Sinan al Bahya from Ajman Stud with bronze.

In the senior divisions, D Najlah from Dubai Arabian Horse Stud won the Senior Mare Championship.

The Senior Stallion title went to D Shahhar, also from Dubai Arabian

Horse Stud, while D Samed from SK Arabians and al Aryam Shklaan from Al Aryam Arabians secured silver and bronze respectively.

Arabian horses hold deep cultural significance across the region and are closely associated with the history of the Arabian Peninsula.

Events such as the Global Champions Arabians Tour bring together breeders, trainers and owners while providing opportunities to showcase bloodlines and breeding programmes from across the Gulf and beyond.

Following the Muscat stage, the Global Champions Arabians Tour will continue in Miami Beach in the United States from April 9 to 11.

OMAN BUTTERFLY

WHEN NATURE
TRANSFORMS INTO
LIVING WORKS
OF ART



ARWA AL HASHIMI

IN a world where many business ventures lean towards conventional ideas, some young initiatives stand out by breaking the norm and offering a unique vision that blends art with nature.

Among these projects, “Oman Butterfly” emerges as a creative model that transforms a delicate creature like the butterfly into an artistic expression carrying both aesthetic and human value.

Behind this project is Sara al Rahbi, an Omani entrepreneur who found inspiration and passion in butterflies, shaping her own distinctive artistic path.

Sara explains that the idea did not begin as a clear plan, but rather as a simple personal experience.

She started by raising caterpillars and observing their transformation into butterflies. After releasing them into nature, she would later find some of them after their life cycle had ended, keeping them without initially knowing how to preserve them.

This curiosity led her to research and learn online, where she discovered various techniques for preserving butterflies. Through experimentation and continuous development, she created her own method, gradually turning her hobby into a fully realised project with a unique artistic identity.

Sara believes her passion for butterflies stems from her deep reflection on their nature and life cycle, which she sees as a symbol of beauty and transformation.

Their colours and intricate details always captured her attention and over time, this admiration evolved into a desire to understand them more deeply and preserve their beauty in an artistic form.

Regarding the sourcing of butterflies, she explains that she works with specialised suppliers outside Oman who operate legally through butterfly farms.

She emphasises that this aspect is very important to her, as all butterflies used in her work have completed their natural life cycle, ensuring no harm is done to the environment.

As for the preservation process, Sara describes it as a delicate task that requires patience and precision.

It begins with careful drying methods, followed by gently spreading and positioning the wings to maintain the butterfly’s natural appearance.

Each step must be carried out with great care to avoid damaging such a fragile creature.



Creatively, Sara relies on natural materials such as high-quality glass frames, dried flowers and carefully selected backgrounds that complement each butterfly.

She aims for each piece to evoke a sense of nature within interior spaces, allowing people to feel connected to nature wherever they are.

Visual harmony plays a key role in the success of “Oman Butterfly” Sara focuses on colour coordination and overall composition, ensuring that each butterfly’s beauty is highlighted without exaggeration.

She believes that simplicity often creates the most powerful impact and therefore strives for balance and elegance in every piece.

Despite the challenges she faces, particularly in sourcing rare or seasonal butterflies, Sara views these difficulties as motivation to continue.

Finding such specimens requires time, effort and constant communication with suppliers, and sometimes involves long waiting periods.

One of the most memorable experiences in her journey was her encounter with what she calls the “Beauty Butterfly” during a trip to Türkiye.

While walking through a crowded and busy street filled with noise and smoke, she was surprised when a butterfly landed on her hand, an unexpected and meaningful moment. She describes it as a sign that encouraged her to continue pursuing her passion, reinforcing her connection to the world of butterflies.

In terms of public reception, the project initially sparked curiosity and even some surprise due to its unconventional nature.

However, once people saw the intricate details firsthand, their reactions turned into admiration.

Sara notes that many now view her creations as unique artistic pieces and meaningful gifts, which has encouraged her to keep growing and evolving.

Looking ahead, Sara aspires for “Oman Butterfly” to expand and become widely recognised both within Oman and internationally.

She aims for it to be the first project of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, while continuing to develop her products in ways that reflect a contemporary Omani artistic identity.

With passion and determination, “Oman Butterfly” stands as an inspiring example of how creativity and respect for nature can come together — transforming small details into meaningful works of art that tell stories of beauty and transformation.