

President of Iran accorded warm



MUSCAT: An official reception ceremony was held at Al Alam Palace on Tuesday in honour of President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the occasion of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

Upon the arrival of the Iranian President's motorcade at the courtyard of Al Alam Palace, a cavalcade from the Royal Cavalry lined up to welcome the Sultanate of Oman's esteemed guest.

When the vehicle boarded by President Pezeshkian arrived at Al Alam Palace, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq gave a warm welcome to the President, wishing him and his accompanying delegation a pleasant stay in Oman and a successful visit.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan accompanied President Pezeshkian to the dais where the Iranian national anthem was played, while the artillery fired a 21-gun salute to the President.

After this protocol, His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with the official delegation accompanying President Pezeshkian. The President was greeted by Omani Royal dignitaries, ministers and military commanders. — ONA



HM HOSTS DINNER IN HONOUR OF DR MASOUD



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq hosted an official dinner banquet at Al Alam Palace on Tuesday in honour of Dr Masoud Pezeshkian, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and his delegation on the occasion of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

Before the dinner, His Majesty and the Iranian President exchanged commemorative gifts.

The official dinner banquet was attended by a number of Their Highnesses, members of the Royal Family, a number of ministers, under-secretaries and advisers. — ONA



welcome at Al Alam Palace



HM, Iranian President grace signing of agreements, MoUs

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran, graced at Al Alam Palace on Tuesday the signing of five cooperation agreements, ten memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and three executive programmes. This took place during the official visit of the Iranian President to the Sultanate of Oman.

The first agreement was a legal and judicial cooperation agreement in civil and criminal matters, extradition of accused persons, and transfer of sentenced individuals. It was signed from the Omani side by Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, and from the Iranian side by Dr Amin Hossein Rahimi, Minister of Justice.

The second framework agreement for joint cooperation, signed from the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and from the Iranian side by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The third agreement pertains to the encouragement and mutual protection of investments, signed from the Omani side by Sultan bin

Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, and from the Iranian side by Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade.

The fourth agreement pertains to mutual administrative assistance in customs matters, signed from the Omani side by Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, and from the Iranian side by Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mining, and Trade.

The fifth agreement relates to trade preferences, signed from the Omani side by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and from the Iranian side by Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade.

The first memorandum of understanding (MoU) is related to cooperation on deploying armed security guards on flights, signed from the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and from the Iranian side by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The second MoU covers cooperation in the health sector, signed from the Omani side by

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and from the Iranian side by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The third MoU was between Oman News Agency (ONA) and the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), signed from the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and from the Iranian side by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The fourth MoU pertains to communications and information technology, signed from the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and from the Iranian side by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The fifth MoU is related to cooperation in the museum sector, signed from the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and from the Iranian side by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The sixth MoU covers housing, urban planning, and construction,

signed from the Omani side by Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and from the Iranian side by Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade.

The seventh MoU relates to organising exhibitions, events, and conferences, signed from the Omani side by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and from the Iranian side by Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade.

The eighth MoU covers cooperation in small and medium enterprise (SMEs) development and entrepreneurship, signed from the Omani side Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and from the Iranian side by Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade.

The ninth MoU pertains to mining and mineral resources, signed from the Omani side by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and from the Iranian side by Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mining and

Trade. The tenth MoU is related to reviewing the feasibility study of the electrical interconnection project, signed from the Omani side by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and from the Iranian side by Seyed Mohammad Atabak, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade.

The first executive programme covers cooperation in technical education and vocational training, signed from the Omani side by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, and from the Iranian side by Ahmad Meidari, Minister of Cooperatives, Labour and Social Welfare. The second executive programme pertains to cultural cooperation, signed from the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and from the Iranian side by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The third executive programme covers tourism cooperation, signed from the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and from the Iranian side by Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs. — ONA





OMAN, IRAN COMMEMORATIVE POSTAGE STAMP INAUGURATED

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister and Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, jointly inaugurated a commemorative postage stamp symbolising the profound cultural and historical ties between Oman and Iran, as well as their shared commitment to the principles of good neighbourliness, cooperation, constructive engagement and civilisational exchange between their peoples.

The ceremony took place at Al Alam Palace in Muscat, coinciding with the official visit of President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman.

Sayyid Nasr bin Badr al Busaidy, Postmaster at Oman Post, stated that this stamp embodies the deep-rooted cultural and historical connections between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran, reflecting their mutual dedication to strengthening cultural diplomacy, fostering neighbourly relations and promoting people-to-people ties.

The stamp's artistic design harmoniously blends the architectural and cultural symbols of both nations. At its centre stands the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat — an iconic landmark of Omani Islamic architecture — framed by date palms, which symbolise resilience and Oman's rich agricultural heritage, forming an integral part of the country's environmental and social identity.

On the opposite side, the stamp features the historic Jameh Mosque of Bastak in southern Iran, encircled by cypress trees — a symbol of eternity and Persian visual culture — representing continuity and civilisational endurance. At the heart of the design lies a handwoven Persian carpet, inspired by the one housed in the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat, which was meticulously crafted in Iran's Khorasan province and adorned with intricate floral motifs. This serves as a testament to the artisanal collaboration between the two nations and a symbol of their diverse cultural connections. — ONA

Iran-Oman relations — a legacy based on mutual respect, cooperation

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The strong, time-tested diplomatic and economic relations that both Oman and Iran enjoy are rooted in geography, diplomacy and mutual interests, based on respect and cooperation over the past decades.

The Sultanate of Oman has played a key role in facilitating and opening up communication between Iran and other states, considered a key mediator in the region. The bilateral relations have been witnessing remarkable growth in various areas, a manifestation of the deep-rooted ties of friendship between the two neighbouring countries.

Both countries have been focusing on strengthening trade and investment ties, succeeding in taking relations to greater heights thanks to unwavering efforts by both sides. Ongoing bilateral visits can further cement bonds to scale greater heights.

Earlier this year, both countries signed an economic memorandum focusing on preferential trade and customs cooperation, with plans to eliminate trade tariffs between them. This marked a significant step in enhancing economic ties between

OMANI-IRANIAN RELATIONS BASED ON RESPECT: SAYYID BADR

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, affirmed the depth of bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran established ages ago.

These relations, he said, are solid and deeply rooted ones and are characterised by mutual respect, trust and positive cooperation for the good and benefit of the two neighbouring peoples and the wider region.

In comments to the media, the foreign minister said: “We look forward to working and building on the visit of the Iranian President to launch a new phase of prosperous relations taking our relations to far-reaching horizons in various political, diplomatic, economic, commercial and cultural fields.” Regarding the Iran-US nuclear



Sayyid Badr President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Muscat.

talks, the foreign minister said: “The talks are ongoing, and we hope they will achieve the desired outcome that satisfies both parties and serves global security and stability.” — ONA

Iran and Oman, potentially boosting trade and investment flows in the region.

Oman and Iran have shared historical ties for centuries, particularly due to maritime trade

and their proximity across the Strait of Hormuz. Both countries share an interest in the security of the area, a critical checkpoint for global oil shipments.

Oman maintains cordial

diplomatic relations with Iran, often acting as a mediator between Iran and Western countries, including the United States.

Notably, Oman facilitated secret US-Iran nuclear talks, which eventually led to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Oman became the host for the second round of the latest series of talks between Iran and the US. Further, Oman has used its neutral stance to act as a mediator in conflicts involving Iran, such as tensions with the US, the release of detained individuals, and broader de-escalation efforts in the Gulf.

The two countries have discussed and pursued economic cooperation, including a proposed undersea gas pipeline from Iran to Oman, though it has faced delays due to sanctions and regional dynamics.

Oman imports Iranian goods, with bilateral interest in expanding trade and investment, particularly in energy and transportation sectors.

The most important exports of Oman include machines, devices, and equipment for heat treatment, plates, sheets, tapes, products of polymethacrylate, diesel engine lubricants, optics tools, equipment for medical examination, and

electrical equipment.

On the other hand, the total imports of Oman from Iran include livestock, semi-finished products of iron steel and petroleum tar, as well as fruits, shrimp and live animals.

Regarding Iranian investments in Oman, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion indicated that the number of companies with Iranian contribution reached nearly 2,000. The number of Iranians who have shares in these companies stands at 3,600, with a total contribution value of RO nearly 200 million, according to the NCSI report.

The number of companies with 100 per cent Iranian shareholding reached nearly 1,400, and the total number of Iranian shareholders in these companies reached around 2,700 investors.

As far as licenses are concerned, they reached 793 licenses for the activity of exporting and importing offices, the highest number among other activities.

Statistics indicated that Iran ranked third in terms of the number of commercial registrations in Oman, with 4,496 commercial registrations at the end of 2022.

PRESIDENT OF IRAN ARRIVES IN OMAN

PRESIDENT Dr Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran arrived on Tuesday in the Sultanate of Oman on a two-day official visit.

HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs led the welcoming party for the Iranian President and his accompanying delegation upon their arrival at the Royal Airport.

HH Sayyid Shihab welcomed the President of Iran, wishing him and his accompanying delegation a pleasant stay and a successful visit.

The welcoming party also comprised Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister (Head of the Mission of Honour), Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Muaini, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mousa Farhang, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman, members of Iran's embassy in Muscat and the Mission of Honour accompanying the guest.

The Iranian President is accompanied during the visit by an official delegation comprising Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohsen Haji-Mirzaei, Head of the President's Office, Mohammad Atabek, Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade, Head of the Iranian side in the Oman-Iran Economic Cooperation Joint Committee, Air Commodore Aziz Nasirzadeh, Minister of Defence and Logistics of the Armed Forces, Amin Hossein Rahimi, Minister of Justice, Ahmad Meydari, Minister of Cooperatives, Labour



and Social Welfare, Gholamhossein Zarei, Deputy Chairman of the Parliament, Mohammad-Reza Farzin, Governor of the Central Bank of Iran, Masoumeh Aghapour Alishahi, Advisor to the President for

Economic Cooperation Affairs, Mousa Farhang, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman and several officials from the Iranian government. — ONA

Minister meets Central Bank of Iran Governor

MUSCAT: Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, met with Mohammad Farzin, Governor of the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The meeting is within the framework of the official visit of President Dr Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran, aimed at strengthening economic and financial relations between the two countries.

The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation in trade and investment, as well as facilitating financial transfers



The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation in trade and investment, as well as facilitating financial transfers and trade procedures between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran. These efforts aim to support shared economic objectives, boost trade exchange, and streamline commercial transactions between private sector

institutions in both countries.

The meeting reaffirmed both sides' commitment to continued coordination and collaboration in areas of mutual interest, further solidifying bilateral ties and supporting sustainable economic growth.

The meeting was attended by Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, Mousa Farhang, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman, and several officials from both sides. — ONA

Sayyid Asaad meets officials from Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia



HH Sayyid Asaad with Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia. — ONA



HH Sayyid Asaad also met Bui Thanh Son, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. — ONA



HH Sayyid Asaad also met Fadillah Yusof, Minister of Energy Transition and Water Transformation of Malaysia. — ONA

KUALA LUMPUR: HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan met in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday with Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the ASEAN-GCC Summit and the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit.

The meeting reviewed the bilateral relations and areas of cooperation between Oman and Cambodia.

The two sides also touched on the agenda of both summits. The meeting was attended by members of the delegation accompanying HH Sayyid Asaad and some Cambodian officials.

HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan also met in Kuala Lumpur with Bui Thanh Son, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the ASEAN-

GCC Summit and the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit.

The meeting reviewed the bilateral relations and explored means of boosting cooperation between Oman and Vietnam in various spheres. The two sides also exchanged views on a set of regional and global issues. They touched on the topics listed on the agenda of the two summits. The meeting was attended by members of the delegation accompanying HH Sayyid Asaad and some Vietnamese officials.

HH Sayyid Asaad also met in Kuala Lumpur

with Fadillah Yusof, Minister of Energy Transition and Water Transformation of Malaysia. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the ASEAN-GCC Summit and the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit.

The meeting reviewed relations between Oman and Malaysia, and explored means of boosting cooperation in different areas. The two sides also exchanged views on a set of regional and global issues. The meeting was attended by members of the delegation accompanying HH Sayyid Asaad and some Malaysian officials. — ONA

Oman remains open to partnerships between Gulf, ASEAN and China

ON behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, headed the Sultanate of Oman's delegation at the ASEAN-GCC-China Summit, which commenced on Tuesday in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.

The summit's opening featured addresses by heads of delegations, as HH Sayyid Asaad delivered a speech, during which he emphasised that the historical relations built on shared values, mutual interests, cooperation and respect — reflected in the ancient Silk Road and the Belt and Road Initiative.

The full text of the speech reads as follows: “Our relations are historical, built on shared values and mutual interests, as well as cooperation and mutual respect — a legacy reflected in the ancient Silk Road and the Belt and Road Initiative.

Today, we are writing a new chapter on the friendship between our nations. Together, we possess immense potential to drive positive



change. Our combined population exceeds 2 billion people, with a GDP reaching \$24 trillion, making our nations among the world's fastest-growing markets.

The energy resources of this group, its workforce, and the goals we seek to achieve across various transformation sectors present significant investment opportunities in solar, wind and green hydrogen energy. These foundations enable us to meet our future energy needs while advancing sustainable development in our countries — an aspiration we all share.

Strengthening partnerships in transportation, logistics and financial technology will enrich trade, investment, and tourism opportunities. It will enhance service efficiency, cross-cultural understanding and support for

small and medium enterprises, as well as knowledge exchange and private-sector partnerships among our nations. This will accelerate innovation, generate jobs and empower our people to lead a future of sustainable prosperity.

We must also emphasise that the Sultanate of Oman strongly supports expanding and liberalising trade between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China.

Oman is optimistic about the future of the Middle East, and we express our deep appreciation to our partners in ASEAN and China for their constructive role in this regard.

Lasting regional peace will only be achieved if Israel ceases its policy of genocide against the Palestinians.

The international community and all nations represented at this summit must take all political, diplomatic and economic steps to end Israeli violence and ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The vision of Oman and the overwhelming majority of the world's nations is to support a just and lasting peace based on the two-state solution which requires the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied Palestinian territories and the full recognition of Palestine as a full-fledged member of the United Nations.

As a maritime nation and a friend to all, the Sultanate of Oman remains open to all initiatives aimed at strengthening partnerships between the Gulf region, ASEAN and China. We always look forward

to welcoming our friends and partners, working with them in a spirit of cooperation, progress and constructive engagement.” On his turn, Shaikh Sabah Khaled Al Hamad al Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, emphasised the summit's role in fostering multilateral cooperation and strategic partnerships based on integration, sustainable development and mutual respect amid global economic and geopolitical challenges.

He noted that GCC-China and GCC-ASEAN relations exemplify advanced cooperation models, with the 2022 GCC-China first Summit in Riyadh marking a strategic shift toward comprehensive economic, technological and environmental collaboration.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang highlighted the importance of regional openness and a unified “trilateral market,” stating that integrating the GCC, ASEAN and China — representing a quarter of the global population and GDP — would unlock growth opportunities. He welcomed progress on upgrading the China-ASEAN FTA and accelerating GCC-China FTA negotiations. — ONA

Sayyid Asaad leads Oman’s delegation

KUALA LUMPUR: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, headed the Sultanate of Oman's delegation at the ASEAN-GCC Summit, which commenced on Tuesday in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.

Upon his arrival at the summit venue, HH Sayyid Asaad was received by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

In his opening remarks, the Malaysian Prime Minister emphasised that the summit reflects a shared commitment to strengthening the robust ties between the two blocs, noting that growing mutual investments demonstrate deepening trust. He stated that ASEAN-GCC relations will be pivotal in fostering interregional cooperation, building resilience, and ensuring sustainable prosperity. He expressed hope for productive discussions that pave the way for tangible initiatives within an expanding and sustainable partnership.



The summit addresses key topics, including strengthening ASEAN-GCC economic partnerships. — ONA

On his turn, Shaikh Sabah Khaled al Hamad al Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, delivered a speech highlighting that the inaugural ASEAN-GCC Summit in Al Riyadh successfully laid the foundation for comprehensive cooperation. He stressed the need to build on this momentum by implementing the Strategic Cooperation Framework (2024-2028), which serves as a road map for institutionalising this partnership and translating it into practical mechanisms to achieve shared progress.

He underscored the significance of this partnership, noting that

the 16 member states collectively represent a massive economic and demographic force, with a combined GDP nearing \$6 trillion and a population of around 740 million. Their shared maritime and trade routes rank among the most vital globally, lending their cooperation a geopolitical and strategic dimension with direct implications for regional stability and global economic growth, he added.

He pointed out that the GCC was ASEAN's seventh-largest trading partner in 2023, with total trade reaching \$130.7 billion—a figure expected to grow by an average of 30%, reaching \$180 billion by 2032.

He explained that the volume of untapped opportunities remains vast, with current achievements affirming the right trajectory. He further added that the ASEAN-GCC merchandise trade exceeded \$122 billion in 2023, alongside steadily rising Gulf investments in Asian markets, reflecting mutual confidence and deepening economic integration. These trends, he noted, highlight the potential for further growth through incentivised economic policies. — ONA

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

For Providing Group Insurance Policies + Medical Insurance

Hay Al Sharooq International School (HASIS), located in Sur, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate (near Lulu Hypermarket), is inviting licensed insurance companies operating in the Sultanate of Oman to provide various insurance coverages – according to the school's needs – including health insurance for its employees and their families, according to a list that will be provided by the school administration.

Qualified companies operating in this sector can purchase the right to participate in this tender by paying an amount of 20 (Twenty Omani Riyals) - non-refundable - according to the following bank details:

Account Name	HAI AL SHROOQ INTERNATIONAL LLC
Account No.	0050-2004-2811
Bank Name	Sohar International
Branch	Al Qurum
Swift Code	BSHRMRUXXX

Last day for purchasing **Tuesday 3rd June 2025**. Hay Al-Shrooq International School is not obligated to provide a reason for excluding any bidder and the amount for entering the tender cannot be refunded.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

HM GREETS AZERBAIJAN, ETHIOPIA, ECUADOR

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Ilham HeydarAliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan, on his country’s National Day.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of success to President Aliyev in achieving further accomplishments and aspirations that serve the interests of his country’s people. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations further progress and growth in all spheres.

His Majesty has also sent a similar cable of greetings to President Taye Atske Selassie of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, on the occasion of his country’s National Day.

In his cable, His Majesty wished the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia continuous stability and growth.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of congratulations to President Daniel Noboa of the Republic of Ecuador, on being sworn-in for a new Presidential term.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Daniel Noboa. His Majesty also wished him success in achieving the aspirations of the people of Ecuador, wishing the bilateral relations and cooperation further progress and prosperity. — ONA

HM’S WRITTEN MESSAGE TO IRAQ PRESIDENT



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to Dr Abdul Latif Rashid, President of the Republic of Iraq, pertaining to bilateral relations between the two countries and brotherly peoples, and ways to enhance them in various fields.

The message was delivered by Ambassador Shaikh Mahmoud bin Muhanna al Kharousi, Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Iraq, during a reception in Baghdad by Fuad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq. — ONA

CRESCENT MOON SIGHTED IN OMAN, EID AL ADHA ON JUNE 6

MUSCAT: The Main Committee for Determining the Lunar New Moons has declared that the crescent moon for Dhul Hijjah 1446 AH has been sighted. Accordingly, Wednesday will be the first day of Dhul Hijjah and Friday (June 6) will be the first day of Eid Al Adha.

The committee issued a statement on Tuesday that reads as follows: “The Main Committee for Determining the New Moons of the Hijri Months convened

on Tuesday evening under the chairmanship of Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in the presence of the following members: Dr Shaikh Kahlan bin Nabhan al Kharousi, Assistant Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman; Eng Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Interior; Mohammed bin Salem al Akhzami, Supreme Court Judge; Abdul Rahman bin Abdul Sattar al

Kamali, Supreme Court Judge and Mohammed bin Salem al Nahdi, Supreme Court Judge.

The committee received reports indicating the sighting of the crescent moon. Based on these reports, the committee decided, after carefully examining these reports, that the crescent moon of Dhul Hijjah 1446 AH was sighted. Accordingly, Wednesday will be the first day of Dhul Hijjah 1446 AH, corresponding to May 28, 2025,

and the first day of Eid Al Adha will be on Friday, Dhul-Hijjah 10, 1446 AH, corresponding to June 6, 2025.

On this auspicious occasion, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs is honoured to extend its sincere congratulations and blessings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, praying to Allah Almighty for many returns of this occasion while His Majesty enjoys good health, well-being, blessings and bounties.” — ONA

Omani projects selected for London science forum

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 27

THE Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) announced on Tuesday the names of five outstanding Omani research projects that have been selected to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the 66th edition of the London International Youth Science Forum (LIYSF) 2025.

The announcement follows the conclusion of a national competition that saw 340 research proposals submitted by young researchers across the Sultanate of Oman. After rigorous evaluation, 30 projects were shortlisted, from which the top five were chosen to take part in this globally respected event, scheduled to be held in London, United Kingdom, from July 23 to August 6, 2025.

The selected projects reflect a diversity of ideas addressing critical environmental and technological challenges through innovative scientific solutions.

The five representatives are: Hala bint Ali al Zuabiyah, for her project titled “Dual Treatment of Landfill Leachate Using Date Seed Tannins and Advanced Oxidation



The announcement follows the conclusion of a national competition that saw 340 research proposals submitted by young researchers across the Sultanate of Oman

Technology”, Al Muntasir bin Salim al Maamari, for his project “AI-Assisted Green Hydrogen Production from Prosopis Juliflora and Industrial Waste”, Saif bin Jumaa al Hashar, for his environmentally focused project “Envvai,” which integrates

sustainability and technology, Zainab bint Khamis al Maharbiyah, for her digital platform “Nadeem,” which supports social impact projects and fosters community engagement and Deema bint Khalaf al Maawaliyah, for her AI-powered digital platform designed to identify the most damaged pipes within water networks, helping reduce water losses and improve resource management.

The evaluation of submissions was carried out by a panel of experts comprising faculty and researchers from Sultan Qaboos University, University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Al Sharqiyah Branch), the Global College of Engineering and Technology, and the Military Technological College.

The judging criteria focused on originality, scientific merit, real-world applicability and innovative potential.

Speaking on the significance of Oman's participation, Abeer bint Mubarak al Jabri, Research and Innovation Capacity Building Specialist at MoHERI, highlighted that the London International Youth Science Forum is a non-profit social institution established in 1959, which has since transformed the lives of more than 22,000 students worldwide.

OLA signs agreements with insurance companies

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The Omani Lawyers Association (OLA) signed a number of agreements with insurance companies operating in the Sultanate of Oman following the amendments issued in the new Omani Lawyers Law, promulgated by Royal Decree No 41/2024. This law requires law firms to insure themselves against professional errors. The signing took place at the headquarters of the Oman Lawyers Association (OLA) on Tuesday.

The agreements were made with Arabia Falcon Insurance Company SAOG, Dhofar Insurance and Oman United Insurance Company SAOG. They will cover professional



The purpose of these agreements is to establish cooperation between the Association and insurance companies to provide professional liability insurance policies to lawyers and law firms.

services such as legal consulting, judicial representation, legal documentation, arbitration and mediation. Additionally, they will

cover employee breach of trust, loss of documents, defamation, slander, copyright infringement, breach of confidentiality, and loss mitigation clauses, all of which are automatically covered.

“In a groundbreaking move to enhance the professional protection of lawyers and improve the quality of legal practice, the Oman Lawyers Association has signed agreements with insurance companies in the Sultanate of Oman to protect against possible errors by law firms,” said Dr Hamad bin Hamdan al Rubaie, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OLA.

The purpose of these agreements is to establish cooperation between the Association and insurance companies to provide professional

liability insurance policies to lawyers and law firms. This will enhance the legal and professional protection of lawyers while they practice their profession. The agreements also cover financial losses resulting from professional errors, negligence, and omissions during legal practice, as well as legal expenses related to any claim covered under the policy.

An insurance company stated that this initiative will create a safe professional environment for law firms. By forging agreements with insurance companies, appropriate and effective insurance solutions against professional liability will be provided to lawyers and law firms in Oman according to the terms and specifications in each agreement.

Students from Oman win big at Science India Forum

MUSCAT: Science India Forum (SIF) Oman announced the outstanding achievements of students at the Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan (VVM) National Level Camp, held at IIT Kanpur from May 24 to 25.

Four students who emerged as the ‘Shastra Pratibhas’ of SIF Oman Shastra Pratibha Contest 2024-2025, participated in this prestigious national competition, engaging with and competing against bright young minds from across India and the Middle East.

In a remarkable display of

talent and dedication, two students from Oman emerged as winners within the highly competitive Middle East region. This accomplishment underscores the high calibre of scientific aptitude fostered in Oman.

“We are incredibly proud of all our participating students for their enthusiasm and commitment,” said a spokesperson for Science India Forum Oman. “Their journey to the national camp is a significant achievement in itself, and the fact that two of our students secured top ranks in the Middle East



Shyam Srinivas

region is a testament to their hard work, the support of their schools, and the dedication of our mentors at SIF Oman.” Shasta Paratibha



Rehan Ahmed

Contest is the biggest science talent search contest conducted by Science India Forum in association with Vijnana Bharathi (VIBHA),

NCERT and CBSE in which thousands of students from India and Middle East region participate every year. Winners of Shastra Pratibha contest in Middle east region are eligible to participate prestigious Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan National Camp conducted every year.

Science India Forum Oman Shastra Pratibha’s for the year 2024-2025 will be visiting prestigious Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) in June. They will also have an opportunity to participate in the India International Science Fest

which is the biggest science festival in India providing students with opportunity to interact with top Indian scientists, successful startup entrepreneurs etc.

The winners from Oman include Rehan Ahmed (Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (Cambridge), and S Shyam Srinivas (Indian School Salalah). Other students who have reached the National Level competition are Vedhyya Govind Vinay K, Grade 10, Indian School Muscat and Samannya Kola, Grade 11, Indian School Sohar.

SHORT TAKES



A man with his face covered with cloth rides a motorbike with children on a hot summer day in Amritsar on Tuesday. — AFP

INDIA FORECASTS ABOVE AVERAGE MONSOON RAINS

NEW DELHI: India is likely to see above average monsoon rains for the second straight year in 2025, the government said on Tuesday, retaining its April forecast and keeping alive the possibility of higher farm output and economic growth.

The monsoon is expected to total 106 per cent of the long-term average this year, said M Ravichandran, secretary in the Ministry of Earth Sciences. The India Meteorological Department defines average or normal rainfall as ranging between 96 per cent and 104 per cent of a 50-year average of 87 cm for the four-month season from June to September.

The monsoon delivers nearly 70 per cent of the rain needed to water crops and replenish reservoirs and aquifers in India. — Reuters

NEPALI ‘EVEREST MAN’ BREAKS OWN RECORD



Nepali mountaineer Kami Rita Sherpa

KATHMANDU: A 55-year-old Nepali climber dubbed “Everest Man” reached the peak of the world’s highest mountain for a record 31st time on Tuesday, more than three decades after his first summit. “Massive congratulations to the legendary Kami Rita Sherpa on his 31st successful ascent of Everest, the highest number of ascents by anyone in history,” expedition organiser Seven Summit Treks said.

“Kami Rita Sherpa needs no introduction. He is not just a national climbing hero, but a global symbol of Everest itself,” it added. Sherpa first stood on the top of Mount Everest in 1994 when working for a commercial expedition.

He has climbed Everest almost every year since, guiding clients. Sherpa said that he was “just working” and did not plan on setting records.

Another Nepali climber, Tashi Gyalzen Sherpa, 29, returned to the capital Kathmandu on Tuesday after he made a record-breaking four summits of Everest in just 15 days, completing the last on May 23, according to 8K Expeditions. — AFP

SRI LANKA’S LEFTIST GOVERNMENT BEGINS PRIVATISATION

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka’s leftist government said on Tuesday it was selling a failed hotel project, marking its first privatisation move in line with an IMF bailout.

Government spokesperson Nalinda Jayatissa said the cabinet had agreed to revive the previous administration’s stalled process “of disposing of shares in Canwill”, a fully state-owned company established in 2011 to operate hotels. The sale of Canwill marks the first major privatisation under

the government of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, a self-avowed Marxist. Jayatissa told reporters the government had decided to retain Deloitte, a leading professional services firm, to manage the sale.

The government said Canwill, with an issued capital of \$61 million, needed at least another \$120 million to complete its 47-storey, partially built, 458-room beachfront hotel in Colombo. With no prospect of raising the capital to complete the project, the new administration

decided to divest the asset instead. The company also owns another beach property in the south of the island. The International Monetary Fund, which extended Sri Lanka a \$2.9 billion loan in early 2023 after the country defaulted on its \$46 billion foreign debt in April 2022, had urged reforms of loss-making state-owned enterprises.

Dissanayake had previously been reluctant to sell state assets, instead promising to revive unprofitable government-owned firms. — AFP

Asean unveils plan to integrate economies

SOUTHEAST Asian leaders reached an understanding on Tuesday that any bilateral agreements they might strike with the United States on trade tariffs would not harm each others’ economies, Malaysia’s premier Anwar Ibrahim said.

Anwar, the current chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, said there was consensus during a leaders’ summit in Kuala Lumpur that any deals negotiated with Washington would ensure the interests of the region as a whole were protected.

The Asean meeting came at a time of global market volatility and slowing economic growth, and amid uncertainty over a trade war that has ensued since US President Donald Trump’s announcement of sweeping “Liberation Day” tariffs.

Southeast Asia is among the regions hardest hit by the tariffs, with six of its countries facing levies of between 32 per cent and 49 per cent in July if negotiations on reductions fail.

“While proceeding with bilateral negotiations... the consensus rose to have some sort of understanding with Asean that decisions should not be at the expense of any other country,” Anwar told a press conference.

“So we will have to protect the turf of 650 or 660 million people,” he said of Asean.

With a combined gross domestic product of more than \$3.8 trillion, Asean members are in a precarious position in relation to the United States, which is the biggest market for the region’s exports, key drivers of its growth.

Anwar said on Monday that he had written to Trump requesting a meeting on the tariffs between the United States and Asean.

Anwar was speaking at the conclusion of the summit on Tuesday, which included an economic gathering of leaders of the Asean bloc, Gulf countries and China, which was represented by Premier Li Qiang.

Asean leaders also called for a temporary ceasefire in army-ruled Myanmar to be expanded nationwide, to enable warring



Brunei’s Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Cambodia’s Prime Minister Hun Manet, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, and Prime Minister of Timor-Leste Xanana Gusmao attend the 46th Asean Summit, at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Tuesday. — Reuters

sides to build trust and work towards convening dialogue after four years of turmoil.

Myanmar has been in crisis since its military overthrew an elected civilian government in 2021, triggering pro-democracy protests that morphed into a widening rebellion, with more than 3.5 million people displaced, according to the United Nations.

A devastating earthquake in March that killed more than 3,800 people led to a series of temporary ceasefires in affected areas, a truce that the military government has violated with continued air strikes and artillery attacks, according to data compiled by a conflict monitor and the United Nations.

“We further called for the sustained extension and nationwide expansion of the ceasefire in Myanmar, as an initial step towards the cessation of violence,” the Asean leaders said in a statement.

“We encouraged all relevant stakeholders

in Myanmar to build trust towards convening an inclusive national dialogue.”

Anwar hailed “significant” engagement steps on Myanmar on Monday after last month holding a closed-door meeting in Bangkok with junta chief Min Aung Hlaing and virtual talks with the shadow National Unity Government, which is aligned with rebel forces.

On Tuesday, Anwar said Asean leaders had agreed that the path forward was to engage all sides in the Myanmar conflict. “Now we have gone to a stage where both parties are now in consultation, although at the lower key level,” he said, stressing the need to extend and expand the ceasefire.

His remarks come after Maris Sangiampongsa, the foreign minister of Thailand, said he would propose broader international engagement with the junta, which has been ostracised by Western powers, with sanctions imposed on the generals. — Reuters

Macron gives students a lesson in ‘impulsive’ superpowers

HANOI: Between jabs at Donald Trump’s US trade tariffs and criticism of Beijing’s assertiveness in the South China Sea, French President Emmanuel Macron warned Vietnamese students on Tuesday that “on the impulse of a superpower, everything can change”.

Macron was in Vietnam as part of a six-day Southeast Asian tour, as he tries to pitch his offer of a “third way” between the United States and China to a region caught up in a confrontation between the two.

On Tuesday he departed Hanoi for Indonesia, the next stop on his trip which will also include Singapore.

Earlier he spoke to a group of around 150 students at the University of Science and Technology in Hanoi, who listened through translation headsets.

“The conflict between China and the United States of America is a geopolitical fact that casts the

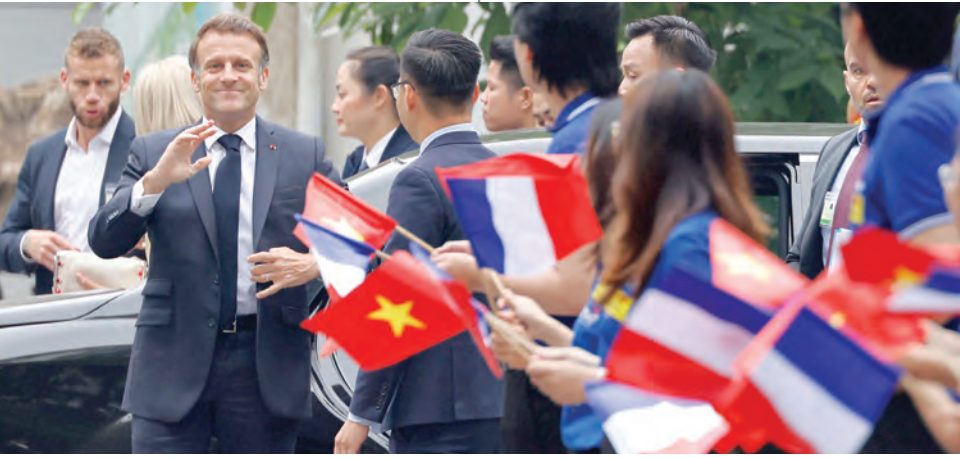
shadow of risk of a much larger conflict in this important region,” he told them.

China would do well to remember that “freedom of navigation, maritime freedom is important for the South China Sea”, he said, adding that what is happening there “worries everyone”.

Macron quickly moved on to a swipe at the United States, which he described as “imposing tariffs according to the side of the bed on which he woke up”, before presenting France as a reliable alternative.

His address came a day after he visited a Hanoi war memorial to those who fought against French colonial occupation, which ended in 1954 following a bloody uprising by Vietnamese pro-independence forces.

Vietnam has been careful to follow a balancing act between China and the United States.



France’s President Emmanuel Macron is greeted by flag waving students during a visit to the University of Science and Technology in Hanoi on Tuesday. — AFP

It shares concerns about Beijing’s increasing assertiveness in the contested waterway, but it has close economic ties with its giant neighbour. Communist-run Vietnam has also been threatened with a hefty 46 per cent tariff by US President Donald Trump as part of

his global trade blitz.

France’s “Indo-Pacific strategy” could offer a “path of freedom” and “sovereignty”, Macron told the students. More than 100 other students who were unable to fit into the university hall where he spoke tuned in via video link from a side

room, often clapping as he spoke.

Some seemed convinced, seeing an opportunity in France to avoid the chaos that many international students in the United States are enduring after Trump attempted to block Harvard University from enrolling foreigners.

“Given the context in the US where visa issues for international students are quite risky, I will prioritise studying in France because it is more stable,” 21-year-old Nguyen Quang Bach said.

Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh, 21, who chatted to Macron ahead of the speech, called the president “friendly and approachable”.

During the speech, Macron also urged the students, a few of whom spoke French, not to fall into the “world of fools” that prevails on social media, where people are free to criticise with short messages “those whose thoughts you do not understand”. — Reuters

OPINION

Diversity and inclusion in the workplace...



HYESHA BARRETT

The author is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat

DIVERSITY and inclusion are often spoken of in boardrooms. Beyond moral imperatives, they are strategic essentials for thriving workplaces. However, past the language of compliance and equity, lies something far more fundamental: a felt sense of belonging. Diversity is not just about who is in the room, it encompasses feeling safe enough to speak up. Inclusion is not just an initiative, it is a culture.

A diverse workforce is no longer a distant ideal, it is a present necessity. Diversity isn't just good ethics, it's good business. Coupled with inclusion, this is where the transformation truly takes root.

Diversity ensures that a range of identities, experiences and perspectives are present, all the while bringing richness, creativity and innovation to the environment. Inclusion is what transforms diversity into belonging, into safety. It creates the conditions where individuals feel secure, valued and respected for who they are, not just for how they fit in. It shows up in the ways people solve

problems, express care, lead meetings and ask questions.

When we don't have to mask parts of ourselves to be accepted, we are more likely to contribute authentically, collaborate effectively and stay engaged. A diverse team brings brilliance, not in spite of its differences, but because of them. Without inclusion, diversity cannot thrive. When both are present, belonging becomes not only possible, but powerful.

Trust becomes the soil where collaboration thrives.

A workplace committed to inclusion doesn't always get it precise — however it stays in the conversation. It listens and adjusts. It leads with humility and heart. It is not just about HR statements or unconscious bias workshops, though those are a great start. It's about the everyday culture where psychological safety is the norm, not the exception. Where inclusion is not just an initiative, but the atmosphere.

Leadership plays a critical role. Studies show that inclusive leaders who show empathy, curiosity and cultural intelligence, drive a considerable higher

A diverse workforce is no longer a distant ideal, it is a present necessity. Diversity isn't just good ethics, it's good business. Coupled with inclusion, this is where the transformation truly takes root

team performance. These leaders normalise differences and create room for others to do the same.

Still, there is discomfort in this work. It asks us to confront our blind spots, to sit with the sting of feedback and to make room for identities we may not fully understand. However, discomfort is not a sign of failure — it is the birthplace of growth.

When we believe the workplaces of the future are being shaped right now in the quiet moments, when someone advocates for an overlooked colleague, when an employee is able to bring their full, unedited self to work and not feel smaller for it, when inclusion become a philosophy — not just policy — we begin to write a different narrative. A story where success is shared, leadership is representative and belonging is a baseline, not just a bonus.

When everyone feels they belong in an environment, more successful teams are built. This forms the foundation of workplaces that are humane, resilient and unfeigned.

That, more than any KPI, is the legacy worth leaving.

INDONESIA SEEKS TO GROW N-ENERGY, CUT EMISSIONS

ERIC BERNAUDEAU AND MARCHIO GORBIANO

Indonesia is hoping going nuclear can help it meet soaring energy demand while taming emissions, but faces serious challenges to its goal of a first small modular reactor by 2032. Its first experiment with nuclear energy dates to February 1965, when then-president Sukarno inaugurated a test reactor.

Sixty years later, Southeast Asia's largest economy has three research reactors but no nuclear power plants for electricity. Abundant reserves of polluting coal have so far met the enormous archipelago's energy needs.

But "nuclear will be necessary to constrain the rise of and eventually reduce emissions", said Philip Andrews-Speed, a senior research fellow at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies.

President Prabowo Subianto has promised to ensure energy security while meeting a pledge to eliminate coal-powered electricity generation within 15 years. Coal accounts for around two-thirds of electricity generation in Indonesia, which targets net-zero by 2050.

The government wants 40-54GW of the 400GW it projects will be generated nationwide by 2060 to come from nuclear. It hopes to kickstart capacity with a reactor on Borneo "by 2030 or 2032", according to Energy Minister Bahlil Lahadalia.

It will be a small modular reactor, which has a lower capacity than traditional reactors but is easier to assemble and transport. The total number of plants planned has not been detailed, but the government has begun scouting locations — a challenge for a country located on the seismically active "Ring of Fire".

"Currently, 29 potential locations have been identified for the construction of nuclear power plants," Dadan Kusdiana, acting secretary general of the National Energy Council (DEN) said.

All are outside the country's biggest island of Java, in line with government goals to develop the archipelago's centre and east. The sites would also put facilities near energy-hungry mining sites.

While Japan's quake and tsunami-triggered Fukushima disaster has stalled nuclear progress in some parts of Asia, proponents say nuclear can be done safely in Indonesia.

"North Java, East Sumatra, West Kalimantan and Central Kalimantan are considered as low-risk zones," said Andang Widi Harto, a nuclear engineering researcher at Yogyakarta University.

"These low seismic risk regions also coincide with low volcanic risk regions," he added.

Countries from Vietnam to Belgium are also growing or retaining nuclear capacity as they struggle to meet net-zero goals to combat climate change. — AFP

Ukraine eyes billions in investment from US deal

UKRAINE is overhauling its minerals sector, which has been pounded by three years of war, in the hope of unlocking potential and attracting billions of dollars of investment from a minerals deal with the US, its ecology minister said. The country has deposits of 22 of 34 minerals deemed as critical by the European Union for industries such as defence, high-tech appliances and green energy, as well as ferro alloy, precious and non-ferrous metals used in construction and some rare earth elements.

However, much of the sector is underdeveloped, weighed down by Soviet-era bureaucracy and lack of investment. After months of fraught negotiations, Kyiv and the United States agreed a minerals deal in April that was heavily promoted by US President Donald Trump. It created a fund, which became active on May 23, that will receive money from new mining licences in Ukraine and invest in minerals projects.

Ecology Minister Svitlana Hrynychuk said in an interview that Ukraine hoped the fund would significantly increase the mineral industry's potential, noting extraction was a capital-intensive and long-term task.

"Currently, our natural resources sector's share of gross domestic product is 4 per cent, but the potential is much greater," she said late on Monday, without giving projections.

"We really hope the agreement will draw more attention to this sector and make foreign investment more understandable and more attractive."

With the conflict still ongoing, about half of the country's mineral wealth and a fifth of its territory are now under Russian occupation. Ukraine has lost most of its coal deposits, as well as some lithium



Ecology Minister Svitlana Hrynychuk hopes the fund would significantly increase the mineral industry's potential.



OLENA HARMASH

The writer is Ukraine economics and finance correspondent for Reuters

and manganese deposits and other minerals.

Hrynychuk estimated that the sector had suffered losses of about 70 trillion hryvnias (\$1.7 trillion) due to the occupation of Ukrainian territory and combat action along a more than 1,000 km frontline.

Ukraine updated its strategy for its resources sector at the end of last year and was now focusing on improving access to information and data on geological exploration, reducing bureaucracy and finalising the lists of critical and strategic minerals crucial for the economy, she said. The work is also part of Ukraine's push to move closer to the European Union, which Kyiv hopes to join in 2030.

Hrynychuk said the government was working with the European Commission and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development on a multi-year project to digitise up to 80 per cent of Soviet-era geological data. That task is about 40 per cent complete, she said. The government was also working to review an existing 3,000 mining licenses. Hrynychuk estimated that

about 10 per cent of them could be dormant.

"We are not interested in taking away assets if there is a potential for them to work," she said.

"We are interested for those assets which are... valuable for the state and have not been working for 10 years or more, to make appropriate managerial decisions about them. And to launch them back into circulation."

The licence review will be done this year and next, she said.

Despite wartime challenges, the government continued to auction mining licenses and last year raised 2.4 billion hryvnias from auctioning 120 mining licenses. It hopes to get a similar amount into the state coffers this year and has already awarded 32 licenses, with the majority for building sector materials, including clay, sand, marble, granite, but also amber.

Investors, who at present are predominantly domestic, were mostly interested in licenses for oil and gas exploration, as well as minerals such as titanium, graphite and manganese, she said.

Combating trans fatty acids in food supplies



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

THE Sultanate of Oman has further enhanced its impressive list of accolades by receiving a new ranking from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for its efforts in eliminating industrially produced trans fats from food supplies.

Other countries that have been recognised for adopting this best-policy for reducing trans fats in their national food supplies by 2025 include the Republic of Austria, the Kingdom of Norway and the Republic of Singapore.

According to Oman’s state-run news agency, the WHO recognition reflects the country’s strong commitment to enhancing the quality of life, consolidating preventive healthcare, and improving public health indicators. This aligns with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to elevate the nation to the ranks of developed countries, with health as a top priority.

The news agency quoted Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, as saying, “The elimination of trans fats represents a significant milestone in our commitment to promoting and protecting community health. Oman takes pride in being one of the nine leading countries globally and the second country in the Arab world to implement this life-saving policy aimed at eliminating this harmful ingredient.”

Oman’s healthcare system emphasises quality, transparency and accountability. It features a national framework designed

to promote and protect public health in accordance with precautionary principles, validated scientific evidence and international health regulations.

In 2022, Oman took action in combatting trans-fatty acids, when it issued a ban on the production, import and marketing of partially hydrogenated oils and food products in which these oils are used.

The ban was issued by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries and Water Resources and it came into effect on July 24, 2022. The decision was expected, given that the problem of high trans-fatty acid intake among the Omani population was highlighted in the National Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030, where such a measure was also proposed.

Trans fats, also known as trans fatty acids, are unsaturated fats found in both industrial and natural sources. Their use has increased dramatically in recent years because they tend to be cheaper and are suitable for a variety of processed food products.

The World Health Organization has set a target to implement best-practice policies in countries that account for at least 90 per cent of the global trans fats burden by the end of 2025, with a goal of reaching at least 70 per cent within each region. But the global progress remains inadequate, despite policy intention across regions. To date, only 60 countries have adopted these policies, which collectively cover 46 per cent of the world’s population.

Experts warn that the consumption of

Oman’s healthcare system emphasises quality, transparency, and accountability. It features a national framework designed to promote and protect public health in accordance with precautionary principles, validated scientific evidence and international health regulations

in ultra-processed packaging can have severe health consequences. They describe these foods as an open invitation to non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and even cancer.

A high intake of trans fats, defined by the UN health agency as more than one per cent of total energy intake, is associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease and mortality.

The consumption of trans fats elevates levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, a recognised biomarker for cardiovascular diseases. Research indicates that diets high in trans fats can increase the risk of heart disease by 21 per cent and the risk of death by 28 per cent. Trans fat intake is responsible for up to 500,000 premature deaths from coronary heart disease each year.

“Eliminating industrially produced trans fats is one of the most cost-effective strategies for reducing the global burden of cardiovascular diseases. Trans fats significantly contribute to preventable deaths each year, particularly due to their impact on heart health,” stated Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General.

Countries must implement best-practice policies, like restricting trans fats to 2 grammes per 100 grammes of total fat or prohibiting partially hydrogenated oils, and also show strict enforcement and monitoring to qualify for the WHO’s validation programme, the UN health agency notes.

SPACEX SET FOR NEXT STARSHIP LAUNCH AFTER FIERY FAILURES

ISSAM AHMED

SpaceX is set for the next test flight of its Starship mega rocket — the linchpin of founder Elon Musk’s Mars ambitions — after the vessel’s last two outings ended in fiery explosions.

A launch window opens at 6:30 pm (2330 GMT) from the company’s Starbase facility near a southern Texas village that recently voted to become a city, also called Starbase.

Standing 403 feet tall, Starship is the largest and most powerful launch vehicle ever built, and it carries Musk’s hopes of making humanity a multi-planetary species.

Nasa is also counting on a variant of Starship to serve as the crew lander for Artemis 3, the mission to return Americans to the Moon.

But the last two tests ended with the upper stages erupting into fiery cascades that sent debris raining down over Caribbean islands and disrupting flights — piling more pressure onto SpaceX to get it right this time.

The company is betting that its aggressive testing approach, which helped it become the dominant force in commercial spaceflight, will once again pay off.

Still, it acknowledged in a statement that progress “won’t always come in leaps.”

According to the Wall Street Journal, SpaceX is shifting personnel and resources to the Starship programme in a push to have the vehicle ready for a Mars mission as soon as next year.

On the bright side, SpaceX has now demonstrated three times that it can catch the Super Heavy first stage booster in the giant robotic arms of its launch tower — a daring feat of engineering that it says is key to making the system rapidly reusable and reducing costs.

It will be reusing a Super Heavy booster for the first time on this ninth flight. As a result, it will not attempt a catch this time, opting instead for a splashdown in the Gulf of Mexico.

Similar to previous missions, the upper stage will attempt to fly halfway around the globe and splash down in the Indian Ocean.

For the first time, SpaceX will also aim to deploy a payload: mock-ups of its Starlink Internet satellites, which are expected to burn up in the atmosphere. In issuing its launch approval, the Federal Aviation Administration said it had nearly doubled the airspace closure zone to 1,600 nautical miles east of the launch site. It is coordinating with authorities in the UK, the British-controlled Turks and Caicos Islands, the Bahamas, Mexico, and Cuba. The FAA also recently approved an increase in annual launches from five to 25 — stating the increased frequency would not adversely impact the environment and overruling objections from conservation groups who warned the expansion could endanger sea turtles and shorebirds. — AFP

Trump’s newspeak threatens us all...

SOME 2,500 years ago, Confucius was reportedly asked what he would do first if granted absolute power. “I would rectify the names of things,” he replied. Changing the language used, he suggested, would enable him to guide “affairs” and ensure that “punishments and rewards” were “appropriate.” Confucius understood that language is not merely descriptive, but prescriptive: by shaping thought and discourse, it determines actions and outcomes.

Now, US President Donald Trump is attempting to leverage language to his own ends. Since his return to the White House, he has issued a wave of executive orders aimed at “rectifying” the language of governance in America. This includes barring the federal government from using terms like “diversity,” “equity,” “inclusion,” “climate crisis, “gender identity,” and other terms related to gender and racial identity, which he argues perpetuate a damaging “woke” ideology.

With these Orwellian orders, Trump is directing outcomes by reshaping narratives, shifting priorities, erasing inconvenient truths. Banning the term “sustainability” banishes environmental concerns. Prohibiting all mention of “diversity” obscures systemic inequities.

While some of Trump’s decrees align with public opinion – for example, a 2023 survey showed that a majority of Americans reject the idea that there are more than two genders – the overall impact is to undermine, politicise, and discredit existing concepts and valuable lines of intellectual and scientific inquiry.

In other words, Trump is constraining Americans’ ability to analyse, learn, improve and engage in the kind of open and informed discourse that a well-functioning democracy requires.

Already, Trump’s linguistic crackdown has enabled the



Trump is directing outcomes by reshaping narratives.



ANA PALACIO

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of Spain and former senior vice-president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University

Department of Government Efficiency, led by Elon Musk, to terminate 85 government contracts, collectively worth an estimated \$1 billion, tied to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), as well as accessibility, often on the basis of AI-conducted word searches. All references to climate change have been purged from government websites.

Research grants that mention “climate” or “racial disparities” have been frozen. Museums that promote inclusive narratives, such as the Smithsonian, have been threatened with funding cuts.

As Confucius predicted, these changes have ripple effects. Corporations like Walmart, Meta, and McDonald’s have scaled back DEI programmes, fearing retaliation from the Trump administration.

BlackRock CEO Larry Fink used to be a vocal advocate for incorporating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations into investments. In his 2020 letter to CEOs, he stated that “climate risk is investment risk,” noting that “sustainability- and climate-integrated portfolios can provide better risk-adjusted returns to investors.”

In 2021, he mentioned ESG four times, highlighting the “sustainability premium” enjoyed by companies with “better ESG profiles.” But Fink’s recently published letter to investors included nothing about ESG or sustainability, focusing instead on “energy pragmatism.”

This mirrors a broader trend: major banks and funds, from Goldman Sachs to JP Morgan, have distanced themselves from sustainability commitments, wary of the political and legal backlash. The Dow Jones Sustainability Index — which long set a global standard for corporate environmental and social responsibility — has been rebranded by its owner, S&P Global, as the “Best-in-Class Index.”

These changes are not merely cosmetic; they signal to investors that sustainability is no longer a priority. And their impact is likely to reverberate well beyond the US, affecting institutions, corporations, and academic research worldwide. After all, America’s economic dominance grants it outsize power to influence linguistic norms in English, the lingua franca of global discourse.

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SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



(2L) Emad crowning the bronze medal

EMAD WINS BRONZE AT SHARJAH CHESS MASTERS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 27

The Oman national chess team player Emad bin Said al Balushi has achieved a new milestone for Oman chess by winning the bronze medal in C category (allocated for players rated under 1900) of the Sharjah Masters International Chess Championship. The tournament was organised recently by the Sharjah Cultural Chess Club.

The event saw broad international participation, with 111 male and female players from 26 countries, representing some of the most promising names in the sport. The competition was held over nine rounds using the Swiss system. Al Balushi managed to secure third place on the podium among a competitive field of players from top-tier chess schools.

The Oman Chess Committee stated that this achievement reflects the growing level of Omani players on the international stage and aligns with its goals to refine young talents through international exposure, helping improve international rankings and strengthen Oman’s presence in global chess tournaments.

Emad al Balushi expressed great joy at his accomplishment, saying “It was a very tough tournament, and I faced players from countries with long-standing chess traditions. There was a lot of pressure in the final rounds, but I focused on each match individually, stayed calm, and i was able to achieve positive results. This medal means a lot to me, and I consider it an important step in my sports career.” Al Balushi added “I thank the Oman Chess Committee for their continuous support. I hope we get more opportunities to participate in international tournaments, as they help us grow and gain new experiences.”

Oman gear up for friendly match with Lebanon

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 27

THE OMAN national football team will play a crucial closed-door friendly match against Lebanon on Wednesday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex as part of their ongoing domestic training camp in preparation for the final round of the Fifa World Cup 2026 Asian Qualifiers. The match will kick off at 8:00 pm (Oman time). This friendly encounter against Lebanon will serve as a final rehearsal allowing the technical staff to fine-tune the lineup and ensure peak readiness for what promises to be two defining fixtures on the road to the Fifa World Cup 2026.

Furthermore, the preparatory against Lebanon will mark the second preparatory match for the Red Warriors, following their 4-1 victory over Niger last week. The fixture which arranged at the request of both coaching staffs will take place at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex venue behind closed doors to maintain tactical confidentiality ahead of the critical qualifiers.

Since last Friday, Oman team moved their training sessions at Seeb Stadium, following a the coaching staff decision by head coach Rasheed Jaber and his team to shift from the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The venue switch has allowed the squad to intensify preparations in a focused environment. Today’s match may see the return of key players who missed the first friendly including Al Mundher al Alawi, Essam al Subhi and players from Seeb Club who were absent during the Niger fixture due to club commitments. Their inclusion is expected to provide valuable depth and experience to the squad as final adjustments are made before the competitive matches. The Oman Football Association (OFA) confirmed that goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini remains sidelined due to a finger injury and will be out for four weeks. Additionally, defender Amjad al Harthy has been ruled out of the



upcoming qualifiers after suffering a leg injury based OFA announcement in social media channels of OFA. His absence is a significant setback to the defensive lineup as Oman eyes crucial wins in the last two fixtures. It is expected that the coaching staff will work to provide the alternative player in this position.

Meanwhile, Salah al Yahyaiei, who is still engaged with his club duties at Al Khalidiya SC in Bahrain, is set to join the

national team squad after the Lebanon match, further strengthening the side ahead of the qualifiers.

Oman is currently fourth in their group with ten points from eight matches, trailing leaders South Korea by six points. With matches against Jordan on June 5 in Muscat and Palestine on June 10 in Jordan, the Red Warriors are aiming to build on their recent form and secure a place in the next stage of qualification.

Oman Club

Est. 1942

Muscat

Bidding Announcement

Investment of Part of the Club's Land

Oman Club announces the following bidding:

Bidding No.	Region	Subject	Document Fee (Non-refundable)	Category of Bidding Companies & Establishments	Bidding's Purchase Date	Query and Clarification Date	Last Date for Bid Submission
1	Plot No. (60/6) in Western Region overlooking Muscat Grand Mall	To build a commercial building as per building's requirements observed in sport buildings	RO 150/-	2 nd grade and above	Between 28/5/2025 & 9/6/2025	Between 28/5/2025 & 3/6/2025	11/6/2025
2	Plot No. (60/5) in Western Region overlooking Muscat Grand Mall	To build a commercial building as per building's requirements observed in sport buildings	RO 150/-	2 nd grade and above	Between 28/5/2025 & 9/6/2025	Between 28/5/2025 & 3/6/2025	11/6/2025
3	Plot No. (60/4) in Western Region overlooking Muscat Grand Mall	To build a commercial building as per building's requirements observed in sport buildings	RO 150/-	2 nd grade and above	Between 28/5/2025 & 9/6/2025	Between 28/5/2025 & 3/6/2025	11/6/2025
4	Plot No. (60/3) in Western Region overlooking Muscat Grand Mall	To build a commercial building as per building's requirements observed in sport buildings	RO 150/-	2 nd grade and above	Between 28/5/2025 & 9/6/2025	Between 28/5/2025 & 3/6/2025	11/6/2025

Note: Each bid must be purchased separately for each project according to the prices specified in the table.

Requirements:

1) **Receiving Bids:** The bidding investor/ company must have at least three years of experience and a valid commercial registration. Eligible bidders can obtain the bid documents from the club's management. The bid amount must be paid into the club's account (01041571485001) at Bank Dhofar before receiving the bid booklet.

2) **Submitting Bids:** The bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Chairman of the Board of Directors and bearing only the name and bid number on the outside. The envelope must not contain the bidder's identity or any reference to him.

3) **Place where tender is submitted:** Bids must be submitted to the club secretary at the club's headquarters in Al Khuwair before 1:00 PM on the deadline for submitting bids.

4) Bids submitted after the deadline or that do not meet the conditions will not be considered.

5) The bid must be signed and sealed by an authorized person only.

6) Oman Club reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to cancel bids without giving reasons.

7) Oman Club reserves the right to determine the type and form of the project in the bid if necessary.

8) Oman Club reserves the right not to give any non-binding reasons for accepting the lowest or any other bid.

9) For more information, those interested in investing may contact us via email (omansportclub@gmail.com) or mobile number (99206060).

Gauff wins, Medvedev exits French Open

PARIS: Coco Gauff forgot to bring her rackets to the court but reminded her rivals of her French Open title ambitions with a commanding win while Daniil Medvedev lost his composure on a cold and blustery on Tuesday as he crashed out in the opening round. Last year’s runner-up Alexander Zverev had no such trouble as he cruised into the second round in his latest bid to win an elusive Grand Slam title after losing three major finals including at this year’s Australian Open.

Former Roland Garros runner-up Gauff provided early comic relief as the second seed grinned sheepishly and showed her empty bag to her entourage, who scammedered to reunite her with her equipment before she thumped Olivia Gadecki 6-2 6-2.

“Honestly, I thought they put the rackets in the bag, and my side court bag is filled with drinks and everything,” Gauff told Sloane Stephens on TNT.

“So it felt like I had enough weight. Then I got on court, and I opened the first zipper. I was like, ‘OK, no rackets’. The second zipper ... ‘Oh my God. I went on court with no racquets’. Usually JC (coach Jean-Christophe Faurel) puts them in.

Gauff in action during her first round match. — Reuters

“I’ll see what happened.” The Madrid and Rome finalist made up for the delayed start by easing through the first three games and wrapped up the opening set with a battling hold after dropping her service earlier.

There was no looking back from there as Gauff tightened her grip on the contest despite the challenging conditions.

Gauff’s compatriot and former runner-up Sofia

Kenin also advanced to the second round after a 6-3 6-1 win over French number one Varvara Gracheva while Hailey Baptiste beat 2023 semi-finalist Beatriz Haddad Maia 4-6 6-3 6-1. Former world number one Victoria Azarenka became the oldest woman in the professional era since 1968 to win a singles Grand Slam main-draw match with a 6-0 6-0 scoreline, after the 35-year-old dished out

a double bagel to Yanina Wickmayer.

Marketa Vondrousova, the 2023 Wimbledon champion, breezed past Oksana Selekhmeteva 6-4 6-4 while sixth seed Mirra Andreeva beat Cristina Bucsa 6-4 6-3 to underline her title credentials after an inspired run to last year’s semi-finals. On the men’s side, third seed Zverev sealed a comprehensive 6-3 6-3 6-4 victory over American Learner Tien while 11th seed Medvedev was beaten 7-5 6-3 4-6 1-6 7-5 by Cameron Norrie.

Dusan Lajovic crashed out 6-2 6-4 7-6(4) to Kazakh lucky loser Alexander Shevchenko and Serbian compatriot Laslo Djere fell 6-3 6-4 7-6(6) to Australian ninth seed Alex De Minaur. Three-times champion Novak Djokovic was looking to lift the spirits of Serbian fans with a victorious start in his bid for a record 25th Grand Slam, with the 38-year-old taking on American Mackenzie McDonald. It was the end of the road for Bulgarian veteran Grigor Dimitrov, however, after the 16th seed pulled up with injury against Ethan Quinn to exit a fourth straight Grand Slam due to retirement. — Reuters

SHORTTAKES



Dr Abdulrahim al Darwishi

OOA HOLDS SPORTS MANAGEMENT COURSE

MUSCAT: The “Contemporary Trends in Sports Management” course, organised by the Oman Olympic Academy (OOA), commenced on Monday, at the premises of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC).

The three-day course is part of the Academy’s continuous efforts to develop sports cadres and enhance institutional performance in alignment with Oman’s Sports Strategy and Oman Vision 2040.

The course was inaugurated with a speech by Dr Ishaq bin Ahmed al Balushi, Director of the Oman Olympic Academy, in which he welcomed the attendees and participants. He then highlighted the importance of training for sports institutions, discussed emerging trends and influencing factors in the training process, and how to benefit from them. He also addressed the stages of training and the mechanisms for improving the training process, focusing on three key pillars: the organizing body, the nominating organization, and the participating individual.

With a total of 30 participants, including the participation of people with disabilities from the Omani Committee for the Deaf Sports. This reflects the Academy’s commitment to integrating and involving people with disabilities in its programs and training courses.

The course is delivered by Dr Abdulrahim bin Muslim al Darwishi, Associate Professor of Sports Management and Sports Policy at the College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University.

The course aims to enhance the competencies of personnel working in sports entities and institutions by enriching their knowledge of modern trends in sports management. It also seeks to provide them with the tools and enablers that contribute to achieving sports excellence, in addition to presenting successful models that can serve as foundations for promoting a culture of excellence and community engagement in sports.

The course program covers several key topics, most notably contemporary administrative trends aimed at achieving podium success, pillars of athletic achievement, successful models in sports accomplishments and Olympic glory, and the theme of maximizing sports achievement from elite athletes to the broader community. The course also includes several practical applications that reflect the participants’ grasp of the programme content.



MUSCAT: Earlier this month, in a quiet yet historic moment for Oman sport, Meera Bhanushali stepped onto the field to officiate the opening game of the T20I series between Oman and Bahrain at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat, becoming the first woman from Oman to umpire an international cricket match.

“It didn’t feel like anything special when I walked out to the middle,” Meera recalled. “But after the game, when it sunk in that I had just become the first woman from Oman to officiate at this level, it felt incredible. I’m very proud to have reached this milestone.”

That pride was reinforced almost

instantly. Her first major decision — a leg-before-wicket call — came at a critical juncture and proved both correct and game-shaping. “To have your first major call stand firm gives you a huge sense of confidence,” she said.

FROM PLAYER TO UMPIRE

Meera’s connection to cricket began at the age of six. Between 2010 and 2014, she represented Oman’s national women’s team, including an overseas tour to Kuwait. “There weren’t many facilities for girls back then. We played on matting wickets, shared kits, and had very limited exposure,” she said.

But even after she stopped

Shai scores 40 as Thunder on brink of NBA Finals

NBA MOST Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander delivered a masterpiece performance to power Oklahoma City over Minnesota 128-126 on Monday, lifting the Thunder to the brink of the NBA Finals.

Gilgeous-Alexander scored a playoff career-high 40 points and added 10 assists and nine rebounds to spark the Thunder, who took a 3-1 lead in the best-of-seven Western Conference finals series with game five to come on Wednesday at Oklahoma City.

“You know how close you are but you’re still so far away,” Gilgeous-Alexander said.

“Play to our identity on both ends of the floor. If we do that we’ll be just fine. If not, it could get ugly.”

Jalen Williams added 34 points with 6-of-9 shooting from three-point range and Chet Holmgren contributed 21 for the Thunder.

“They were amazing,” said Gilgeous-Alexander.

“They were confident. They weren’t rattled by the moment... I’m nothing but proud of these two.”

The Thunder have not reached the NBA Finals since losing to Miami in 2012 while the T-Wolves have never reached the championship series.

Reserves Nickeil Alexander-Walker and Donte DiVincenzo sparked Minnesota with 23 and 21 points respectively, while Jaden McDaniels added 22.

“Give their role guys credit,” said Thunder coach Mark Daigneault. “The shotmaking was ridiculous so for us to overcome that on the road the way we did was a great team win. “We’re expecting their best punch in game five so we have to play hard again if we want to win.”

Minnesota star guard Anthony Edwards, tightly marshalled all night, managed only 16 points on 5-of-13 shooting.

“Definitely not the points I wanted to get but they didn’t let me get too many shots off,” Edwards said.

“I don’t look at it like I struggled. They just had a good game plan... I didn’t get enough shots to say I struggled.”

The Timberwolves surrendered 21 turnovers and allowed the Thunder 19 offensive rebounds.

“They got 40 more possessions and we lost by two,” Edwards said. “We can work with that.”

“You’re not going to beat a team like this if you are turning it over 20-plus times,” Minnesota coach Chris Finch said.

Oklahoma City won the first two games at home but host Minnesota delivered the worst playoff loss in Thunder history in game three.

“Had a bad taste in our mouths from the last game,” Gilgeous-Alexander said. “We wanted to control the things we could control.”

Finch said the T-Wolves can win the series but added, “This isn’t the formula to get it done. That’s the most important thing to take away from tonight.”

BRAWL FROM THE JUMP

Both teams were physical and aggressive from the start, with Gilgeous-Alexander and Williams each scoring 13 points in the first



Shai (2) shoots the ball over Minnesota. — Reuters

quarter as the Thunder took a 37-30 lead.

“It was just a brawl from the jump,” Daigneault said. “The first five to seven minutes of that game was unbelievably physical. The guys just battled up.”

Gilgeous-Alexander was 5-of-6 from the floor while Williams was 5-of-8 and 3-of-5 from three-point range in the first quarter.

“Shai was obviously brilliant. Chet was a monster,” Daigneault said. “Everybody who went into the game gave us a huge contribution.”

Gilgeous-Alexander had 21 points in the first half as Oklahoma City led 65-57 at half-time and 90-85 entering the fourth quarter.

“I tried to lose myself in the game,” Gilgeous-Alexander said. “Be aggressive, pick my spots and doing so really helped.”

McDaniels sank a left corner three-pointer

with 23 seconds remaining to lift Minnesota within 123-121, but Gilgeous-Alexander converted two free throws.

Gilgeous-Alexander answered a Gobert basket with another free throw but Minnesota had a late chance.

Naz Reid and Gilgeous-Alexander traded free throws for a 128-125 Thunder lead and Edwards was fouled with 3.5 seconds remaining.

He made the first free throw, deliberately missed the second, but Gilgeous-Alexander got the rebound and threw the ball out of bounds with 0.3 of a second to play. A failed desperation inbound play sealed Minnesota’s fate. “Definitely sucks being that close,” Alexander-Walker said. “Got to play like there’s no tomorrow because there isn’t.” — AFP

Meera becomes Oman’s first woman umpire



Meera officiating her first on-field T20I match

playing, her passion never faded. “I couldn’t walk away from the game. I love it too much.”

That love turned into a new purpose in 2018, when she enrolled in her first umpiring course offered by Oman Cricket. “It was a big switch, but it felt right. I wanted to stay involved in the game and contribute in any way I could.”

In July 2024, her dedication paid off as she became the first woman from Oman to earn an ICC Level 1 umpiring certification — paving the way for her T20I debut.

Over the past year, Meera has stood in nearly 45 top-tier men’s matches, including A Division and Premier Division league games.

“I didn’t face any gender bias,” she said. “Oman Cricket has been incredibly supportive. The players, the officials — everyone has treated me with respect.”

“There are so many more opportunities now than when I started. Girls play on turf wickets, have their own gear, better coaching and more visibility. It’s heartening to see women’s cricket finally getting the attention it deserves.”

Meera hopes her journey will encourage others to chase their cricketing dreams. “If you love the game and are willing to work hard, nothing can stop you. Grab the opportunities that come your way — the sky’s the limit.”

SHORTTAKES



Cristiano Ronaldo

CRISTIANO RONALDO SAYS AL NASSR CHAPTER ‘OVER’

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA: Questions swirled over Cristiano Ronaldo’s future in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, hours after the superstar indicated he might be leaving Al Nassr in a social media post, just hours following the end of the Saudi Pro League season.

The 40-year-old Portuguese forward joined Al Nassr in 2022 from Manchester United and his contract with the Saudi club ends this summer.

A special transfer window runs from June 1-10 to allow the 32 clubs involved in the Club World Cup to sign players.

Al Nassr are not at the Club World Cup unlike fellow Saudi side Al Hilal.

Fifa president Gianni Infantino last week said “there are discussions” over the former United, Real Madrid, Juventus and Sporting Lisbon star playing at the enlarged tournament in the United States starting on June 14. “This chapter is over,” Ronaldo cryptically said on social media with a photo of him in an Al Nassr shirt. “The story? Still being written. Grateful to all.”

TOP SCORER

Ronaldo’s potential exit from Saudi Arabia will likely raise fresh questions about how the Saudi Pro League would fare in his absence, with rumours already circulating of other ageing football stars eyeing opportunities in the kingdom. On Monday, Simone Inzaghi played down rumours he is set to leave Inter Milan after the Champions League final amid widespread reports of interest from Saudi Pro League club Al Hilal. Ronaldo’s announcement comes just months after Brazilian star Neymar ended his injury-plagued 18 month stay in the kingdom, where he played just seven times with Al Hilal after joining the club in August 2023 -- despite a reported salary of around \$104 million a year.

The cryptic post from Ronaldo comes after Al Nassr lost in the semi-finals of the Asian Champions League last month to Japan’s Kawasaki Frontale and finished third in the Saudi Pro League.

Ronaldo was the league’s top goal scorer on 25. Last year, the five-time Ballon d’Or winner said he could end his career with Al Nassr. — AFP



Josh Inglis celebrates after reaching his half century. — Reuters

Punjab grab two shots to reach IPL final

AUSTRALIA’S JOSH INGLIS scored 73 to help Punjab Kings finish in the top-two moving into the IPL playoffs with a seven-wicket victory over Mumbai Indians on Monday.

Both the teams have already secured their play-off berth along with Gujarat Titans and Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the T20 tournament. A top-two position in the final group phase table makes Punjab grab one of the two spots in the first qualifier on May 29 and two shots at reaching June 3’ final.

Chasing 185 for victory, Punjab depended on a 109-run second-wicket stand between Inglis and Priyansh Arya to achieve their target with nine balls to spare in Jaipur.

The left-handed Arya made 62 before he departed in the 15th over and Inglis fell after his first IPL fifty with the team needing another 14 to win.

Inglis, a wicketkeeper-batsman, hit nine fours and three sixes in his 42-ball knock.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer made an unbeaten 26 off 16 balls to steer the team home.

“Every individual stepped up at the right time,” said Iyer.

“We’ve had players putting their hands up when we were in the dumps. (Coach) Ricky (Ponting) has been fantastic with player management, it’s important for me to get trust too.”

Ponting praised Iyer, who was brought for \$3.17 million in November’s auction. “It was pretty obvious with the amount of money we spent on him, we wanted him here,” said Ponting. “He’s a man who has been so good



Shreyas Iyer and Nehal Wadhwa celebrate after the match. — Reuters

and has a sparkle for captaincy, he has led this team superbly.”

NOT MUCH PANIC

Five-time champions Mumbai sit bottom of the top-four teams and will play the eliminator on May 30.

“We just want to play good cricket going forward, figure out the right template for

the batting group,” Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya said. “Not much panic though, we knew what was at stake.”

Gujarat’s position will depend on the final league match between Bengaluru and Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday.

The winner of the first qualifier will enter the final, while the loser will take on the winner of the second qualifier to book their spot in the title clash.

Mumbai reached 184-7 after Suryakumar Yadav top-scored with 57 off 39 deliveries to boost the total.

South Africa’s opener Ryan Rickelton hit a brisk 27 in a 44-run opening stand with Rohit Sharma, who scored 24.

Wicketkeeper Rickelton, a left-hand batter, departed in the sixth over as wickets fell at regular intervals including Rohit and England’s Will Jacks, out for 17.

Suryakumar took stock in a partnership of 44 with Pandya, who took on the opposition bowling in his 26 off 15 balls.

Pandya hit two fours and two sixes before being caught behind off South African left-arm quick Marco Jansen to put Mumbai in trouble.

Number seven Naman Dhir came out firing as he and Suryakumar, who reached his fifth half-century of the season in his 640 runs, hammered 23 off the 19th over.

Left-arm quick Arshdeep Singh took down Dhir after the batsman’s 12-ball 20 at the start of the 20th and trapped Suryakumar to finish the over with two wickets and just three runs. — AFP

Ben Griffin grabs second PGA title

HOUSTON: Ben Griffin secured his second PGA Tour victory on Sunday at the Charles Schwab Challenge, holding off Germany’s Matthias Schmid by a single stroke at the historic Colonial Country Club. Griffin, who finished at 12-under par after his final round one-over 72, maintained his composure during a challenging final round that tested players with gusty winds.

The victory comes just weeks after his breakthrough win at the Zurich Classic of New Orleans, where he partnered with Andrew Novak to win the team event.

The 29-year-old North Carolina native is enjoying an impressive career revival. After turning professional in 2018, Griffin

stepped away from golf in 2021 to work as a mortgage loan officer due to financial pressures and burnout. But his return to professional golf through Q-school has now yielded success, with his two PGA Tour victories in 2025 and other top-10 finishes moving him to fifth in the FedEx Cup rankings. Griffin got off to a flying start with an eagle on the par-five first where he drained a 15-footer and he followed it with a birdie on the par-four second to build up a cushion.

He needed it with back-to-back bogeys on six and seven and he had two more bogeys on the back nine. Schmid, who finished at 11-under after his two-over 72, made a dramatic chip-in on the 18th hole from an awkward position



Ben Griffin poses with the trophy.

near water to put the pressure on Griffin. But the American kept his composure to roll home a four-foot putt that secured victory.

“So many people to thank, so many people in my corner, I’m very blessed,” Griffin said after securing the victory. The German’s runner-up finish earned him a spot in next week’s Memorial tournament. “It wasn’t a very good start, even though I don’t think I deserved to be three-over after five or six holes,” Schmid said of his final round, where he made double bogey on the par-four fifth “I hit a lot of quality shots actually.” American Bud Cauley finished third at nine-under 271, while world-class players Tommy Fleetwood and Scottie Scheffler tied for fourth

at 272. The tournament at Colonial is one of the PGA Tour’s oldest and most prestigious events, having begun in 1946 and having been played continuously, making it the longest-running non-major PGA event still held at its original site. World number one Scheffler never managed to get his normally trusty putting into full flow.

“I had a really good weekend. I did some good stuff. Feel like I could have scored a little better today. Overall it was a really challenging day,” Scheffler said.

“I was surprised at how firm they were still able to get these greens. It was impressive,” said the Texan who had been aiming for a third straight win after his victory in last week’s PGA Championship. — AFP



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NAMA PWP SCALES UP RENEWABLE PROJECTS IN OMAN



AHMED BIN SALIM AL ABRI
CEO, Nama PWP

— has announced sweeping developments in solar and wind energy, underscoring its role as a key catalyst in the Sultanate of Oman’s clean energy transformation.

The company revealed its progress during Nama Group’s annual press conference held on May 27, 2025, which brought together electricity companies under the group to outline strategic milestones and future initiatives in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Nama PWP, in particular, emerged as a leading force, spearheading several renewable energy tenders and studies crucial to Oman’s long-term decarbonisation goals.

Nama PWP launched tenders for two large-scale solar power projects in 2024: the 500 MW Ibri III Solar IPP and the 280 MW Al Kamil Solar IPP.

Both projects are scheduled for award in 2025, with commercial operation dates (COD) set for Q4 2027 and Q2 2028 respectively.

In parallel, the Manah I and Manah II Solar IPPs reached significant milestones, with the latter completing acceptance testing four months ahead of schedule.

These solar initiatives are complemented by a growing wind energy portfolio, with five projects progressing through qualification and two already at the Request for Proposal (RFP) stage.

“Nama Power and Water Procurement is responsible for planning the future capacities required for electricity and water production and for launching tenders for Independent Power and Water Projects (IPPs and IWPs) under the Build-Own-Operate (BOO) model by the private sector.

This approach supports meeting the growing demand and enhances energy and water security in the Sultanate of Oman,” said Ahmed bin Salim al Abri, CEO of Nama PWP.

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 27

IN A clear sign of Oman’s intensifying push towards a sustainable energy future, Nama Power and Water Procurement (Nama PWP) — the sole procurer of capacity and offtaker of output

National company to oversee mineral exports

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 27

IN A SIGNIFICANT move to optimise the economic potential of its mineral wealth, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals has announced the establishment of Oman Minerals Trading Company as the central authority to oversee the marketing and export of mineral resources from the Sultanate of Oman.

The initiative is formalised through Ministerial Resolution No 18/2025, issued by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

The resolution marks a key step in reforming the mineral management system and aligns with Oman Vision 2040’s goal of sustainable, diversified economic growth.

It aims to address existing structural challenges in the mineral sector — such as fragmented marketing, price instability and the dominance of intermediaries — by centralising export control under a national entity.

KEY PROVISIONS FOR TRANSPARENCY AND MARKET STABILITY

Under the new regulation, gypsum and chrome ore exports will be strictly monitored. Export of raw chrome ore will require a minimum concentration of 36%, while processed ore can be exported at any concentration upon Ministry



The resolution marks a key step in reforming the mineral management system and aligns with Vision 2040’s goal of sustainable, diversified economic growth.

approval.

Local market needs will be prioritised before exports are approved, a policy that supports domestic manufacturing and ensures stability in local supply chains.

The regulation also seeks to standardise contracts, enhance negotiation leverage with international buyers and improve pricing transparency for Omani ores — factors that have historically impacted competitiveness despite strong production levels.

In 2024 alone, Oman produced about 14 million tons of gypsum across 15 licensed sites and 300,000 tonnes of chrome ore from 29 licensees. However, revenue gains have been diluted by inconsistent marketing and a lack of pricing discipline.

STRATEGIC ROLE OF OMAN MINERALS TRADING COMPANY

As a subsidiary of Minerals Development Oman, the new trading firm will manage exports, unify contract terms, enforce quality specifications and negotiate international sales. This professionalised approach is expected to lift the average price of Omani minerals and boost national income.

Dr Salah bin Hafiz al Dhahab, Director General of Investments at the Ministry, described the move as a “pivotal milestone,” adding that it enables the government to streamline the export process, reduce price manipulation and better monitor sectoral returns. The decision is also designed to:

- a. Improve the efficiency of logistics and export

- operations.
- b. Increase transparency and curb rent-seeking behaviour.
- c. Support SMEs involved in supply chains.
- d. Create more jobs and promote local content through in-country value (ICV) initiatives.

The resolution falls under the Ministry’s broader “Majd” initiative, which aims to evaluate and enhance local content across the energy and minerals sectors. Companies will be required to submit ICV plans and support domestic manufacturing activities that add value to raw mineral exports.

ONE-YEAR TRANSITION PERIOD

To ensure a smooth shift, a one-year transitional period has been granted. During this time, companies can conclude existing contracts and adapt to the new system. The Ministry also plans to conduct orientation and training workshops to support stakeholders and build internal capacity. Dr Al Dhahab emphasised that the transformation reflects the Ministry’s broader institutional reform following the merger of energy and minerals portfolios.

“With clearer policies, enhanced geological databases and improved investor privileges, we are creating a transparent and regulated business environment that meets the goals of Oman Vision 2040,” he noted.

Oman maintains fiscal discipline in Q1 amidst lower oil revenue

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 27

THE Sultanate of Oman posted a fiscal deficit of RO 136 million in the first quarter of 2025, demonstrating continued government commitment to prudent financial management and strategic investments, even amidst a drop in hydrocarbon revenue and tightening global economic conditions. This is according to the Ministry of Finance’s Fiscal Performance Bulletin for the January–March period.

During the first quarter of 2025, total public revenue reached RO 2.635 billion. This represented a year-on-year decline of seven per cent compared to the RO 2.826 billion recorded in the same period of 2024. The decline was driven primarily by a reduction in oil and gas revenue.

Net oil revenue stood at RO 1.468 billion, falling by 13 per cent from

RO 1.688 billion a year earlier. Net gas revenue also declined marginally by two per cent to RO 436 million, down from RO 444 million.

In contrast, current revenue increased by five per cent to RO 725 million, compared to RO 691 million in the same period last year.

Despite revenue pressures, public spending rose to RO 2.771 billion, a four per cent increase compared to RO 2.664 billion in the first quarter of 2024. The increase is attributed to a strong rise in development expenditure, which grew by 27 per cent to RO 254 million. Meanwhile, current expenditure slightly decreased by one per cent to RO 1.967 billion.

The government also allocated RO 490 million towards contributions and other expenses, including RO 144 million for the social protection system and RO 27 million in fuel subsidies.

Additionally, RO 100 million



Despite revenue pressures, public spending rose to RO 2.771 billion, a four per cent increase compared to RO 2.664 billion in the first quarter of 2024.

was allocated to the budget line designated for future debt obligations.

Spending on social sectors and basic services totalled RO 1.668 billion by the end of March 2025. This amount represented 40 per cent of total public spending. Of this allocation, 52 per cent was directed towards social welfare

and security, twenty-five per cent towards education, sixteen per cent towards health services and seven per cent towards housing.

The Ministry of Finance also maintained strong support for the private sector by paying more than RO 304 million to suppliers and contractors through the government’s financial system.

These payments were made within an average of five working days after the submission of complete documentation, reflecting the government’s reliability and efficiency in fulfilling its financial obligations.

Public debt declined to RO 14.3 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2025, compared to RO 15.1 billion in the same period of 2024.

The Ministry attributed this reduction to the proactive repayment of outstanding financial obligations.

To address financing needs for 2025, the government has

announced a borrowing plan of RO 2.454 billion. This includes RO 1.836 billion to cover maturing debt instalments and RO 620 million to finance the anticipated fiscal deficit.

The government aims to meet these requirements through a mix of Government Development Bonds and Local Sovereign Sukuk, with a total issuance value of RO 750 million planned across the year. This strategy is designed to ensure funding at sustainable cost and risk levels.

The financing plan also supports three key objectives: enhancing the domestic debt market, diversifying investor participation and mitigating risks associated with public debt.

According to the International Monetary Fund’s April 2025 World Economic Outlook, global economic growth is projected to slow to 2.8 per cent in 2025. The global inflation rate is expected to ease to 4.2 per cent.

ADVERTORIALS

BOLD CULINARY



Each course is thoughtfully crafted and plated with precision.

ROBERTO’S MUSCAT UNVEILS FOUR HANDS DINNER WITH CHEFS GIANDONATO TAFURI FLORIN RESMERITA

MUSCAT: Roberto’s at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort will transform into a stage for culinary artistry as two exceptional chefs come together for a five-Course Four Hands Dinner on Wednesday May 28, 2025.

Executive Chef Giandonato Tafuri from Roberto’s Muscat and guest Chef Florin Resmerita from Roberto’s Doha join forces to create a singular expression of flavor and finesse — a bespoke tasting menu that marries Italian soul with global inspiration.

This collaboration is a true meeting of minds, where signature techniques and bold culinary philosophies converge. Each course is thoughtfully crafted and plated with precision, reflecting the chefs’ shared vision of elevating Italian cuisine through fresh coastal ingredients and the delicate, enchanting essence of Omani saffron.

“Bringing Chef Giandonato and Chef Florin together is about more than pairing skill sets,” notes Fabio Marzano, General Manager of Roberto’s Muscat.

“It’s about connecting our Roberto’s family across the Gulf and bringing this extraordinary culinary experience to Oman. It showcases how Italian roots can flourish uniquely in both Muscat and Doha — different expressions, yet united by the same authentic culinary language.”

Chef Giandonato, born into a family of chefs and seafood farmers in Puglia, honed his skills through early apprenticeships and years of collaboration with Michelin-starred masters across Italy and the Middle East. After leading Roberto’s kitchens in Dubai and Doha, he now steers the Muscat venue with a signature approach that melds coastal simplicity with meticulous detail.

Chef Florin began his culinary path in Greece and spent over a decade in Italy perfecting the essentials of Italian cuisine. Having refined his artistry in the Michelin-starred kitchens of Gordon Ramsay and Alain Ducasse, he now brings his globally informed sensibilities to Roberto’s Doha, where he curates immersive dining experiences that respect tradition while embracing innovation.

The exclusive five-course menu takes guests on a journey of contrasts and harmony, from the luxurious Manzo, Caviale e Uova — black Angus tartare adorned with Kristal caviar — to the bright Ricotta, Salmone e Lime and the comforting warmth of saffron-infused Ossobuco Croquette.

The meal continues with torched red mullet risotto, handmade plin pasta filled with wagyu cheek and foie gras and charcoal-grilled wagyu striploin topped with delicate carbonara foam.

SKODA LAUNCHES THE NEW OCTAVIA MODEL IN OMAN

MUSCAT: Škoda has officially announced the highly anticipated arrival of the new Octavia model in Oman, a bold evolution of the brand’s global best-seller with enhanced design, functionality and sustainability.

With over seven million units sold worldwide, the Octavia, the embodiment of high-quality European engineering and craftsmanship, continues to anchor Škoda’s line-up, offering ideal interior, boot and storage space with



simply clever features throughout the cabin.

Available in four distinct trims — Essence, Selection, Sportline and the sporty range-topper RS — this

new model features a sharper design language, smarter technology and even more dynamic performance, tailored to meet the evolving expectations of drivers across the region.

The new Octavia’s exterior reflects subtle yet impactful enhancements. Revised front and rear aprons, a reimagined Škoda grille and second-generation LED Matrix beam headlights contribute to a more confident, contemporary look.

OETC showcases 20 years of network growth

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, MAY 27

OMAN Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), the majority state-owned owner and operator of Oman’s national transmission grid, has highlighted significant achievements in the development of infrastructure, while driving safety and sustainability as well.

The company achieved over 58 million safe man-hours, having also boosted the length of its grid to over 10,200 kilometres, while adding 10.65 per cent clean energy to the network. As the pioneer Omani organisation certified Integrated Management System in six strategic sectors, at a level of Omanisation of 97 per cent, OETC continues to be at the forefront of propelling the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

These achievements were outlined during the annual press conference on May 27, 2025 organised by parent organisation Nama Group at the Oman Conference and Exhibition Centre.

The new milestone in 58 million safe man-hours with no lost-time injury underscores its commitment towards workplace safety — one of the fundamental pillars of human well-being in the OETC Vision. OETC is



ENG SALEH NASSER AL RUMHI
OETC CEO

also the first Omani organisation and one of the first in the GCC region, to attain Integrated Management System (IMS) certification across six significant areas: quality, environment, health & safety, asset management, business continuity and information

security.

Eng Saleh Nasser al Rumhi, OETC CEO, reaffirmed the company’s vital role in Oman’s power industry, saying that, “Since its establishment in 2005, OETC has been a pillar in the electricity sector, responsible for transmitting electricity from power generation stations to main load centres around the Sultanate of Oman.

We manage the national grid, achieving a fine balance between supply and demand, high efficiency and cost-effective supply of electricity. OETC supplies electricity at 132 kV and above; and controls interconnection lines with the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) at 220 kV.”

Speaking about the company’s growth, Al

Rumhi added, “The national grid has been extended in the past 20 years according to international standards.

We have built over 116 grid Stations, of which 17 are 400 kV running and increased our transmission lines to over 10,200 kilometres. All these have paid us rich dividends with superb operating performance, achieving 99.9999 per cent reliability and 98.1112 per cent availability.

These achievements not only indicate OETC’s operational success but also indicate its strategic alignment with Oman Vision 2040 to empower national talent, develop infrastructure and integrate clean energy.”

According to Oman Vision 2040’s sustainability goals, OETC increased the percentage of clean and renewable energy in its grid to 10.65 per cent (1,855 GWh), reaffirming Sultanate of Oman’s move towards a cleaner future.

Financial strength is another aspect, with a Ba2 (stable) rating by Moody’s and BB+ (stable) rating by Fitch. Paying off the \$1 billion “Lamar” Bond in its entirety is a testament to OETC’s fiscal responsibility and investment capacity.

Being 97 per cent Omanised, OETC also helps in empowering national capabilities, responding to Oman Vision 2040’s call to build human capital.

BANK MUSCAT GOLD WINNER IN CORPORATE BANKING INNOVATION

MUSCAT: In recognition of its leadership in delivering innovative digital solutions that enhance business operations for its customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been honoured as the Gold Winner in Corporate Banking Innovation by Infosys Finacle.

This accolade acknowledges the Bank’s excellence in implementing Soft Token Authentication, Unified File Format, and Automated Balance Confirmation.

On this occasion, Mohammed Saud al Naamani, Deputy General Manager of Business Applications at Bank Muscat, expressed his delight at receiving this prestigious award.

He highlighted the Bank’s ongoing commitment to developing and modernising its internal operations to adapt to the rapidly changing business landscape. Al Naamani emphasised the importance of providing digital solutions that enable corporate customers to execute their financial



This accolade acknowledges the bank’s excellence in implementing soft token authentication, unified file format and automated balance confirmation.

transactions efficiently and securely. He stated, “We are dedicated to adopting the latest technologies to deliver the best possible services. We sincerely thank our customers for their unwavering trust in Bank Muscat and the innovative products and services we offer.”

The Soft Token Authentication for

corporate customers available through the mobile application significantly enhances user experience, offering clear instructions and streamlined steps.

Also, Unified File Format for companies facilitates automatic account balance verification, ensuring seamless information exchange between organisations across various billing transactions and reports.

This innovation not only reduces errors but also simplifies tracking and auditing processes. The Automated Balance Confirmation enhances financial accuracy and expedites settlement transactions between companies, ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.

This includes the ability to confirm financial statements across multiple accounts and branches simultaneously, with immediate access to updated data.

Information technology plays a central role in enhancing the security of various banking practices and operations of Bank Muscat.

Vodafone Oman reaches over one million users on its 5G network

MUSCAT: Vodafone Oman has marked a powerful new chapter in its growth journey, with one million users now connected to its 5G network. The network is now among the most widely adopted in the country, delivering advanced connectivity experiences to individuals, households and businesses alike. This achievement is more than about network availability.

It reinforces the trust of a growing customer base in Vodafone’s ability to deliver fast, reliable and future-ready digital services. Purpose-built from the ground up, the company’s

fully independent 5G network now serves as a core enabler of how its customers across Oman live, work and connect in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. Earlier in the year, Vodafone Oman had announced setting another benchmark in the Sultanate of Oman’s telecommunications sector by completing the fastest 5G network rollout in the country’s history.

With over 2,572 5G sites deployed in less than 3 years, the digital operator achieved over 98% population coverage, significantly ahead of its original license obligation. This



The network is now among the most widely adopted in the country.

extensive rollout underscored Vodafone’s commitment to pushing technological boundaries and accelerating Oman’s digital transformation.

Speaking on the occasion, Eng Bader al Zidi, CEO of Vodafone Oman, said: “Reaching one million customers is a proud moment, not just because of the number, but because of what it represents; the trust of those who have chosen to connect through us. Our mission was never just to launch a network; it was to build something that grows with Oman’s ambitions and supports its people, every step of the way.”

He added: “This milestone validates our strategy, keeping everything simple, fast and customer-focused, reaffirming our belief that digital infrastructure must serve people first.”

As Vodafone Oman moves forward, the journey is no longer about building a network, but rather about unlocking its full capability to deliver an exceptional customer experience. The company is now expanding the role of its 5G infrastructure to power enterprise transformation, accelerate youth innovation and contribute to a more connected, competitive Oman.

BUSINESS

1.13 MILLION ELECTRICITY SMART METERS INSTALLED ACROSS OMAN

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 27

THE rollout of smart electricity meters across the Sultanate of Oman crossed the 75 per cent mark at the end of last year, with the project on track to achieving 100 per cent coverage before the end of this year, according to the Nama Electricity Distribution Company (NEDC).

Both NEDC, with a mandate covering all the governorates of Oman (with the exception of Dhofar) and Nama Dhofar Services (which is responsible for Dhofar Governorate), successfully installed 1.130 million smart meters across their respective jurisdictions as of December 31, 2024.

The initiative, first launched in 2021 as part of the National Meter Reading Project, is key to the government’s goal of driving the digital transformation of energy management.

The pace of smart meter deployment has also picked up in recent years. “NEDC’s installations surged from 244,088 meters in 2021 to 1,008,958 meters in 2024, while Nama Dhofar expanded from 10,815 smart meters to 121,596 smart meters over the same period.

The deployment rate saw a significant boost, rising from 26 per cent in 2022 to 46.17 per cent in 2023, and reaching 75.48 per cent in 2024,” NEDC — part of Nama Group — noted in its 2024 Annual Report.

Significantly, meter reading performance — a source of customer unease over billing accuracy in the past — has now reached an impressive 96.17 per cent, said NEDC, citing the ongoing meter replacement drive as key to enhancing accuracy and reliability.



The nationwide deployment of around 1.2 million smart meters is targeted for completion before the end of this year.

Ramp up investment in Oman’s utility systems

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 27

OMAN’S transition towards smart energy and water infrastructure is gathering pace, with leading public and private sector voices calling for stronger investments in digitalisation, AI and data-driven decision-making.

These technologies, experts agree, are no longer optional — they are essential to meet the country’s growing demand and sustainability goals.

These insights were shared during Session 2: “How to Fund the Next-Generation Smart Energy & Water Systems:” at the EU-Oman Energy & Water Collaboration Forum, held at Crowne Plaza OCEC on May 20–21, 2025. The forum, sponsored by Nama Group and the EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition Project, was moderated by Said al Kamyani, Sustainability Specialist.

Speaking at the session, Jamie Hoyzer, CEO of Siemens Oman, stressed that digital transformation is key to enabling Oman’s energy transition. “Oman’s energy demand is expected to triple by 2050. Smart grids, AI and predictive systems aren’t luxuries — they’re critical infrastructure,” he said.

He highlighted a successful local project in which Siemens



Speakers agreed that to sustain momentum, Oman must continue aligning its policies, financing tools and human capital strategies.

used AI to optimise a chilled water plant’s operations, achieving a guaranteed 36% reduction in energy use — validated through performance guarantees from a local bank.

Bringing in a European perspective, Moisés Blanco Maceiras, Adviser to the Secretary-General for EU Funds at Spain’s Ministry of Finance, explained how Spain has effectively deployed smart infrastructure at scale.

“We’ve rolled out more than 27 million smart electric metres and supported AI-enabled irrigation and citizen-centric utility platforms through layered financing — EU grants, public-private partnerships and national co-funding,” he noted. Blanco encouraged Oman to

consider similar multi-source funding models to accelerate its smart infrastructure deployment.

From the utility side, Issam al Ismaili, Chief Commercial Officer of Nama Water Services, shared how digital tools are already making an impact in Oman. “We’ve deployed over 700,000 smart meters and reduced non-revenue water from over 40% to 37.1%, with a target of 33% by the end of this year,” he said.

Smart meters are not only cutting losses, but also giving customers access to real-time consumption data, helping to promote conservation and engagement.

Fahad al Harrasi, General Manager of ICT at Nama

Water Services, emphasised the importance of enabling technologies and local talent.

“Smart infrastructure is more than hardware — it’s a data ecosystem that supports long-term sustainability and creates jobs for Omanis,” he stated. He also noted Nama’s successful public-private partnerships under a build-operate-transfer model, which are driving digital transformation in the sector.

Speakers agreed that to sustain momentum, Oman must continue aligning its policies, financing tools and human capital strategies. AI integration, workforce development and stronger public-private collaboration emerged as the top priorities for scaling demand-side innovation in utilities.

Private sector must absorb premiums to accelerate energy transition

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 27

THE global energy transition will not succeed without private-sector willingness to absorb cost premiums, build scalable models and push investment despite current regulatory uncertainties, according to Salih Merghani, Executive Vice President for Energy at Olayan Saudi Holding Company.

Speaking at the Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES) held in Muscat recently, Merghani said that unlike previous shifts in industrial history, today’s energy transition demands that companies move away from “dense, cheap and reliable” fossil fuels to energy sources that are intermittent, complex and often more expensive.

“This is unlike anything we’ve attempted before. We’re transitioning not because the alternatives are more efficient, but because of an environmental imperative. That makes the economics more challenging — and more urgent,” he said.

Merghani noted that although Saudi Arabia and the region offer



Private investors must take the lead in developing new mechanisms for green investment.

competitively priced energy, the lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework for decarbonisation is slowing momentum. As a result, private investors must take the lead in developing new mechanisms for green investment.

“In our case, we asked ourselves: why move now? The answer was scalability. The scale exists, the market is forming and our capital has to find a home where it

contributes to the long-term shift,” he said.

He cited examples of private investment by Olayan into carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies and industrial retrofits aimed at reducing emissions in sectors like steel, cement and heavy industry.

“We looked at steel production, for example. Instead of building a new ‘green steel’ facility from scratch,

we worked on retrofitting existing operations to lower their emissions profile significantly,” he explained.

However, he stressed that many low-carbon technologies will not scale without “offtake guarantees” and financial structures that share the risk across the value chain.

“We realised that if we wanted to accelerate deployment, someone had to accept the premium — whether in the form of higher offtake prices, long-term contracts, or industrial policy support,” he said.

Merghani also highlighted the role of voluntary carbon markets (VCMs), noting that investments under Saudi Arabia’s VCM initiative have focused on creating credible carbon credits and building awareness within the private sector.

“We don’t yet have taxes or binding emissions caps, but the idea is to integrate carbon into business decision-making through the market. The VCM gives us a way to do that,” he said.

On technology maturity, he pointed out that while solar energy has now reached global scale, other solutions — particularly CCS and

sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) — still face barriers.

“We’ve made strong progress in solar, but CCS and SAF require different economic models. For SAF, the aviation sector may be the last to transition and retrofits must become financially viable at today’s cost structures,” he said. Merghani called for greater collaboration between industrial players, regulators and financiers to unlock the full potential of emerging technologies.

“Financing institutions must be part of the solution. We can’t build a project pipeline if the banks and regulators aren’t aligned with the pace of transition,” he noted. He concluded by stressing that while the private sector is ready to lead, market signals and policy coordination must follow if the region is to move from pilot projects to full-scale decarbonisation. “The technology is here, the investment appetite is real — but if we want this to happen fast, it has to be a shared effort. This transition won’t happen under normal conditions. We need to rewire the whole ecosystem,” he said.

CUT LAYERS

Opec+ must be mindful of rising oil demand



Opec+ is doing its best to balance the oil market, but needs to be mindful of rising demand, United Arab Emirates Energy Minister Suhail Mohamed al Mazrouei said on Tuesday.

Opec+ has agreed various layers of cuts since 2022 to support the market. Members of the group began unwinding some of the cuts in April. It has agreed larger-than-expected output boosts for May and June. — Reuters

FINAL APPROVAL

EU’s CO₂ targets reprieve for car industry



EU countries gave final approval on Tuesday to a reprieve for European carmakers over new emission targets, as they seek to balance climate goals with support for a struggling key industry.

Starting this year, the European Union is cutting the average carbon emissions that new vehicles sold in the 27-country bloc are permitted to produce, with steep fines if auto manufacturers fail to comply. — AFP

DEMAND SLUMP

China steel subsidies ‘distort’ global market



Subsidies that China grants to its steel makers “distort” the global market and hamper decarbonisation investment in the industry, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development said in a report.

China is the world’s largest producer of steel, making more than a billion tonnes in 2024 and a slump in domestic demand has forced producers to seek foreign markets. — AFP

OPINION

Rethinking AI for the real world of sustainable energy transition



DR MUHAMMAD
ABDUL QYYUM

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ARTIFICIAL Intelligence (AI) has come a long way. Today, it can write, translate and analyse large volumes of information. But to help solve the urgent challenges of climate change and clean energy, AI must move beyond language. It must support real-world planning, decisions and action. Oman is taking bold steps towards sustainability. With its commitment to net-zero emissions by 2050, the country has launched the Oman Net Zero Centre under the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. This centre will guide the national strategy, ensuring a transition that protects the environment, reduces costs, creates jobs and secures the energy supply. To make this transition successful, we need smart tools that can manage complex energy systems; and guide policy and investment choices. This is where AI can make a real difference, not just as a digital assistant but as a partner

in designing and operating better sustainable systems. For example, green hydrogen is a key pillar of Oman's strategy. Major projects are being planned to turn Oman into a global hub for hydrogen production and export. AI can help these projects by modelling supply chains, optimising storage and transport; and forecasting international market dynamics to facilitate sustainable business growth. Similarly, AI can enhance the power sector by improving forecasting for solar and wind production, managing energy storage and increasing grid reliability. In transport, AI can support the rollout of electric vehicles and smart charging networks. In industry, it can identify cost-effective routes to shift from fossil fuels to electricity or hydrogen, helping avoid stranded investments. AI should be aligned with the five goals of Oman's net-zero pathway: environmental sustainability, energy affordability, economic growth, job creation and energy security.

This centre will guide the national strategy, ensuring a transition that protects the environment, reduces costs, creates jobs and secures the energy supply.

With the right approach, AI can help balance trade-offs and support better decisions. The UAE has already recognised this opportunity through the establishment of the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence (MBZUAI), which is advancing research in AI for national transformation. Oman too can benefit by investing in similar initiatives. A dedicated centre or academic hub for AI in energy, climate and sustainability would complement the goals of the Oman Net Zero Centre and strengthen our national capabilities. As Oman builds its green hydrogen infrastructure and decarbonises its energy systems, AI must become part of the solution. It should be trained not just on data, but on the realities of engineering, economics and the climate. Now is the time to think beyond conventional uses of AI. If applied with purpose, AI can help Oman meet its Oman Vision 2040 and Net Zero 2050 goals and become a regional leader in smart and sustainable development.

MINING GIANT PUTS NEW SPIN ON CHINA RESOURCE PUSH

BY KA SING CHAN

ZIJIN MINING'S plan to take advantage of the surging gold price may not glitter as much as it hopes. The \$67 billion company, which also digs up copper, zinc and lithium, wants to spin off its overseas gold mines into a separate listing on Hong Kong's stock exchange. That could boost its valuation and its global ambition. But new targets may be harder to find. Zijin has gained over 700 per cent since 2015, making it one of the best-performing blue chips in Hong Kong. During that time it also spent \$7 billion snapping up assets around the globe, more than its domestic rivals, per Dealogic. Shareholder value was not the only — or possibly even chief — driver. The People's Republic is resource-hungry and Zijin's overseas spending spree helps Beijing's strategy to secure self-reliance in critical minerals. That's why the mining sector has been unaffected by regulators' tight oversight that has curtailed most other industries' outbound M&A. As a result, Zijin's gold and copper production now accounts for 24 per cent and 65 per cent of China's total, per its latest annual report. The company's strategic value to the country looks even higher with the price of both metals recently shooting to record highs. Arguably, though, keeping them under the same roof has weighed down valuation. Zijin's Hong Kong-listed shares trade at 10 times 2025 earnings, compared with the average 16 times multiple of several gold-mining global peers, calculates Jefferies. Carving out its yellow metal assets might narrow that gap. Yet Chinese miners' global push is getting more rocky. First, Zijin has tended to focus on riskier-looking assets, mainly in developing countries. In 2020, for example, it bought control of the Buriticá project in Colombia from Newmont. It's now the company's third-biggest gold mine by production, but the company reckons thieves in 2023 stole 3.2 tonnes worth \$200 million — 38 per cent of the location's annual output. Second, multinational rivals are less willing to sell as Chinese demands drive up prices of critical metals. Many will also want to avoid provoking President Donald Trump, whose administration is stepping up to counterbalance China's influence in resources-rich countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Zijin is also heavily invested. All big mining companies have to learn how to navigate geopolitical risks. For Zijin, those lessons are getting trickier. — Reuters

Western businesses will not return to Russia



On paper, several thousand Western companies still operate in Russia, but most are little more than mailboxes or fronts for Russian business entities.

In recent weeks, Russian officials have promoted the idea that once the war in Ukraine ends, Western businesses — particularly American companies — would be welcome to return to Russia. The Trump administration has responded with interest. But how realistic is that prospect? Would Western investments and joint ventures really come back? The Greek philosopher Heraclitus once famously observed, “No man ever steps into the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.” The same could be said of Russia. In the 1990s, following the Soviet Union's collapse, Western businesses poured into the country. Over the next 30 years, these businesses invested hundreds of billions of dollars in Russia, bringing not just capital but also expertise and institutional connections. In many ways, they helped integrate Russia into the global economy. That legacy has been largely erased. On paper, several thousand Western companies still operate in Russia, but most are little more than mailboxes or fronts for Russian business entities. The few remaining Western firms with meaningful operations are effectively trapped: they either cannot exit the market or are being pressured to sell their assets — often at huge losses — to well-connected Russians. Consequently, the networks painstakingly built over three decades have unravelled. Russia's financial ties to the West have mostly vanished and Western sanctions are squeezing strategic exports like oil and natural gas. Although trade in commodities and “dual-use” technologies continues via third-party intermediaries, it lacks the direct hands-on transfer of expertise once provided by Western companies, which was often the true engine of value creation. But even if the war in Ukraine were to end and sanctions were lifted, a return of Western businesses remains highly unlikely. Russia is “not the same river.” The post-Soviet economic void that Western companies filled in the 1990s and 2000s, following seven decades of isolation and central planning, has since been occupied by Russians.



THANE
GUSTAFSON

The writer, Professor of Government at Georgetown University, is the author, most recently, of Perfect Storm: Russia's Failed Economic Opening, the Hurricane of War and Sanctions, and the Uncertain Future (Oxford University Press, 2025).

Today, offices in Moscow no longer display the names of Western multinationals, but rather those of their former Russian partners, many of whom were educated in the West or trained by Western professionals. Foreign banks have been replaced by Russian ones, as have businesses across the board, from retail to online services. In these areas, Russia now functions as a fully developed market economy and no longer depends on Western involvement. That said, the war in Ukraine has pushed Russia's economy towards something resembling its Soviet-era self, with an inflated military-industrial complex alongside chronic underinvestment and stagnation in much of the rest. In several industries, particularly manufacturing, Western skills, technologies and capital could still play an important role. The oil industry is a prime example. In the 1990s, Western companies entered Russia in droves, bringing with them a full suite of oilfield services. Using capital and modern management practices, they helped revive declining Soviet-era oil provinces and launched new projects through joint ventures with Russian partners, pioneering new business models for post-Soviet Russia. That experience is unlikely to be repeated. Many Western oil companies are still wounded by

their previous forays into Russia and the global oil industry has more attractive opportunities in regions with richer reserves and more business-friendly governments. Perhaps most important, the future of oil itself is uncertain, as major energy firms seek to diversify away from traditional fossil fuels towards petrochemicals and renewables. In this emerging landscape, Russia has little to offer. Another example is the automobile and transportation sectors. Here, too, Western manufacturers rushed into Russia with ambitious plans to modernise its outdated Soviet-era industries. But all of these companies have exited Russia since 2022 — many of them suffering significant losses in the process — and are unlikely to return. The Western transportation industry is undergoing a major transformation. Amidst the transition to electric vehicles and high-speed rail, most companies have neither the appetite nor the means for another Russian adventure. Then there's China. As economic growth there slows, Chinese companies are aggressively ramping up exports, especially to Russia. But rather than investing or facilitating technology transfers, they prefer to ship finished goods. Similarly, Chinese banks are cautious with their capital and the so-called “yuanisation” of Russia's economy (in which the renminbi displaces the dollar and the euro) has proven to be a poor bargain for Russia, as China — driven by domestic priorities — is actively devaluing its currency. In practice, Russia's much-touted “no-limits” partnership with China has turned out to be an inadequate substitute for its severed financial ties to the West. Against this backdrop, it is easy to see why Russia would want to launch a charm offensive aimed at luring back Western businesses and investment. But Westerners are unlikely to respond with anything like the missionary zeal of 30 years ago. The once-empty niches left by the collapse of the Soviet economy have now been filled by Russians and Western firms — remembering their previous bitter experiences — are pursuing more promising opportunities elsewhere. It is not the same Russia — and not the same West. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

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ART/LIFE

L I F E S T Y L E

THE YOUNG OMANI BREEDER CHANGING HOW WE VIEW PREDATORY ANIMALS

20



ENTERTAINMENT

Billie Eilish takes top prize at American Music Awards



“BIRDS OF A FEATHER” singer Billie Eilish landed the top honour on Monday at the American Music Awards, winning artist of the year in Las Vegas at a red-carpet ceremony that celebrated winners selected by fan votes.

Pop singer Eilish claimed the artist prize over Taylor Swift, Kendrick Lamar, Morgan Wallen and other nominees. Eilish won all seven categories in which she was nominated, including album of the year and favourite touring artist.

“This is so crazy. I feel speechless,” Eilish said in a video message from Europe, where she is on tour. “I wish I could be there tonight.”

Eilish, 23, released her third studio album, “Hit Me Hard and Soft,” in May 2024.

“That’s So True” singer Gracie Abrams, winner of new artist of the year, also sent a recording to accept her honour. She thanked her fans, who she said “I have been lucky enough to learn from.”

“They have reminded me of the light that exists out there,” Abrams said.

SZA took home AMA accolades for female R&B artist and for R&B song for “Saturn.” Becky G was named favourite female Latin artist.

Many big names on the nominees’ list did not attend the show, which was broadcast live on CBS from the Fontainebleau Las Vegas hotel. One absentee was Beyonce who claimed favourite female country artist and favourite country album for “Cowboy Carter,” her first AMA wins in country categories. Post Malone was named favourite male country artist. Other no-shows included Taylor Swift and Kendrick Lamar.

Lamar went into the ceremony with a leading 10 nominations. He earned one award, favourite hip-hop song, for “Not Like Us.”

The festivities opened with host Jennifer Lopez singing and dancing to a six-minute medley of 23 hits by the nominees. The songs included Eilish’s “Birds of a Feather,” Sabrina Carpenter’s “Espresso” and Beyonce’s “Texas Hold ‘Em.” Janet Jackson was honoured with the Icon award, a tribute for artists with global influence. Eighty-year-old Rod Stewart received a lifetime achievement honour; and danced and sang to his pop hit “Forever Young,” which was released in 1984. — Reuters

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



HERITAGE

A staff member holds a model during an exhibition of animatronic and sculpted dinosaurs during a preview of “Jurassic World: The Experience” at Cloud Forest, Garden by the Bay in Singapore. — AFP



FILM

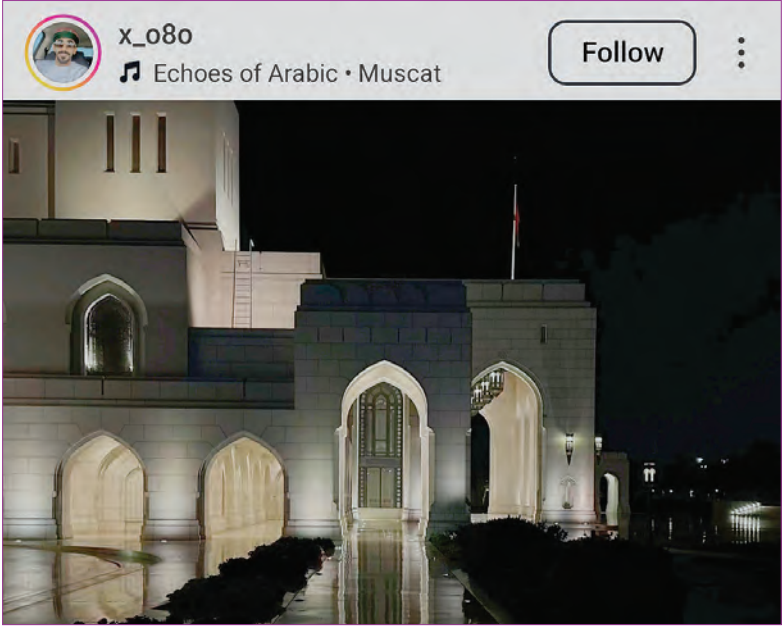
Ben Wang, poses as he promotes the upcoming movie “Karate Kid: Legends,” before a Sony Pictures presentation at CinemaCon, the official convention of Cinema United. — Reuters



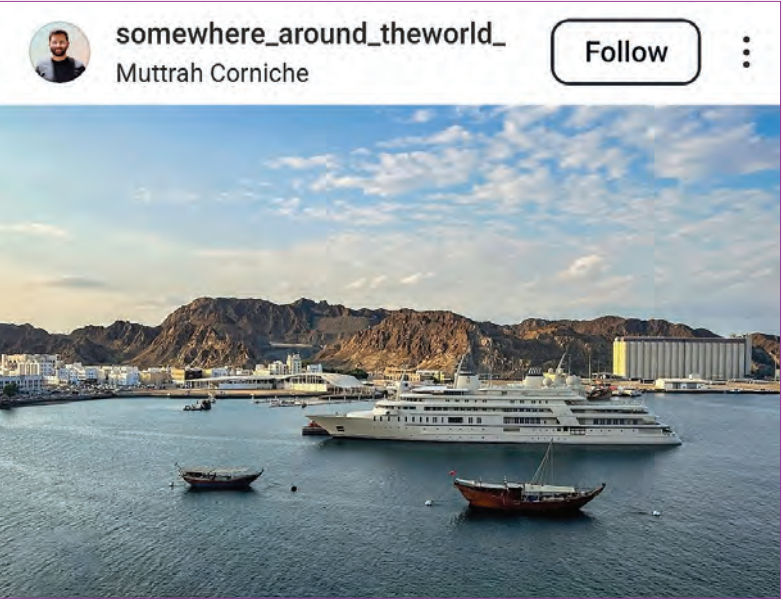
LIFESTYLE

A livestock vendor leads a cattle at a market ahead of the Muslim festival of Eid Al Adha, on the outskirts of Karachi. — AFP

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This Fossil’s 3 Eyes Are Not Its Most Surprising Feature



MORE THAN 500 million years ago, long before “The Simpsons” introduced Blinky, the iconic three-eyed fish, a bizarre creature roamed the seas of the Cambrian Period. Known as *Mosura fentoni*, this ancient animal is part of the fossil record preserved in the Burgess Shale in the Canadian Rockies. Its unique anatomy, recently detailed in the journal *Royal Society Open Science*, suggests it may not be as extraterrestrial as its appearance hints.

The first *Mosura* specimen was discovered over a century ago by a paleontologist. In recent decades, researchers at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto uncovered numerous more fossils, affectionately called “sea moths” due to their swimming flaps. Although not true fish, these creatures were related to radiodonts, dominant arthropods of the Cambrian seas, which makes *Mosura*’s anatomy all the more intriguing.

In 2012, additional

specimens unearthed in the Burgess Shale provided new insights. Paleontologists Joseph Moysiuk and Jean-Bernard Caron meticulously examined 60 fossils, photographing them under polarised light to reveal fine anatomical details. Unlike most early arthropods with simple body structures, *Mosura* exhibited remarkable segmentation — up to 26 segments — contradicting previous ideas that segmentation evolved slowly over time. At just 2.5 inches long, this creature’s body was highly divided, with a trunk filled with gills resembling those of horseshoe crabs and insects, indicating a complex breathing structure.

Mosura’s anatomy challenges our understanding of early arthropod evolution, revealing that advanced segmentation and specialised body parts appeared surprisingly early in history, painting a richer picture of Cambrian biodiversity. — JACK TAMISIEA / NYT



Ancient bread rises again as Türkiye recreates 5,000-year-old loaf



IN THE EARLY Bronze Age, a piece of bread was buried beneath the threshold of a newly built house in what is today central Türkiye.

Now, more than 5,000 years later, archaeologists have unearthed it and helped a local bakery to recreate the recipe — with customers lining up to buy it.

Round and flat like a pancake, 12 centimetres (five inches) in diameter, the bread was discovered during excavations at Kulluoba, a site near the central Anatolian city of Eskisehir.

“This is the oldest baked bread to have come to light during an excavation and it has largely been able to preserve its shape,” said Murat Turkteki, archaeologist and director of the excavation.

“Bread is a rare find during an excavation. Usually, you only find crumbs,” he said.

“But here, it was preserved because it had been burnt and buried,” he said.

The bread was charred and buried under the entrance of a dwelling built around 3,300 BC.

A piece had been torn off, before the bread was burnt, then buried when the house was built.

“It makes us think of a ritual of abundance,” Turkteki said.

- ‘MOVED BY THIS DISCOVERY’ -

Unearthed in September 2024, the charred bread has been on display

at the Eskisehir Archaeological Museum since Wednesday.

“We were very moved by this discovery. Talking to our excavation director, I wondered if we could reproduce this bread,” said the city’s mayor, Ayse Unluce.

Analyses showed that the bread was made with coarsely ground emmer flour, an ancient variety of wheat and lentil seeds, with the leaf of an as yet undetermined plant used as yeast.

Ancient emmer seeds no longer exist in Türkiye.

To get as close as possible to the original recipe, the municipality, after analysing the ancient bread, decided to use Kavlca wheat, a variety that is close to ancient emmer, as well as bulgur and lentils.

At the Halk Ekmek bakery (meaning “People’s Bread” in Turkish), promoted by the municipality to offer low-cost bread, employees have been shaping 300 loaves of Kulluoba by hand every day.

“The combination of ancestral wheat flour, lentils and bulgur results in a rich, satiating, low-gluten, preservative-free bread,” said Serap Guler, the bakery’s manager.

The first Kulluoba loaves, marketed as 300-gramme (11-ounce) cakes that cost 50 Turkish lira (around \$1.28), sold out within hours.

“I rushed because I was afraid there wouldn’t be any left. I’m curious about the taste of this ancient bread,” said customer

Suzan Kuru.

- DROUGHT RESISTANT -

In the absence of written traces, the civilisation of Kulluoba remains largely mysterious.

In the Bronze Age, the Hattians, an Anatolian people who preceded the Hittites, lived in the Eskisehir region.

“Kulluoba was a medium-sized urban agglomeration engaged in commercial activities, crafts, agriculture and mining. There was clearly a certain family and social order,” said archaeologist Deniz Sari.

The rediscovery of the bread has sparked interest in the cultivation of ancient wheats better adapted to drought. Once rich in water sources, the province of Eskisehir is today suffering from drought.

“We’re facing a climate crisis, but we’re still growing corn and sunflowers, which require a lot of water,” said Unluce, the local mayor.

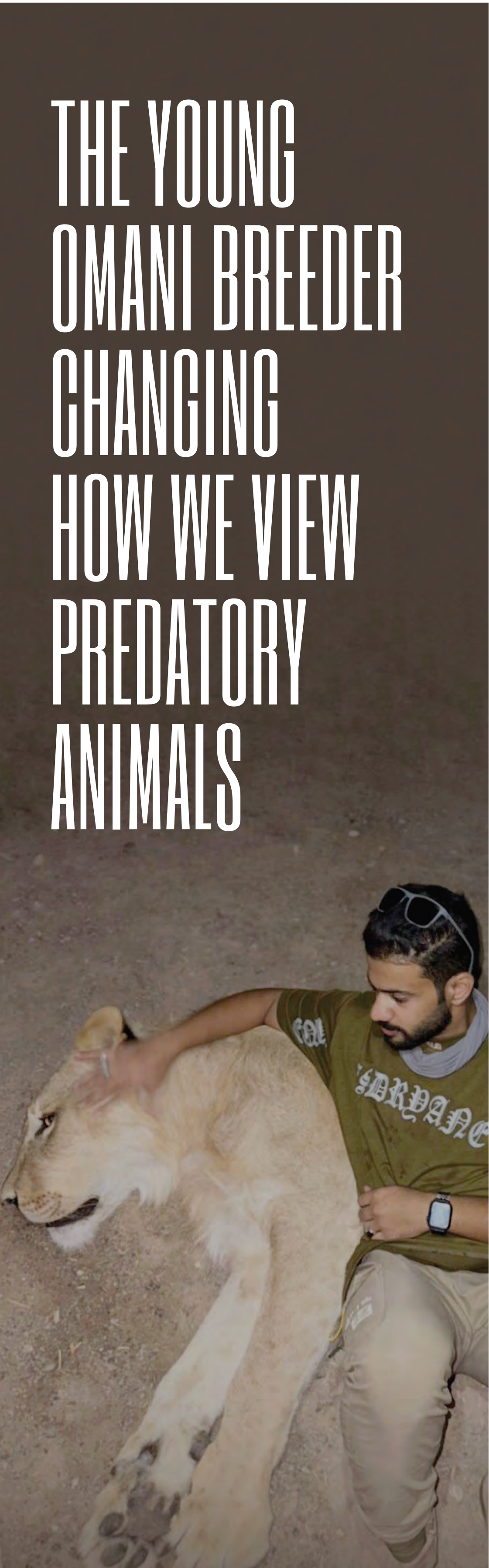
“Our ancestors are teaching us a lesson. Like them, we should be moving towards less thirsty crops,” she added.

The mayor wants to revive the cultivation of Kavlca wheat in the region, which is resistant to drought and disease.

“We need strong policies on this subject. Cultivating ancient wheat will be a symbolic step in this direction,” she said.

“These lands have preserved this bread for 5,000 years and given us this gift. We have a duty to protect this heritage and pass it on.” — AFP

FEATURES



THE YOUNG
OMANI BREEDER
CHANGING
HOW WE VIEW
PREDATORY
ANIMALS

BY BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

IMAGINE walking into a large enclosure in Oman. There’s the deep growl of a lion echoing across the space, mixed with the sharp alertness of a fox’s bark or the flutter of enormous wings from a bird of prey perched high. The sounds are constant — animals calling, grooming and moving around in a space that requires careful upkeep to keep everyone safe. Enclosures like this aren’t your typical backyard pet pens; they’re complex, high-security areas that demand round-the-clock attention, strict regulation and a deep understanding of wildlife. Behind these spaces is a story few outsiders know—of passion, risk and the heavy responsibility involved in raising some of the world’s most dangerous creatures.

In Bahla, a small town with a long history, there’s one young man pushing these boundaries. Hisham al Hinai isn’t your typical Omani; he’s a 22-year-old who has dedicated himself to raising wild predators, from lions and tigers to wolves and crocodiles. It’s a bold move in a country where wildlife laws are strict and safety is paramount. This isn’t a story about exotic pet dreams or reckless adventure. It’s about someone who’s gone through serious hurdles to turn a childhood fascination into a controlled and knowledgeable effort — under the watchful eye of government authorities.



A CHILDHOOD SPARK

Hisham says his interest in predatory animals started when he was very young. “I always loved animals that you don’t usually see outside the zoo,” he explains. “But I knew right away that raising these animals was not something I could do casually.” His family wasn’t supportive at first, worried for his safety and unsure about the risks. Yet, that early curiosity never faded.

In 2018, Hisham took his first real step — raising a lion cub he sourced through official channels. It was a daunting undertaking and he admits he faced many obstacles, including the local stigma against keeping such dangerous animals. But this was only the beginning of a journey that would test his resolve.

His uncle, Musaab, played a vital role in helping him navigate the legal and safety hurdles. “My uncle taught me a lot about how to handle predators responsibly,” Hisham says. “He helped me get the permits, understand the laws and learn what’s needed to keep both the animals and people safe.” Without that support, he admits he might have given up early.

Hisham’s love for these animals came with sacrifices. During a particularly difficult period,

he spent months caring for two lion cubs alone — often away from friends and family — to ensure they received proper attention. That time in isolation helped him bond deeply with his lions, fostering a respect for their needs and behaviours. Today, he’s vocal about how important proper handling and care are, especially given the risks involved.

THE REALITY OF RAISING PREDATORS

Despite his passion, Hisham is quick to warn others. “Raising a lion from a cub doesn’t mean you’re qualified to handle predators,” he says. He emphasises that anyone interested must follow the law — getting all necessary permits from government bodies like the Environment Authority, Royal Oman Police, Civil Defence and others. These regulations aren’t just bureaucratic hoops; they’re safeguards designed to prevent accidents and ensure animal welfare.



Handling predators — especially in a country with strict wildlife laws — is no easy task. Enclosures need to be secure enough to prevent escapes. The animals require specialised diets, veterinary care and mental stimulation to stay healthy. Owners must have the right training and experience. Without this, both the animals and the public are at risk — even with the best intentions.

Hisham stresses that raising wild animals isn’t a hobby for thrill-seekers. It’s an ethically charged responsibility. “It’s not for everyone,” he says plainly. “You need to be committed long-term, be willing to learn and follow the rules.” He wants to avoid the image of exotic animals being kept as pets or status symbols — something increasingly frowned upon both locally and internationally.

Many people don’t understand the extent of the work involved or the potential dangers. Hisham’s journey has been filled with challenges — legal paperwork, high standards for enclosures, continuous training and the emotional toll of caring for animals that can be unpredictable.

Despite everything, Hisham remains optimistic. His dream is to combine his hands-on experience with formal education. He hopes to study veterinary medicine, focusing on animal sciences, so he can improve his skills and contribute more responsibly to wildlife conservation. His example raises an important question: how can Oman balance a deep respect for its natural heritage with safe, responsible wildlife management?

The truth is, raising wild predators isn’t just about fulfilling a personal dream — it’s about respecting the science, laws and ethics surrounding wildlife. It’s about recognising that these animals, beautiful and powerful as they are, require dedicated care and respect.