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INBRIEF

OMAN, RUSSIA
REVIEW ECONOMIC
COOPERATION



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, on Monday received Maxim Reshetnikov, Russia's Minister of Economic Development, who is currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman. The meeting reviewed areas of economic and investment cooperation between the two friendly nations and discussed ways to enhance them for the mutual benefit of their peoples. The two sides also explored promising opportunities in priority sectors to strengthen economic partnerships and support sustainable development efforts in both countries.

TOURISM LAW TO
RAISE STANDARDS

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has issued the executive regulations for the Tourism Law, reinforcing efforts to regulate activities, strengthen governance and improve the efficiency of the sector in line with Oman Vision 2040. The decision mandates the implementation of the new provisions and requires all licensed operators to align their activities within six months of entry into force. Under the new framework, the ministry will maintain dedicated registers for each tourism activity, documenting licences, correspondence and violations. **DETAILS ON P13**

SALALAH – CENTRE OF RESILIENCE



Salalah has received international recognition as a centre of resilience within the 'Making Cities Resilient 2030' programme of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, making it the first in the Sultanate of Oman, the second at the level of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, and the third in the Arab world. This recognition contributes in raising the ranking of Oman in international reports, and enhances the attractiveness of Salalah.

HM, Bahrain King discuss regional situation



MUSCAT: A telephone call took place on Monday between His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain. During the call, the two leaders discussed the latest developments of the crisis in the Middle East, ongoing efforts to bring it to an end, as well as means to secure maritime navigation. They also affirmed the necessity of intensifying regional and international efforts to protect the interests of states, ensure the safety of peoples and resolve disputes through peaceful diplomatic means, in accordance with the principles of international law. This, they emphasised, is essential to ensuring respect for the sovereignty of states and consolidating regional and international security and peace. — ONA



MEDIATORS STILL
SEEK TO BRIDGE GAPS

IRAN LOOKING INTO TRUMP'S REQUEST FOR NEGOTIATIONS

IRAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER Abbas Araqchi said on Monday that Tehran was looking into US President Donald Trump's request for negotiations, according to a post on the minister's Telegram account.

He told reporters in Russia that Trump requested negotiations because the US has not achieved any of its objectives. Trump scrapped a visit to Islamabad by his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner for talks on ending the conflict, and said Iran could telephone if it wanted to negotiate. Meanwhile, sources from mediator Pakistan said work has not halted to bridge gaps between the United States and Iran despite the failure of face-to-face diplomacy after Trump called off a trip by his envoys last week. Iranian sources disclosed Tehran's latest proposal on Monday, which would set aside discussion of Iran's nuclear programme until the war is ended and disputes over shipping from the Gulf are resolved. That is unlikely to satisfy Washington, which says nuclear issues must



A woman walks next to a symbolic mock-up of an Iranian missile in Tehran, Iran, on Monday. — Reuters

be dealt with from the outset. Hopes of reviving peace efforts have receded since the US president scrapped a visit on Saturday by his envoys to Islamabad, where Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi shuttled in and out twice over the weekend. Araqchi went to Russia on Monday, where he met President Vladimir Putin and received words of support from a longstanding ally. With the warring sides

still seemingly far apart on issues including Iran's nuclear ambitions and access through the crucial Strait of Hormuz, oil prices resumed their upward march when trade reopened on Monday. Brent crude was up around 2.5 per cent at around \$108 a barrel. "If they want to talk, they can come to us, or they can call us. You know, there is a telephone. We have nice, secure lines," Trump told "The Sunday Briefing" on Fox News.

"They know what has to be in the agreement. It's very simple: They cannot have a nuclear weapon; otherwise, there's no reason to meet," Trump said. Senior Iranian sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the proposal carried by Araqchi to Islamabad over the weekend envisioned talks in stages, with the nuclear issue to be set aside at the start. A first step would require ending the US-Israeli war on Iran and providing guarantees that Washington cannot start it up again. Then, negotiators would resolve the US blockade and the fate of the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran aims to reopen under its control. Only then would talks look at other issues, including the longstanding dispute over Iran's nuclear programme, with Iran still seeking some kind of US acknowledgement of its right to enrich uranium for what it says are peaceful purposes. Asked about any new Iranian proposals, White House spokesperson Olivia Wales said: "These are sensitive diplomatic discussions and the US will not negotiate through the press. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

Oman's image reflects a soft power to be discovered over time

MUSCAT: Emmy Culiane, a French photographer based in the Sultanate of Oman, has expressed her astonishment at the remarkable presence of Omani customs and traditions in everyday life. Through her photographs — which seek to capture the true meaning of both people and place — her vision has revealed the unique interplay between historical reality and contemporary immediacy. "There is a clear intention to preserve and express Omani cultural identity through architecture, materials, and the repetition of forms," she said. "At the same time, everything feels alive, still part of daily life." Regarding the aesthetic reality of Oman as reflected in her images,

Culiane, noted that what she translates visually is often linked to what she feels. "The way light interacts with surfaces, the texture of stone, the rhythm of arches — these elements create a very specific atmosphere," she said. "What I found in Oman is a kind of soft power — something subtle, not imposed, yet very present," she added. "There is a space where you do not just look; you take your time, you feel, you experience. In other words, the Omani photographic image reflects the landscape of that soft power and its role in crafting an experience to be discovered over time." Culiane presented a number of her works at Stal Gallery as part of the French Weeks events, titled "200



Emmy Culiane reflects on the photographic image in Oman before she captures it.

Years of Photography: A French Invention." The images focused on Oman's cultural components and distinctive architecture, alongside works designed to be experienced by both sighted and blind visitors. Speaking of the Omani people — their dignified bearing and quiet presence — and their prominent place in her work, she said: "In my work, I sometimes focus on people and their faces, especially when something authentic emerges naturally. But in the series exhibited at Stal Gallery, my focus was different. I wanted to offer a tribute to the country that welcomed me, so I naturally chose to focus on the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque — its space, its architecture, its light,

its atmosphere." "When a person appears in these images, they are not the main subject," she affirmed. "They add scale, movement, and a sense of life to the place. So, instead of focusing on identity through portraits, I explore the relationship between human presence and the environment." Because her photographs present Omani architecture as living, real spaces, Culiane speaks of the harmony between the solidity of historical walls and the delicacy of human movement within them. "For me, architecture is not merely a backdrop. It truly brings the image to life. The arches, shadows, and repetition of forms create a rhythm. **TURN TO P4**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Gen Al Numani expressed his gratitude to the ambassador for strengthening ties. — ONA

GEN AL NUMANI BIDS FAREWELL TO SYRIAN AMBASSADOR

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received at his office on Monday Dr Idris Ahmed Mia, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic, on the occasion of the conclusion of the ambassador’s tenure in the Sultanate of Oman.

Gen Al Numani expressed his deep gratitude to the ambassador for his efforts in supporting and strengthening the ties between the two brotherly countries during his term. — ONA

SAKROON MEETS GCC MILITARY OFFICIAL



MUSCAT: Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies received at his office at Bait Al Falaj on Monday Maj Gen Abdulaziz bin Ahmed al Balawi, Commander of the GCC Unified Military Command and his accompanying military delegation. — ONA

State Council reviews legislative achievements

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

THE STATE COUNCIL reinforced its approach to media openness and direct engagement with press and media institutions through a media forum held under the theme ‘Vision, Communication, Acknowledgement’, attended by chairpersons of the permanent committees, the Secretary-General, and a gathering of journalists and media professionals from various government and private media institutions.

Dr Khalid al Saadi, Secretary-General of the State Council, said the initiative reflects the Council’s commitment to effective communication and providing the media with access to information that reflects its performance in line with the mandates set out in the Oman Council Law. He stressed the importance of creating space for constructive dialogue that enhances public awareness of the Council’s legislative role and national studies, particularly at a time when information spreads rapidly and facts are often mixed with rumours.



The event was attended by chairpersons of the permanent committees, the Secretary-General and a gathering of journalists.

During his presentation on the Council’s achievements in the first half of its eighth term, Al Saadi reviewed progress across its legislative and institutional work, noting that the Council studied 29 draft laws spanning economic, social, legal, technology and innovation sectors. He added that the Council also submitted three proposals related to the State General Budget, referred four studies to the government on economic diversification, education, civil society institutions and data governance, and is currently working on 12 additional studies,

including nine studies within the permanent committees and three special committee studies covering population structure and its impact on economic development, plant derivatives, and analysis of Oman’s business environment.

Dr Abdullah al Kindi, Member of the State Council, also delivered a presentation titled ‘Parliamentary Media: Mutual Interests Between Two Institutions’, in which he discussed the concept of parliamentary media, ongoing digital communication shifts, and the role of both traditional and digital platforms in enhancing

transparency and facilitating access to information. He also highlighted the importance of developing parliamentary media coverage, simplifying the legislative dimensions of laws, and encouraging wider public engagement with parliamentary affairs.

Speaking to Observer, Dr Dhafar al Shanfari, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee at the State Council, emphasised the importance of direct interaction between parliamentary institutions and the media, noting that access to information from its original source has become essential amid today’s heavy flow of information. He expressed hope that the forum would become an annual event, offering broader opportunities to showcase the Council’s work and strengthen direct engagement with the press.

The forum concluded with an open discussion between Council members and media representatives, during which a number of issues were raised, including educational matters, digital transformation, and cybersecurity, reflecting the broad range of issues the Council continues to address within its legislative and advisory roles.

Weather Symposium: Protection of life is a shared responsibility



The opening ceremony of the symposium was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information. — ONA

MUSCAT: At the conclusion of its proceedings, the symposium titled “Al Masarat Weather Depression Symposium: Response and Impact,” organised by the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, affirmed that the protection of life is a shared responsibility founded on individual awareness that rejects recklessness.

It is also a societal commitment to the directives of competent authorities, and supported by a deterrent legal framework that holds negligence and complacency accountable.

The opening ceremony of the symposium was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, in the presence of Maj Gen Sulaiman bin Ali al Hussein, Chairman of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority.

The symposium reviewed national response efforts during the exceptional

weather event “Al Masarat low-pressure system,” emphasising the importance of enhancing community awareness regarding the dangers of venturing into wadi channels and hazardous locations, thereby contributing to the reduction of losses and the protection of life and property.

The symposium encompassed several key themes, most notably a review of the meteorological conditions of Al Masarat low-pressure system, an analysis of its impact across various governorates, and the national response efforts implemented by relevant authorities, in addition to discussing mechanisms for developing preparedness and strengthening institutional coordination in dealing with similar events.

The symposium focused on field experiences, the challenges faced by response teams, and the solutions implemented, with

the aim of enhancing the efficiency of future responses to emergency weather events and strengthening community awareness regarding the importance of adhering to directives issued by competent authorities.

Furthermore, the symposium introduced relevant legal provisions and procedures, highlighting the role of compliance therewith in reinforcing response efforts, thereby contributing to risk mitigation and the protection of life and property.

The symposium also explored the religious dimension of preserving life as one of the great objectives of Islamic law (Sharia), emphasising the necessity of undertaking due diligence and adhering to preventive guidelines that safeguard oneself and others, in accordance with religious teachings that urge the protection of human life and the avoidance of perilous situations. — ONA





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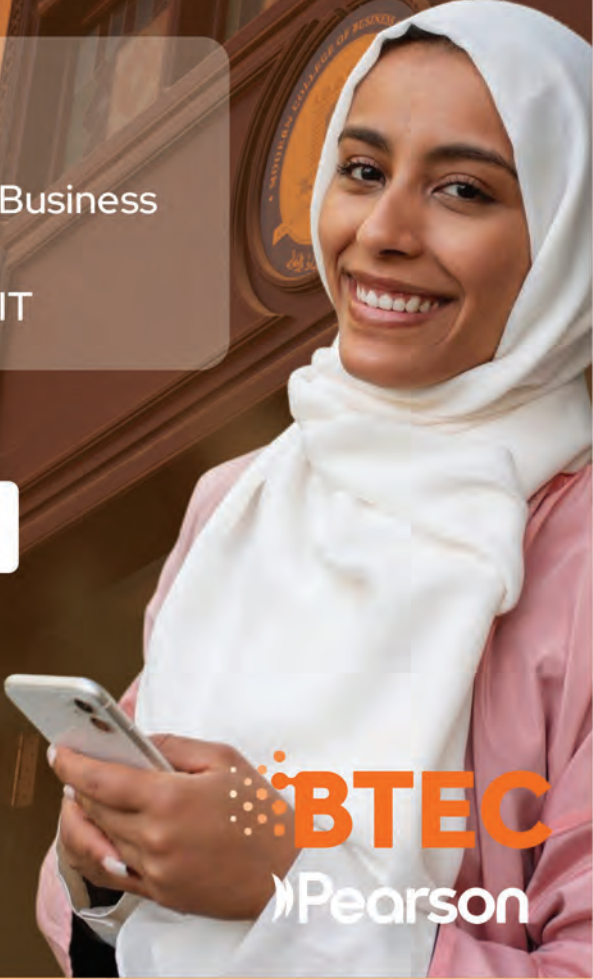
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OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The championship aimed to empower young people with skills in dialogue and critical thinking.

SQU WINS FIRST PLACE IN DEBATING CHAMPIONSHIP

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University secured first place in the universities, colleges and sports clubs category at the conclusion of the ninth National Debating Championship. The competition was organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in collaboration with the Oman Debates Centre, and featured 20 teams: 6 representing schools and 14 representing universities, colleges and clubs.

The university team comprised students Sara bint Abdullah al Balushi, Sara bint Ahmed al Farsi, Imran bin Salim al Mahrouqi, and Maryam bint Ammar al Balushi, under the supervision of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Maktoumi.

The championship aimed to empower young people and enhance their skills in dialogue, critical thinking and logical analysis, while promoting a culture of constructive debate.

This year’s topics centred on the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, covering a range of fields including artificial intelligence, social development, the environment and health, education, culture and industry and mining.

It is worth noting that 12 school teams and 88 teams from universities, colleges and sports clubs participated in the competition. All of whom competed in the preliminary rounds and progressed through a series of debates from early April to the final stage.

FROM PI

OMAN’S IMAGE REFLECTS A SOFT POWER TO BE DISCOVERED

They naturally shape the way we look, and even the way a person moves within the space.” “At the same time, human presence adds something very subtle. Even when it is not the main subject, a simple movement can bring the image to life. Between architecture and humanity, there is a deeply rooted intellectual cultural connection, a continuous dialogue that gives a sense of life and scale.”

Culianez reflects on the photographic image in Oman before she captures it, and on her own presence as a photographer as part of the cultural fabric she creates. “When I take a photograph, it is always because something has touched my artistic and cultural sensibility — a moment — whether symmetry, light, or sometimes just a feeling I cannot fully explain. I do not alter the image before capturing it, nor do I stage anything. I simply respond to what I see and feel.”

“Once I have taken the image, I may use simple editing tools or filters, not to transform reality, but to help express what I felt at that moment. Speaking of Oman, it has undoubtedly influenced me, making me slow down and pay attention to details — through sensation, light, and silence. Over time, I no longer feel like an ‘artist’, merely an observer. I feel a greater connection to what I photograph. The image is not only about what is in front of me; it is also about how I experience it.”

“For me, photography is not just about taking a picture. It is a way to make people discover, or rediscover, what I see — and more importantly, how I see it.” Culianez addressed her lens’s contribution to documenting history. “Photography can document reality, but it is never neutral. Every image carries a point of view, shaped by experience, sensitivity, and intention. In my case, my work is strongly connected to what I feel — textures, sensations, atmospheres — rather than being a purely factual record.”

“I see photography as both a visual memory and a personal interpretation. The aesthetic aspect is not separate from the documentary aspect. It is what allows the image to exist, to attract attention, and to create emotion.” — ONA

SQU, Russian Academy explore partnerships

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) on Monday received Vittoria Idrisova, Rector of the Russian Foreign Trade Academy, as part of her official visit to the Sultanate of Oman to discuss joint academic and scientific cooperation.

HH Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU, welcomed the guest and her accompanying delegation, together with several university officials. HH Sayyidah Mona stressed the importance of strengthening international partnerships to exchange expertise and develop academic programmes.

The two sides reviewed cooperation in education, training,



The two sides reviewed cooperation in education, training and cultural exchange. — ONA

academic and cultural exchange, and explored collaborative opportunities in negotiation and international trade.

During the visit, the Russian guest noted the growing interest in learning Arabic in Russia, alongside other languages and emphasised the

importance of enhancing cultural cooperation for mutual benefit.

Dr Al Mukhtar bin Saif al Abri, Dean of the College of Economics and Political Sciences, presented an overview of the college’s undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. He highlighted that international trade is a core component of several specialisations, and that the college focuses on developing students’ negotiation and other professional skills.

Both sides agreed to continue coordination to explore future cooperation, including student and academic exchange programmes and joint scientific events. — ONA

Psychological disorders cause declining output

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN, which marks the World Day for Safety and Health at Work on April 28 each year, reaffirmed the importance of embedding occupational safety and health concepts and strengthening the protection of workers across various sectors.

This occasion comes as part of ongoing efforts to advance the national framework of legislation and standards in line with international best practices and guidelines issued by the International Labour Organization, contributing to the creation of safe and healthy work environments that support sustainable development and societal well-being.

The Social Protection Fund, represented by the General Directorate of Work Injuries, Occupational Diseases and Medical Affairs, participated in an event organised by the Ministry of Health to mark the occasion.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Ali bin Said al Ghaithi, Head of Occupational Diseases Investigation Section, underscored the importance of such initiatives in strengthening strategic partnerships and raising awareness of occupational safety and health from a comprehensive perspective.

He noted that this perspective extends beyond physical safety to



The role of employees in promoting mental well-being is not solely the responsibility of institutions but also depends on individual behaviours and daily practices.

ALI BIN SAID
AL GHAITHI

include psychological and social dimensions, ultimately enhancing quality of life and fostering sustainable and secure workplaces.

Al Ghaithi highlighted the growing global significance of mental health in the workplace, noting that work-related psychological disorders have become a leading cause of absenteeism and declining productivity. He attributed this trend to increasing workplace pressures and burnout, which not only affect mental well-being but also have repercussions on physical health.

He added that this year’s theme underscores the need to prioritise mental and social well-being within workplace policies and practices, as a means of improving employee welfare and boosting institutional performance.

Addressing the most prominent occupational diseases, Al Ghaithi pointed to the provisions of the newly issued regulation under Decision No (1/2026), which includes a range of conditions such as mental and behavioural disorders, as well as musculoskeletal disorders. These cases are recognised when a direct scientific link is established between the work environment and occupational exposure, in accordance with nationally approved standards. On fostering psychologically healthy workplaces, Al Ghaithi stressed that such environments are fundamental to enhancing organisational

performance and sustainability. He explained that research in organisational psychology indicates a strong correlation between employee well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction.

He further elaborated that achieving this requires the adoption of organisational policies that address workplace stress, promote a culture of respect and effective communication, and provide psychological and social support programmes. Maintaining a balance between professional and personal life also plays a key role in reducing burnout, thereby positively impacting both mental and physical health while encouraging creativity and continuity in modern work settings.

Al Ghaithi also emphasised the role of employees in promoting mental well-being, noting that creating a healthy workplace is not solely the responsibility of institutions but also depends on individual behaviours and daily practices. This includes awareness of work-related stress, effective stress management, seeking support when needed, and contributing to a positive and collaborative work environment.

He stressed that a psychologically and socially healthy workplace is a fundamental right for employees and a shared responsibility for institutions. He noted that caring for employees’ mental and social well-being directly reflects on their productivity, job satisfaction and organisational loyalty.

Hackberry tree boosts sustainability drive

SUHAR: The hackberry tree, a rare and long-lived species in Oman, is gaining increasing scientific attention for its environmental and economic value, reinforcing efforts towards sustainability. Scientifically known as Dalbergia sissoo — also referred to as sissoo, sheesham or Indian rosewood — the tree originates from the Indian subcontinent and has spread across parts of East Asia, Africa, Australia and the Americas.

Eng Ahmed bin Khamis bin Ali al Hamdi, an agricultural researcher at the Department of Agricultural Research in Al Batinah North, said the tree remains relatively rare in Oman, with concentrations in mountain villages such as Wadi Al Sahtan, Wadi Al Nakhr in the Wilayat of Al Hamra, and Wadi Bani Ghafir in an area locally known as ‘Al Mays’.

Al Hamdi noted that the tree is prized for its durable, high-quality wood, historically used in furniture-making as well as for crafting sword and knife handles and firearm stocks.

He highlighted its role in forestry systems, soil conservation and reforestation, citing



Hackberry tree is prized for its durable, high-quality wood.

its adaptability to diverse climatic and soil conditions and its rapid growth rate.

Studies indicate that a mature hackberry tree can absorb around 22 kilogrammes of carbon annually. Under optimal conditions, planting 10 acres with approximately 140 trees per acre could absorb up to 30 tonnes of carbon each year.

Wood productivity varies depending on factors such as age, soil and climate, but estimates suggest yields of 10–15 cubic metres per hectare annually under proper management.

Al Hamdi added that the General-Directorate of Agricultural and Animal Research is actively studying the species, focusing on propagation, salinity tolerance, water consumption and growth rates — reaching up to three metres annually — as well as its potential in reforestation and carbon capture initiatives.

These efforts aim to support decision-makers and farmers in selecting suitable plant species, contributing to both environmental sustainability and economic development in Oman. – ONA

SHORTTAKES



Mohammed Shakir carried out a rescue after saving a mother cat and her kittens.

VOLUNTEERS SAVE CATS TRAPPED IN RUWI PIT

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 26

A mother cat and her four kittens were rescued from a four-metre-deep uncovered pit in Ruwi on Saturday, following a determined effort by Mohammed Shakir and a group of volunteers.

The incident began last Tuesday when Shakir's son, Shazan, heard faint meowing from a pit in the Mumtaz area. Upon investigation, the family discovered four kittens trapped inside, with their mother having jumped in after them in an apparent attempt to save them.

Unable to climb out, the cats remained stranded for three days, surviving on food and water lowered into the pit by Shakir's family.

"We couldn't find a ladder tall enough at first," Shakir said. "So we made sure they had food and water until we could rescue them safely."

On Saturday, Shakir returned to the site with friends Ashkar, Naushad, Shemir, Sharif and Zahra. Using a tall ladder, the group successfully brought the cat family to safety.

The rescue has since drawn widespread praise on social media, with animal welfare groups commending the team for their compassion, persistence and swift action.

Ahmed al Maimani, a resident of Mumtaz area and an animal lover, praised the rescuers. "Taking time to save a cat stuck in a pit takes patience, kindness, and guts. Not everyone would stop their day, get dirty, and problem-solve to pull a scared animal to safety, but they did. Thank you for choosing compassion when it was easier to walk away. The world needs more people like you," Ahmed said.

Initiative seeks to strengthen integration

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, APRIL 27

THE 'Language of hope ...
bridges without borders'
initiative concluded in Al
Dakhiliyah Governorate
as part of the Sultanate of
Oman's celebration of Arab Deaf Week
2026 in the Sultan Qaboos Mosque
Hall in Nizwa on Monday morning.
The initiative was organised by the
Consumer Protection Department
in partnership with the Governorate
Office and the Directorate General of
Education.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Ahmed bin Salim bin Saif al Toubi, Director-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. It witnessed the participation of several government entities, alongside officials, specialists, and active engagement from members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

The initiative aimed to promote inclusion and enhance consumer awareness among all segments of society by empowering deaf and hard of hearing individuals with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, while also strengthening communication skills through sign language. This contributes to improving service quality and fostering greater societal integration.

Ali bin Salim bin Marhoon al Hadhrami, Director of the Consumer Protection Department in Al Dakhiliyah, emphasised that such initiatives represent a vital pillar in strengthening institutional integration and community service. He said: “These qualitative initiatives play an important role in promoting consumer awareness and require inclusive communication tools that ensure messages reach all segments of society without exception,



The initiative aimed to promote inclusion and enhance consumer awareness among all segments of society.

reflecting our direction toward a more aware and inclusive community.”

Among the event's highlights was the inspiring story of artist Fatima bint Mohammed al Busaidy, who shared her personal journey. She said, "My journey with challenges began in childhood. After losing my hearing, I found in art a way to express myself. Despite the difficulties I faced in my academic path, I continued self-learning until I was able to participate in art exhibitions both locally and internationally." She added, "Perseverance, continuous learning, and patience are essential to achieving success. I encourage everyone to invest in their abilities and never give in to challenges." The event also featured participation from students of Hafsa bint Omar School, who showcased handmade products reflecting their creativity and skills. Hadeel al Amri said: "This initiative gave us the opportunity to present our abilities and connect with the community. We hope to gain trust and support so we can demonstrate our capabilities and actively contribute to society." Rimaz al Amri added that the experience boosted her confidence

and allowed her to learn from other successful individuals within the same community.

Student Malak al Hinai expressed her happiness at participating and meeting artist Fatima al Busaidy, saying, “She is a true role model. Her story inspired me to continue developing my artistic talent and work hard to achieve my ambitions.” The programme included an awareness paper titled “Your awareness protects you,” highlighting the importance of informed consumer decisions, as well as an educational theatrical performance presented by students of Sultan bin Saif School, addressing consumer related issues in an engaging manner.

Attendees also visited the accompanying exhibition corners, which included the Consumer Protection Department, the Directorate General of Education with participation from schools for the deaf and hard of hearing, the Directorate General of Social Development, and Nizwa Hospital. These corners provided educational content and awareness services.

The initiative aimed to promote inclusion and enhance consumer awareness among all segments of society by empowering deaf and hard of hearing individuals with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, while also strengthening communication skills through sign language.

Al Batinah North launches plastic-free workplace initiative



EA has launched the 'Plastic-Free Work Environment' initiative.

SUHAR: A project to reduce plastic use in government workplaces has been launched in Al Batinah North Governorate, targeting more than 500 employees across five institutions in its first phase.

The 'Plastic-Free Work Environment' initiative, introduced by the Environment Authority in cooperation with the Governor's Office, was launched under the auspices of Shaikh Saud bin Mohammed al Hainai, Wali of Suhar.

The initiative forms part of broader national efforts

to promote sustainable practices in the workplace, reduce plastic consumption and encourage responsible behaviour among employees.

Project manager Safiya bint Musa al Zadjali said the programme will run until November, featuring phased awareness campaigns and practical measures.

Key steps include replacing plastic bottles with glass or reusable alternatives, promoting eco-friendly bags, and conducting awareness programmes to highlight the environmental impact of plastic use.

The first phase covers five

entities: the Governor's Office, the Directorate-General of Labour, the Directorate-General of Consumer Protection, the Department of Heritage and Tourism, and Al Batinah North Municipality.

The initiative will be implemented gradually to ensure measurable behavioural change and effective results.

Aligned with the environmental objectives of Oman Vision 2040, the project underscores the role of government institutions in advancing sustainability and fostering a greener future.

— ONA


 المجلس الاعلى للقضاء
 The Supreme Judicial Council

Tenders Announcement

The Supreme Judicial Council announces its desire to submit the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
14/2026	Cleaning services for The Supreme Judicial Council building in Al Ghubrah in 2027	3/5/2026	2/6/2026	Excellent	RO 25/-
10/2026	Cleaning services for The Supreme Court building, The General Secretariat of the Council building, The Investment and Commercial Court, The Court Complex in Muscat and Al Seeb for the year 2027	3/5/2026	2/6/2026	Excellent	RO 82/-
12/2026	Gardening and agriculture services in for The Supreme Court building in for the year 2027	3/5/2026	2/6/2026	Excellent	RO 25/-
13/2026	Gardening services for building belong to The Supreme Judicial Council for the year 2027	3/5/2026	2/6/2026	Excellent	RO 25/-
11/2026	Building cleaning services for The Supreme Judicial Council for the year 2027	3/5/2026	2/6/2026	Excellent	RO 120/-

Where you can buy the more detailed tender documents electronically via the link below website:
<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders must submit a letter of commitment to the bid, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tenders Committee of the Supreme Judicial Council, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tenders Council and the latest updates to the electronic bidding system. Based on Circular No. (1/2024) issued by the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority.

1- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:

Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

2- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:

Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:

Phone: +968 24402200

Email: etenderhd@gstb.gov.om

PURSUIINGPEACE



Police officers stand guard behind a barricade near Serena Hotel, in Islamabad. — Reuters file photo

PAKISTAN STILL
SEEKS TO BRIDGE
GAPS FOR PEACE
NEGOTIATIONS

ISLAMABAD: Work has not halted to bridge gaps between the United States and Iran, sources from mediator Pakistan said, despite the failure of face-to-face diplomacy after Donald Trump called off a trip by his envoys and said Iran should phone when it wants a deal. Iranian sources disclosed Tehran's latest proposal, which would first seek to end the war and resolve the stand-off over Gulf shipping, while pushing wider talks about Iran's nuclear programme until later. That suggestion is unlikely to satisfy Washington, which says nuclear issues must be resolved from the outset.

Hopes of reviving peace efforts have receded since the US president scrapped a visit on Saturday by his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to Islamabad, the Pakistani capital,

where Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi shuttled in and out twice over the weekend. With the warring sides still seemingly far apart on issues including Iran's nuclear ambitions and access through the crucial Strait of Hormuz, oil prices resumed their upward march when trade reopened on Monday. Brent crude was up around 2.5 per cent at around \$108 a barrel. "If they want to talk, they can come to us, or they can call us. You know, there is a telephone. We have nice, secure lines," Trump told "The Sunday Briefing" on Fox News. "They know what has to be in the agreement. It's very simple: They cannot have a nuclear weapon; otherwise, there's no reason to meet," Trump said.

Senior Iranian sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the proposal carried by Araqchi to Islamabad over the weekend envisioned talks in stages. A first step would require ending the US-Israeli war on Iran and providing guarantees that Washington cannot start it up again. Then negotiators would resolve the US blockade and the fate of the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran aims to reopen under its control. Only then would talks look at other issues, including a longstanding dispute over Iran's nuclear programme, with Iran still seeking some kind of US acknowledgment of its right to enrich uranium for what it says are peaceful purposes.

In a sign that no face-to-face meetings are planned any time soon, streets reopened in Pakistan's capital Islamabad, which had been locked down for a week in anticipation of talks that never took place. The luxury hotel that had been cleared out to serve as a venue was again taking reservations from the public.

Pakistani officials said negotiations were still taking place remotely, but there were no plans to convene a meeting in person until the sides were close enough to sign a memorandum. "The draft will be negotiated remotely till they reach some consensus," said a Pakistani source familiar with the negotiations.

Washington, which says its main war aim has always been preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, has demanded Iran give up a stockpile of highly enriched uranium and forgo further enrichment, a step needed to make a bomb.

With his approval ratings falling, Trump faces domestic pressure to end the unpopular war. Iran's leaders, though weakened militarily, have found leverage in negotiations with their ability to stop shipping in the strait, which normally carries a fifth of global oil shipments. — AFP

IRAN FM BLAMES US FOR
FAILURE OF TALKS



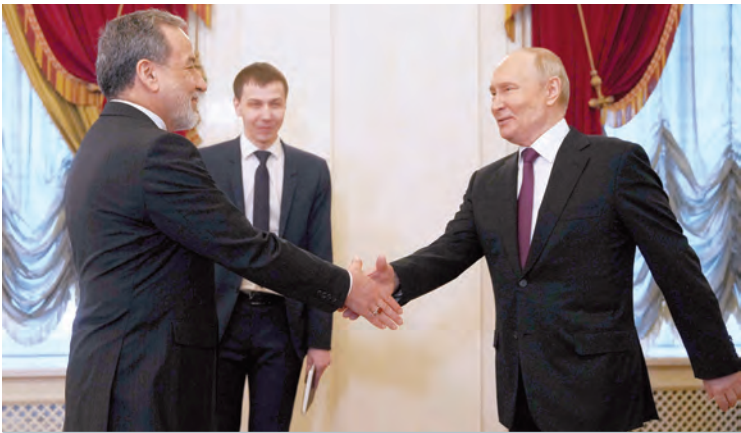
People walk past a billboard with a graphic design about the Strait of Hormuz on a building, in Tehran. — Reuters

IRAN'S
TOP diplomat
blamed
Washington on
Monday for the
failure of Middle

East peace talks during a visit to Russia, where President Vladimir Putin promised him Moscow's support in bringing the war to a close. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was in Saint Petersburg on the fourth leg of a whirlwind diplomatic tour, having sandwiched a trip to Oman in between two visits to main mediator Pakistan over the past few days. Islamabad played host to the first and only round of unsuccessful talks between Washington and Tehran, and Araghchi's visit had fanned hopes for fresh negotiations over the weekend, until US President Donald Trump scrapped a planned trip by his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner.

"The US approaches caused the previous round of negotiations, despite progress, to fail to reach its goals because of the excessive demands," Araghchi said on Monday. After nixing his emissaries' trip, Trump told Fox News that if Iran wanted talks, "they can call us" — though he has said the cancellation does not signal a return to hostilities. Following his meeting with Araghchi, Putin voiced his commitment to the two countries' "strategic relationship", telling the visiting diplomat: "For our part, we will do everything that serves your interests, the interests of all the people of the region, so that peace can be achieved as soon as possible."

In a sign that back-channel diplomatic efforts were ongoing, the Fars news agency said Iran had passed "written messages" to the Americans via Pakistan spelling out red lines, including nuclear issues and the Strait of Hormuz. Fars news agency said the messages were not part of formal negotiations, however. US media outlet Axios — citing



Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, in Saint Petersburg. — AFP

Following his meeting with Araghchi, Putin voiced his commitment to the two countries' strategic relationship, telling the visiting diplomat: For our part, we will do everything that serves your interests, the interests of all the people of the region, so that peace can be achieved as soon as possible

a US official and two other sources with knowledge of the matter — reported on Sunday that Iran had sent a new proposal to end the war centred on reopening the Strait of Hormuz and ending a US naval blockade there, with nuclear negotiations postponed for a later stage. Iranian state news agency IRNA cited the report without denying it. Trump was expected to hold a meeting with his top national security advisers on Monday to discuss the stalled talks and how to proceed, Axios and ABC news reported.

GLOBAL ISSUE

The ceasefire in the US-Israeli war with Iran has so far held, but its economic shock waves have continued to reverberate globally. Iran has blockaded Hormuz, cutting off flows of oil, gas and fertiliser and sending prices soaring. In response, the US has imposed a blockade of Iranian ports in the waterway and beyond. Trump is facing domestic pressure to find an off-ramp as fuel prices rise, with midterm elections due in November and polls showing the war is unpopular among Americans.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards, however, have said they have no intention of lifting their market-

rattling blockade. Ebrahim Azizi, head of the national security commission in Iran's parliament, told state television on Monday that a proposed law for managing the strait would make the Islamic republic's armed forces the overseeing authority, with financial gains from the waterway to be paid in Iranian rial. Oil prices rose and stock markets were mostly lower on Monday as peace talks between the US and Iran stalled, ahead of a week full of central bank decisions and corporate earnings. Both main international oil contracts were up over one per cent with Brent crude holding above \$100 a barrel as the crucial Strait of Hormuz waterway remained largely closed, though lingering hopes that a deal can eventually be reached tempered gains.

Wall Street's main indices dipped at the open but the Dow quickly edged higher and S&P 500 both steadied. The Nasdaq edged off its record close.

In Europe, London dipped but Frankfurt and Paris were higher in afternoon trading. Asian stock markets were mixed on Monday, as Tokyo and Seoul were buoyed by a tech rally, while Hong Kong slipped. "It may be that hopes of a diplomatic breakthrough were pretty faint to start with, and markets are now in wait-and-see territory ahead of a heavy week of earnings and economic touchpoints," said Derren Nathan, head of equity research at Hargreaves Lansdown.

With energy prices remaining high, the US Federal Reserve is expected to keep interest rates unchanged on Wednesday, followed by similar decisions from the European Central Bank and Bank of England. "There's no expectations of rate cuts from any of these central banks," said Trade Nation analyst David Morrison. "But analysts will be paying very close attention to comments made, particularly those to do with inflation," he added. — AFP

Nations meet to discuss fossil fuel exit in shadow of war

BRUSSELS: Around 60 governments, including Brazil, Germany, Canada and Nigeria, will hold the first international meeting this week to discuss phasing out fossil fuels, as the Iran war upends global oil and gas markets and sends prices soaring. The gathering of ministers and officials in Santa Marta, Colombia, which starts on Tuesday, will focus on practical steps to shift economies away from fossil fuels, rather than setting new global targets of the kind agreed at UN climate summits.

"We're not negotiating ambitions, we're not negotiating commitments. This really is about sharing how you do this," said Stientje van Veldhoven, climate minister for the Netherlands, which is co-organising the meeting with Colombia. Governments will discuss "what kind of financial instruments, what kind of regulatory incentives, what kind of planning instruments" are needed to kick-start a phase-out, she said. Talks will also address how to create investment conditions for industries to switch from gas to

electricity, and how to reform fossil fuel subsidies. The meeting brings together a coalition of willing nations, with the world's top two polluters — China and the US — notably absent. Saudi Arabia and other major Middle Eastern oil and gas producers are also not attending. The Iran war has exposed many countries' heavy dependency on oil and gas imports, with Asian economies hit by fuel shortages, and European countries facing surging energy costs. Van Veldhoven said the energy

crisis had reinforced the case for phasing out oil and gas to bolster economic and energy security, not just to tackle climate change. "This war in the Middle East has ramifications all around the world because of our dependency on fossil fuels," she said. "The less you are dependent on it, the less vulnerable you are." The meeting also reflects frustration among some governments at slow progress in annual UN climate talks, where nearly 200 countries must agree decisions by consensus. — Reuters

Israeli strikes expand in Lebanon despite ceasefire

BEIRUT: The Israeli military began carrying out strikes in eastern Lebanon on Monday, expanding the scope of its bombing campaign during a ceasefire that has failed to fully halt hostilities with Hezbollah. The strikes on Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley marked the first time the area has been hit since a US-brokered ceasefire came into force on April 16, significantly reducing the pace of attacks without entirely stopping the exchanges of fire.

Israel has continued to carry out strikes across southern Lebanon, and its troops are occupying a strip of the country's south, destroying homes they describe as infrastructure being used by Hezbollah.

Hezbollah has kept up its drone and rocket attacks against Israeli troops in Lebanon and on northern Israel. A spokesperson for the Israeli military said it was beginning to strike Hezbollah infrastructure in the Bekaa as well as areas in southern Lebanon. Security sources said strikes had hit near the town of Nabi Chit, near Lebanon's eastern border with Syria, with no immediate reports of casualties.

Lebanon's state media agency reported several strikes across the south that left at least three people wounded. Hezbollah said on Monday it had attacked an Israeli tank in southern Lebanon with a drone. The Israeli military said a drone launched by Hezbollah exploded near its troops in southern Lebanon, without causing casualties.

More than 2,500 people have been killed in Israeli strikes across Lebanon since March 2, when Hezbollah fired on Israel in support of its ally Iran and triggered an Israeli ground and air campaign that has left swathes of southern Lebanon in ruins. The war has deepened differences among people in Lebanon, who are divided over Hezbollah's arms and over prospective peace talks with Israel. The Lebanese and Israeli ambassadors to the United States have met twice to discuss the ceasefire, intended to pave the way for direct talks to secure a peace deal between the long-time foes.



Israeli soldiers walk along the road between destroyed houses in southern Lebanon. — AFP

The strikes on Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley marked the first time the area has been hit since a ceasefire came into force on April 16, significantly reducing the pace of attacks without entirely stopping the exchanges of fire. Israel has also continued to carry out strikes across southern Lebanon



People sit on top of a vehicle as displaced people flee their homes in southern Lebanon. — Reuters

Hezbollah fiercely opposes direct negotiations, with its head Naim Qassem describing the talks in a written statement on Monday as a "humiliating and unnecessary concession." "Let it be clear, these direct negotiations and their

outcomes are considered non-existent to us and do not concern us at all. We will continue our defensive resistance for Lebanon and its people," Qassem said.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun has defended the government's move to engage in face-to-face talks and on Monday made a jab at Hezbollah without naming the group. "What we are doing is not treason; rather, treason is committed by whoever takes his country to war to achieve external interests," he said in a statement released by his office, an apparent reference to Hezbollah's decision to enter the regional war last month. "Some hold us accountable for deciding to go to negotiations on the pretext of the lack of national consensus, and I ask: When you went to war, did you first obtain national consensus?" Aoun said. — Reuters

Shipping traffic through Hormuz remains muted in recent days

LONDON: At least seven ships — mainly dry bulk vessels — have crossed the Strait of Hormuz in the past 24 hours, in line with muted activity in recent days, shipping data showed on Monday, while talks between Iran and the United States have stalled. The vessels included ships leaving from Iraqi ports and one dry bulk vessel from an Iranian port, according to ship tracking data from Kpler and separate satellite analysis from data analytics specialists SynMax.

Shipping traffic passing through the crucial waterway at the entrance to the Gulf during an uneasy ceasefire between Washington and Tehran represents a fraction of the average 140 daily passages before the Iran war began on February 28.

The US Central Command has redirected 37 vessels since a blockade was imposed on Iran on April 13, the military said on April 25. Six Iranian tankers returned to Iranian ports and sailed back through Hormuz in recent days with



Oil tanker HELGA is moored at one of Iraq's southern offshore oil terminals near Basra. — Reuters

some 10.5 million barrels of oil, according to satellite analysis from TankerTrackers.com. Around four million barrels of Iranian oil onboard tankers sailed through the US blockade on April 24, according to separate satellite analysis from TankerTrackers.com.

The inflationary fallout from the Iran war has been at the forefront of concerns, as the crucial Strait of Hormuz, which handles over one-fifth of the world's energy trade, remains choked, especially for energy-reliant Asian

and European economies. However, as the war enters its third month, investors seem to be looking past the conflict to focus on economic fundamentals and quarterly earnings.

Six tankers loaded with Iranian oil have been forced back to Iran by the US blockade, data shows, underscoring the impact the Iran war is having on traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. The strait typically handles 20% of the world's daily supply of oil and LNG. — Reuters

ABRUPTREBUKE



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz gives a press statement during committee meeting in Berlin, Germany. — Reuters

GERMANY'S MERZ
SAYS IRAN IS
HUMILIATING
US OFFICIALS

BERLIN: German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Monday Iran's leadership was humiliating the United States and getting US officials to travel to Pakistan and then leave without results, in an unusually abrupt rebuke over the conflict. Merz also said he not see what exit strategy the US was pursuing in the Iran war — comments that underlined deep divisions between Washington and its European Nato allies, which had already been festering over Ukraineand other issues.

"The Iranians are obviously very skilled at negotiating, or rather, very skilful at not negotiating, letting the Americans travel to Islamabad and then leave again without any result," he said during a talk to students in the town of Marsberg. "An entire nation is being humiliated by the Iranian leadership, especially by these so-called Revolutionary Guards. And so I hope that this ends as quickly as possible," he added at the venue in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia.

US President Donald Trump has harshly criticised Nato allies for not sending their navies to help open the Strait of Hormuzduring the conflict. The waterway has remained virtually shut, causing market turmoil and unprecedented disruption in energy supplies. Merz reiterated that Germans and Europeans were not consulted before the US and Israel started attacking Iran on February 28, and that he had conveyed his scepticism directly to Trump afterwards. "If I had known that it would continue like this for five or six weeks and get progressively worse, I would have told him even more emphatically," Merz said, comparing it to previous US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Hopes of reviving peace efforts have receded since Trump scrapped a visit on Saturday by his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to Islamabad, the Pakistani capital. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi travelled to Russia on Monday after failed talks in Pakistan. Merz said it was evident the Strait of Hormuz had been at least partially mined. "We have offered, also as Europeans, to send German minesweepers to clear the strait, which has obviously been mined in part," he said. He said the conflict was costing Germany "a lot of money, a lot of taxpayers' money and a lot of economic strength." — Reuters

OPINION

African Bank of Oman, a new financial bridge to Africa



THE AFRICAN Bank of Oman (ABO), which was formally launched in Luanda recently, may prove one of the most consequential moves in Oman's recent economic diplomacy. ABO is not a high-street bank chasing retail deposits. It is a corporate and investment bank, designed from day one to do something far more strategic: structure and regulate the flow of capital, trade, and investment between Angola, the GCC and Africa's wider markets.

In doing so, it places Muscat directly into the plumbing of Africa's emerging-market finance — and gives Oman Vision 2040 a tangible foothold abroad.

Oman Vision 2040 commits the Sultanate of Oman to diversify income sources and build global investment arms. The Oman Investment Authority (OIA) calls ABO 'a step in a strategy to expand Oman's investment presence in the two regional arenas' and to 'build effective financial arms in emerging markets'.

This is not symbolism. ABO is an integrated financial platform that aims to increase and enhance the flows of capital, trade and investment between the Sultanate of Oman and the African continent.

In other words, Oman Vision 2040 isn't just about projects at home. It's about owning parts of the value chain abroad.

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, said ABO "embodies the approach of economic diplomacy" championed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, aimed at

"linking global markets and consolidating its position as an investment bridge... based on the pillars of stability, trust and well-established international relations".

That bridge has two ends. For Angola, ABO arrives as the country pushes its Angola 2050 Strategy — diversification, privatisation, infrastructure and opening productive sectors to international investment. For Oman, Angola is a resource-rich, reform-minded partner with oil and gas making up a good percentage of GDP and massive needs in logistics, mining, and consumer goods.

ABO's first phase will serve major multinational companies, local firms and government agencies in Angola. Its services are built on three pillars: cross-border payments, corporate banking for trade finance, and advisory/project financing in oil and gas, mining, manufacturing, and logistics. This is institution-building, not just deal-making.

ABO's significance also lies in what Oman brings to the table: financial governance. The bank is designed "based on Oman's financial governance standards and its institutional expertise in building transparent, sustainable and regulatory-compliant banking models". In emerging markets where capital often chases opacity, Oman is exporting stability.

OIA explicitly views this as a chance to "transfer institutional expertise and best practices in financial governance to emerging markets," enhancing "efficiency of investment flows and sustainable value for both sides".

Beyond geopolitics, ABO matters for

ABO is an integrated financial platform that aims to increase and enhance the flows of capital, trade and investment between the Sultanate of Oman and the African continent

Omani companies. It will play a pivotal role in supporting Omani companies seeking to expand internationally and access new markets and investment opportunities.

For SMEs and corporates that have outgrown the domestic market but lack banking infrastructure in Africa, ABO lowers the friction. Trade finance, letters of credit, guarantees, liquidity management — these are the unglamorous tools that turn MoUs into revenue.

The launch comes one year after President João Lourenço's visit to Muscat, signalling rapid movement from diplomacy to execution. It also arrives as other foreign banks recalibrate their Africa presence. Analysts note ABO is occupying the space left by a large foreign bank that exited Angola. Nature abhors a vacuum; Omani capital does not.

ABO's success won't be measured by branch count. It will be measured by deal flow, risk management, and whether it truly becomes an Angolan bank with an international reach. If it does, Oman gains three things: diversified income, diplomatic leverage and a reputation as a credible financial partner beyond hydrocarbons.

In a world where trade routes are being redrawn and Africa's demographic dividend is coming due, Oman has chosen to be a builder, not a bystander.

The African Bank of Oman is that choice, capitalised.

For Muscat, the bridge to Africa is now open. The real work is keeping traffic moving both ways.

FERTILISER SQUEEZE SPELLS TROUBLE FOR GRAIN HARVESTS

GUS TROMPIZ AND NAVEEN THUKRAL

Farmers around the world are facing the second surge in fertiliser prices in four years due to the Iran war. But with grain prices too low to cushion the blow from the deeper supply crunch this time around, many are rethinking planting plans, putting global food production at risk.

The Middle East is a leading fertiliser production hub, and much of the global fertiliser trade typically passes through the Strait of Hormuz, which has seen traffic brought to a standstill by the conflict.

Supplies of urea - a nitrogen-based fertiliser - from the world's largest production facility in Qatar have been halted, and flows of sulphur and ammonia, common inputs for a range of fertilisers, have also been curbed.

With a resolution of the conflict proving elusive, analysts, traders, fertiliser producers and agronomists are looking back at the last supply crisis, Russia's 2022 war on Ukraine, worried that this time things could get even worse.

"Back in 2022, a lot of the fertiliser was ultimately flowing through," said Shawn Arita of the Agricultural Risk Policy Center at North Dakota State University.

"It's a much steeper supply crunch that we're seeing now."

As fertiliser prices have jumped since the onset of the war in late February, urea has seen the sharpest price spike, reflecting the loss of roughly one-third of globally traded volumes typically exported from the Gulf.

Some are paying. India, the world's largest rice producer and second-biggest wheat grower, has booked record volumes of urea in a single import tender, paying nearly twice as much as it did just two months ago. But such price levels are beyond the reach of many, analysts say.

In 2022, high global grain prices helped farmers offset the steep increase in input costs caused by the Ukraine war. But ample harvests of grains and oilseeds in recent years have restrained crop prices.

Chicago wheat prices are roughly half what they were four years ago, for example. Soybeans were nearly 50 per cent higher than now. As a result, many growers today lack the revenue to absorb ballooning fertiliser bills. — Reuters

Could Asia be the unlikely winner in war fallout

ASIA HAS been the most vulnerable region in the Iran war given its heavy reliance on Middle East energy, but it could turn out to be a major winner from several long-term trends this conflict is likely to accelerate, including higher cybersecurity investment, the pivot away from fossil fuels and supply-chain diversification.

The region's energy-intensive economies - led by China, Japan, South Korea and India - are highly dependent on Middle Eastern oil and gas. Around 80 per cent of oil and 90 per cent of gas that normally transit through the Strait of Hormuz are destined for Asian markets. The closure of the Strait for most vessels has thus led to sharp spikes in regional energy prices.

While China has been relatively insulated due to its massive stockpiles, the rest of the region has faced supply shortfalls. Yet even though the crisis has laid bare Asia's energy vulnerabilities, it may simultaneously be accelerating several structural shifts that favour the region in the long term.

The conflict is apt to accelerate the global push for more defence spending as well as Asia's ongoing drive for greater defence self-sufficiency. The region's world-class semiconductor and manufacturing supply chains may give Asian contractors a production edge that Western peers will struggle to match. For example, Korean arms manufacturers - Hanwha Aerospace, LIG Defence & Aerospace, formerly LIG Nex1, and Hyundai Rotem



A man stands in front of a screen displaying Japan's Nikkei share average outside a brokerage in Tokyo, Japan. — Reuters



MANISHI RAYCHAUDHURI

The writer is the founder and CEO of Emmer Capital Partners Ltd

- have commanded investor attention over the past year due to their strong earnings growth forecasts and large order backlogs. Their market dominance could increase further, bolstered by the growing penetration of European markets. Both the Iran conflict and the Russia-Ukraine war have also underscored the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of "new" weaponry, especially drones.

The global military drone market is expected to nearly double to \$29 billion by 2030 from \$15.3 billion in 2025, according to market research firm Technavio.

Technavio also forecasts similar growth for Asia's military drone market, which is led by state-backed Chinese aerospace giants. The region's manufacturers are apt to compete against US, Israeli, and Turkish rivals by leveraging their

production scale, cost-effectiveness, and product range.

Asia's cybersecurity ambitions sit at the heart of a broader global race, underpinned by rapid digital transformation, high threat exposure, government-led investment, and massive hardware manufacturing capacity supporting artificial intelligence-powered cyber defences.

The World Economic Forum's (WEF) January survey reveals that geopolitically motivated cyberattacks are the principal risk corporations perceive today.

Unsurprisingly, the WEF survey shows most companies view AI as the technology that will most significantly affect cybersecurity in the next 12 months.

AI already appears to be doing just that. For example, Anthropic's Mythos - a model that is reportedly capable of identifying software vulnerabilities at scale - illustrates both the offensive potential and the defensive imperative. The need to stay one step ahead in the AI arms race could push the US, Europe and others to seek to develop more of their own domestic manufacturing. Until then, the hunger for Korean and Taiwanese semiconductors looks set to remain insatiable.

The energy shock created by the Iran war may encourage more nations to accelerate their push away from fossil fuels, expanding electric vehicles, energy storage and green energy overall. China, with its commanding share of the EV battery market, stands to be a disproportionate winner. — Reuters



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

Words that can heal or break

WORDS ARE not just sounds. Words help us convey our thoughts and feelings. Written or spoken, words are a form of expression used in conversations, letters, literature, songs and speeches.

Words are used for description, conveying greetings, condolences and encouragement, and the list can go on and on. A collection of words on topics encompassing a variety of subjects forms books and gives us knowledge.

In the past, we had to attend classes and read books to gain knowledge. This is a special time when the current generation is able to gather information from the digital world. Thousands of books are available in PDF formats, and then we have enthusiastic experts share their knowledge on social media.

One has to sieve the information to find genuineness amongst all the rush of the digital world.

Imparting knowledge is one aspect, and the other development is communicating with another person in the spur of the moment through text messages.

One-to-one communication is extremely delicate.

Words are what can make or break a student in a classroom. Words of encouragement can light a student’s path, and painful words can make a child have self-doubt.

Words are accompanied by the tone of the voice and facial expressions, as well as

body language. This is probably why text messages seem so bland and tend to cause misunderstandings. No wonder they thought of emoticons to enhance text messages.

Words truly hold that kind of power, don’t they?

That is why they say a single phrase like “I believe in you” can mend a shattered spirit, while careless words like “you’re worthless” can wound deeply and linger for years.

You might also remember certain remarks – not that I want you to dwell on them if they’re negative, because words are tied to emotions. Every time we remember a negative incident, we tend to relive all those emotions.

Words shape us, and that is why we have to be careful what we say to others and be mindful of what we say to ourselves.

This is the scientific explanation: ‘Our brains process language emotionally – positive words trigger dopamine releases, fostering connection and resilience, as shown in studies from psychologists like Barbara Fredrickson on the “broaden-and-build” theory.’

Harsh ones, conversely, activate the amygdala’s stress response, spiking cortisol and eroding trust. Think of it like a garden: nurturing words cultivate growth; toxic ones choke the roots.

The amygdala is a small brain region that works as an alarm. Under chronic stress, it can become reactive, and I think we all know what happens then.

In therapy, according to the experts,

A kind word can bring hope and instantly change our outlook on life. It is easy to cause destruction, but an admirable quality is the one who can generate energy through words that can heal a mind

techniques like cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) rewire harmful self-talk – “I’m a failure” becomes “I’m learning” – proving words can literally heal neural pathways over time.

What experience with words has felt most magical to you lately?

Have they been kind words or harsh ones?

A kind word can bring hope and instantly change our outlook on life. It is easy to cause destruction, but an admirable quality is one who can generate energy through words that can heal a mind.

Therapists say positive wording changes attention from danger to possibility, which reduces perceived threat. Over time, this can support better emotion regulation, less stress reactivity and a calmer physical stress response.

Many of us are not even aware of affect labelling – it is about accurate emotional naming, whereas we are quite familiar with positive affirmations that are about encouraging self-talk.

Affect labelling is acknowledging your emotions rather than fighting them. Once we detect what we are feeling, we can think of solutions.

So the cycle goes on – from a feeling to thought to emotions to words.

Now it could be a state of mind that leads us to speak negative words. There is a solution here as well: practice gratitude. When we are happy, we tend to impart excitement and bliss.

Simple positive self-talk is what we need.

DEALING WITH THE DEAD IN THE RUINS OF SUDAN’S WAR

BAHIRA AMIN AND ABDELMONEIM ABU IDRIS ALI

At a makeshift morgue in Khartoum, engineer turned mortician Ali Gebbai clicked through a spreadsheet of the dead. Thousands of entries, each with a photo and burial site, keep a harrowing record of Sudan’s war.

Every time the team of volunteers finds a body, they post to social media and wait 72 hours in the hopes that the victim’s loved ones will come across the picture and claim the person.

“We photograph every body. We check if there’s anything in their pockets to help us identify them, and we mark the spot where we buried them,” Gebbai said.

It was a blazing April day and a dead woman lay on the ground of the small, air-conditioned room in the Sudanese capital.

If no one came to identify her, the team would prepare a clean white shroud, wash her according to the custom and bury her nearby.

It is all anyone in Khartoum can hope for by way of a morgue. And it is far more than what most victims of Sudan’s war receive: a shallow grave, hastily dug into the dirt where they fell.

The conflict, now in its fourth year, between Sudan’s army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces has no confirmed toll, though it has killed at least tens of thousands, and aid workers give estimates of more than 200,000.

“It’s disheartening, all these estimations. When you have a population not knowing what has happened, that trauma and the impact cannot be overlooked,” Jose Luis Pozo Gil, the International Committee of the Red Cross’s deputy Sudan chief, said. In the year since the army recaptured Khartoum, authorities have exhumed and reburied “around 28,000 people”, Hisham Zein al Abdeen, head of forensic medicine at Sudan’s health ministry, said. And they have only cleared a little over half the capital.

Gebbai said he and his teams have buried 7,000 dead since the war began. Ethnic massacres in Darfur, meanwhile, have killed thousands of people at a time, and this year alone, at least 700 died in drone strikes on Kordofan.

Across the country, there is nowhere to store the dead, and no way to count them. During the worst massacres, when firebombs tear through mosques and markets, rescuers routinely run out of shrouds.

Zein al Abdeen, one of only two forensic doctors in Khartoum, said the capital’s morgues “were already full before the war”.

According to the ICRC, Khartoum’s four morgues were all forced out of service by the war, but the dead remained inside.

“When we went inside the Omdurman morgue, there were still many bodies. And there hadn’t been any electricity for a long time – you can imagine the state,” Pozo Gil said. — AFP

Trump’s security protocol in focus after shooting



President Donald Trump takes questions from the media at a press briefing at the White House, following a shooting incident, in Washington, DC, US, on Saturday. — Reuters



JANA WINTER

The writer is US Intelligence and Law Enforcement Correspondent for Reuters

checking in to the hotel in the days before the event.

Bill Gage, who served on the Secret Service’s Counter Assault Team for six years and is now executive protection director for the SafeHaven Security Group, said post-incident reviews will likely focus at least in part on pushing the magnetometers farther out to expand the outer perimeter. The Secret Service, Gage said, “is going to have to find a way to better secure large hotels that may inconvenience the hotel goers and the hotel.”

He also said the Secret Service would need to do a better job coordinating the evacuation of other administration officials.

Several law enforcement bodies, from the US Marshals to the Diplomatic Security Service, spirited away attendees after the shooting, highlighting how the complex web of those charged with protecting different VIPs can lead to seemingly uncoordinated responses.

While Trump was whisked off stage just over 30 seconds after the last shots were fired, according to a video and audio analysis conducted by Reuters, it took at least 100 seconds for Health and

Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to leave the room and around 150 seconds for Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth to exit.

Don Mihalek, a former senior Secret Service agent who has worked previous correspondents’ dinners at the Washington Hilton, said securing the sprawling site has long posed challenges.

“I’m sure the service is going to go back and re-look at the set-up there, and probably push out the perimeter some more now, because of what happened,” Mihalek said.

Trump himself said at an impromptu news conference late on Saturday that the Washington Hilton was “not a particularly secure building.”

During the first assassination attempt against Trump, which took place at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, in July 2024, law enforcement officials were criticised for failing to set an effective security perimeter. That omission allowed a gunman to get a clean line of sight at the then-candidate, who was clipped in the ear. Among those who were critical of the event’s security posture was the shooter himself, who mused in a written manifesto, first reported by the New York Post, about how lax security appeared to be. “Like, I expected security cameras at every bend, bugged hotel rooms, armed agents every 10 feet, metal detectors out the wazoo,” the California man wrote. “What I got (who knows, maybe they’re pranking me!) is nothing.”

Conservative influencers and officials, including acting Attorney General Todd Blanche, quickly took to X to say the incident showed why Trump should move ahead with the construction of a ballroom on White House grounds. A federal judge ordered a halt to the ballroom’s construction in late March, saying the project was unlawful without congressional approval, although a federal appeals court later stayed that injunction.

SPORTS

GCCGAMES



OMAN SET FOR 11-SPORT CAMPAIGN AT GCC GAMES

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) will take part in the 4th GCC Games Doha 2026 which is taking place during May 11 to 22. Oman’s representation in this prestigious gulf sporting event will be in 11 sports including: athletics, volleyball, Fencing, Taekwondo, Karate, Basketball, Bowling, Shooting, Snooker and billiards, Table tennis and Aquatics.

The selection of the above sports came after a series of meetings of the technical staff and officials at these associations and committees which was held by the Planning and Following-up Committee in the past months. The committee reviewed the national team’s plan and expectations in the upcoming participation at the GCC Games in Doha. The chances of Oman to gain the medals are high in this participation as Oman athletes are in best shape in many sports to clinch the medals following a comprehensive training sessions in a scheduled training camps.

The national sporting teams had achieved in the last edition in 2022 in Kuwait 29 medals including 12 gold, 5 silver, and 12 bronze medals. It was a good progress compared to the number of games in which they had participated as they were able to break the record for the number of gold medals achieved in the first tournament which was held in Bahrain in 2011, which had a total of 11 medals, including 4 gold, 3 silver, and 4 bronze medals. In the second tournament which was held in Dammam, Saudi Arabia in 2015, the Sultanate of Oman athletes had managed to achieve 29 medals including 4 gold, 13 silver, and 12 bronze medals.

On the other hand, the hosts Qatar are gearing up to host these games as the committees are working in close coordination to complete every logistical, technical, and organisational detail, ensuring a memorable edition of the Games. The event will bring together an elite field of athletes from across the Gulf Cooperation Council nations, competing in 19 different sports, including handball, table tennis, athletics, squash, padel, fencing, boxing, taekwondo, karate, swimming, billiards, snooker, basketball (5x5 and 3x3), shooting, archery, volleyball, equestrian, and bowling, highlighting the diversity of competition.

SEEB EXTEND LEAD IN JL

AL NAHDA, AL KHABOURAH WIN

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

THE OPENING day of round 22 in the Jindal League (JL) saw leaders Seeb maintain their strong hold on top spot, while important movement continued across the rest of the standings with only four rounds left in the season.

Seeb strengthened their position at the summit after defeating Al Rustaq 4-2 at Al Rustaq Sports Complex, moving to 57 points. The leaders once again showed their attacking quality, with Nasser al Rawahi, Omar al Maliki, Musaab al Shaqsi and Omar al Fazari all finding the net. Al Rustaq replied through Jaira Jov and Omar al Salti, but the defeat left them rooted to the bottom of the table on 11 points, further complicating their survival hopes.

AL NAHDA ADVANCES
At Al Buraimi Sports Complex, Al Nahda continued their positive run with a narrow 1-0 victory over Dhofar. Mohammed al Ghafri scored the only goal of the match in the 20th minute, handing his side three valuable points in the race for the upper positions.

The win lifted Al Nahda to 38 points in fourth place, while Dhofar remained on 21 points in ninth.

AL KHABOURAH CLAIM WINS
Al Khabourah also secured an important result after a 2-0 win over Samayil at Nizwa Sports Complex.

The breakthrough came in the 37th minute when Saeed Obeid controlled a pass from Zakariya al Qurtobi before sending a low shot into the net.

John Rashford sealed the victory in the 84th minute after a fine dribble and powerful finish.

The result moved Al Khabourah up to 20 points in 11th place, while Samayil stayed on 22 points in eighth, still within reach of the teams battling near the lower end of the table.

IBRI MOVE UP
Ibri moved a step closer to safety with a valuable 2-1 away win over Saham at Sohar Sports Complex. Saham took the lead in the 18th minute through Cameroonian forward Amy Marceline, who headed home a cross from Mohammed Ryan Bahlouli.



A moment from Seeb’s 4-2 triumph over Al Rustaq at Al Rustaq Sports Complex



Mohammed al Ghafri’s goal earned Al Nahda a 1-0 win over Dhofar..

Ibri responded in the 36th minute when Bisan Jacques capitalised on a scramble inside the box to level the score.

The second half saw both coaches make a series of changes in search of better control and greater attacking threat. Ibri threatened from a free-kick early in the half before the game turned into an evenly balanced contest.

The decisive moment came in the 76th minute when Augusti Malo scored Ibri’s second goal, giving the visitors the lead for the first time in the match. Saham pushed forward in search of an equaliser in the closing stages, but Ibri held firm to secure all three points. The victory lifted Ibri to 20 points in 12th place, cutting the gap to Saham to just one point, with the latter remaining 10th on 21 points.

Masirah crowned women’s handball champions

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

Masirah Club were crowned champions of the 2025/2026 Oman Women’s Handball League after a commanding 32–15 victory over Al Amerat in the final, held at the main hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The final was played under the auspices of Dr Ahood bint Said al Balushi, Member of the State Council, and attended by Abeer bint Issa al Zadjali, Board Member of the Oman Handball Association and Chairperson of the Women’s Committee, alongside a number of figures interested in women’s sport.

Masirah asserted their dominance from the outset, delivering a powerful performance that reflected their technical superiority, the team stormed to a 17–1 lead by half-time, effectively putting the result beyond doubt. Although Al Amerat showed some improvement in the second half and attempted to narrow the gap, Masirah’s organisation and experience ensured a comfortable



Masirah Club crowned league champions. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

victory and a deserved title.

Following the final whistle, the patron crowned Masirah with the championship trophy and gold medals, while Al Amerat received the silver medals. The ceremony was held in a celebratory atmosphere, highlighting the success of the tournament, with a commemorative gift presented to the patron in recognition of her

support for women’s sports.

This season’s league featured five teams: Sohar, Salalah, Al Ittihad, Masirah and Al Amerat, the competition was marked by enthusiasm and closely contested matches, reflecting the noticeable development of women’s handball and the growing participation base in Oman. Dr Ahood al Balushi praised the significant progress of

women’s sport in Oman, noting that Omani women are increasingly present across various roles, whether as players, administrators, or referees. She emphasised that such participation reflects growing societal awareness of women’s empowerment and the importance of providing opportunities to showcase their capabilities. She added that both domestic and

international competitions play a vital role in developing players’ skills and enhancing Oman’s presence on the global sporting stage. Meanwhile, Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Handball Association, expressed satisfaction with the season, describing it as competitive and progressive both technically and organisationally, highlighted the importance of cooperation between the Association and clubs in ensuring the success of competitions and praised the level displayed in the women’s league.

Abeer bint Issa al Zadjali noted that the tournament concluded successfully despite some challenges, including the absence or withdrawal of certain teams. She stressed that these factors did not affect the overall quality of competition and pointed to growing interest in women’s handball, added that the Women’s Committee is working on expanding participation and strengthening talent development programmes to further elevate the sport in the coming years.

SCHOOL LEAGUE



The girls' 3x3 basketball tournament began on Monday at the Middle East College sports hall.

SCHOOL SPORTS LEAGUE CONCLUDES TODAY

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhalbalushi

The curtain falls this morning (Tuesday) on the School Sports League for Team Games at the sub-hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, with the finals of the girls' volleyball and girls' 3x3 basketball competitions bringing a highly competitive season to a close.

The closing ceremony is being held under the auspices of Dr Aisha bint Hamad al Darmaki, Member of the State Council, in the presence of Nadhira bint Ahmed al Harthi, Chairperson of the Oman School Sports Association.

Today's action features the decisive second round of the girls' 3x3 basketball competition, with six teams divided into two groups. Group A includes Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah South, and Al Batinah North, while Group B features Muscat, Al Batinah South, and Dhofar. The competition follows a round-robin format, with the top teams from each group advancing to the final, while the runners-up compete for third place.

The girls' 3x3 basketball tournament began on Monday at the Middle East College sports hall, where 25 matches were played across five rounds, showcasing a high level of competition among the participating teams. Al Dakhiliyah, Muscat, Al Batinah North, and Al Batinah South emerged as strong contenders following a series of impressive performances.

Muscat recorded notable victories, including dominant wins over Al Wusta (13-2) and (10-1), while Al Dakhiliyah displayed consistency with convincing results, including an 8-0 win against Al Buraimi and a 3-0 victory over Al Batinah North. Other teams, including Al Batinah North and Al Sharqiyah South, also delivered competitive performances throughout the tournament. In the girls' volleyball competition, the second round produced exciting encounters. Muscat defeated Al Dhahirah in straight sets, while Al Dakhiliyah secured a similar victory over Dhofar.

Al Batinah North continued their strong form with a 2-0 win against Al Dhahirah, and Al Sharqiyah North also overcame Dhofar by the same scoreline, leaving the title race wide open heading into the final matches today.

The School Sports League continues to serve as a vital platform for discovering and developing young sporting talent, reflecting ongoing efforts to strengthen school sports and expand participation, with the aim of preparing future national team players.



Trying to spray the horse Jack with water to make him tired and alleviate fatigue during the race.

JACK AU XOIS EXCELS IN FRENCH ENDURANCE RACE

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

THE HORSE 'Jack Au Xoix' continued his outstanding performances in endurance racing after securing first place in the 103 km Vizac Endurance Ride held recently in France, adding another achievement to the growing list of notable Arab successes on the European stage.

The victory was achieved under the guidance of rider Theo Jonas. The horse is owned by Mohammed bin Rashid al Saadi and was originally developed and conditioned in Oman under the supervision of trainer Mohammed bin Hamood al Balushi. In the lead-up to the race, the horse was sent to France, where it underwent pre-race preparation under the guidance of trainer Elisabeth Hardy.

This achievement builds on Jack Au Xoix' consistent record, having previously secured third place in the His Majesty the King's Endurance Cup in the Kingdom of Bahrain, reflecting the horse's steady progress and ability to compete at a high international level.

France is widely regarded as a major destination for international endurance competitions, particularly over distances ranging from 100 to 160 km, attracting elite global teams and prominent Arab stables aiming for top finishes.

Owner Mohammed al Saadi expressed his pride in the achievement, stating: "All



This achievement builds on Jack Au Xoix' consistent record, having previously secured third place in the His Majesty the King's Endurance Cup in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

of our horses prepared for international competitions are initially developed in Oman under the supervision of trainer Mohammed al Balushi. He identified Jack Au Xoix as a suitable horse for international endurance racing." He added: "When we purchased this horse from France, it was not a racehorse and had no prior experience in endurance competitions. We brought him to our stable in Oman, where he was carefully developed and trained locally, rather than through domestic races. He then competed in Bahrain and secured third place, which clearly demonstrated his quality and potential. Based on that performance, we decided to send him back to France to compete at a higher level and gain further experience, where he will remain for the current season."

Trainer Mohammed al Balushi highlighted that the win was the result of careful preparation and a well-planned strategy. He said: "I was supposed to travel to France with the team, but work commitments prevented me from doing so. However, I remained in constant communication with them to provide the race strategy. I know this horse very well, having personally trained him in Oman and understanding his strengths and characteristics, which helped guide the team toward this achievement."

This victory further strengthens the presence of Arab horses in European endurance racing and reflects the continued development of the sport on the international stage.

Oman U-17s camp ahead of regional and continental contests

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT APRIL 27

Oman's national U-17 football team began a new internal training camp on Monday evening at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, as part of its build-up for a demanding run of regional and continental competitions later this year. The camp, which continues until May 1, forms an important stage in the team's preparation programme ahead of three major assignments: the Arab Cup in August, the West Asian Championship in September, and the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers scheduled for the

end of November.

The Oman Football Association has mapped out an intensive preparation plan aimed at raising the team's technical and physical readiness, with the national junior side looking to gain valuable experience and compete strongly across all upcoming events.

National U-17 head coach Ahmed bin Salim Bait Said has called up 26 players for the current camp. The squad includes Sulaiman bin Khalifa al Mafarji, Sultan bin Mohammed al Balushi, Mohammed bin Sultan al Rahbi, Nayir bin Said Bait Ardeen, Saad bin Mohammed



Oman U-17 team during the training session 31.

al Sinaidi, Al Mulham bin Mahmoud al Sulaimi, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kazrouni, Abdulrahman

bin Mohammed al Harrasi, Mohammed bin Khalid al Maqbali, Abdullah bin Mohammed Bait Ali

Issa, Ahmed bin Shihab al Mukhaini, Nader bin Hamid al Nubi, Bashar bin Badr al Shamsi, Ahmed bin Khamis al Masoudi, Mohammed bin Majid al Balushi, Abdulrahman bin Suhail al Hashmi, Ghaith bin Matar al Toubi, Rakan bin Badr al Jabri, Saif bin Ahmed al Jabri, Abdulrahman bin Abdullah al Tuwairshi, Jassim bin Mohammed al Dawood, Mohammed bin Manea al Omrani, Mohammed bin Qasim al Mahrouqi, Al Hussein bin Saleh al Ajmi, Jihad bin Abdullah al Shukaili and Abdullah bin Ali al Farsi.

The technical staff will use the camp to further improve

the players' fitness levels, tactical understanding, and overall match readiness. It also comes shortly after the team's previous gathering, which was held from April 16 to 20, giving the coaching staff another opportunity to monitor player development and strengthen team cohesion.

Bait Said and his assistants are expected to focus on building harmony among the players, applying selected tactical plans and improving individual technical skills, as Oman seek to prepare a competitive squad capable of delivering positive results in the coming months.

SPORTS

Sabalenka tops Osaka to reach Madrid quarters

WORLD number one Aryna Sabalenka overcame Naomi Osaka 6-7 (1/7), 6-3, 6-2 in a gripping battle on Monday to reach the Madrid Open quarter-finals. Sabalenka, who has claimed titles at Miami, Indian Wells and Brisbane this year, was tested by her Japanese opponent in the fourth-round clash but came back from a set and a break down to triumph. “I was just trying to take one ball at a time and my team was there for me, they really (pushed) me to keep fighting, and I’m really happy that I didn’t give up and I was pushing until the very last point,” said Sabalenka. The first set between the two four-time Grand Slam winners was tight, with only one break point forced, by Sabalenka, which Osaka saved to hold for 2-1. Osaka dominated in the tie-break, ripping into a 5-0 lead and then triumphing when Sabalenka lashed a return wide. Sabalenka stepped up a gear in the second frame, although world number 15 Osaka dug deep to survive three break points and then managed to engineer a break for herself to

take a 2-1 lead. However, the Belarusian immediately broke to love and then again in the eighth game, serving out to take the second set. Only Elena Rybakina has beaten Sabalenka this year, in the Australian Open final, and the 27-year old dominated in the third set, securing breaks in the fifth and seventh games while Osaka could not put pressure on her opponent’s serve. Sabalenka sealed her victory serving to love with an ace to reach the last eight, where she will face American Hailey Baptiste. “She’s an incredible player, we had a really tight match in Miami, and especially here in Madrid I think this surface suits her game,” added Sabalenka. Later, Rybakina and Coco Gauff are in action against Anastasia Potapova and Linda Noskova respectively, while in the men’s draw second seed Alexander Zverev faces Frenchman Terence Atmane in the third round. Casper Ruud eased to a 6-3, 6-1 win over Alejandro Davidovich Fokina to reach the last 16, while Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Daniel Merida 6-4, 6-2. — AFP



Belarus’ Aryna Sabalenka reacts during her round of 16 match against Japan’s Naomi Osaka. — Reuters

Rockets rout Lakers; Wembanyama wins Spurs return

LOS ANGELES: The Houston Rockets routed the Los Angeles Lakers 115-96 on Sunday to stay alive in the NBA playoffs as San Antonio’s Victor Wembanyama made a triumphant return to put the Spurs on the brink of advancing. Amen Thompson scored 23 points to fuel the Rockets, who bounced back from a crushing overtime loss on Friday to cut the deficit in their best-of-seven Western Conference series to 3-1. The Spurs and the Boston Celtics took commanding 3-1 leads in their series, San Antonio rallying from 19 points down to beat the Trail Blazers 114-93 in Portland and Boston thrashing the 76ers 128-96 in Philadelphia. In Toronto, the Raptors edged the Cleveland Cavaliers 93-89 to level their series at two games apiece. Denied a sweep in Houston, the Lakers can still finish off the



Houston Rockets forward Tari Eason gets a rebound away from Los Angeles Lakers forward Jake LaRavia. — Imagin Images

Rockets when they host game five on Wednesday. The Rockets, still without star Kevin Durant, harried the Lakers into 24 turnovers yielding 30 Houston points. Four-time NBA champion LeBron James made just two of nine attempts from the floor on the way to 10 points. He handed out nine assists but made eight turnovers. With Los Angeles still missing their top scorers in injured Luka Doncic and Austin Reaves, centre Deandre Ayton led the Lakers with 19 points and 10 rebounds. But Los Angeles were already down by 19 when he was ejected in the third quarter after catching Rockets centre Alperen Sengun in the head with his forearm. Tari Eason added 20 points and Sengun scored 19 for Houston, who are trying to become the first NBA team to rally from an 0-3 deficit to win a playoff series.

In Portland, Wembanyama returned after missing one game because of a concussion and scored 27 points with 11 rebounds, three assists, four steals and a whopping seven blocked shots. “I had lots of emotions in me before the game, obviously,” said Wembanyama, named the 2026 NBA Defensive Player of the Year and in the running for Most Valuable Player. “Excitement, frustration, so I let it all out tonight,” he said. The 22-year old Frenchman praised the doctors who oversaw his path through the NBA concussion protocol, but voiced dissatisfaction with the process that requires a gradual return to physical activity under medical supervision. “The way the situation was handled was very disappointing,” Wembanyama said, declining to elaborate. — AFP

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
8,139.531

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$102.37
BRENT \$107.49
LIGHT \$96.17



SHORT TAKES



The meeting reviewed prospects for joint initiatives aligned with the priorities of both countries.

OMAN AND RUSSIA DEEPEN ECONOMIC, INVESTMENT TIES

MUSCAT: Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), received on Monday a delegation from the Russian Federation led by Maxim Reshetnikov to advance discussions on economic and investment cooperation. The meeting reviewed prospects for joint initiatives aligned with the priorities of both countries, with a focus on expanding collaboration across strategic sectors including energy, infrastructure, logistics, food security and information technology.

Both sides highlighted the importance of building on existing partnerships while identifying new areas of mutual interest that can deliver long-term value.

Discussions also underscored the need to strengthen engagement between public and private sector stakeholders to drive investment flows and support economic integration. Officials stressed that deeper cooperation would contribute to sustainable development objectives and enhance resilience in both economies.

The talks reflected a shared intent to open new channels for investment and reinforce bilateral economic ties, amidst growing interest in cross-border opportunities. Enhancing institutional collaboration and facilitating business linkages were identified as key enablers in this regard.

The meeting was attended by the Russian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, senior officials from the Oman Investment Authority and chief executives of affiliated companies, signalling continued momentum in strengthening Oman-Russia economic relations. — ONA



Abdul Salam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, OIA received the delegation from the Russian Federation.

Tourism law sets stricter rules and raises standards

THE Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has issued the executive regulations for the Tourism Law, reinforcing efforts to regulate activities, strengthen governance and improve the efficiency of the sector in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The decision mandates the implementation of the new provisions and requires all licensed operators to align their activities within six months of entry into force. It also repeals the previous executive regulations issued under Ministerial Decree No 124/2021, along with any conflicting provisions.

Under the new framework, the ministry will maintain dedicated registers for each tourism activity, documenting licences, correspondence and violations.

Engaging in tourism activities or operating establishments without prior licensing is prohibited.

The regulations define a broad licensing structure covering hotel and tourism establishments, travel and tourism offices, foreign company branches, tour guides, adventure tourism operators, entertainment groups and business tourism entities.

Applications must be processed within 60 days, with non-response deemed implicit approval. The framework also sets licence fees, validity periods and penalties for late renewal.

For tourist and hotel establishments, prior approval is required before construction, alongside compliance with designated land use and classification standards.

Establishments must display their classification and licence details prominently and establish electronic links with relevant authorities to provide periodic statistical data. A 4 per cent tourism fee and an 8 per cent service charge are also mandated,



The decision mandates the implementation of the new provisions and requires all licensed operators to align their activities within six months of entry into force.

The regulations define a broad licensing structure covering hotel and tourism establishments, travel and tourism offices, foreign company branches, tour guides, adventure tourism operators, entertainment groups and business tourism entities.

with clear mechanisms for collection and audit.

Travel and tourism agencies are authorised to organise trips, issue tickets and provide agency services, but are barred from using unlicensed guides and must provide insurance coverage for tourists.

Tour guides are classified into general, site-specific and specialist categories, with English-language guiding restricted to Omani nationals. The regulations also define professional obligations and prohibited practices.

Adventure tourism is subject to stringent safety requirements, including mandatory insurance, risk management planning and adherence to official weather warnings.

Entertainment groups are limited to performances in classified establishments and must comply with public decency standards and restrictions during religious occasions. Business tourism operators are required

to submit programme data and statistics, supported by a central database to monitor visitor flows and economic impact.

The regulations also establish controls over the allocation and use of tourism land, including usufruct rights, contractual obligations and approval requirements for development.

Inspection and enforcement provisions grant authorised officers the power to monitor compliance, with penalties ranging from administrative sanctions to licence suspension or revocation.

Establishments may also be downgraded for failing to meet service standards.

The ministry said the regulations mark a significant step in strengthening the legislative framework of the tourism sector, improving service quality, safeguarding visitor interests and enhancing Oman's attractiveness as an investment destination.

— ONA

Intellectual property can drive sustainable sports economy in Oman

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, marked World Intellectual Property Day 2026 under the theme “Intellectual Property and Sport: Prepare, Launch, Innovate”, highlighting the role of IP in driving innovation in the sports sector and transforming it into a sustainable economic industry.

The event featured presentations and specialised workshops on intellectual property concepts and Oman's sports strategy, underscoring links between the sector and the pillars of Oman Vision 2040.

Nasra bint Sultan al Habsi, Director General of Commerce, said the theme reflects the growing importance of IP rights as a key pillar in developing the sports sector into an integrated, investment-driven industry.

She noted that this aligns with Oman Vision 2040 goals to enhance the efficiency of sports institutions



World Intellectual Property Day 2026 was commemorated with a forum focusing on the theme, “Intellectual Property and Sport: Prepare, Launch, Innovate”.

and strengthen their role within a sustainable economic system, while emphasising the need to protect trademarks and innovation rights to ensure long-term growth.

Eng Khalid bin Hamoud al Hinai, Director of the National Intellectual Property Office, said the occasion highlights the importance of IP awareness. He

noted that the sports theme was selected due to the strong link between intellectual property and the sector's economic potential in transforming sports into a sustainable industry. A panel discussion featured Khalifa bin Saif al Issai, Advisor to the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, who

described the sports sector as one of the most promising for Oman's next phase of development.

He stressed that intellectual property is essential to developing the sector as a national system, attracting investment and protecting national identity.

Al Issai added that the National Intellectual Property Office will collaborate with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth to raise public awareness of IP rights and their benefits for the sports sector.

Citing a recent international study, he said the sector currently contributes 0.9 per cent to Oman's GDP — below regional averages of 1.5 per cent and global levels exceeding 2 per cent — while accounting for just 0.5 per cent of total employment across public, private and non-profit entities.

The study highlighted opportunities to boost the sector's contribution by attracting international sports organisations to establish regional headquarters in Oman, increasing local and global sporting events, expanding sports tourism, developing the e-sports market and leveraging

infrastructure through sponsorships and partnerships.

These findings underscore the need to transform sports from a recreational activity into a sustainable economic sector by diversifying income sources, attracting investment and strengthening national sporting identity.

Intellectual property plays a critical role in this transformation by protecting trademarks and national identity, enhancing economic returns, regulating broadcasting rights and supporting innovation across the sports ecosystem. It also safeguards the rights of players and technical staff, combats counterfeiting and commercial fraud; and helps build a professional, investment-friendly sports environment.

The event also showcased the work of photographer Khamis bin Ali al Maharbi, whose extensive portfolio highlights Oman's natural and cultural heritage, underscoring the importance of intellectual property in protecting and valuing creative expression.

BUSINESS FEATURE



OMAN’S
NON-OIL GDP IS
ESTIMATED TO HAVE
GROWN BY AROUND
3–4% IN 2025

PRIME ASSETS
ANCHOR OMAN
PROPERTY
MARKET SHIFT

JOMAR MENDOZA

OMAN’S REAL ESTATE SECTOR is entering a more mature and disciplined phase, underpinned by structural reforms, evolving investor preferences and steady non-oil economic growth. The market is increasingly transitioning away from speculative activity towards income-generating, demand-led assets with stronger fundamentals. This shift reflects a broader recalibration in both investor strategy and market dynamics. In an exclusive interview, Michael O’Connell of Hamptons International, a highly experienced RICS chartered surveyor and asset management professional, highlighted the emergence of a more transparent, resilient and institutionally aligned property market in the Sultanate of Oman.



MICHAEL
O’CONNELL
RICS chartered
surveyor and asset
management
professional

STRUCTURAL SHIFT TOWARDS MATURITY

According to O’Connell, Oman’s property sector is undergoing a fundamental transformation. “The real estate market is entering a more mature, fundamentals-driven phase, shifting away from speculative development towards income-generating, demand-led assets with strong cash flow visibility”, he said. This transition is being supported by improvements in regulatory alignment, governance and transparency, all of which are strengthening investor confidence. At the same time, emerging frameworks such as real estate investment trusts (REITs) and the proposed International

Financial Centre of Oman are expected to deepen liquidity and broaden the investor base.

Supporting this shift, Oman’s non-oil GDP is estimated to have grown by around 3–4 per cent in 2025, driven by logistics, tourism and manufacturing — key sectors underpinning real estate demand. Population growth in urban centres, particularly Muscat, has also remained steady, reinforcing demand for residential and mixed-use developments. O’Connell also pointed to the growing role of technology and sustainability. “ESG considerations and AI-driven analytics are increasingly embedded in valuation and investment decisions, influencing pricing, risk and long-term performance”, he noted.

FLIGHT TO QUALITY DEFINES INVESTMENT STRATEGY A defining feature of the current cycle is the clear outperformance of prime assets. Investors are increasingly prioritising stability, quality and long-term income over speculative gains. “The outperformance of prime, income-generating assets is being driven by a clear flight to quality”, O’Connell said. “Investors and lenders prioritise stable long-term cash flows, strong covenant profiles and asset resilience in a more disciplined market environment”.

Prime Grade A office yields in Muscat are currently estimated in the range of 7 to 8 per cent, remaining attractive compared to more mature regional markets. At the same time, rental levels across secondary assets have shown limited growth, highlighting the widening performance gap. This divergence is further reinforced by tighter financing conditions and heightened scrutiny around asset performance. As a result, market participants are becoming more selective, focusing on well-located, professionally managed assets with sustainable income streams.

DISTINCT REGIONAL INVESTMENT PROFILES

Oman’s key real estate hubs — Muscat, Al Duqm, Suhar and Salalah — are evolving along distinct trajectories. Muscat remains the most mature and liquid market, accounting for an estimated 60–70 per cent of total real estate transactions in the Sultanate of Oman. Its stability continues to attract investors seeking lower-risk exposure. Al Duqm, by contrast, represents a long-term, infrastructure-driven opportunity. Backed by multi-billion-dollar investments in the Special Economic Zone, the area continues to see growing demand for industrial land and logistics facilities.

Suhar is emerging as a strong logistics and industrial hub, supported by port activity and manufacturing demand. “Suhar is increasingly attractive from a logistics and industrial perspective, offering strong income-led opportunities”, O’Connell said. Industrial occupancy levels in key zones are estimated to be above 80 per cent, reflecting sustained demand. Salalah presents a hybrid growth story, combining tourism-led development with logistics expansion. Tourist arrivals in Dhofar continue to rise seasonally, supporting hospitality and retail real estate performance.

POLICY REFORMS BOOST INVESTOR SENTIMENT

Government reforms and policy initiatives are playing a pivotal role in reshaping Oman’s real estate landscape.

“Government reforms and foreign ownership policies are materially reshaping investor sentiment, moving the market towards a more internationally investable proposition”, O’Connell explained.

The expansion of foreign ownership in Integrated Tourism Complexes, alongside incentives such as 100 per cent foreign ownership in free zones, is strengthening investor confidence.

Free zones in Al Duqm and Suhar are driving demand for logistics, industrial and workforce housing assets.

Foreign direct investment inflows into Oman have shown steady growth, with real estate and related sectors forming a key component of capital deployment, particularly from GCC investors.

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

Despite the positive outlook, the market faces near-term challenges, particularly around liquidity and supply-demand balance.

“Liquidity remains relatively thin, which can limit exit depth for larger transactions, while supply-demand mismatches in certain segments risk short-term oversupply”, O’Connell cautioned.

Interest rate sensitivity and financing conditions continue to influence deal flow, particularly for leveraged investors. However, the opportunity set remains compelling. Institutional investors are targeting prime assets such as Grade A offices, logistics facilities and well-located retail developments, where yields remain attractive relative to regional peers. Meanwhile, growth corridors linked to Al Duqm and Suhar continue to offer strong fundamentals.

For private investors, Oman still presents value-driven entry points, with potential for medium-term capital appreciation as the market continues its transition towards a more institutional, globally competitive real estate sector.

SHORTTAKES



The agreements provide integrated financing solutions to facilitate access to housing.

Palm Hills project financing deals signed in Musandam

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has signed 10 partnership and financing agreements for the “Palm Hills” project in Musandam Governorate, marking a step forward in expanding homeownership options and strengthening demand for integrated residential developments.

The agreements, concluded between Musandam WCT Development Company — the project developer — and a group of local banks, provide integrated financing solutions to facilitate access to housing. Participating institutions include Oman Housing Bank, Bank Dhofar, Bank Dhofar Islamic, National Bank of Oman, Bank Nizwa, Oman Arab Bank, Sohar International and Sohar Islamic.

Raed bin Mohammed bin Abdullah al Shehhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Musandam WCT Development Company, said the agreements enhance the project’s readiness to move into the marketing and sales phase, with construction scheduled to begin this year.

He noted that the range of financing partners enables the delivery of flexible and innovative solutions, supporting citizens in securing residential units within a modern, integrated urban setting.

The development will feature a comprehensive mix of facilities, including a government university, central business district, medical centre, mosque and community amenities, alongside commercial, leisure and sports infrastructure.

Housing options will range from villas and townhouses to apartments, designed to meet contemporary living standards.

The signing was attended by Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing, along with senior banking executives. — ONA

‘Makeen’ drives tech jobs, skills and sector growth

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology marked five years of its ‘Makeen’ initiative with a forum highlighting its expanding role in building national digital capabilities and supporting the growth of the Sultanate of Oman’s technology sector.

Held under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, the forum featured discussions on the initiative’s impact and witnessed the signing of three memoranda of understanding covering programming competitions, game development and technology sector employment.

In his address, Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, described ‘Makeen’ as a central pillar in advancing the digital economy by equipping Omani talent with advanced skills and strengthening competitiveness in the labour market.

He emphasised that investment in human capital is key to developing high-value industries and reinforcing digital sovereignty.

The initiative has contributed to raising Omanisation in the ICT sector to 45.5 per cent, with 2,790 Omanis employed and a 69 per cent share in specialised technical roles. A further 4,949 Omanis have entered sector-related professions, signalling improved workforce readiness.

Beyond employment, ‘Makeen’ has supported



Officials from the public and private sectors attended the event.



DR ALI BIN AMER AL SHAITHANI

Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology

emerging industries. The semiconductor sector now includes more than 150 Omani engineers and five start-ups, while the drone sector has expanded through a joint training programme with Sultan Qaboos University, benefitting over 120 participants annually.

In artificial intelligence, more than 800 trainees have been prepared for the labour market, contributing to the emergence of around 27 specialised companies. Meanwhile, the space sector recorded strong growth between 2023 and 2025, with a 63 per cent increase in company numbers, a 163 per cent rise in employment and investment growth exceeding 270 per cent.

Key projects include OmanSat-1, the Duqm launch platform and the development of specialised laboratories and educational infrastructure, alongside programmes to support start-ups and talent development.

The initiative has also enhanced Oman’s global engagement through participation in international

agreements.

Looking ahead, the next phase will prioritise economic impact, targeting the training of 10,000 job seekers over five years.

This will be delivered through labour market readiness programmes and capacity-building initiatives, each offering 5,000 training opportunities aligned with evolving market needs.

The initiative is also shifting towards an empowerment phase focused on employment outcomes and productivity, with expanded partnerships, advanced training in fields such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing, and the development of a new generation of digital leaders.

Since its launch, ‘Makeen’ has attracted more than 27,000 participants, delivered 139 programmes across over 30 technical fields, trained more than 11,000 individuals and achieved a 50 per cent employment rate in technical camps, underscoring its growing role in shaping Oman’s digital economy. — ONA

Consortiums vie for key livestock biosecurity PPP project in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

A number of local and international consortiums are competing for a concession to deliver Oman’s first integrated biosecurity project for the livestock sector, launched under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative by the Ministry of Finance on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Sunday, April 26, 2026, marked the deadline for the submission of Statements of Qualification (SOQs) by interested bidders, signalling strong market interest in what is viewed as a strategic national project aimed at safeguarding food security.

The initiative seeks to strengthen Oman’s long-term biosecurity framework by leveraging private sector expertise through a structured PPP model. The selected developer will be awarded a



The biosecurity project, featuring three modern Animal Quarantine Centres, will handle in excess of two million animals annually.

concession to design, develop, finance, operate, maintain and ultimately transfer a network of modern Animal Quarantine Centres (AQC)s and associated infrastructure.

Three sites have been identified for the project: Raysut in Salalah, Al Suwaiq in Al Batinah North and

Al Buraimi. Collectively, the facilities are expected to handle more than 2 million animals annually, significantly enhancing the Sultanate of Oman’s capacity to manage livestock imports and mitigate disease risks.

The development will follow a phased approach, combining

greenfield construction with the upgrading and replacement of existing facilities.

At Al Suwaiq, the current Sa’al quarantine facility will be replaced with a new centre matching existing capacity in the initial phase, ensuring uninterrupted operations, before being expanded to approximately 3.5 times its current capacity.

At Al Buraimi, a new land-border quarantine facility focused on camel quarantine and cross-border livestock trade will be established on a site spanning around 41,990 square metres, with an estimated investment of RO 2 million.

In Raysut, a larger facility covering approximately 188,125 square metres is planned, with an indicative investment of RO 8 million. The Al Suwaiq site, with an area of about 197,629 square metres, is expected to attract investment of around RO 4 million.

Providing technical advisory support during the feasibility and design stages is Prime Consulting International Ltd, a UK-based firm specialising in agriculture, infrastructure and development advisory services, working in collaboration with Altra Capital, an investment firm focused on project structuring and financing across infrastructure and sustainable development sectors.

The SOQ process is designed to assess bidders’ technical and operational capabilities, including experience in operating quarantine, agricultural or veterinary facilities, as well as expertise in design and construction, facilities management and compliance with biosecurity standards.

Oman’s livestock imports, largely sourced from the Horn of Africa and transported via the Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea, present unique biosecurity challenges.

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold declines on dollar strength



Gold prices edged lower as a stronger US dollar and rising oil prices heightened inflation concerns and expectations of prolonged high interest rates.

Spot gold slipped 0.3 per cent to \$4,694.26 an ounce, extending last week’s losses. Investors are awaiting the US Federal Reserve policy decision, while other precious metals like silver, platinum and palladium also recorded modest declines. — Reuters

OIL MARKETS

Oil prices rise as talks stall



Oil prices advanced about 2% as stalled US-Iran negotiations and ongoing shipping constraints tightened supply expectations.

Brent rose to \$107.49 a barrel, while WTI reached \$96.17 a barrel, extending strong gains from the previous week. Market sentiment remained supported by fading prospects for diplomatic progress after Donald Trump cancelled a planned envoy visit. — Reuters

AVIATION SECTOR

Budget airlines seek US aid



A group of low-cost carriers from the United State, including Frontier Airlines and Avelo Airlines, is seeking \$2.5 billion in government assistance to offset rising fuel costs.

The airlines’ executives held talks with government officials in Washington, proposing support in exchange for equity-linked warrants, as sustained high jet fuel prices strain operating margins. — Reuters

OPINION

Before you blame AI, fix your CV



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker

LAST week, I had an interesting discussion with Stella Da Silva, one of the founders of DeskPark, a premium coworking space that offers flexible workspaces, private offices, meeting rooms and a vibrant business community designed for startups. The discussion revolved around one of my previous articles that is titled “Your CV is read by robots, not humans”.

Stella, who also delivers employability skills sessions covering CVs, interview preparation, LinkedIn optimisation and wider soft skills, stated to me that while ATS (Applicant Tracking Systems) do filter CVs, they don’t actually “reject people” on their own. ATS simply ranks and organises applications, with the final decision still made by a human.

The message reinforced a point I strongly agree with: the real issue isn’t robots versus humans, but rather poor CV structure and unclear value. A CV that is clear, relevant, uses the right keywords naturally and focuses on outcomes that pass both the system and the recruiter.

It also added an important reminder that relying only on online applications limits opportunities. Networking and visibility still matter just as much. In short, we should not blame AI but rather fix our CV to get an opportunity for an interview. My article

this week focuses on just that. We often hear people say, “It’s hard to get a job in the AI era”. While that’s partly true, it’s a convenient excuse, because in many cases, the issue isn’t the market but how candidates present themselves.

Your CV today is more than a document. It’s your first impression, your digital pitch and your filter test — all at once. Before you even get a chance to speak, your CV has already spoken on your behalf. If it’s unclear, generic, or poorly structured, it doesn’t matter how talented you are. You are simply not getting through, trust me.

The reality is simple: a poor CV is one of the biggest reasons people don’t get shortlisted. Something I totally agree with, as Stella noted.

Most CVs fail because they focus on what someone did, not what they achieved. There’s a big difference between “managed a team” and “led a team that increased revenue by 25%”. One is a task. The other is impact. And in today’s competitive environment, impact is what stands out. People or organisations per se don’t care who you are as much as what you did and what you will do for them.

Another common mistake is lack of relevance. Sending the same CV to multiple roles and/or opportunities might save time, but it significantly reduces your chances. Employers and the systems they use are looking for alignment. If your CV doesn’t

A CV that is clear, relevant, uses the right keywords naturally and focuses on outcomes that pass both the system and the recruiter. It also added an important reminder that relying only on online applications limits opportunities.

reflect the language, skills and priorities of the job, it simply won’t rank high enough to be noticed, period! Structure is another silent killer. A cluttered CV makes it difficult for both systems and recruiters to extract key information. If someone has to “work” to understand your profile, they won’t. They’ll move on. Trust me, this comes directly from a number of HR directors I know personally.

So how does one fix this?

First, start with clarity. Keep your CV clean, structured and easy to scan. Use clear headings, logical flow and concise bullet points. Think simplicity, not complexity. Yes, KISS: Keep it simple and standard.

Secondly, shift your focus to results. Every role you list should answer one question: what difference did you make? Use numbers where possible. Growth percentages, cost savings and efficiency improvements. These are information signals of value.

Thirdly, tailor your CV by aligning it with each role so it dramatically increases your chances. That can be done by studying the job description, identifying key terms and finally reflecting them naturally in your content.

Fourth, highlight skills that matter. Technical skills are important, but don’t underestimate soft skills such as adaptability, communication and problem-solving. These are increasingly valuable in a world where AI handles routine tasks. You, as a professional, do more!

SPACEX’S MARKET CLAIMS ARE PLANET-SCALE ABSURDITY

ROBERT CYRAN

Even by Elon Musk’s lofty standards, the world’s preeminent hype man is making some out-of-this-world claims. SpaceX is banking on the thrill of rockets and artificial intelligence to power its mission for a \$1.8 trillion valuation. A filing touting its upcoming initial public offering, says that this makes for a total addressable market, or TAM, of \$28.5 trillion.

Take it seriously and stellar returns are possible. Doing so would be a mistake. The company says it has identified the largest actionable TAM in human history. Indeed, it equates to over a fifth of global GDP. Still, take the filing at face value and the business of selling artificial intelligence to corporations alone is worth \$22.7 trillion.

Technology markets are often winner-take-most, so assume that SpaceX’s orbital data centres are impressive enough to take all of it, despite concerns about, say, abusive AI imagery on its social network, X.

At a software-like 30% margin, that’s about \$7 trillion of profit. Put this on the 28-times multiple of an industry stalwart like Alphabet and SpaceX would be worth over 100 times its mooted IPO value. That’s not even considering real, here-and-now businesses like satellites, or imagined ones like space mining. It’s even possible for someone, somewhere to argue that Musk is being modest, since he will have multiple planets to tap.

Promising the stars is easier than delivering them. Uber Technologies’ investors found that out after its 2019 IPO. The company said its overall TAM was \$12.3 trillion, including \$5.7 trillion from ride-hailing and the rest from freight or food delivery.

These figures were aggressive, to say the least: the ride-hail market alone equated to essentially all journeys made in 175 countries, including public transit.

When rubber met the road, Uber’s stock underperformed the S&P 500 Index. An initial valuation of 5 times trailing revenue has since fallen to about 3 times.

Of course, colossal TAMs are useful beyond strict financial modeling. Giant figures may inspire employees to deliver more. Lyft’s claimed TAM was only 10% of Uber’s when it listed and today its market value is about 4% of its rival’s. They also serve as marketing, or a statement of intent. Apollo Global Management says the TAM for the “private credit universe” is \$40 trillion, as it continues muscling aside old-finance peers.

Perhaps Musk is merely setting goals so high that inspired troops create multiple astonishing businesses. Or maybe hype is the best way to justify a valuation that stretches credulity. — Reuters

Oman–Tanzania: A pact whose time has come

FEW relationships in the Indian Ocean economy carry the quiet depth of the one between Oman and Tanzania. Centuries before containers and free-trade agreements, dhows sailed from Sur and Suhar on the monsoon winds to Zanzibar, carrying dates and fabric, returning with spices and stories. The dhows are gone, but the geography, the goodwill and the complementary strengths remain. What has changed is the opportunity: both countries now stand at the pivotal economic inflection points, and the case for a deeper commercial partnership has never been stronger.

Oman Vision 2040 and Tanzania Development Vision 2050 are not parallel documents; they are structurally complementary frameworks. Oman’s blueprint targets a diversified, knowledge-based economy in which non-oil activities reach roughly 90 per cent of GDP by 2040, with FDI rising to 10 per cent of GDP.

The progress is tangible: non-oil sectors now contribute around 73 per cent of GDP, and cumulative FDI stock exceeded RO 30.3 billion by mid-2025, up 12.8 per cent year-on-year. Judicial and anti-corruption reforms lifted Oman twenty places on the Corruption Perceptions Index, and a new Investment and Commerce Court has cut appeal timelines from 186 days to 136.

Tanzania’s ambition is of a different scale but the same spirit. Launched in July 2025 by President Samia Suluhu Hassan, Vision 2050 aims to transform Tanzania into a \$1 trillion economy and lift per-capita income to \$7,000, placing the country among Africa’s top three investment destinations.

The IMF projects GDP growth of 6.0 per cent in 2025 and 6.3 per cent in 2026, with inflation near 3.5 per cent. Moody’s affirms a stable B1 rating. Tanzania is positioning itself as East Africa’s industrial and logistics hub. When two reform-minded economies move in the same direction, alignment becomes strategy rather than coincidence.

According to Oman’s National Centre for Statistics and Information



Two nations, two ambitious visions, one natural alliance across the Indian Ocean.



DR YOUSUF
HAMED AL
BALUSHI
yousefuh@omaninvestgateway.com

The writer is founder and CEO, Smart Investment Gateway, economist, board adviser & business transformation mentor

Oman Vision 2040 and Tanzania Development Vision 2050 are not parallel documents; they are structurally complementary frameworks. Oman’s blueprint targets a diversified, knowledge-based economy in which non-oil activities reach roughly 90 per cent of GDP by 2040, with FDI rising to 10 per cent of GDP.

(January 2026), Oman’s exports to Tanzania stand at around RO 2.57 million, led by electrical cables, propylene copolymers and Portland cement. Imports from Tanzania reach RO 7.11 million, dominated by cathodes (RO 6.26 million), followed by wheat bran and industrial tools.

The absolute numbers are small for two countries of this size and potential, and the composition is skewed toward raw and semi-processed materials. That is not a weakness; it is a clear signal of untapped value-chain integration opportunities. The diversification agenda of both Visions is precisely about moving up the value chain — today’s gaps are tomorrow’s opportunities.

WHY THE PARTNERSHIP MAKES COMMERCIAL SENSE

Geography is the first argument. Oman sits at the crossroads of East–West trade routes, outside the Strait of Hormuz, with deep-water ports at Suhar, Salalah and Al Duqm.

Tanzania is East Africa’s natural gateway, with Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Zanzibar serving landlocked markets from Zambia to Rwanda.

On a map of shipping lanes, Oman and Tanzania are strategically positioned anchors on either side of the Indian Ocean corridor.

Complementarity is the second. Oman imports wheat, pulses, meat and agricultural commodities — exactly what Tanzania produces competitively.

Tanzania is building a manufacturing base aiming for 40 per cent of GDP by 2050 and

needs the petrochemicals, cement, fertilizer inputs and industrial cables Oman produces at scale. A direct corridor would materially reduce logistics costs, lead times, and supply-chain risk.

Capital meeting capacity is the third. Tanzania’s annual FDI inflows of \$1–1.5 billion fall short of what a trillion-dollar ambition requires. Omani investors are seeking productive, long-horizon assets beyond hydrocarbons.

Tanzania offers them: agribusiness, mining beneficiation, tourism, blue-economy projects and Special Economic Zones with tax holidays and capital-repatriation guarantees under the Tanzania Investment Act of 2022. For Omani capital, Tanzania is a structured growth opportunity rather than a frontier exposure.

SECTORS WHERE THE FUTURE LIVES

Manufacturing. Oman’s industrial estates at Suhar, Rusayl and Al Duqm host producers of cables, cement, polymers and steel — inputs Tanzania’s construction boom demands. Joint ventures locating finishing capacity in Tanzania would cut delivered costs and open the East African Community and AfCFTA — a 1.3-billion-person, \$3 trillion market.

Blue economy and fisheries. Oman’s sustainable fisheries sector grew 7.5 per cent in the first nine months of 2024 and targets 10 per cent annual growth. Tanzania’s blue economy is a pillar of Vision 2050. Shared cold-chain logistics, joint processing and aquaculture technology transfer can integrate two adjacent marine economies into a single value chain.

Tourism. A twinned “Safari and Sands” proposition — Serengeti and Zanzibar combined with Oman’s forts, wadis and Empty Quarter — is a natural product for GCC, Indian and European travelers. Direct flights coordinated visas for tour operators and cross-investment in hotel assets would unlock this quickly.

Logistics and agriculture. Al Duqm and Dar es Salaam are two terminals of the same opportunity.

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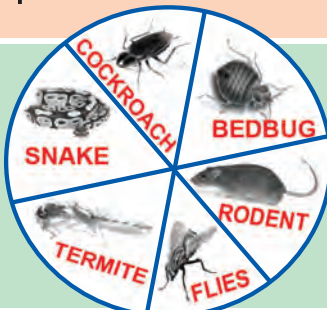
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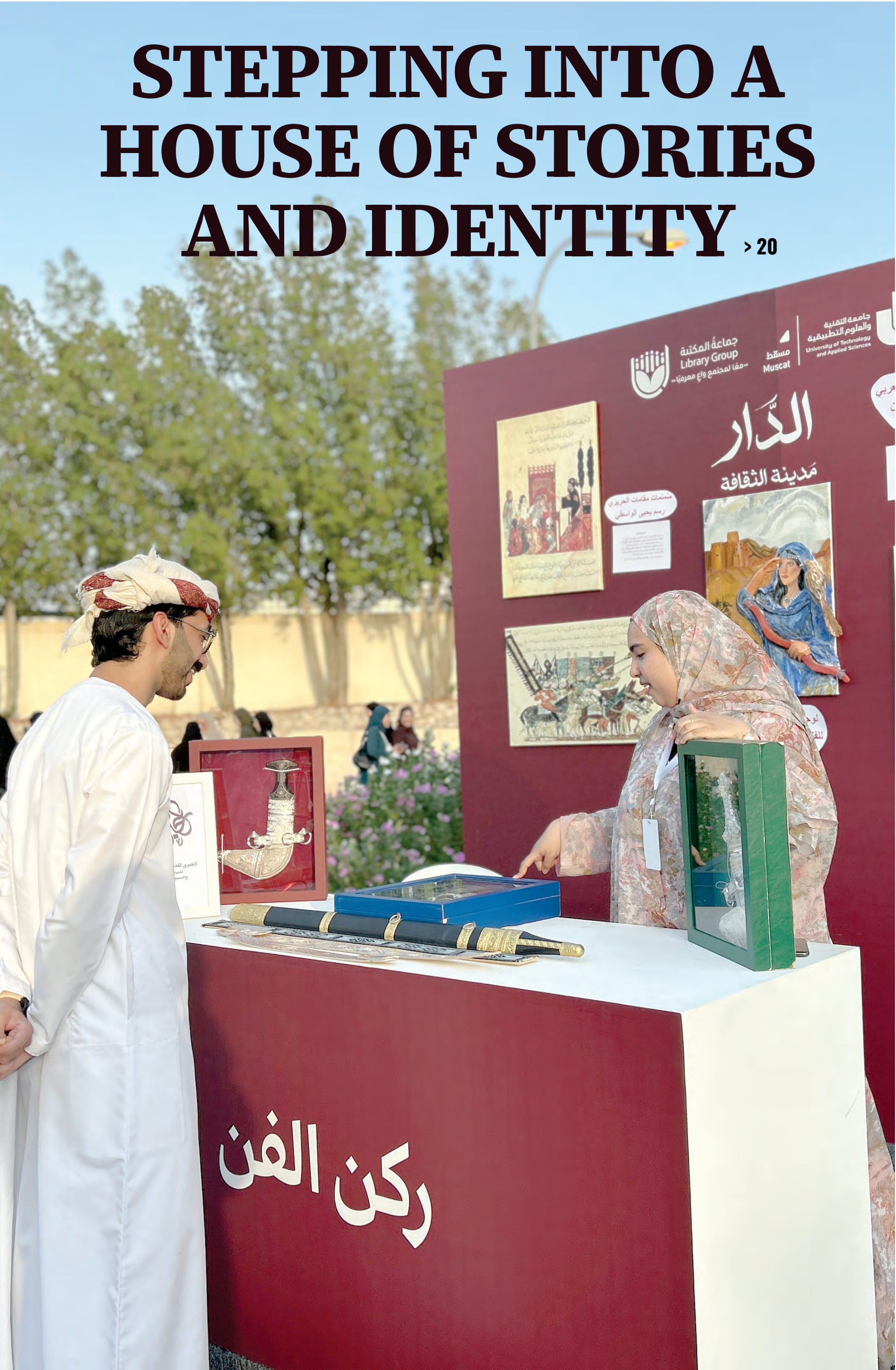
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BIENNALENEWS

VENICE BIENNALE JURY EXCLUDES RUSSIA AND ISRAEL



European Union flags flutter outside the European Commission headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. — Reuters

Jurors at the Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition said they will not consider artists from countries whose leaders face charges at the International Criminal Court, an apparent reference to Russia and Israel.

The five jury members, who will select winners of the Golden and Silver Lion awards among 110 participants, said they were committed “to the defence of human rights” as part of their role at the exhibition, which opens on May 9 and draws global attention from artists, curators and critics.

“This jury will refrain from the consideration of those countries whose leaders are currently charged with crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court”, they said in a statement, without naming the countries directly but clearly signalling their position.

The ICC has issued arrest warrants for figures including Russian President Vladimir Putin, over alleged war crimes involving children in Ukraine and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, over alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity during the Gaza conflict. Both leaders deny the allegations.

The decision comes amidst ongoing criticism after organisers allowed Russia to reopen its pavilion at the Biennale, following its exclusion from major European cultural events after the 2022 war in Ukraine.

The move drew backlash from Italy’s government, led by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, as well as from the European Commission, which has taken a firm position on the issue.

On Thursday, the Commission said it had formally notified the Biennale of its intention to suspend or terminate a €2 million (\$2.34 million) grant awarded for the next three years, raising the stakes of the dispute and putting financial pressure on organisers.

“There is only one ongoing grant, this is of 2 million for the next three years and this is the one we aim to terminate or to suspend”, a Commission spokesperson said, adding that the Biennale has 30 days to respond to the letter and clarify its position.

In a separate statement, the Biennale said the jury operates with full autonomy and independence, describing the decision as “a natural expression of the freedom and autonomy” it guarantees, while stressing that the exhibition remains open to broad international participation. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



ART

People look at a sculpture named ‘Bengaluru’s Soul’ during its unveiling ceremony at the Terminal 2 of Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru. — AFP



CANNES

Spanish actress Anna Castillo poses during the “Many people need to die” photocall as part of the 9th edition of the Cannes International Series Festival (Canneseries) in Cannes, southern France. — AFP



FESTIVAL

People watch fireworks during the Malta International Fireworks Festival over Valletta, in Sliema, Malta. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



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HELLO KITTY’S PARENT COMPANY TO MAKE OWN VIDEO GAMES



Unlike other Japanese cultural exports such as Pokemon or Dragon Ball, there is minimal narrative around Hello Kitty. — AFP

Hello Kitty is stepping into a new arena as Sanrio looks to expand its global reach through video games, announcing plans to launch a dedicated gaming division and release 10 original titles over the next three years.

The beloved character, which first appeared as a simple illustration on a 1970s vinyl coin purse, has since become a defining symbol of Japan’s “kawaii” — or cute — culture. While Hello Kitty and other Sanrio characters have featured in games before, those projects were developed by third-party studios.

This marks the first time Sanrio will take direct control of game development.

Chief executive Tomokuni Tsuji said the move is aimed at broadening the company’s appeal beyond its traditional audience.

“We also want to approach people who have not been part of our traditional fan base, like boys and adult men”, Tsuji told reporters.

The first title under the new strategy, “Sanrio Party Land”, is expected to launch by autumn for Nintendo’s Switch and next-generation Switch 2 consoles. The game will feature more than

45 mini-games and include over 145 Sanrio characters, such as Cinnamoroll and Kuromi, alongside Hello Kitty.

Sanrio plans to invest up to 10 billion yen (around \$63 million) into its gaming operations by March 2027, underscoring the importance of the sector to its long-term growth.

“Video games are a very big market. People spend a long time on games”, Tsuji said. “This is a sector we must enter”.

Unlike other major Japanese exports such as Pokémon or Dragon Ball, Hello Kitty has little narrative background — notably, the character has no mouth — yet remains one of the most recognisable figures in global pop culture.

Over the decades, the brand has appeared on tens of thousands of products, from handbags to kitchen appliances and has collaborated with major names including Adidas and Balenciaga.

The franchise continues to expand, with a Warner Bros-produced Hello Kitty film currently scheduled for release in 2028, signalling that the iconic character’s global appeal shows no signs of fading. — AFP



Rozan: Where art meets identity and sustainability



MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

In a two-day artistic experience at Al Afaq Private School in Nizwa, the “Rozan” exhibition opened a wide window onto the creativity of students from across all school levels, presenting a space where colour met purpose, identity met innovation and art met environmental responsibility in a way that carried meaning beyond the canvas.

Participants relied on local environmental materials and used eco-friendly adhesives, highlighting the importance of sustainable art that respects nature and creatively reuses available resources. A recycling corner was also dedicated to the initiative in cooperation with the Mothers’ Council and students under the Mishkat Sustainable Education Initiative, where used materials such as cardboard, fabric and newspapers were transformed into artistic alternatives.

Lilian Youssef Mikhael, visual arts teacher, explained that Rozan is an invitation to see each student as a unique element, adding their own colour, voice and creativity to the artistic landscape, together creating a garden of ideas and innovations that reflects Omani identity in its authentic spirit. She added that the exhibition also carried an environmental and



cultural message, bringing together creativity and sustainability in a distinctive artistic experience.

Among the exhibition’s standout themes were cartoon-style artworks with an Omani identity, portraying traditional games such as Saloom Bloom, Hawalis and Rajilah, alongside works that were reimagined using artificial intelligence techniques in a step aimed at reinforcing national identity and strengthening values of citizenship. The exhibition also featured three-dimensional cubic art models of living creatures, including the Arabian horse, the Arabian oryx and the falcon, created from cardboard and other materials.

Muna al Kandi, administrator at Al Afaq Private School said the presence of the administrative staff alongside students and teachers at Rozan reflects the school’s pride in and support for student activities.

“The exhibition is a culmination of visual and fine arts education and a window into bold ideas and creative talents that know no limits”, she said.

In describing the exhibition, Omani filmmaker Mohammed al Kindi praised its vibrant colours, skillful compositions and optimistic artistic spirit, a reflection of how art, when given space to grow, can become a language that speaks of people, place and identity all at once.

FEATURES



STEPPING INTO A HOUSE OF STORIES AND IDENTITY

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

UNDER the open sky of the Preparatory Studies Centre at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences — Muscat, A'dar Dark unfolded not just as an event, but as a living narrative, one that invited visitors to step through time, culture and self. The name itself, loosely translating to “my home is your home”, echoes the spirit of the well-known Spanish saying *mi casa es su casa*, setting the tone for an experience rooted in belonging and shared identity.

Held over three consecutive days in the outdoor courtyards, the event was designed as a journey. From the very first step, visitors were transported through a symbolic “gateway of time”, surrounded by books, stories and echoes of civilisations that date back thousands of years. It was a reminder that culture is not inherited passively, but discovered, questioned and reshaped.

The journey began with the evolution of culture itself. From ancient cave drawings created using natural materials such as animal blood, charcoal and coloured stones, to the emergence of writing systems like hieroglyphics and cuneiform, visitors experienced firsthand how humans preserved their stories. Some paused to write their own messages using papyrus and ink, bridging the ancient with the personal. Others experimented with feather quills, rediscovering the tactile intimacy of writing before the digital age transformed it into something instantaneous.

From there, the narrative flowed into the evolution of media. The written word gave way to sound, then image. Visitors moved through sections that traced this transformation, from newspapers and typewriters to radio broadcasts and television screens, raising a subtle question, in an age of endless content, are we documenting our “homes” as meaningfully as those before us?

At the heart of the event stood the “Diwan”, a space that blurred the line between tradition and interaction. Designed as two mirrored seating areas with red carpets and cushions, it hosted discussions, laughter and even friendly competitions in carrom, UNO and Fifa. It was here that culture felt most alive, not in artefacts, but in connection.

The artistic corner added another dimension. Yumna al Abri, a student participant, guided visitors through displays of Omani craftsmanship, silver-crafted khanjars, intricately designed belts and swords tinted with gold hues. Each piece carried not just aesthetic value, but history. Nearby, a calligraphy artwork by Iman al Abri told a layered Omani tale through a poetic phrase, revealing how language itself can carry resistance, wit and identity.

Yet, it was the panel discussions that gave the event its contemporary pulse.

In one session, Fatma al Hamhami explored the influence of social media on behaviour, prompting reflection on how digital spaces shape identity. In another, Salman al Maskari, a film critic and podcast host, led a compelling dialogue on the power of cinema and television. He argued that media is not merely a mirror of society, but a force that can shape it, sometimes subtly, sometimes profoundly.

Al Maskari emphasised the importance of awareness in consuming content, noting that while some works reflect real societal issues, others construct realities that can normalise harmful behaviours. He pointed to the role of values and cultural grounding in navigating this influence, encouraging audiences to engage critically rather than passively.

As visitors reached the final stop, the archive wall, they were invited to leave behind a trace of themselves. Notes, memories and reflections filled the space, transforming it into a collective story still being written.

Because, as A'dar Dark quietly insisted, culture does not begin in books or screens.

It begins with you.

