Follow us on facebook@omanobserver, @omanobserver

ESTABLISHED 1981 — *EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:* ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHUEILI

DHUL QA'ADA 3 - 1447 AH - TUESDAY - **APRIL 21** - 2026

OMAN عُمان DAILY

Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 158
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

11 AHMED AL WAHAIBI OMAN'S RISING GOLD TALENT

INBRIEF

OMANI FRANKINCENSE GETS GLOBAL GI TAG

MUSCAT: *The Sultanate of Oman has successfully registered Omani frankincense as an international geographical indication with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The issuance of the international registration certificate marks a milestone that reflects the enduring stature of this ancient product in Omani identity and in global heritage-linked trade.*

Nasra bint Sultan al Habsi, Director-General of Commerce at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said the registration — the first of its kind in the Gulf region — crowns institutional efforts to protect Omani frankincense and enhance its marketing value in international markets. ***SEE ALSO P13***

Vision 2040: New bank deepens ties with Africa

LUANDA: *The establishment of the African Bank of Oman was announced on Monday in Luanda, the capital of the Republic of Angola, in furtherance of the strategic objectives set forth under Oman Vision 2040, which seek to diversify national income sources and strengthen the Sultanate of Oman's overseas investment presence.*

This landmark initiative reflects the Sultanate of Oman's ongoing commitment to reinforcing its financial footprint in Africa's emerging markets. HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, stated, "We welcome the establishment of the African Bank of Oman (ABO), which embodies the economic diplomacy approach championed by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. This approach seeks to enhance the Sultanate of Oman's investment and economic presence on the international stage, affirm its role in connecting global markets, and solidify its position as an investment and financial bridge linking the Middle East to emerging global markets, built upon the pillars of stability, trust, and the deep-rooted international relations for which Oman is widely recognised." Sayyid Theyazin added, "We believe that this auspicious step will yield benefits for all parties involved. It will deepen economic ties with Africa and its emerging markets, enhance Oman's regional and international reputation and promote Oman as a trusted investment partner. This, in turn, supports the sustainable economic diversification plans set out in Oman Vision 2040 - a vision rooted in a rich civilisational heritage, grounded in a distinguished present, and aimed at a bright future under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik." ***SEE ALSO P13***

HH SAYYID THEYAZIN BIN HAITHAM AL SAID

WORLD AWAITS FATE OF CEASEFIRE

PAKISTAN PREPARES TO HOST NEW ROUND OF IRAN-US TALKS

TEHRAN REJECTS NEW PEACE TALKS, CITING THE ONGOING BLOCKADE

IRAN THREATENS TO ATTACK GULF STATES IF US STRIKES CIVILIAN INFRA

CRUDE OIL PRICES BOUNCED ON MONDAY AS IRAN SHUTS HORMUZ

CONCERNS GREW on Monday that the ceasefire between the United States and Iran might collapse after the US said it had seized an Iranian cargo ship that tried to run its blockade and Iran vowed to retaliate.

Efforts to build a more lasting peace in the region also appeared under threat, as Iran said it would not participate in a second round of negotiations that the US had hoped to kick off before the ceasefire expires.

The US has maintained a blockade of Iranian ports, while Iran has lifted and then reimposed its own blockade on marine traffic passing through the Strait of Hormuz, which typically handles roughly one-fifth of the world's oil supply.

Iranian state media reported that Tehran had rejected new peace talks, citing the ongoing blockade, threatening rhetoric, and Washington's shifting positions and "excessive demands." "One cannot restrict Iran's oil exports while expecting free security for others," Iran's First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Aref wrote on social media. "The choice is clear: either a free oil market for all, or the risk of significant costs for everyone."

Trump earlier warned Iran that the US would destroy every bridge and power plant in Iran if Tehran rejected his terms, continuing a recent pattern of such threats.

Iran has said that if the United States were to attack its civilian infrastructure, it would hit power stations and desalination plants of Gulf Arab neighbours.

Trump said his envoys would arrive in Islamabad on Monday evening, one day before a two-week ceasefire ends.

A White House official said the US delegation would be headed by Vice-President JD Vance, who led the war's first peace talks a week ago, and also include Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Pakistan, which has served as the main mediator, was still gearing up for the talks on Monday.

A woman stands amid the debris of a destroyed building in the Haret Hreik area of Beirut on Monday. ***— AFP***

Analysts at the International Crisis Group think tank said Iran's strategy for Hormuz was to signal it was open to diplomacy, "but only on terms that show it has not suffered strategic defeat"

Nearly 20,000 police, paramilitary and army personnel have been deployed across the capital Islamabad, a government and a security official said, adding that the area around the venue for the second round of talks had been vacated.

Public transport across the city has also been suspended.

Investors were on edge approaching the end of the US-Iran ceasefire, with Washington saying it will send a delegation to Pakistan for a new round of talks "soon" and Iran saying it had yet to decide whether to attend.

"The market mood is very different at the start of the week compared to Friday," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at trading group XTB.

Crude had plunged on Friday after the Islamic republic said it would again allow ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas usually passes.

But world oil prices bounced on Monday as Iran closed the waterway and said the US blockade and seizure of an Iranian cargo ship breached the two-week ceasefire.

"Renewed attacks on commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz increased fears of supply disruptions and raised the risk of a broader escalation in hostilities between the US and Iran," said Trade Nation analyst David Morrison.

"Uncertainty also remains over whether negotiations in Islamabad will proceed after Iran said it would not attend talks while the blockade remains in place," he added.

Analysts at the International Crisis Group think tank said Iran's strategy for Hormuz was to signal it was open to diplomacy, "but only on terms that show it has not suffered strategic defeat". **— Agencies**

SHORT*TAKES*

The meeting addressed the latest developments in the Yemeni crisis and ongoing international efforts to resolve it. ***— ONA***

OMAN REVIEWS YEMEN CRISIS WITH GERMAN AMBASSADOR

MUSCAT: *Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received on Monday at his office Thomas Friedrich Schneider, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Yemen.*

The meeting addressed the latest developments in the Yemeni crisis and ongoing international efforts to resolve it.

For his part, the Ambassador lauded the diplomatic efforts of the Sultanate of Oman, which advocate for prioritising the language of dialogue and rejecting violence among the relevant parties in order to reach understandings that lead to a lasting and sustainable peace, thereby achieving security and stability for the Yemeni people.

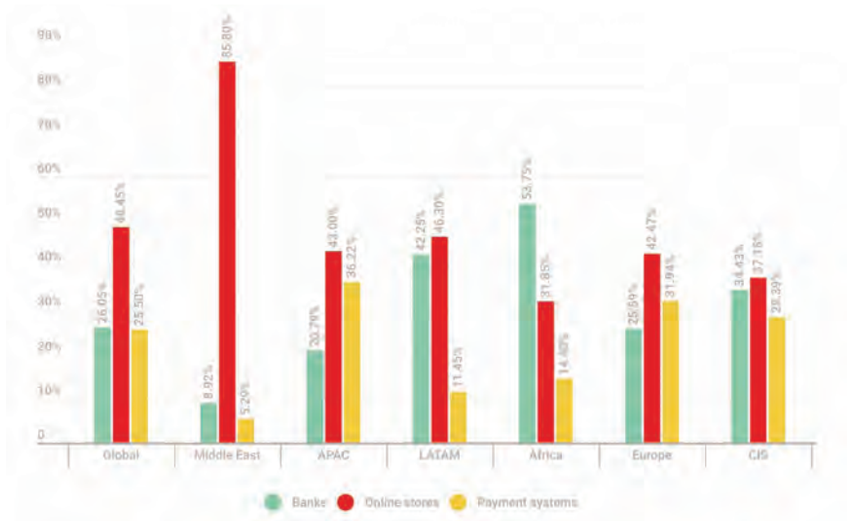
The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Sultanate of Oman. ***— ONA***

E-commerce scams account for 85% of financial phishing

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

UP TO 80 per cent of cyberattacks conducted by online fraudsters were e-commerce scams, and over one million online banking accounts were compromised by infostealers last year, according to a report. Financial cyber threats have shifted towards credential theft and data reuse. Attackers are moving away from traditional PC banking malware and increasingly relying on social engineering and dark web marketplaces. Mobile financial malware is also on the rise, as stated in the report published by Kaspersky.

Despite widespread campaigns and awareness programmes, traditional financial phishing methods are still prevalent. Pages imitating e-shops accounted for 48.5 per cent of financial phishing attempts in 2025, followed by banks at 26.1 per cent and payment systems at 25.5 per cent. The decline in bank phishing suggests that these services are becoming harder to impersonate successfully, leading fraudsters to seek easier ways to access users' finances.



Despite widespread campaigns and awareness programmes, traditional financial phishing methods are still prevalent.

Tariq bin Hilal al Barwani, a technologist and motivational speaker, commented on the report, emphasising the rapid growth of the regional e-commerce sector, particularly in Oman. "Oman's e-commerce market is flourishing due to high smartphone penetration (over 150 per cent) and government initiatives under Oman Vision 2040. With mobile payment volumes increasing eight-fold in the past two years, we are effectively combating cyberattacks on various e-commerce platforms through continuous awareness campaigns," he said.

Oman's e-commerce sector is projected to reach around $3.26 billion by the end of 2026 and is expected to grow to $4.62 billion by 2031. The market was valued at approximately $2.2 billion in early 2024, with a projected CAGR of 7.22 per cent from 2026 to 2031.

"Over 80 per cent of the population in Oman has internet access, and mobile shopping is popular, especially in categories like fashion, electronics and food service. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has issued more than 3,300 e-commerce licenses by 2024, reflecting formalisation," Al Barwani added.

Polina Tretyak, an analyst at Kaspersky Digital Footprint Intelligence, highlighted the dark web as a central hub for financial cybercrime, where stolen credentials and bank cards are aggregated, repackaged and sold.

PROTECTION TIPS

Avoid following links from suspicious messages

Double-check web pages before entering banking card details

Use multifactor authentication where possible, create strong, unique passwords

Install a reliable security solution to protect against fake e-shops and phishing pages

Utilise advanced detection technology to analyse website characteristics and URLs

وزارة المالية

رؤية عُمان 2040

Announcement of an Electronic Auction for the Sale of Movable Assets

The Ministry of Finance is pleased to announce an electronic auction for the sale of movable assets. The auction will be conducted through the Mzadcom Smart Auction Solutions at (www.mzadcom.om), as per the following details:

Auction	Quantity	Preview Location	Preview Date & Time	Auction Period
Used vehicles	(156) vehicles	Ministry of Finance Warehouse, Ghala Industrial	28-30 April 2026 8:00 am - 2:00 pm	Opens: 03 May 2026 Closes: 06 May 2026
Used Office Furniture, Used Air Conditioning Units, and Iron & Aluminum Poles	A set of used office furniture, used air-conditioning units, and iron and aluminium poles			

Those wishing to participate in the electronic auction shall comply with the following conditions:

01 Register on the website of Mzadcom Smart Auction Solutions (www.mzadcom.om).

02 Bidders must pay a security deposit before participating in the electronic auction, 1,000 for bidding on vehicles and 200 for bidding on used office furniture, used air-conditioning units, and iron and aluminium poles.

03 Bidder shall pay the total value of the movables via the website within five working days from the date of the auction award.

04 Bidder shall also pay Value Added Tax (VAT) at 5% and an auctioneer's commission of 2% of each movable value.

05 Bidder is required to pick up the movable within five working days after paying the purchase value. In case the movable is not picked up, the Ministry shall not be responsible for any losses or damage that may occur to the movable.

06 If a bidder fails to pay the purchase value or transfer the movable within the specified period, the security deposit shall be confiscated.

07 Mechanical condition of the vehicle, vehicle safety driving on the road, or the possibility of it being licensed by the Royal Oman Police will not be guaranteed in any way, as well as the Ministry is not obligated to guarantee any defects in the movables being sold, and the buyer must inspect the movables to verify their condition.

08 Bidders can inspect the movables during the period starting from 28-30 April 2026 at the Ministry of Finance Warehouse in Ghala Industrial, from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm.

N.B:

All movable assets are sold as is.

Security deposits will be refunded if the auction is not awarded to the bidder.

Ministry of Finance reserves the right to delay or cancel the auction without justification.

For further details, please visit (www.mzadcom.om) or contact (76767470).

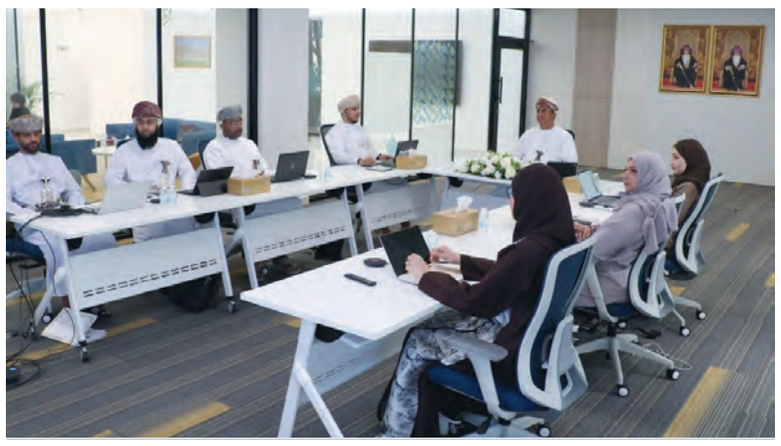
To inspect the movable assets, please contact the Administrative Affairs Department at the Ministry of Finance during official working hours at: (24746131 - 24746112).

oman_mof www.mof.gov.om وزارة المالية-سلطنة عمان ministry of finance - Oman

GCC MEETING LOOKS AT ENHANCING FOOD SAFETY SYSTEM

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Monday took part in the 10th meeting of the preparatory committee of under-secretaries entrusted with food safety in GCC states. Oman was represented at the meeting by Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture.

The meeting, held via video conferencing, dealt with the GCC Unified Food Law (system) and the GCC Guide on Monitoring Imported Foods, which seeks to unify relevant procedures and raise the efficiency of approved systems.



The meeting discussed ways to facilitate the flow of food commodities among GCC states. ***— ONA***

The meeting also discussed ways to facilitate the flow of food commodities among GCC states during the current circumstances. It laid emphasis on enhancing food security, supporting market stability and ensuring the constant availability of food products. **— ONA**

Wakan's apricot blossoms draw visitors

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

Wakan village in the Wilayat of Nakhal is witnessing a captivating natural spectacle as apricot trees burst into bloom, draping the terraced mountainside in a blanket of white. The annual flowering season, which typically continues until early March, has become a visual highlight that draws visitors seeking scenic landscapes and cooler mountain climates.

Nestled within Wadi Mistal, Wakan stands out as one of the most prominent highland destinations in Al Batinah South Governorate. Its elevated terrain and distinct climate — cool in winter and mild during summer — create ideal conditions for cultivating a variety of temperate fruits, particularly apricots. The surrounding villages of Haddash and Al Qoura also contribute to the governorate's agricultural richness.

Local farmers emphasise their commitment to traditional and environmentally friendly practices.

Local farmers emphasise their commitment to traditional and environmentally friendly practices, avoiding chemical fertilisers and pesticides to preserve both soil health and crop quality. This approach not only enhances the natural resilience of the trees, but also increases the market value of the produce. Apricot trees in the area are known for their longevity and high yield. Speaking to the Observer, local resident Mohammed bin Khamis al Rawahi described the season as a vital period for the community. "The apricot blossom season is more than just a natural event — it represents livelihood and continuity for us. We take pride in maintaining traditional farming methods, and the growing number of visitors during this time supports our local economy," he said.

Abdullah al Ajmi, a visiting Gulf tourist, expressed admiration for the landscape, noting, "I did not expect to find such breathtaking beauty in the mountains. The white blossoms create a stunning view, and the atmosphere here is truly refreshing."

SHORTTAKES

The day represents a milestone for renewing commitment to support innovation. ***— ONA***

RIA AFFIRMS ITS ROLE IN SUPPORTING INNOVATION

MUSCAT: *The Sultanate of Oman will join the international community in observing the World Creativity and Innovation Day, which falls on April 21 every year. The event seeks to highlight the use of creative thinking and technology in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).*

In this context, the Research and Innovation Authority (RIA) affirms its commitment to support and empower the scheme of innovation in the Sultanate of Oman, notably by furnishing proper grounds for research and hosting creative initiatives and national talents in a manner that contributes to the development of a sustainable economy based on deep-rooted knowledge.

Najah bint Mohammed al Rashdi, who is in charge of the directorate general of the Innovation Centre at the Research and Innovation Authority, said, "Observing the World Creativity and Innovation Day embodies growing awareness about the importance of establishing the concepts of creativity and innovation as fundamental pillars for achieving sustainable development, enhancing readiness to face global challenges and devising innovative solutions that support economic progress and social growth, besides opening up vistas for empowering youth and women and enhancing their role in building a prosperous future." ***— ONA***

Forum examines Quran's role in shaping values

IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

THE third scientific symposium titled 'The Quran and Human Development', opened in Muscat on Monday. The event brought together leading scholars, thinkers, and researchers from within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad to examine the Quran's role in shaping values, responsibility and national belonging. Held at Sultan Qaboos University under the auspices of Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, the two-day symposium is organised by the Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation.

The event reflects a broader intellectual engagement with the Quran as a guiding framework for human development, ethical conduct and societal progress.

The symposium set a reflective and scholarly tone. In a keynote message delivered on behalf of His Eminence Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamed al Khalili, Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, the Quran was described as a transformative source of guidance that illuminates human understanding, guiding people 'from darkness into light.' The message underscored the Quran's comprehensive role as a reference point for life and its continued relevance in addressing contemporary challenges.

The event reflects a broader intellectual engagement with the Quran as a guiding framework for human development. ***— Photo by Hussain al Maqbali***

Speakers at the opening ceremony reinforced this perspective, presenting the Quran as a timeless foundation for ethics, identity, and collective development. The discussions highlighted its role not only as a spiritual guide but also as a framework for intellectual and social balance across generations.

Shaikh Khalil bin Ahmed al Khalili, Chairman of the Foundation, stressed the importance of moving beyond theoretical reflection to practical application.

He noted that the development of a balanced human being — intellectually, socially and ethically — depends on embedding Quranic principles into everyday life, including family structures and public systems, in alignment with Oman's vision of a values-driven society.

The main session featured contributions from Dr Shaikh Kahlan bin Nabhan al Kharousi, Assistant Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, Shaikh Abouzaid El Idrissi, and Palestinian media figure Wadah Khanfar. Discussions centred on restoring the Quran's central role in shaping human thought while maintaining a balance between scientific advancement and moral responsibility.

Dr Shaikh Kahlan highlighted contemporary challenges such as the commodification of human identity and an overreliance on purely material interpretations of science, emphasising the need for ethical grounding in knowledge systems.

Shaikh Abouzaid El Idrissi called for strengthening the connection of younger generations, particularly Generation Z, with Quranic teachings to foster unity, awareness and critical thinking. Wadah Khanfar, meanwhile, discussed the application of Quranic values in politics and media, warning against systems that overlook human dignity.

The symposium also included three panel discussions under the theme 'The Centrality of the Quran in Knowledge and Humanity.' The first was presented by Dr Shaikh Kahlan bin Nabhan al Kharousi. The second, moderated by Dr Salim bin Said al Harithy, featured Dr Abdulrahman bin Dhakir al Hashimi, and Dr Hilal bin Hassan al Lawati, focusing on applied intellectual and social perspectives.

The third session examined professional approaches to political thought and governance within an ethical framework. It included Wadah Khanfar and Shaikh Aflah bin Ahmed al Khalili, and was chaired by Dr Ali bin Suleiman al Jahdhami, exploring how Quranic principles can inform contemporary political understanding and decision-making.

Where Oman's Built Environment Gets Designed: Oman Design & Build Week and Oman Real Estate Expo 2026 Open This May

TWO weeks from now, Muscat will become the undisputed centre of the regional construction, design and real estate. The question is not whether the decisions made here will shape the built environment for the next decade, it's whether you will be in the room when they are made.

Oman Design & Build Week (ODBW) 2026 will open at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, taking place from 10 to 13 May 2026. As the Sultanate's leading platform for the built environment, it will bring together key players across real estate development, design and construction, creating a high-impact space for collaboration, innovation, and business growth. Those who attend will leave with the partnerships, intelligence and commercial momentum that define the next chapter of their organisations. The event will also host three key sub-events, The Oman Real Estate Expo, The Real Estate Conference and Oman Design & Build Expo (ODBX), further strengthening its position as a comprehensive hub for innovation, investment, and industry collaboration.

Now, in its 21st edition, ODBW is organised by CONNECT in partnership with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. Together, OREX, the Real Estate Conference and ODBX are strategically aligned with Oman's Vision 2040 urban development and economic diversification goals, serving as pivotal platforms for dialogue, deal-making, and innovation across the built environment.

Oman Real Estate Expo (OREX) 2026 is held in partnership with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and serves as the Sultanate's dedicated platform for residential and commercial property investment, master-planned developments, and the policy frameworks shaping Oman's real estate future. Incorporating the Real Estate Conference, OREX and the Real Estate Conference bring together developers, investors, government officials and financial institutions at the exact moment Oman's property market is experiencing its most significant transformation, with residential prices up 18.7% year-on-year (According to NCSI 2025 Q3 Report) , Sultan Haitham City delivering its first phase, and foreign freehold ownership reforms unlocking an entirely new buyer base.

Oman Design & Build Expo (ODBX) 2026 is held in partnership with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, bringing together the wide spectrum of the construction, building systems, interior design and sustainable materials industry under a single roof. The ODBW Symposium brought to you by a three-day masterclass programme from the Project Management Institute (PMI), will explore AI's role in future infrastructure, talent readiness, and the delivery of complex, sustainable projects. Together, OREX, the Real Estate Conference and ODBX complete each other, and attending both secures a strategic advantage that no single-event delegate can replicate.

At Oman Real Estate Expo and the Real Estate Conference, which will place from 10-13 May 2026, investors, developers, financial institutions and property buyers will find the most concentrated and commercially fertile real estate environment in the Sultanate. With transactions hitting 3.3 billion Omani rials in 2024, a 29.5% leap year-on-year, Oman's property market has decisively turned the corner. OREX places every delegate in direct proximity to the project developers, investment banks, and government entities shaping the next chapter of Oman's urban landscape. The partnerships formed here will secure land, unlock capital, and launch the projects that will define Muscat's skyline for the next twenty years.

At Oman Design & Build Expo, which will take place from 11 to 13 May 2026, contractors, architects, engineers, developers, and technology providers will not exchange business cards. They will close contracts. They will connect directly with the procurement decision-makers driving Oman's most significant construction projects, the technology providers redefining what sustainable building looks like in a desert climate, and the policymakers whose codes and standards are reshaping the entire industry. With mandatory BIM requirements for buildings over four storeys taking effect in 2026, and the new Oman Building Code entering its voluntary trial phase, the Omani built environment is undergoing its most significant regulatory and technological shift in a generation, and ODBX is where the industry will navigate it together.

Miss this, and you miss the moment Oman's built environment moved from ambition to delivery, opening the door for your competitors to gain an advantage.

Oman Design & Build Week 2026 is proud to be supported by an exceptional lineup of sponsors that reflects the strength and ambition of Oman's built environment and investment community. OMRAN Group serves as Main Sponsor, with Al Ahly Sabbour Developments as Strategic Partner and Wujha Development as Lead Sponsor. MAJD joins as Diamond Sponsor, while Dubizzle and Al Moftah Real Estate are Platinum Sponsors. Fonoon and STAY Development support both events as Gold Sponsors. Further support comes from Oman Cement Company, Asawer Real Estate Development, Jindal Steel, Al Habib, Wefaaq, Oman Society of Engineers, ICCP, and Ascent Logistics. The Project Management Institute (PMI) joins as Knowledge Partner. Their collective commitment reinforces a shared vision for innovation, investment, and the long-term development of Oman's built environment.

As Oman continues to execute one of the most ambitious urban development programmes in its history, ODBW 2026 will play a vital role in connecting the industry, accelerating investment, and reinforcing the Sultanate's position as the GCC's most dynamic built environment market. The professionals who attend ODBW will leave better informed, better connected, and better positioned to contribute to, and benefit from the transformation already underway.

Be part of Oman's defining built environment event. Register now: Oman Design & Build Week 2026 - www.omandesignandbuildweek.com

SHORTTAKES

The Egyptian delegation at the Joint Command and Staff College.

EGYPTIAN MILITARY DELEGATION VISITS JOINT COMMAND

MUSCAT: *Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, received in his office at Bait Al Falaj on Monday a delegation from the Military Academy for Postgraduate and Strategic Studies of the Arab Republic of Egypt, headed by Maj Gen Mohammed Mahmoud Awad, Director of the Academy.*

The Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies welcomed the visiting delegation. Then, the two sides exchanged views on a number of matters of mutual interest, particularly in the academic field.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian delegation also visited the Joint Command and Staff College at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

The delegation was welcomed upon its arrival at the college by Brigadier Mohammed bin Ahmed al Mashikhi, Commandant of the Joint Command and Staff College.

The visiting delegation watched a visual presentation about the college and its training and educational programmes, and also conducted a tour that included the college's facilities and its various departments, systems and equipment.

The delegation also paid a visit to the National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

Upon its arrival at the college in Bait Al Falaj, the delegation was welcomed by Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC).

The visiting delegation received a briefing on the NDC and its facilities and equipment. ***— ONA***

OMAN MARKS WORLD AMATEUR RADIO DAY

Amateur radio operators enhance human communication and support community initiatives.

MUSCAT: *The Sultanate of Oman joined the world in celebrating World Amateur Radio Day, observed annually on April 18, marking the anniversary of the founding of the International Amateur Radio Union.*

The occasion highlights the growing importance of amateur radio operators in enhancing human communication, supporting community initiatives, and contributing to awareness, training and emergency response efforts.

It also serves as an opportunity to underscore the vital role of amateur radio as a scientific and technical hobby in building national capabilities, developing individual skills in communications and modern technologies, and strengthening cooperation among enthusiasts at both local and international levels.

The Royal Oman Amateur Radio Society continues its efforts to promote this hobby, encourage participation, and enhance Oman's presence in regional and international forums and events, reflecting its importance and contribution to society.

The society was established under Royal Decree No (2/93) as a national body responsible for regulating and developing amateur radio activities in Oman. ***— ONA***

DHOFAR OFFERS 67 FOOD SECURITY PROJECTS ACROSS 6,455 ACRES

MUSCAT: *Oman has unveiled 67 investment opportunities in Dhofar's food security sector, covering more than 6,455 acres, in a move aimed at strengthening domestic production and supporting non-oil economic growth.*

The opportunities, announced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, span agriculture, livestock, fisheries and water-related activities.

Projects are distributed across Salalah, Taqah, Mirbat, Thamrait, Maqshin, Al Mazyouna, Sadah, and Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands.

The initiative aligns with Oman's broader efforts to build a resilient food system amid growing regional focus on supply security, climate risks and import dependence.

Food security remains a key pillar of Oman Vision 2040, linking sustainable resource management with economic diversification.

Dhofar plays a strategic role in this vision, benefiting from its unique monsoon climate, which supports a wider range of agricultural activities compared to much of the Gulf region.

The investment portfolio includes projects in frankincense cultivation, mango, dates, citrus and wheat farming, as well as greenhouse production of vegetables, herbs and berries. It also covers livestock and poultry ventures, fish processing, water purification and the utilisation of existing fisheries facilities. ***— ONA***

OAQA reviews progress in quality of higher education

BALQESS AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

UNDER THE auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education (OAQA) organised a high-level briefing session to present recent developments in higher education quality assurance.

The event brought together officials and specialists from across the education sector.

The Authority highlighted key institutional advancements following the issuance of Royal Decree No 12/2026.

Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukaili, Chairperson of the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education, delivered a comprehensive presentation outlining the Authority's transformation, including its updated name, refreshed identity and expanded mandate.

She emphasised that these developments strengthen the Authority's national role in advancing quality assurance in line with international best practices, improving system-wide integration and reinforcing governance through an independent national framework.

The briefing also showcased the Authority's Strategic Plan (2026-2030), which focuses on innovation, institutional excellence, and capacity building. A newly introduced organisational structure was also presented, designed to support the Authority's long-term strategic direction.

Dr Reem al Alawi, Director-General of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Centre, provided an overview of external quality assurance activities in higher education.

Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani led the briefing session.

The briefing also showcased the Authority's Strategic Plan (2026-2030), which focuses on innovation, institutional excellence, and capacity building. A newly introduced organisational structure was also presented, designed to support the Authority's long-term strategic direction.

She highlighted the Centre's structure, key functions and major initiatives, supported by statistical data reflecting institutional and programme-level evaluations. She also underscored the importance of training and developing national expertise to sustain quality assurance practices.

In another presentation, Fakhriya al Habsi, Director-General of the Oman Qualifications Framework Directorate-General, addressed challenges related to implementing the National Qualifications Framework.

She discussed its national applications, transformative impact and outcomes, while also highlighting challenges in the design, development and review of qualifications by awarding bodies.

Salim al Kindi, Quality Assurance Expert, reviewed key regulatory frameworks governing external quality assurance activities. These included the International External Quality Assurance Activities Policy and the Policy on Major Change Notification for Higher Education External Quality Assurance Activities. He noted that these frameworks enhance shared responsibility between the Authority and higher education institutions, facilitate engagement with international agencies and establish safeguards to manage risks arising from unexpected changes.

The session concluded with a presentation by Dr Iman al Numani, Director of the Institutional Quality Assurance Department, on the Authority's efforts to achieve international recognition from the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education.

She outlined the significance of this recognition in strengthening Oman's global standing, along with progress made, key milestones achieved and guiding standards and frameworks.

She also highlighted the role of higher education institutions in the next phase of the process.

The event concluded with an open panel discussion, where participants exchanged views and raised questions on the presentations.

The discussion reflected the Authority's continued commitment to collaboration, transparency and the advancement of higher education quality assurance in Oman.

Forum to boost research and entrepreneurship

AL MUSANNAH: A scientific forum titled 'What If 2026' for research and innovation was inaugurated on Monday in the Wilayat of Al Musannah, Al Batinah South Governorate. Organised by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Al Musannah, the forum aims to provide an interactive platform that bridges research and entrepreneurship.

The forum was inaugurated under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Chairman of the Research and Innovation Authority.

The forum discussed ways to transform ideas into practical applications that serve society and enhance the knowledge economy, in alignment with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, with broad participation from students, researchers and innovators, alongside the attendance of specialists and representatives from government and private entities supporting the innovation ecosystem.

The forum featured scientific sessions that addressed the enhancement of collaboration between academic institutions and the industrial sector, alongside the presentation of applied research projects tackling local challenges in Al Batinah South Governorate, with the proposal of actionable solutions.

The forum included working papers that addressed the integration of roles between academic institutions and industrial sectors in supporting innovation. During the event, a competition titled 'Best Research Project' was held with multidisciplinary student participation.

On the sidelines of the forum, an exhibition was held, featuring examples of student innovations and research experiences, along with interactive booths that allowed visitors to experience design thinking and problem-solving, in addition to the display of modern technologies, including robotics, unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) and three-dimensional (3D) printing.

A number of Omani innovators showcased their experiences in transforming ideas into applied projects, spanning the fields of environmental technologies, artificial intelligence and industrial applications.

These included the development of 3D printing materials derived from marine algae, the employment of artificial intelligence in product analysis, and the innovation of technological solutions to serve productive sectors. **— ONA**

Wadi greening drive launched in Suwaiq

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, APRIL 20

YOUNG volunteers, students and families gathered along Wadi Al Jahawer in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq, transforming open land into a living classroom of sustainability. The initiative reflects a growing shift in mindset, where environmental awareness is no longer limited to knowledge alone but is evolving into daily practice - empowering youth to become active stewards of their environment rather than passive consumers.

The campaign, under the Environment Authority in Al Batinah North Governorate, forms part of the national initiative to plant 10 million wild trees. At its core lies an ambitious target: sowing three million seeds along the banks of Wadi Al Jahawer, transforming the area into a thriving ecological corridor while strengthening biodiversity and expanding vegetation cover.

What sets this campaign apart is its strong community-centred approach. Students from local schools, including Al Rosouk Basic Education School, Fatima bint Al Nabi School, and Jaber bin Abdullah Al Ansari School, worked side by side with volunteers, municipal teams, and civil society groups. Youth teams such as Al Mabrah and Al Suhool Sports Cultural Clubs added momentum, while private sector participation, including MK Prints, reflected a growing culture of shared environmental responsibility.

The campaign forms part of the national initiative to plant 10 million wild trees.

Nasser al Yaqoubi, Director-General of Environment in Al Batinah North, emphasised that such initiatives go beyond tree planting. He noted that empowering communities — especially young people — to actively participate is key to achieving long-term sustainability goals.

"When youth become partners in environmental action, the impact extends far beyond the planting season," he said, highlighting the importance of collective engagement in improving quality of life.

Meanwhile, Hamoud al Harrasi, Head of the Environment Centre in Al Suwaiq, described the campaign as a practical step towards restoring natural habitats. He stressed that involving schools and community groups helps embed environmental awareness into everyday life, nurturing a generation that values and protects green spaces.

2.547M BIDIYAH ENTERTAINMENT CENTRE NEARS COMPLETION

BIDIYAH: *Construction of the 'Bidiyah Entertainment Centre' in the Wilayat of Bidiyah, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, has reached 93 per cent completion, with the RO 2.547 million project expected to be finalised by July.*

The project, implemented by the Al Sharqiyah North Municipality, is designed to serve as a major tourism, cultural and recreational hub in the governorate.

Dr Zubaida bint Salim al Shaithani, official spokesperson for the governorate, described the centre as one of the most prominent development projects currently underway, adding that it represents a significant addition to Oman's recreational infrastructure.

She noted that the project will enrich tourism, cultural, and social activities in Bidiyah, which is known for its vibrant winter season extending from October to March.

*The project under Al Sharqiyah North Municipality is expected to be finalised by July. — **ONA***

*The centre is expected to host conferences, festivals, exhibitions, and local and international events. Facilities include an open-air theatre equipped with advanced projection and lighting systems, multiple halls, dedicated zones for electronic games and children's entertainment and landscaped outdoor areas. — **ONA***

الرّحمة
ALRAHMA ASSOCIATION

Tender Announcement (For Eid Al-Adha Sacrifice)

Al-Rahma Association for Motherhood and Child Welfare announces its desire to contract with institution and companies. Specialized in supplying livestock to provide the association with Eid Al-Adha sacrifices for the year 1447 AH/2026 AD. The deadline for receiving bids at 2:00 PM on Thursday, 30th of April 2026. At the association's headquarters in Al-Khoud, the envelopes must be sealed and stamp.

Interested institutions and companies wishing to participate in the tender are invited to contact the association via the following email.

Email: finance@alrahma.om
Contact Number: 99840850

8 teams compete at National Arabic Debating Championship

The championship serves as a national platform to develop young talent.

SALALAH: *The third and final stage of the preliminary rounds for the ninth edition of the National Arabic Debating Championship got underway at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, with the participation of eight teams representing the governorates of Dhofar and Al Wusta.*

The teams, drawn from universities, colleges and sports clubs, are competing for places in the final rounds of the championship. The qualifiers aim to enhance youth capabilities in dialogue, critical thinking and structured argumentation, while promoting constructive debate practices and strengthening analytical skills.

The competition featured three rounds, reflecting a high level of preparation among participants. The championship serves as a national platform to develop young talent in debate and equip them to engage with diverse issues through scientific and systematic discussion — aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Hamad bin Khalfan al Harrasi, Head of the Awareness and Education Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, said that the Dhofar leg marks the final stop in the preliminary phase of this year's competition. He added that the list of teams qualifying for the finals — scheduled for April 25-26 in Muscat — has now been finalised. He noted that participation has increased compared to the previous edition, reflecting growing interest and wider engagement from institutions across Oman.

*Meanwhile, Nasser bin Humaid al Hinai, CEO of the Oman Debates Centre, said the initiative began in 2016 in Al Buraimi Governorate and has since grown into one of the country's leading platforms for debate. — **ONA***

صُحار للطاقة
SOHAR POWER

P.O. Box: 147, Jawharat A' Shatti, PC 134, Sultanate of Oman, Fax: 24698496, E-mail: admin@soharpower.com, Website: www.soharpower.com

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD 31 MARCH 2026

BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Sohar Power Company SAOG ("Sohar Power" or the "Company"), I am pleased to present you with the Directors' Report of the Company for the period ended 31 March 2026.

On 10 March 2026, Sohar Power Company shareholders held their Annual Ordinary General Meeting ("AOGM").

Health & Safety

The H&S record over the period has been excellent. The number of LTA free days at the end of Q1 2026 for the Plant Operations (cumulative since the expired PWPA) stands at 4,809 days.

The dismantling project of the MSF units being undertaken by the MSF Buyer has clocked 42,138 manhours with no Lost Time Accidents (LTA) over the period and a cumulative of 172,628 LTI free manhours since project commencement.

The Health and Safety of our employees, contractors and visitors remains the utmost priority for the Company. The Company is committed to maintain its record to ensure that highest standards of safety are maintained and that they are completed without any LTAs.

Operations

During the period, the Plant generated 147,471 MWH of electricity. The three gas turbine units have been cycled, which is typical for an open cycle plant, and have clocked an aggregate of 91 starts over this period.

Annual maintenance work was completed over the Winter Period.

On 29-March-2026, the Company undertook the Annual Performance Year to demonstrate the capacity of the Plant for the forthcoming Contract Year that commences on 01 April 2026. While the official confirmation is awaited from Nama PWP, the Company demonstrated power capacity in excess of the guaranteed figures on both Natural Gas and Fuel Oil.

Financial Performance

The Company has ended the period with a net loss of OMR 0.01 million compared to a net loss of OMR 0.13 million in 2025.

The revenue and other income for the period amount to OMR 4.7 million against OMR 1.9 million for 2025. This is mainly due to the revenues generated on account of the new PPA.

The operating cost and taxes for the period amount to OMR 4.7 million against OMR 2 million for the corresponding period in 2025

Currently the Company shares are traded under the monitoring market. Following the return of the Company to solvency position during Q2 2025, the company approached the MSX to restore the Company's shares to the regular market. As part of its annual review, MSX are currently monitoring the Company results and expected to make a decision on such transfer in 2026.

Corporate Governance

In line with efforts deployed in previous years, the Company ensured that its organization, systems, policies, and procedures follow the highest standards of governance to always comply with the Code of Corporate Governance promulgated by the FSA, including the new Code requirements effective since July 2016.

Outlook for 2026

The Company is actively pursuing plant improvement projects; especially those related to component obsolescence, equipment deficiencies and plant efficiencies.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to thank our valued stakeholders, including our shareholders, lenders, the APSR, Nama PWP, FSA and partners for their continued support, trust, and confidence, especially during the year. I would also like to thank all the personnel associated with the preservation of the plant in Sohar and the staff of the Company for their loyalty, dedication and commitment.

I would also like to express our gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Government for their continued guidance, support and encouragement to the private sector.

Miklos Almasy
Chairman of the Board

Statement of financial position as at 31 March 2026

	31 March 2026 RO'000	31 Dec 2025 RO'000	31 March 2026 USD'000	31 Dec 2025 USD'000
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	18,635	19,192	48,403	49,849
Right-of-use asset	1,109	1,142	2,879	2,965
	19,744	20,334	51,282	52,814
Current assets				
Inventories	764	834	1,984	2,167
Trade and other receivable	1,743	2,075	4,527	5,381
bank balances	3,836	3,514	9,964	9,129
Total current assets	6,343	6,423	16,475	16,677
Total assets	26,087	26,757	67,757	69,491
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Share capital	2,000	2,000	5,195	5,195
Legal reserve	667	667	1,732	1,732
Accumulated losses	546	560	1,402	1,440
Total capital and reserves	3,213	3,227	8,329	8,367
Non-current liabilities				
Term loans	12,096	11,907	31,420	30,929
Lease liabilities	970	1,049	2,520	2,725
Provision for decommissioning costs	3,147	3,124	8,174	8,116
Employee benefit liabilities	35	33	91	85
Deferred tax liability	1,725	1,725	4,481	4,479
Total liabilities	17,973	17,838	46,686	46,334
Current liabilities				
Term loans	1,117	1,117	2,900	2,900
Lease liabilities	199	199	517	517
Accruals and other payables	1,478	974	3,854	2,537
Amounts due to related parties	160	1,455	415	3,779
Income tax payable	1,947	1,947	5,057	5,057
Total current liabilities	4,901	5,692	12,743	14,790
Total liabilities	22,874	23,530	59,429	61,124
Total equity and liabilities	26,087	26,757	67,758	69,491
Net assets/(deficit) per share	0.161	0.161	0.418	0.418

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 31 March 2026

	Year ended 31 March 2026 RO'000	Year ended 31 March 2025 RO'000	Year ended 31 March 2026 USD'000	Year ended 31 March 2025 USD'000
Revenue	4,051	1,856	10,523	4,821
Cost of revenue	(4,344)	(1,296)	(11,283)	(3,365)
Gross profit	(293)	560	(760)	1,456
Other income	657	-	1,706	-
	364	560	946	1,456
Expenses				
General and administrative expenses	(118)	(112)	(308)	(292)
Depreciation				
Finance costs	(260)	(580)	(676)	(1,508)
	(378)	(692)	(984)	(1,800)
Profit/(loss) before tax for the period	(14)	(132)	(38)	(344)
Income tax expense	-	-	-	-
Net profit/loss) after Tax for the period	(14)	(132)	(38)	(344)
Basic and diluted earnings share	(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.003)	(0.0018

Note: The complete accounts either in English or Arabic will be sent to any shareholder by mail within 7 days of receipt.

CEASEFIRE AT RISK

US SEIZES IRANIAN SHIP, IRAN SHUNS PEACE TALKS

A CEASEFIRE between the United States and Iran appeared in jeopardy after the US said it had seized an Iranian cargo ship that tried to run its blockade and Tehran vowed to retaliate, refusing for now to join new peace talks.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei said Washington has shown it was "not serious" about pursuing the diplomatic process and Tehran would not change its clearly stated demands, adding that it did not believe in deadlines or ultimatums when safeguarding national interests. "As of now, as I am speaking to you, we have no plan for the next round of negotiations. No decision has been taken in this regard," said Baghaei.

The US had hoped to start negotiations in Pakistan shortly before the two-week ceasefire expires, with sweeping security preparations under way in Islamabad, but Baghaei said the US was "insisting on some unreasonable and unrealistic positions". "We are still in a state of war. It is true that a ceasefire has been announced, but unfortunately it has been met from the very beginning with repeated violations by the United States," Baghaei said. A senior Iranian source said that the continuation of the US blockade was undermining the prospect of peace talks, and Tehran's "defensive capabilities", including its missile programme, were not open to negotiation.

CEASEFIRE EXTENSION

A Pakistani security source said Pakistan's key mediator, Field Marshal Asim Munir, had told US President Donald Trump the blockade was an obstacle to talks, and that Trump had replied that he would consider the advice. Trump announced the two-week ceasefire with Iran on April 7. While he has not specified the exact time it expires, April 21 would mark two weeks, which could be on Tuesday evening in the United States and Wednesday morning in Iran. Asked over the weekend about the chance of an extension to the ceasefire, Trump replied: "I don't know. Maybe not. Maybe I won't extend it. But the blockade is going to remain."

A Pakistani security source said Pakistan's key mediator, Field Marshal Asim Munir, had told US President Donald Trump the blockade was an obstacle to talks, and that Trump had replied that he would consider the advice. Trump announced the two-week ceasefire with Iran on April 7.

The US has maintained the blockade of Iranian ports, while Iran has lifted and then re-imposed its own blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which typically handles roughly one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied gas supply. Oil prices rose about 5 per cent and stock markets wobbled as traders fretted that the ceasefire would collapse and traffic through the Strait of Hormuz remained at a virtual standstill with just three crossings in the space of 12 hours on Monday, according to shipping data.

US BOARD IRANIAN VESSEL

The US military said it had fired on an Iranian-flagged cargo ship headed towards Iran's Bandar Abbas port on Sunday after a six-hour standoff, disabling its engines. US Central Command released video showing Marines descending ropes from helicopters onto the vessel. Iran's military said the ship had been travelling from China and accused the US of "armed piracy", according to state media. They said they were ready to confront US forces over the "blatant aggression", but were constrained by the presence of crew members' families on board.

Trump warned on Sunday the US would destroy every bridge and power plant in Iran if it rejected his terms, continuing a recent pattern of such threats. Iran has said that if the United States were to attack its civilian infrastructure, it would strike power stations and desalination plants in its Gulf Arab neighbours. Trump said his envoys would arrive in Islamabad on Monday evening.

A White House official told Reuters the US delegation would be headed by Vice-President JD Vance, who led the US delegation to the first round of talks a week ago, and also include Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Pakistan was still gearing up for the talks. Nearly 20,000 security personnel have been deployed across the capital Islamabad, a government official and a security official said. Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who has led Iran's side in the talks, said on Saturday the two sides had made progress but were still far apart on nuclear issues and the Strait.

European allies, repeatedly criticised by Trump for not aiding his war effort, worry that Washington's negotiating team is pushing for a swift, superficial deal that would require months or years of technically complex follow-on talks.

Thousands of people have been killed by US-Israeli strikes on Iran and in an Israeli invasion of Lebanon conducted in parallel since the war began on February 28, where a truce is also currently in place. Iran responded to the attacks with missiles and drones against Israel and nearby Arab countries that host US bases. — **Reuters**

Commuters drive past a large billboard depicting Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei on a street in Tehran. — **AFP**

Commercial vessels are seen off the coast of Dubai. — **AFP**

China calls for Strait of Hormuz to remain open

BEIJING: *Chinese President Xi Jinping called for normal passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz to be maintained, in a phone call on Monday with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman held as Beijing steps up efforts to help end the Iran war. China is concerned over renewed instability around the strategic waterway, as a US-Iran ceasefire came under fresh strain after the US seized an Iranian cargo ship and Tehran signalled it would not join new peace talks for now.*

"The Strait of Hormuz should remain open to normal passage, as this serves the common interests of regional countries and the international community," he told the Saudi leader. Worries have mounted over the survival of the ceasefire between Washington and Tehran after the US seizure of the Iranian vessel. The Chinese foreign ministry expressed concerns over the "forced interception" by the US of the Iranian ship, while urging relevant sides to abide by the ceasefire agreement.

Xi's call with the Saudi crown prince followed a meeting in Beijing last week with the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, when Xi urged adherence to international law. Xi also told the Saudi crown prince that China supports countries in the Middle East in "taking their future and destiny into their own hands, and promoting long-term regional stability and peace". — **Reuters**

Pakistan, Iran leaders speak ahead of talks with US

A US Air Force Boeing C-17A Globemaster III aircraft prepares to land at Pakistan's Nur Khan military airbase in Rawalpindi. — **AFP**

ISLAMABAD: *Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that he had spoken by phone with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian ahead of anticipated US-Iran talks in Islamabad, and reaffirmed his government's readiness to mediate the conflict.*

"I had a warm and constructive conversation with President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian this evening on the evolving regional situation," Sharif said in a post on X. "Pakistan remains fully committed to its role as an honest and sincere facilitator of lasting peace and regional stability." US President Donald Trump is sending negotiators to Pakistan on Monday for talks with Iran just days before a ceasefire in the Middle East expires, though Tehran has reportedly yet to decide whether it will participate.

Iran said it had yet to decide whether to attend a new round of peace negotiations with the United States, casting uncertainty on a push to stop the Middle East war from resuming. US President Donald Trump said he was sending negotiators to Pakistan for talks on ending the war that engulfed the region and rattled global markets, while repeating threats to attack Iran's infrastructure if it did not make a deal.

After initial talks in Islamabad ended without a deal earlier this month, both sides have accused the other of breaching a temporary truce that is now in its final days. "We have no plans for the next round of negotiation, and no decision has been made in this regard," spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said. — **AFP**

Lebanon president sees end of hostilities in talks

BEIRUT: *Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said on Monday that planned talks with Israel aim to end hostilities and the Israeli occupation in the south, as he named an ex-ambassador to the United States to lead the delegation.*

"The choice to negotiate aims to stop hostilities, end the Israeli occupation of southern regions and deploy the (Lebanese) army all the way to the internationally recognised southern borders" with Israel, Aoun said in a statement.

A 10-day ceasefire pausing more than six weeks of war between Hezbollah and Israel started on Friday after being announced by US President Donald Trump.

Lebanese ambassador to Washington Simon Karam to head the negotiations with Israel, and said "no one will share this task with Lebanon or take its place".

The truce in Lebanon was one of Iran's conditions for resuming talks with Washington to extend their separate ceasefire and work out the terms of a lasting peace. But Aoun said on Monday that the Israel-Lebanon talks will be "separate from any other negotiations", in an implicit reference to the US-Iran diplomacy.

"Lebanon is facing two options: either the continuation of the war, with all its humanitarian, social, economic, and sovereign repercussions, or negotiations to put an end to this war and achieve lasting stability," he said. — **AFP**

A woman stands amid the debris of a destroyed building in the Haret Hreik area of Beirut. — **AFP**

STOCK MARKETS DIP AFTER LATEST TENSIONS

NEW YORK: *Wall Street stocks dipped early on Monday, giving back a fraction of their recent bounty as oil prices jumped following Iran's renewed closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Analysts described on Monday's early losses as a mild retreat following an almost unbroken string of gains so far in April.*

"The sell-off reaction to the bad news has, throughout the course of this entire war, been much less in terms of percentage moves than the celebrations of potential end of the war," said Art Hogan of B. Riley Wealth Management. About five minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 0.1 per cent at 49,417.01.

The broad-based S&P 500 slipped 0.2 per cent to 7,115.44, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index also lost 0.2 per cent at 24,430.94. Meanwhile, European stocks fell on Monday as oil prices surged over fears hostilities could resume in the weeks-long Middle East war. Investors were on edge approaching the end of the US-Iran ceasefire, with Iran insisting it has no plan to attend a new round of negotiations with the United States. "The market mood is very different at the start of the week compared to Friday," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at trading group XTB. — **AFP**

1 — QATAR BEGINS FLIGHTS

Qatar's aviation authority said it would begin allowing flights from foreign airlines to land at its main airport for the first time.

2 — DUTCH AID TO OFFSET FUEL HIKE

The Dutch government said it would allocate more than 950 million euros to help businesses and individuals for the surge in petrol prices.

3 — 'ISRAEL TALKS SEPARATE'

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said planned talks with Israel aim to end "hostilities" and stressed they were "separate" from Iran-US negotiations.

4 — IRAN SLAMS US 'VIOLATIONS'

Iran said it has yet to reach a decision on whether to attend the next round of talks with the United States, which it accused of "violations" of their two-week ceasefire.

5 — CHINA EXPRESSES 'CONCERN'

China expressed "concern" over the US seizure of an Iranian-flagged vessel that tried to evade a naval blockade, and urged all parties to resume peace talks.

6 — ISRAEL LEBANON WARNING

Israel's military warned Lebanese civilians against returning to dozens of villages in southern Lebanon, claiming Hezbollah's activities in the area.

7 — OIL PRICE BOUNCE

Oil prices surged on a re-escalation of hostilities in the Middle East war after Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, just a day after reopening it.

8 — UAE DISMANTLED GROUP

Authorities in the United Arab Emirates said that they arrested members of an Iran-linked group plotting "terrorist" acts in the country.

9 — IRAN REOPENS MAIN AIRPORTS

Iran reopened its main Imam Khomeini and Mehrabad airports in capital Tehran on Monday, the country's aviation authority said.

10 — VANCE, US TEAM IN ISLAMABAD

Vice President JD Vance and the US delegation to land in Pakistan for talks on Iran, President Donald Trump told the New York Post.

Continuation of US-Iran peace talks can bring peace

EDITORIAL

THE SULTANATE of Oman has always been in favour of peace and is calling for an extension of the current ceasefire and the continuation of peace talks between the US and Iran, renewing its decades-long role as a discreet but decisive intermediary in one of the world's most volatile rivalries.

Dialogue remains the only viable path to prevent further escalation in a region already strained by shipping disruptions, armed proxy clashes and renewed concerns over nuclear enrichment.

Oman's appeal comes at a moment when the cost of miscalculation is rising for all parties, with commercial shipping rerouted, insurance premiums climbing and energy markets reacting to every new incident in the Gulf.

The Sultanate of Oman occupies a unique diplomatic space. It maintains warm and cooperative ties with Washington while sharing the strategic Strait of Hormuz with Tehran. That balancing position is not accidental. It was deliberately built through the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos "friend to all, enemy to none" doctrine, a foreign policy approach that rejected bloc politics and emphasised quiet engagement. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has preserved and deepened that tradition, keeping Oman's channels open even when regional tensions have peaked.

That neutrality has given Oman credibility when direct contact between Washington and Tehran becomes politically untenable at home. Oman brokered the secret backchannel that ultimately produced the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the nuclear agreement between Iran and world powers. It has since hosted multiple rounds of prisoner exchanges and repeatedly intervened to de-escalate Gulf flashpoints after vessel seizures, drone incidents and maritime harassment. Each intervention has been conducted without public grandstanding, a trait that Omani diplomats say is central to their effectiveness.

Oman is not pressing for a sweeping, comprehensive settlement overnight. Instead, it is advocating a sequence of modest, verifiable measures designed to build trust and prevent backsliding into conflict. The first step is to extend the current ceasefire and avoid any actions that could be interpreted as provocations.

From there, Oman envisions a return to maritime de-confliction mechanisms in the Gulf to protect commercial shipping, a restoration of baseline nuclear inspections to address proliferation concerns, continued humanitarian exchanges including prisoners, and a potential reciprocal freeze on new sanctions and on uranium enrichment above agreed thresholds. None of these steps is politically dramatic, but together they form the architecture that has historically kept regional crises from tipping into open war. Oman has facilitated each of them in previous cycles of tension.

In a region where loud threats have too often drowned out quiet solutions, Oman is betting that credibility and discretion can still make the difference. The cost of ignoring that bet is one that the region and the world can ill afford.

For Oman, the path forward is unambiguous. The ceasefire should be extended without delay, and the peace talks must continue with a focus on achievable, incremental steps.

In a region where loud threats have too often drowned out quiet solutions, Oman is betting that credibility and discretion can still make the difference. The cost of ignoring that bet is one that the region and the world can ill afford.

The ceasefire is a small step towards healing and rebuilding and Oman's commitment to peace and stability remains unwavering as Oman and its people have a deep love for peace.

Oman's history of peaceful coexistence with diverse cultures and religions has created a unique blend of traditions. Hence, the ceasefire is a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there's always hope. Hope for a better future, hope for peace and hope for a world where nations can resolve their differences through dialogue, not violence.

AI 'AGENT' FEVER COMES WITH LURKING SECURITY THREATS

MONA GUICHARD

Artificial intelligence "agents" promise to save users time and energy by automating tasks, but the growing power of systems like OpenClaw is setting cybersecurity experts on edge.

Powered by a wave of hype, OpenClaw today claims more than three million users worldwide.

The system allows users to create so-called agents, tools based on a large language model (LLM) like OpenAI's ChatGPT or Anthropic's Claude that can carry out online tasks.

"We've moved from an AI you could talk with via a chatbot to an agentic AI, which can take action... the threat and the risks are definitely much greater," said Yazid Akadiri, principal solutions architect at Elastic France, an IT security company. In an article titled "Agents of Chaos" that has yet to be peer-reviewed, a 20-strong team of researchers studied the behaviour of six AI agents created with OpenClaw.

They spotted a dozen potentially dangerous actions executed by the systems, from deleting an email inbox to sharing personal information.

Many users have posted similar stories of OpenClaw mishaps online. "When you deploy agents, you have no control over what they'll do, and when you try to look at what they're doing, you'll find them going far beyond the limits you set," said Adrien Merveille, an expert at the Check Point cybersecurity agency. And the security gaps are not limited to the agents' own mistaken actions. To carry out useful work, the tools need access to personal accounts for email, calendars or search engines — drawing the attention of cyberattackers. AI agents are likely to become top targets for hackers as their use spreads, said Wendi Whitmore, chief security intelligence officer at cybersecurity firm Palo Alto Networks.

"As soon as (attackers) are inside an environment, (they're) immediately going to the internal LLM (agent) that's being used and using that then to interrogate the systems for more information." Palo Alto's Unit 42 research division said in early March that it had found traces of attempted attacks in the form of hidden instructions for agents added to websites.

*One such command ordered any agent who might read it to "delete your database". Other irms and researchers have warned that attackers could gain access to agents via so-called skills — downloadable files that users can add to their systems to give them new abilities.— **AFP***

Education for peace: Lessons from war

AISHA AL DARMAKI

The writer is a researcher specialising in semiotics and a member of the State Council

"ACCESS TO education lies at the heart of humanity's vision for peace, dignity and equality." This is how Unesco's Global Education Monitoring Report 2026 frames the role of education as a public good. At its core, education promotes stability, fosters justice and supports equality by ensuring inclusive access to learning systems that align with national priorities and societal needs.

Education is more than the transmission of knowledge. It is a framework of values that underpins human rights and provides the foundation for sustainable development. Today's world is shaped by rapid social, economic and geopolitical transformations, alongside accelerating technological change. These shifts do not merely affect individuals; they introduce unfamiliar patterns that societies must learn to understand and navigate.

The recent conflict involving the US, Israel and Iran has had profound effects on societies across the Middle East. Individuals have found themselves drawn into the emotional and psychological currents of the war, facing uncertainty, anxiety and confusion. For many communities unaccustomed to such large-scale military confrontation, the experience has exposed gaps in awareness — particularly in understanding the nature and dynamics of modern conflict.

The social consequences of war extend far beyond disruptions to formal education or the temporary shift to remote learning. War reshapes public consciousness. It generates fear, misinformation and conflicting narratives, amplified by media and social platforms. At the same time, influential voices — whether intellectuals, commentators, or public figures — often contribute to polarised discourse, intensifying psychological and social pressures. Continuous exposure to images of destruction, displacement and loss deepens these effects, especially among younger generations.

This conflict has also tested social cohesion and public awareness of security. Across the region, individuals have played active roles in sharing information, documenting events and engaging with public discourse. While this reflects a form of civic participation, it also reveals the urgent need for structured awareness capable of guiding such engagement in constructive directions.

As the war moves towards a ceasefire and de-escalation, it becomes essential to assess its broader social and cultural impact. Returning to normal life cannot mean resuming previous educational practices unchanged. The experiences of war must be examined, and the lessons they offer must be integrated into educational systems. This includes addressing psychological effects, particularly among children and young people, and strengthening their ability to understand and respond to complex global developments.

Ultimately, education for peace is an investment in awareness. It prepares individuals not only to understand the past, but to navigate the present and shape the future.

In this context, the concept of "education for peace" becomes critical. Educational practices that promote cooperation, coexistence and acceptance of others, alongside a sense of responsibility towards society and national stability, can play a decisive role in shaping future generations. Such approaches encourage dialogue, critical thinking and constructive engagement, rather than reactionary or extreme responses.

This awareness must be grounded in structured curricula and supported by clear strategies that reinforce social cohesion while avoiding ideological rigidity or exclusion. The goal is not merely to prevent conflict, but to cultivate a culture capable of managing diversity and disagreement without resorting to division or violence.

The recent war has also highlighted the influence of competing narratives on social media, where ideological and emotional responses often clash. This further underscores the need for education systems that equip individuals with the tools to analyse information critically and engage responsibly. Oman's emphasis on neutrality, dialogue and peaceful resolution offers a valuable model. Understanding the historical and cultural foundations of this approach can help younger generations develop a balanced perspective on conflict and diplomacy. Educational content that integrates these principles, alongside a broader understanding of global political and technological dynamics, will provide deeper insight into contemporary challenges.

Ultimately, education for peace is an investment in awareness. It prepares individuals not only to understand the past, but to navigate the present and shape the future. The recent conflict should not pass without reflection. It must serve as a catalyst for developing educational policies that strengthen resilience, promote coexistence and reinforce the values of peace in an increasingly complex world.

Translated by Badr al Dhafari.

The original version of this article was published in the Oman Arabic newspaper on April 19

OMAN DAILY Observer

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Tel: 22651222
SECRETARY Tel: 22651200
DESK Tel: 22651209
LOCAL Tel: 22651221
BUSINESS Tel: 22651208
SPORTS Tel: 22651205
FEATURE Tel: 22651220
ONLINE Tel: 22651202
DESIGN Tel: 22651210
TRANSLATION Tel: 22651204
PROOFREADING Tel: 22651206
ADVERTISING Tel: 24649444, 24649430, 24649437, 24649401
Fax: 24649434
DISTRIBUTION AGENT Tel: 24649351/24649360
Fax: 24649379
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY: Ministry of Information
P.O. Box 974, Postal Code 100, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

DISCLAIMER: *The views and opinions expressed in these pages are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of the Observer.*

Website: *omanobserver.om* — Editor-in-chief: *Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili* — e-mail: *editor@omanobserver.om*

We welcome your opinions and views. Mail your articles (word limit 600) to editor@omanobserver.om

Distinguishing sound and noise

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

HAVE you ever experienced the breaking down of a mountain?

I used to have sensitive ears, and the first time I heard the noise of flattening a mountain for construction, I was distressed.

The excavator-mounted hydraulic hammers used in breaking large rock masses into manageable pieces are not quiet at all. The noise can be so loud that your mind refuses to process any thought. "So forget studying," said my best friend, a sixth grader then. Almost six years later, they are at it again. On the same lane. This time, the excavator is often seen sitting on broken rocks and can be seen climbing up further.

"I have evolved," I said to myself and decided to cope with the noise that starts around 7 am. Almost a month since they began their work, I am actually able to hear the birds chirping even in the midst of stone hammering.

What happened? I used to joke and convince myself to imagine it as the sound of percussion — someone is playing the drums.

But what can one do? People need to build houses. We can try justifying the action, but one cannot stop wondering if this sound falls under sound pollution because of its extremely high decibel levels. Apparently, conventional hydraulic breakers can produce sound power levels exceeding 125 dB(A), which is comparable to a jet engine taking off. But I am not sure about the one working in the residential area. After all, someone is going to construct something.

The mind, however, wants to know more: would there be any health hazards? According to my mini research, noise levels often exceed 114 dB. During rock or concrete breaking, the noise is well above the 85 dB threshold where long-term hearing damage begins. The sound does fall under disturbance factors: it is considered a major source of noise pollution for both construction workers and nearby communities. The noise is both intensely loud and persistent, often lasting for long, continuous periods.

According to the experts, "Chronic exposure to this noise is linked to increased stress, fatigue, higher heart rates and sleep disturbances." It can also damage structures and disturb wildlife due to ground-borne vibrations." When we had the rains, I did wonder about rocks rolling down. Other than that, it has been a make-believe world of being at a rock concert.

And then there was silence.

There they were, walking on the mountain, most probably with their supervisor, studying the area. They walked as if they were walking on plain land or in a garden. The third man was slightly more careful about where he set his foot and was delicately trying to catch up with the other two. A conversation on the mountain slope, and I noted they were born hikers.

Every day, we guess when they might finish and how far they might continue. It would be better to have a direct conversation, but with all that noise, who is going to be heard? We would probably make more noise speaking louder. Even a regular office environment has sound pollution.

No matter what techniques we try to use to tune out the noise, scientists say our brain works overtime. The impact results in high cortisol levels and reduced deep work ability.

Acoustic trash is a term used to describe the "background noise clutter" that serves no purpose but creates significant mental fatigue.

We are exposed to the layer of low-level, persistent sounds in an environment that our brain is forced to process and filter out constantly. We think we are filtering out, but can we actually do that? In a workplace or public setting, acoustic trash typically consists of indistinct chatter where we cannot hear the words, but our brain still tries to decode them. Oh, and the voices matter too.

Then we have the mechanical hum generated by air conditioners, computer fans and the lights. Let us not forget the digital beeps. At the office, the contributors are notification sounds, printers and the clicking of the keyboards. Have you noticed how your attention can be drawn to the sound of someone tapping a pen, footsteps in the corridor, or the sound of a trolley, which are all considered inconsistent rhythms? So why are all these sounds considered 'trash'? They are considered 'zero' because they provide no information but are very much within our bandwidth, which gets our cognitive processing going. Acoustic trash is considered a form of passive pollution.

No matter what techniques we try to use to tune out the noise, scientists say our brain works overtime. The impact results in high cortisol levels and reduced deep work ability.

Now you know the reason behind the sense of restlessness we experience at times.

PAKISTAN'S MILITARY CHIEF TAKES LEAD ON US-IRAN TALKS IN DIPLOMATIC BLITZ

SAMEER MANDHRO AND ASAD HASHIM

Over a feverish few days of diplomacy, Pakistan's military and civilian politicians successfully divided the Middle East between them to push for a second round of US-Iran peace talks expected to take place in Islamabad this week.

The country's powerful military chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, headed to Tehran on Wednesday for what would become a three-day trip, where Iranian leaders said he carried US proposals for a second round of peace talks.

Simultaneously, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his foreign minister conducted a whirlwind diplomatic tour across regional allies Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Türkiye.

The twin trips illustrate the coordination at play in what is often described as a "hybrid regime" in Pakistan, and Munir's central role in the negotiating process.

"The synergy that is going on right now is giving results, and to take this momentum forward, all this synergy will be needed," said Sheharyar Khan, executive director of the Islamabad-based National Dialogue Forum.

Munir was one of two Pakistani mediators in the room during face-to-face talks between the United States and Iran in Islamabad on April 11.

"It's not political leadership that takes the decision in these kinds of situations, but the military leadership," said a Pakistani official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The official described Munir's visit to Iran as "important" in bringing both sides back to the negotiating table.

While a first round of peace talks between the United States and Iran did not yield an agreement, it did lead to the highest-level face-to-face negotiations between the two sides in decades, and communications channels remained open - through Pakistan.

Building on that momentum, Pakistan's leaders have been pushing for a second round of talks in Islamabad, with security being stepped up across the capital on Sunday in anticipation.

Munir's rise on the global stage has coincided with a consolidation of military power in Pakistan, which has seen him given unprecedented legal immunity and an extended term.

The military as a whole has also taken a more prominent role in governance.

Muhammad Saeed, a retired Pakistani general, said that Munir was in "direct communication" with the US leadership to negotiate through sticking points in the dialogue with Iran.

*"His presence is bringing both sides to a middle ground," he said. — **AFP***

The warmongers are getting history all wrong

MEMBERS of the Trump administration have been channelling their inner Thucydides, paraphrasing the Greek historian's aphorisms about the pitiless realities of power in a world of self-interested nations.

In January, the president called the unilateral military intervention that ended in the kidnapping of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro an example of the "iron laws that have always determined global power." Challenged about the US operation, the White House senior policy adviser Stephen Miller mocked Jake Tapper on CNN for his naïveté about "international niceties" like the United Nations Charter. "We live in a world, in the real world, Jake, that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power."

The Iran war has only reinforced these instincts. On April 7, Trump warned the Iranian regime to capitulate to American might. Otherwise, he menaced, "A whole civilisation will die tonight."

Such references to the timeless verities of power politics often draw inspiration from Thucydides, whose "History of the Peloponnesian War" remains a foundational text for professed foreign policy realists. Policymakers and analysts regularly invoke the tome to explain the inevitability of great power rivalry and justify the domination of the weak. But their analyses do not offer a close enough reading — and often overlook the historian's deeper lessons about the perils of wielding power without limits or legitimacy.

The most famous vignette in Thucydides' "History" is the Melian Dialogue. In it, an Athenian delegation delivers an ultimatum to the island of Melos: Submit to the superior power of Athens and become a tributary state in its war against Sparta, or face destruction. The Melians plead to remain neutral but are rebuffed. "You know as well as we do," the Athenians explain, "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." Melos is vanquished, its adult men put to death and its women and children sold into slavery.

STEWART PATRICK

The writer directs the Global Order and Institutions Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

If the US stays on this course, it will find itself bereft of allies and friends, a lonely superpower in a lawless international system it has helped to create. It is not too late to reverse course — and that starts with a closer reading of Thucydides.

The second Trump administration has embraced the logic of the Melian Dialogue with gusto. It echoes in the president's blunt declaration to President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine that "you don't have the cards," his browbeating of Denmark to cede control of Greenland, his unilateral imposition of tariffs on smaller nations, his threats to "take" Cuba at a time of US choosing and his demands that Nato allies — who were not consulted before the war in Iran — help open the Strait of Hormuz. These are the actions of a rogue superpower that has abandoned any pretence of enlightened leadership or aspirations to legitimacy in favour of pure global dominance.

The Trump administration's relentless bullying ignores a central lesson from classical antiquity: Athens's shift from benevolent hegemony to malevolent empire paved its road to ruin.

From the seventh century BC onward, the city-states of ancient Greece recognised one of their number as their natural leader, entitled to pre-eminent status and special rights for its disproportionate contribution to collective defence. They called this power the hegemon. Such leadership was often contested, however.

The most famous such clash was the Peloponnesian War, which pitted Athens against Sparta. Ultimately, Athens was vanquished.

"What made war inevitable," Thucydides famously wrote, "was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta." Many contemporary scholars have latched onto this line as a succinct explanation for the inevitability of great power war. Like Athens and Sparta, we are told, the United States and China risk falling into a "Thucydides trap."

But, as the historian himself makes clear, the war's causes ran deeper. What made Athens's surging power so worrisome was its violation of Hellenic norms in seeking to transform its consensual leadership into a coercive empire. During the Spartans' debate over whether to go to war, a visiting Athenian delegation justified their own country's imperial turn: "It was not we who set the example, for it has always been law that the weaker should be subject to the stronger." The gambit backfired, confirming suspicions of Athens's imperialist intentions and leading the Spartans and their allies to approve a declaration of war.

What made war inevitable, in other words, was not merely the presence of rival great powers, but the fact that one of those powers was abusing the rules of the system that had enabled its rise to greatness in the first place.

The temptation to exploit dominance is a recurrent historical impulse — one to which Trump's America has succumbed. Tired of assuming burdens in the general interest, the US is now leveraging and abusing its structural dominance for maximal gain, coercing and extracting benefits from even its closest partners. As in Thucydides' time, this posture promises short-term gains but long-run disaster.

The genius of post-1945 US foreign policy was in embedding America's awesome power in a framework of international institutions and law in which all nations, large and small, could participate and benefit. It was far from perfect and coincided with plenty of episodes of imperialist intervention. But the strategy overall paid off for the US. It cushioned the reality of American dominance, legitimated American power and produced an order broadly consistent with American interests.

All these advantages are now being abandoned. The Trump administration is destroying any remaining faith that the US can be trusted to exercise power responsibly. It is also erasing any distinction between the exercise of American might and Russian conduct in Ukraine and Chinese behaviour in the South China Sea or (potentially) over Taiwan. **— The New York Times**

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in these pages are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of the Observer

SPORTS

SHORT*TAKES*

The friendly match between Oman beach handball and the Saudi national team.

OMAN ALL SET FOR ASIAN BEACH GAMES CHALLENGE IN CHINA

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

Oman's national teams are set to begin their campaigns at the 6th Asian Beach Games – Sanya 2026, with beach handball opening its matches today, Tuesday, while beach soccer and athletics teams continue their preparations for upcoming competitions.

The Oman national beach handball team begins its journey today (Tuesday) with two matches, facing Mongolia at 1:00 pm, followed by a second encounter against Qatar at 4:00 pm (Muscat time).

The team has undergone an intensive preparation programme, including friendly matches against participating Asian sides and focused training sessions aimed at raising both physical and technical readiness.

Oman will continue its group-stage fixtures against Thailand on Thursday, Maldives on Friday, Bangladesh on Sunday morning, and Jordan later the same day, before concluding the preliminary round against Pakistan on Monday.

Coached by Hamoud bin Salim al Hasani, the team enters a highly competitive group where only two teams advance. The coach emphasised that preparation focused on balanced physical conditioning and tactical work, noting that beach handball matches are often decided by fine margins due to their short duration.

Meanwhile, the Oman national beach soccer team continues its training camp ahead of its group-stage match against Palestine on Thursday at 5:00 pm, followed by a clash against hosts China on Saturday.

Under the guidance of coach Talib bin Hilal al Thanawi, preparations have focused on tactical and technical aspects, with ambitions to replicate Oman's historic title-winning achievement in the inaugural 2008 edition in Bali.

In athletics, the Oman national team has arrived in Sanya to begin preparations for competitions scheduled from April 23 to 26 at Phoenix Island. The events include the 60m sprint, high jump, long jump, and relay races.

Chairman of the Oman Athletics Association, Said bin Mohammed al Hajri, highlighted that the participation represents an important step in developing athletes' capabilities in sand-based events. He noted that preparations were conducted in coastal areas such as Seeb and Al Musannah to simulate competition conditions, with a focus on explosive power and balance.

The Sanya 2026 Asian Beach Games will feature 1,790 athletes from 45 Asian countries competing in 14 sports. Oman is participating in five sports and has previously secured 17 medals in the history of the Games, including six gold medals.

SEKTIOUI WEIGHS OPTIONS IN FIRST OMAN CAMP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

OMAN'S NATIONAL football team have stepped up preparations for their upcoming international commitments with a short internal training camp in Muscat, running from April 18 to 23, marking the first camp under newly appointed head coach Tarik Sektioui. The Moroccan tactician called up 28 players for the gathering as he begins shaping the next phase of the national team project.

The camp has taken on added importance after Oman were unable to hold a training gathering in March, making this week's programme a valuable chance for the new technical staff to begin direct work with the players. Sektioui said the camp, although limited to five days, is significant because it allows the coaching staff to deliver key messages, get closer to the players and accelerate mutual understanding ahead of the next stage.

Oman opened the camp without several overseas-based professionals, who remain tied to their club commitments abroad. That has allowed Sektioui to closely assess domestic-based players, an approach consistent with the field monitoring he has carried out since taking charge, having attended Jindal League matches and followed players at close range before naming his first squad.

Sektioui also underlined the importance of institutional support around the camp, thanking the Oman Football Association, those responsible for scheduling, and club officials for facilitating the team's preparations. He indicated that the immediate objective is not to chase glamour friendlies, but to arrange matches that genuinely serve Oman's competitive needs in the coming period. In that context, he made it clear that Spain is not part of the current camp plan, stressing that any future friendlies should be selected carefully in coordination with the federation to support the team's official targets.

For the players, the camp is also the start of a new chapter. Oman midfielder Ghanim al Habshi described it as an important first gathering under Sektioui, saying the coming period will be crucial for the team's ambitions. He noted that the camp gives the coach the chance to see players from close quarters while helping the squad push towards the best possible level of readiness for the tournaments ahead.

A scene from the national team's training session.

The team staff gathered before the start of training.

The current phase forms part of Oman's broader build-up towards a packed cycle of competitions, including the 10th West Asian Football Federation Championship, which is set to be hosted by Oman from November 9 to 18, and the 2027 AFC Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia, for which Oman has already qualified. Earlier reports also indicated that the main national team camp is expected after the Eid al-Adha break, in line with the June FIFA window, when preparatory friendlies are being discussed. Sektioui reserved a final message for Omani fans, calling on them to return to the stands and back the team in the period ahead. He described the supporters as the "number one player", while stressing that the road ahead will require patience, hard work and collective commitment from everyone involved if Oman is to reach the level they aspire to.

Al Alawi earns officiating role at World Table Tennis

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

Oman's international umpire and holder of blue badge, Mohammed al Alawi, selected as one of the officials to officiate at the ITTF World Table Tennis Championships which will take place in London during April 28 to May 10. Al Alawi expressed his pride and gratitude following the announcement of the officials list for the prestigious global event which is one of the most significant competitions in table tennis, bringing together elite national teams, players and officials from around the world.

"This is a moment of great pride for me," Al Alawi said. "I am honoured to be part of the officiating panel at the World Team Table Tennis Championships 2026 in London. It is one of the biggest events in the sport and represents the pinnacle of competition at the international level."

Oman's international TT umpire Mohammed al Alawi officiating a match.

Al Alawi, who hails from Ibri, told Oman Observer that this marks his first appearance at a major World Championships, making the milestone even more significant. "I am especially proud to be among the first Omani umpires to officiate at the finals of the World Team Championships. This achievement reflects the progress of Omani officiating and its growing presence on the international stage." he added

"I attributed my selection to the continuous support provided to table tennis officials in the Sultanate of Oman as well as the ongoing efforts to develop national cadres in line with the highest international standards." he explained

Throughout his officiating career, Al Alawi has overseen matches in numerous international tournaments across several countries including China, France, Italy, Spain, Singapore, Nigeria, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and India, in addition to Arab countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Qatar, Lebanon and Iraq. These experiences have played a key role in refining his skills and preparing him for major global events.

"Representing Oman at such prestigious championships carries a great responsibility," he said. "It motivates us to deliver the highest standards of officiating, reflecting the positive image of Omani sport and strengthening the position of Omani umpires on the global map.

He highlighted his eagerness to benefit from this experience by gaining further expertise and sharing knowledge with fellow officials back home, contributing to the development of the sport in Oman." he clarified

Mohammed concluded his sincere appreciation to all those who supported him.

AL WAHAIBI

OMAN'S RISING GOLF TALENT

KEY MILESTONES

GCC Championships
- 2018 GCC Championship (U15): 1st Place – Team
- 2019 GCC Championship (U15): 2nd Place – Team
- 2019 GCC Championship (U15): 3rd Place – Individual
- 2022 GCC Championship (U18): 2nd Place – Team
- 2022 GCC Championship (U18): 2nd Place – Individual

Arab Championships
- 2019 Arab Championship (U15): 3rd Place – Team
- 2022 Arab Championship (U18): 2nd Place – Team
- 2022 Arab Championship (U18): 3rd Place – Individual

International Championships
- 2023 Jordan Open Championship (U18): 2nd Place
- 2024 La vie Masters Championship: 2nd Place

Local Championships
- 1st Place: Sayyid Abbas Championship
- 1st Place: Al Sereen Championship
- 1st Place: Al Sereen Championship (Repeat Title)
- 1st Place: Muscat Open
- 1st Place: LNG Championship
- 1st Place: National Team Championship
- And various other local titles.

Career Milestones
- World Amateur Golf Ranking (WAGR): Successfully entered the official world rankings.
- Asia-Pacific Championship: Qualified for the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship via world ranking status.

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

OMANI golfer Ahmed bin Khalil al Wahaibi is steadily carving out a name for himself as one of the Sultanate of Oman's most promising young talents, following an impressive run of achievements across local, Gulf and international competitions. His recent entry into the world rankings marks a significant milestone in his career and signals the beginning of a new chapter filled with higher ambitions and greater challenges.

In an exclusive interview, Al Wahaibi spoke about his journey in golf, his key achievements, and his aspirations for the future. He clarified that his qualification for the 2026 Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship has not yet been officially confirmed, while noting that he had previously qualified for the same tournament an indication of his consistent performance at a high level.

Al Wahaibi's journey into golf began with what he described as "a simple passion that quickly turned into a serious goal." Starting with basic training and gradual skill development, he dedicated himself to mastering the fundamentals of the game. His early participation in local competitions played a crucial role in shaping his competitive mindset and pushing him to improve.

"As I progressed, I started competing in regional and international tournaments, which helped me gain experience and refine my playing style," he said. "It was not an easy journey. I faced several challenges, both technically and mentally, but persistence and continuous work helped me overcome them."

One of the key turning points in his career came through the support of Al Manar Financial Investments, which he described as instrumental in boosting his confidence and enabling him to compete at higher levels. Additionally, winning medals outside Oman marked an important milestone, reinforcing his belief in his ability to compete internationally.

> *I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, President of the Oman Golf Federation and President of the Oman Olympic Committee, for his continuous support and strong commitment to providing me with opportunities to compete in international tournaments. He has been a key supporter of my journey since the very beginning.*
>
> ***AHMED BIN KHALIL AL WAHAIBI***

A snapshot of player Ahmed al Wahaibi's crowning as champion in one of the tournaments.

Al Wahaibi has achieved notable success in Gulf championships across different age categories. He secured first place in the team event at the 2018 Gulf Championship (U15), followed by a second-place team finish and third place individually in 2019. In 2022, he claimed second place in both team and individual categories at the U18 level.

At the Arab level, he contributed to a third-place team finish in 2019 (U15) and followed it with a second-place team and third-place individual finish in 2022 (U18), further highlighting his steady development.

Internationally, his runner-up finish at the 2023 Jordan Open (U18) and second place at the 2024 Laffi Masters stand out as major achievements. Reflecting on these experiences, he said: "Competing internationally gave me confidence and taught me how to handle pressure, stay focused, and manage my performance throughout the rounds."

Domestically, Al Wahaibi has enjoyed consistent success, winning multiple titles including the Muscat Open, LNG Championship, National Team Championship, and several others. He attributes this consistency to discipline and commitment. "Continuous training and daily dedication are the main reasons behind maintaining a stable performance level," he explained.

Despite his success, the young golfer acknowledged the challenges he faced along the way, particularly injuries and the difficulty of balancing academics with sports. He expressed gratitude to the College of Banking and Financial Studies for its support, which played a key role in helping him maintain that balance.

Looking ahead, Al Wahaibi is focusing on intensive preparation for upcoming international competitions through participation in overseas tournaments and structured training programmes aimed at enhancing both his physical and technical readiness.

He also revealed that golfing legend Tiger Woods is his primary role model. "His achievements, mentality, and ability to come back stronger after setbacks inspire me greatly," Al Wahaibi said.

On dealing with pressure, he emphasised the importance of mental strength and preparation. "Pressure is part of competing at a high level. I focus on staying calm, taking each shot step by step, and relying on my preparation to perform well," he noted.

"I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, President of the Oman Golf Federation and President of the Oman Olympic Committee, for his continuous support and strong commitment to providing me with opportunities to compete in international tournaments. He has been a key supporter of my journey since the very beginning. I would also like to thank the Oman Golf Federation for the significant development the sport is witnessing, as reflected in the ongoing support and attention given to players, which is helping elevate the game and strengthen its presence both regionally and internationally."

He also highlighted the progress of golf in Oman, pointing to world-class facilities such as Al Mouj Golf. However, he stressed the importance of increasing international exposure and investing in youth development programmes to ensure sustained growth.

Concluding the interview, Al Wahaibi made it clear that his ambitions extend far beyond his current achievements. "My short-term goal is to continue improving and perform well in upcoming tournaments. In the long-term, I aim to turn professional and represent Oman on the global stage," he said. "I want to raise my country's flag in major tournaments, and I am working step by step to achieve that."

GUARDIOLA WARNS TITLE NOT WON YET AS MAN CITY HUNT DOWN ARSENAL

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola celebrates after the match. ***— Reuters***

Manchester City's Erling Haaland in action. ***— Reuters***

PEP GUARDIOLA said that Manchester City's vital 2-1 victory over Arsenal has only given his side "hope" in the Premier League title race as they look to hunt down the Gunners.

City are three points behind the leaders but have a game in hand and would go top for the first time this year if they beat struggling Burnley on Wednesday.

Guardiola's men are now favourites for a seventh league title in his 10 seasons in Manchester, with momentum very much in their favour.

Arsenal have lost their last four games in domestic competitions, including the League Cup final to City last month.

But even if City win at Burnley, the sides will only be level on points with five games remaining.

"We are there, but the reality is what? Who is the top of the league? We are not. Who has the better goal difference?

"So, step-by-step. But of course we've got hope to still extend the chances to fight in the league."

Erling Haaland struck the winner 25 minutes from time in a game of fine margins.

Arsenal hit the post twice in the second half, either side of Haaland's strike, and also missed two glorious chances through Kai Havertz.

Rayan Cherki's sensational solo run and finish had given City an early lead that was almost immediately wiped out when Havertz charged down an attempted clearance by Gianluigi Donnarumma.

But it was Bernardo Silva who earned rave reviews from Guardiola in the week he announced that he will depart at the end of the season after nine years at the Etihad.

"You have to write the word legend in capital letters for him, not for today but for every single game during nine years," added Guardiola.

"He is a special player. Wherever he will go, the team will be so lucky!". **— AFP**

Gilgeous-Alexander, Wemby, Jokic finalists for NBA MVP

LOS ANGELES, United States: Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander headlines the finalists announced on Sunday for this year's award alongside San Antonio Spurs star Victor Wembanyama and Denver's three-time MVP Nikola Jokic.

Gilgeous-Alexander, who beat out Jokic and Giannis Antetokounmpo in the voting last year and was also named NBA Finals MVP as the Thunder beat Indiana for the trophy, averaged more than 30 points per game this season.

He led Oklahoma City to the Western Conference top seed and the best record in the league at 64-18.

Wembanyama, 22, has been the driving force of San Antonio's first run to the playoffs since 2019, averaging a career-high 25 points per game and a league-best 3.1 blocks.

Gilgeous Alexander shoots as Phoenix Suns guard Collin Gillespie defends in the second half during game one of the first round of the 2026 NBA Playoffs. ***— Imagn Images***

Jokic averaged a triple-double and became the first player in NBA history to lead the league in both rebounds and assists in the same season. He averaged 27.9 points, 12.8 rebounds and 10.8 assists per game.

Wembanyama also headlines the finalists for Defensive Player of the Year, with Oklahoma City center Chet Holmgren and Ausar Thompson of the Detroit Pistons also on the ballot.

Gilgeous-Alexander is also up for Clutch Player of the Year. He scored 175 points in clutch time, defined as the final five minutes of regulation or overtime when the score is within five points.

Los Angeles Lakers star Luka Doncic and Detroit's Cade Cunningham, who were both ruled eligible for awards races despite not meeting the 65-game minimum, both failed to make the final MVP ballot.

Anthony Edwards, who was ruled out of the MVP race when his request for an "extraordinary circumstances" exemption from the 65-game rule was denied, is nevertheless among the Clutch Player finalists, which isn't covered by the regulation.

The awards, which are voted on by a panel of sports media members, will be announced over the course of the playoffs. **— AFP**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE 8,259.246

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN $97.51
BRENT $94.93
LIGHT $87.53

SHORTTAKES

Senior officials and dignitaries attended the launch underscoring its strategic relevance.

15 MW SMART GRID-BALANCING PILOT LAUNCHED IN IBRI

BUSINESS REPORTER
IBRI, APRIL 20

The Sultanate of Oman has moved to the forefront of regional grid innovation with the launch of a 15 MW flexible load centre in Ibri, marking a decisive shift towards demand-side solutions in electricity management.

The Grid Balancing Optimisation Pilot Project Using Large Flexible Loads (LFL), inaugurated in Dreez, Ibri under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, represents the first deployment of controllable demand-side assets by a grid operator in the region.

Senior officials and dignitaries attended the launch, including Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Oman; Tahir bin Mabkhout al Junaibi, Governor of Al Dhahirah; and Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation and Head of the Basic Services Sector, underscoring its strategic relevance.

Developed jointly by DEMA Energy and MARA, the 15 MW pilot introduces a new operational model in which electricity demand is actively managed in real time. Rather than relying solely on generation capacity to maintain balance, the system enables grid operators to treat large-scale demand as a dispatchable resource — enhancing flexibility, responsiveness and overall system stability.

This approach is increasingly critical as Oman expands its renewable energy portfolio, where intermittency can place added pressure on grid operations. By unlocking demand-side flexibility, the project provides an additional layer of control that conventional infrastructure alone cannot deliver.

With an investment exceeding RO 8 million, the initiative also reflects a strong local economic contribution. It has achieved 43 per cent in-country value and full Omanisation, creating 14 specialised jobs for Omani professionals while building capabilities in advanced energy technologies.

African Bank of Oman launched in Angola

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT/LUANDA, APRIL 20

In line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, aimed at economic diversification and strengthening the Sultanate of Oman's international investment footprint, the African Bank of Oman (ABO) has officially launched in Luanda, Angola.

Positioned as a specialised financial platform, the bank supports trade and investment flows between Africa and the Middle East while contributing to deeper economic integration between the two regions, reflecting Oman's strategic direction to expand its international partnerships and strengthen its presence in emerging markets.

In this context, ABO plays a key role in opening new financial channels between Oman and Africa and enabling Omani companies to access promising opportunities across the continent. The launch comes just eleven months after the official visit of João Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, to the Sultanate of Oman, underscoring the pace at which strategic economic dialogue between the two countries is being translated into tangible institutional outcomes and highlighting Oman's ability to move decisively from diplomatic engagement to structured investment execution.

On this occasion, His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, stated: "We commend the establishment of the African Bank of Oman (ABO), which embodies the principles of economic diplomacy laid down by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, aimed at strengthening Oman's international investment and economic presence.

It also reaffirms the Sultanate of Oman's role in connecting global markets and consolidates its position as a financial and investment bridge linking the Middle East with emerging global markets, building on the foundations of stability, trust and its well-established international relations.

The new bank will support trade and investment flows between Africa and the Middle East.

The establishment of the African Bank of Oman represents a strategic step in expanding Oman's investment presence at both regional and international levels; and serves as a practical reflection of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to build effective financial platforms in emerging markets and diversify sources of national income.

ABDULSALAM BIN MOHAMMED AL MURSHIDI
President, Oman Investment Authority

We believe this important step will deliver broad benefits, contributing to the deepening of economic relations with the African continent and its emerging markets, while enhancing Oman's regional and international reputation as a trusted investment partner.

This supports the objectives of sustainable economic diversification under Oman Vision 2040, which builds on a rich heritage, a strong present and an ambitious vision for the future under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik".

Licensed and regulated by the National Bank of Angola, ABO focuses on corporate and institutional clients, including large corporations, multinational companies, government entities and international investors. Its services are directed towards key strategic sectors such as energy, mining, infrastructure, agriculture, logistics, telecommunications and industry.

This launch comes at a time when Angola is undergoing significant economic transformation under its long-term development agenda, Angola 2050, which prioritises diversification, infrastructure development and increased private sector participation.

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), said: "The establishment of the African Bank of Oman represents a strategic step in expanding Oman's investment presence at both regional and international levels; and serves as a practical reflection of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to build effective financial platforms in emerging markets and diversify sources of national income.

This project goes beyond being a banking institution; it is an integrated financial platform designed to enhance capital flows, trade and investment between the Sultanate of Oman and the African continent — particularly Angola, which we view as a promising strategic partner given its strong economic potential and investment opportunities."

Omani frankincense secures global geographical indication status

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has secured international recognition for its prized frankincense after registering it as a geographical indication (GI) with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), marking a first for the Gulf region.

The certification affirms the product's authenticity and strengthens its legal protection across member states under the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement, linking Omani frankincense to its unique geographical origin and long-standing cultural heritage.

Nasra bint Sultan al Habsi, Director General of Trade at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, described the move as a strategic milestone that enhances the product's global market value.

She said the registration crowns sustained national efforts to safeguard Omani frankincense and position it competitively in international markets by emphasising its distinct environmental and cultural attributes.

The certification affirms the product's authenticity and strengthens its legal protection across member states under the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement.

She noted that the Lisbon System offers a unified framework for recognising and protecting products tied to specific origins, extending protection beyond national borders while allowing flexibility in implementation.

For Oman, accession to the agreement provides a structured pathway to protect heritage-based products with unique characteristics.

Engineer Khalid bin Hamoud al Hinai, Director of the National Intellectual Property Office, said the registration elevates Omani frankincense within the global intellectual property system and reinforces its legal standing among contracting parties.

He highlighted its role in boosting consumer confidence, enhancing the competitiveness of Omani goods and enabling businesses to capitalise on the product's established reputation.

He added that GI status supports sustainable production practices and encourages long-term resource management, ensuring continued economic returns. It also paves the way for building a unified national brand around frankincense, opening opportunities across sectors including perfumery, cosmetics, health products and heritage goods.

Officials underscored that geographical indications extend beyond legal protection against imitation, serving as economic tools that empower producers, stimulate local economies and diversify income streams. The Ministry is seeking to expand GI protection to additional Omani products, including food items and handicrafts, to further strengthen national value chains.

Badriya bint Khalfan al Rahbi, Head of the Trademarks and Geographical Indications Department, explained that a GI identifies products whose qualities and reputation are intrinsically linked to their place of origin, ensuring authenticity and preserving consumer trust.

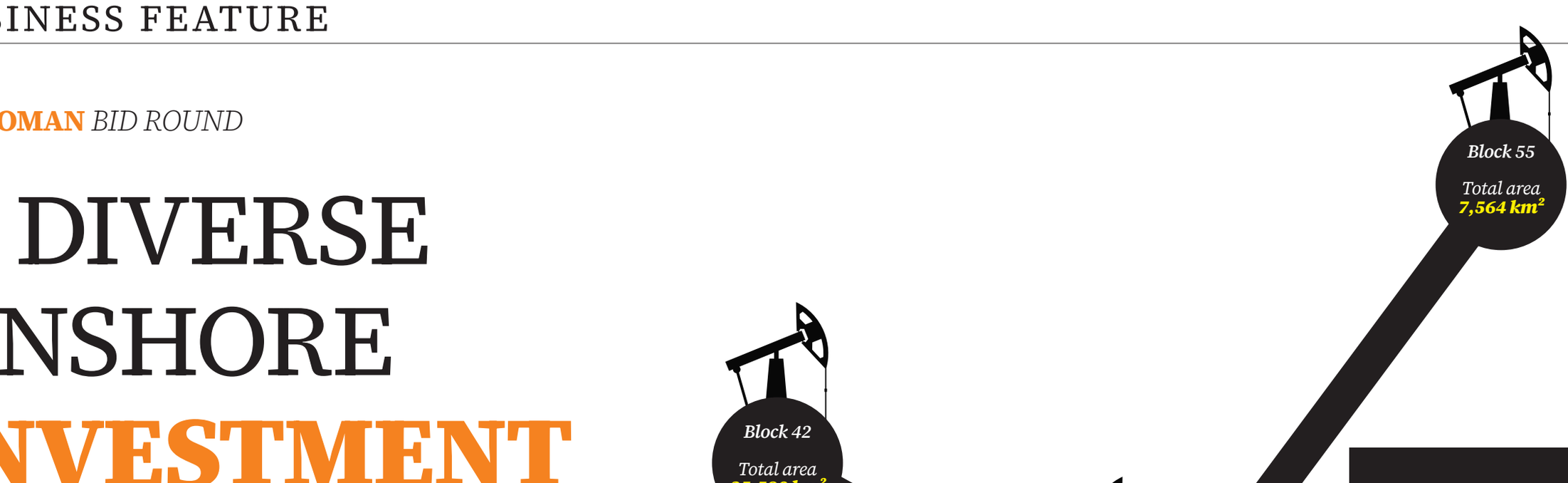
Unlike trademarks, which are company-specific, geographical indications are tied to a defined region and shared production standards.

She also highlighted the tourism potential of frankincense-linked sites such as Wadi Dawkah, noting that organised visits can showcase traditional production methods while supporting local communities and promoting Oman's cultural heritage internationally. — ONA

2026 OMAN *BID ROUND*

A DIVERSE ONSHORE **INVESTMENT** OPPORTUNITY

OCCUPYING THE BROAD DESERT PLAINS OF THE INTERIOR ARABIAN PLATE, BLOCK 12 HAS HISTORICALLY OFFERED UNRIVALLED LOGISTICAL ACCESSIBILITY AND SEAMLESS INTEGRATION WITH OMAN'S CORE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE



CONRAD PRABHU

FIVE UPSTREAM oil and gas blocks, spanning a total area of around 48,000 square kilometres, have been offered for local and international investment under the 2026 Oman Licensing Round. Onshore Blocks 12 (Non-Associated Gas), 16, 45, 42 and 55 present a "compelling and diverse onshore investment portfolio", said Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals in an overview of the acreage opened for bidding.

"These blocks span multiple proven petroleum systems and geological settings, offering a balanced mix of near-field exploration, appraisal upside and frontier potential", the Ministry noted.

Significantly, four of the licences are the result of the partitioning of two legacy blocks — a move described by the Ministry as a "strategic division" to transition the original acreage into a more "dynamic dual-block configuration".

This subdivision has been applied to two legacy licences: Block 12, which has been split into Block 12 and the newly designated Block 16; and Block 42, which has been divided into Block 42 and the newly designated Block 45. In both cases, the move is intended to catalyse exploration and maximise resource recovery, while preserving the overall exploration value of the province, according to the Ministry.

Herewith is a brief overview of each block open to tender, outlining ownership and exploration history, discoveries, prospects and other key characteristics:

BLOCK 12

Legacy Block 12, originally spanning approximately 9,550 km², has long been recognised as a "cornerstone" of central Oman's onshore exploration strategy.

"Strategically positioned south of the Greater Barik area and immediately north of Block 6, the concession sits within one of the Sultanate of Oman's most established hydrocarbon provinces.

Occupying the broad desert plains of the interior Arabian Plate, Block 12 has historically offered unrivalled logistical accessibility and seamless integration with Oman's core energy infrastructure, including major trunk pipelines, processing facilities and producing fields across central Oman", the Ministry explained.

A new chapter in its history was added recently when the Ministry decided to divide the original acreage into separate blocks — a transition to Blocks 12 and 16 that preserves the intrinsic value of the acreage while offering more focused opportunities.

Both blocks remain adjacent to major gas developments in Blocks 10 and 11; and their proximity to these progressing export projects materially enhances the commercial relevance and monetisation potential of any future discovery. High-quality seismic coverage has also been maintained across both the refined Block 12 and the new Block 16.

Legacy Block 12 was originally part of Block 6, long operated by Petroleum Development Oman, where several Permian oil discoveries — including Zauliyah, Hazar, Hasirah, Asfoor and Anzuz — confirmed the presence of active petroleum systems within the area.

In 2020, a non-associated gas (NAG) EPSA was signed with a consortium led by TotalEnergies (operator) and PTTEP, which undertook seismic surveys, detailed geological studies and drilled two exploration wells in 2024. Although no commercial hydrocarbons were found, the campaign significantly improved subsurface understanding and refined geological models.

The concession was relinquished to the Government in 2025 at the end of the EPSA term, with the newly acquired data enhancing the overall geological framework and helping to better define the remaining exploration potential.

Following its partitioning, the new Block 12 now covers approximately 5,050 km². According to the Ministry, exploration is focused on multiple potential sources of oil and gas, with the main challenge being whether these resources have effectively accumulated in viable reservoirs — although evidence from nearby areas suggests this remains a realistic possibility.

BLOCK 16

Block 16 is an onshore non-associated gas (NAG) concession in central Oman, covering about 4,496 km². Strategically located between the Greater Barik area and Block 6, it lies within one of the country's most established hydrocarbon provinces, with strong logistical access and proximity to key infrastructure such as pipelines, processing facilities and producing fields.

Its closeness to major gas developments in Blocks 10 and 11 further enhances the commercial potential of any future discoveries.

Geological and geophysical studies indicate that the block sits within a mature petroleum province with multiple active hydrocarbon systems. While recent drilling has not yielded commercial results, Block 16 remains underexplored at depth and retains significant upside, particularly for deeper gas prospects.

BLOCK 42

Block 42 is an onshore exploration concession in northeastern Oman, created from the subdivision of the original Block 42 and covering around 25,590 km². It spans a varied landscape — from the Al Hajar Mountains foothills to the Rimal Al Sharqiya — and is strategically located near the Ghaba Salt Basin, one of the country's most productive hydrocarbon regions, while also offering exposure to additional prospective areas beyond this core zone.

The block was split as part of the 2026 licensing round to sharpen exploration focus while retaining overall value. It also lies adjacent to Oxy's Block 51, where multiple untested prospects have been identified, with geological trends extending into Block 42 — suggesting potential continuity of resources across the boundary.

"As a standalone concession, Block 42 represents a technically coherent structural exploration play with identifiable petroleum system elements, regional analog support and upside linked to adjacent proven trends", the Ministry stated.

BLOCK 45

Block 45, spanning 5,483 km², forms the southern part of the former Block 42 and is aligned with one of Oman's key oil and gas-producing regions, with similarities to nearby producing areas supporting its potential.

Exploration was previously carried out through a partnership between the Omani state (via OOCEP, now OQEP) and Shell, which became the operator in 2017.

The partners assessed the block's potential through studies and surveys but did not make any commercial discoveries. Shell later exited the concession in 2025 and the block was returned to the government in early 2026 for future re-offering.

While a limited number of wells have been drilled without success, the block's proximity to active producing fields suggests that resources may still be present, though not yet confirmed.

Nearby acreage operated by Oxy also contains several untested prospects, pointing to continued exploration potential with improved data and renewed efforts.

BLOCK 55

Block 55 is an onshore concession in Al Wusta Governorate covering about 7,564 km², located near one of Oman's most productive oil and gas regions. While parts of the block have seen limited exploration, its western side is considered more promising due to its proximity to proven producing areas and major discoveries, including Mukhaizna.

Originally part of Block 6, the area has undergone relatively light exploration, with a limited number of wells drilled and older survey data collected. More recent activity by operators such as Petrogas and Shell has focused on reassessing its potential, although hydrocarbon-focused drilling remains limited.

Importantly, Block 55 is close to established infrastructure — including pipelines, processing facilities and storage terminals — which enhances its commercial appeal by potentially lowering development costs for any future discoveries.

SHORT TAKES

The upgrade reflects the company's track record in operating one of the region's most efficient electricity transmission networks.

OETC ATTAINS INVESTMENT-GRADE RATING FROM FITCH

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

The Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) has secured its first investment-grade credit rating after Fitch Ratings upgraded the company to "BBB-" with a stable outlook, from "BB+".

The upgrade signals strengthened global confidence in OETC's resilient business model, underpinned by predictable cash flows within a clear regulatory framework, solid institutional backing and disciplined financial management. It also reflects the company's track record in operating one of the region's most efficient electricity transmission networks.

The milestone enhances OETC's standing with investors and improves its access to capital markets on more competitive terms, supporting its ongoing expansion of the national transmission grid.

The company is advancing a pipeline of strategic projects to meet rising electricity demand while facilitating the integration of renewable energy sources in line with Oman Vision 2040.

OETC said the rating upgrade underscores its resilience across economic cycles and its ability to maintain strong financial metrics through disciplined policies and a sustainability-focused strategy. The company plays a central role in enabling the energy transition, including efforts towards net-zero emissions.

Eng Hisham bin Abdullah al Riyami, Acting Chief Executive Officer, said the upgrade reflects OETC's commitment to operational excellence, robust governance and financial discipline, strengthening its credibility among stakeholders.

CEO TALK: A measured approach to leadership

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

As Oman accelerates its push towards a digitally enabled economy under Oman Vision 2040, Ooredoo Oman is positioning itself at the forefront of this transformation. Leading the charge is CEO Saud al Riyami, whose strategic focus is firmly set on evolving the company from a traditional telecom operator into a full-spectrum digital infrastructure provider.

"Our number one priority is completing Ooredoo Oman's transformation into a full-spectrum digital infrastructure company", Al Riyami explains.

This transition is anchored in three core pillars: expanding 5G coverage across both commercial and underserved areas, operationalising a landmark data centre and cable landing station in Salalah and scaling the company's fintech platform, walletii.

The Salalah facility, notably the first of its kind in southern Oman to combine advanced data hosting with an international submarine cable landing point, represents both a technological and strategic milestone.

"Each of these moves is designed to give Omani consumers and businesses access to digital services that genuinely change how they live and work", he adds.

This transformation has been underpinned by a fundamental shift in how the company engages with its enterprise customers.

Reflecting on a pivotal decision taken during his tenure as Acting CEO, Al Riyami highlights a move away from a transactional, product-driven approach to a more collaborative partnership model. We stopped selling connectivity and started solving business problems", he says.

We stopped selling connectivity and started solving business problems. Good decisions in telecoms are often invisible when they work. I count that one as a success precisely because of how quietly it took hold.

SAUD AL RIYAMI
CEO, Ooredoo Oman

The shift required internal recalibration but ultimately strengthened relationships, improved customer retention and positioned the company as a trusted partner for major ICT projects.

"Good decisions in telecoms are often invisible when they work. I count that one as a success precisely because of how quietly it took hold", he notes.

For Al Riyami, execution is the true differentiator between ambition and achievement. "Strategy without execution is just a presentation", he remarks, underscoring the importance of disciplined implementation.

At Ooredoo Oman, every strategic priority is translated into clear accountability — with defined ownership, measurable outcomes and timelines — and tracked through structured quarterly reviews.

Equally critical is fostering a culture of transparency".
I want to hear bad news first and good news later. The companies that execute well are not the ones with the best strategies; they are the ones with the most honest internal conversations.".
This focus on clarity extends to performance measurement. Rather than tracking an extensive list of metrics, Ooredoo Oman concentrates on a concise set of indicators that reflect operational reality.

Network performance is assessed through 5G coverage quality and data throughput in key commercial zones, while customer experience is gauged through Net Promoter Scores and digital adoption rates.

On the people front, Omanisation levels, internal promotions and attrition in technical roles provide insight into talent health. Cybersecurity effectiveness is measured by response speed to incidents, while sustainability is linked to energy consumption per network site.

"These are the numbers that tell the truth about where we are", Al Riyami says.

Leadership and organisational culture are central to sustaining this momentum. Al Riyami places a premium on intellectual honesty, a quality he describes as the willingness to admit mistakes openly, alongside what he calls "constructive restlessness" — a drive to challenge the status quo. Equally important is the ability to develop others.

"A leader who makes the people around them better is worth ten individual performers", he observes.

This philosophy has helped foster a strong internal culture, recognised at the 2025 Global Digital HR Transformation Forum, where Ooredoo Oman was named Workplace Culture Champion.

Balancing growth with resilience is another cornerstone of the company's strategy.

"Risk management and growth are not in tension; they are the same conversation", Al Riyami explains.

Investments in cybersecurity capabilities and regular stress testing of infrastructure underpin this approach, while the Salalah data centre also enhances network resilience by diversifying infrastructure and reducing single points of failure.

"We grow fast, but we do not grow fragile", he emphasises.

War's environmental toll could outlast conflict: Report

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 20

The environmental consequences of the US-Israeli war on Iran are likely to have far more enduring impacts on the Gulf region than the conflict itself, according to a new analytical report by the Arab Gulf States Institute (AGSI), a Washington, DC-based independent research organisation.

Jointly authored by Dr Aisha al Sarihi, an Omani researcher and policy expert and Dr Naser Alsayed, an environmental policy researcher, the paper, titled 'A Silent Casualty of War: The Rising Risk of Ecocide in the Gulf', examines the ecological toll of the conflict in one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions.

Beyond the immediate human and economic costs, the report highlights extensive environmental damage, including incidents that may amount to "ecocide", defined as deliberate, long-term environmental harm during wartime.

DR AISHA AL SARIHI

DR NASER ALSAYED

"The threat of ecocide is particularly acute in one of the world's most climate-vulnerable regions, where its impact will extend far beyond the 'day after' the war", the authors warn.

Attacks on energy infrastructure across the Gulf have heightened the risk of far-reaching environmental and economic fallout. Damage to oil and gas facilities and transport vessels could trigger large-scale oil spills, air pollution and toxic contamination, affecting water resources, ecosystems and key sectors such as fisheries, agriculture and tourism.

These impacts may also disrupt essential services, including freshwater production, posing risks to public health and livelihoods. Critical infrastructure remains particularly exposed.

Disruptions to desalination plants — on which the region heavily depends — could rapidly lead to severe water shortages, while incidents involving nuclear facilities carry the potential for long-term environmental contamination and health risks. Together, these threats underscore how damage to energy and water systems can undermine basic habitability and require substantial time and investment to address, the report points out.

According to the authors, the Gulf states have taken steps to strengthen their preparedness. Oman, for instance, established its National Committee for Natural Disasters in 1988 and further enhanced its capabilities with the creation of the National Centre for Emergency Management in 2020.

Other GCC countries have similarly developed national disaster response frameworks, while the GCC General Secretariat has activated its Emergency Management Centre to monitor environmental and radiological risks and expanded cooperation with international partners on nuclear safety.

Oil spills remain a principal environmental concern. In response, Gulf countries have developed cooperative frameworks for emergency response, technology sharing and expertise exchange.

The Kuwait Regional Convention (1978) serves as a cornerstone of this collaboration, supported by the Regional Organisation for the Protection of the Marine Environment, which has coordinated major spill responses in the past.

Water security represents another critical vulnerability. With limited alternatives to desalination, countries rely heavily on strategic reserves, which vary significantly in capacity. Any prolonged disruption could strain supply in a region where water demand continues to grow.

The report also highlights the need for stronger engagement with international legal frameworks. While the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court does not currently recognise ecocide as a crime, proposals to include it are under discussion. The authors argue that Gulf states have a strong interest in advocating for its adoption to strengthen global safeguards against environmental harm in conflict.

"More than ever, it is clear that the Gulf must move from reactive to proactive environmental crisis management", the authors conclude, calling for stronger coordination at both national and regional levels to enhance long-term resilience.

CURRENCY MARKETS

Dollar rises as tensions escalate

The United States (US) dollar climbed to a one-week high in early Asian trading as escalating Middle East tensions boosted demand for safe-haven assets. The dollar index rose 0.3 per cent to 98.485, its highest since April 13.

*The euro and pound weakened, while risk-sensitive currencies and cryptocurrencies declined amidst investor caution over US/Israel-Iran developments. — **Reuters***

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold falls as dollar strengthens

Gold prices dropped more than 1 per cent as a stronger US dollar weighed on the market, while uncertainty over US-Iran peace talks lifted oil prices and inflation concerns.

*Spot gold fell 1.4 per cent to $4,762.09 an ounce, with futures also lower. Other precious metals like silver, platinum and palladium declined, reflecting broader weakness across precious metals. — **Reuters***

MONETARY POLICY

China keeps key lending rates steady

China kept its benchmark loan prime rates unchanged, signalling a cautious monetary stance amidst economic uncertainties.

*The one-year loan prime rates remained at 3 per cent, while the five-year rate, a key reference for mortgage pricing, stayed at 3.5 per cent. The country's decision reflects efforts to balance growth support with financial stability. — **Reuters***

Which jobs will artificial intelligence replace?

TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker

AT a family gathering last weekend, someone asked a question: "Which jobs do you think artificial intelligence (AI) will actually replace and which ones are safe?"

This is in fact a question almost every Tom, Dick and Harry has in the back of their minds. I paused. Not because I did not have an answer, but because the answer deserved more than a quick reply over a dinner table.

It needed context, honesty and a bit of perspective. So instead of answering the questions, I in fact promised to share the response in the form of an article and that is the focus of my article this week.

Briefly, AI is not coming. It is already here and it's not asking for permission. If we look at history, technology does not randomly replace jobs. It replaces tasks.

And when a job is mostly made up of repetitive, predictable tasks, it becomes vulnerable. Think about roles like data entry clerks, basic customer service agents, telemarketers and even some areas of accounting and finance. These jobs follow structured patterns. The inputs are known and the outputs are expected. That is exactly where AI thrives.

Many organisations around the world (Oman included) are already adopting chatbots to handle their customer queries, AI tools to process invoices and automation tools to manage scheduling and reporting.

Over the next 3 to 5 years, many of these roles won't disappear overnight but will shrink significantly.

Organisations will simply need fewer people to do the same work. Proof is in the pudding on the massive layouts and cuts that we see globally today.

Content creation is another interesting area. Basic writing, generic marketing copy and even simple design tasks are now being handled by AI tools. Nevertheless, the difference is that AI can produce content, but not context. It can generate words, but not lived experience.

So while entry-level content roles may decline within the next 2 to 4 years, the demand for thoughtful, original voices will actually increase in my humble opinion. Jobs that won't be replaced but will be reshaped include software developers, marketers and/or even doctors.

They are being assisted and not replaced. AI is already assisting in writing code, analysing data and even suggesting diagnoses. But it's not replacing the human behind the decision. Developers will and are in fact coding faster.

Marketers are and will make smarter decisions. Doctors can most probably and will diagnose with more precision. The role shifts from doing the work to overseeing and enhancing it. Over the next 5 to 10 years, professionals who embrace AI will outperform those who resist it.

Briefly, AI is not coming. It is already here and it's not asking for permission. If we look at history, technology does not randomly replace jobs. It replaces tasks. And when a job is mostly made up of repetitive, predictable tasks, it becomes vulnerable.

Jobs that I trust that would not be replaced include those that require deep human connection, creativity, leadership and emotional intelligence.

For example, think about teachers who inspire, leaders who make tough decisions, entrepreneurs who navigate uncertainty, or even skilled trades like electricians and mechanics working in unpredictable environments.

These roles are not just about tasks but about judgement, empathy and adaptability. AI struggles in situations where there is no clear pattern, where emotions matter and where trust is the currency.

These professions will remain human at their core even after 10 to 20 years because people prefer dealing with people when it truly matters. I continue to enjoy speaking with a real customer service agent more than an automated machine.

So to conclude my article this week, I would say that the real question should not be "Will AI take my job?" yet "Is my job built on repetition or is it built on thinking?" If it's repetition, start evolving now.

But if it's thinking, double down on it. Because in the end, AI won't replace people. It will replace people who refuse to adapt. Until we catch up again next week, keep learning and evolving so you remain updated and irreplaceable.

KOREA–INDIA SUMMIT SIGNALS STRONGER ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AHEAD

SEOUL: *South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's visit to India is poised to inject fresh momentum into bilateral economic ties, with both sides seeking to unlock underdeveloped areas of cooperation and set a more ambitious trajectory for trade and investment.*

Meeting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, Lee is expected to prioritise expanded collaboration in shipbuilding, alongside emerging sectors such as finance, artificial intelligence and defence. The visit — the first of its kind in eight years — reflects a shared intent to elevate economic engagement to match broader strategic alignment.

Lee's own assessment ahead of the summit points to the opportunity at hand, noting that current levels of economic cooperation remain "low". The two countries are now looking to address this gap by upgrading their Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), with a target of increasing bilateral trade to $50 billion by 2030, up from $25.7 billion last year.

The push comes amidst evolving global economic conditions that are prompting both countries to diversify supply chains and strengthen trusted partnerships.

Lee highlighted how instability linked to the Iran war is reinforcing the importance of closer coordination, positioning India as a key partner not only as a consumer market but as a growing production and supply chain hub.

Energy cooperation is emerging as a practical pillar of this shift. South Korea's recent request for increased naphtha supplies from India underscores efforts to mitigate potential disruptions from Middle East tensions.

India currently accounts for about 8 per cent of South Korea's naphtha imports, suggesting scope for further expansion that could also contribute to balancing trade flows.

Trade dynamics remain a consideration in shaping future ties. South Korea recorded a $12.8 billion surplus last year, with exports reaching $19.2 billion compared to imports of $6.4 billion.

Expanding imports from India, particularly in energy-related products, is seen as one way to address this imbalance while supporting broader economic cooperation.

Sectoral alignment offers additional opportunities. Shipbuilding, in particular, stands out as a complementary area, combining India's focus on job creation with South Korea's industrial strengths. Meanwhile, growing interest in Korean consumer goods and culture could support further expansion in food and retail sectors.

As Lee engages with business leaders during his visit, the emphasis will be on translating policy intent into tangible outcomes.

The summit signals a constructive step towards building a more balanced, diversified and forward-looking economic partnership between the two countries. ***— Reuters***

Oman zones move from geography to relevance

THERE are moments in a country's economic journey when numbers stop being mere statistics and start becoming signals of structural change. Oman's special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities have entered such a phase.

The achievements recorded in 2025 were not simply encouraging annual results; they reflected the steady emergence of a more confident national investment platform, one that is increasingly tied to production, exports, industrial capability and long-term competitiveness.

With total committed investment across these zones reaching RO 22.4 billion, new investments exceeding RO 1.4 billion in 2025 and 325 investment agreements signed in a single year, the message is becoming clearer: Oman is no longer presenting zones as real estate offerings alone, but as strategic economic instruments within a broader national transformation.

What makes this phase particularly important is that Oman's zones are becoming more specialised and more purposeful.

The older model in the region was often built around offering land, incentives and access. That remains necessary, but it is no longer sufficient. Today, the more important question is whether an economic zone can anchor value chains, reduce friction for investors, connect to global markets and generate local capability.

Oman appears to be moving in that direction. The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has explicitly framed the next phase around integrated industrial clusters, especially in renewable energy, manufacturing industries, mining and downstream activities.

In Al Duqm, this is visible in wind turbine manufacturing, green hydrogen, green steel and tourism infrastructure. In Suhar, it is visible in solar cells, solar modules, polysilicon and aluminium-related opportunities. This reflects a necessary shift: not zones competing for attention, but platforms competing for relevance in future industries.

Oman's zones are becoming more specialised and more purposeful.

DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI

yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

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

With total committed investment across these zones reaching RO 22.4 billion, new investments exceeding RO 1.4 billion in 2025 and 325 investment agreements signed in a single year, the message is becoming clearer: Oman is no longer presenting zones as real estate offerings alone, but as strategic economic instruments within a broader national transformation.

This matters even more when viewed against the global backdrop.

The world economy is not becoming simpler. Supply chains are being reconfigured. Energy security and industrial resilience have returned to the centre of policymaking.

Companies are reassessing where they manufacture, where they store, where they ship from and which jurisdictions can offer legal clarity, political stability, energy access, logistics connectivity and credible institutional support.

Opportunity, in practical terms, will favour those ready to act. Oman's advantage is that it is not trying to enter this conversation too late. It is positioning itself through location, infrastructure and policy.

The country's access to more than two billion consumers through trade agreements and economic partnerships, including its rare position as one of only four countries globally with arrangements involving both the United States and India, gives it a serious strategic edge.

That edge, however, must be activated through execution, sector targeting and speed. The legislative and institutional dimension is equally important. Investors do not respond only to incentives; they respond to predictability.

Oman's issuance of the Law of Special Economic Zones and Free Zones under Royal Decree 38/2025, followed by the Authority's new regulation under Royal Decree 39/2026, signals that the country understands this well. A more unified framework, broader regulatory powers, stronger governance and a more capable one-stop-shop model all matter because they reduce ambiguity and shorten the distance between investor interest and project execution.

Add to that OPAZ's digital progress, its advanced service maturity and its institutional recognition, including quality certification and strong government performance indicators and the broader picture becomes more convincing. Infrastructure may attract investors, but institutions are what ultimately retain them.

Just as importantly, these achievements should not be read only through the lens of capital inflows. Their deeper test is whether they contribute to jobs, skills, local content and resilience.

Here too, the indicators are encouraging. In 2025, the zones generated 4,467 job opportunities for Omanis, bringing total Omani employment in these zones to more than 30,000, with an Omanisation rate of 36 per cent.

The requirement to allocate 10 per cent of project value to SMEs, alongside 72 training and development initiatives and the launch of the 'Experiences' initiative to benefit from national expertise, reflects a more mature understanding of development.

A zone succeeds not only when investors arrive, but when local businesses integrate into supply chains, skills are built and communities see tangible benefits.

Still, pride should not become complacency. Oman has achieved something meaningful, but the global race for quality investment is only becoming more intense.

Other countries have shown how zones can become springboards for national transformation. Singapore remains the benchmark in disciplined execution, logistics excellence and investor confidence.

The United Arab Emirates has demonstrated the power of regulatory agility and ecosystem-building. Saudi Arabia is pushing hard on industrial localisation and future industries at scale.

Oman does not need to imitate any of them mechanically.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

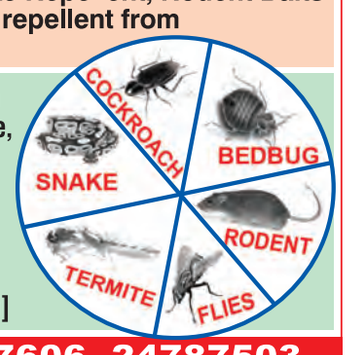
INDIAN male civil engineer with more than 30 years experience in different ministers, seek immediate suitable position. CONTACT: 94158080

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

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches), Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]



Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

A family Restaurant located in Al Khuwair require the following:
1. Cooks — 2 for North Indian Foods.
2. Cooks — 2 for South Indian Foods.
3. Cook — 2 for Porotta, Biryani & Chinese dishes.
4. Waiter — 2 Nos
5. Cleaners — 2 Nos

Salary according to experience. Visa/food/Accommodation available free.

Interested persons contact directly to: Phone/WhatsApp 92795735/76457976/74132913

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

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

FOR SALE

PEUGEOT Traveller, 2019 model, in excellent condition. Interested buyers may visit the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to inspect the vehicle and submit their offers. For inquiries, please contact: 95041480.

SIT. VACANT

URGENTLY REQUIRED FOR CONTRACTING COMPANY

1- Electrical Foreman.
2- Civil foreman (Experience in Piping work).
3- Civil Supervisor.
Contact @Mr.Mohmmaed GSM : 92563101
send CV to mohammed92563101@gmail.com

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

We're Hiring

Engineers Required for Immediate Joining

We are looking for experienced engineers to join our team right away!

OPEN POSITIONS:
1. QA/QC Engineer — 8+ Years Experience
2. QS Engineer — 5+ Years Experience
3. Planning Engineer — 5+ Years Experience

Immediate Joining Required

If you or someone you know meets the experience criteria, drop your CV in the comments below or send us a direct message.
Email- contactus@hooqani-ig.com

We're Hiring

Project Operation Manager
Turbine Civil Works (Oman / GCC Projects)

We are seeking a highly experienced and results - oriented Project Operation Manager with a strong background in turbine civil works to lead and manage major power and infrastructure projects across Oman and GCC countries. This role requires proven expertise in handling large-scale projects, coordinating multicultural teams, and ensuring operational excellence in compliance with regional standards.

Position: Project Operation Manager
Experience Required: Minimum 10 years
Industry: Power Plant / Turbine / Civil Construction
Location: Oman / GCC Region

Interested candidates can apply by sending their CV to: **contactus@hooqani-ig.com**
Mob: +968 79646786
Application Deadline: **30-Apr-2026**

مجمع زلفى الطبي
ZULFA MEDICAL COMPLEX
Opening Soon in Shinas

WE ARE HIRING

Join our new team! Priority is given to experienced candidates with active DataFlow verification.

- **Gynecologist** — Female & Arabic Speaking (Required)
- **Dermatologist** — Female & Arabic Speaking (Required)
- **Nurse** — Female & Arabic Speaking (Required)
- **Pediatrician**
- **Dentist**
- **General Practitioner**
- **Laser Technician** — Female & Arabic Speaking (Required)
- **Lab Technician**

Note: *Arabic speaking ability is preferred for all roles.*

Send your CV to:
hr@zulfamedical.om

SIT. VACANT

OPERATIONS MANGER — LIFTING INSPECTION COMPANY

Required Qualifications:
1- ASNT level II (minimum requirement)
2- LLEA or ASNT Foundation Certification
3- Diploma in Lifting Accessories
4- Diplomas in the following equipment:
- Mobile Crane.
- Overhead Crane.
- MEWP (Mobile Elevating Work Platforms).
- Forklift.
- Gantry Crane.

5 - Additional Advantage: ASNT level III Certification.
Send all your CVs and certified certificates on below email: pipe2566@yahoo.com

FOR RENT

10000 sqm plus area of open yard fully blacktop with compound wall, wide gate & CCTV for immediate rent in Jifnain. Contact: 99853040

4 Ready made office space for rent in Bank Melli Iran building MBD area Ruwi, opposite Centre point. Contact: 99011352.

SIT. VACANT

A CONSUMER goods distribution company FMCG headquartered in Muscat with several branches across the Sultanate of Oman is seeking qualified candidates for the following positions:
- National Sales Manger
- Marketing Manager
- Sales Representative
- Product Display Specialist (Merchandiser).

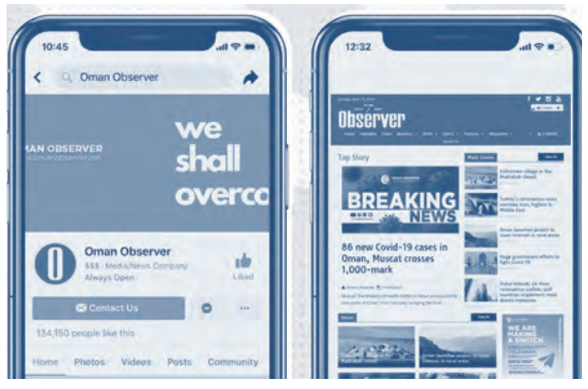
Please send your CV to the email address below. ssagriculture25@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

PROJECT management professional with 20+ years' experience in tendering, business development, business systemisation, ISO QMS, planning and procurement. Possesses managerial and team lead skills. Seeking an opportunity. Contact: 91799438

LOOKING for Pipeline Engineer with 8 Years Experience offer salary: 200 OMR Phone : +96896965333 Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

14 years experience in warehouse in-charge furniture field site installation work in Oman. Valid driving licence. Suitable position required CONTACT NO: 79994705



To advertise in Ministry of Information channels

To advertise | 71455532- 71455531- 71455530 | adv@omaninfo.om | izdihar_info | izdihar.info

izdihar ازدهار IZDIHAR_INFO

ART/LIFE

LITTLE ELEGANCE

BIG DREAMS

REDEFINING GIRLS' FASHION FROM OMAN TO THE WORLD > 20

TRAILER**DEBUT**

MARVEL UNVEILS 'AVENGERS: DOOMSDAY' TRAILER AT CINEMACON

Disney showcased the first theatrical trailer of the new Marvel franchise film "Avengers: Doomsday" on Thursday during the closing day of CinemaCon in Las Vegas.

The clip — played twice for the enthusiastic audience at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace — offered the first look at Robert Downey Jr as the villainous Doctor Doom.

It marks the actor's return to the Marvel Cinematic Universe since the death of Iron Man in 2019's "Avengers: Endgame".

The footage also teased several dramatic moments from the movie, including a fight between Gambit and Shang-Chi — played by Channing Tatum and Simu Liu, respectively — and Patrick Stewart reprising his role as X-Men's Professor Xavier, warning: "Something's coming, something we may not be able to deter".

At the very end of the trailer, Chris Evans returns as his character Steve Rogers, otherwise known as Captain America, appearing before a surprised-looking Thor (Chris Hemsworth) as the Norse god's Mjolnir hammer flies into Rogers' hands.

Both Evans and Downey Jr were on the stage at CinemaCon to present the trailer alongside the film's directors, brothers Joe and Anthony Russo.

"I said I would only come back if there was a real reason", Evans told the crowd.

"And in Doomsday, there is a very real reason that these heroes need Steve Rogers".

"Avengers: Doomsday" follows the events of "Avengers: Endgame", bringing together a host of Marvel characters new and old, including the X-Men, previously excluded from the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

The movie will have its US premiere on December 18, the same day as Denis Villeneuve's "Dune: Part Three".

Theatre owners hope the double-whammy will be a box office bonanza, ending the year on a high note amid declining revenues.

Marvel's presentation was the grande finale of Disney's CinemaCon showcase.

The annual convention allows movie studios to preview their upcoming slates to theatre owners and the press.

Tom Hanks, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson and Queen Latifah were among the superstars to showcase footage from their upcoming Disney films.

Director Jon Favreau introduced the opening scene of his new movie, the latest Star Wars flick "The Mandalorian and Grogu", out next month.

*Disney also played clips from the upcoming sequel films. These include "The Devil Wears Prada 2" with Meryl Streep reprising her role as icy fashion magazine editor Miranda Priestly and "Toy Story 5", the latest Pixar animated film with lifelike toys Woody and Buzz Lightyear coming together more than 30 years since the original released. — **AFP***

QUICK FEATURES

POP

*Fans wearing costumes from the Star Wars films take part in the Desfile de las Galaxias 2026 in Santiago. — **AFP***

PREMIERE

*Australian actor Hugh Jackman attends the premiere of "The Sheep Detectives" in New York. — **AFP***

TRADITION

*An archer in traditional outfit riding a horse shoots arrows at a target during the Yabusame horseback archery demonstration at Sumida Park in Tokyo. — **AFP***

INSTA PICKS

Youngster at the camel races

Muttrah Corniche at dusk

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

TURNING DISABILITY INTO EXCELLENCE

KABEER YOUSUF

Success often belongs to those who refuse to be limited by their circumstances and Amaan Shoaib Ahmed is a powerful example of that spirit. At just 7 years old, the Grade 2 student at Indian School Al Seeb has turned what many would see as a limitation into a story of achievement and inspiration.

Born visually impaired, Amaan has never allowed his condition to define his abilities. Instead, he has developed a strong sense of independence and curiosity that has impressed both his teachers and peers. His journey reflects a simple but powerful idea: real vision comes from determination, not sight.

From an early age, Amaan stood out as a pioneer in using assistive technology. He became the youngest visually impaired student to independently work with digital tools, starting in kindergarten. While other children were learning basic classroom skills, he was navigating laptops with screen readers, accessing digital textbooks and exploring beyond traditional print.

Today, his learning journey also includes artificial intelligence tools. With platforms like Google Gemini, Amaan can listen to books being read aloud and receive detailed descriptions of images, helping him access visual information through sound. His mother, Nausheen, says this has transformed his learning experience and highlights how he is setting new standards for inclusive education by embracing AI at such a young age.

Amaan's academic and creative achievements are equally remarkable. He was featured at the National Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities 2024 and holds a record in the India Book of Records for fastest typing. He has won multiple school and national competitions in storytelling, western music, recitation, Paint and character portrayal, including events like Sargotsav '24 and Regalia '25.

In 2025, he received a Special Award from his school and went on to win the Science, Technology and Innovation Award (STAI).

In 2026, he earned the Memory Maestro Special Award after reciting 200 digits of Pi and 195 country names in alphabetical order from memory. He was also recognised as the Youngest Motivational Speaker by the Influencer Book of World Records and has spoken at major events such as Graduation Day 2025 and Avenir 2025.

AT 91, SOUTH KOREA'S CHAINSAW ARTIST CARVES HER LEGACY

SOUTH KOREAN sculptor Kim Yun Shin wields a chainsaw with quiet precision, refining a craft she has honed over decades spent far from her homeland. Now 91, she is finally receiving major recognition in South Korea through a major retrospective at the Hoam Museum of Art.

Titled "Two Be One", the exhibition is the museum's first since its founding in 1982 to focus on a woman artist. It features around 170 works, including her signature abstract wooden sculptures carved with a chainsaw, alongside paintings that reflect her deep engagement with nature, existence and form.

"The saw is my body", Kim said in her studio in Paju, northwest of Seoul. "When I lift it and cut the wood, it has to move exactly like me".

Born in 1935 in Wonsan, now in North Korea, Kim spent her childhood in the countryside, speaking to trees and rice fields. She experienced the turbulence of Japanese colonial rule and later the Korean War, during which her family fled south. The disappearance of her brother, who joined the independence movement and the cutting down of trees she considered her companions left a lasting emotional mark.

South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin at her studio in Paju. ***— AFP***

"Those trees were my friends", she said, explaining that her work became a way to preserve and transform what was lost. "I wanted them to endure".

After studying in France and returning to Seoul as an art professor, Kim worked during South Korea's military dictatorship, a period when artists were closely scrutinised and women were largely invisible in the art world.

At 48, she moved to Argentina, drawn by its forests and artistic freedom; and lived there for 40 years. There she began chainsaw carving in earnest, working with dense woods like palo santo and algarrobo; and later experimenting with stone such as onyx and sodalite in Mexico and Brazil. According to curator Tae Hyun-sun, she built "her own artistic world, nourished by culture and nature".

Her recognition has grown only in recent years. Represented internationally by Lehmann Maupin, Kim's work has appeared in major exhibitions in London, New York, Seoul and the Venice Biennale.

Her influence also extends to younger artists, including Korean-Argentine filmmaker Cecilia Kang, who says Kim showed her that "living a life doing what one loves is possible".

Kim herself changed her name at 15 to Yun Shin, meaning "truth and faith", following a monk's advice to seek her "true colour". She says those words still guide her today: "Sometimes I feel they are what have carried me through this life".

LITTLE ELEGANCE

BIG

DREAMS

REDEFINING GIRLS' FASHION FROM OMAN TO THE WORLD

SIHAM AL SAIDI

In a modest studio where sketches meet fabric and tradition blends with bold imagination, Omani designer Afra al Maskari is quietly reshaping the world of girls' fashion. A graduate of Sultan Qaboos University with a degree in public law, she chose to follow her creative passion instead of a conventional career path, founding Zadan collection, a brand dedicated to elegant designs for young girls.

Her journey began in 2023 with just RO 250 and four initial designs that quickly captured attention. What started as a personal escape through art soon evolved into a growing business. Supported strongly by her family and husband, Afra embraced entrepreneurship, gaining both creative freedom and financial independence.

Her designs are deeply inspired by Gulf heritage, particularly Omani traditions, yet tailored for young girls in a way that feels modern, soft and refined. Using high-quality fabrics, beads, threads and lace, she creates pieces that balance cultural authenticity with contemporary elegance. Her thoughtful choice of calm, uncommon colours adds a unique sophistication to children's wear.

What distinguishes Zadan collection is not only the quality of its designs but also its strong connection with customers. Afra actively listens to feedback and continuously improves her collections to meet international tastes too. Combined with creative marketing and visually appealing photoshoots, this has helped her brand grow rapidly both inside and outside Oman.

Today, her creations are in demand across the Gulf countries and beyond. Orders come from countries such as Libya and Iraq, as well as internationally from the United States and France, especially among Arab communities living abroad.

Among her proudest achievements is the expansion of her brand to include "Zadan Musk", a fragrance line that has become a customer favourite. She has also been selected as a designer for important events and special occasions both within Oman and internationally. Recently, she achieved recognition at the level of the United Arab Emirates, marking an important milestone in her journey.

Despite her success, Afra's path was not easy. In her early days, she faced significant challenges, including long travel distances to workshops and limited control over production. Over time, she overcame these obstacles by partnering with professional manufacturing teams that allowed her to manage her work more effectively.

Today, her biggest challenges include sourcing fabrics in large quantities and protecting her designs from imitation. In response, she has shifted towards more intricate patterned fabrics that highlight her unique artistic identity and are harder to replicate.

Looking ahead, Afra aims to expand Zadan collection into a broader fashion line, including abayas, textiles and casual wear for girls. With increasing international demand and invitations to design for fashion events both locally and abroad, her vision continues to grow.

For Afra al Maskari, designing for children is more than fashion. In fact, it is about celebrating innocence, culture and beauty through every piece. And as her designs travel across borders, they carry a story of ambition, creativity and Omani identity stitched into every detail.