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HM GIVES AUDIENCE TO SHARJAH RULER



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at Al Alam Palace on Thursday to Shaikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah. At the outset of the audience, His Majesty welcomed the guest and lauded the deep-rooted relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE. The audience reviewed areas of cooperation, particularly in the cultural, scientific and historical fields. — ONA

ROYAL DECREE ON PUBLIC HEALTH LAW

FROM PAGE 1
Article (1) stipulates that provisions of the Law Regulating the Transfer and Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues attached to this Decree shall be enforced.
Article (2) states that the Minister of Health shall issue the Executive Regulation of the attached law, as well as any regulations and decisions necessary for its implementation within one year of its date of enforcement. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall remain in force, without prejudice to the provisions of this law.
Article (3) cancels article (27) of the Law on Practicing Medicine and Auxiliary Medical Professions promulgated by Royal Decree No 75/2019. It also cancels all that contradicts this law or contravenes its provisions.
Article (4) says that this Royal Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publication. — ONA

RUSSIAN TOURISTS EXPLORE OMAN

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) on Thursday hosted an introductory meeting in Muscat for a delegation from the Russian Federation representing 54 tourism companies. The session aimed to showcase the Sultanate of Oman’s latest tourism developments and explore avenues for enhanced bilateral cooperation in the sector.
Recent statistics indicate a significant increase in Russian tourist arrivals to Oman during 2024, exceeding 44,000 visitors. The ministry had previously established a tourism representation office in Russia during the fourth quarter of 2024. This office has effectively promoted Oman’s diverse tourism experiences. — ONA

SAYYID BADR RECEIVES KUWAITI AMBASSADOR



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy meets with Dr Mohammed Nasser al Hajri

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received in his office on Thursday Dr Mohammed Nasser al Hajri, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, both sides underscored the depth of fraternal and historic relations between the two sides. They also expressed the joint keenness to enhance the cooperation relations under the directions of the two countries’ leaders. — ONA

Training on leadership communication skills ends

HAMMAM AL BADI
MUSCAT, APRIL 24

A five-day training programme titled ‘Leadership Communication Skills’ concluded on Thursday. Organised by the Media Training Centre at the Ministry of Information, the programme is designed to enhance the communication and leadership skills of senior officials from various government institutions and private media platforms.
The programme forms part of the ministry’s strategy to align with international best practices in corporate communication. It aims to equip individuals with an interest in media and leadership communication — across various sectors — with the skills and tools needed to meet contemporary challenges, engage effectively with audiences and convey messages with clarity and confidence.
The training was conducted by Coach Kamel Odeh, an international expert in public relations and corporate



Coach Kamel Odeh, an international expert in PR and corporate communication, led the five-day training programme

communication, and a consultant in image building and reputation management. Coach Odeh is widely recognised for his work in designing reputation models and developing strategic plans to assess and enhance the public image of organisations.
Throughout the week, the participants engaged in a variety of sessions focused on key aspects

of leadership communication. Topics included the fundamental standards for effective communication, techniques for interacting with different segments of society and practical tools for reinforcing institutional messaging.
Coach Odeh emphasised that in an era marked by rapid technological and social change,

leadership communication is a vital skill. It builds trust, enhances reputation and allows media professionals to communicate with clarity and confidence. He stressed the importance of mastering communication, supported by persuasive techniques and relatable examples.
“The goal of the programme,” Coach Odeh said, “is to equip participants with genuine leadership communication skill — skills that can be applied both in the workplace and in their personal lives. While some may possess these abilities naturally, they can also be learned and refined through focused training and real-world practice.”
Ahmed al Nabhani, Senior Admin Specialist at the OAAQA and one of the participants, praised the course for its hands-on approach, describing it as “practical and impactful.” He added that the sessions provided valuable insights and significantly improved his communication and leadership competence.

Muscat International Book Fair opens with wide participation

FROM PAGE 1
Additionally, cultural cafés have been set up in several participating pavilions.
Al Sharqiyah North Governorate is this year's 'Guest of Honour', with a special pavilion showcasing the governorate's local culture, history, notable figures, scientific and humanitarian contributions, tourist attractions and modern lifestyle across its various wilayats.

Ahmed al Rawahi, Director of the Muscat International Book Fair, expressed pride in the visit of Shaikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, who signed his new publication 'The Portuguese in the Sea of Oman: Events in Annals from 1497 to 1757' at the Sharjah Book Authority's pavilion.
Al Rawahi noted that this year's edition celebrates a number of intellectuals and creatives from both Oman and abroad, welcoming all guests attending the cultural programme and exploring Omani culture, people and national identity. He added that the cultural programme of Al Sharqiyah North will highlight the governorate's cultural, historical and developmental heritage. The fair also celebrates Saudi Cultural Days, featuring a series of events led by prominent Saudi intellectuals with participation from Omani writers.

The current edition is held under the theme: 'Cultural Diversity Enriches Civilisations', emphasising openness and cultural exchange through its events and hosted figures.
Ibrahim Saad Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, said that the Kingdom is participating in this year's exhibition with 38 publishing houses as part of the Saudi Cultural Days. Several cultural events will also be held to celebrate Omani-Saudi relations, reflecting initiatives by the Omani-Saudi Coordination Council to strengthen cultural cooperation.

Speaking on the occasion, Mahmood bin Yahya al Thuhli, Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, emphasised that the governorate's participation as guest of honour marks a significant cultural milestone, showcasing its literary, tourism, economic and heritage treasures. The pavilion features an AI-powered platform to promote the governorate and a children's corner dedicated to the Omani identity. The governorate is organising 15 diverse events, including seminars and lectures on literature, sports, education and tourism.
The pavilion also aims to promote the governorate's unique tourist sites from golden sands and resorts to natural water springs and historic landmarks across its wilayats — inviting visitors to discover these treasures firsthand.

The book fair runs till May 3, and is open daily from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm, allowing visitors of all ages to explore exhibits and events at convenient times. The organising committee has allocated special morning hours for school students - from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm on weekdays - to provide a safe and educational environment that nurtures young people's love for reading and learning from an early age.



Shaikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi at the Muscat International Book Fair.

PHOTOS BY FAISAL AL BALUSHI



The 29th edition marks one of the most diverse and expansive fairs to date, drawing

674 publishing houses from 35 countries



Information Ministry launches Oman's first children's media platform

THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION on Thursday launched "Ayn for Children", a dedicated media platform for young audiences.
The launch took place during the opening of the 29th Muscat International Book Fair under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University, in the presence of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information.
The platform aims to enrich child-focused media content by providing youth with knowledge resources that shape their awareness, develop their personalities and strengthen their national identity. It offers content that reflects Omani culture and values while nurturing future-ready generations capable of engaging effectively with modern technology.
Ayn for Children features



diverse educational, entertainment and cultural content, including cartoons, programmes, audio content, audiobooks and other age-appropriate materials for children aged 4 to 18.
Dr Amal al Nufali, Director-General of Digital Media at the Ministry of Information, stated that the platform delivers a carefully designed digital edutainment experience with an intuitive, child-friendly interface featuring vibrant colours inspired by the Ayn platform. It ensures accessibility for all children, including those with visual or hearing impairments, and offers exclusive content that reinforces national identity and ethical values.
Dr Al Nufali pointed out that key technical features include personalised child accounts with customisable cartoon avatars,

offline content downloads, an advanced search engine for audio-visual materials and a resume-play function for interrupted sessions. The platform also hosts a dedicated space for young content creators, showcasing their work and fostering future media talent.
She added that the platform boasts a vast library of over 65,000 audio-visual items, including over 8,000 child-specific materials, spanning radio/TV programmes, original productions, animations and audiobooks. Accessible globally with audiences in 170+ countries, it supports smart TVs, mobile devices, tablets and web browsers.
Notably, the Ministry of Information's Ayn platform is Oman's largest audio-visual content hub, surpassing 16 million views since its soft launch. — ONA

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a gathering in Madhubani district of Bihar state. — AFP

MODI VOWS TO PURSUE KASHMIR ATTACKERS

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed on Thursday to punish those responsible for killing 26 civilians in Kashmir, after his government blamed neighbouring country for backing the gruesome attack.

“I say to the whole world: India will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backer,” Modi said in his first speech since the attack in the Himalayan region. “We will pursue them to the ends of the Earth”.

His government later ordered all Pakistani citizens in India to leave by April 29, with the exception of remaining diplomats.

While no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, Indian police have issued wanted notices who they say are members of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) group, designated by the United Nations as a terrorist organisation.

Police have offered a Rs 2 million (\$23,500) bounty for information leading to each man’s arrest.

Modi, speaking in Bihar state to launch development projects, led two minutes of silence in memory of those killed, all but one of whom was Indian.

Pakistan, which denies any role in the Pahalgam attack, held a rare national security meeting on Thursday after New Delhi issued a raft of punitive diplomatic measures.

That included suspending a water-sharing treaty, the closure of the main land border crossing with Pakistan and downgrading diplomatic ties.

While the measures are largely symbolic, some fear New Delhi’s diplomatic moves may just be an opening salvo.

At the Attari-Wagah frontier, Pakistani citizens had already started to leave.

“We just want to go home,” said exhausted-looking Mehnaz Begum, a Pakistani businessman from Karachi, as he left India. — AFP

GERMANY TAKES IN 141 REFUGEES FROM SUDAN

BERLIN: A plane carrying 141 refugees, mostly from war-torn Sudan, landed in Germany on Thursday, according to officials. The aircraft took off from Cairo and landed in the northern German city of Hanover on Thursday morning, the Interior Ministry said.

The group, comprised of particularly vulnerable refugees from crisis zones, was granted humanitarian permission to enter Germany as part of the EU resettlement programme upon referral by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), according to the ministry.

The group includes families, single mothers and 77 minors found to be particularly vulnerable due to experiences of torture and violence or medical needs, for example.

The EU resettlement scheme governs humanitarian admission of non-EU nationals in need of protection to an EU country upon referral by a relevant international body. — dpa

FIRE SEASON UP

Greece beefs up firefighting force



Greece will deploy the largest firefighting force in its history for a menacing fire season that has already seen over a thousand blazes break out, the prime minister said. “For 2025, we have the largest number of men and women in the fire service,” Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said during a visit to the civil protection ministry. “We must be prepared for the worst possible scenario,” Mitsotakis said. — AFP

UK ENDS SANCTIONS ON SYRIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY

LONDON: The UK government announced on Thursday it was lifting sanctions that were imposed on Syria’s interior and defence ministries during the rule of the now-deposed Bashar al Assad.

“The following entries have been removed from the Consolidated List and are no longer subject to an asset freeze — Ministry of Interior, Ministry of

Defence,” the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementation said in a notice.

Sanctions against various media groups and intelligence agencies were also lifted, although Syria’s new rulers dissolved the Assad-era spy bodies in January.

Those targeted by the sanctions were “involved in repressing the civilian population in Syria” or

had been “involved in supporting or benefitting from the Syrian regime”, said the notice.

The new Syrian government is aiming to persuade Western capitals that the origins of the rebels who toppled Assad in December, after 24 years in charge, are confined to the past, and that crippling international sanctions should be lifted. — AFP

Israel warns of ‘larger’ Gaza assault as strikes kill 55

GAZA rescue teams and medics said Israeli air strikes killed at least 55 people on Thursday, as the military threatened an even larger offensive if captives were not freed soon.

Israel resumed its military assault in the Gaza Strip on March 18, after the collapse of a two-month ceasefire that had brought a temporary halt to fighting in the blockaded Palestinian territory.

Israel’s army chief, visiting troops in Gaza on Thursday, threatened to expand the offensive in Gaza if the captives were not released.

“If we do not see progress in the return of the captives in the near future, we will expand our activities to a larger and more significant operation,” Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir said. The warning came as the army issued fresh evacuation orders for northern areas of Gaza ahead of a planned attack.



Palestinians gather at the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Gaza City. — Reuters

Earlier in the day, six members of one family — a couple and their four children — were killed when an air strike levelled their home in northern Gaza City, the civil defence agency said in a statement.

Nidal al Sarafiti, a relative, said the strike happened as the family was sleeping.

“What can I say? The destruction has spared no one,” he said.

Nine people were killed and several wounded in another strike on a former police station in the Jabalia area of northern Gaza, according to a statement from the Indonesian hospital, where the casualties were taken.

“Everyone started running and screaming, not knowing what to do from the horror and severity of the bombing,” said Abdel Qader Sabah,

Israel resumed its military offensive in the Gaza Strip on March 18, following the collapse of a two-month ceasefire

23, from Jabalia. In another deadly attack, the bodies of 12 people were recovered after the Hajj Ali family home, also in Jabalia, was struck, the civil defence said. Another 28 people were killed in strikes across the territory, medics and the civil defence agency reported.

BLUNDER

Meanwhile, the Israeli military on Thursday acknowledged that it mistakenly fired on a United Nations facility in Gaza in March, killing a UN employee.

The military said the building, located in Deir al Balah in the central Gaza Strip, was targeted “due to suspicions of enemy presence” and “was not identified” as a UN site at the time of the attack.

The military expressed regret over “this serious incident.”

Preliminary findings indicate the employee was killed by tank fire.

“We regret the unintentional harm to the UN employee and share in the family’s grief,” the statement continued. The attack occurred on March 19, injuring five people, some seriously, according to the UN.

At the time, the Israeli military denied any involvement, stating: “Contrary to reports, the Israeli army did not attack a UN building in Deir al Balah.”

Jorge Moreira da Silva, Executive Director of the UN Office for Project Services, said strikes had taken place on and around the facility in the days prior, prompting the organisation to alert the Israeli military. He said that the site, involved in demining efforts, was well known to Israeli forces.

— Agencies

FLOUR FAMINE IN GAZA

People receive sacks of flour provided by the Turkish disaster relief agency AFAD, from a supply centre affiliated with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees (UNRWA) in Al Tifah neighbourhood of Gaza City. Flour is so scarce after more than 18 months of the war in Gaza that it has become like white gold, with humanitarian organisations operating in the territory lacking essential goods, both food and medical, especially since Israel blocked humanitarian aid after March 2, to the war-devastated Palestinian territory. — AFP



SPIRITUAL FERVOUR

Buddhists flock to see ‘sacred tooth’



Buddhist devotees flocking to see a sacred tooth in Sri Lanka were urged to stay clear by police after hundreds of people queuing fell sick and a woman died. Regional police chief Lalith Pathinayake said queues in the city of Kandy were already 10 kilometres long to worship what Buddhists believe to be a tooth of the Buddha that ends on Sunday. “We appeal to the people not to come to Kandy,” Deputy Inspector General Pathinayake said. — AFP

SPACE DREAM REALISED

Chinese astronauts blast off for space station



China will send a new team of astronauts to its space station as it marches towards its ambition of becoming a space power. Beijing has pumped billions of dollars into its space programme in recent years in an effort to achieve Chinese people’s “space dream”. The world’s second-largest economy has bold plans to send a crewed mission to the Moon by the end of the decade and eventually build a base on the lunar surface. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



People evacuate to Gezi Park following an earthquake in Istanbul. — Reuters

ISTANBUL HIT BY 300 AFTERSHOCKS AFTER 6.2 QUAKE

ISTANBUL: More than a thousand people in Istanbul turned to mosques, schools and other temporary shelters on Thursday after a strong earthquake rattled the Turkish metropolis a day earlier, leaving some 1.5 million buildings at risk, authorities said.

The magnitude 6.2 tremor on Wednesday sent citizens dashing from shaking homes, reviving memories of a historic quake that devastated the country's southeast two years ago - and raising anxieties about the city's lack of preparedness.

It hit a city that has recently seen mass protests over the arrest of its mayor, Ekrem Imamoglu. Scheduled demonstrations still occur twice weekly, with more spontaneous protests cropping up regularly. There were no deaths from Wednesday's tremor, the biggest in years in Istanbul, which sits just north of a fault line crossing the Marmara Sea. Some 5 million of the city's 16 million residents live in risky homes, data showed in 2023.

While the government said preparing the city for a bigger earthquake was urgent, the opposition party - which runs the municipality and has been frustrated by what it calls inaction by the central government - said its urban transformation plan must finally be adopted.

Imamoglu and some of the city's other disaster-response officials are in prison pending trial on charges brought last month that were broadly criticised as politicised and anti-democratic.

— Reuters



GAMING WITH ROYALS

Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales, reacts as he plays a computer game with school children during his visit to the Mentivity community centre and youth hub in the Southwark borough of London. Mentivity, founded in 2016, engages over 400 local young people weekly through mentoring programmes, school outreach and youth clubs. — AFP

BOSNIAN SERB LEADER BACK IN SARAJEVO AFTER ARREST ATTEMPT

Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik returned to the Serb-controlled part of the capital on Thursday, hours after federal police failed to arrest him there on secession charges. Dodik, president of the Bosnian Serb statelet, is wanted by Bosnia's central judiciary after a series of secessionist moves but continues to defy an arrest warrant issued in mid-March.

Since the end of its ethnic war in the 1990s, Bosnia remains split into two highly autonomous

halves — the Serbs' Republika Srpska (RS) and a Muslim-Croat Federation — linked by a weak central government.

On Wednesday, federal police officers tried to enter an official building in East Sarajevo, a Serb-controlled area of the Bosnian capital, to arrest Dodik but were blocked by Bosnian Serb interior ministry forces.

“Our colleagues from the RS ministry simply weren't cooperative or, rather, they believed that it

shouldn't be carried out, that it could perhaps lead to some conflict,” said Jelena Miovcic, spokeswoman for the federal police force (SIPA).

“We simply assessed that proceeding might cause bigger problems... In the end, we didn't go in armed,” she added.

“It was meant to be handled in a civilised way, to explain things clearly — that we are legally obliged to enforce the court order from Bosnia and Herzegovina,” she said.

— AFP

Trump urges Putin to halt missiles after Kyiv barrage

RUSSIA pounded Kyiv with missiles and drones overnight, killing at least 10 people in the biggest attack on the Ukrainian capital this year and drawing rare condemnation from Donald Trump who told Vladimir Putin: “Vladimir, Stop!”

The attack, which the US president said was “not necessary” and “very bad timing” as he pushes for peace, wounded 90 people, smashed buildings and set off fires, Ukrainian officials said. Some people were still trapped under rubble over 12 hours later.

The attack comes at a critical moment in Russia's war in Ukraine, which began with Moscow's full-scale war in 2022. Both Kyiv and Moscow are trying to show Trump they are making progress towards his goal of a rapid peace deal.

“I am not happy with the Russian strikes on KYIV. Not necessary, and very bad timing. Vladimir, Stop! 5000 soldiers a week are dying. Lets get the Peace Deal Done!” Trump said on Truth Social, referring to the Russian president.

The White House has threatened to abandon its efforts if no progress is made soon. Trump upbraided Zelensky on Wednesday over a comment in which the Ukrainian repeated that Kyiv would not recognise Russia's occupation of Crimea.

Trump has used a markedly more gentle tone in his statements about Putin than with Zelensky, whom he at one point referred to as a “dictator”.

Trump's special envoy is expected to meet Putin on Friday for more talks, a US official has said.

Zelensky said on Thursday he believed that a document with proposals that emerged from Wednesday's talks between



Police officers and local residents stand next to damaged apartment buildings following a Russian missile attack in Kyiv amid the Russian war of Ukraine. — AFP



A man, who was injured during a Russian missile strike, appears at the site of his damaged house, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv. — Reuters

Ukrainian and Western officials in London was now on Trump's table.

“...I believe that today, this format, this document, is on President Trump's desk,” Zelensky told a press conference in South Africa.

“Anything that contradicts our values or our constitution cannot be included in any agreement.”

Zelensky, who cut short a trip to South Africa on Thursday after the Russian strike, said he did not see signs Washington was putting strong pressure on Russia. — Reuters

At least 12 dead, 90 wounded in Kyiv, officials say as Trump tells Putin: ‘Vladimir, Stop’

Vatican says 50 heads of state, 10 monarchs to attend Pope’s funeral

VATICAN CITY: The Vatican said on Thursday that at least 130 foreign delegations, including about “50 heads of state and 10 reigning monarchs”, would attend Pope Francis's funeral on Saturday. “There are currently 130 delegations confirmed for the funeral of Pope Francis,” to be held in St Peter's Square, the Vatican said.

Meanwhile, mourners queued on Thursday to catch a last glimpse of Pope Francis's body on the second day of public tributes as Italian authorities stepped up security arrangements ahead of his weekend funeral.

Some 61,000 people had filed past the late Catholic leader's red-lined wooden coffin in the first 26 hours since Francis was laid in state at St Peter's Basilica on Wednesday morning, the Vatican said.

Such was the demand to see him that authorities extended visiting

hours on Wednesday from midnight local time until 5:30 am.

After a break of just one and a half hours, the doors opened again, with authorities saying the window might again be extended on Thursday night if necessary.

Italian authorities have begun increasing security for the funeral, even blocking drones.

On Thursday morning, the queue quickly stretched far past the two entry points at St Peter's Square, where spirits were high despite the long wait.

“It's true that it feels oppressive but at the same time you all feel united, everyone happy,” Frenchwoman Laure Du Moulin who visited with her family, said.

“Everyone seems enthusiastic, fraternal, like a big community.”

Friends Florencia Soria and Ana Sofia Alicata, both 26 and -- like Francis -- from Argentina, came



Nuns after seeing Pope Francis lying in state, at the Vatican's St Peter's Basilica, in Rome. — Reuters

prepared for the long wait with coffees and wondered whether the light rain might work in their favour.

“We're here and we hope it will

go as well as possible, with people leaving because of the rain,” joked Soria, although the sun soon re-emerged.

Francis died on Monday aged 88, after 12 years as head of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

Condolences have flooded in from around the world for the Jesuit, an energetic reformer who championed the most vulnerable and marginalised in society.

His funeral on Saturday is expected to draw huge crowds as well as world leaders including US President Donald Trump.

The ceremony will be held in front of St Peter's Basilica.

Lined in red silk, the pope's wooden coffin has been set before St Peter's altar, with Francis dressed in his papal vestments -- a red chasuble, white mitre and black shoes -- with a rosary in his hands.

Each mourner was ushered past the casket within seconds, while authorities on Thursday banned the use of smartphones inside the Basilica. — AFP

OPINION

Developing countries can lead in medical innovation



MUHAMMAD
RADZI ABU
HASSAN

The writer is
Malaysia's
Director-General
of Health

THE successful collaboration between the health ministries of Malaysia and Thailand, industry partners in Egypt and Malaysia, and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) to bring a new hepatitis C antiviral drug – ravidasvir – to market in 2022 was an important milestone. For years, a 12-week course of treatment using sofosbuvir cost between \$70,000 and \$80,000, putting it out of reach for many in the Global South. But ravidasvir – a safe and effective alternative when combined with sofosbuvir – costs far less, averaging less than \$500 per course.

This type of South-South cooperation could serve as a model for developing countries with endemic disease, highlighting how collective action can help them address health challenges and promote medical innovation. As this year's chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), Malaysia plans to advance the agenda of collaborative, need-driven research, and foster the development of therapeutics and diagnostics in the Global South.

Ravidasvir's success depended on several factors. First, DNDi worked with an Egyptian drug manufacturer to develop the molecule, which was originally produced in the United States but overlooked by large pharmaceutical companies. Second, once it became clear that this R&D initiative would produce an independent, affordable treatment for hepatitis C, the Malaysian

Ministry of Health (where I am Director-General of Health), together with DNDi leadership in Southeast Asia, designed an aggressive access strategy based on market competition, driving down the prices of three treatment options. Throughout the process, Global South partners were in the driver's seat. This sense of ownership prompted a flurry of activity in Malaysia, ultimately lowering the barriers between siloed government departments and dispelling conventional thinking. For example, our regulatory authority was the first to register the combination of ravidasvir and sofosbuvir without approval by a stringent regulatory authority. Pharmaniaga, a Malaysian generic-drugs manufacturer, supported these efforts by taking on the challenge of preparing a registration dossier for a new chemical entity.

The Malaysian health ministry has continued to advance this treatment option. In February, the ministry unveiled results from a clinical trial showing that a shorter regimen (eight as opposed to 12 weeks) of sofosbuvir-ravidasvir treatment was not inferior in non-cirrhotic hepatitis C patients. This represents a big win for those living with the disease in the Global South, as it lowers the therapeutic cost even further and improves patient compliance.

While making treatment affordable and accessible is an important step towards eliminating hepatitis C, the same needs to be done for diagnostic tools. Traditional lab-based testing is expensive and logistically

Hepatitis C treatment is no longer prohibitively expensive in the Global South because Malaysia, Thailand, Egypt, and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative developed ravidasvir – a low-cost antiviral. Such breakthroughs are possible for other neglected diseases if low- and middle-income countries agree to act collectively

challenging for mass screening programmes across Southeast Asia. But instead of waiting for high-income countries to develop solutions, the Global South should take the lead in innovating point-of-care diagnostics that are inexpensive and scalable.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of global medical-supply chains and the limits of solidarity among countries in the face of a public-health crisis. The Global North's reluctance to share vaccines, tests, personal protective equipment, and therapeutics fuelled an “every country for itself” mentality. As a result, a credibility crisis has consumed the global health system, now exacerbated by a widening funding gap, largely owing to America's recent withdrawal from the World Health Organization. The need for new models has never been clearer.

Recognising the need for greater regional resilience, Southeast Asian countries have shown an increasing willingness to support clinical trials and boost local manufacturing of medical devices and pharmaceuticals. Malaysia has played a central role in these efforts. In July 2024, the Malaysian government hosted a workshop with the United Kingdom's Academy of Medical Sciences to explore strategies for improving diagnostic and therapeutic access in the region. Workshop attendees recommended establishing a product-development partnership to foster collaboration among governments, academia and industry.

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AFRICANS EYE A POPE FROM AMONG THEIR OWN

NICHOLAS ROLL AND WINIFRED LARTEY

In 2010, Ghana's Cardinal Peter Turkson said he was not ready to become pope -- and that the Catholic Church might not be either. "I wouldn't want to be that first black pope. I think he'll have a rough time," he said.

Now, after the death of Pope Francis, the west African clergyman's name is buzzing around the Vatican. Turkson isn't the only potential African candidate as the Church prepares for a conclave to choose its next leader, and he wouldn't be the first pontiff from the continent: Pope Victor I, who reigned from 189-199, was from North Africa. But as Africa's share of the Catholic population booms — mirroring its growing share of the world population as the continent grows while Europe has greyed and secularised — renewed attention has turned to whether the Church is ready for its first black pope.

“There has been this sense which has built up that the pope if he is going to be a global authority, needs to come from the global church,” said Miles Pattenden, a historian of Catholicism.

Turkson was born into a humble family of 10 children and was Ghana's first clergyman to become a cardinal, in 2003. In 2008, he served as a mediator on a peace council following close elections that threatened to erupt into violence and has worked in the upper levels of the Vatican's bureaucracy. The papacy of Francis, an Argentine, marked a major break from the Church's Europe-heavy leadership. His drive to make the Vatican's hierarchy reflect its membership means that African cardinals now make up 12 per cent of the voting members of the conclave, versus eight per cent during the last election.

“It would be almost impossible to imagine the world accepting an African pope without this transition of Pope Francis having been from Argentina,” said Traina, even as Africa, which counts 20 per cent of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics, remains underrepresented in the conclave. One Congolese priest, wishing to remain anonymous, said that while the Church has come a long way, there's a reason there hasn't been an African pope in 1,500 years.

“Discrimination, even if it isn't obvious among our European brothers, is still a reality that we often don't talk about,” he said. — AFP

Textile giant Bangladesh pushed to recycle waste

BANGLADESH'S

limited capacity to deal with the enormous waste generated by its textile sector may prove unsustainable as the global fashion industry faces pressure to reduce its environmental footprint.

Bangladesh, the world's second-largest apparel producer, only recycles a small percentage of its textile waste, with the rest shipped abroad or left to pollute the landscape.

As more countries introduce rules requiring greater recycled content in clothes, analysts and business owners say Bangladesh must expand recycling to meet demand from a global textile recycling market projected to be worth \$9.4 billion by 2027. The European Union this month published its first road map towards meeting the standards under its Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, which includes provisions for reducing the environmental harm caused by the textile industry.

This will require Bangladesh and other fashion suppliers to boost recycling while improving working conditions in what is largely an informal sector, said Patrick Schröder, a senior research fellow at the British think tank Chatham House.

“As the call for recycling grows and fast fashion goes out of fashion in the coming years, millions of jobs will be impacted, and Bangladesh needs to think ahead to step up its capacity to keep up with the changes,” he said.



MD TAHMID
ZAMI

The writer is a Climate Correspondent for the Thomson Reuters Foundation based in Dhaka. He specialises in sustainable development, investment and public policy and has previously worked in policy research



Women work in a factory where fabric waste from garments is transformed into cotton to make mattresses, in Narayanganj, Bangladesh. — Reuters

Bangladesh's fashion industry is estimated to produce up to 577,000 metric tonnes of textile waste from the factories each year. Most of it is shipped abroad, and the rest is left to clog bodies of water, pollute the soil, enter landfills or be incinerated, which produces toxic gases, according to a report by Switch to Circular Economy Value Chains, a project supported by the EU and the Finnish government.

What is processed has evolved into a vast, informal business in Bangladesh. Thousands of informal workshops sort and bundle the waste, known as jhut, and what remains in Bangladesh is down-cycled to make low-value products like mattresses, pillows and cushions.

When clothing scraps are swept

up from factory floors, politicians and other influential people control who gets it and at what price, said Asadun Noor, project coordinator at the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation in Dhaka.

“This is a very opaque process, offering limited visibility of the waste value chain to clothing brands and suppliers,” he said.

The scraps go to hundreds of mostly unregistered workshops near the capital Dhaka, where they are cleaned and sorted into batches based on quality, colour and other considerations.

Tens of thousands of workers, 70 per cent of them women, sort the remnants for 10 to 12 hours a day, a study by the UN's children agency Unicef said last year.



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
4,273.44

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$68.27
BRENT \$66.80
LIGHT \$62.04



SHORT TAKES



Oman and Libya sought to strengthen bilateral economic cooperation as business leaders met in Muscat to explore joint investment opportunities across key sectors.

OMAN AND LIBYA ENHANCE ECONOMIC TIES

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 24

As part of efforts to promote bilateral economic relations, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) hosted a high-level Libyan business delegation within the framework of the Omani-Libyan Business Forum that began in Muscat on Tuesday.

The forum was attended by delegates from seventeen Libyan companies, with the aim of exploring possibilities of cooperation and mutual investment in a range of vital sectors.

Hamoud al Saadi, Second Vice-Chairman of the OCCI Board of Directors, received the delegation and pointed out the forum's role in developing cross-border commercial relations.

"We are pleased to host a delegation of Libyan businessmen in the context of developing bilateral investment relations," Al Saadi stated. "Seventeen Libyan companies are participating in the forum, which is being co-organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Libyan counterparts."

He noted that the forum is showcasing a number of high-potential sectors like food security, infrastructure, medical industries, renewable energy, technology and healthcare services — all of which are Oman's national priorities and of high interest to Libyan investors.

Issa al Bahlani, Member of the Labour Market Committee at OCCI and Representative of Sarooj Construction Company stressed the strategic significance of such forums. "The importance of these events cannot be overstated," he said. "They attract international investors who seek promising opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman," Al Bahlani spoke about how Oman has presented a wide range of opportunities for Libyan companies to invest in, specifically in food, healthcare, and construction.

Oman plans 300 – 400 km hydrogen pipeline by 2030

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 24

Gas Networks (OQGN), the sole owner and operator of Oman's national gas transportation network, says it anticipates the development of hydrogen pipelines ranging in length from 300 – 400 kilometres by 2030, in conjunction with the growth of the country's green hydrogen industry.

Funding approval for this initiative, conceived in line with its mandate as the National Infrastructure Provider for the hydrogen transportation network, is expected in 2027, the publicly traded, majority state-owned company said in its newly published 2024 Annual Report.

"OQGN will follow a phased approach, beginning with regional pipelines, which can later be expanded into a nationwide hydrogen network. By 2030, the Company expects 300-400 km of hydrogen pipelines to be built, with the final investment decision (FID) expected by 2027," OQGN – part of OQ Group - stated.

The "regional lines" in question are a reference to OQGN's role in rolling out hydrogen pipelines as part of an end-to-end, integrated common use infrastructure (CUI) encompassing dedicated networks for electricity supply, ultrapure water and other utilities.

This infrastructure will be made available for use by the eight consortiums currently in the early stages of developing their green hydrogen projects in dedicated blocks in Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates.

OQGN says it plans to leverage its expertise in the operation of the country's 4,235 km gas transportation network in rolling out the new hydrogen network.

To this end, it is working with Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom) – the architect of Oman's green hydrogen industry – on the technical aspects of the proposed hydrogen pipeline



OQGN plans to initiate developmental work on a regulatory and commercial framework for hydrogen and CO₂ transportation in 2025

Highlights

Oman charts bold course for hydrogen economy with

400 km pipeline plan; OQGN to finalise investment by 2027

system for the country.

"OQGN is collaborating with Hydrom, which orchestrates implementing the green hydrogen strategy, bringing together producers, end-users, and infrastructure providers. While Hydrom facilitates discussions and attracts foreign direct investment (FDI), OQGN is responsible for the technical and operational development of the pipeline infrastructure," the company noted.

Last year, in line with its remit as the National Infrastructure Provider for the hydrogen transportation network, OQGN signed a MoU with the consortium developing the Salalah2 green hydrogen project in Salalah. The multinational consortium, comprising OQ Alternative Energy, Marubeni Corporation, UAE-based Dutco Group and Samsung C&T of South Korea, is targeting the production of 1 million tpa of green ammonia and 175,000 tpa of green hydrogen.

Also in 2024, OQGN conducted a strategy study to evaluate the complexities of developing hydrogen infrastructure and its commercialization, it noted in its Annual Report.

Furthermore, in parallel with its hydrogen pipeline strategy, OQGN is master planning the development of a carbon dioxide (CO₂) transportation network

infrastructure to link CO₂ emission sources with storage and utilization sites.

"Some CO₂ will be stored underground for carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects, while other volumes will be used as feedstock in industries such as fertilizer production, desalination, and enhanced oil recovery in upstream oil and gas operations," it said.

Envisioned for implementation on the CO₂ front is a project with energy major Shell focusing on the development of underground CO₂ storage. Separately, OQGN is collaborating with Oxy Oman in the development of a CO₂ network to support the latter's enhanced oil recovery operations.

Additionally, the company is "collaborating with Shell, OQ, and PDO on Blue Horizons' low-carbon and ammonia project, which is currently in the pre-FEED (front-end engineering design) stage, to explore commercial models and ensure shareholder value".

Further into 2025, OQGN plans to initiate developmental work on a regulatory and commercial framework for hydrogen and CO₂ transportation. Additionally, the company plans to advance technical studies for hydrogen and CO₂ projects, ensuring readiness for the final investment decision in 2027.

Oman enhances cyber resilience in logistics sector

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 24

In accordance with Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises economic diversification, digital transformation, and human capital development, Oman reaffirmed its commitment to cybersecurity with the inauguration of the 5th Oman Cybersecurity Conference on Thursday.

Focusing on the theme, "Empowering Cybersecurity in the Logistics Sector", the conference was organised in collaboration with the Cyber Defense Centre and the Advanced Cybersecurity Academy.

The conference opened under the auspices of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

In attendance were national and international experts sharing their perspectives on tackling the growing cyber threats to Oman's logistics infrastructure — a cornerstone of Oman Vision 2040 strategy to transform Oman into a competitive logistics centre.



Oman launched its first national cybersecurity drill and workforce upskilling initiative to safeguard supply chains and fuel sustainable growth

Opening the conference, Hatim bin Hamad al Taie emphasised the need to inject cybersecurity into logistics planning, as both are essential to keeping modern economies afloat.

"As cyber threats continue to grow globally, it is imperative that

our supply chains are efficient and secure," Al Taie said.

He mentioned Oman's unique geographical position and continued investment in ports and free zones as evidence of its growing role in regional and global trade.

Al Taie also referenced the recent

historic agreement on the world's first liquefied hydrogen corridor from the Global South to Europe as evidence of Oman's evolving role in global energy security.

Eng Khamis al Hajri, Head of Cyber Defense Centre, delivered the keynote, quoting the vulnerability of global logistics networks to cyberattacks. He referred to the 2023 MOVEit breach that affected more than 93 million individuals as a chilling reminder. Al Hajri called for "Secure by Design" practices for ensuring cybersecurity from the onset.

One of the highlights of the event was also the inauguration of the first national cybersecurity simulation exercise tailored to the logistics sector in Oman. The exercise aims at boosting digital preparedness, testing response to threat, and stimulating inter-agency coordination.

Singaporean cybersecurity expert Leonard Kahou provided a general overview of how it's becoming increasingly difficult to secure logistics ecosystems.

He warned that ransomware, data

breaches, and social engineering tactics present increasing threats throughout supply chains — all the way to the end-user.

Cyber Defence Centre engineer Hashem al Balushi revealed an alarming trend: Oman's logistics industry alone saw over 80,000 malware attacks and 37 advanced persistent threats within the first quarter of 2025.

He advocated for robust protection mechanisms, including encrypted protocols, limited access permissions, and periodic system updates.

Wrapping up the event, the Ministry of Labour's "Tashgheel" programme and several local businesses signed a memorandum of understanding to upskill Omani professionals in cybersecurity — doubling down on Oman Vision 2040's focus on developing the workforce.

The conference underscored the fact that a secure digital foundation is not a technical necessity alone, but rather a strategic necessity for Oman's sustainable development and economic future.

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



South Korea to ready support for business in response to US tariffs. — Reuters

EUROPEAN CAR SALES DIP SLIGHTLY IN MARCH: ACEA

BRUSSELS: New car sales in Europe edged down slightly in March as automakers continued to face tough global economic conditions, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) said on Thursday. Car registrations across the region fell 0.2 per cent year-on-year, easing from a sharper drop of 3.4 per cent recorded in February.

France posted the steepest decline among major markets, with sales plunging 14.5 per cent, while Germany saw a decrease of 3.9 per cent. In contrast, Spain and Italy reported positive growth in March, with sales in Spain surging 23.2 per cent and Italy up 6.3 per cent.

Electric vehicles continued to gain ground. Battery-electric car sales rose by 17.1 per cent, while hybrid-electric vehicles climbed by 23.9 per cent. Plug-in hybrid electric cars also posted gains, rising 12.4 per cent. Sales of petrol-powered vehicles dropped 20.7 per cent in March, while diesel car sales tumbled 25.5 per cent.

Over the first quarter, new EU car registrations were down 1.9 per cent compared to the same period last year.

Battery-electric vehicles accounted for 15.2 per cent of the EU market in the first three months of the year, up from 12 per cent in the first quarter of 2024, as sales jumped 23.9 per cent. Hybrid-electric vehicles made up 35.5 per cent of the market, with sales rising 20.7 per cent.

Meanwhile, the combined market share of petrol and diesel cars dropped to 38.3 per cent, down from 48.3 per cent a year earlier. — **dpa**

FRANCE EYES EU STEEL SHIELD

PARIS: France will push for stronger EU measures to protect the steel sector from Chinese imports, government spokesperson Sophie Primas said on Thursday, following ArcelorMittal's decision to cut 600 jobs at seven French sites.

Primas blamed cheap Chinese steel and high energy costs for undermining Europe's competitiveness. ArcelorMittal said it had exhausted short-term options and must reorganise. The move comes amid broader industry pressure, with Tata Steel also announcing major layoffs in the Netherlands.

Regional officials demanded clarity on delayed decarbonisation investments. — **AFP**

AMERICANS UNEASY OVER TRUMP'S ECONOMIC REVERSALS

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's erratic economic policies are stirring growing concern among Americans, many of whom had hoped for stability following his return to office.

Recent weeks have seen Trump float firing Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, impose steep tariffs on Chinese goods, and then abruptly reverse course.

A Pew Research Center survey in April showed his job approval fell to 40 per cent, down seven points



US President Donald Trump signs executive orders. — **AFP**

from February. Nearly 60 per cent of respondents disapproved of his trade policies.

Similarly, a Reuters/Ipsos poll found only 37 per cent were satisfied with his economic direction.

Markets have responded nervously to the lack of a clear White House strategy, with stock fluctuations unsettling millions of investors. Trump's public attacks on Powell further shook confidence before he assured the Fed chair's job was safe.

— **AFP**

Markets waver on Trump tariff reversal

GLOBAL markets faltered on Thursday, with Asian stocks mixed and US futures turning lower, as investor sentiment was rattled by the Trump administration's shifting stance on trade tariffs and the Federal Reserve's leadership.

In recent days, US President Donald Trump launched attacks on Fed Chair Jerome Powell, only to later walk back calls for his resignation. Simultaneously, uncertainty looms over potential changes to tariffs on Chinese imports.

According to a source cited by Reuters, the White House may consider easing tariffs, a report echoed by The Wall Street Journal. However, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent clarified that any changes would require reciprocal action from Beijing. White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt supported that view.

"I don't think you can ever get used to the kind of flip-flopping we're seeing. It's extreme," said Tony Sycamore, market analyst at IG. "But that's Trump – he tries levers and isn't afraid to reverse if they don't work."

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan fell 0.72%, while Japan's Nikkei edged up 0.4%. In China, the CSI300 rose slightly by 0.06%, but Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped over 1%.

US stock futures retreated, with Nasdaq futures down 0.32% and S&P 500 futures falling 0.23%. EUROSTOXX 50 futures were flat, while FTSE futures dipped 0.04%.

Japan's chief trade negotiator, Ryosei Akazawa, is expected to visit Washington at the end of April for a second round of tariff talks, according to informed sources.

China, meanwhile, reaffirmed its commitment to free trade and multilateralism, according to state broadcaster CCTV, quoting the central bank governor's remarks in Washington.

"Short-term volatility is extreme



German share price index DAX graph is pictured at the stock exchange in Frankfurt. — **Reuters**

Highlights

Investor confidence shaken by tariff reversals, Fed uncertainty and global volatility

right now," said Salman Ahmed, Global Head of Macro at Fidelity International. "We're beyond peak globalisation — trade and capital will no longer flow freely in a steady state."

Japanese Finance Minister Katsunobu Kato also called on G20 partners to stabilise financial markets, warning that US tariffs and retaliation from trading partners are weakening global growth.

The dollar retreated slightly following a rebound earlier in the week. It fell 0.5% against the yen to 142.75, while the euro gained 0.25% to \$1.1341. The Swiss franc rose 0.3% to 0.8281 per dollar.

US Treasury yields dipped, with the benchmark 10-year yield falling 3.5 basis points to 4.3578%, and the 30-year yield steady at 4.7960%.

Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland President Beth Hammack said the Fed remains cautious amid ongoing uncertainty, reinforcing market expectations of over 80 basis points of rate cuts by December.

Oil prices steadied after falling in the previous session, as sources reported OPEC+ is considering accelerating output hikes in June. Brent crude edged up 0.1% to \$66.19 per barrel, while US crude rose 0.14% to \$62.36. — **Reuters**

Oil steadies after sharp drop on OPEC+ output talk

BEIJING: Oil prices stabilised on Thursday after a sharp drop the previous day, as traders assessed signals that OPEC+ may bring forward plans to increase oil output, alongside continued uncertainty over global trade and geopolitical developments.

Brent crude futures rose 0.8% to \$66.65 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude increased by 0.88% to \$62.82 per barrel—recovering some ground lost during Wednesday's nearly 2% decline, according to a Reuters report.

The earlier drop was driven by growing expectations that the OPEC+ alliance—comprising the Organization of the Petroleum



A worker walks past infrastructure on D Island, the main processing hub, at the Kashagan offshore oil field in the Caspian Sea in western Kazakhstan

Exporting Countries and its allies—might accelerate its production increases to June. Citing sources familiar with the matter, Reuters reported that internal pressure is building within the group, with some member states seeking greater production flexibility.

Kazakhstan, for instance, has indicated that it may prioritise national interests over agreed quotas, raising questions about the group's cohesion.

This follows Angola's departure from OPEC+ in 2023, underscoring potential risks to the alliance's unity.

In parallel, markets are also reacting to mixed signals from the United States regarding its trade policy with China.

While there are indications that Washington may consider easing tariffs to revive negotiations, conflicting statements from officials have added to market uncertainty. Meanwhile, ongoing efforts to restore the US-Iran nuclear agreement remain fragile.

New US sanctions imposed on Iran this week further complicate the prospects for a deal, with potential implications for global oil supply.

Analysts warn that if divisions within OPEC+ persist, the risk of a renewed price war cannot be ruled out. Broader geopolitical and economic factors are also likely to influence the oil market's trajectory in the coming months. — **Reuters**

SPORTS

THIGH INJURY



ALCARAZ OUT OF MADRID OPEN DUE TO INJURY

MADRID: World number three Carlos Alcaraz withdrew from the Madrid Open on Thursday with a thigh injury, in a blow for his French Open title defence preparations.

The Spaniard, a four-time Grand Slam winner, sustained the problem during his Barcelona Open final defeat last Sunday by Holger Rune.

“I did everything that was in my hands but it didn’t improve a lot over the (last few) days,” Alcaraz told a news conference.

“Things didn’t work out as I wanted to be able to play here, and we have decided not to take risks.

“If I played, I was going to be messed up for longer than expected... hard decisions had to be made, and I think we made the right one.”

Alcaraz was hoping to lift the trophy in Madrid for the third time after his 2022 and 2023 victories.

The 21-year-old had not trained all week after arriving in the Spanish capital on Monday.

Alcaraz did not rule out competing in the Italian Open and said he was sure he would make the French Open, with the main draw beginning on May 25.

“I think I will definitely be at Roland Garros and I will do everything possible to be in Rome,” said Alcaraz.

“On Monday, I’ll have another test to see how it’s evolved, and from there we’ll take the timings and evaluate how the next few weeks are going to be and how my body is doing.” — AFP

BRAZILIAN ICON CARLOS GRACES NSL AS SPECIAL GUEST



Brazilian football icon Roberto Carlos seen with Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal in Kathmandu.

KATHMANDU: Nepal’s football scene was lit up with excitement as legendary Brazilian footballer Roberto Carlos arrived in Kathmandu as the special guest of the Nepal Super League (NSL). The presence of the Real Madrid great marks a historic moment for Nepali football, furthering its global recognition and inspiring the nation’s young players.

Among those who had the privilege of welcoming him was Sarmila Parajuli Dhakal, former Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain and the Sultanate of Oman, who currently resides in Kathmandu. Recalling her longstanding friendship with the football star, Sarmila expressed her delight at reuniting with Roberto in her home country. “It’s truly special to see Roberto Carlos here in Kathmandu as the special guest of the Nepal Super League,” she shared. “We’ve known each other since my time in Spain, and I’ve always admired his humility, talent, and love for the game. His visit brings back fond memories and builds new bridges through sports and friendship.”

Roberto Carlos, famous for his electrifying pace, powerful free kicks, and iconic tenure with Real Madrid and Brazil, was greeted warmly by NSL organisers and local fans. His visit adds significant international weight to the league, which continues to grow as Nepal’s premier professional football platform.

Oman to face Bangladesh in AHF Cup semifinal



Oman and Chinese Taipei players in action.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 24

THE Oman national hockey team secured its place in the semifinals of the 2025 Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) Cup after a thrilling 4-4 draw against Chinese Taipei. The match was held on Wednesday evening at the hockey stadium in Jakarta, Indonesia, marking the conclusion of the group stage.

Chinese Taipei stunned the Omani side with an early goal in the first minute from a low drag-flick penalty corner by Tsung-Yu Hsieh. Oman responded with intense offensive pressure in search of an equaliser and nearly scored in the seventh minute through a penalty corner taken by Asama Barazahan, but the Taipei defence held firm.

Before the end of the first half, Chinese Taipei capitalised on a defensive lapse by Oman, with Tsung-Yu Hsieh scoring again with a powerful shot. However, Rashad al Fazari reduced the deficit for Oman

just before half-time with a well-executed penalty corner.

OMAN DOMINATE SECOND HALF

Oman entered the second half with renewed energy and quickly equalised through a surprise goal by Fahad al Lawati. The Reds continued to press, and Mohammed al Noufali nearly gave Oman the lead with a powerful shot that was saved by the goalkeeper. In the 26th minute, Ammar al Shuaibi scored Oman’s third goal from a penalty corner, ending the third quarter with Oman leading 3-2.

Chinese Taipei came out strong in the fourth quarter, with Tsung-Yu Hsieh completing his hat-trick just two minutes in after a brilliant run through Oman’s defence, levelling the score at 3-3.

Oman quickly responded, applying heavy pressure on Taipei’s defence. Ayman Mudit broke down the left flank and delivered a perfect pass to his teammate Talal, who slotted home the fourth goal for Oman in the 39th minute. Both

teams exchanged chances afterward, with Taipei awarded a penalty corner that was superbly saved by Omani goalkeeper Ibrahim al Farsi. Near the end of the third quarter, Oman missed a golden opportunity from a counter-attack as Ayman Mudit failed to convert.

The fourth quarter remained highly competitive. Tsung-Yu Hsieh scored his fourth goal in the 50th minute with an unstoppable strike, levelling the match at 4-4. The teams continued to trade attacks, with Huang Lin Yu missing a crucial penalty corner for Taipei in the 56th minute. Oman also wasted a key chance just two minutes before the final whistle, which blew with the score tied at 4-4.

Tsung-Yu Hsieh was named Player of the Match after scoring an impressive ‘super hat-trick’ that helped his team advance.

With this draw, Oman qualify to face Bangladesh, toppers of Group B, in the semifinal on Friday. In the other semifinal, Group A leaders Chinese Taipei will take on Group B second-placed Kazakhstan.

Oman stars arrive to warm reception in Seychelles for Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 24

The Oman beach soccer team players arrived in Mahe Island in Seychelles on Thursday to take part in the Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup which will begin from May 1 to 11. Oman’s delegation received a warm welcome upon their arrival to Seychelles International Airport as Non-resident Ambassador of Oman to Republic of Seychelles, Saud bin Hilal al Shaidani, was among the head officials to receive the national team delegation.

Oman squad, under the technical guidance of experienced coach Talib Hilal, is in best shape to commence their sixth appearance in the global event. Oman, who will eye to advance to the knockout stage for first time, will take on Italy, who ended runners-up in the last edition, on May 2. They will meet El Salvador, champions of 2025 Concacaf



Oman’s delegation received a warm welcome upon their arrival to Seychelles International Airport.

Beach Soccer Championship, on May 4 and conclude group matches against world champions Brazil on May 6.

Upon arrival to the Mahe Island, the coaching staff instructed the players for a light training session to stretch their muscles after the long journey. Then, the team will have their daily training schedules until the kick-off action of the tournament. Oman will play two

friendly matches in their final warm-up camp in Seychelles as they will meet against hosts Seychelles and Paraguay on Sunday. These two matches will be critical as they will shape the player’s readiness for this essential assignment.

Oman will enter this event with high morale after they had ended as runners-up at the 2025 AFC Asian Beach Soccer Beach in Thailand last

March. The team had suffered a 8-1 loss against Iran in the concluding match.

Also, they had ended recently as champions of GCC Beach Games in Muscat by claiming gold medals and both events acted as a golden opportunity for the team to gear up for the global showpiece event. Oman team players had excelled with an outstanding show in the Gulf event as they started with a 5-1 thrashing of Bahrain.

They stunned Kuwait 3-1 before securing a thrilling 1-0 win over the UAE in third game. Later, Oman thumped Saudi Arabia by 7-2 to seal the victory and gold medal.

OMAN SQUAD: Younis al Owaisi, Amjad al Hamdani, Said al Farsi, Abdullah al Souti, Musallam al Orami, Nooh al Zadjali, Ahmed al Owaisi, Salim al Orami, Mundher al Orami, Sami al Balushi, Al Yaqdhan al Hindasi, Yahya al Murkhi, Khalid al Orami and Mashal al Orami.

SPORTS

SKILL TRAINING



The workshop focused on teaching basketball skills for 12th grade students.

OBA LAUNCHES
TEACHER TRAINING
WORKSHOP IN SUHAR

AHMED AL KAABI
SUHAR, APRIL 24

The Technical Development Committee of the Oman Basketball Association (OBA), in collaboration with the Oman School Sports Association (OSSA) represented by the School Sports Committee in Al Batinah North Governorate, organised a specialised training workshop for male and female physical education teachers. The workshop focused on teaching basketball skills for 12th grade students and was held at the Sohar Sports Complex.

The workshop was conducted by Abu Bakr al Jahwari, OBA Vice-President and Head of the Technical Development Committee. It is part of a series of initiatives aimed at enhancing the professional capabilities of school PE teachers and aligning their teaching methods with the curriculum requirements. The programme included both theoretical and practical components, covering essential basketball skills and tactics suitable for school-level teaching such as screen plays, zone defence and how to teach personal fouls in an educational setting.

The trainer also presented modern teaching strategies and demonstrated how to integrate educational technology into PE lessons, aiming to improve the quality of learning and encourage positive student participation. The workshop introduced simplified ways to teach screen play concepts, develop appropriate learning activities; and effectively link technical and legal aspects of the game to help students grasp the content in a hands-on and engaging way.

This workshop marks the first edition of a comprehensive training project launched by the OBA in cooperation with the OSSA. The project begins with the 12th grade curriculum and will gradually expand to cover other grade levels in the coming years. The initiative reflects a vision of integration between educational curricula and sports education, aiming to empower teachers to deliver well-rounded lessons that combine technical, tactical and regulatory aspects of the game. It also provided a platform to discuss real-world challenges faced by teachers in implementing the curriculum and explore practical solutions.



AC Milan's Luka Jovic scores their second goal against Inter Milan. — Reuters

Jovic shoots AC Milan
into Italian Cup final

LUKA Jovic fired AC Milan into the final of the Italian Cup with a brace in Wednesday's convincing 3-0 derby win over Inter Milan which sent his team through 4-1 on aggregate. Serbia forward Jovic doubled his goal tally for the season, with Tijjani Reijnders sealing the tie late on, as Milan fans were given something to shout about in what has been an awful season for the seven-time European champions. Milan are unbeaten in all five of this season's local derbies and Wednesday's win also ended Inter's hopes of repeating the Serie A, Champions League and cup treble won under Jose Mourinho in 2010. Sergio Conceicao's side, who sit ninth in Serie A and will almost certainly miss out on Champions League football next season, will likely face Bologna in next

month's final in Rome. Bologna lead Empoli 3-0 ahead of their second leg on Thursday and are set to reach a major tournament final for the first time since last winning the cup in 1974. Given a rare start, Jovic put Milan ahead on the night and in the tie in the 38th minute when he met Alex Jimenez's cross with a thumping header, the nominal away side's first chance of the game. Federico Dimarco had hit the bar and Lautaro Martinez smashed a great chance over before Jovic opened the scoring, and the 27-year-old extended Milan's aggregate lead three minutes after the break. Jovic pounced to poke home from close range after Inter failed to deal with a basic corner, sparking four immediate substitutions from Inter coach Simone

Inzaghi which came to nothing. Instead Reijnders completed a comprehensive win for Milan five minutes from the end when he rolled home with a first-time finish after being slipped in by Rafael Leao. Elimination at the hands of their local rivals is a big blow to Inter who had genuine ambitions of the treble after booking a Champions League semifinal against Barcelona last week. But Inter are also level on points with Napoli at the top of Serie A after losing to Bologna at the weekend and could easily end an excellent season empty handed. Inzaghi's players have a packed and challenging run-in with Champions League chasers Roma visiting the San Siro on Sunday before the first leg of their last-four clash with Barcelona which could yet make or break their campaign. — AFP

Rohit, Boult star as Mumbai Indians surge into IPL top four

HYDERABAD, India: Star batsman Rohit Sharma smashed 76 and pace bowler Trent Boult claimed 4-26 as Mumbai Indians thrashed Sunrisers Hyderabad to move up to third in the IPL table on Wednesday. New Zealand's Boult, a left-arm quick, and fellow pace bowler Deepak Chahar ripped apart the top of Hyderabad's batting order as they collapsed to 35-5 before managing 143-8. Five-time champions Mumbai achieved their target with 26 balls and seven wickets to spare after Rohit registered his second successive half-century, smacking eight fours and three sixes in his 46-ball knock to lead the chase. But the 35-year-old Boult set up victory with his two early wickets and was named player of the match. "I still love the feeling of competing and getting wickets," said Boult, who retired from international cricket in 2024. "It's a huge tournament, there



Mumbai Indians' Trent Boult celebrates with team-mates after taking the wicket of Sunrisers Hyderabad's Travis Head, caught out by Naman Dhir. — Reuters

are hundreds of thousands of bowlers who'd love to do what we're doing so it's about not taking it for granted." It was Mumbai's fourth straight win and a victory that propelled

them three spots from sixth in the 10-team table led by Gujarat Titans. Hyderabad, who are captained by Australia's Pat Cummins, slumped to their sixth loss in eight matches.

"We have a few away games now, it will be about assessing each wicket as quickly as possible," said Cummins. "Some days it will be all-out attack, some days it will be about weighing our options." Rohit and England's Will Jacks (22) laid the platform for Mumbai in their second-wicket partnership of 64. Jacks got out but Rohit stood firm to raise his fifty in an another key stand of 53 with Suryakumar Yadav, who made an unbeaten 40 off 19 balls. **SOMBRE START** The match began with a tribute to the victims of the deadly attack in Kashmir as a minute's silence was observed and teams wore black armbands in Hyderabad. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) took the decision to remove the cheerleaders and put a halt to the celebratory fireworks and music customary at IPL matches. Boult got Mumbai off to a perfect

start by dismissing Australian opener Travis Head for a duck after the left-hander mis-timed a shot to deep backward point. Chahar had Ishan Kishan caught behind for one in the next over, the batter walking off to a timid appeal with ultra-edge technology later suggesting there was no edge. Boult and Chahar continued to do damage and accounted for Abhishek Sharma and Nitish Reddy, leaving Hyderabad five down when skipper Hardik Pandya struck in the ninth over. South Africa's Heinrich Klaasen hit a 44-ball 71 as he counter-attacked with a string of boundaries and put on 99 runs with impact substitute Abhinav Manohar (43), but the effort was not enough against a rampaging Mumbai. Klaasen finally became pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah's 300th T20 wicket when he was caught at deep backward square. Boult finished with two wickets in the 20th over. — AFP

ART/LIFE



F A S H I O N



COLLECTION INSPIRED BY ROSES

BY BUTHINA AL RIYAMIYA

AS the days grow longer and May approaches, the sun-drenched slopes of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar are transformed into a vibrant haven of blooms, heralding the celebrated rose harvest season. Here, stretches of Damask Roses blossom in a stunning display against the rugged terrain, their intoxicating fragrance wafting through the air. This annual floral spectacle is not merely a feast for the eyes; it has also inspired the creative spirit of one of Oman's foremost fashion designers, Alaa al Siyabi. Her passion for blending the rich tapestry of Omani heritage with modern aesthetics has culminated in an exquisite collection that blossoms with the essence of the region.

Growing up in Muscat, Alaa's upbringing was deeply entwined with the magnificent beauty of Oman, where the pristine coastline meets imposing mountains under an ever-watchful sun. This picturesque backdrop ignited her early fascination with colour, texture, and detail—a fascination that blossomed into a full-blown passion for fashion design by 2009. With each stitch, she masterfully interweaves Omani tradition into

distinctive garments, crafting a legacy that speaks volumes of her heritage.

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, renowned for its fertile soil and consistent supply of fresh water, has long been a cradle for various agricultural bounties. From the end of March through mid-May, this majestic mountain transforms into a veritable paradise teeming with Damask Roses, painting the landscape with an enchanting palette of colours. For Alaa, this captivating canvas of nature is an invitation to translate the stunning visual beauty of her homeland into wearable art.

From a young age, Alaa found herself captivated by the luxurious beauty of traditional Omani clothing—each piece rich with intricate textures, stunning embroidery, and delicate beadwork.

This admiration has evolved into a heartfelt commitment to showcase this cultural heritage to the world. Her latest collection, aptly named Mawsim Al Ward—which translates to the Season of Roses—serves as a reflection of her love for her homeland and a homage to the magnificent Damask Roses found in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

A cornerstone of this collection is the dara'a, a long, elegant dress traditionally worn by

women throughout the Gulf region. Each piece is designed with meticulous attention to detail, echoing the luxurious atmospheres of the mountains and the gentle breezes that dance through the valleys. The flowing fabrics are intricately embroidered with motifs inspired by the Damask Roses, each stitch imbued with the essence of the landscape.

Moreover, Alaa has incorporated the lisu, a traditional Omani headscarf, into her latest offering. This beautiful accessory is often draped over the head and shoulders, providing a culturally rich touch that harmonises seamlessly with contemporary design. Floral patterns inspired by the vivacious Damask Roses weave through the lisu collections, bridging the gap between heritage and modernity.

Alaa al Siyabi's vision extends far beyond simple fashion creation; she aspires to elevate Omani culture on the global stage, portraying it as a vibrant and evolving identity rather than merely a historical narrative. "I want to show the world that Oman is not just history," she asserts proudly. "It's a living, elegant culture that deserves to shine."

Through her artistry, Alaa seeks to inspire future generations, ensuring that the

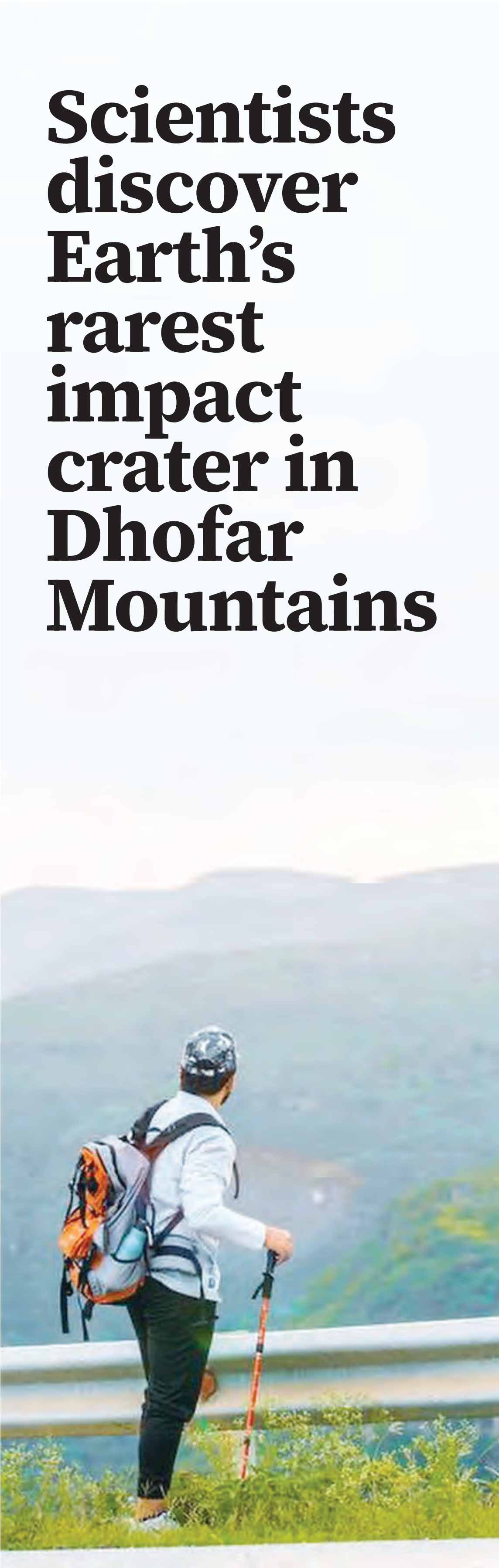
intricate traditions of Oman are preserved and cherished as a vital part of the nation's identity. Each collection she unveils tells a story, harmoniously merging contemporary aesthetics with the rich legacy of the past.

The rise of Alaa's work resonates with a wider cultural context in Oman, where there is a growing appreciation for local artisanship and traditional crafts. This movement reflects a societal shift toward embracing and sharing Omani identity, encouraging others to take pride in their heritage and share it broadly.

As she continues to explore new frontiers in fashion, Alaa remains rooted in the values of her culture. Each piece she designs encapsulates the spirit of Oman—a blend of resilience, beauty, and a commitment to honour the past while embracing the present.

With her creativity blossoming as vibrantly as the roses of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Alaa al Siyabi stands as a beacon of inspiration, weaving the stories and colours of Oman into an ever-expanding narrative of elegance and pride. As the world opens its arms to her designs, Alaa invites each of us to experience the soul of Oman through the artistry of her creations—a celebration of nature, heritage, and the creative spirit.



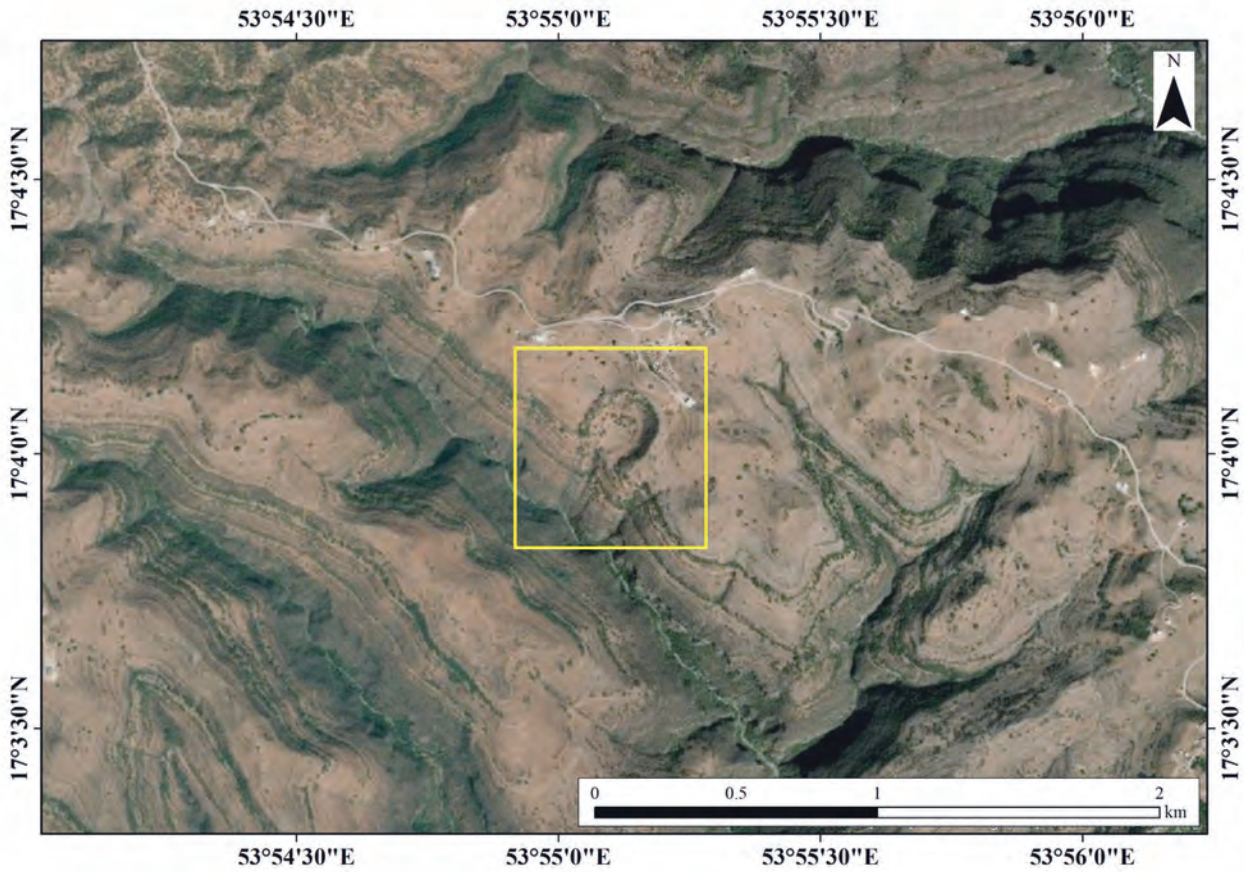


Scientists discover Earth's rarest impact crater in Dhofar Mountains

BY JOMAR MENDOZA

IN A SCIENTIFIC breakthrough that could reshape our understanding of planetary impacts on Earth, a team of researchers from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has identified a rare meteorite impact crater nestled within the rugged slopes of the Dhofar Mountains in southern Oman. This discovery is significant not only for its rarity but also for what it reveals about how celestial bodies interact with Earth's topography.

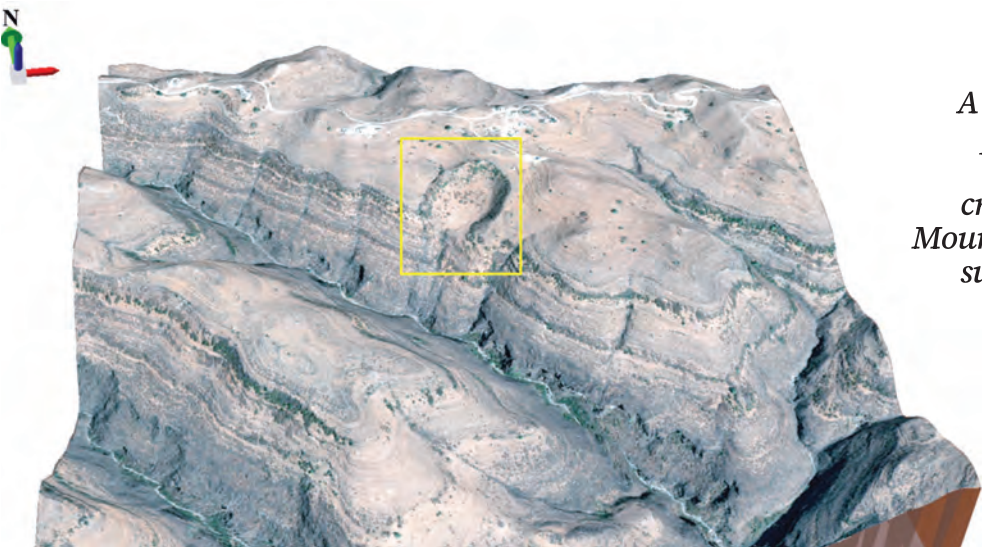
ellipticity and depth-to-diameter ratio were consistent with theoretical models of oblique meteorite impacts on inclined surfaces. What makes this site even more compelling is the geomorphological evidence supporting its classification as an impact crater. Mathematical simulations conducted in previous studies have shown that impacts on slopes tend to shift the deepest point of the crater downhill. The Dhofar crater conforms exactly to this pattern. In addition, a tongue-shaped landslide extending from the basin's lower edge adds further proof that this was not formed by erosion or other terrestrial processes, but by a powerful extraterrestrial collision. Another remarkable feature of the site is the exposure of folded rock layers along a steep slope just below the crater. These folds provide a rare opportunity for geologists to study how the force of a meteorite impact affects subsurface geological structures. This unique combination of surface and subsurface clues makes the crater a valuable natural laboratory for planetary scientists and geologists alike.



A small impact crater located in the Dhofar Mountains, ~20 km northwest of Salalah (as seen in ResourceSat-2A/LISS-IV imagery of Indian remote sensing satellite).

Unlike the majority of known impact craters — which tend to form on flat plains — this newly identified structure was formed on a sloped surface. Measuring approximately 259 metres in diameter, the crater stands out in the global geological record as the first verified impact site discovered on inclined terrain. The location, near the hamlet of Jardoom and accessible from the Wilayat of Salalah, adds yet another scientific gem to meteorite-rich Dhofar

The Dhofar Governorate has long been a hotspot for meteorite discoveries, with fragments of extraterrestrial material frequently found scattered across its desert landscape. However, this newly uncovered crater elevates the region's scientific importance to a new level. It is expected not only to attract researchers from around the world but also to boost geotourism in Oman, inviting visitors to explore the dramatic



A three-dimensional perspective view of the small impact crater on the Dhofar Mountains showing the surrounding terrain

Governorate. The discovery was made using an array of advanced technologies including high-resolution satellite imagery, digital elevation models, and data from NASA's ICESat-2 satellite, which uses laser altimetry to measure the Earth's surface. These tools enabled the ISRO team, led by Dr Dandabathula Giribabu, to precisely map and analyse the crater's structure, revealing a raised rim and an unusual crescent-shaped basin. Comparative analysis with similar craters on Mars — conducted using imagery from NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter — highlighted striking similarities in crater morphology, especially in cases where impacts occurred on slopes. The researchers noted that the crater's

landscapes and cosmic history of the country's southern highlands. With its precise coordinates fixed at 17°04'02.8" N, 53°55'06.8" E, the Dhofar impact crater may soon become a must-visit destination for both scientists and adventure seekers looking to trace the marks of the universe on Earth's surface. The research was published in the peer-reviewed international journal, namely, Earth and Planetary Science, an esteemed journal of Nan Yang Academy of Sciences, Singapore (<https://doi.org/10.36956/eps.v4i1.1454>), and has gained excellent traction in the scientific community within a shorter time since its publication.