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CURRENT PRICES

DATE

PRICE

UNIT

7/4

1.6

700

850

IS THE COST OF FOOD ITEMS RISING?

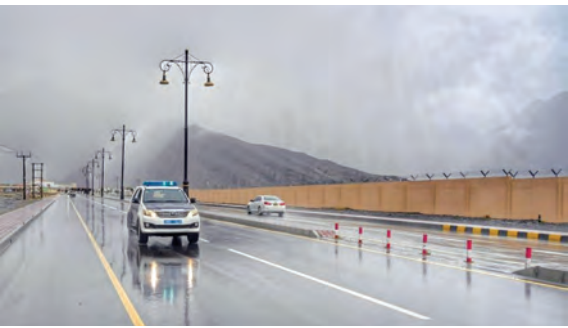
4

INBRIEF

LOW PRESSURE FROM THURSDAY

Focus on regional situation

His Majesty gives audience to Kuwaiti Foreign Minister



The latest forecasts and analyses from the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre indicate that the atmosphere of the Sultanate of Oman will be affected by a low-pressure system of limited impact, starting from Thursday and continuing until Sunday. It is expected that clouds will form over most of the northern governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, with chances of scattered light to moderate rainfall, which may be thundery at times.

SHURA APPROVES PROPOSED REQUESTS

The Majlis Ash'shura on Tuesday approved a number of proposed requests with economic and social dimensions during its 13th regular session of the third regular annual sitting (2025-2026) of the 10th term (2023-2027). The session was chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura. In his address, Al Maawali noted that the council continues to contribute to shaping development project plans. **DETAILS ON P2**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday to Shaikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad al Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait.

During the audience, the Kuwaiti minister conveyed greetings and best wishes of Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people.

On his turn, His Majesty asked the minister to convey his greetings and best wishes to the Emir and the people of Kuwait.

The audience addressed ongoing regional developments, as His Majesty listened to Kuwait's perspectives on the war and its severe repercussions for regional states and the global economy.

His Majesty affirmed the Sultanate of Oman's stance on these issues, emphasising the consequent necessity of intensifying efforts to achieve de-escalation, reduce tensions and acts of provocation, and come up with solutions to resolve the crisis at its roots. This, His Majesty noted, would contribute to safeguarding regional security, stability and the well-being of its peoples.

The audience was attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Hajri, Ambassador of Kuwait to Oman, and Minister Plenipotentiary Abdullah bin Nasser al Obaidi, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister of Foreign Affairs Office. — ONA



- RUSSIA, CHINA VETO UN RESOLUTION ON HORMUZ
- UN CHIEF 'VERY TROUBLED' BY TRUMP THREATS
- FRENCH COUPLE HELD IN IRAN FINALLY FREED
- TEHRAN CUTS OFF DIRECT DIPLOMACY WITH US
- WHITE HOUSE DENIES CONSIDERING N-STRIKES
- US-IRAN TALKS ARE CONTINUING, SAY SOURCES
- SAUDI ARABIA'S JUBAIL PETRO COMPLEX HIT
- OIL PRICES RISE 2% AS HORMUZ STAYS SHUT

CLOCK TICKS DOWN ON TRUMP'S DEADLINE FOR IRAN

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump threatened that “a whole civilisation will die tonight” as Iran showed no sign of accepting his ultimatum to open the Strait of Hormuz by Tuesday evening. Trump has given Iran until 8 pm in Washington - 3:30 am in Tehran - to end its blockade of Gulf oil or see the US destroy every bridge and power plant in Iran.

As the clock ticked down on Trump's deadline, strikes on Iran intensified, hitting railway and road bridges, an airport and a petrochemical plant. US forces attacked targets on Kharg Island, home to Iran's main oil export terminal.

Iran responded by declaring it would no longer hold back from hitting its Gulf neighbours' infrastructure, and said it had carried out fresh strikes on a ship in the Gulf and a huge Saudi petrochemical complex.

“A whole civilisation will die tonight, never to be brought back again. I don't want that to happen, but it probably will,” Trump wrote on Truth Social, in a statement directed at a nation that prides itself on being one of the world's

earliest centres of civilisation.

Brian Finucane, a former US State Department legal adviser now with the International Crisis Group, said Trump's remarks “could plausibly be interpreted as a threat to commit genocide” under US and international law.

The US State Department warned Americans in Bahrain to shelter in place until further notice, while Iran's Borna news agency said air defences had been activated over Tehran, with fighter planes flying at low altitude over the city.

With only hours left before the deadline, a senior Iranian source said Tehran was still refusing to reopen the strait without US concessions that had so far not been forthcoming.

Pakistan, the main go-between, was continuing to relay messages, but Washington had not softened its stance, the source said.

WAR CRIME
The UN rights chief decried the “incendiary rhetoric” in the Middle East war, warning that deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure was “a war crime”.
“Under international



Iranians rally during a memorial, 40 days after the US-Israeli strike on a children's school in the southern city of Minab on the first day of the war that killed at least 165 people, most of them children, in Tehran. — AFP

law, deliberately attacking civilians and civilian infrastructure is a war crime,” UN high commissioner for human rights Volker Turk said in a statement, insisting that “anyone responsible for international crimes must be held to account by a competent court.”

His comment came as US President Donald Trump ramped up his rhetoric against Iran, vowing to carry out the “complete demolition” of critical infrastructure, particularly bridges and power plants if Iran did not agree a deal by late on Tuesday.

In particular, he highlighted “the latest threats to annihilate a whole civilisation and to target civilian infrastructure”.
“This is sickening,” he said, warning that “carrying through on such threats amounts to the most serious international crimes”.

The UN rights chief stressed that “threats that spread fear and terror among civilians are unacceptable and must cease immediately”. He called on the international community to “take urgent steps to de-escalate the situation and to help protect the lives of all civilians”. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

HIS MAJESTY GIVES AUDIENCE TO FOREIGN MINISTER OF KUWAIT



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday to Shaikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad al Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait. During the audience, the Kuwaiti minister conveyed greetings and best wishes of Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people. — ONA

MoARA REVIEWS 2026 PLAN



The meeting covered the optimal investment of endowments and the development of Zakat resources. — ONA

SUHAR: The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA) reviewed the pillars of its 2026 executive plan in Al Batinah North Governorate during a meeting between Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North.

Dr Al Maamari emphasised that the plan stems from an integrated institutional path focusing on impact and quality outcomes. He noted that the ministry has designated this year as the “Year of Mastery” to consolidate the values of quality and excellence and to strengthen a work methodology based on efficiency, sustainability and measurable results, following a progressive developmental path the ministry has undertaken in recent years.

The meeting addressed the general orientations of the ministry’s work, which centre on the governance of the religious sector, the development of moderate religious discourse, and enhancing the role of religious institutions in building community awareness. It also covered the optimal investment of endowment (Waqf), the development of Zakat resources, and the expansion of digital transformation and electronic services to improve service quality and enhance beneficiary experiences.

Furthermore, the meeting reviewed key executive programs the Ministry is currently implementing, including Quranic education, Iftaa, preaching and guidance, and the promotion of national identity, alongside the development of endowment and Zakat revenues. The discussions also highlighted digital transformation initiatives and efforts to improve the beneficiary experience, aiming to raise institutional performance efficiency and achieve higher levels of satisfaction.

For his part, the Governor stressed the importance of strengthening the partnership between the Ministry and North Al Batinah Governorate in the areas of endowment management and development, religious service enhancement. — ONA

Shura approves reports on requests

MUSCAT: The Majlis Ash’shura on Tuesday approved a number of proposed requests with economic and social dimensions during its 13th regular session of the 3rd regular annual sitting (2025-2026) of the 10th term (2023-2027). The session was chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura.

In his address, Al Maawali noted that the Majlis Ash’shura continues to contribute to shaping development project plans and the progress programmes undertaken by state institutions, which positively reflects on achieving optimal stability and prosperity across all development sectors. He explained that the 13th Council session witnessed the discussion and approval of several proposed requests,



Majlis Ash'shura continues to contribute to shaping development plans. — ONA

building upon previous achievements and reinforcing the path of comprehensive, sustainable development in the Sultanate of Oman.

Among the matters discussed during the session was an urgent statement concerning the improvement of the road linking the Wilayat of Suhar

to the mountainous areas of Wadi Heebi and Wadi Ahan, which connects to Al Dhahirah Governorate. The Council also approved proposed requests regarding the attraction of global low-cost airlines to Sohar Airport, the conversion of certain areas in the Wilayat of Qurayat into tourist zones, and

the establishment of a national financing guarantee centre for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The council members also discussed proposed requests regarding the establishment of a centre for family studies and Omani women’s affairs, as well as a request to exempt beneficiary families of the Family Income Support benefit from paying electricity and water bills.

It is worth noting that the Majlis Ash’shura will hold its 14th regular session today, Wednesday, which will be dedicated to discussing the statement of the Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, as part of the ministerial statements approved during the 3rd regular sitting of the Council’s 10th term. — ONA

Meeting reviews readiness for Khareef season

ADEL AL YAFEI
SALALAH, APRIL 7

HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, held a meeting with representatives of public and private sector organisations to assess preparedness for the 2026 Dhofar Khareef season.

The meeting, part of early preparations for the annual tourist season, discussed various aspects related to enhancing tourism services and facilities and raising the level of preparedness in vital sectors, including accommodation, transportation, catering, health, security and municipal services.

The meeting discussed plans for developing



The meeting discussed plans for developing natural and cultural tourist sites. — Photo by Hamed al Kathiri

natural and cultural tourist sites and ways to ensure the availability of high-quality essential goods.

The Governor of Dhofar stressed the importance of enhancing integration and cooperation between public and private sector organisations to provide a comprehensive tourism

experience that reflects the unique natural features of the Dhofar Governorate and aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 in the field of sustainable tourism development. He also stressed the importance of adhering to public health and safety standards and developing high-quality

events to enrich visitor experience.

The representatives of the relevant authorities presented reports on their readiness, including road and public facility maintenance, plans to raise the capacity of hotels, resorts, and camps and the organisation of temporary commercial

activities during the season.

The Dhofar Khareef season is one of the most prominent tourist seasons in the Sultanate of Oman, attracting thousands of visitors annually thanks to its mild climate and unique misty landscape. The annual event also contributes to boosting economic and tourism activities in the governorate.

Participants expressed their optimism for the success of the 2026 season, given the ongoing efforts to develop infrastructure and provide high-quality services, which will enhance Dhofar’s position as tourist destination.

SHORT TAKES



The move comes following the government’s recent confirmation of the completion of SalamAir’s acquisition.

SALAMAIR EYES EXPANSION AND LOW FARES



ADRIAN HAMILTON-MANNS

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

SalamAir is set to expand its network and maintain competitive fares as part of its strategy to support Oman Vision 2040 and boost inbound

tourism, according to the airline’s Chief Executive Officer, Adrian Hamilton-Manns. The move comes following the government’s recent confirmation of the completion of SalamAir’s acquisition, a step aimed at strengthening air connectivity and enhancing the sustainability of the aviation sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Adrian Hamilton-Manns, CEO, SalamAir, said, “We are a low-cost airline, and we will continue to focus on that. Our role is to transport passengers at the lowest possible fares while maintaining efficiency.”

To meet tourism targets under Oman Vision 2040, the airline plans to increase frequencies and expand to new destinations, ensuring wider connectivity at affordable prices. The airline serves passengers travelling between Asia, the Middle East and Africa, with certain destinations requiring transit connectivity.

Hamilton-Manns highlighted Africa as a key growth market, citing routes such as Mogadishu, Port Sudan and Nairobi, with plans to expand further along the East African coast, including Mombasa. He also indicated intentions to resume services to Khartoum when conditions permit.

QUALIFIERS ANNOUNCED FOR ITEX 2026



The exhibition will be held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in Malaysia on May 18. — ONA

SUHAR: The Research and Innovation Authority on Tuesday announced at Sohar University the four qualifiers selected to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the International Invention, Innovation and Technology Exhibition (ITEX 2026), which will be held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in Malaysia on May 18. The announcement ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Hilal bin Ali al Hinai, Deputy Chairman of the State Council.

The evaluation results for the competing projects resulted in the qualification of innovator Balqis al Hakmani for her project “Cardio-K™,” which is a smart closed-loop system for regulating potassium levels in heart patients, and innovator Nahiya al Hamdani, who developed “Sensiglass” spectacles to empower the blind and visually impaired through an integrated smart application.

Also qualifying were innovator Zaher al Alawi for his project involving an advanced bio-therapeutic platform to accelerate the healing of diabetic wounds using bio-delivery techniques, and innovator Lugman al Dhafri for the “Guided Lens” project, which utilises AI-supported drones for automated and precise aircraft inspection. — ONA

Gen Al Numani receives British official, Syrian Ambassador

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, on Tuesday received Sir Oliver Robbins, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom (UK).

At the outset of the meeting, Gen Al Numani reviewed the bilateral relations linking the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom, as well as ways to enhance joint cooperation to achieve the interests



The meetings reviewed support to peace and stability in the region. — ONA

of the two countries. For his part, the guest expressed his deep appreciation for the diplomatic efforts led by the Sultanate of Oman in bridging viewpoints on numerous issues to support peace, security and stability in the region.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman. Gen Al Numani also received Idris Ahmed Mia, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Sultanate of Oman.

CBO EASES LOAN STRESS OF RAIN HIT BORROWERS

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

THE Central Bank of Oman’s relief measures to support small businesses hit by recent heavy rains is drawing widespread public acclaim. The CBO allowed some borrowers, whose properties sustained direct damage from flash floods, to defer repayments on personal, housing and business loans. The deferment covers a minimum of two instalments and may extend to three in specific cases, including holiday periods. Importantly, no additional interest or profit will be charged on the deferred amounts, and no fees will apply for requesting or processing the deferment.

Abdullah bin Mahmoud al Balushi, a resident affected by heavy rainfall, said the measure has significantly eased financial stress during a challenging period.

“The damage to my home required immediate attention and unexpected expenses,” he explained. “Having the option to defer loan payments gives us the flexibility to prioritise essential repairs without worrying about accumulating financial pressure.” Similarly, Mona bint Said, a small business owner in the food sector, highlighted the importance of such measures for sustaining business continuity. She noted that weather disruptions had directly impacted operations and revenue streams.

“When business activity slows down due to circumstances beyond our control, financial



The Central Bank of Oman’s relief measures to support small businesses hit by recent heavy rains is drawing widespread public acclaim.

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commitments can quickly become overwhelming,” she said. “This decision provides a much-needed buffer, allowing us to recover and stabilise without the added burden of repayments.” Entrepreneurs and business observers have also welcomed the move, noting that it strengthens trust between financial institutions and their clients while demonstrating the CBO’s proactive role in safeguarding economic stability. The waiver of additional charges during the deferment period has been particularly praised as a critical factor in reducing financial strain.

On social media platforms, citizens expressed appreciation for the swift response and clarity of the measures, emphasising that such initiatives enhance

financial security and reflect a strong alignment between national institutions and community needs. Experts point out that the impact of these measures extends beyond immediate financial relief. By alleviating stress and uncertainty, they contribute to broader social stability and enable families and businesses to focus on recovery and rebuilding efforts.

They further note that this approach reflects Oman’s broader crisis management strategy — one that balances fiscal responsibility with social support, particularly in the face of increasing climate-related challenges. The move stands out as a model of how responsive financial policies can effectively support communities while reinforcing confidence in the banks.

First digital twin technology introduced

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

The first digital solution that helps in electrical engineering has been introduced in the Sultanate of Oman, and after certain feasibility studies, various areas, including electricity consumption in the country, will see the introduction of the first Digital Twin AI solution, an AI-powered technology transforming multiple sectors worldwide, including medical and electrical engineering.

Digital twin technology is a dynamic, virtual replica of a physical asset, process, or system that updates in real time using IoT sensor data, AI, and machine learning, and enables simulation, monitoring, and predictive analysis, allowing companies to optimise performance and prevent issues without affecting real-world operation.

At a PCS Roadshow, held at the Kempinski Hotel and attended by electricity suppliers, including the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) and stakeholders, Al Ghurair, the promoters of the noble initiative, said the technology is highly cost-cutting, efficient, fast, safe, and prevents errors, and has always driven innovations in business and industry.

“We are actively considering the Digital



Digital twin technology is a dynamic, virtual replica of a physical asset, process, or system that updates in real time.

Twin project proposal of Al Ghurair, and after weighing the pros and cons, we will consider implementing the same. We hope that the electricity consumers can benefit from it,” said Imad al Zadjali, Head of Tenders and Contracts at OETC.

Digital twins can significantly enhance Oman’s electricity consumption by providing real-time monitoring and predictive maintenance.

They allow for the simulation of energy consumption patterns, enabling the identification of areas for improvement and

promoting energy efficiency. This aligns with Oman’s sustainability goals and contributes to a greener future for the country.

Tariq al Barwani, TechOman Founder and President, said, “Digital Twin is an exciting step for Oman because it means we can create a digital copy of real things like cities, buildings, or even systems and use it to test ideas, predict problems, and make better decisions before doing anything in real life.”

“It’s a smart way to save time, cost, and improve efficiency, especially in areas like infrastructure, energy, and transport. What’s important now is not just the tech itself, but how we use it and how ready we are in terms of skills and collaboration across sectors. If we get that right, it can really help Oman become smarter and future-ready,” he added.

Explaining the technology in simple terms, K Jacob John, CEO of Construction and Manufacturing at Al Ghurair, described Digital Twin as a 3D virtual model of electrical systems.

“It scans the setup, takes it into a virtual environment and analyses complex issues. Thousands of research datasets are fed into the system, enabling it to identify overloads, optimise usage and resolve problems without interfering with the real powerhouse,” he said.

KINGFISH

PER KG

TUNA

PER KG



ASH GOURD

BAISAS
PER KG

TOMATOES

BAISAS
PER KG

“We are still maintaining the same prices for our menu items, but we are no longer offering discounts because costs have gone up, especially for chicken,” one restaurant owner said. “We are buying locally, but demand has increased and, with it, the cost. However, we are not compromising on quantity or quality.” For now, the food market in Oman is not facing a single across-the-board surge. But the combination of rough weather, disrupted trade routes, transport strains and rising input costs is beginning to show in the prices that people pay each day.

SHORT TAKES



The event will be held under the theme ‘Bridging Culture and Innovation: Empowering Youth for Sustainability.’

Dhofar University to hold sustainability week on April 13-14

SALALAH: The College of Commerce and Business Administration (CCBA) at Dhofar University, in collaboration with the Dhofar University Centre for Sustainability, will organise Sustainability Week 2026 on April 13–14, at the University Conference Hall. The event will be held under the auspices of Shaikh Naif bin Hamed bin Amer Fadhil, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Dhofar Governorate.

The event will be held under the theme ‘Bridging Culture and Innovation: Empowering Youth for Sustainability,’ and will bring together over 27 schools and colleges across the Dhofar region, providing a dynamic platform for showcasing innovative ideas and sustainable practices.

The event is supported by leading organisations including OQBI, OQEP, and United Securities, as main sponsors. The Sustainability Week aims to promote sustainability awareness and innovation among youth and is scheduled to take place from 9 am to 3 pm.

The programme will feature a wide range of sustainability-focused activities, including a Sustainable Business Exhibition and a Sustainability Projects Competition for secondary school, and college students.

The event reflects Dhofar University’s commitment to fostering sustainability awareness and empowering young people to contribute to a more sustainable future aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Students, educators and members of the community are encouraged to attend and actively participate in the activities, which highlight creative solutions to environmental and social challenges.

The event is being organised by a committed team under the leadership of Dr Mariam Anil, Assistant Professor at the College of Commerce and Business Administration, Dhofar University.

OMAN, LIBYA MEETING LOOKS AT BOOSTING ECONOMIC COOPERATION

MUSCAT: Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, met in Muscat on Tuesday with Dr Khalifa Rajab, Acting Minister of Oil and Gas of the State of Libya, and Dr Suhail Bou Sheikha, Minister of Economy and Trade of the State of Libya. During the meeting, discussions focused on means of enhancing economic, commercial and industrial cooperation, as well as increasing the volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Libya.



The two sides explored ways to strengthen supply chain integration.

The two sides also explored ways to strengthen supply chain integration between the industrial sectors of both countries, enhance

industrial cooperation, attract investments and propose the establishment of joint industrial projects in priority areas of mutual interest. Discussions also covered investment in promising sectors, particularly energy, renewable energy and related industries, as well as organising specialised forums in sectors of common interest to attract Libyan investors to the Sultanate of Oman. Both parties affirmed their commitment to studying opportunities for joint industrial investments. — ONA

Forum seeks development of energy, business sectors

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

A LEADERSHIP forum was held under the theme ‘Beyond Ambition: A Growth Mindset’, bringing together chief executives, senior executives, government representatives and professionals from the energy and business sectors in Oman and across the GCC.

The forum discussed the development of the energy and business sectors, drawing on insights, research and studies presented by experts and thought leaders. Discussions focused on how organisations can sustain growth in a competitive environment, while moving beyond traditional definitions of success to examine real leadership experiences, including defining moments, challenges and lessons learned.

The event also marked the launch of “Thinking Aloud – Al Maha Ideas Series”, a new platform intended to bring together leaders, entrepreneurs and decision-makers to exchange views on leadership and long-term growth.

Speaking at the forum, HH Sayyid Dr Faris bin Turki al Said, Assistant Professor at Sultan Qaboos University and Director of the Oman Promotional Brand Office, said the session was important because it encouraged participants to think beyond conventional boundaries and limitations.

He said growth should not be viewed only through financial indicators, but should also



Discussions focused on how organisations can sustain growth in a competitive environment.

take into account the human dimension and its role in sustainable development.

He added that while many companies have traditionally focused on meeting shareholders’ financial expectations, that approach can at times overlook wider priorities. He said real growth lies in building sustainable and agile organisations capable of dealing with challenges at the local, regional and global levels. Eng Hamed al Maghdhari, CEO of Al Maha Petroleum, said the newly launched “Thinking Aloud” platform aims to bring together thinkers from the economy and business sectors to exchange ideas and develop practical solutions that can be applied during and after the forum.

He said the initiative is designed to draw on collective experience in support of economic growth and the wider business

sector, while also encouraging new thinking in management, production and operations to help improve business practices and sustainability. The forum also featured Safiya al Bahlani, artist and founder of Safiya Arts Gallery and Studio, who spoke about her personal journey and how it connects with leadership.

She said her participation focused on the challenges she had experienced, the accomplishments she had achieved and the lessons she had learned, as well as how those experiences could be used to benefit others.

Al Bahlani said her journey extended beyond art to include overcoming physical and learning disabilities.

She said leadership often requires people to step outside their comfort zones and take initiative, even in difficult circumstances.

MoCSY ANNOUNCES SUPPORTED INITIATIVES FOR THE YEAR 2026

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) announced the supported initiatives for the year 2026, totalling 68 initiatives covering various fields across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Hilal bin Saif al Siyabi, Director General of the General Directorate of Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, stated that the Ministry is moving steadily toward supporting such youth initiatives due to their significant impact on local communities.

These initiatives now target more than 14,000 beneficiaries across the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman and contribute to instilling a spirit of initiative among Omani youth.

This confirms their preservation of long-standing customs while encouraging them to be proactive in achieving impact and benefit for all segments of society.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, he explained that the youth initiatives support project is a major undertaking that receives



These initiatives now target more than 14,000 beneficiaries across the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

significant priority and continuous follow-up from the Ministry, represented by the General Directorate of Youth. This is because the activities of these initiatives continue throughout the year and are geographically distributed to cover most of Oman’s governorates, adding another dimension to the project’s inclusivity. He confirmed that this year, the number of initiatives applying for support exceeded 100, with 68

receiving full support — an increase from the 61 initiatives supported last year. He added that the diversity of these fields enhances their societal value.

He further explained that the support process undergoes several stages, beginning with registration and application via an electronic link, followed by a project study, the announcement of results, and finally the signing of

an agreement between the Ministry and the initiative to improve and govern the work.

He noted that the issuance of the Youth Initiatives Regulation in 2023 serves as further evidence of the attention given to these initiatives and the effort to govern them and define their operational path, ensuring the rights of both the initiatives and the Ministry are upheld. — ONA

محافظة مسقط
Muscat Governorate



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (10/2026)

Muscat Municipality invites Companies specialized in the field and registered with General Secretariat of **Tender Board**, to participate and obtain tender documents from the website via the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PRE-24-312	Development of Al Mahaj Commercial Area (Re-Tender)	20/04/2026	27/04/2026
PRE-24-237	Maintenance Works of Stormwater Stagnation Sites at Ruwi in Muttrah (Re-Call)	02/05/2026	17/05/2026
PRE-26-014	Maintenance of Water Coolers with Filtration Systems for Muscat Municipality (Re-Tendering)	20/04/2026	27/04/2026
PRE-26-028	Design and Construction of U-Turn at Al Koudh Interchange	02/05/2026	17/05/2026
PRE-24-332	Replacing of existing Pole Lights of Dama Seafont A'Seeb	18/04/2026	22/04/2026
PRE-26-025	Renewal Licenses of Muscat Municipality Backup Solution (COMVAULT)	18/04/2026	22/04/2026
PRE-26-013	Maintenance of Fire Extinguishers at Muscat Municipality (Re-Tender)	18/04/2026	22/04/2026
PRE-26-029	Provision of Manpower Services (Unit Rate Contract)	02/05/2026	17/05/2026
PRS-26-006	Supply Plumbing Building Materials by unit price (Re-Tender)	02/05/2026	17/05/2026
PRS-26-007	Supply Electric Materials by unit rate (Re-Tender)	02/05/2026	17/05/2026
PRE-26-030	Maintenance of Official Muscat Municipality Website, Muscat Municipal Council Website and Government of Muscat Website	02/05/2026	17/05/2026

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2. Clarification and Support:

- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@pttc.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

TENSION UP IN REGION

KHARG ISLAND STRIKES	OIL JUMPS	US HAS 'TOOLS'	BRIDGES, HIGHWAY HIT	WAVE OF STRIKES	GUARDS' THREAT	TRAINS CANCELLED	ISTANBUL SHOOTOUT	AVERT 'TRAGEDY'	BLASTS IN TEHRAN	IRAN SYNAGOGUE DESTROYED	CIVILIANS KILLED IN IRAQ
US-Israeli strikes hit Kharg island, where Iran's main oil export terminal is located, Iranian media reported.	The main US oil contract, West Texas Intermediate, jumped more than two per cent, to \$114.71 per barrel.	US Vice President JD Vance warned America has "tools in our toolkit that we so far haven't decided to use" against Iran.	US-Israeli strikes hit at least two bridges and a highway in Iran, hours ahead of Trump's deadline for Tehran.	The Israeli military said it had completed a broad wave of strikes targeting "infrastructure sites" across Iran.	Iran's Revolutionary Guards threatened to deprive the United States and its allies of oil and gas if Washington crossed Tehran's "red lines".	Train travel to and from Iran's second city of Mashhad was cancelled until further notice after Israel warned Iranians not to use railways.	One gunman was killed and two others were wounded in a shootout with police outside the Israeli consulate in Istanbul, officials said.	Iran's ambassador to Kuwait urged Gulf states to find a way to avert a "tragedy".	A journalist in Tehran heard a series of blasts coming from the north of the city, without being able to determine what was hit.	US-Israeli strikes "completely destroyed" the Rafi-Nia synagogue in Tehran.	A strike in Iraq's southern province of Basra on Tuesday killed at least three civilians.

STRIKES HIT KHARG ISLAND, KEY INFRASTRUCTURE AHEAD OF DEADLINE

US, IRAN TRADE THREATS



Pictures of the Minab School students are displayed during a ceremony, in Tehran. — Reuters

PRESIDENT Donald Trump warned that "a whole civilisation will die" in Iran on Tuesday if the country does not heed his ultimatum to accept US war demands. With Trump ratcheting up his strident language in recent days, Vice-President JD Vance offered his own threatening assessment of what may follow, warning Tehran that US forces have tools they "so far haven't decided to use" against the Islamic republic. Through weeks of conflict, the United States and its ally Israel have levelled Iranian military targets, killed the country's top leadership and devastated parts of the country's infrastructure. Early on Tuesday he issued one of his most glaring threats of the war. "A whole civilisation will die tonight, never to be brought back again. I don't want that to happen, but it probably will," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. Trump did not give details but he has already said the US military could bomb Iran's bridges, power plants and other civilian

infrastructure into the "stone age." Trump has announced a deadline of midnight GMT on Tuesday for Iran to end its de facto closing of the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow, strategic waterway used to transport oil and other commodities. On Monday, he said a temporary ceasefire proposal being circulated was insufficient. Iran has rejected US pressure, with state media reporting authorities are insisting that instead of just a ceasefire it wants a full end to the war. On Truth Social, Trump left the door open for a last-hour agreement. "Now that we have Complete and Total Regime Change, where different, smarter, and less radicalised minds prevail, maybe something revolutionarily wonderful can happen, WHO KNOWS? We will find out tonight," he wrote. Trump said that starting in Washington late on Tuesday evening, US forces would destroy "every bridge in Iran" and cripple "every power plant" in the country — something that many experts

say would be a blatant war crime. The extent of Trump's saber rattling and provocative language has appalled critics. "This is an extremely sick person," top US Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer posted on X. "Each Republican who refuses to join us in voting against this wanton war of choice owns every consequence of whatever the hell this is." Meanwhile Vance, visiting Hungary, delivered an ominous warning even as he told reporters that Washington has "largely accomplished its military objectives," and that more negotiations were expected ahead of the deadline. "They've got to know we've got tools in our toolkit that we so far haven't decided to use," Vance said. Trump "will decide to use them if the Iranians don't change their course of conduct." US and Israeli warplanes have been continuously bombing Iran since February 28, and on Tuesday Tehran said that its crucial oil export terminal on Kharg island was under attack. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel struck on Tuesday

railways and bridges in Iran "used by the Revolutionary Guards", after Iranian officials reported damage to at least two bridges and railway infrastructure. Iran said critical infrastructure, including two bridges, was struck Tuesday by the United States and Israel, with US President Donald Trump warning "a whole civilisation will die" if a midnight deadline for a deal to open the Strait of Hormuz was not met. The strikes came as Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned they would deprive the United States and its allies of oil and gas if Washington crossed Tehran's "red lines". Iranian authorities reported a US-Israeli attack on a bridge outside the city of Qom and a strike on a rail bridge in central Iran that killed two people. Regional authorities also said that a US-Israeli strike shut down a key highway in northern Iran connecting the city of Tabriz with Tehran. The Mizan news agency additionally reported a strike on railway tracks in Karaj, outside Tehran. — AFP

China, Russia veto UN resolution on protecting Hormuz shipping



Members of the United Nations Security Council vote on a resolution calling for the unblocking of the Strait of Hormuz, at UN headquarters in New York. — AFP

At a vote in the UN Security Council on Tuesday, China and Russia vetoed a Bahraini resolution encouraging states to coordinate efforts to protect commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz. The 15-member Security Council voted 11 in favour of the resolution, with two against - China and Russia - and two abstentions. "The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdulatif bin Rashid Al Zayani told the Council. Oil prices have surged since the US and Israel struck Iran at the end of February, unleashing a conflict that has run for more than five weeks and seen Tehran largely close the Strait, a vital energy artery. Oil prices climbed on Tuesday and US crude was on track for its highest close since 2022 ahead of a deadline set by US President Donald Trump for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz or face attacks on power plants and other infrastructure. Efforts by Bahrain, the current chair of the 15-member Council, to secure a resolution have involved multiple drafts seeking to overcome opposition from China, Russia and others. The latest iteration, seen by Reuters, drops any explicit authorisation of the use of force. Instead the text, "strongly encourages States interested in the use of commercial maritime routes in the Strait of Hormuz to coordinate efforts, defensive in nature, commensurate to the circumstances, to contribute to ensuring the safety and security of navigation across the Strait of Hormuz." — Reuters

Efforts to facilitate talks between US, Iran ongoing

Efforts to facilitate talks between the US and Iran are still ongoing, two Pakistani sources with knowledge of the discussions said on Tuesday, as US strikes on Iran intensified and President Donald Trump's deadline to unleash "hell" neared. One of the sources, a senior security official, said Iran's overnight strike on Saudi Arabia's industrial facilities linked to US firms threatened to derail the talks. If Saudi Arabia were to respond to the strikes, the talks would be over, the source said, adding that retaliation could also draw Pakistan into the conflict under its defence pact with Riyadh. The second source said Iran was "walking on thin ice" and that the next three to four hours were critical for the future of dialogue. Pakistan has been at the centre of negotiations between the US and Iran in recent weeks, acting as the main go-between for proposals shared by both sides, but there has been no sign of a compromise. "We are in touch with Iranians. They have lately shown flexibility that they could join the talks, but they are at the same time taking hard lines as a prerequisite for any negotiations," the Pakistani security source said. He added that Islamabad was persuading Tehran to enter negotiations without prior conditions.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson said on Monday that messages are still being exchanged via mediators. A senior Iranian source said on Tuesday that Tehran had rejected a proposal conveyed

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson said that messages are still being exchanged via mediators. A senior Iranian source said on Tuesday that Tehran had rejected a proposal conveyed by intermediaries for a temporary ceasefire.



Women walk at a mosque at Sharif University of Technology, which was damaged in a strike, in Tehran. — Reuters

by intermediaries for a temporary ceasefire. Talks on a lasting peace could begin only after the United States and Israel end their strikes, provide a guarantee they will not resume, and offer compensation for damages, the source said. The strike on Saudi Arabia threatens to complicate Pakistan's efforts, with Islamabad locked into a mutual defence pact with Riyadh that requires the two countries to come to one another's defence in case of an attack.

Islamabad has been working to avoid being pulled into the war, which could wreak havoc along its shared western border with Iran and roil discontent among its large Shi'ite population, the second largest in the world after Iran. Pakistan's foreign office said in a statement on Tuesday that the strikes on Saudi Arabia constitute "a dangerous escalation that undermines regional peace and stability". The Pakistani-brokered framework for ending the war proposed an

immediate ceasefire, followed by talks on a broader peace settlement to be concluded within 15 to 20 days, a source aware of the proposals said. At a news conference, Trump said Iran could be "taken out" in one night "and that night might be tomorrow night," referring to Tuesday. He vowed to destroy Iranian power plants and bridges, brushing off concerns that such actions would be a war crime or alienate Iran's 93 million people. — Reuters

FEARS OF SHORTAGES

Thailand weighs new measures to save fuel



BANGKOK: Thailand is considering enforcing overnight closures of petrol stations beginning later this month, the prime minister said. Anutin Charnvirakul said that his government was weighing shutting down sales at petrol pumps from 10:00 pm to 5:00 am, as early as April 20. The prime minister assured Thais they would still be able to travel to their hometowns during the Songkran holiday period, officially observed from Monday to Wednesday next week. — AFP

POWER FACILITIES ATTACK

Barrage targets Saudi industrial complex



RIYADH: Overnight attacks on Saudi Arabia hit a petrochemical complex in a sprawling industrial area in the eastern city of Jubail, a witness who requested anonymity said, hours after similar installations in Iran were struck. "An attack caused a fire at the SABIC plants in Jubail. The sounds of explosions were very loud," the source said, referring to the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation. Jubail in eastern Saudi Arabia is home to one of the world's largest industrial cities. — AFP

CRITICAL SITUATION

Qatar warns escalation cannot be controlled



DOHA: Qatar on Tuesday warned the war in the Middle East was close to a threshold where it cannot be controlled. "We have been warning since 2023 that escalation left unchecked will get us into a situation where it cannot be controlled and we are very close to that point," Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majed al Ansari said. "This is why we have been urging all parties to find a resolution to find a way of ending this war before it's too late," he added. — AFP

OPINION

From surviving to living: reclaiming joy after difficult seasons



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

THERE ARE seasons in life where living quietly gives way to surviving. From the outside, survival can resemble strength. You show up, you keep going, you carry responsibilities and you hold everything together. Internally, however, something feels dimmed. Joy softens, presence fades and life becomes something to get through rather than experience fully. Across parts of the Middle East today, this experience is not theoretical. Ongoing conflict, uncertainty, displacement and economic strain are shaping daily realities, placing many nervous systems in prolonged states of vigilance. When life feels unpredictable, the body adapts by protecting and survival mode becomes the default.

Survival mode is an intelligent response. The mind and body are designed to keep you safe, shifting into heightened awareness when a threat is perceived. This can show up as restlessness, emotional numbness, overthinking, or a constant sense of pressure. Over time, especially during extended periods of stress, this state narrows emotional capacity.

Creativity, playfulness and ease begin to feel distant, not because they are gone, but because the system is prioritising protection over openness. Remaining in this space for too long carries a quiet cost. Disconnection

from self deepens, relationships may feel strained and life begins to revolve around reacting rather than consciously engaging. Moving from surviving to living is not about forcing positivity or bypassing reality. It is about restoring a sense of internal safety so that the body no longer needs to remain on high alert. Joy is not something that can be chased or manufactured; it emerges naturally when the system begins to soften. The process is gentle, layered and deeply human.

One way to begin is through sensory recalibration. Bring attention to the five senses in a deliberate way. Hold something textured in your hands and focus fully on its temperature, weight and detail. This anchors awareness in the present moment and signals to the brain that there is no immediate danger. Another approach involves bilateral movement, such as slow walking while gently tapping one hand against the opposite arm in an alternating rhythm. This mimics the body’s natural processing patterns and can help discharge accumulated stress.

Sound can also be a powerful regulator when used intentionally. Listening to steady, rhythmic sounds or humming softly stimulates the vagus nerve, encouraging a shift out of heightened alertness. Temperature contrast, such as a hot and cold shower, offers another pathway that can interrupt cycles of overwhelm. Surrounding

It is found in the willingness to remain open to experience, even in uncertain times, and to gently reclaim the parts of you that remember how to feel, connect, and come alive

yourself with strong scents like lavender or eucalyptus really help too.

Other ways to settle the mind is to gently focus on something simple and steady. Activities such as organising small spaces, completing simple puzzles, or repetitive tasks like folding laundry with full attention can create a sense of order and completion, counteracting the chaos that often accompanies survival states.

Reclaiming joy also involves allowing moments of lightness without guilt. Joy does not invalidate pain, nor does it ignore reality. It exists alongside it. Comedy shows or moments of stillness restore our capacity to keep going with resilience and humanity intact. Connection remains essential. Reaching out, even in small ways, reminds the nervous system that it is not alone. Presence with another person creates grounding that cannot be replicated in isolation.

The shift from surviving to living is rarely dramatic. It unfolds quietly, in small, consistent moments of awareness and care. Each time you return to your senses, allow a feeling, or create steadiness, you move closer to yourself. Living is not found in the absence of difficulty. It is found in the willingness to remain open to experience, even in uncertain times, and to gently reclaim the parts of you that remember how to feel, connect and come alive.

FROM PROMPT ENGINEERING TO MIND PROMPTING



AHLAM AL BALUSHI

Imagine asking an AI the same question twice and getting two different answers. Many of us have experienced this, and it can be frustrating, confusing, or even alarming. Yet this inconsistency is not necessarily a flaw of the AI. It reveals something deeper about how we think and interact with these systems. Prompt engineering has emerged as a critical concept in AI, particularly within Natural Language Processing (NLP). It involves designing and refining the inputs we provide to AI systems to generate more accurate and meaningful outputs. As AI tools become a part of our daily work, mastering this skill is often presented as essential.

Even so, a recurring question remains. If two users provide similar prompts in the same context, why do the results sometimes differ? The answer lies not only in the technology but also in the way AI interacts with human thinking. AI does not simply read words. It responds to the structure, clarity and intentions embedded in our thought process. At the same time, the way we think and organise our ideas actively shapes and enhances the AI’s ability to provide better outputs. A prompt is therefore more than a sentence. It is a reflection of how we organise, analyse, and express our ideas, and of how our thinking can guide the AI toward more meaningful results. This invites a shift from “prompt engineering” to what I would describe as “mind prompting.” Here, the process does not begin at the keyboard but in the mind, where ideas are formed, connected and refined before being expressed. This concept also echoes a deeper question about writing itself. Do we think first and then write, or do we write in order to discover what we think? In the context of AI, this is no longer just a philosophical reflection. It is practical. Over-reliance on AI without engaging our own thinking risks weakening the very skills that make these tools effective.

AI does not require complexity. It requires clarity. The ability to ask the right question has always been central to problem-solving, and AI simply makes this more visible. Ultimately, prompt engineering may be less about mastering technology and more about mastering thought. Better questions do not just lead to better answers. They reveal the depth of our own thinking, reminding us that the most powerful tool in AI is the mind that uses it.

Securing Hormuz strait is a regional responsibility

IRAN'S

CLOSURE of the Strait of Hormuz sent a clear political message: it retains the ability to disrupt one of the world's most critical energy arteries whenever it faces what it considers unjust aggression. The move immediately unsettled global markets, drove up oil and gas prices and triggered sharp international reactions. Among them was a threat from Donald Trump, who warned of severe retaliation if the strait were not reopened.

Yet, as has often been the case, contradictory signals quickly followed. Reports indicated that Washington might tolerate a prolonged closure if reopening the strait risked extending the conflict. Such inconsistency reflects the broader uncertainty surrounding the crisis.

It is important to note that Iran has not historically disrupted maritime traffic in the strait, largely because its own oil exports pass through it. The closure, as framed by Iranian officials, is a defensive measure — a form of pressure in response to external aggression. Whether one agrees with this justification or not, the move underscores how strategic geography can be weaponised in times of conflict.

In response, proposals have emerged for an international coalition to secure the strait and guarantee freedom of navigation. While presented as a stabilising solution, such proposals carry significant risks. They could transform the strait into a zone of international oversight, effectively transferring control from regional states to external powers. This raises a fundamental question: should the region respond to a crisis by inviting foreign intervention, or by strengthening its own sovereignty



ZAHIR AL MAHROUQI

The writer focuses on regional politics

Cooperation, not external intervention, offers the most credible guarantee of stability. In a region shaped by shifting power dynamics, preserving sovereignty today is an investment in long-term independence



A cargo ship near the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from northern Ras al Khaimah. — Reuters file photo

through regional cooperation?

History offers a cautionary answer. The presence of foreign military bases in the region has not delivered the level of protection often assumed. Instead, recent events have shown that these installations themselves may require protection. Past alliances and coalitions — whether in Iraq, Syria, or Yemen — have left complex legacies, prompting reflection on whether similar approaches should be repeated.

A different perspective can be found in the vision articulated decades ago by the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, who emphasised that the Strait of Hormuz is part of the sovereign waters of the region and that safeguarding navigation is both a legal and humanitarian responsibility.

He made clear that Oman did not seek foreign military intervention, but rather believed in the capacity of regional states to manage their own security if equipped with the necessary means.

This position remains highly relevant. It highlights that rejecting international control is not a rejection of cooperation, but a defence of sovereignty. Regional coordination, particularly among the

coastal states bordering the strait, offers a more sustainable path to stability than reliance on external alliances.

Recent discussions — even on social media — have revealed attempts to promote international intervention under the banner of protection. Yet statements by Iranian officials, including Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, reinforce the principle that responsibility for the security of the strait lies primarily with Iran and Oman, as the two littoral states.

International maritime law guarantees freedom of navigation through strategic waterways. However, the implementation of this principle does not require external guardianship. On the contrary, introducing outside powers risks turning the strait into a flashpoint for great-power rivalry rather than a stable trade route.

Perhaps most striking is the contrast between public awareness and political decision-making. There is a growing sense among ordinary citizens that regional cooperation — rather than external dependency — offers the most viable path forward. The idea of Gulf states working alongside Iran to secure the strait may appear ambitious, yet it reflects a recognition that shared geography necessitates shared responsibility.

Ultimately, the lesson is clear: securing the strait is a regional responsibility. Cooperation, not external intervention, offers the most credible guarantee of stability. In a region shaped by shifting power dynamics, preserving sovereignty today is an investment in long-term independence.

Translated by Badr al Dhafari
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Another ‘giant leap for mankind’ in Moon



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

WAS just seven years old when Apollo 11 made history. Although I don’t clearly remember how exciting it was for an elementary school child, I have vague memories of the entire school being marched into the assembly square, where we were shown a newspaper featuring a photo of the men on the Moon mission.

I also remember the teacher ensuring that all of us memorised the names and dates that defined history, including the event 238,900 miles away when Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin became the first human beings to walk on the Moon on July 20, 1969.

Nobody would ever forget Armstrong’s historic phrase, “That’s one small step for (a) man, one giant leap for mankind,” he uttered while stepping onto the “Sea of Tranquillity.”

Although millions of people around the world watched the event live, many did not, primarily due to a lack of access to television sets or limited international broadcast coverage in certain regions. Nevertheless, the Apollo 11 landing became a significant milestone in our lives.

The Apollo missions demonstrated that it was feasible to send people to investigate another celestial body and motivated generations to aspire to greater things; now, over fifty years later, the Artemis programme is sending humans back to the Moon.

Last week, Artemis II launched from the Kennedy Space Centre’s pad in Florida,

marking its four astronauts as the first individuals to travel beyond low Earth orbit. This mission emphasises establishing a lasting presence on the Moon and preparing for upcoming missions deeper into outer space.

Significantly, unlike the Apollo 11 mission, live daily mission status briefings are conducted from Nasa’s Johnson Space Centre in Houston until splashdown. Nasa also provides a distinct, separate stream of showing views of the Orion spacecraft when bandwidth permits, allows, including perspectives inside the capsule.

However, amid the technological enthusiasm and grand proclamations surrounding the Moon landing, it is often overlooked that president John F Kennedy’s 1961 declaration — that the United States would send a man to the Moon by the end of the decade — was not met with unanimous praise.

“I am convinced that this country must dedicate itself to accomplishing the objective, before this decade ends, of placing a person on the Moon and bringing him back safely to Earth,” Kennedy stated in his speech to the US Congress.

The Apollo missions marked a significant shift in planetary science. Previously accessible only through astronomy, planetary bodies became reachable through missions and sample returns, utilising the full range

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of analytical tools provided by geochemistry. The Apollo samples have inspired 56 years of research and continue to be analysed today.

History shows that although the United States conducted six additional missions to the Moon, Apollo 11 remained a remarkable achievement that was difficult to surpass. Apollo 13 narrowly avoided catastrophe, and by December 1972, when Apollo 17 completed its mission, travelling to the Moon had become almost routine, if not somewhat outdated.

Indeed, the success of the space journey continued amid what American civil rights activist Ralph Abernathy criticised before the launch of the Apollo 11 from the Kennedy Space Centre that “\$12 a day for an astronaut’s meals can nourish a hungry child for \$8.”

The total cost of the Apollo programme was \$25.4 billion, which is equivalent to over \$100 billion in today’s dollars. Even now, some critics question whether the Moon landing was a misuse of funds and why so much money was spent on exploration instead of prioritising improvements in the quality of life for people living on Earth.

The answer, as one scientist told CBC News, is to “establish a permanent presence on the Moon while transforming humanity’s connection with space. The Moon is an excellent test ground for experimenting with what we would want to do in deep space.”

PAKISTANIS TURN TO E-BIKES AS FUEL SHORTAGE LOOMS

ARIBA SHAHID AND SUDARSHAN VARADHAN

Days after Iran effectively blocked shipping through the Strait of Hormuz following the start of US and Israeli attacks in late February, two Pakistani electric motorbike outlets 1,400 km away found themselves overwhelmed with enquiries.

Haseeb Bhatti, who retrofits petrol-fuelled bikes with battery-powered motors in the northern city of Rawalpindi, said his March sales surged 70 per cent. For Ali Gohar Khan, who owns a 7-year-old electric motorbike retail franchise with branches across Pakistan, the recent surge in sales is the steepest ever.

“People have this fear that maybe in the near future, they might not get petrol at all,” Khan said. The Middle East crisis has sent global fuel prices soaring, compounding pain for Pakistanis already hit by inflation and a post-pandemic economic downturn. As the nation imports nearly all its oil through the Strait of Hormuz, shortage rumours took hold despite the government’s supply assurances. About 40 per cent of Pakistan’s petrol is used to fuel the 30 million two-wheelers and three-wheeled autorickshaws that dominate roads in a country where cars are a luxury and public transport is inadequate.

Industry officials and analysts expect the crisis to supercharge an EV rush in Pakistan, which would stand out from a broader regional surge for the availability of cheap and plentiful solar power to charge e-bikes. A switch would also help lower oil imports and bolster foreign exchange reserves, and slash emissions in the world’s most polluted country in 2025. After the government’s 18 per cent price hike last week, a Pakistani household earning the median wage now pays 31 per cent of its daily income for a litre of petrol - more than all but 22 of 139 countries tracked by globalpetrolprices.com and Our World in Data.

“My monthly salary is Rs 30,000. I can barely cover expenses for my family of six with this. How am I supposed to fill my bike?” said Zahoor Ahmed, a security guard in the southern city of Karachi.

From working professionals to college students, more riders have been turning to EVs in recent months. Last year, higher petrol prices drove up EV sales nearly three-fold to 90,000 units or 5 per cent of all two-wheelers sold, data from consultancy Renewables First showed.

This year, EVs have accounted for more than 10 per cent of monthly two-wheeler sales for the first time, said Talha Khan, CEO at EV logistics planning company Orko, a transition he expects to accelerate as filling up with conventional fuel can be as much as 10 times more costly than charging.

“Today, the war situation is bad, so petrol prices are going up. I think this (EV) is a very reasonable thing. Everyone should buy one,” said Noori Shahbaz, a housewife purchasing an electric bike in Lahore, in a country where female riders remain a small but growing minority. — Reuters

Israel’s new law and the reality of apartheid

ISRAEL’S PROPOSED law to impose the death penalty on detained Palestinians convicted of deadly attacks is being framed as a matter of security. Yet beyond the rhetoric lies a far more troubling reality. This law does not apply equally. It targets Palestinians specifically, while Israeli citizens, primarily Jewish Israelis, remain under a different legal framework. That alone raises a fundamental question: can a state claim to be democratic while enforcing laws that treat people differently based on identity?

At its core, this proposal reflects a system where two populations living under the same authority are governed by entirely different rules. Palestinians in the occupied territories are subject to Israeli military law, while Israeli settlers are governed by Israeli civil law. This dual legal structure has long been criticised by human rights organisations as discriminatory, racist and incompatible with international legal standards. The introduction of a death penalty applicable only to Palestinians deepens that divide, turning an already unequal system into something even more severe.

As Adam Coogle, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, stated: “Israeli officials argue that imposing the death penalty is about security, but in reality, it entrenches discrimination and a two-tiered system of justice, both hallmarks of apartheid.” This is not simply an accusation; it is a legal and moral concern grounded in the principle that justice must be equal for all.

The issue is not only the existence of the death penalty itself, but the context in which it would be applied. Israel has long been criticised for its treatment of Palestinian detainees. Reports from organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have documented cases of arbitrary detention, harsh interrogation practices and torture in custody. Palestinians are frequently detained without charge or trial under



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Reality has repeatedly shown that Palestinian and Arab lives are not treated with equal value. The scale of harm inflicted, particularly on civilians, including women and children, cannot be dismissed as incidental or unavoidable



Palestinians react following an Israeli strike outside a school sheltering displaced people, according to medics, at Al Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al Balah in the central Gaza Strip, on Tuesday. — Reuters

administrative detention orders, sometimes for months or years.

In recent prisoner exchanges, images of released Palestinian detainees have drawn international attention. Many appeared physically weakened, with visible signs of neglect or abuse after prolonged detention. These cases reinforce concerns about due process and the treatment of prisoners. If individuals can already be detained under questionable conditions, the introduction of a death penalty raises the stakes dramatically. The possibility of wrongful accusations or coerced confessions becomes not just a legal concern but a matter of life and death.

This concern is particularly pressing in the context of ongoing conflict. In times of war, the line between security enforcement and collective punishment can become dangerously blurred. If the threshold for what constitutes a “deadly attack” is interpreted broadly or if accusations are made without sufficient evidence, the death penalty could be used not as a tool of justice, but as an instrument of control.

If another country implemented a legal system in which one ethnic or national group was subject to harsher laws, different courts and more severe punishments than another, it would likely provoke

widespread international outrage. Yet in this case, the response has been far more muted. Israel has, over time, operated within a system that allows such disparities to persist with limited accountability, as we have seen with the ongoing genocide.

A democratic system is defined not only by elections or institutions, but by equality before the law. When legal frameworks assign different rights and punishments based on identity, they cease to function as systems of justice and instead become mechanisms of separation. The introduction of a death penalty exclusively for Palestinians risks institutionalising that separation at its most extreme level. It transforms an already unequal legal system into one where the ultimate punishment, death, is reserved for one group alone.

Reality has repeatedly shown that Palestinian and Arab lives are not treated with equal value. The scale of harm inflicted, particularly on civilians, including women and children, cannot be dismissed as incidental or unavoidable. While much of the world’s attention has focused on events since October 2023, patterns of violence and displacement long predate this period, tracing back to the early decades following the creation of the state of Israel.

SPORTS

HANDBALLCOMPETITION



The Omani squad will hold a pre-tournament training camp in China.

OMAN SET FOR STRONG CHALLENGE IN SIXTH ASIAN BEACH GAMES

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

Oman's national beach handball team is gearing up for a competitive campaign at the sixth Asian Beach Games, set to take place in Sanya, Hainan, China, from April 21 to 30, featuring some of the continent's top national teams.

Drawn into Group B, Oman will face a tough lineup that includes Pakistan, Jordan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Thailand, Qatar and Mongolia, in what is widely considered one of the most balanced and competitive groups in the tournament.

Oman will begin their campaign on April 21 with a match against Mongolia, followed later the same day by a clash with Qatar. The team will then continue its group stage schedule with matches against Thailand, Jordan, Maldives, Bangladesh and Pakistan in a round-robin format, with top teams advancing to the knockout stages.

As part of its preparations, the Omani squad will hold a pre-tournament training camp in China, where it will play a series of friendly matches aimed at boosting match fitness, refining tactical approaches, and assessing player readiness ahead of the competition. The delegation is scheduled to depart on April 14, allowing sufficient time for acclimatisation and final preparations.

Beach handball is one of the leading disciplines at the Asian Beach Games, attracting strong participation from across the continent. The competition format includes a preliminary round followed by knockout stages, culminating in the semifinals and finals to determine the champions.

Oman will be aiming to deliver a strong performance and build on their growing reputation in beach handball, with ambitions of advancing to the latter stages and competing for top honours, supported by thorough preparations and an experienced squad.



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Oman come from behind to thrash Kazakhstan

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

OMAN'S national hockey team continued its strong run in the 2026 Asian Games Qualifier, ending its first-phase campaign with a convincing 5-1 victory over Kazakhstan at the Royal Thai Air Force Hockey Field in Bangkok in Group A. The win underlined the Red Warriors' superiority in the group after an effective attacking display, giving the side further momentum heading into the next stage of the tournament.

Kazakhstan made a better start and took the lead in the 14th minute through Duisengazy Agymtay to go 1-0 up at the end of the opening quarter. Oman, however, produced a strong response in the second quarter and quickly found the equaliser through Elyas al Noufli in the 17th minute after he met a low pass from his teammate al Baraa al Noufli and guided it into the net.

The in-form Al Noufli then struck again in the 18th minute to make it 2-1 after Oman won a penalty corner. The goalkeeper parried Rashad al Fazari's powerful effort, but Al Noufli reacted brilliantly to turn the rebound home, giving the Red Warriors clear momentum and control.

Oman maintained their attacking pressure in the same period, and Fahad al Lawati added the third goal in the 27th minute with a shot from outside the circle that the goalkeeper could not keep out. Hazaa al Balushi then extended the advantage with the fourth goal in the 29th minute, moments after Oman had won a penalty corner. Kazakhstan, for their part, earned penalty corners in the 27th and 29th minutes, but Oman's defence dealt with them successfully as the national team closed the second quarter with a commanding 4-1 lead.



Oman and Kazakhstan players in action.

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Fahad al Lawati was adjudged the player of the match.

FAHAD NAMED BEST PLAYER

In the third quarter, the Red Warriors remained in control and continued to push forward in search of more goals. Their efforts were rewarded again when Fahad al Lawati scored Oman's fifth goal in the 35th minute, capping another strong attacking move to put the result beyond doubt. The same player was later named player of the match for his influential performance. The period also saw Kazakhstan's Yerkebulan Dyussebekov receive a yellow card in the 42nd minute.

In the final quarter, Oman managed the match calmly and maintained their grip on proceedings until the final whistle, securing an emphatic 5-1 victory.

The result once again reflected Oman's ability to respond strongly under pressure, having come from behind to produce another dominant win. It also gave the Red Warriors another lift after completing the first phase with a strong record and carrying their momentum confidently into the next stage of the tournament.

OTTA postpones Asian Youth TT in Muscat to 2027

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

The Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) in coordination with the Asian Table Tennis Union (ATTU) have decided to postpone the Asian Youth Table Tennis Championship in the capital city of Muscat to 2027 due to the current security issues in the region. The event was supposed to take place in June 2026.

The ATTU also confirmed that the current edition of the event will take place in East Asian countries which will be announced later this month to maintain the approved continental calendar as the Union will proceed with the necessary arrangements to relocate the 2026 edition from Muscat city to another member association to be held in June 2026.

The ATTU confirmed full support to the Sultanate of Oman to host the Asian Youth



The OTTA will host the WTT Star Contender 2026 in November.

Table Tennis Championship in 2027 and to work closely with the Association to ensure the successful organisation of the event.

The prestigious continental event will bring together Asia's most promising young table tennis talents for a week of high-level competition. The championship is expected to

attract qualifiers from four regional zones, ensuring wide representation and tight competition.

The Central Asia qualification tournament began in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from April 3 to 5. South Asia's qualification rounds will take place during April. Singapore will organise the South East Asia qualifiers from April 14 to 19, while West Asia's qualifying event postponed. Teams that secure qualification from these regions will vie in the coming edition of the event to compete for continental honours.

Following the youth event, attention will shift to the 2026 Asian Games, scheduled for September 20 to 28 in Nagoya, Japan.

The 2026 Asian Para Games will follow from October 16 to 23, before the curtain falls on the continental season with the 29th ITTF-ATTU Asian Championships in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, from October 19 to 25.

STAR CONTENDER IN NOV

On the other hand, OTTA will host the WTT Star Contender 2026 in coming November for the second straight edition. The last edition featured participation of more than 300 athletes representing 32 countries including: China, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Chinese Taipei, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, England, France, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, Wales, Yemen and the hosts Oman.

World No 7 Felix Lebrun from France had defeated his brother and teammate World No 13 Alixes Lebrun 4-3 in a thrilling final to clinch the title of men's singles of WTT Star Contender Muscat 2025. It is expected that the top five paddlers will vie in upcoming edition in Muscat.

HIGHS & LOWS



Pumas' Welsh midfielder Aaron Ramsey speaks during a press conference in Mexico City on July 3, 2025. Ramsey announced his retirement from football at the age of 35 on Tuesday. — AFP

FORMER ARSENAL MIDFIELDER RAMSEY RETIRES AT 35

LONDON: Former Wales captain and Arsenal regular Aaron Ramsey announced his retirement from football at the age of 35 on Tuesday.

The midfielder, who spent over a decade in London with Arsenal before spells at Juventus, Nice and Cardiff, has been without a club since leaving Mexican side Pumas at the end of last year.

A combination of injuries and limited match time meant Ramsey won the last of his 86 Wales caps in 2024 and he was overlooked for his nation's agonising penalty shoot-out loss to Bosnia and Hercegovina in a World Cup qualifier last month.

Defeat in that game ended any hopes Ramsey had of bowing out on football's biggest stage.

"This has not been an easy decision to make," he said on Instagram. "After a lot of consideration, I have decided to retire from football.

"Firstly, I want to start with Wales. It has been my privilege to wear the Welsh shirt and experience so many incredible moments in it. It would not have been possible without the incredible input of all the managers I have played under and all the staff who have helped me in many ways.

"To the Red Wall (Wales fans). You have been there through thick and thin! You have been there through the highs and lows, and you have been an essential and indispensable part of our success. I can't thank you enough. We've been through everything together and it's been an honour to represent you. Diolch (thank you).

"Secondly, thank you to all the clubs I've been lucky enough to play for. Thank you to all the managers and staff that have helped me be able to live my dream and play at the highest level."

Ramsey was a key figure in Wales' run to the European Championship semifinals in 2016, earning a place in Uefa's team of the tournament, and also featured in the next edition in 2021 as well as the 2022 World Cup.

Wales manager Craig Bellamy, speaking ahead of what proved to be Ramsey's last international appearance, against Montenegro, said: "We're talking about one of the best players to ever play for Wales.

"We're talking about a player who's represented Arsenal and won cups, he's been at Juventus and Nice. What he brings into the squad with young players — they're aspiring to be that."

Bellamy, however, left Ramsey out of his squad him for the recent World Cup clash, saying: "He hasn't played competitive football in seven months. He's not at a club. It's a situation I'm sure which will resolve itself." Ramsey won three FA Cups, a Serie A title and two Italian cups, a Scottish Cup with Rangers and two runners-up medals in the Europa League. — AFP



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates after winning against Argentina's Sebastian Baez during the Monte Carlo ATP Masters Series Tournament second round match on Court Rainier III at the Monte-Carlo Country Club in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, south-eastern France. — AFP

Sinner, Alcaraz start fast on Monte Carlo clay

JANNIK SINNER and Carlos Alcaraz continued their duel for the world number one ranking before the French Open as they opened their clay court seasons by crushing their opponents into the red Monte Carlo dirt on Tuesday. With Usain Bolt in the crowd, the world's top two sprinted to second-round victories at the Masters event.

No. 2 Sinner took one hour and four minutes to dispatch Frenchman Ugo Humbert 6-3, 6-0. He was followed onto centre court by top-ranked Alcaraz, who took five minutes longer to beat Argentine Sebastian Baez 6-1, 6-3.

Sinner is chasing a first significant clay court title and seeking to dethrone defending Monte Carlo champion Alcaraz as world number one, although the Spaniard said after his match that it was inevitable the 24-year-old Italian would take top spot in the next few weeks.

Sinner came into the season's first clay court event following his impressive 'Sunshine Double' in March at the Indian Wells and Miami Masters 1000 tournaments, winning the two titles without dropping a set.

His victory on Tuesday ran his winning streak in 1000-level events to 18 matches.

"It was a good performance from my side," Sinner said, adding the first clay event "is never easy". "You have to change your game style a little bit, how you approach certain situations," he said.

"I come here with good feelings but, at the same time, not many expectations." Alcaraz had no such reservations.

"It's been almost one year the last match I played on clay," he said. "To be honest, I missed it. I missed getting myself dirty a little bit."

Last season, Alcaraz entered four clay-court tournaments, winning three, including Monte Carlo, and losing the final in Barcelona.

Sinner missed the start of the 2025 clay season as he finished a ban, but returned to reach the finals in Rome, where he fell to Alacraz, and at Roland Garros, where he led the Spaniard by two sets and had three championship points before losing a five-set, five-hour marathon.

Ranking points are wiped out after a year, but as Sinner has none to lose in Monte Carlo, Alcaraz said the Italian's return to the top is inevitable.

"I'm going to lose the number one in the world," said Alcaraz after his win. "I don't know if it's going to be in this tournament or the next one."

"It is going to be really difficult to defend all the points and even if I do, Jannik is going to add some points in this tournament. Number one is not on my mind but to be my best on clay and let's see how the clay court season is going to be."

'I SURPRISED MYSELF'

Sinner took a few games to find his rhythm against Frenchman Humbert, whom he had faced only twice, the last time five years ago, but broke serve in the fifth game before holding to love and taking a 4-2 lead.

Humbert saved a double break point but eventually lost his serve again and the first set 6-3. The second set was a one-way affair. The Italian did not concede a single game to the Frenchman, sweeping him aside 6-0 in 23 minutes.

Sinner will face either Argentine Francisco Cerundolo or Czech Tomas Machac in the next round.

Alcaraz raced through the first set but stuttered in the second before winning the last seven points to surge to victory.

"A really good start to the tournament for me," he said "I surprised myself with the level. I thought I was going to play a little bit worse." He will next face either another Argentine, Tomas Etcheverry, or Frenchman Terence Atmane. — AFP

Al Rustaq, Sur share points; Oman Club hold Al Nahda

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

Al Rustaq and Sur settled for a 1-1 draw at Al Rustaq Sports Complex in Round 19 of the Jindal League, while Al Nahda were forced to accept a goalless draw against Oman Club at Al Buraimi Sports Complex.

In Rustaq, the two sides entered the match with different aims. The home side were looking for a result to improve their position at the bottom of the table, while Sur were hoping to move further away from the relegation battle.

The opening stages were evenly contested, with both teams showing a willingness to attack. Al Rustaq broke the deadlock through their foreign player Jaira Jov, who made the most

of a scoring opportunity to put his side in front. Sur, however, responded quickly and restored parity through Mani Sbeit after a well-constructed move.

After the break, both teams pushed for a second goal. Sur looked more threatening going forward, while Al Rustaq relied on quick counter-attacks to try and regain the lead. Despite a number of attempts from both sides, neither team was able to find the breakthrough, and the match ended all square.

The result left Al Rustaq at the foot of the standings on seven points, while Sur moved to 16 points and remained 11th.

AL NAHDA FIFTH
In Al Buraimi, Al Nahda and Oman



Al Rustaq and Sur settled for a 1-1 draw at Al Rustaq Sports Complex in Round 19 of the Jindal League.

Club played out a 0-0 draw in a match full of effort and intensity but lacking the finishing touch.

The draw marked a third successive league stalemate for Al Nahda, who moved to 31 points in fifth place, while Oman Club advanced to 28 points in seventh.

Al Nahda controlled much of the first half, particularly in midfield, and tried to break through Oman Club's defence with short passing moves and balls played into the channels. Oman Club, on the other hand, relied on counter-attacks, long deliveries and attempts from distance, but without enough precision to make the difference.

The visitors were also threatened from set-pieces, while Al Nahda continued to search for a way through

with Hamad al Habsi, Mohammed al Habsi and Amir Alaa leading the attack. Oman Club, however, remained organised at the back and defended well throughout the opening half. Al Nahda maintained their pressure after the interval and came close when Amir Alaa met a cross from the left, only for the Oman Club goalkeeper to make an important save. The rest of the match saw both teams exchange attacks, though much of the play remained concentrated in midfield.

Both coaches made several substitutions in an effort to add more attacking spark, with Al Nahda increasing the pressure in the closing stages. Four minutes of stoppage time were added, but neither side managed to find a winner.

SPORTS

NBALEAGUE



Philadelphia 76ers' Joel Embiid (21) battles for a rebound with San Antonio Spurs' Stephon Castle (5) and ahead of Keldon Johnson (3) and Carter Bryant (11) at Frost Bank Center. — **Imagn Images**

MAGIC UPSET
PISTONS,
SPURS SUFFER
WEMBANYAMA
SCARE

LOS ANGELES: The Orlando Magic kept up their bid for an automatic playoff berth with an 123-107 upset over the Eastern Conference-leading Detroit Pistons on Monday.

Paolo Banchero scored 31 points and Desmond Bane added 25 as six Orlando players finished in double figures to overpower a Detroit side still missing the injured Cade Cunningham.

Jalen Duren and Daniss Jenkins led the Detroit scoring with 18 points apiece, but the Pistons, who have already clinched the top seeding from the East, were shut down by the Orlando defence.

“Everything with our team starts on the defensive end,” Bane said. “When we get stops, we get out in transition.

“The way we’ve been sharing the ball — a lot of different guys contributing up and down the roster.”

Orlando’s victory left them tied with the Charlotte Hornets and Philadelphia 76ers — all three teams are on 43-36 with four games of the regular season remaining.

The Magic, Sixers and Hornets are all half a game behind the Toronto Raptors, who occupy the sixth and final automatic playoff berth in the Eastern Conference standings.

Philadelphia missed the chance to move level with the Raptors on Monday after suffering a 115-102 defeat on the road against the San Antonio Spurs in Texas.

Superstar Victor Wembanyama suffered an injury scare for San Antonio, leaving the game early in the second quarter to undergo treatment for what the team said was a left rib contusion.

The Frenchman, who is in the running for the NBA’s Most Valuable Player award, checked back in to play a few more minutes at the end of the first half but sat out the second half.

“I think it would be a positive that he felt like he could come back and he played the last four or five minutes of the half,” Spurs coach Mitch Johnson said of Wembanyama.

The Sixers’ Joel Embiid scored a game-high 34 points, but San Antonio bagged their 60th win of the campaign with another trademark all-round offensive effort that saw six players post double-digit points totals.

KNICKS CONTROL HAWKS

Elsewhere, Jalen Brunson scored 30 points with 13 assists as the New York Knicks rallied to secure a wild 108-105 road win over the Atlanta Hawks.

Brunson’s tally included 17 points in the fourth quarter to steer the Knicks to a win which edges them closer to securing the third seed in the East.

The game ended in dramatic fashion with Atlanta’s CJ McCollum launching a three-pointer from inside his own half on the buzzer that would have forced overtime at 108-108.

But replays showed McCollum had just failed to get the ball out of his hands before time expired and the score did not stand.

In the late game, the Denver Nuggets edged ahead of the Los Angeles Lakers in the race for the Western Conference third seeding with a come-from-behind 137-132 defeat of the Portland Trail Blazers in overtime.

Nikola Jokic finished with 35 points, 14 rebounds and 13 assists as Denver fought back from a 16-point fourth quarter deficit to secure a victory which saw them improve to 51-28, just ahead of the fourth placed Lakers who have a 50-28 record. — **AFP**



Napoli's Matteo Politano scores their first goal against AC Milan in Naples, Italy. — **Reuters**

Napoli edge AC Milan to
boost Serie A title defence

NAPOLI ARE still in the hunt to retain their Serie A title after the champions beat Scudetto rivals AC Milan 1-0 on Monday.

Matteo Politano came off the bench and lashed home the only goal of the game with 11 minutes remaining in front of delighted fans in Naples as the hosts racked up a fifth straight win.

Napoli leapfrogged Milan into second place but still have a battle on their hands to deny Inter a 21st league crown as they sit seven points off the pace with seven matches remaining.

Antonio Conte’s team were superior at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona, where Politano’s second goal of the season decided a largely stodgy contest not helped by Milan only being able to select star attackers Rafael Leao and Christian Pulisic.

“It’s a happy moment for us because we’re back in second place, I thanked the boys for what they’ve done this season as it could have finished badly,” said Conte of an injury-ravaged season. “We’ve got back to what we’re were like last season, we’ve got to keep going without getting ahead of ourselves.”

Milan now trail their local rivals Inter by nine points and will in all likelihood have to content themselves with a return to the Champions League.

“I think we’re done with the Scudetto race. We’re nine behind Inter and Napoli are ahead of us now,” said Allegri.

“We’ve got an advantage of a few points for the Champions League, let’s try to keep it that way by winning some matches.”

Napoli’s win came without Romelu Lukaku who has incurred the wrath of the club hierarchy after staying in Belgium for treatment for a hip injury, while Denmark striker Rasmus Hojlund ruled out with a stomach bug.

Winter signing Giovane forced Maignan into the best save of the match in the 50th minute with a stinging drive from distance and there was little more goalmouth action until Politano pounced on Koni De Winter’s weak headed clearance with a powerful, and decisive, first-time finish.

JUVE EYE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Juventus moved to within a point of Serie A’s Champions League places with a 2-0 win over Genoa, as the top four battle heats up.

Taking advantage of fourth-placed Como’s goalless draw at Udinese earlier in the day, Juve notched the three points in Turin thanks to Gleison Bremer’s fourth-minute header and a 17th-minute strike from the ever-reliable Weston McKennie.

American McKennie’s fine finish took his Serie A tally to five, equalling his best-ever



Juventus’ Brazilian defender #03 Bremer celebrates with Canadian forward #30 Jonathan David after scoring his team’s first goal during the Italian Serie A match between Juventus and Genoa. — **AFP**



Juventus’ Brazilian defender #03 Bremer scores his team’s first goal during the Serie A match against Genoa at the Allianz stadium in Turin. — **AFP**



Juventus’ Lloyd Kelly (L), Weston McKennie (C) and Emil Holm greet supporters in Turin. — **AFP**



Napoli’s Matteo Politano celebrates scoring their first goal against AC Milan. — **Reuters**

ITALIAN SERIE A RESULTS ON MONDAY:	
Juventus 2 (Bremer 4, McKennie 17)	Genoa 0
Lecce 0	Atalanta 3 (Scalvini 29, Krstovic 59, Raspadori 73)
Napoli 1 (Politano 79)	AC Milan 0
Udinese 0	Como 0

haul in a single league season back in his first campaign with Juve in 2020/21. But he showed no interest in that personal statistic when speaking with DAZN after the match, saying “the important thing is getting into the Champions League”.

Home fans had to thank goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio for a superb double save which stopped spirited Genoa from getting back into the game, first pawing away Aaron Martin’s penalty and then keeping out Vitinha’s volley.

Di Gregorio has had a tough second season at Juve, dropped from the first team in February following a series of clangers and only in goal on Monday due to Mattia Perin being substituted at half-time with a calf injury. “He has some good moments and some tough moments, but we always knew that he was a quality goalkeeper. He knew that his moment would come,” said Bremer.

Di Gregorio’s stops helped put some distance between fifth-placed Juve and Roma, who trail Spalletti’s team by three points in sixth after being thumped 5-2 at Inter on Sunday. Juve are also four points ahead of Atalanta, 3-0 winners at Lecce, ahead of Saturday’s clash between the pair in Bergamo, with Como hosting Inter the following day.

Genoa suffered no real damage to their bid to avoid relegation as Daniele De Rossi’s team sit six points above Lecce, who are in the bottom three after a heavy defeat.

Lecce were booed off by disgruntled fans after a defeat which left their team level on 27 points with Cremonese, who sit just outside the drop zone thanks to their superior head-to-head record. — **AFP**

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
8,217.861

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$119.31
BRENT \$110.42
LIGHT \$114.13



SHORTTAKES



Total fish landings reached 798,615 tonnes, up 3.7 per cent compared to 769,769 tonnes in 2024.

FISH LANDING VALUE IN OMAN TOPS 576 MILLION

MUSCAT: The total value of fish landed in the Sultanate of Oman rose to approximately RO 576.2 million by the end of December 2025, marking a 12.7-per cent increase from RO 511.3 million recorded a year earlier.

According to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, total fish landings reached 798,615 tonnes, up 3.7 per cent compared to 769,769 tonnes in 2024.

Artisanal fishing continued to dominate the sector, with volumes rising 3.3 per cent to 715,745 tonnes, compared with 692,973 tonnes during the same period in the previous year.

Al Wusta Governorate recorded the highest artisanal catch at 246,183 tonnes, followed by Al Sharqiyah South at 222,726 tonnes. Al Batinah North and Al Batinah South combined accounted for 84,883 tonnes, while Dhofar registered 73,824 tonnes.

Musandam and Muscat recorded 50,489 tonnes and 37,640 tonnes, respectively.

Commercial fishing also posted solid growth, increasing by 8.7 per cent to 74,461 tonnes, compared to 68,470 tonnes in 2024. Coastal fishing rose marginally by 1 per cent to 8,409 tonnes.

By species, small pelagic fish accounted for the largest share of artisanal landings at 372,740 tonnes, followed by large pelagic fish at 211,776 tonnes. Demersal fish reached 101,291 tonnes, while crustaceans and molluscs totalled 11,844 tonnes. Other species accounted for 11,004 tonnes, with sharks recording the lowest volume at 7,090 tonnes.

The latest figures reflect steady growth in Oman's fisheries sector, supported by rising demand, improved production capacity and continued development across fishing segments.

— ONA

Wheat farming plan aims to enhance food security

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

THE Sultanate of Oman is witnessing rapid expansion in wheat cultivation as part of strategic efforts to enhance food security and reduce reliance on imports, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. This expansion is supported by continued government assistance and the adoption of modern agricultural technologies.

Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture, stated that the Sultanate of Oman's annual wheat requirement is approximately 350,000 tonnes, with imports primarily handled by two companies: Salalah Mills and Oman Flour Mills, totalling around 900,000 tonnes.

The government supports wheat re-export and storage to ensure availability in silos for extended periods. Additionally, a wheat support programme was introduced following the Ukraine crisis, while incentivising the procurement of locally cultivated wheat.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the wheat harvest season began in mid-March and will intensify during April and May. Initial indicators suggest a promising season, with many wheat farms across the governorates reporting increased production.

The 2025/2026 wheat harvest



Local wheat production in the 2024-2025 season reached approximately 10,128 tonnes.



The 2025/2026 wheat harvest season is witnessing significant expansion, with farmers in areas such as Najd (Dhofar) and Al Mudhaibi (Al Sharqiyah North) beginning harvesting. The cultivated area in Najd alone exceeds 6,400 acres.

DR AHMED BIN NASSER AL BAKRI

Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture

season is witnessing significant expansion, with farmers in areas such as Najd (Dhofar) and Al Mudhaibi (Al Sharqiyah North) beginning harvesting. The cultivated area in Najd alone exceeds 6,400 acres.

According to official data, wheat production in the 2024-2025 season reached approximately 10,128 tonnes, with a market value exceeding RO 3 million. This compares to an estimated annual requirement of around 350,000 tonnes, reflecting the continued gap between domestic production and consumption and the market's reliance on imports.

In this context, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources continues to implement the Wheat Cultivation Expansion Project (2023-2027), which focuses on introducing improved, high-yield varieties, providing modern equipment, and supporting farmers with advanced agricultural technologies. The

2025-2026 season is expected to see further expansion, particularly in Najd in Dhofar Governorate, with production projected to exceed 8,000 tonnes in some areas.

The food security sector also recorded growth of 9.1% by the end of the third quarter of 2025, increasing its contribution to GDP to RO 831 million, driven by the expansion of agricultural projects and improved production efficiency.

Despite this growth, analysts indicate that wheat cultivation in Oman remains more strategic than profit-driven, given the high production costs associated with water and energy compared to global wheat prices.

However, the government continues to support the sector by purchasing the crop at incentive prices of up to RO 500 per tonne and improving supply and storage chains.

The Sultanate of Oman's agricultural policies are moving towards a dual model based on gradually boosting local production while continuing imports to meet the majority of demand. This approach ensures the stability of food supplies amid global market fluctuations and supports agricultural sustainability.

The sector is expected to witness gradual growth in the coming years, supported by the expansion of cultivated areas, the use of smart farming technologies, and improved productivity, despite ongoing challenges related to water scarcity and climate change.

MIDEAST WAR MEANS 'ALL ROADS' LEAD TO HIGHER PRICES, SLOWER GROWTH

WASHINGTON: The war in the Middle East will lead to higher inflation and slower global growth, the head of the International Monetary Fund said on Monday, ahead of a forecast for the world economy planned by the global lender for next week.

The war has triggered the worst-ever disruption in global energy supply, with millions of barrels of oil production shuttered due to Iran's effective blockage of the Strait of Hormuz, crucial for shipping one-



KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA
Managing Director

growth and bump up its outlook for inflation, Kristalina Georgieva,

fifth of the world's oil and gas.

Even if the conflict is swiftly resolved, the IMF is set to reduce its forecast for economic

managing director of the IMF, said.

The war is expected to dominate discussions among finance officials from around the world at next week's spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank in Washington.

The Fund is expected to release a range of scenarios in its upcoming World Economic Outlook due on April 14. It signalled a possible downgrade in a March 30 blog post, citing the asymmetric shock of the war and tighter financial conditions.

— Reuters

Three Omani firms sign new 15-year power agreements

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

Three Omani publicly listed power generation companies have announced the signing of new Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (Nama PWP) – the sole offtaker of power and water in Oman – effectively extending the operational lives of their power assets by a further 15 years.

In regulatory filings to the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on April 7, 2026, Phoenix Power, Al Batinah Power and Al Suwadi Power said the new PPAs will come into effect upon the expiry of their current 15-year agreements.

Together, they account for over 3,500 MW of electricity generation capacity, representing



The three power plants account for over 3,500 MW of gas-based electricity generation capacity.

around half of the total gas-based generation capacity of the Main Interconnected System

(MIS), which covers much of the northern half of Oman. Notably, the lead international investor

in all three firms is ENGIE, the French multinational utility company.

Phoenix Power said the new PPA, stemming from the acceptance of a Letter of Award issued by Nama PWP on March 18, 2026, commences on April 1, 2029, immediately upon the expiry of the current agreement, and will continue for a period of 15 years until March 31, 2044.

"The new agreement provides for the continuation of the purchase of 1,978.41 to 2,074.13 megawatts of power under agreed commercial terms, further strengthening the strategic partnership between the company and Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP).

It also ensures long-term financial stability and supports the company's future operational

sustainability," the company stated.

Both Al Batinah Power and Al Suwadi Power Company (ASPC) signed new PPAs for their power plants, each with 746.53 MW capacity, that will enter into force on April 1, 2028 and remain in effect for 15 years until March 31, 2045.

The new PPAs help ensure reliable electricity supply in Oman by keeping well-performing plants operational as older units retire and new, particularly renewable, capacity comes online.

The agreements also enhance cost efficiency through lower fuel consumption and competitive generation costs, support grid stability amid rising renewable penetration, and provide flexibility during the country's energy transition.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The initiative will enable fully cashless charitable giving, powered by BankDhofar’s SoftPOS acquiring platform.

BANKDHOFAR PARTNERS WITH SIRAJ EDUCATION ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION

MUSCAT: In a move that reinforces its longstanding commitment to social responsibility and community development, BankDhofar has partnered with Siraj Education Endowment Foundation to roll out a nationwide network of more than 1,000 charity donation kiosks across 120 supermarket branches throughout the Sultanate of Oman.

The initiative will enable fully cashless charitable giving, powered by BankDhofar’s SoftPOS acquiring platform. Through secure, real-time contactless payments using bank cards and mobile wallets, donors will be able to contribute conveniently and transparently to education-focused endowment (waqf) initiatives managed by the Foundation.

Oman-based Siraj Education Endowment Foundation is dedicated to expanding access to quality education through sustainable endowment models. By financing scholarships, educational programmes and capacity-building initiatives — while investing in income-generating projects that ensure long-term sustainability — the foundation plays a vital role in advancing human capital development and supporting Oman’s broader social and economic goals.

Under the partnership, each kiosk will be equipped with a tablet running a dedicated donation application developed and managed by Siraj. The application integrates seamlessly with BankDhofar’s SoftPOS platform, routing and settling donations directly into Siraj’s charity accounts. Donors can select predefined contribution amounts and designated charitable causes through a simple, user-friendly interface.

BankDhofar’s SoftPOS solution transforms compatible smartphones and tablets into secure point-of-sale terminals using near-field communication (NFC) technology, eliminating the need for traditional card-reading hardware.

The platform supports major card networks and adheres to stringent security and compliance standards, enabling safe and seamless digital transactions.

Reignite your passion with Lexus RX500h

EXPERIENCE the Lexus RX500h, a crossover SUV with an uncompromised attitude to innovation, modern luxury, impeccable style, and comfort. Make a statement in the Lexus RX with its bold, ravishing exterior with L-shaped rear combination lamps and the exclusive front and rear bumper design.

The RX is impressive with its youthful looks and elegant appeal.

For Lexus enthusiasts or luxury travellers, the RX500h sets the perfect journey. Shine into the limelight, attend corporate meetings or spend quality family time in the meticulously engineered Lexus RX, crafted for perfectionists.

Delving deeper under the hood - The RX500h is available in two trims; RX500h F Sport & F- Sport Plus with 2.4L HEV Turbocharged, 4 Cylinder, 16 Valve, DOHC (Dual VVT-i) mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission.

Equipped with the latest technologies, the RX AWD provides an unparalleled driving experience with matchless fuel efficiency by the hybrid system.

Reflecting Lexus’ brand philosophy, the RX features convenience options that include a power back door with a kick sensor, rain-sensing wipers and a headlamp cleaner.

Step inside a world of possibilities with easy access through the Smart Key option and the welcoming illuminated entry system, charge your phone with the wireless charging tray and adjust seats with the 10-way rear seats power adjustment.

Witness a new drive unfold with the unique Digital Rear View Mirror and the head up display. As with all Lexus vehicles,



For Lexus enthusiasts or luxury travellers, the RX500h sets the perfect journey.

the RX500h comes equipped with the Mark Levinson Premium Surround Sound System while the 14-inch Panoramic View Monitor projects essential details throughout the drive.

Designed to increase driver’s alertness on the roads, technologies such as the Lane Change Assist, Blind Spot Monitor, Lane Keeping Assist, Lane Tracing + Vibration, Pre-Crash System, Adaptive Cruise Control, Lane Departure Alert, Front and Rear Parking Sensors help deliver a matchless driving experience among other noteworthy advanced safety features.

As the world journeys to sustainable travel, Lexus products bring in the perfect blend of nature with luxury. At Lexus, we believe in fostering relationships and delivering an a-class experience to our customers by following new trends with the fast-paced era.

Please visit your nearest Lexus Saud Bahwan Automotive Showroom for more information.

Eint Automotive wins Petronas Grand Prix Award

MUSCAT: In a significant recognition of market excellence, Petronas has named Eint Automotive LLC as the winner of the Petronas Middle East Grand Prix Award 2025.

The announcement was made during a prestigious ceremony held in Naples, Italy, from February 10-12, 2026, following a comprehensive evaluation of Petronas distributors across the Middle East.

The Grand Prix Award is the highest honour within the Petronas regional network, celebrating partners who demonstrate exceptional performance in business growth, brand recognition, and customer engagement.

For Eint Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Petronas lubricants in Oman, this 2025 victory represents a steady climb to the top, having



The Grand Prix Award is the highest honour within the Petronas network.

previously secured runner-up status in 2023 and 2024.

The award was accepted on behalf of the company by S Kasthurirengan, CEO of Towell Auto Group, and Shajahan Abdul Azeez, AGM of Eint Automotive LLC. Shajahan Abdul Azeez, Assistant General Manager of Eint Automotive LLC, stated: “Achieving the top position as the 2025 Winner is a proud milestone for Eint Automotive and our entire team.

After being recognised as runners-up for the past two years, this award from Petronas validates our strategic focus on

elevating the brand within the Omani market.

Our partnership with Petronas is built on a shared commitment to world-class quality and innovation, and we remain dedicated to ensuring Petronas is the premier choice for automotive enthusiasts and professionals alike.”

Petronas continues to lead the global lubricant industry through technical superiority and sustainable solutions. By securing this award, Eint Automotive has proven its ability to align with Petronas’ global standards while delivering tailored, customer-centric services in Oman.

Through strategic investments in logistics and innovative marketing, Eint has played a pivotal role in expanding the Petronas footprint across the region.

Amouage debuts in India with new petite boutique in Bangalore

MUSCAT: Amouage, the Omani High Perfumery House, has unveiled its first petite boutique in Bangalore at Mall of Asia, marking the House’s official debut in India.

In partnership with LUXASIA, the leading omni-distribution platform for luxury beauty in Asia Pacific, the opening represents a new chapter in Amouage’s purposeful global expansion, bringing its singular vision of perfumery to a cultural landscape long shaped by ancient traditions of scent and ritual.

Within this new destination, visitors are invited to encounter the world of Amouage through an immersive olfactory journey, discovering the House’s rare ingredients, meticulous craftsmanship, and narrative approach to fragrance creation. The



The boutique translates the landscapes and heritage of Oman into a contemporary spatial expression.

petite boutique presents an edited assortment of Amouage’s signature collections and iconic creations that have defined the House since its founding in the Sultanate of Oman, alongside the newly unveiled Essences Act II fragrances, as well as discovery experiences and visual storytelling.

A VISUAL TRANSLATION OF OMANI LANDSCAPE

Designed according to Amouage’s distinctive architectural language, the petite boutique translates the landscapes and heritage of Oman into a contemporary spatial expression. Stone arches echo the architectural traditions of Oman, while sculptural curves and fluid contours evoke the dramatic topography of Oman’s mountain

ranges. Material contrasts shape the narrative of the space. Rough sandstone textures recall the rugged desert terrain, set against smooth, polished travertine that reflects the geometric elegance of Omani architecture.

Fluted concrete elements evoke the rhythmic movement of desert dunes, creating a subtle dialogue between permanence and motion.

The exterior of the boutique anchors the House’s presence within the cultural fabric of the city, where the Amouage logo is expressed in Kannada, the primary language of Bangalore with a literary history spanning over 1,500 years.

At the heart of the boutique, a luminous circular installation presents The Gift of Kings fragrance set.

SHORTTAKES



Discussions will centre on handicrafts, historical sites and cultural experiences.

HERITAGE DIALOGUE TO UNLOCK ECONOMIC VALUE

MUSCAT: The Oman Business and Private Sector Partnership Forum Office at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion will host the second session of its “Trade Dialogues” initiative on April 14, focusing on leveraging Omani heritage for sustainable economic growth.

Titled “Cultural Capital: Transforming Heritage into Global Impact,” the session will be held at the Civil Aviation Authority Training Centre and will examine how heritage assets can drive tourism, support creative industries and expand commercial opportunities.

Discussions will centre on handicrafts, historical sites and cultural experiences, alongside the role of modern technologies in widening access and enhancing global reach. The session will also address balancing preservation with commercialisation, strengthening Omani cultural exports, and developing innovative financing models to support sector growth.

Haritha bint Salim al Busaidy, Director of the Oman Business Forum and Public-Private Partnership Office, said the challenge lies not in establishing the value of Omani heritage, but in presenting it to wider audiences without compromising authenticity.

She noted that the initiative aims to strike a balance between economic utilisation and cultural preservation, enabling heritage to generate income, support livelihoods and expand its reach while maintaining national identity.

The “Trade Dialogues” platform brings together experts and specialists to explore opportunities across key economic sectors.

Oman to harness landfill gas for power generation

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

OMAN Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) says it is advancing landfill gas (LFG) utilisation projects as part of its broader carbon credit and sustainability strategy.

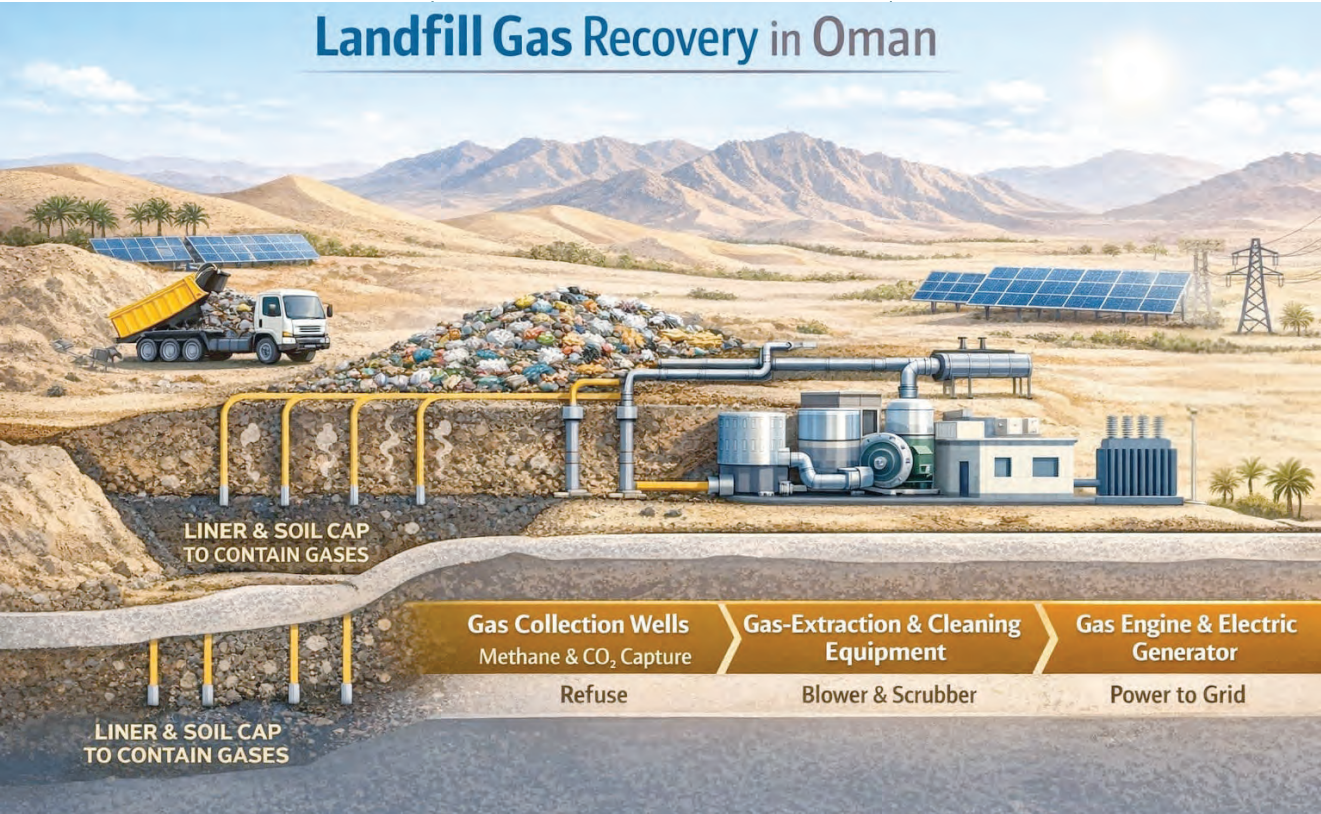
Moving beyond conventional gas capture and flaring, the state-owned waste management utility is now transitioning towards converting recovered methane into electricity at key sites, notably the Barka and Al Multaqa landfills. These projects, which commenced in January 2025 and are targeted for completion by July 2026, the company announced in its 2025 Annual Report.

At Barka landfill, the estimated gas recovery potential stands at approximately 530 Nm³ (normal cubic metres) per hour, out of a total landfill gas generation potential of around 2,500 Nm³ per hour.

This supports a flaring capacity of about 600 kW, while also indicating strong potential for electricity generation from captured methane.

Similarly, at Al Multaqa landfill, gas recovery is estimated at roughly 430 Nm³ per hour from a total generation potential of 2,000 Nm³ per hour, with a flaring system capacity of around 460 kW.

These figures highlight both the scale of methane emissions being managed and the opportunity to convert a significant portion of this gas



Landfill gas (LFG) recovery projects at Barka and Al Multaqa have moved toward commercial structuring: be’ah (Picture for illustration only)

into usable energy.

Commenting on the status of efforts to progress landfill gas recovery, be’ah said, “The Barka and Al Multaqa LFG-to-energy projects moved toward commercial structuring. Negotiations with private partners for offtake of biomethane and carbon credit monetisation under voluntary markets are underway.”

Landfill gas (LFG) is a mixture produced when organic waste decomposes in the absence of oxygen. It consists primarily of methane (CH₄) and carbon dioxide (CO₂), with methane typically making up about 45–60% of the mix.

Methane is the key component of interest because it is both a potent greenhouse gas and a valuable energy source that can be captured and used for power generation or industrial fuel.

According to experts, the volumes cited are substantial for landfill-based energy systems in terms of scale. Recovery rates of around 430–530 Nm³ per hour at individual sites translate into a continuous and reliable gas stream that can support hundreds of kilowatts of power generation.

When viewed against

total generation potentials of 2,000–2,500 Nm³ per hour, these projects are capturing a meaningful share of emissions that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere.

Across several engineered landfills in Oman, the company has installed gas collection systems that capture methane generated from decomposing organic waste.

This gas is being systematically extracted through a network of wells and piping infrastructure, helping to mitigate environmental impact while improving overall landfill management practices.

Vodafone Oman hits 17% share as growth accelerates

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 7

Vodafone Oman has captured around 17 per cent of the Sultanate of Oman’s telecom market as it marks four years of operations, underpinned by strong subscriber and revenue growth and an expanding digital-first model.

The operator reported a 46 per cent increase in its subscriber base and a 66 per cent rise in net revenues in 2025 compared to the previous year, signalling sustained momentum in a highly competitive and mature market.

Speaking on the milestone, Eng Bader al Zidi, Chief Executive Officer of Vodafone Oman, said the sector has moved beyond the question of market disruption to one of delivery and consistency.

“Four years ago, the question was whether the market would change. By 2025, that question had been answered. The focus shifted to how consistently operators



Eng Bader al Zidi, CEO of Vodafone Oman, speaks during the annual press conference.

deliver at scale — across network performance, service quality and customer experience,” he said.

SCALE, CONSISTENCY DRIVE PERFORMANCE

Vodafone Oman’s growth comes as

the telecom sector in the Sultanate of Oman transitions from expansion to operational maturity, where reliability and service quality have become key differentiators.

Its 5G network now covers more than 99 per cent of populated

areas, supporting rising data demand and a growing customer base of approximately 1.5 million users. This includes the successful migration of over 450,000 subscribers from Friendi Mobile, completed without disruption to network performance.

The company said maintaining service quality while scaling operations has been central to its strategy, with a continued focus on network capacity management and customer experience.

DIGITAL-FIRST MODEL GAINS TRACTION

A core pillar of Vodafone Oman’s strategy remains its fully digital operating model. The My Vodafone app accounted for over 64 per cent of total revenue in 2025, with app-driven revenue increasing by 25 per cent year-on-year.

More than 1.2 billion interactions were recorded via the app during the year, reflecting high levels of customer engagement. The platform

was also recognised as the Best Digital Storefront in the Middle East in 2025.

In line with evolving usage patterns, the company expanded its 5G broadband portfolio through Makani, introduced Raseed to enhance usage visibility, and rolled out a PKI-enabled eSIM aligned with national digital authentication frameworks.

RETAIL, ENTERPRISE SEGMENTS EXPAND

Vodafone Oman continued to strengthen its physical and omni-channel presence, expanding its retail network by over 75 per cent to more than 75 stores and eStores, supported by over 5,500 sales points nationwide.

Growth in the enterprise segment was particularly notable, as businesses increasingly sought integrated digital solutions. Enterprise service revenues rose by 321 per cent, while the customer base grew by 249 per cent in 2025.

IPO MOMENTUM

SpaceX targets record \$75 bn IPO



SpaceX has outlined plans for a landmark Initial Public Offering (IPO), targeting up to \$75 billion and a valuation of \$1.75 trillion.

The company plans a significant retail investor allocation, with 1,500 invited to a June event after the roadshow launch. Executives said the strategy recognises long-time individual supporters, positioning the offering as the largest IPO in history. — Reuters

OIL TENSION

Oil hovers near \$110 amid standoff



Oil prices hovered near \$110 per barrel as markets tracked a US deadline for Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Brent traded at \$110.42, while West Texas Intermediate (light) remained elevated.

The continued closure of the shipping route has tightened global supply, while escalating rhetoric has heightened geopolitical risk and uncertainty in energy markets. — Reuters

SAFE HAVEN

Gold steadies ahead of Iran deadline



Gold prices stabilised as investors adopted a cautious stance ahead of a US-imposed deadline on Iran. Spot gold held near \$4,640 per ounce, with futures slightly lower.

Broader precious metals weakened, reflecting subdued sentiment. Market participants remain focused on geopolitical events, which continue to influence safe-haven demand and short-term price movements. — Reuters

OPINION

West Asia crisis highlights urgent need for renewable energy shift



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ENERGY remains the lifeblood of any nation, and the ongoing conflicts in West Asia have once again exposed a critical weakness in the global economic system — its overdependence on fossil fuels.

The region, which accounts for a substantial share of the world's energy supply, continues to influence global markets. Any disruption caused by geopolitical tensions, sanctions, or instability inevitably triggers price volatility and supply uncertainty, sending shockwaves across the world economy.

Recent tensions around the Strait of Hormuz have highlighted the magnitude of this risk. As one of the world's most critical oil transit routes, even minor disruptions have resulted in rising shipping costs and soaring insurance premiums. The ripple effects are immediate, pushing crude oil prices higher and placing immense pressure on energy-importing nations.

The economic consequences are both swift and widespread. Higher crude prices fuel inflation, increase transportation and production costs, and strain public finances. Countries like India often face currency depreciation and widening trade deficits during such periods.

The impact extends beyond macroeconomic indicators, affecting household budgets and key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services,

thereby weakening overall economic stability.

Against the backdrop of a deepening global energy crisis — fuelled by geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, and rising fossil fuel costs — the urgency of transitioning to renewable energy has sharply intensified.

For many nations, this shift is no longer a matter of choice, but an economic and strategic necessity. The recent energy crises in Cuba, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka provide a clear warning about the risks associated with fragile and fossil-fuel-dependent energy systems. Renewable energy, derived from sources such as solar, wind, and hydropower, offers a sustainable and resilient alternative.

Unlike fossil fuels, these resources are naturally replenishing, widely available, and far less vulnerable to geopolitical risks. Once infrastructure is in place, renewable energy also ensures greater price stability, shielding economies from global market fluctuations.

Several countries have already demonstrated the benefits of this transition. Uruguay, for instance, has significantly reduced its dependence on imported fuels through sustained investment in renewables, thereby strengthening its energy security.

Globally, the momentum is unmistakable. According to estimates by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), renewable sources could account for up to 90 per cent of global electricity generation by 2050.

The region, which accounts for a substantial share of the world's energy supply, continues to influence global markets. Any disruption caused by geopolitical tensions, sanctions, or instability inevitably triggers price volatility and supply uncertainty, sending shockwaves across the world economy.

Significantly, more than 90 per cent of renewable energy projects commissioned in 2024 were found to be more cost-effective than fossil fuel alternatives.

The shift to renewable energy offers multiple advantages. It reduces import dependence, enhances energy security, and insulates economies from geopolitical shocks.

Additionally, it promotes sustainable development by creating employment opportunities, fostering technological innovation, and supporting inclusive growth.

Alongside the transition to non-conventional energy, equal emphasis must be placed on energy conservation. A substantial amount of energy is lost due to inefficiencies such as traffic congestion, poor road infrastructure, and outdated technologies in transportation, households, and the hospitality sector.

Addressing these gaps through modern, energy-efficient solutions can significantly reduce waste and conserve valuable foreign exchange.

The lessons from the current West Asia crisis are clear. Nations must adopt forward-looking strategies that reduce dependence on fossil fuels while accelerating the adoption of renewable energy and conservation measures. Strategic investments in both conventional and non-conventional energy sources will be crucial in ensuring long-term economic stability and energy security in an increasingly uncertain world.

STAR ANISE GIVES CHIPMAKERS A RECIPE FOR SHORTAGES

ROBERT CYRAN

The spice must flow. So goes the dictum of the science-fiction universe Dune, dependent on a mysterious substance for space travel. In the real world, Taiwan's semiconductor factories are of similarly existential importance.

Shortages of both liquefied natural gas and helium threaten production. If they need reassurance, chipmakers can look to a very literal case of keeping the spice flowing from the recent past.

In 2005, a nasty avian influenza strain threatened the world.

Drugmaker Roche's Tamiflu was the best choice for fighting symptoms. The problem was, the United States had stockpiled millions of doses.

To fill other nations' orders, then-Roche boss Franz Humer needed to secure a compound found in an Asian pantry staple: star anise. The spice was the primary source of shikimic acid, a chemical necessary for manufacturing Tamiflu. There was no burst of supply that could sate this new demand. Demand for the spice rocketed, and the price of shikimic acid rose ten-fold in a month.

Yusuf Hamied, chairman of Indian drugmaker Cipla, complained that his rival had cornered the market. Grumbling cooks, too, were largely priced out.

But Roche produced its treatment. Now consider cutting-edge chips. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing is the essential silicon manufacturer for Nvidia and its peers.

To keep factories humming, the company needs power and raw materials. Conflict in the Gulf threatens both.

LNG accounted for nearly half of Taiwan's electricity generation last year. One-third of the island's supply came from Qatar, which is now largely shut down. But ships from elsewhere are still sailing, and can be rerouted if a higher bidder jumps in.

Taiwan can afford to do so, and supplies are sufficient: Asian prices are still well below 2022's heights. Furthermore, the nation's total imports last year equate to about two months' worth of US exports, and Washington would surely react if chip supplies were really threatened.

Then there are raw materials, particularly helium. Semiconductor makers account for 23% of global demand, according to Bank of America, while around 27% of supply has been taken offline amid the fighting. — Reuters

Your CV is now read by robots, not humans

YOU spend over a week preparing, reviewing, and then perfecting your CV in order to apply for a job.

A clean and clear format, strong achievements, and carefully chosen words that were pulled directly from a job description. You enter the website of the organisation seeking the resource in question, register, and then finally hit “Apply” feeling confident (having worked all week on the CV).

The outcome, within minutes (if not a day or so), is a rejection email.

There was no interview. There was no follow-up, but just a polite message: “Dear XYZ, We regret to inform you...” Sounds familiar? Yes, this is the norm today, adopted by many AI-ready organisations, where there is no human interaction at all.

What really happened was that you (or whoever applied) were not rejected by a human or a recruiter per se, but by a machine (that is powered by AI).

This is no longer an unusual story. It's becoming the default experience for job seekers around the world. Organisations today are flooded with applications. Sometimes hundreds (if not thousands) for a single role.

Reviewing each CV manually is no longer practical, so companies rely on artificial intelligence to filter, rank, and eliminate candidates almost instantly. These systems, known as Applicant Tracking Systems, scan CVs for keywords, qualifications, and patterns, deciding who moves forward and who doesn't.

On paper, it sounds efficient and like an AI-ready badge that many organisations strive for. Faster hiring, lower costs, and more “objective” decisions. But the reality is more complicated.

AI is only as fair as the data it learns from. If that data reflects past biases, the system doesn't remove them — it in fact learns and scales them.

A well-known case involved Amazon, which had to abandon an AI hiring tool after discovering



Reviewing each CV manually is no longer practical, so companies rely on artificial intelligence to filter, rank, and eliminate candidates almost instantly. Image for illustration only.



TARIQ
AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker

it favoured male candidates. The system had learned from historical data where male candidates were more frequently hired — and simply repeated that pattern. This is the impact of not having humans as part of the process.

Entirely relying on machines has a painful price to pay sometimes (especially if not given the ample time to assess).

The numbers behind this shift are striking. Research suggests that over 75% of resumes/CVs are rejected by AI before they ever reach a human recruiter. In large organisations receiving 200-250 applications per role, automation is no longer optional — it's inevitable.

But this efficiency comes at a cost. Highly qualified candidates can be filtered out simply because their CV doesn't match the exact language or structure the algorithm expects.

This has created a new kind of job market where candidates are no

longer writing for humans but for machines. Creativity is reduced.

Personality is minimised. Everything becomes a game of optimisation. The difference between getting noticed or rejected can come down to a missing keyword or a formatting choice. And when rejection comes, it comes without explanation, leaving candidates unsure of what went wrong.

So what should students and future applicants do in a world like this? First, understand how the system works. Use keywords directly from job descriptions — don't assume similar wording will be recognised.

Keep your CV simple, structured, and easy to scan. Avoid overly creative designs that may confuse automated systems. Focus on measurable achievements, because numbers are easier for AI to interpret than vague descriptions.

But more importantly, don't rely only on online applications. Because while AI may control the front door, humans are still inside.

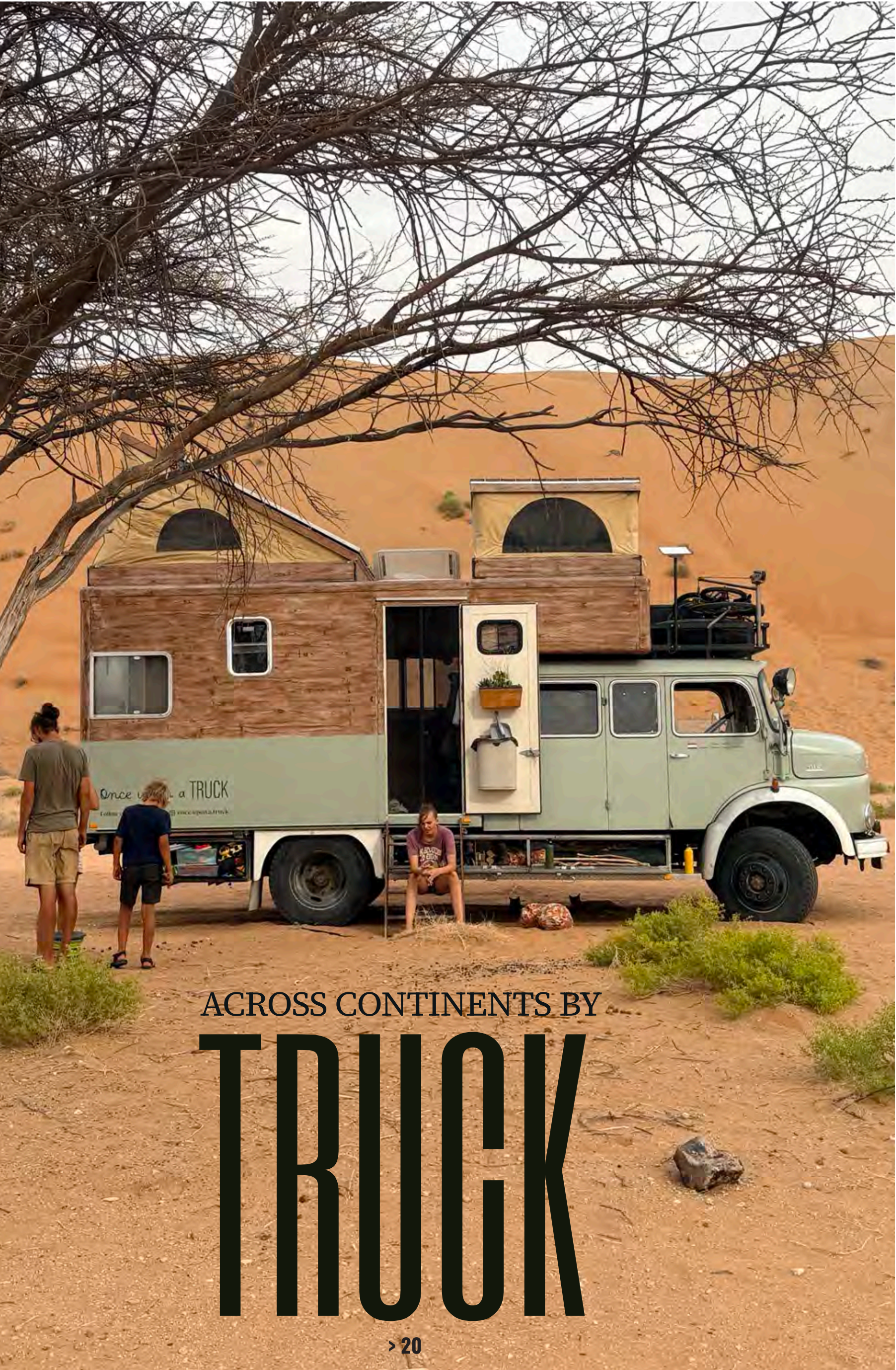
Networking, referrals, and building a strong professional presence can help you bypass automated filters entirely. In many cases, who you know — or who knows you — still matters just as much as what's on your CV.

AI in hiring is not going away. It will continue to evolve and play an even bigger role in shaping careers. The responsibility lies with organisations to use it ethically and transparently.

But as a candidate, you also have a role to play by adapting, understanding the system, and learning how to navigate it intelligently. Because today, you're not just competing with other candidates.

You're competing with how well a machine understands you before a human ever gets the chance. Until we catch up again next week, I urge you not to be disappointed (rather, look for real reasons) the next time you hear someone got rejected for a job. It could have been the doing of an AI.

ART/LIFE



ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

THE URGE TO OVERBUY



Yeru Ebuén
The writer is a luxury media strategist and a creative director

There’s a pattern we’ve all come to recognise. A crisis hits the headlines, uncertainty creeps in, and almost instinctively, people head to the supermarket, not to shop, but to secure. Trolleys fill up faster than usual. Shelves begin to thin. And before long, the fear of shortage starts to look like a shortage itself.

We’ve seen this play out in Oman more than once. During Cyclone Mekunu in 2018, people rushed to stock up as forecasts worsened.

In 2020, at the height of Covid-19 anxiety, supermarkets across the country, like much of the world, saw waves of panic buying.

Even smaller disruptions over the years, from weather warnings to regional supply concerns, have triggered moments where behaviour moved faster than reality.

Because panic buying isn’t really about food. It’s about control. When things feel uncertain, people reach for something tangible.

A bag of rice, a tray of eggs, it becomes less about consumption and more about reassurance. You’re not just buying groceries; you’re buying a sense of preparedness.

The problem, of course, is that when everyone does this at once, it creates the very pressure people were trying to avoid.

Which is why the recent message from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources matters. The advice has been clear: shop normally, avoid stockpiling, and trust the system. And importantly, that reassurance isn’t empty.

Authorities have been managing import channels and maintaining strategic reserves to keep essential goods available.

Oman’s position, both geographically and diplomatically, has also helped. With direct access to the Sea of Oman and a policy of neutrality, the country has remained relatively insulated from some of the disruptions affecting parts of the region.

On the ground, that translates into continuity. Fresh fish is still coming in from coastal waters. Dairy products remain available through a mix of local and international suppliers. Even as global logistics costs shift, there is a coordinated effort between government and retailers to absorb the pressure and keep prices stable.

In simple terms: the system is holding.

But here’s the part we don’t often talk about, systems are only as strong as the behaviour around them. Panic buying thrives in moments where trust dips. Not just trust in government or supply chains, but trust in each other. Because at its core, overbuying is a quiet assumption that someone else might take more than their share.

Oman, to its credit, has spent years building a level of resilience that doesn’t rely on last-minute fixes. Strategic reserves, diversified sourcing, and strong logistics infrastructure don’t happen overnight. They are the result of long-term planning, the kind that is meant precisely for moments like this.

So the real question isn’t whether there’s enough food. It’s whether we respond in a way that keeps it that way.

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



GASTRONOMY

Staff member prepare the ingredients for the bacon and egg filling croissant at Garden Bakery in Akishima city. — **AFP**



PARADE

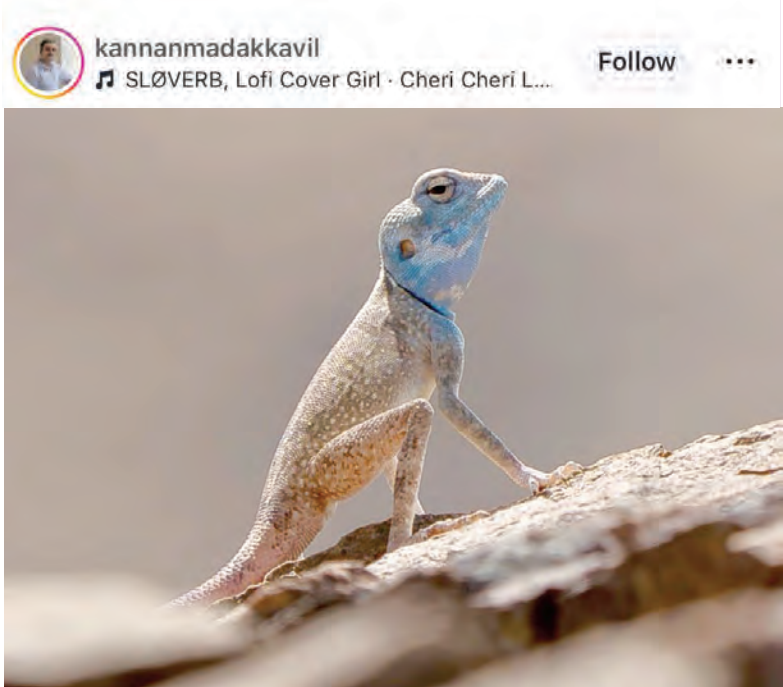
A person participates in the Lagos Fanti Carnival parade, which reflects Afro Brazilian culture linked to the history of formerly enslaved Africans. — **Reuters**



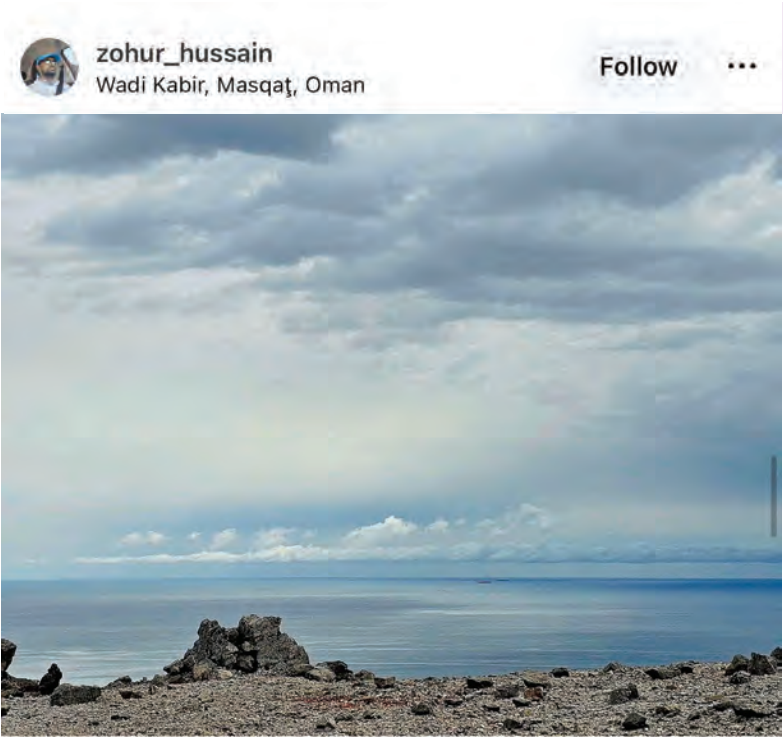
FILM PREMIERE

US actress Elizabeth Banks attends the premiere of Peacock’s “The Miniature Wife” at the DGA Theater in Los Angeles. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



A gorgeous reptilian standing tall.



Puffy clouds adorn Omani skies.

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.

NASA RELEASES ‘EARTHSET’ SHOT BY ARTEMIS CREW



A view of Earth, partially hidden by the Moon, photographed through the Orion spacecraft window. — NASA/Reuters

Houston: NASA on Tuesday released a historic photograph of Earth dipping below the lunar horizon, more than 57 years after an iconic “Earthrise” image was captured by an Apollo 8 astronaut.

Members of the Artemis II crew captured the shot from their Orion capsule during the mission’s record-setting lunar flyby, echoing the legendary “Earthrise” photograph taken by US astronaut Bill Anders in December, 1968 during the first space mission to carry humans around the Moon. The US space agency posted its “Earthset” photo on X, as did the White House. “Humanity, from the other side,” the White House said. “First photo from the far side of the Moon. Captured from Orion as Earth dips beyond the lunar horizon.”

The crew of four — US astronauts Reid Wiseman, Christina Koch, and Victor

Glover, as well as Canadian Jeremy Hansen — are on a historic mission to loop around Earth’s natural satellite as part of a broader program paving the way for a Moon landing in 2028.

The astronauts have reported in vivid detail features of the lunar surface and later witnessed a solar eclipse, when the Moon passed in front of the Sun.

Back in 1968, Apollo 8 orbited the Moon 10 times without landing. During one orbit, Anders captured Earth’s brilliant blue hue standing out against the vast darkness of space and accentuated by the desolate, grey lunar horizon in the foreground. “Earthrise” often appears in selections of the most iconic images, and was included in 2003 in Life magazine’s book entitled “100 Photographs That Changed the World.” — AFP



Maiko (apprentice geisha) take part in a press interview ahead a rehearsal for the annual “Miyako Odori” — which means “capital city dance” in Japanese. — AFP



GEISHA SPECTACLE IN JAPAN’S KYOTO CELEBRATES ARRIVAL OF SPRING

AGAINST a backdrop of blooming cherry blossoms, a group of geishas elegantly shuffle onto a stage in Japan’s Kyoto city to begin a centuries-old performance celebrating the arrival of spring.

Dressed in sky blue kimonos emblazoned with flowers, the dancers twist and twirl in unison in front of hundreds of spectators eager to see the annual “Miyako Odori” in the nation’s spectacular ancient capital.

Geishas, known as geikos in Kyoto, and apprentices called maikos have been donning elaborate costumes and fluttering fans since the Miyako Odori - or “capital city dance” - first started in 1872.

“Just as cherry blossoms bloom when spring approaches, the Miyako Odori is a spring tradition in Kyoto,” Kyoko Sugiura, head of the Yasaka Nyokoba Gakuen, a school for geishas in Kyoto’s Gion district, told AFP.

In Japanese, the word geisha means “person of the arts”, and can refer to a woman or man trained in traditional Japanese performing arts.

In the popular imagination geishas are often confused with courtesans but their work as trained masters of refined old artforms does not involve selling immodest acts.

Their performances are usually small and private, and take place at high-class establishments which operate a no first-time customer policy.

“That’s why it is often thought of as a very exclusive world,” Sugiura said.

“But the Miyako Odori is a one-hour show in which geisha and maiko have the opportunity to



showcase the arts they practise daily,” she said.

“Anyone and everyone with a ticket can enjoy the show.”

The Miyako Odori began soon after Kyoto hosted Japan’s first national expo - an effort to revitalise the western city following the relocation of the capital to Tokyo in 1869.

The format of the performance has not changed much, Sugiura explained, although the music and dance moves are sometimes switched up.

Maria Superata, a geisha expert who has worked with them as an interpreter, explained that the show “combines all of the traditional performing arts that you can see in

Japan”.

“For example, elements from kabuki (classical Japanese theatre), elements from traditional dance. So they have to act, they have to sing, they have to play the instruments, everything all in one,” she said.

“That’s why it’s so special.”

But the number of geishas, who once made a living through performing for Japan’s wealthy elite, is in decline.

Superata said that fewer young Japanese want a life that demands huge discipline and comes with a strict practise schedule.

“Nowadays, young Japanese people... are not very interested that much in traditional art and in kimono.” — AFP

FEATURES

ACROSS CONTINENTS BY

TRUCK

A DUTCH FAMILY’S ROAD TO OMAN

A DUTCH FAMILY TRADES ROUTINE FOR THE OPEN ROAD, TRANSFORMING A VINTAGE FIRETRUCK INTO A MOVING HOME AND SETTING OUT ON A JOURNEY WITHOUT END. IN OMAN, WHERE MOUNTAINS RISE FROM DESERT AND GENEROSITY DEFINES DAILY LIFE, THEY REDISCOVER WHAT IT TRULY MEANS TO BELONG, NOT TO A PLACE, BUT TO EACH OTHER.

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

FOR the family behind Once Upon a Truck, life does not unfold between four walls; it moves. Douwe and Karlijn, along with their four children, Sophie, Tobias, Pepijn and Olivier, left the Netherlands with a bold objective: to trade routine for connection, and possessions for experiences. Accompanied by their two cats, Fox and Izzy, they now live full-time in a self-built home on wheels, a converted 1975 Mercedes 1113 firetruck that carries not just their belongings, but an entirely reimagined way of life.

The idea began modestly. Four years ago, a six-month road trip across Europe in a small, aging van was meant to be a one-time adventure. Instead, it revealed something deeper. Despite breakdowns, unpredictable weather and the pressures of life on the road, the family discovered a sense of closeness and clarity that their fast-paced life back home rarely allowed.

Returning to the Netherlands felt inevitable, but temporary. The question was no longer if they would travel again, but how. They needed more space, more durability, and more freedom. The answer came unexpectedly in the form of an old firetruck, reliable, spacious, and full of potential. Over the course of a year and a half, they transformed it themselves, designing and building nearly every detail. What emerged was not just a vehicle, but a philosophy: live simply, spend less, and prioritise time together.

They sold their home, let go of most of their belongings, and set out with no fixed end date.

Oman was always part of that vision. For Karlijn, the country holds a personal history; she lived in Muscat as a child in the 1990s, and the memory of it lingered for decades. But rather than returning as tourists, the family chose a slower, more immersive approach to drive there, experiencing every mile in between.

Their journey took five months, crossing Eastern Europe, Türkiye, Iraq and the Gulf, before they finally entered Oman at the end of February.

What greeted them was not what they expected; it was more.

After long stretches of desert across the region, Oman revealed itself in layers, rugged mountains, winding wadis, and villages that felt both timeless and alive. Their first stop, a remote wadi, set the tone. “It was quiet, raw, and incredibly beautiful,” they recall. “It felt like we had arrived somewhere special.”

Since then, their days have been

shaped by Oman’s natural rhythm. They have hiked through valleys like Wadi Al Shab, where turquoise pools cut through stone, and explored lesser-known wadis where the journey itself is as rewarding as the destination. For the children, it is a playground without walls, space to run, climb and discover freely.

Yet, it is the people who have left the deepest impression.

Across Oman, the family has encountered a kind of hospitality that feels instinctive. Strangers offer food, water, and help without hesitation. Conversations begin easily, even without a shared language. “We had to learn to accept that generosity,” they admit. “It comes from a place of genuine care.”

Moments of connection have become part of their daily life, sharing the joy of Eid Al Fitr celebrations, exchanging stories on the roadside, or simply being welcomed into someone’s presence. These encounters, small yet profound, have reshaped their understanding of community.

Through it all, their truck continues forward, across mountains, through wadis, and along coastal roads, proving as resilient as the family inside it.

And with every passing mile, one idea becomes clearer: home is no longer a destination. It is the life they have built together, carried across borders, and deepened in places like Oman, where the road does not just lead somewhere new, but reveals something essential along the way

