

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



GCC EDUCATION
MINISTERS MEETING
IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the Ninth Meeting of the Ministers of Education of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries which was held in the sisterly State of Kuwait, on Monday.

Oman's delegation to the meeting was headed by Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education.

The meeting discussed several topics related to enhancing cooperation and integration between the ministries of education in the GCC countries. It reviewed the Gulf Strategy for Combating Drugs for the 2025-2028 period which included numerous proposals for developing educational and training programmes in the educational field.

The meeting also discussed ways of developing the work of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) to ensure its contribution to supporting the work of the ministries of education and keeping pace with current and future changes and developments in education. — ONA

MEETING LOOKS AT
INTEGRATION OF GCC
HIGHER EDUCATION



KUWAIT: The Sultanate of Oman took part in the 25th meeting of GCC Ministers of Higher Education and Research, held in the State of Kuwait.

Oman's delegation was headed by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The meeting discussed matters related to enhancing cooperation and integration among GCC states in the fields of higher education, research and innovation.

The meeting discussed common systems of higher education, innovation and entrepreneurship. It also dealt with standard methods of teaching and learning in higher education institutions, means of developing community partnerships and related regional and international ties and envisaging future growth in a manner that keeps pace with rapid updates.

— ONA

OMAN,
BELARUS SIGN
AGREEMENT
TO ESTABLISH
JOINT
COMMITTEE

MINSK: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Belarus signed an agreement in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, on Monday to establish a joint committee aimed at boosting cooperation across various fields between the two countries.

The signing ceremony was attended by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, and Viktor Aleksandrovich Lukashenko, President of the Belarusian Olympic Committee and Special Envoy of the President of Belarus to the GCC



states.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the Government of the

Sultanate of Oman by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), and on behalf of the Government of Belarus by Maxim Ryzhenkov, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Also present at the signing ceremony were Hamoud bin Salim al Tuwaih, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation and non-resident Ambassador to the Republic of Belarus, along with a number of Belarusian officials. — ONA

Housing experiences await
visitors of real estate expo

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 19

THE Oman Real Estate Conference and Exhibition is currently running for six days, offering attendees a rich interactive experience. Visitors have the opportunity to closely explore available housing options through a live model of residential apartments in Sultan Haitham City. This provides a realistic chance to assess the quality of designs and construction firsthand.

The exhibition serves as an integrated platform, bringing together leading real estate developers under one roof. Visitors can compare various offerings and receive direct consultations from housing and real estate development experts.

Exclusive offers for buyers during the event include prizes exceeding half a million Omani rials, such as chances to win apartments, residential plots, luxury cars and special furnishing deals from specialised companies.



The 20th edition of the conference hosts over 40 local and international speakers participating in 10 panel discussions covering diverse topics like urban development, real estate investment, smart planning and sustainability. The event features nearly 180 pavilions spread over more than 13,000 square metres.

The conference sessions present working papers that highlight Oman's experience in real estate development, showcasing investment opportunities and available

incentives in the sector. They also address market challenges and ways to enhance its resilience and sustainability amid global economic changes.

The accompanying exhibition includes extensive showcases of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning's key projects, such as Sultan Haitham City, Oman's Mountain Destination, Al Khuwair Downtown, the Future Salalah City, as well as the Greater Muscat Structure Plan and the "Sorouh" integrated residential neighbourhoods.

The conference features the "Investment Forum", which gathers a select group of local and international investors to explore future city projects and promising investment opportunities in Oman.

The aim is to strengthen partnerships with the private sector and attract quality investments to urban development projects.

The conference also hosts the "Youth Forum", highlighting the efforts of Omani youth in implementing urban strategy projects over recent years.

RO 2.3 bn deals inked to boost smart city project

FROM PAGE 1

A tourism project in Al Seeb covering over 2.2 million square metres, featuring a hotel, residential areas with waterfront views, artificial lakes and a marina, adding significant value to Oman's tourism sector.

A development agreement worth over RO 150 million with Idraak Real Estate Development Company to develop districts (6C) and (6D) in Sultan Haitham City, in addition to awarding a site preparation tender for Package (1A) worth over RO 6 million.

A new hotel project in collaboration with the global

LUX Collection brand, valued at RO 45 million, to develop the first 4-star hotel complex in Sultan Haitham City's January Residences.

An usufruct agreement worth RO 2 million was signed with Al Siyabi Group to establish a precast concrete factory in Halban, Barka. This project is expected to reduce construction time by 40 per cent compared to traditional methods and support local employment.

An agreement worth over RO 240 million was signed to develop District (6) in Al Thuraya City, covering 285,000 square metres and including 1,000 residential units. Two

tenders worth RO 13 million were also awarded for site preparation and engineering consultancy services.

Additionally, an international competition was announced for the design of the city's third phase, aimed at making it a hub for adventure and mountain sports.

An agreement worth RO 200 million was signed to develop the Health District in the western village, covering 630,000 square metres and offering 500 residential and hotel units, reinforcing Al Jabal Al Aali position as a destination for health and eco-tourism.

On the sidelines of the

conference, 23 agreements were signed with service providers to implement infrastructure for eight projects under the "Sorouh" initiative, covering water, electricity, and telecom networks. Eight new investment opportunities were also announced across the governorates of Al Batinah South, Al Sharqiyah South, Dhofar, Muscat and Al Dakhiliyah.

The event also witnessed the signing of 43 usufruct contracts worth over RO 7.3 million, covering sectors such as food security, industry, SMEs, and the establishment of a specialised sports academy.

Oman awarded for eliminating trans-fats from food products

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman has been awarded a validation certificate by the World Health Organization (WHO) for eliminating industrially-produced trans-fats from food products.

This milestone reflects the country's strong commitment to improving the quality of life, consolidating preventive healthcare and augmenting public health indicators in line with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which aspires to elevate the nation to the ranks of developed countries, with health as a top priority.

The certificate was officially presented on Monday during the 78th World Health Assembly (WHA), currently being held in Geneva, Switzerland, from May 19 to 27. The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was headed by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.



The certificate was officially presented on Monday during the 78th World Health Assembly (WHA), being held in Geneva where Oman's delegation was headed by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health. — ONA



In a press statement, Dr Al Sabti said, "The elimination of trans-fats constitutes a milestone in our commitment to promote and protect community health. Oman takes pride in being among the nine leading countries globally and the second country in the Arab world to implement this life-saving policy of eliminating

this harmful ingredient." Oman's official delegation will be engaged in WHA78's key issues that address the proposed programme budget for the 2026–2027, as well as the role of the Global Coordination Mechanism on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) in supporting WHO's efforts to engage multiple stakeholders in combating

NCDs.

The discussions also cover mental health and social connectivity, along with various global strategies and action plans scheduled to be implemented with effect from next year. These include the Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (2021–2025),

the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health and the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery (2021–2025).

The Assembly is further addressing the critical issue of antimicrobial resistance. It also is reviewing progress made by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body responsible for drafting and negotiating a convention, agreement, or other international instrument under the Constitution of the WHO to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

The meeting will cover integrated emergency, critical and surgical care to achieve universal health coverage and protection from health emergencies. It will also address substandard and falsified medical products. — ONA



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SHORT TAKES

BRIDGING EDUCATION WITH INDUSTRY

MUSCAT: In line with its ongoing mission to empower Oman’s education sector through real-world industry engagement, Knowledge Oman is taking a significant step forward as its founder, Tariq bin Hilal al Barwani, expands his strategic influence by joining key academic and financial institution boards.



TARIQ BIN HILAL AL BARWANI
Founder of Knowledge Oman

This strategic move enhances Knowledge Oman’s ability to connect classroom learning with industry practices, creating impactful opportunities for students, educators and society at large.

“Serving on the boards of academic and financial institutions gives me a unique opportunity to understand how systems operate from within,” said Al Barwani. “More importantly, it allows me to connect those insights to create real-world opportunities for youth, through internships, hands-on projects and industry-academic collaboration. My goal is to bring the boardroom into the classroom — so students can learn from real-world decisions, not just textbooks. These appointments not only strengthen Knowledge Oman’s influence in shaping future-ready graduates, but also reflect a growing national trend.

WORKSHOP ADDRESSES DRAFT COMMERCIAL LAW



MUSCAT: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, organised a workshop to discuss the draft Commercial Law and Commercial Transactions Law, as well as the draft Commercial Registry Law. This initiative falls within the OCCI efforts to strengthen partnerships between the public and private sectors in developing the legislative environment for the business sector in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

TURNING LANES AT AL ZULFA ROUNDABOUT CLOSED: ROP

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has announced the closure of turning lanes at Al Zulfa roundabout in both directions as part of measures to improve traffic flow on Sultan Qaboos Street.

In a statement issued on Sunday, the ROP said the closure affects the designated U-turn lanes leading into and out of the roundabout.



The move is aimed at reducing congestion along the vital thoroughfare that serves key residential and commercial areas.

Motorists are advised to use the nearby bridges as alternative routes. The police have called on drivers to exercise caution and adhere to traffic instructions to ensure road safety.

Fire accidents on the rise; CDAA calls for caution

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MAY 19

OVER the past one week, there has been a surge in fire accidents in commercial buildings, residential areas and farmlands. From January 1 to the end of April 2025, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) received a total of 1,204 fire accident reports.

“During the month of May, the Sultanate of Oman experiences a gradual increase in temperatures, which contributes to a higher risk of fire incidents. The main causes observed during this period include poor or non-compliant electrical installations, negligence in the use of electrical and heating appliances such as air conditioners and stoves,” First Lieutenant Ali bin Said al Farsi from CDAA, told the Observer.

He pointed out that other causes are open burning without proper safety precautions and careless disposal of cigarette butts near flammable materials. “Preliminary statistics indicate a relative increase in fire-related reports during the summer season, particularly in May and June. This is due to rising temperatures and unsafe practices by individuals or in various facilities,” he said.

The firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority in the Governorate of Al Dhahirah were able to extinguish a fire that broke out in a house in the Wilayat of Yanqul without recording any injuries. Rescue and ambulance teams of CDAA in the Governorate of Muscat responded to a partial collapse in a commercial residential building in Bausher. Initial evidence indicated a momentary gas explosion resulting from a cooking gas leak in a restaurant.

The accident resulted in the death of two Asian nationals. The authorities are investigating the circumstances of the accident. The CDAA’s firefighting teams in the Governorate of Al Batinah North were



able to extinguish a fire that broke out in trees in the Wilayat of Shinas, and there were no injuries. A supermarket also experienced a fire accident.

In Muscat, the CDAA, with the support of the Special Tasks Police Unit in Al Seeb, was able to control a fire mishap and prevent it from spreading.

Al Farsi explained that fires involving trees and vegetation are often caused by high temperatures and extreme dryness, which make dry grass and leaves highly flammable, in addition to careless disposal of cigarette butts or glass objects that may focus sunlight. Other major causes have been campfires or outdoor cooking without ensuring full extinguishment and agricultural or industrial activities near green areas without proper safety measures, he noted. However, electrical fires remain one of the most common types of fire incidents, particularly in homes and commercial establishments.

“These are usually caused by improper and unsafe electrical wiring, lack of regular maintenance for electrical appliances and the use of non-standard or counterfeit

SAFETY TIPS

- Ensure all electrical installations are safe and do not overload power outlets
- Avoid leaving electrical appliances running while away or asleep
- Refrain from lighting fires in open areas, especially during peak heat hours
- Do not store flammable materials in areas exposed to direct sunlight
- Keep fire extinguishers at home and in vehicles, and know how to use them
- Call emergency number (9999) or (24343666) immediately in case of any fire incident

electrical devices,” Al Farsi stressed.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in Muscat carried out a joint practical exercise in cooperation with OQ Company and the relevant authorities in Al Seeb. This exercise aimed to enhance the preparedness of emergency teams and improve their ability to respond to industrial accidents. It included a number of scenarios, including a crude oil leak from a pipeline and a fire breaking out during technical inspections, with a number of casualties.

The aim of the exercise was to develop field capabilities and enhance coordination among various stakeholders to ensure a rapid response and effective intervention in such emergency incidents. The firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah South were able to control a fire that broke out in a warehouse in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, with no injuries recorded. The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority has amended the application for suggestions, complaints, reports and inquiries related to its services - the Tajawub platform.

CEO programme: RAM celebrates achievements of 35 C-suite executives

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) celebrated the achievements of 35 C-suite executives, all private sector leaders, who recently completed the National CEO Programme. Held under the auspices of Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court and Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the Royal Academy of Management, the graduation ceremony reflected Oman’s ongoing commitment to enhance leadership capabilities at the national level, which is in line with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040 and the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to invest in human capital and strengthen institutional excellence.

The National CEO Programme



The participants undertook an eight-month immersive learning journey consisting of five core modules and interactive workshops.

is a flagship initiative designed to equip private sector executives with the tools to lead effectively in today’s complex and dynamic work environment. The participants undertook an eight-month

immersive learning journey consisting of five core modules, interactive workshops, coaching sessions, field visits and exposure to global business trends.

Hiba al Hinai, Programme

Manager at the Royal Academy of Management, emphasised the national significance of the National CEO Programme and its alignment with Oman’s ambition to empower future-ready leaders. She noted that since the launch of the programme in 2014, the National CEO Programme underscored the requirement for continued investment in executive talent to boost the private sector’s competitiveness and inspire future generations.

Helen Kerkentzes, Associate Dean for Executive Education at LBS, praised the fruitful collaboration with RAM, enabling the delivery of a truly distinguished learning experience. She expressed her pride in the partnership and commended

the joint efforts that contributed to the programme’s success.

Eng Hamad bin Abdullah al Maamari, Executive General Manager, Technical Services and Decarbonisation Executive, Oman LNG, reflected on the transformative nature of the experience he shared with his fellow participants. He highlighted several key moments during the programme that significantly shaped their leadership development and broadened their strategic perspective. In his closing remarks, he extended his appreciation to the teams at RAM and LBS, as well as the subject matter experts, speakers and facilitators who enriched the programme with global insights and international best practices.

SPOTLIGHT

HANDLE EXAMS WITH CARE

Study regularly, choose the right place, organise your time, and clear your mind

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 19

Study as if you were watching a movie or a match. The way you study, make the material your friend

Take care of your study space, avoid distractions, and find positive motivators

Organise your time, always know your priorities and make plans to activate these priorities

Rely on effective study by examining all illustrations

Take breaks, don't overexert yourself



- Television and mobile phones
- Using dim lighting
- Listening to loud music
- Studying in public places
- Soft drinks and stimulants
- Relying on quick summaries
- Postponing studying until the end of the year
- Sitting in an unhealthy manner
- Studying in bed

THINGS TO AVOID

EXAMINATIONS ARE A CRUCIAL STAGE in students' lives; they require careful preparation and effective time and task management. Examinations are also one of the most stressful periods students experience during the academic year. This is perhaps because they are the culmination of all the effort they have put into studying and reviewing throughout the academic year. Therefore, this period should pass peacefully so that the student's psychological state is not negatively affected, which inevitably impacts their ability to comprehend and achieve final results in exams.

Mastering study methods is extremely important for maximising the benefit of our knowledge and skills. Therefore, it is important to learn the techniques and strategies that help you make the most of your study hours.

Experts advise against staying up late during exam days, as this does not help with memorising more information. So, start studying before and prepare for it well. Also, they believe that studying the night before an exam is a light review of what the student has previously memorised, while the intense stress of studying in-depth the night before an exam leads to forgetfulness.

The exam period is divided into two phases: the pre-exam phase and the exam phase itself.

Studying for exams is essential. Studying is an essential part of academic success. However, sometimes it's difficult to find the time to study each subject. One way to ensure study success is to create a solid study schedule. However, creating a study schedule can be more challenging than we think. Not only do you have to prioritise the subjects and materials you need to study within a certain time frame, but you also have to balance other responsibilities such as family, friends and entertainment. Ultimately, with a little thought and a little work, one will have no problem creating a schedule and meeting all your academic goals.

By following good strategies, one can improve the effectiveness of your study and achieve your goals. Smart studying requires planning, organisation and perseverance.

Students are also preparing for exams during the upcoming period, amid hot weather coinciding with the start of summer. This may cause students to feel exhausted due to the high temperatures and the effort they exert while studying. A recent study revealed a significant relationship between temperature and students' performance in the exams they take during their studies.

Students in hot weather may also be more distracted, irritable and find it difficult to concentrate.

Therefore, it is recommended to drink plenty of water, reaching up to three litres throughout the day, eat vegetables and fruits, especially those containing compounds that stimulate brain cells and stimulate memory, eat light meals that prevent feeling heavy, avoid direct exposure to sunlight, a study in a well-ventilated area to reduce high humidity, wear loose, cotton clothing when going out, and avoid the colour black completely, as it is a colour that can affect your mood washing your face and neck with water from time to time will refresh your body.

SHORTTAKES



The event will continue for three days. — ONA

MUSANDAM HOSTS ‘ALL OF OMAN’ INITIATIVE

KHASAB: The activities of the “All of Oman” project were launched on Monday in the Wilayat of Khasab, marking its tenth stop in a series of field meetings organised by the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, with broad participation from representatives of government and private sectors.

“The visit of ‘All of Oman’ project reflects the nation’s steadfast commitment to applying the principle of decentralisation and enhancing direct communication between stakeholders responsible for implementing the vision and governorate development,” Sayyid Ibrahim said.

He added that this step underscores the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit’s keen interest in monitoring the execution of plans and strategies designed to achieve the vision’s ambitious goals.

He further stated: “Our focus is on elevating performance levels and achieving efficiency and satisfaction to meet our economic aspirations and enhance societal well-being, while always emphasising that people are the core, purpose and foundation of the vision.”

This initiative aims to strengthen partnerships with governorates and empower them to formulate their developmental visions and plans, based on a decentralised approach that embodies the objectives of the ambitious national vision. The event will continue for three days.

NDC COMMANDANT RECEIVES UK DELEGATION



Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC), received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtajaa a delegation from the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS) of the United Kingdom (UK). During the meeting, the two sides discussed several military matters of mutual interest, especially in academic and strategic spheres. The visiting delegation members were also briefed about the NDC and its facilities. — ONA

International museum conference highlights scientific sessions

AMAL AL RIYAMI
MANAH, MAY 19

The second day of the International Museum Conference at the Oman Across Ages Museum in the Wilayat of Manah on Monday brought forward a series of enriching and varied scientific sessions, delving the roles of museums in areas such as economics, tourism, culture and education.

The day included an insightful lecture on “Museum Communication in the Contemporary Digital Environment: Global Trends and Future Scenarios”, delivered by Prof Dr Abdullah bin Khamis al Kindi, a member of the State Council and head of the Department of Media at Sultan Qaboos University. His talk offered a fresh perspective on the way digital platforms and media have transformed museum communication.

He emphasised that the Internet

and social media have reshaped how museums interact with their audiences, urging that museums now have to navigate a vast ocean of data to connect with a younger, more digitally fluent generation.

He stressed the need for Oman to harness these changes to enhance its museum ecosystem, ensuring that future generations are engaged through interactivity, inclusivity and sustainability.

Prof Islam Elsayed Hussein Elsayed from Fayoum University, Egypt, talked about event role of museums in achieving sustainable tourism development in light of Egypt’s Vision 2030, applied to Greater Cairo Museums, while Dr Ahmed Younis Abdel-Gawad, Lecturer, Department of Geography and GIS, Faculty of Arts, Fayoum University, talked about the spatial transformation of museums and their economic contributions, with a particular focus on Egypt’s National



The session included insightful lecture on museum communication in the contemporary digital environment.

Museum of Egyptian Civilisation.

Dr Asma Boukhaoua and Dr Zerouati Mouahib, Setif 1 University-Ferhat ABBAS, Algeria, provided insights into the role of virtual engagement, particularly looking at Algeria’s progress from 2015 to 2024, while Hassina Belouadah, Mohamed Boudiaf University M’Sila, Algeria, highlighted how digital innovation could align Omani museums with Oman Vision 2040, proposing that

museums become interactive, tourist friendly destinations.

A unique presentation by researcher Ferroudj Zineb, Department of Nutrition Technologies, Faculty of Natural and Life Sciences, Hadj Lakhdar University of Batna, Algeria, and Dr Krarcha Hadda, Earth Sciences and Universe Institute, University Mostepha Benbloulaid Batna, Algeria, examined the

growing interest in food museums, suggesting that such attractions can significantly contribute to tourism, as illustrated by an Italian model in collaboration with Algerian universities.

Wadha al Shukaili addressed the contribution of cultural institutions to sustainable tourism, with a focus on how museums can enhance both local and international tourism.

Fatma al Alawi from the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism emphasised the importance of service quality in enhancing the visitor experience.

The Nehru Science Centre in Mumbai offered insights into the role of science museums in tourism development. Poornima Sathischandra, Assistant Director, Department of National Museums, Sri Lanka, provided a presentation on sustainable museum investments and underscored their potential to drive both economic and tourism growth.

MAJLIS ASH’SHURA TO DEBATE DRAFT LAWS THIS WEEK



SHAIKH AHMED BIN MOHAMMED AL NADABI
Secretary-General of Majlis Ash’shura

MUSCAT: The Majlis Ash’shura will hold its 10th and 11th regular meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 20-21, during which a number of draft laws referred by the government will be discussed in addition to a number of draft economic and social agreements, Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash’shura, announced on Monday.

Al Nadabi stated that the two meetings will discuss draft amendments to the Law on Arbitration in Civil and Commercial Disputes and the draft Real Estate Registry Law. The meeting will also discuss and approve the draft Civil Society Organisations Law referred by the government.

The agenda of the two meetings also includes reviewing a number of draft laws referred by the

Council of Ministers, most notably the draft law on national geospatial data and information, the draft law on unified industrial regulation for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the draft law on sports authorities, Al Nadabi said.

The members of the Majlis Ash’shura will be briefed on the draft air services agreement between Oman and the Netherlands. — ONA

Ambassadors Forum to showcase strategic projects

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, MAY 19

In cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, Muscat Governorate will host the inaugural “Governors’ Ambassadors Forum” from May 20 to 22.

The second and third days of the upcoming Governors’ Ambassadors Forum will feature a comprehensive programme of field visits and workshops aimed at enhancing local governance and accelerating development efforts across Oman’s governorates.

On Wednesday, May 21, the delegates will embark on a series of site visits to major development initiatives within Muscat Governorate. The agenda will begin with a tour of the Sultan Haitham City in Al Khuwair, a major urban expansion project designed to meet Oman’s future residential and infrastructure demands. The participants will also visit the Oman Botanic Garden in Al Ansab, a flagship conservation initiative that showcases the country’s



The delegates will embark on a series of site visits to major development initiatives within Muscat Governorate.

diverse plant life.

The itinerary will continue with a stop at the Al Ansab-Jifnain dual carriageway project. Later in the afternoon, the group will tour the Green Walk in Al Maabela, an urban environmental initiative designed to integrate recreational spaces with sustainability goals. The day will conclude with dinner and visual presentations on

development projects from across Oman.

On Thursday, May 22, attention will turn back to Muscat Governorate Hall for a full day of technical sessions. The day will open with a presentation on the ‘Etimad’ Platform and the Unified Municipal System, both of which aim to improve service delivery and digital integration across Oman’s governments.

Subsequent workshops will address modern construction methods, evaluation guidelines for tenders and the management of variation orders in public projects. These sessions will equip regional leaders with practical tools for effective governance and project execution.

The forum’s second and third days are expected to offer an insightful blend of practical experience and policy knowledge, promoting best practices and fostering collaboration between Oman’s governorates. The events will play a vital role in aligning local initiatives with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, supporting a more decentralised and effective model of national development.

SAI marks audit awareness month

MUSCAT: The State Audit Institution (SAI) joined institutions and organisations from around the world in celebrating “Internal Audit Awareness Month,” which falls on May every year.

This annual occasion aims to highlight the importance of internal audit in enhancing transparency and efficiency within institutions. It affirms the pivotal role that internal audit undertakes in strengthening governance, managing risks, and ensuring compliance with regulations and standards.

Commenting on the occasion, Imad bin Abdullah al Shanfari, Director of the Internal Audit



Department at SAI, stated that internal audit departments serve as a safety wall and the first line of defence in the financial and administrative operations of both government and private institutions.

He noted that the primary objective of internal audit is to provide independent and objective assurance that the institution’s risk management, governance and internal control processes are functioning effectively, thereby ensuring the institution’s ability to achieve its goals.

Al Shanfari pointed out that the importance of internal audit lies in its role as a key element institutions rely on to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of financial, administrative and operational processes. Through internal audits, officials can identify gaps that may affect performance, enabling them

to take corrective actions in a timely manner. Internal audit is also an important part of governance as it helps enhance transparency and ensures that all operations are conducted in accordance with the established laws and regulations.

Furthermore, Al Shanfari stressed that fully leveraging internal audit to improve organisational performance requires implementing practical changes based on audit findings. This is accomplished by acting on the recommendations provided by internal auditors, which help institutions enhance processes, reduce costs and improve efficiency. — ONA

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



US President Donald Trump and Russia's President Vladimir Putin shake hands as they meet in Helsinki, Finland. — Reuters file photo

TRUMP CALLS PUTIN IN PUSH FOR UKRAINE TRUCE

Donald Trump spoke with Russia's Vladimir Putin on Monday as the US president seeks a breakthrough to end the grinding conflict triggered by Moscow's 2022 war on Ukraine.

Trump is pinning his hopes on a fresh personal appeal to Putin to get the Kremlin leader to agree to a 30-day unconditional ceasefire with Kyiv. A White House official said on condition of anonymity that the call had started.

But the White House warned that Trump was "weary and frustrated" with the slow progress in resolving the conflict. The Kremlin said the call between the Russian and US leaders was "important."

Trump is also set to speak to Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and Nato officials during the day as he scrambles to find a solution to the three-year-old war.

The 78-year-old Republican vowed during his US election campaign to halt the Ukraine war within 24 hours of taking office, but his diplomatic efforts have so far yielded little progress.

Vice-President J D Vance reiterated that Trump was losing patience.

"There's a bit of an impasse here, and I think the president's going to say to President Putin, look, are you serious?" Vance told reporters as he left Rome, where he met both Pope Leo XIV and Zelensky. — AFP

BRAZIL PROBES SIX SUSPECTED BIRD FLU CASES

Brazil, the world's largest chicken exporter, is currently investigating six potential outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza, known as bird flu, according to updated data on the Agriculture Ministry's website.

Two of the ongoing investigations concern poultry raised on commercial farms and four refer to backyard flocks in Brazil, which sold some \$10 billion worth of chicken products globally last year, supplying more than 5 million metric tons. Under existing protocols signed between Brazil and trade partners, those including China, the European Union and South Korea would ban poultry imports nationwide in case of a bird flu outbreak on a commercial farm.

Protocols with buyers Japan, the UAE and Saudi Arabia provide for local trade restrictions.

One of the cases under investigation concerns a commercial farm in the state of Tocantins, and the other a commercial farm in Santa Catarina, according to the ministry's website.

The first commercial-farm outbreak was confirmed last week in Brazil's southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul. "People are on high alert," agriculture minister Carlos Favaro told TV reporters outside his ministry on Monday, referring to the cases under investigation.

"Farmers, whether on commercial or subsistence farms, report it when they see a sick animal, and it's good that it is that way." — Reuters

CEASEFIRE PUSH

Pope Leo XIV meets Vance



Pope Leo XIV received US Vice-President J D Vance and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the Vatican on Monday, ahead of a US-led push to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The Vatican released photographs of Vance and Rubio smiling as they met with the Chicago-born pope. The pair were among the 200,000 dignitaries, royals and faithful gathered to mark the official start of Leo's papacy at an inauguration mass. — AFP

PORTUGAL'S FAR-RIGHT PARTY GAINS AS PREMIER HOLDS ON

LISBON: Portugal's Prime Minister Luis Montenegro prepared on Monday to lead a new minority government after the upstart far-right Chega party tied for second place in snap elections, posing a major challenge to his centre-right alliance. Nearly complete official results showed that Montenegro's Democratic Alliance (AD) had boosted its tally in the 230-seat parliament to 89 in the Sunday election, short of the 116 seats required for a majority.

Chega, led by the former television sports commentator Andre Ventura, won eight additional seats to reach 58, putting it on par in second place with the Socialist Party that also obtained 58. There are still four seats left to be assigned representing Portuguese who live abroad.

Ventura said he was confident Chega would pick up a couple of those seats, as it did in the previous election last year, and would overtake the PS to become Portugal's

main opposition party for the first time. "We didn't win these elections but we made history," Ventura told supporters who chanted "Portugal is ours and it always will be" shortly after midnight on Monday.

"The system of two-party rule in Portugal is over," he said. Even with the backing of the recently formed business-friendly party Liberal Initiative (IL), which won nine seats, Montenegro's AD would still need the support of Chega or the PS to pass legislation. — AFP

Israel will ‘take control of all’ of Gaza, says PM

PRIME

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday Israel would control the whole of Gaza despite mounting international pressure that pushed it to lift a blockade on aid supplies that has left the enclave on the brink of famine.

The Israeli military, which announced the start of a new operation last Friday, warned residents of the southern city of Khan Yunis on Monday to evacuate to the coast immediately as it prepared "an unprecedented attack".

"There is huge fighting going on, intense and huge, we are going to control all parts of Gaza... but we have to do it in a way that we won't be stopped," Netanyahu said in a video message. He said Israel would achieve "complete victory" with the release of the 58 captives.

Even as the military warned of the attack, Reuters reporters saw aid trucks heading towards northern Gaza after Netanyahu was forced to agree to allow a limited amount of aid into Gaza in response to global concern at the reports of looming famine. Netanyahu said US senators he has known for years as supporters of Israel, "our best friends in the world", were telling him the scenes of hunger were draining vital support and bringing Israel close to a "red line, to a point where we might lose control".

Israeli air strikes across Gaza killed at least 40 Palestinians on Monday, according to local medics.

One of the strikes killed seven at a school housing displaced families in Nuseirat, central Gaza, and three



Palestinians move with their belongings following Israeli evacuation orders for Khan Yunis on Monday. — AFP



If I'm not mistaken, trucks will be entering, are planned to enter today already. Small amounts of aid has already started entering Gaza City

NADAV SHOSHANI

in a house in nearby Deir Al Balah, local health authorities said.

Palestinian media said 50 trucks carrying flour, cooking oil and legumes would be allowed into the small coastal territory later in the day, while Israeli media said nine trucks with baby food were expected to enter in the coming hours.

"If I'm not mistaken, trucks will be entering, are planned to enter today already. Small amounts," Israeli military spokesman Nadav Shoshani told reporters. He said it took time to create a situation where hundreds of trucks were able to enter daily and that such a decision was also a political one.

Israel has faced rising pressure over the blockade on humanitarian deliveries it imposed in March, shortly before breaking a two-month-old ceasefire, as aid agencies warn of famine in the enclave of 2.3

million people.

Nahed Shheibar, owner of a transport company involved in aid distribution, urged Gazans not to intercept or loot the trucks.

Residents and medics said an Israeli undercover force killed a leader in a raid in the south as the army proceeded with its new ground offensive. Ahmed Sarhan, a commander of the Popular Resistance Committees, a group allied with Hamas, was killed in the raid by forces that entered the heart of the city of Khan Younis disguised as displaced persons, according to the medics.

Residents said Sarhan fought the force before he was killed, and that the Israelis detained his wife and children before retreating in a bus towards the eastern border with Gaza under a cover of fire from planes. — Reuters



INDIAN CITY UNDER WATER

An aerial view shows a flooded locality following heavy rainfall in Bengaluru on Monday. Many roads are waterlogged, slowing down public transport. Commuters faced difficulties reaching destinations due to impassable streets and reduced mobility. Floodwaters entered ground-floor homes in Horamavu, damaging furniture and appliances. Residents waded through knee-deep water to save their belongings and the city's poor drainage system failed to manage the heavy rain. Streets turned into streams, and parked vehicles are partially submerged in several areas. — AFP

HIGHEST LEVEL

Indonesia raises volcano alert



Indonesia raised the alert level of Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki to the highest after it erupted eight times over the weekend, its volcanology agency has said. Lewotobi Laki-laki, located on Flores island in eastern Indonesia, spewed volcanic ash between 3 km to 5.5 km high on Sunday. Analysis showed that the activities of Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki are still high so the status level has been raised on Sunday. — AFP

COVID CRISIS

Countries should adopt pandemic pact



Countries told to adopt pandemic deal The head of the World Health Organization on Monday urged countries to adopt this week the Pandemic Agreement, aimed at preventing a repeat of the Covid-19 crisis. WHO member states are holding their annual World Health Assembly. "At this assembly, member states will consider, and hopefully adopt, the WHO Pandemic Agreement," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

SHORTTAKES



Russian choreographer Yuri Grigorovich

RUSSIAN BALLET MASTER YURI GRIGOROVICH DIES

MOSCOW: Russian ballet maestro Yuri Grigorovich, considered one of the greatest choreographers of the 20th century, has died at the age of 98, the Bolshoi Theatre said on Monday.

Grigorovich, artistic director of the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow from 1964-1995, was famed for productions of Spartacus, Ivan the Terrible, Romeo and Juliet and many other ballets.

Valery Gergiev, head of the Bolshoi and Mariinsky theatres, told Izvestia newspaper he was “a legendary figure who will continue to command respect and admiration for decades to come”.

The Bolshoi said in a statement that it would “faithfully cherish his memory and protect his priceless legacy”.

Grigorovich was born in 1927, a decade after the Bolshevik Revolution, and performed as a soloist with Leningrad’s Kirov ballet before becoming a choreographer. — Reuters

SUDAN ARMY CHIEF NAMES IDRIS AS PM



KHARTOUM: Sudan’s army chief Abdel Fattah Burhan appointed Kamil Idris, a former UN official and ex-presidential candidate, as prime minister of Sudan’s military-led government on Monday.

The appointment installs a prime minister for the first time since a coup in 2021 ousted civilian leadership and established a caretaker government. It is unclear how much power the prime minister will have as the army fights a devastating war against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Idris’ appointment follows less than a month after Burhan named diplomat Dafallah al-Haj Ali as acting prime minister, in a move that did not appear to take effect. Earlier on Monday, Burhan re-appointed Salma Abdel Jabbar Almubarak to the ruling sovereign council and also appointed Nowara Abo Mohamed Mohamed Tahir to that governing body. — Reuters

‘CHOOSE FRANCE’ SUMMIT TO BRING 20 BILLION EUROS

PARIS: This year’s “Choose France” business summit is set to secure 20 billion euros (\$22.47 billion) of new investment, French President Emmanuel Macron said, announcing projects in the defence, energy and industrial sectors.

Macron’s personal efforts to woo international business leaders, making the Choose France summits at the opulent Palace of Versailles a must-attend for the global corporate elite, have been credited for a turnaround in past investor

perceptions of France as a high-tax, rigid economy. On top of the 20 billion euros in new investments, details of some 20 billion euros worth of AI-focused projects pledged at an AI summit earlier this year will also be provided at Monday’s summit, Macron said, adding that his aim was to ensure that France, and Europe, are more innovative and competitive. “We don’t give up on anything!,” Macron said as he announced the pledges expected at the summit. He was speaking

at a Daimler Buses site in eastern France, where Chief Executive Till Oberwoerder announced an increase in investment and jobs.

Among the pledges made ahead of the summit, US logistics giant Prologis is set to invest 6.4 billion euros in four data centres in the Paris region, while London-based fintech Revolut plans to invest 1 billion euros over the next three years on expanding in France and will apply for a French banking licence. — Reuters

UK forges new ties with EU in post-Brexit era

BRITAIN

agreed the most significant reset of defence and trade ties with the European Union since Brexit on Monday after US President Donald Trump’s upending of the global order pushed the two sides to move on from their acrimonious divorce.

Nearly nine years after it voted to leave the bloc, Britain, the second largest defence spender in Europe, will take part in joint procurement projects. The sides also agreed to make it easier for UK food and visitors to reach the EU, and signed a contentious new fishing deal.

Trump’s tariffs, alongside warnings that Europe should do more to protect itself, forced governments around the world to rethink trade, defence and security ties, bringing British Prime Minister Keir Starmer closer to France’s Emmanuel Macron and other European leaders.

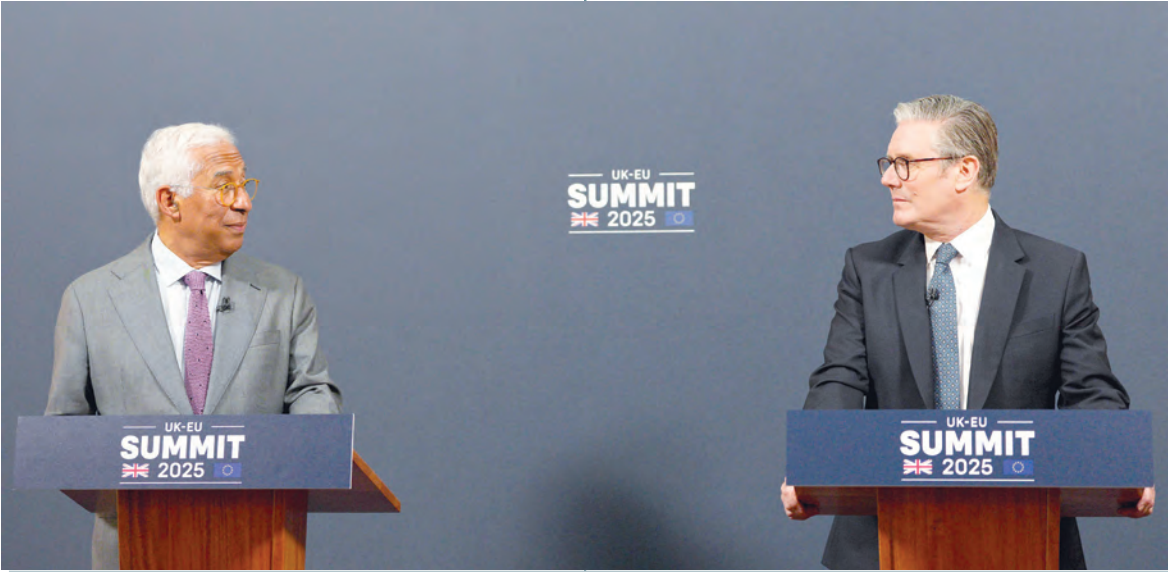
Starmer, who backed remaining in the EU in the Brexit referendum, also bet that offering benefits to Britons such as the use of faster e-gates at EU airports will drown out the cries of “betrayal” from Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage.

Flanked by EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa, Starmer said the deal marked “a new era in our relationship”.

Von der Leyen said it sent a message to the world: “At a time of global instability, and when our continent faces the greatest threat it has for generations, we in Europe stick together.”

Britain said the reset with its biggest trading partner would reduce red tape for food and agricultural producers, making food cheaper, improve energy security and add nearly 9 billion pounds (\$12.1 billion) to the economy by 2040. It is the third deal Britain has struck this month, after agreements with India and the US, and while it is unlikely to lead to an immediate economic boost, it could lift business confidence, drawing much-needed investment.

At the heart of the reset is a defence and security pact that will let Britain be part of



European Council President Antonio Costa (L) and Britain’s Prime Minister Keir Starmer speak during a press conference during the UK-EU Summit at Lancaster House in London on Monday. — AFP

any joint procurement and pave the way for British companies including BAE, Rolls-Royce and Babcock to take part in a 150 billion euro (\$167 billion) programme to rearm Europe.

On fishing, British and EU vessels will have access to each other’s waters for 12 years - removing one of the UK’s strongest hands in any future talks - in return for a permanent reduction in paperwork and border checks that had prevented small food producers from exporting to Europe.

In return, Britain has agreed to the outline of a limited youth mobility scheme, with the details to be hammered out in future, and it is discussing participation in the Erasmus+ student exchange programme.

The agreement was denounced by Farage and the opposition Conservative Party, which was in power when Britain left the bloc and spent years negotiating the original divorce deal.

Britain’s vote to leave the EU in a historic referendum in 2016 revealed a country that was badly divided over everything from migration and sovereignty of power to culture and trade.

It helped trigger one of the most tumultuous periods in British political history, with five prime ministers in office before Starmer arrived last July, and

poisoned relations with Brussels.

Polls show a majority of Britons now regret the vote although they do not want to rejoin. Farage, who campaigned for Brexit for decades, leads opinion polls in Britain, giving Starmer limited room for manoeuvre.

But collaboration between Britain and European powers over Ukraine and Trump has rebuilt trust between the two sides after relations were badly damaged by years of arguments.

Rather than seek a full return to a pillar of the EU such as the single market, Starmer sought to negotiate better market access in some areas - a move that is often rejected by the EU as “cherry picking” of EU benefits without the obligations of membership.

Removing red tape on food trade required Britain to accept EU oversight on standards, but Starmer will argue that it is worth it to grow the economy and cut food prices. Trade experts said breaking the taboo of EU oversight for something that would benefit small companies and farmers was good politics.

Despite the agreement, UK’s economy will remain significantly different from before it left the bloc. Brexit cost London’s financial centre thousands of jobs, has weighed on the sector’s output and reduced its tax contributions, studies show. — Reuters

Ex-president Biden diagnosed with ‘aggressive’ prostate cancer

WASHINGTON: Former US President Joe Biden has been diagnosed with an “aggressive form” of prostate cancer that has spread to his bones, his office said in a statement.

Biden, 82, was diagnosed on Friday after experiencing urinary symptoms, and he and his family are reviewing treatment options with doctors, according to the statement.

“Cancer touches us all. Like so many of you, Jill and I have learned that we are strongest in the broken places. Thank you for lifting us up with love and support,” Biden said in an X post early on Monday.

Cancers that have spread, or metastasized, are considered Stage 4, the most advanced. Most prostate cancers are detected at an earlier stage. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, of the 236,659 cases of prostate cancer diagnosed in 2021, 70 per cent were diagnosed before the cancer had spread beyond the prostate.

About 8 per cent of new prostate cancer diagnoses that year involved advanced-stage disease.

“While this represents a more aggressive form of the disease, the cancer appears to be hormone-sensitive which allows for effective management,” Biden’s office said on Sunday.

Biden’s physical health and mental acuity drew scrutiny during his 2021-2025 presidency. He abruptly ended his bid for reelection last July, weeks after a halting performance during a debate against Republican Donald Trump prompted panic among his fellow Democrats.

President Trump, who has repeatedly berated Biden since taking office in January, expressed sympathy on Sunday for Biden and his wife, Jill, in a post on his social media platform Truth Social.

“Melania and I are saddened to hear about Joe Biden’s recent



Former US President Joe Biden

medical diagnosis,” he wrote, referring to first lady Melania Trump. “We extend our warmest and best wishes to Jill and the family, and we wish Joe a fast and successful recovery.”

Biden’s office said the cancer scored a nine out of 10 on the

Gleason score grading system, which is used to help determine the aggressiveness of prostate cancer.

Dr Herbert Lepor, an urologist at NYU Langone, said a score of nine is “very high risk,” but added that many men can live “five to 10 years and beyond” even with metastatic

prostate cancer.

“Over the last decade, there have been many advances in the treatment of advanced prostate cancer,” he said.

Dr Chris George, the medical director of the cancer programme for the Northwestern Health Network, said prostate cancer is no longer curable once it spreads to the bones but that there are treatments that can control it.

Biden was the oldest person to win the US presidency at the time of his election in 2020. Trump, 78, broke that record when he defeated Vice-President Kamala Harris last year.

Biden has kept a low profile since leaving office, making only a handful of public appearances, including an April speech in which he defended the Social Security Administration against Trump’s planned cuts.

— Reuters

OPINION

AI talking trees feature at Chelsea Flower Show



BRIGITTE DUSSEAU

The writer is AFP Director for the UK and Ireland

TALKING trees powered by AI, drought-resistant crops and sweet potatoes sprouting among flowers — the prestigious Chelsea Flower Show is facing the future with a focus on innovation and climate-change adaptation.

Over five days starting on Tuesday, more than 140,000 visitors are expected to view what the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) bills as “the pinnacle of horticultural excellence”.

There are stunning gardens, 30 competing for top awards, and more than 400 exhibitors showcasing their gardening knowledge and carefully-cultivated plants to the public and champagne-sipping VIPs. King Charles III was to visit with Queen Camilla, with an eye on the show’s first ever dog garden, designed by celebrity gardener Monty Don.

The head of state was also expected to visit the Wildlife Trusts’ British Rainforests garden where the main attraction is a 50-year-old fern that once thrived in the Great Park of Windsor.

The garden was “inspired by the enchanted forests of Arthurian legend” and it “rekindles the wild and wet woodlands that once swathed vast landscapes along the west coast”. In the Intelligent Garden, plant-lovers can truly talk to the trees thanks to artificial intelligence. Pioneering AI sensors called Treetalk have been installed to give updates on the trees’ needs in urban environments,

whether they are under stress and how to care for them.

“Urban trees filter air pollution, cool the air, support wildlife and boost community well-being. Yet, they face immense challenges,” the RHS said about the garden designed by Tom Massey and architect Je Ahn.

About 50 per cent of urban trees do not survive beyond 10 years and up to 30 per cent die in their first year, it added. “The use of AI is not going to replace a human being, our intuition and our labour. It’s still the core and heart of this garden,” said Je Ahn. But data could give “a clearer picture of what’s going on around us”.

The plants on display in the Garden of the Future “have the ability to survive in a range of challenging conditions,” the designers told the RHS. Growing among the more common hawthorn bushes, are sweet potatoes which have “fantastic nutritional value and are drought resistant,” sorghum a popular cereal from Africa, rock roses and chickpeas that are “more resilient to warmer climates”, they said. Those are all crops that “can grow right here in the UK”, said Ana Maria Loboguerrero, the Gates Foundation’s director of adaptive and equitable food systems.

It is the first time the foundation has sponsored a garden at the show.

Designers Matthew Butler and Josh Parker said the show was a chance to reflect on “the future of crops, food and livelihoods in the

There are stunning gardens, 30 competing for top awards, and more than 400 exhibitors showcasing their gardening knowledge and carefully-cultivated plants to the public and champagne-sipping VIPs

face of climate change”.

The theme of sustainability is echoed across the show, including in the Seawilding garden inspired by the landscape around Loch Craignish, on the west coast of Scotland.

It includes a saltwater pool, planted with seagrass — the first time that it has ever been displayed at the show and the UK’s “only native flowering plant in the ocean,” the RHS says. Designer Ryan McMahon said he “always assumed seagrass grew in warmer climates” so was intrigued when he discovered it in Scotland.

There is also a garden called “Songbird Survival” amid reports bird numbers have fallen in UK gardens by 50 per cent in the past two generations. Or visitors can discover the “Making Life Better with Bees” garden, with insects key to pollination. The annual horticultural show is organised in the grounds of the Royal Chelsea Hospital, and has long championed environmental issues.

In 2021, the RHS it said it would ban the use of peat, a natural captor of CO2 one of the main greenhouse gases blamed for global warming, from the end of 2025.

But growers will be able until 2028 to continue using peat, an organic material made over thousands of years from decaying vegetation in the UK’s dwindling wetlands.

The RHS decided to push back the peat ban for growers “due to a complex horticultural supply chain where 60 percent of young plants, many grown in peat, are sourced from abroad”.

FAMILIES FIND A NEW DANGER IN SUDAN’S BATTERED CAPITAL

KHALID ABDELAZIZ AND ELTAYEB SIDDIG

The bespectacled, grey-bearded man ran out of the primary school in Khartoum’s Amarat district, shaking with shock.

He, like thousands of others, had returned to check on buildings retaken by the army after two years of civil war, only to find a new threat lurking in the rubble of Sudan’s capital, in his case an unexploded shell under a pile of old cloth.

“I’m terrified. I don’t know what to do,” Abdelaziz Ali, 62, said outside the school where he used to work as an administrator before the conflict started in April 2023 and the Rapid Support Forces moved in.

“It’s around 40 cm long - looks like anti-armour. This is a children’s school.”

Ammunition and missiles litter streets, homes, schools and shops across the city where families have started to return to the buildings that the RSF commandeered. Sudanese and UN clearance teams are out checking, trying to make things safe. But they say they need more staff and funds, particularly since the US aid cuts.

In Amarat, Ali pointed at other shells on the dirt road between the school and a kindergarden. Several missiles were seen lodged in crushed vehicles. A caretaker from another building said authorities had found and removed ammunition and drones in the basement. But the anti-tank missiles were still there.

“We’re afraid one explosion could bring the whole place down,” he said.

More than 100,000 people have returned since the army took back control of Khartoum, and most of central Sudan, in a conflict that started over plans to integrate the military and the RSF.

The RSF still holds huge swaths of western Sudan and has switched tactics from ground incursions to drone attacks on infrastructure in army-held areas. Sudan’s National Mine Action Centre said more than 12,000 devices have been destroyed over the course of the war. Another 5,000 have been discovered since operations expanded into newly re-taken territory, director Major General Khaled Hamdan said.

At least 16 civilians have been reported killed and dozens more wounded in munitions explosions in recent weeks. The real toll is feared to be higher. — Reuters

Istanbul talks lay bare Kyiv-Moscow chasm

THE first high-level talks between Russia and Ukraine since the early months of Moscow’s 2022 war showed they are far from agreement on steps needed for a ceasefire, even though they promised a major swap of prisoners of war. A window for more diplomacy remains ajar, however, after the sworn enemies agreed in principle to hold further talks, the foreign minister of host country Türkiye said, a crucial point for US President Donald Trump, who wants a rapid peace.

The negotiators’ promises to release a thousand prisoners of war, to meet again for talks and to present their vision for a ceasefire were “substantial steps”, said Peter Slezkine, a senior fellow and director of the Russia programme at the Stimson Center.

“I do think that they are a very hopeful sign, because the two sides coming into direct contact is an important development,” he said.

Ukraine, the United States and other Western countries have called for a 30-day ceasefire without preconditions to allow for peace talks to begin.

Russia, which controls almost a fifth of Ukraine, has shown little appetite for concessions, repeating maximalist demands such as Ukraine withdrawing from and recognising Russian control over four Ukrainian regions that the Kremlin now unilaterally claims as its own but does not fully control.

The measured tones of statements by both sides that followed the talks did little to paper over the chasm between them. A Ukrainian diplomatic source said that Russia



A woman holds a portrait at a makeshift memorial for the fallen Ukrainian and foreign fighters at Independence Square in Kyiv. — AFP



TOM BALMFORTH

The writer is Chief Correspondent, Ukraine, Moldova for Reuters

made demands at the talks that were “detached from reality and go far beyond anything that was previously discussed.”

The source, who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the talks, said they included ultimatums for Ukrainian forces to withdraw from some of its own territory and “other nonstarters and non-constructive conditions.”

The Kremlin’s chief negotiator Vladimir Medinsky suggested after the negotiations that Russia could fight on for as long as it needed to achieve its aims. Invoking tsarist military victories in a 21-year war against Sweden in the 18th century, he said Kyiv was merely deepening its own demise by resisting Russia’s peace demands.

The closest things to a blueprint for a peace deal that have yet to

emerge are proposals circulated by the United States and counter-proposals suggested by Europe and Ukraine at talks last month, which Reuters has obtained.

On Saturday, a senior Ukrainian government source said Russia’s latest demands in Istanbul included Kyiv renouncing its desire for reparations, international recognition of five parts of Ukraine as Russian and that Ukraine becomes a neutral state. The demands went further than either the US or Ukrainian and European proposals.

One of the senior Ukrainian officials who took part in the abortive series of 2022 talks with Russia that failed to stop the all-out war said that the outcome of the renewed engagement in Istanbul had panned out entirely as expected.

A path that requires you to be yourself



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

WHAT was that profession you fancied when you were a child?

First, we used to like to imitate our parents, and as our horizon widens, so do the options. Soon it's people we come across - doctors and teachers.

There were other people too.

When you are a child you have a licence to stare and stare I did. The house was being constructed, and now the area was full of creative people. The masons, the carpenter who could shape the wood into doors, and all he would do is measure and slide the hand held wood planer, slices of thin wood curled and fell on the sides. They were curls of golden hair to my imagination. The placement of bricks with cement fillings. There was a certain rhythm to it. Hands of expertise are wonderful to watch because they perform with finesse. The women mixed the cement with sand and water, and they carried the bricks too. Women are strong, I noted.

For that matter, women played important roles in agriculture, especially in the rice fields in Kerala. Whether they were planting the seedlings, or harvesting, drying or threshing. They sang, laughed and worked hard. And most importantly, they were physically fit and strong.

As a child and up to now I continue to be fascinated by the creativity of dressmakers. Tailors might not be much celebrated, but things could stand still if their sewing machines stopped. And we have seen the demand for tailors every festive season.

Childhood days also had telephone operators and even lift (elevator) operators.

Jump to 2025, and we are talking about AI replacing many of the regular jobs.

Choosing the right path is going to be a different experience altogether for teenagers who are all set to graduate from high school. Within months they would have to choose their streams and head to colleges and universities. All this to build themselves as professionals in a few years' time. This period can be one of the toughest because there are a lot of decisions to make. The job market is more dynamic than ever before. New areas are being developed, and so, first of all, we need to know the choices that are available to be explored.

First of all, we need to identify what our interests are. Is a particular field the right one where you would want to be investing years of your life? The chosen career must be of your interest, the one that makes you feel great to go to work every day.

In other words, a particular job might provide you with a lifestyle, but if you are not passionate about it, you might not attain job

Women play important roles in agriculture, especially in the rice fields in Kerala. Whether they were planting the seedlings, harvesting, drying or threshing

satisfaction.

We don't want a modicum of success. We need to be inspired and motivated too.

A career path is a complete journey encompassing long-term plans and strategic moves. We need to grow in experience and knowledge.

So when we try to decide on the career we would like to pursue, it is important to research the skills that we would require to learn and develop.

Do we have the right personality suitable for the job? This is another question to ponder about.

But usually with the amount of training that colleges put the students through, even the personality can go through transformation.

There are innumerable cases of students studying one particular subject and switching on to another career.

If you are not a student and you are an adult, please go into a session of introspection and reflect on your own journey. We realise there were so many unexpected events. No one can actually prepare us completely, just like the process a butterfly goes through. The tougher the experiences, the stronger the individual becomes.

Do you want to climb the corporate ladder, be an expert in the chosen field, or be an entrepreneur? What we need is resilience.

POLAR BEAR BIOPSIES TO SHED LIGHT ON ARCTIC POLLUTANTS

OLIVIER MORIN AND ETIENNE FONTAINE

With one foot braced on the helicopter's landing skid, a veterinarian lifted his air rifle, took aim and fired a tranquilliser dart at a polar bear. The predator bolted but soon slumped into the snowdrifts, its broad frame motionless beneath the Arctic sky.

The dramatic pursuit formed part of a pioneering research mission in Norway's Svalbard archipelago, where scientists, for the first time, took fat tissue biopsies from polar bears to study the impact of pollutants on their health. The expedition came at a time when the Arctic region was warming at four times the global average, putting mounting pressure on the iconic predators as their sea-ice habitat shrank.

"The idea is to show as accurately as possible how the bears live in the wild — but in a lab," Laura Pirard, a Belgian toxicologist, said.

"To do this, we take their (fatty) tissue, cut it in very thin slices and expose it to the stresses they face, in other words, pollutants and stress hormones," said Pirard, who developed the method. Moments after the bear collapsed, the chopper circled back and landed. Researchers spilled out, boots crunching on the snow. One knelt by the bear's flank, cutting thin strips of fatty tissue. Another drew blood.

Each sample was sealed and labelled before the bear was fitted with a satellite collar.

Scientists said that while the study monitors all the bears, only females were tracked with GPS collars as their necks are smaller than their heads -- unlike males, who cannot keep a collar on for more than a few minutes. For the scientists aboard the Norwegian Polar Institute's research vessel Kronprins Haakon, these fleeting encounters were the culmination of months of planning and decades of Arctic fieldwork.

In a makeshift lab on the icebreaker, samples remained usable for several days, subjected to controlled doses of pollutants and hormones before being frozen for further analysis back on land.

Each tissue fragment gave Pirard and her colleagues insight into the health of an animal that spent much of its life on sea ice. Analysis of the fat samples showed that the main pollutants present were per and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) — synthetic chemicals used in industry and consumer goods that linger in the environment for decades. Despite years of exposure, Svalbard's polar bears showed no signs of emaciation or ill health, according to the team.

The local population has remained stable or even increased slightly, unlike parts of Canada, where the Western Hudson Bay group declined by 27 per cent between 2016 and 2021, from 842 to 618 bears, according to a government aerial survey.

Other populations in the Canadian Arctic, including the Southern Beaufort Sea, have also shown long-term declines linked to reduced prey access and longer ice-free seasons. — AFP

Carbon pricing advances despite Trump denial

MANY fear that America's withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement will undermine the international consensus to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. Yet just in the last month, there have been two major steps towards widespread carbon pricing where it is needed most.

To be sure, carbon pricing is not always the best policy, and not all sectors need to be subjected to schemes that require international consistency. If India electrifies its vehicle fleet more slowly than Europe, European industry suffers no competitive disadvantage. But the situation is different in long-distance shipping and aviation, and in heavy industries such as steel and chemicals, which account for around 25 per cent of global emissions. Here, carbon pricing is key to cost-efficient decarbonisation and must be imposed on an internationally consistent basis.

Fortunately, the technologies needed to achieve net-zero emissions by mid-century in each sector already exist. For example, methanol or ammonia can be used instead of fuel oil in ship engines, and hydrogen can replace coking coal in iron production. As matters stand, these technologies would impose a significant "green cost premium" at the intermediate product level, but with only a small impact on consumer prices. For example, even if shipping-freight rates doubled, the price of a pair of jeans made in Bangladesh and bought in London would rise less than 1 per cent. If making zero-carbon steel costs 50 per cent more per ton, that would add around 1 per cent to the price of an automobile made from green steel.

Carbon pricing is essential to overcome the green cost premium, and it could drive cost-efficient decarbonisation at a trivial cost to consumers. But in each of these sectors, inherently international products (long-distance shipping) or the international trade in products (steel) make purely domestic approaches untenable. That is why the International Maritime



Carbon pricing could also drive decarbonisation in heavy industry.



ADAIR TURNER

The writer is Chair of the Energy Transitions Commission, was Chair of the UK Financial Services Authority from 2008 to 2012. He is the author of many books, including Between Debt and the Devil: Money, Credit, and Fixing Global Finance

Organization (IMO) agreed on April 11 to impose a carbon levy reaching \$380 per metric ton on ship operators whose emissions intensity exceeds a defined threshold.

The IMO agreement is not perfect. The organisation aims to cut global shipping emissions by 20 per cent by 2030, but the new pricing scheme would achieve only an 8 per cent reduction. Still, concluding a new multilateral agreement despite a US boycott of the negotiations is a big step forward. China, India, and Brazil were among the 63 countries in favour.

Carbon pricing could also drive decarbonisation in heavy industry, but if it is imposed in only some countries, production and emissions will simply move to others. Though the ideal solution would be common carbon prices worldwide for these energy-intensive sectors, there is no international rule-making body like the IMO. The second-best solution, then, is for individual countries to impose domestic carbon prices combined with border carbon tariffs. The European Union is pursuing this approach. Not only will its emissions-trading scheme likely price carbon around \$140 per metric ton by 2030; it is also removing the free allowances that heavy industry previously enjoyed and introducing a border carbon

adjustment mechanism (CBAM) to subject imports to the same carbon pricing as domestic production. In principle, this creates strong incentives for decarbonisation, while protecting domestic competitiveness. But the CBAM has been too weak, and heavy-industry decarbonisation projects have been delayed. As a result, in March the European Commission committed to strengthening the regime in three respects: by ensuring a level playing field for exports as well as domestic sales; by widening the product coverage; and by improving the measurement of imports' carbon intensity.

The crucial question now is how developing countries will respond. In the past, several governments – in particular China and India – have criticised CBAMs as protectionist. But their arguments are unconvincing. Combining a domestic carbon price with a CBAM does not give domestic producers a competitive advantage. It simply maintains the competitive balance that existed before both were introduced. Moreover, it is the only way that developed countries can truly decarbonise their heavy industry, rather than claiming to reduce emissions that have merely moved to other countries.

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SPORTS

HOCKEYLEAGUE



Seeb and Al Amerat players in action.

SEEB BEAT AMERAT, AHLI SIDAB THRASH SALALAH 8-1

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 19

The final stage of the 2025 Oman Hockey League continues on Tuesday with two decisive matches taking place at the Oman Hockey Stadium in Al Amerat. In the first match, Salalah Club will face Seeb Club in a game between two teams aiming to reach the final. The second match will see Ahli Sidab Club clash with Al Amerat Club in a fierce battle for a place in the final.

The league concludes on Wednesday with the final match to determine the champion, alongside the third-place playoff.

Seeb defeated Al Amerat in an exciting second-round semifinal match with a close 3-2 victory. The first quarter was balanced with both teams exchanging attempts but failing to score.

Early in the second quarter, Seeb opened the scoring through Abdullah al Hasani from a penalty corner in the 17th minute. His teammate Imad al Hasani doubled the lead in the 29th minute, ending the quarter with Seeb leading 2-0.

In the third quarter, Al Amerat managed to pull one back when Osama Ramadan converted a penalty corner in the 41st minute. Despite both teams pushing hard, the score remained 2-1 in favor of Seeb at the end of the quarter. The intensity increased in the final quarter as Seeb extended their lead with a third goal by Fahad al Lawati from a penalty corner in the 45th minute. Al Amerat refused to give up, and Elias al Nofali scored their second goal from a penalty corner in the 53rd minute. Despite Al Amerat's efforts to equalise in the closing minutes, Seeb held on to their lead, securing a 3-2 victory.

AHLI SIDAB SINK SALALAH

In the second match, Ahli Sidab achieved a 8-1 victory over Salalah. Ahli Sidab started strong, with Shafi Talib scoring early in the third minute, capitalising on his team's relentless pressure, while Salalah relied on ineffective counter-attacks. Shafi Talib struck again in the 12th minute to make it 2-0 and Rashad al Fazari added a third in the 14th minute, ending the first quarter 3-0.

Salalah showed some improvement in the second quarter, but Ahli Sidab continued their dominance, with Waqas Saad scoring the fourth goal from a penalty corner in the 23rd minute, closing the quarter 4-0.

Ahli Sidab maintained their momentum in the third quarter, with Rashad al Fazari scoring his second goal from a penalty corner in the 34th minute. Two minutes later, Almas al Qasmi made it 6-0, ending the quarter with a commanding lead. In the final quarter, Maitham al Wahaibi added the seventh goal in the 52nd minute. Salalah managed to score their only goal a minute later through Hussain Hatim. However, Shafi Talib completed his hat-trick with his third goal in the 57th minute, sealing a massive 8-1 victory for Ahli Sidab.

Seeb edge Bahla to claim OFA Cup for fourth time

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 19

SEEB'S FIRST FOOTBALL team was crowned champion of the 2024-2025 Oman Football Association Cup for the fourth time in its history after defeating Bahla 2-1 in the final at Seeb Sports Stadium. The match was held under the auspices of Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth.

The opening minutes saw Seeb dominate possession seeking an early goal, relying on the pace of their attacking players who launched several dangerous attempts on Bahla's goal. The most notable being Al Mushaifri's powerful shot that narrowly missed the post in the 15th minute.

Despite Seeb's pressure, Bahla showed solid defensive organisation thanks to standout performances by Omar al Hinai and professional player Loki Vikimi, along with goalkeeper Salah al Handhali, who made several crucial saves.

Just when Seeb seemed in control, Bahla surprised their opponents a minute before half-time when Abdulsalam al Shukaili capitalised on a perfect through ball from Hosni al Hinai, breaking free and slotting the ball past goalkeeper Ahmed al Rawahi to give Bahla the lead. The first half ended with Bahla ahead 1-0.

The second half started with a faster tempo, with Seeb players showing greater focus and determination to quickly equalise, applying continuous pressure from the first minute on Bahla's goal.

Seeb's attacking play became more effective, featuring quick, short passes that unsettled Bahla's defence, which tried to absorb the pressure while relying on counter-attacks led by Abdulsalam al Shukaili and Kipama Malova.

BAHLA'S RESISTANCE

In the 55th minute, Seeb finally broke Bahla's resistance when Jameel al Yahmadi delivered a perfect cross to professional player Aboubakar Kamara, who rose above the defenders and headed the ball into the net to the left of goalkeeper Al Handhali, levelling the match at 1-1.

The play remained balanced in the middle stages of the half, with Bahla



Seeb and Bahla players in action. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

making timid attempts to regain the lead, the most notable being a shot by Faisal al Balushi that narrowly missed the post.

Then in the 82nd minute, substitute Omar al Malki scored the winning goal for Seeb with a brilliant header from a precise cross that caught goalkeeper Salah al Handhali off guard. Despite Bahla's late attempts to equalise, Seeb's defence held firm until the referee's

whistle confirmed Seeb's title victory.

At the end of the match, guest of honour Basil al Rawas honoured the refereeing team, followed by the players and technical staff of Bahla, the tournament runners-up, before presenting the Seeb players and their technical and administrative teams with the championship trophy, officially concluding the 2024-25 football season.

Al Zubair, Klingmann get podium spots in Zandvoort

MUSCAT: Al Manar Racing by Team WRT's Al Faisal al Zubair and Jens Klingmann picked up a pair of podium finishes in the Gold Cup category at the two one-hour Sprint races in round two of the 2025 GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Sprint Series at Zandvoort in the Netherlands.

They guided the Al Manar Racing by Team WRT BMW M4 GT3 EVO to third overall in race one on Saturday and repeated the feat at the Dutch circuit on Sunday afternoon to remain in contention for the Teams' and Drivers' Championships. Both drivers showcased their potential in both attacking and defensive driving during the course of the two absorbing races.

Al Zubair said: "Very happy with the result. To come to the first time ever to Zandvoort and to finish P3 in a new car and a new team in the Sprint Championship is something we should be very happy with. On Saturday, we were close



Both drivers showcased their potential in both attacking and defensive driving.

to second place but we lost position at the end of race one and finished third.

"Today, we were a solid P3 after a hard fight with the Sainteloc Audi. That made it quite fun. The most important thing now is that we are collecting solid points and we can hopefully continue on this path and secure top spot in

the championship." Victory in the first of the weekend's races went to the Sainteloc Racing Audi with the Emil Frey Racing Ferrari edging out the Al Manar Racing crew for second place.

Klingmann then qualified the Al Manar Racing BMW in third place for the second of the one-hour Sprint races on Sunday with a best lap of 1min

34.508sec. Pole position went to Chris Lulham in the Emil Frey Racing Ferrari.

Thierry Vermeulen of Emil Frey Racing passed the chequered flag to secure the win in race two. The Tresor Attempto Racing Audi finished second and Al Zubair brought the Al Manar Racing BMW home in third place just behind Leonardo Moncini in the Audi.

Free practice got proceedings underway on Friday morning and the Al Manar Racing duo got their weekend off to the perfect start by topping the session. They ran the Team WRT BMW for 50 laps and clocked the fastest tour of 1min 34.232sec on lap 17. The Tresor Attempto Racing Audi R8 LMS GT3 was their closest rival with a best run of 1min 34.550sec.

Pre-qualifying followed in the afternoon and the Emil Frey Racing Ferrari topped the times with a best tour of 1min 34.334sec. Al Manar Racing's best run was a 1min 35.095sec lap.

INTER-SCHOOL CONTEST



Sixty girls from six schools across Muscat participated in floor routines.

ORION GYMNASTICS BACKS RETURN OF GYMNASTICS

MUSCAT: Gymnastics made a vibrant comeback to the Muscat Primary Sports League (MPSL) with an exciting inter-school competition held on May 12 at the PDO School. Sixty girls from six schools across Muscat participated in floor routines across three difficulty levels —Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced.

Participating schools included PDO School, British School Muscat, ABA International School, Royal Flight School, Our Planet International School and Modern International School. The event focused on promoting physical literacy, confidence and school spirit, in line with MPSL’s mission to provide quality sports programmes and encourage fair play. The competition was made possible with the support of Orion Gymnastics, which developed the competitive framework, offered preparatory workshops and provided expert judges for the event.

“This event was a celebration of confidence, discipline and teamwork,” said Ionela Yammine, Director of Orion Gymnastics. “We’re proud to support the next generation of gymnasts in Muscat.” With strong performances and enthusiastic participation, the return of gymnastics to the MPSL calendar was a resounding success, setting the stage for further growth in youth gymnastics across Oman.

FALCONS LIFT MOCL CHAMPIONS CUP



KAS Falcons receive their winners trophy.

MUSCAT: The fourth MOCL Friday Afternoon League had two groups of 34 teams in fray. KAS Falcons emerged champions of the fourth edition of MOCL League by defeating Bravos XI by 11 runs in the final at MIS ground in Misfa.

The winners were given trophy and a prize money of RO 250 while runners-up got trophy and RO 175.

In the final, Bravos XI won the toss and elected to field. KAS Falcons scored 160 runs in 16 overs. In return, Bravos could make only 149-8 in 16 overs. It was a great fight from both teams till the last ball. Shiveray from KAS Falcons was awarded the Man of the Match of the final for his outstanding performance. He scored 46 runs from 15 balls which had four mighty sixes and four fours and also took three catches as the wicket-keeper. His powerful strokeplay in the last 2 overs lifted the score of KAS Falcons to 160 runs.

Haris Ahmed from KAS Falcons scored 41 runs from 25 balls. Aneermom from Bravos XI scored 30 runs from 14 balls.

Mubin from Awan Gas team was awarded the best batsman of the tournament. He scored a grand total of 705 runs in the entire tournament.

Tamraiz from KAS Falcons was awarded the best bowler of the tournament. He took 42 wickets.

Mubin from Awan Gas was awarded the player of the tournament for this outstanding performance with both bat and the bowl.

The sponsors for this tournament were Lama International group, Misfar, Essential Trading, Hotpack and Team Blasters. The official umpires for the tournament were Faisal Rahim and Anil.

The organisers and the coordinators of the tournament — Robert, Laji John, Sarath Chandran and Anil — congratulated the teams and the sponsors for the support to make this tournament a grand success.

Gujarat, Punjab and RCB in playoffs as IPL resumes

NEW DELHI: Azmatullah Omarzai’s all-round show and an unbeaten century by Sai Sudharsan marked the return of Indian Premier League action on Sunday with victories for Punjab Kings and Gujarat Titans.

Gujarat rode unbeaten knocks from Sudharsan (108) and skipper Shubman Gill (93) to hammer Delhi Capitals by 10 wickets in the day’s second match to book their play-off spot.

The result also ensured play-off places for Punjab Kings, who won the first match of the day, and Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

Punjab beat Rajasthan Royals by 10 runs in the first completed match since the IPL’s resumption after Saturday’s scheduled restart ended in a washout.

The T20 tournament was paused last week because of a deadly conflict between India and Pakistan but officials decided to resume the competition after a ceasefire.

On a batting-friendly pitch at Delhi’s Feroz Shah Kotla ground, impact substitute Sudharsan, who struck his second IPL century, and Gill helped Gujarat chase down 200 with one over to spare.

“Feels amazing, I have talked about this couple of times, when I’m batting, I want to play and think as a batsman, not as a captain,” said Gill.

“Last year was a learning (experience) for me as I was captain for the first time, the back end of last season I learnt that.”

GILL THE LEADER

Gill, 25, is the front-runner to lead India in five-day cricket after the recent Test retirements of skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Gujarat, who won the IPL in their debut season in 2022, reclaimed first place in the 10-team table.

Delhi, five-time champions Mumbai Indians and Lucknow Super Giants are the three teams remaining in the hunt for one remaining play-off spot.

The huge partnership between Gill and Sudharsan trumped KL Rahul’s unbeaten 112 that steered the home team to 199-3.

Sudharsan came out attacking in response as he raced to 25 off nine balls and reached his fifty with a boundary.

Gill soon changed gears as he took on Sri Lanka’s Dushmantha Chameera in a 19-run 13th over, with Sudharsan picking up the pace as well and completing his hundred before hitting the winning six.

Sudharsan is the leading batsman this



Gujarat Titans’ Shubman Gill in action. — Reuters

season with 617 runs in 12 matches, with Gill second on 601.

IN HIGH SPIRITS

Earlier Rahul, who was promoted to open the innings, struck 14 fours and four sixes en route to his fifth career IPL ton.

In Sunday’s opening match in Jaipur, Punjab posted 219-5 after they elected to bat first.

Nehal Wadhwa top-scored with 70 off 37 balls before Shashank Singh made the team finish strong with his unbeaten 59.

Omarzai boosted the total with his unbeaten nine-ball 21 before he returned with two key wickets to restrict Rajasthan to 209-7.

Impact substitute Harpreet Brar stood out with figures of 3-22 with his left-arm spin and South African left-arm quick Marco Jansen took two wickets in the final over when Rajasthan needed 22 for a win.

“Absolutely brilliant approach and attitude coming in after the break,” Punjab skipper Shreyas Iyer said.

“The boys were in high spirits and we also needed a rest, going forward in the tournament, it was the right time we came in together and showed the kind of mindset to win irrespective of the situation.”

Explosive opening knocks by Yashasvi Jaiswal and 14-year-old Vaibhav Suryavanshi came in vain after the two left-handers fired Rajasthan to 89-1 in the first six overs.

Jaiswal hit a 25-ball 50 and Suryavanshi made 40 off 15 balls.

Punjab were playing Delhi in Dharamsala when the match was halted midway on May 8 due to an apparent floodlight failure and the next day the IPL was suspended.

Since the pause in the IPL, the tournament has been rescheduled with the final now set to take place on June 3. — AFP

Thunder thrash Nuggets to set up Wolves clash

LOS ANGELES: Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder thrashed the Denver Nuggets 125-93 to book their place in the NBA Western Conference finals on Sunday.

After a back-and-forth series with little to choose between the two teams, the top-seeded Thunder asserted their dominance in a one-sided game seven to seal a 4-3 series victory.

The win sends Oklahoma City into a showdown with Anthony Edwards and the Minnesota Timberwolves for a place in next month’s NBA Finals, with game one set for Tuesday.

“It feels good,” Gilgeous-Alexander said after the win. “Obviously our ultimate goal isn’t just the Western Conference finals — but we’ve got to go through there to get there.

“We put it together tonight and now we’ve got four games to go get against a really good team in the Timberwolves and that’s what we’re focused on.”

Gilgeous-Alexander, who is vying with Denver’s Nikola Jokic for the NBA’s Most Valuable Player award, was backed by 24 points from Jalen Williams.



Denver Nuggets’ Christian Braun (0) shoots as Oklahoma City Thunder’s Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) defends in the first quarter during game seven of the second round for the 2025 NBA Playoffs at Paycom Center. — Reuters

The Nuggets scoring was led by Jokic with 20 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, while Christian Braun added 19 and Jamal Murray 13. Denver though were left counting the cost of an error-strewn performance that saw them cough up 23 turnovers which the Thunder’s livewire offense ruthlessly converted into 37 points.

TURNOVERS

“The turnovers were a huge issue in this game obviously,” Denver’s interim head coach David Adelman said afterwards.

“Sometimes turnovers as a number don’t matter. But 16 steals off live ball turnovers — that’s 37 points off your mistakes. You’re not going to win a playoff game like that.”

Denver had produced a sensational performance on Friday to tie the series at 3-3 and set up Sunday’s decisive game seven in Oklahoma City.

The Nuggets started brightly at OKC’s Paycom Center, seizing an early 11-point lead midway through the first quarter and taking a five-point cushion into the second quarter at 26-21.

But the game flipped decisively in the second quarter as Oklahoma City unleashed the full force of their potent offense, erupting for 39 points to Denver’s 20. Thunder forward Jalen Williams did the damage for the home team, scoring 17 points in the second quarter from 8-of-11 shooting to send Oklahoma City into halftime with a 60-46 lead.

Oklahoma City picked up where they left off in the second quarter when the third quarter got underway, outscoring Denver 37-26 to move into an unassailable lead. “We wanted to keep the pressure on coming out of the half, as we haven’t been great in the third quarter this series,” Gilgeous-Alexander said. “We wanted to make that emphasis and come out stronger. We did so.” — AFP

SPORTS

LATEWINNER



Sharjah FC players celebrate with the trophy.

SHARJAH BEAT SAILORS TO CLAIM AFC CL2 GLORY

SINGAPORE: Sharjah FC claimed the AFC Champions League Two 2024-25 title with a dramatic 2-1 win over Singapore’s Lion City Sailors at Bishan Stadium on Sunday as Marcus Meloni scored deep into added time to secure victory for the side from the United Arab Emirates. The final looked to be heading for extra-time when Lion City’s Maxime Lestienne cancelled out Firas Ben Arbi’s 74th minute goal but Meloni struck in the 97th minute to give Sharjah head coach Cosmin Olaroiu the perfect send off before he takes over as UAE national team boss.

Sharjah become the first club from the country to lift the title and follow in the footsteps of domestic rivals Al Ain, who won the AFC Champions League in 2003 and 2024, in becoming the only outfits from the Gulf state to taste continental glory. Sharjah’s Meloni had an early sight of goal but his free-kick from distance was comfortably dealt with by Lion City goalkeeper Izwan Mahbud as both teams took time to impose themselves on the game.

Caio Lucas almost unlocked the Lion City defence with 11 minutes left in the half, the Brazil-born winger swinging a right-foot cross in from close to the left touchline that an on-rushing Ben Arbi only narrowly missed reaching to beat Izwan.

The game was starting to open up and Diogo Costa almost put the Sailors in front moments later, the Portuguese winger hitting the base of Al Hosani’s right post with a powerful left-foot strike from the edge of the area.

MELONI HITS WINNER
Lion City midfielder Song Ui-young skied his first-time effort well off target inside the opening five minutes of the second half while Ramselaar started and almost finished a flowing move through the centre that ended with the ball flying over the bar.

Ousmane Camara squandered a guilt-edged opportunity with 21 minutes remaining, rising highest to meet Meloni’s corner from the right only to steer his header marginally wide of Izwan’s left post. With 16 minutes remaining, however, Sharjah found their way through.

Caio Lucas swung the ball over from the left corner of the area towards Khaleed Ebraheim as the full-back galloped into space behind the Lion City defence and his first-time centre as he slid along the turf found Ben Arbi at the far post and he finished with aplomb.

But Meloni won the title for Sharjah six minutes later when he moved the ball onto his right foot on the left side of the Lion City penalty area and bent an unstoppable low shot beyond Izwan to seal a remarkable win. — AFC



Spain’s Carlos Alcaraz poses with the trophy after winning the final against Italy’s Jannik Sinner. — Reuters

Alcaraz downs Sinner to clinch Italian Open

ROME: Carlos Alcaraz won the Italian Open on Sunday after beating rival Jannik Sinner 7-6 (7/5), 6-1 in the final and firing a warning shot for Roland Garros.

Alcaraz, who will climb to world number two behind Sinner on Monday, won his third title of the season, eventually dominating Sinner and silencing the over 10,000 fans packed into the centre court stands.

The Spaniard claimed victory in his fourth final of the season and sent a message to the rest of the men’s tour for the French Open, where he will defend the title once it starts next weekend.

“Beating Jannik and winning in Rome, I think both things mixed together give you a great confidence coming to Paris,” said Alcaraz.

“I’m going to enjoy this moment with my family, with my team, friends that came from home. And a few days rest just to realise what I’ve achieved, that is important as well. And then my focus is on Roland Garros.”

Sinner tops the world rankings but his 26-match winning streak was ended by Alcaraz, also the man who had last beaten him in last year’s China Open final.

Alcaraz is the only man to beat Sinner in a tour final since the start of 2024, when his Italian rival began his rise to the top of men’s tennis and three Grand Slam titles.

The 22-year-old has had a hugely



Spain’s Carlos Alcaraz poses for a photo with Italy’s Jannik Sinner after winning the final. — Reuters

impressive clay court swing this season even with the thigh injury which cost him the chance to compete at the Madrid Open.

Alcaraz won his second Masters 1000 title of the year in Rome to go alongside his victory at Monte Carlo last month. He also reached the final in Barcelona.

FIRST ROME CROWN FOR ALCARAZ
Finishing runner-up is still a hugely positive result for Sinner in his first tournament since his three-month ban for testing positive twice in March last year for traces of clostebol, a contamination doping authorities accepted was accidental. Sinner let two set points slip in game 12 of the first

set and that was the turning point in the match, with Alcaraz rattling off the first three points of the tie-break before going ahead in the match.

Alcaraz then moved through the gears to win the first five games of the second set as he powered to a first Rome crown.

Sinner’s encouraging return though sets up the possibility of another final clash with Alcaraz at Roland Garros, with the two young stars of men’s tennis set to be the two top seeds in Paris.

Sinner said on court that Alcaraz would be “the man to beat” at Paris and then jokingly thanked his brother Mark for “preferring to go to Imola to watch the Formula One Grand Prix instead of being here”.

The 23-year-old was gunning to become the first Italian man to win at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta back in 1976, but he failed to make it a hat-trick of triumphs for home players in the Italian capital.

Earlier, Jasmine Paolini became the first woman since Monica Seles in 1990 to win the Rome singles and doubles titles when she and Sara Errani beat Veronika Kudermetova and Elise Mertens 6-4, 7-5.

Paolini secured that brace of victories a day after overcoming former US Open champion Coco Gauff in straight sets, and becoming the first Italian woman to win the Rome singles title since Raffaella Reggi in 1985. — AFP

Napoli close in on Serie A title despite Parma stalemate

PARMA: Napoli will have to wait one more week to seal the Serie A title after being held to a goalless draw at Parma while closest rivals Inter Milan drew 2-2 a dramatic game with Lazio.

Antonio Conte’s team stay one point ahead of Inter and were unfortunate not to win after twice striking the woodwork through Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa and Matteo Politano, while Scott McTominay also had a free-kick tipped onto the crossbar. The away side thought they would be handed a chance to take the points from the penalty spot in the 96th minute when David Neres was fouled, only for the decision to be reversed for a foul committed by Giovanni Simeone earlier in the move.

A feisty match at the Stadio Ennio Tardini ended with Conte and his

Parma counterpart Cristian Chivu both being sent off following a blazing row between the two dugouts in the final moments.

However a home win on the final day against Cagliari, who are safe thanks to a 3-0 win over second-from-bottom Venezia, will give Napoli a fourth league crown.

“We’re close but we have more step to take in front of our own fans. We’ve been top for a large part of the season even with a lot of difficulties,” said Conte to DAZN.

“It’s down to these boys who put their heart and soul into it. I really hope we can win this title because it would truly be a great achievement.”

Inter’s final fixture is at Como who are finishing their first Serie A season in over two decades in great



Parma’s Hernani shoots at goal from a free kick. — Reuters

form, although Cesc Fabregas’ team’s winning streak ended at six matches with a 1-1 draw at safe Verona.

Napoli were saved from being overtaken by Inter thanks to a Pedro brace for Lazio, including a 90th-minute penalty.

ROMA BEAT AC MILAN
Denzel Dumfries thought he had headed home a potentially key goal with 10 minutes remaining at the San Siro, before a Yann Bissec handball allowed Champions League chasers Lazio to snatch a point.

Inter once again showed their wasteful side by giving away a lead twice, with Bissec opening the scoring on the stroke of half-time before Pedro netted in the 73rd minute.

Lazio drawing kept the Roman club in the hunt for the final Champions league spot, although Marco Baroni’s team are two points behind four-placed Juve who beat mid-table Udinese 2-0. Sandwiched between Juve and Lazio are Roma, who beat 10-man AC Milan 3-1 on a night when fans honoured Claudio Ranieri in his last home match as coach for his boyhood club.

Milan, who had to play most of the match a man down after Santiago Gimenez was sent off in the 21st minute, sit ninth and will not play European football next season.

Bologna’s bid for Champions League football is over after a 3-2 defeat at Fiorentina which left the Italian Cup winners five points behind Juve. — AFP



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\$550 million for Duqm port expansion

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MAY 19

INVESTCORP, the global alternative investment firm, has announced a landmark \$550 million investment in Oman's Port of Duqm, marking one of the largest foreign direct investments into the country's maritime infrastructure.

The investment will be made through Investcorp Aberdeen Infrastructure Partners (AIIP), a joint venture between Investcorp and Aberdeen plc, and will be undertaken alongside the Port of Duqm Company and international partners DEME Group and Port of Antwerp-Bruges. The consortium, operating under the name "CAP INFRA", will spearhead the development.

The deal marks AIIP's fourth major infrastructure commitment, following investments in ADNOC's Project Wave in the UAE and two public and social asset concessions in Saudi Arabia. It reinforces AIIP's focus on long-term infrastructure



The Port of Duqm is positioned as a vital global trade and logistics hub.

assets across the GCC and broader MENA region. Located on Oman's southeastern coast with direct access to the Indian Ocean, the Port of Duqm is positioned as a vital global trade and logistics hub. It plays a pivotal role in the Sultanate of Oman's economic diversification efforts.

The expansion project includes major marine infrastructure works, such as

dredging and the construction of a new quay wall, which will service a planned low-carbon industrial plant within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. The facility is expected to produce low CO₂ iron metalics and eventually hydrogen-powered "green steel", aligning with Oman's net-zero ambitions.

AIIP secured the investment mandate through a competitive bidding process that saw interest from four other parties.

Mohammed al Ardhi, Executive Chairman at Investcorp, said: "The Port of Duqm is one of the most strategically important seaports in the world. We are pleased to be investing not only in one of Oman's largest infrastructure projects, but in Oman's Vision 2040, contributing to the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050."

Sami Neffati, Managing Partner of AIIP, stated: "We are delighted to partner with the Port of Duqm Company and CAP INFRA to expand this important shipping hub and further secure trading routes to and from the region. Securing this transaction

demonstrates our ability to offer investors access to unique opportunities. We are very excited about the region's infrastructure prospects."

Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of Port of Duqm Company, commented: "We are proud to partner with a strategic foreign direct investment from AIIP, a renowned global investment group, to support the development of the port's infrastructure."

"This investment is a strong vote of confidence in the Port of Duqm's vision and future. It reflects the trust of international partners in our growth story and in Oman's broader economic ambitions under Vision 2040. Through this opportunity, we will not only increase capacity, but also advance sustainable industry by supporting future-facing projects like green steel production."

The project is expected to significantly enhance Oman's port capacity and catalyse industrial growth in Duqm, further positioning the Sultanate of Oman as a regional leader in sustainable logistics and green industry.

Tawoos Group acquires NMC Oman



importance. With deep local insights, a long-term investment horizon and experience in managing regulated businesses, Tawoos Group is uniquely positioned to create durable value in Oman's healthcare sector."

David Hadley, CEO of NMC Healthcare, stated, "NMC has been proud to serve communities in Oman through our network of hospitals and medical facilities. At a time when we are strategically focusing on our core operations and planned investments in the UAE, we welcome the acquisition of NMC Oman by Tawoos Group, a leading, trusted, and well-established Omani business with a proven track record of fostering innovation and long-term growth—key drivers of high-quality healthcare delivery. We look forward to working closely with Tawoos Group in the coming months to ensure continuity of care for patients and a smooth transition of ownership."

With diversified business interests across various sectors over the past four decades, the Tawoos Group has been recognised for its unwavering commitment to excellence, in-country value creation (ICV) and continuous efforts to support the Sultanate's broader economic development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Tawoos Group engaged Addleshaw Goddard as legal counsel and KPMG as financial advisor with respect to the transaction.

In a move set to transform private healthcare delivery in the Sultanate, Tawoos Group, one of Oman's premier business groups, and NMC Healthcare Group, a leading integrated private healthcare provider group headquartered in the United Arab Emirates, have announced that Tawoos Group has entered into a binding agreement to acquire NMC Healthcare LLC Oman and Elegant Medical Center Oman (NMC Oman). This agreement marks a significant milestone in Tawoos Group's strategic entry

into Oman's private healthcare sector.

This complex, multiple asset acquisition from NMC Group comprises two hospitals and six clinics/aesthetics centres. This landmark transaction both secures the future of these healthcare institutions and highlights the effectiveness of public-private collaboration. Despite challenges from tight timelines and diverse stakeholder interests, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Oman Tax Authority

and the Central Bank all provided guidance in support of a seamless transition that strengthens Oman's private healthcare sector.

By consolidating these assets under a trusted Omani brand, Tawoos Group aims to create a resilient and sustainable ecosystem focused on patient care, job creation and operational excellence. Samir J Fancy, Chairman, Tawoos Group, commented, "The acquisition is much more than just securing assets; it is about ensuring continuity of

care, upskilling and creating a strong local healthcare brand that benefits Oman. This is just the first step of a journey that will become a larger platform for private healthcare that is affordable yet best in class. This has been a classic case of the public sector partnering with private enterprises for the good of the Omani economy."

Sameer Ul Haque, Chief Investment Officer, Tawoos Group, added, "The acquisition of NMC Oman marks a strategic entry into a sector with strong fundamentals and national

BUSINESS



A dedicated board-level sustainability committee now oversees Omantel's ESG strategy.

OMANTEL CHARTS NET-ZERO PATH WITH GREEN TECH SHIFT

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 19

Omantel advanced its net-zero road map in 2024 with new milestones in energy efficiency, AI-based emissions control and circular technology systems. A full GHG assessment was completed across Scopes 1, 2 and 3, setting baseline targets for carbon reduction. Omantel recycled over 200 metric tonnes of e-waste and deployed solar infrastructure at key data facilities. The Group embedded AI tools into its telecom network to reduce energy use and emissions, while launching trade-in programmes to promote customer sustainability. A dedicated board-level Sustainability Committee now oversees ESG strategy. The shift aligns Omantel with Oman Vision 2040 and strengthens its appeal to sustainability-focused investors and partners. Meanwhile, the telecom company has also launched a five-year strategy titled “Portal to the Future” to advance its transition from telecom operator to digital-native tech group, anchored in AI, cloud computing and fintech. ICT revenue across the group surged 55.5 per cent, driven by subsidiaries Oman Data Park and Tadoo. New product launches included a fintech app (OmPay), an API marketplace and AI-driven customer experience campaigns exceeding 300 activations. Omantel deepened collaborations with AWS, Google, Oracle and Huawei to scale its National Cloud. ZainTech revenue also rose 103 per cent to \$118 million, reinforcing enterprise growth across the region. This strategy succeeds the “Shift Gear” programme and supports national objectives in digital transformation and economic diversification under Oman Vision 2040.

OQ AND DHL PARTNER TO INTRODUCE SAF IN CARGO SHIPMENTS

MUSCAT: As part of our continued commitment to sustainability and carbon reduction, OQ has partnered with DHL Express by joining the GoGreen Plus programme. Through this collaboration, Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) will be used for cargo shipments entering and leaving Oman, a meaningful step towards low-carbon logistics. This initiative aligns with OQ's long-term strategy to achieve carbon neutrality. SAF is produced from renewable resources, including used cooking oil and sugarcane; and can reduce carbon emissions by up to 30 per cent compared to conventional jet fuel.

HR forum empowers Oman’s energy workforce

THE Ministry of Energy and Minerals has launched the inaugural Energy Sector Human Resources Forum, held under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. Taking place from May 19–20, 2025, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, the forum aims to reshape human capital development in the energy sector in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

DRIVING TRANSFORMATION THROUGH HUMAN CAPITAL
Bringing together executive leaders, HR professionals, academics and policymakers, the forum underscores the urgency of building an agile, future-ready workforce amidst rapid changes in the global energy landscape. The event highlights Oman's efforts to promote economic diversification and empower its national workforce. In his opening speech, Eng Salim al Aufi emphasised the forum's role in fostering collaborative thinking and policy innovation. He stressed that empowering Omani talent, enhancing workplace well-being and nurturing supportive environments are vital to boosting institutional performance and national competitiveness. He called on participants to reimagine HR strategies, strengthen academia-industry ties and advance public-private cooperation.



The event highlights Oman’s efforts to promote economic diversification and empower its national workforce.

Held under the theme “Strategic Human Resources in the Energy Sector,” the forum tackled four priority areas:
1. Leadership Resilience in navigating economic and technological disruption.
2. Innovative Omanisation, bridging the gap between education and employment.
3. Future Skills, focusing on digital transformation and workforce upskilling.
4. Mental Health & Safety, promoting stability and productivity at work.
The first day featured four interactive workshops facilitated by industry experts. These sessions encouraged participants to propose practical, actionable solutions to HR challenges, which will be reviewed for integration into sector-wide policies.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIA-INDUSTRY DIALOGUE
A CEO panel headlined the first day, offering insights into labour market shifts, talent retention

and the impact of digitalisation on leadership models. On the second day, the forum hosted an academic session titled “Integration of Knowledge and Energy”, featuring top university leaders from Sultan Qaboos University, the University of Technology and Applied Sciences; and the German University of Technology in Oman. The session focused on aligning academic curricula with industry needs and fostering R&D partnerships to support energy innovation. Participants also joined expert-led knowledge exchange sessions exploring practical solutions to the forum's key themes. Attendees were awarded participation certificates, reinforcing the forum's emphasis on engagement and learning.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND AGREEMENTS
The forum also served as a platform for signing several high-impact agreements and MoUs aimed at advancing workforce

development and sector innovation. Highlights included:
PDO & SMEDA: Supporting SMEs in the solar energy sector through the Ishraq Programme.
PDO, Oman LNG & Sur LNG: Enhancing talent mobility through a joint MoU on talent acquisition
PDO & Takatuf: Providing advanced human capital services.
Shell & Takatuf Petrofac Oman (TPO): Launching training programmes for technical operators.
OPAL & Oman Energy Institute: Developing clean energy training programmes.
OPAL & TPO Centte: Expanding vocational training opportunities.
MEM & Riha!l: Creating a digital dashboard to monitor rig and jack-up contracts for greater transparency.

PLATFORM FOR SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
The forum concluded with a commitment to transforming dialogue into action. Recommendations and insights generated during the event will be submitted to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals to inform future policies and initiatives. As a cornerstone initiative, the Energy Sector HR Forum marks the beginning of a structured, long-term approach to building a resilient, skilled and competitive national workforce — paving the way for a more integrated, innovative and sustainable energy future in Oman.

BankDhofar unveils 2024 sustainability report

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the second-largest bank in the Sultanate of Oman by branch network size, has released its 2024 Sustainability Report, reaffirming its deep-rooted commitment to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles. The comprehensive report showcases the bank's progress across its ESG pillars, underscoring its role as a leading force for sustainable growth in Oman's financial sector. Sustainability forms the cornerstone of BankDhofar's strategic vision, guiding its pursuit of responsible banking, ethical governance and long-term value creation for all stakeholders. The 2024 report, which covers both BankDhofar and its Islamic banking window, Dhofar Islamic, outlines achievements over the past year while setting ambitious forward-looking targets aligned with Oman Vision 2040 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Central to the bank's approach is a newly developed ESG framework, shaped through a rigorous materiality assessment and



benchmarked against global best practices. This framework prioritises proactive risk management, opportunity capitalisation and sustainable growth, ensuring that ESG considerations are embedded in all decision-making processes from the Board of Directors down to operational levels. Throughout 2024, BankDhofar reinforced sustainability at the highest levels of leadership, engaging executives and the Board in embedding ESG as a core business priority. The bank's efforts extend beyond internal operations; it has committed to supporting Oman's transition to a Net-Zero economy by 2050 in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Investments in green finance, energy efficiency, water conservation and waste management are central to this commitment. Diversity, equity and inclusion have also been a major focus. The bank made significant strides in increasing the representation of women in leadership and middle management roles; and launched the Women's Leadership Forum to empower female employees. BankDhofar also champions the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in its workforce, while maintaining robust Omanisation rates and investing heavily in local talent development. In the area of community engagement, BankDhofar strengthened its support for SMEs by opening over 13,000 new SME accounts in 2024 alone, highlighting its critical role in fostering economic resilience. Its efforts to enhance accessibility, support financial literacy and ensure meaningful banking access for individuals with disabilities further reinforce its commitment to building a more inclusive financial ecosystem.

Sohar International set to host interactive Viewpoints Forum

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to advancing industry dialogue and fostering informed decision-making, Sohar International invites customer customers, investors, industry experts and the general public to attend its upcoming Viewpoints Forum, taking place on May 22, 2025. Titled “Politics, Policy & Prices — Impact on Markets: A Walkthrough,” this edition of the forum will provide valuable strategic insights into how global political shifts, policy changes and economic

trends influence markets. Open to all, the event underscores Sohar International's mission to promote inclusive dialogue and cross-sector engagement. Interested participants can register through the Sohar International corporate website or by visiting the Bank's official social media platforms. Headlining the session as Guest Speaker is James Ashley, Managing Director and Head of International Market Strategy and



Strategic Advisory Solutions at Goldman Sachs Asset Management. Ashley brings extensive experience in global markets,

macroeconomic trends and investment strategy. His insights will help participants navigate uncertainty, manage risk and uncover opportunities in today's evolving financial landscape. The discussion will be moderated by Sarah Cocker, a seasoned financial journalist and former anchor of CNBC's Squawk Box. Known for her incisive interviews and engaging style, Cocker will guide the conversation to ensure a lively, informative and impactful session.

Through initiatives like the Viewpoints Forum, Sohar International reinforces its role as a catalyst for knowledge sharing, economic resilience and long-term sustainability. Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated: “In today's global landscape — characterised by geopolitical transformation and evolving economic complexities — clarity and strategic foresight stand as critical enablers of long-term success. Viewpoints Forum

transcends conventional dialogue by empowering individuals and institutions to make informed decisions, enhance economic resilience and contribute meaningfully to national development goals. At Sohar International, we are deeply committed to fostering a culture of knowledge and insight, recognising that a well-informed community is instrumental to driving Oman's sustainable growth and competitiveness on the global stage.”

BUSINESS

SCALING UP

NEW PACT TO BOOST OMAN’S GREEN HYDROGEN PUSH



ENG ABDULAZIZ AL SHIDHANI
Managing Director, Hydrom



GURSHARAN JASSAL
Country Manager, ACME Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 19

THE signing of new agreements between India-headquartered ACME Group and Hydrom marks a major advancement in Oman’s efforts to scale up its green hydrogen ambitions.

The Project Development and Usufruct Agreements signed on Sunday, May 18, formally bring ACME’s Phase 2 and 3 hydrogen and ammonia projects in Duqm under the national framework overseen by Hydrom.

In an interview with the Observer, ACME’s Country Manager in Oman, Gursharan Jassal, said the new pact reflects strong confidence in

Oman’s clean energy strategy and long-term vision for global leadership in green hydrogen.

“This agreement represents a major step towards a cleaner and more sustainable energy future for Oman,” he noted.

The expanded projects will span 80 square kilometres within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and are expected to produce 71,000 tonnes of green hydrogen and 400,000 tonnes of green ammonia annually in each phase.

This builds on ACME’s Phase 1 facility currently under construction, which will produce 100,000 tonnes of green ammonia annually under an offtake agreement with Yara International.

Jassal explained that Phase 1 is targeted to begin production by Q1 2027, while Phase 2 is scheduled for 2028–2030 and Phase 3 from 2030–2033. He revealed that the project’s first phase has already achieved financial closure with backing from India’s Power Finance Corporation.

“We have signed a term sheet for Phase 2 and will now proceed with finalising offtake and financial agreements,” he added.

ACME is currently focused on exporting green ammonia from Duqm, with key markets in Europe and Far East Asia. Jassal also highlighted Oman’s top ranking in ACME’s global simulation for the lowest cost of producing hydrogen and ammonia, which factored heavily in the company’s decision to invest.

From Hydrom’s side, Managing Director Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani said the inclusion of ACME’s legacy initiatives under the national hydrogen portfolio strengthens the regulatory alignment and sends a strong message to global investors. “It’s a positive message to the market that Oman is continuing to award new projects and build the green hydrogen ecosystem,” he said.

With this latest addition, Hydrom’s portfolio has grown to nine large-scale projects across Al Wusta and Dhofar, with combined investments exceeding \$50 billion and a production target of 1.5 million tonnes of green hydrogen per year by 2030. The projects will be powered by approximately 35 GW of renewable energy.

Al Shidhani also noted that the timing of the agreement supports Hydrom’s third land auction round, currently underway and will help attract further attention from prospective investors.

“Our role is to continue working closely with ACME and others to ensure successful execution while addressing any implementation challenges,” he affirmed.

DERAILED MOMENTUM

China’s factory output resists tariff impact



China’s factory output slowed in April but showed surprising resilience, a sign that government support measures may have cushioned the impact of a trade war with the US that threatens to derail momentum in the world’s second-largest economy.

Industrial output grew 6.1% from a year earlier NBS data showed, slowing from 7.7% in March but beat a forecast 5.5% rise in a poll. — Reuters

OMAN PREPARES FRAMEWORK FOR 2026 BUDGET AND 11TH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 19

CHINESE multinational wind turbine manufacturer Goldwind is set to make its debut in Oman’s sizable wind energy space with a contract to supply wind turbines for a pair of wind farms with a combined capacity of 234 MW.

The partnership of Omani state-owned OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) [with a 51 per cent shareholding] and French integrated multi-energy group TotalEnergies (49 per cent) is developing the two wind farms in the southern part of the Block 6 concession of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), currently the largest producer of hydrocarbons in Oman.

Output from the two wind farms, dubbed Riyah-1 and Riyah-2, will be supplied to PDO under long-term power purchase agreements.

Agreements green-lighting the start of work on these wind farms, among other initiatives, were signed last week. PowerChina Huadong Engineering (PowerChina) was named the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) contractor.

For Beijing-headquartered Goldwind, which was ranked the

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Finance held a preparatory meeting today to set the stage for the state’s general budget for 2026 and the financial framework of the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026–2030). The meeting, aligned with Financial Circular No 1/2025, brought together representatives from 70 government units to ensure a unified approach to fiscal planning. The session aimed to clarify the budget preparation guidelines and development project approval



The meeting brought together representatives from 70 government units to ensure a unified approach to fiscal planning.

rules outlined in the circular. It also stressed the importance of aligning financial allocations with annual plans, adhering to performance indicators, controlling public expenditure and reinforcing programme and performance-based budgeting. Abdullah bin Salem al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, highlighted the positive impact of the government’s fiscal measures since 2020, supported by higher oil prices.

‘Climate-adapted’ turbines for PDO wind farms



Chinese turbine maker Goldwind set to make Oman debut with turbine supply contract for PDO wind farms.

largest supplier of wind turbines to the global market in 2024, the Oman contracts represent a further expansion into the lucrative Middle East market.

“We are honoured to announce that Goldwind, as the wind turbine supplier for the 234 MW Riyah 1&2 wind projects, is partnering with OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) and TotalEnergies to deliver Oman’s largest wind power initiative—marking a historic step in the nation’s decarbonisation journey.

It also represents Goldwind’s

entry into its global market, reinforcing our commitment to worldwide sustainable energy solutions,” the Chinese firm stated in a post.

According to Goldwind, the two wind farms will be equipped with the company’s “climate-adapted turbines” designed to displace 740,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually, which is equivalent to removing 160,000 cars from roads.

“These projects will supply green electricity to the Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) electricity transmission

network through long-term power purchase agreements.

This represents a pioneering model of integrating renewable energy into the traditional fossil fuel sector, demonstrating Oman’s strong commitment to decarbonising its oil and gas sector,” it noted.

Ranked among the Top 5 wind turbine manufacturers in China, Goldwind is credited with delivering more than 53,000 wind turbines worldwide as of the end of Q3 2024, boasting a global cumulative installed capacity exceeding 128GW.

According to the Global Wind Energy Council’s (GWEC) annual Supply Side Data report, Goldwind remained the world’s leading turbine supplier, installing more than 20 GW in 2024 — a new record.

As of the end of Q1 2025, the company’s total order backlog was 51.09GW, which includes 48.6 GW of external orders.

Oman, with a requirement of hundreds of wind turbines to meet its target of securing at least 30 per cent of its energy needs from renewables, represents a key market for manufacturers like Goldwind.

Additionally, an estimated 2,000 wind turbines will also be required to support Oman’s green hydrogen productions targets by 2030.

OUTPUT FROM BLOCK 53’S MUKHAIZNA FIELD TOTALS 640M BARRELS

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 19

OMAN’S Block 53 oilfield, home to the Mukhaizna steam flood project, has produced over 640 million barrels since production began in 2005, according to official statements marking the latest extension of the field’s production sharing agreement.

The announcement follows the signing of Amendment No 2 to the Production Sharing Agreement between the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Block 53 consortium, extending the agreement to 2050. Mukhaizna is one of the largest and most mature steam flood operations in the region.

The Block 53 partnership comprises Oxy (47%), OQ Exploration and Production — OQEP (20%), Indian Oil (17%), Liwa Energy (15%) and PTTEP (1%).



Over 640 million barrels have been produced from the asset to date, making Mukhaizna one of the largest and most mature steam flood operations in the region

More than 3,500 wells have been drilled in the field, located in Al Wusta Governorate, which spans 694 sq km.

The consortium aims to add 800 million barrels in gross recoverable resources through further drilling, enhanced oil recovery techniques and optimisation of steam flood technologies. The deal is expected to unlock fresh investments, improve Oman’s reserves position and reinforce the Sultanate of Oman’s role as a strategic energy hub.

Officials noted that the extension aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to maximise value from energy assets while boosting economic diversification and energy security.

The Ministry reiterated that such long-term agreements enhance investor confidence and support national development goals.

SLOWDOWN PACE

Oil retreats as US growth concerns weigh



Oil prices slipped on Monday, weighed down by Moody’s downgrade of the US sovereign credit rating and official data that showed a slowdown in the pace of China’s industrial output and retail sales.

Front-month Brent crude futures edged down 51 cents, or 0.8%, to \$64.90 a barrel while US West Texas Intermediate crude dropped 45 cents, or 0.7%, to \$62.04 a barrel. — Reuters

FLOATING AGAIN

Norway opens offshore wind tender



Norway has launched the first part of its long-awaited inaugural floating wind tender, it said on Monday, offering subsidies to the winners despite the challenges faced by the global offshore wind industry.

The process foresees bidders being awarded the rights to develop commercial projects of up to 500 MW in capacity at the Utsira Nord site off the country’s south-west coast. — Reuters

OPINION

The pillars for building a sustainable green economy in Oman



MARYAM AHMED YOUSEF AL NOFLI

The writer is researcher, academic faculty and Head of the Continuous Education and Community Service Department at UTAS - Musandam

In recent years, the global conversation around sustainability has shifted from vision to action. Oman, through its ambitious Vision 2040, is aligning itself with this transformation by laying the foundation for a sustainable, inclusive green economy. While hydrocarbons still account for 68% of government revenue (NCSI 2023), this transition represents both a challenge and an opportunity to redefine economic development through a strategic, holistic lens that addresses Oman's unique conditions - including water scarcity (only 89m³ renewable water per capita annually) and growing energy demand (projected 5% annual increase to 2040).

To succeed, Oman must build its green economy on four interdependent pillars, such as transition to renewable energy, sustainable resource management, innovations in the green technology area, and green legislation and international partnership that leverage its natural advantages while addressing its constraints. These pillars are not only aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also rooted in Oman's geographic, environmental, and economic realities.

TRANSITION TO RENEWABLE ENERGY
Oman's economy has long relied on oil, but the shift toward sustainability demands transformative change. Fortunately, the Sultanate of Oman is rich in untapped renewable resources, particularly solar and wind energy. Pioneering projects like the "Miraah Solar Plant" in Amal and the "Dhofar Wind Farm" are already reshaping the country's energy

landscape. Developed through a partnership between Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and GlassPoint, the Miraah plant generates over 1,000 MWth (megawatts thermal) of solar steam, making it one of the world's largest solar thermal facilities.

Meanwhile, the Dhofar Wind Farm, a collaboration with Masdar of the UAE, supplies clean power to thousands of homes in the south. Parallel initiatives from industrial energy retrofits to smart metering are enhancing efficiency and minimizing waste, ensuring optimal use of clean energy.

Complementing these efforts is Oman's ambitious push into green hydrogen. Through Hydrom, the Sultanate has signed \$30 billion worth of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with global players like BP, ACME, and Posco, positioning itself as a future exporter of green fuels to Asia and Europe by 2030-2035.

One of the promising green fuels in the energy transition is ammonia, and within the SalalahH2 consortium, Marubeni, OQ Alternative Energy, Samsung C&T, and Dutco are jointly developing a 1 million-ton per year renewable ammonia project in Salalah.

Together, these projects from Miraah's solar steam to Dhofar's wind power and Oman's \$30 billion green hydrogen drive are not just reducing carbon emissions but future proofing the economy. The target is clear about the cut reliance on oil, diversify the energy mix, and ensure 30% of Oman's energy comes from renewables by 2030, as outlined in the National Energy Strategy.

SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Oman is redefining sustainability through circular economy principles that turn waste

These pillars are not only aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) but also rooted in Oman's geographic, environmental and economic realities.

into resources. The nation now recycles 12% of its 1.6 million annual tons of plastic waste, targeting 30% by 2030, while Be'ah processes 4,500 tons of e-waste yearly. Industrial byproducts like steel slag see 90% reuse rates in Sohar's construction sector. Water innovation shines through projects like Barka IV solar desalination (250,000 m³/day, 20% emissions reduction) and Darsait's wastewater recycling (70% reuse). Agriculture undergoes revolution with Nizwa's smart irrigation (40% water savings) and Barka's hydroponics (8x yield per water unit). The sultanate's comprehensive transition to the utilization of all resources, regardless of their energy potential, serves as a regional model for sustainable resource management.

INNOVATION AND DEPLOYMENT OF GREEN TECHNOLOGY
Oman's green economy transition is gaining momentum through targeted investments in the innovation and deployment of green technologies. Institutions like Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) have filed 17 green tech patents since 2020, focusing on solar efficiency and hydrogen storage, while GÜtech has developed solar panels that retain 92% efficiency in dusty desert conditions. At Innovation Park Muscat, 62 cleantech startups are now active, with over 40% specializing in renewable energy applications. Smart infrastructure is also evolving rapidly. Muscat's AI-driven water management system has reduced losses by 25%, and Duqm is piloting blockchain-based energy trading within its smart grid.

THE POST-TRUCE STATE OF US-CHINA TRADE LOOKS DIRE

HUDSON LOCKETT

MARKETS appear to be writing off the latest Sino-American trade conflict as quickly as they priced it in. China's benchmark CSI 300 index is up 1.4% this year, marking a full recovery from its sharp drop in early April after President Donald Trump announced a 34% reciprocal tariff on Chinese goods, which swiftly spiralled into triple-digit retaliatory levies.

The latter has been cancelled and the former suspended for 90 days, leaving the official reciprocal charge at 10%, level with other countries.

In reality, it's much higher. Beijing's burden was already heavier, having started out Trump's second term with effective tariffs of roughly 11% incurred during his previous trade war.

Almost immediately, the White House then slapped another 20% on Chinese goods. That, stacked atop the other blanket levies, brings the country's total to more than 40%.

The administration did carve out some exemptions for smartphones, computers and other electronics. Factor in both those but also new global tariffs on products like steel, and the effective rate is almost 32%, per Fitch. That's far higher than the global average of about 13%, the rating agency estimates.

Optimists may take heart from the speed with which Beijing and Washington scrapped the retaliatory levies. So far, though, aside from a modest and preliminary pact with the UK, there is little indication that US discussions with its other trading partners are yielding much real progress ahead of their 90-day deadline in early July.

Worse, the electronics carve-out on April 13 was followed the next day by a national security probe into semiconductor imports.

If that ends up shrinking the loophole and pushing the effective rate on China higher, it will complicate already fraught trade talks.

Those with skin in the game don't expect a quick deal restoring the status quo ante. Apple intends to shift production of most US-bound iPhones to India.

Last week, Allan Wong, CEO of Hong Kong's Vtech — one of the world's largest toymakers and a supplier for Walmart — told the Financial Times that he planned to shift all production for the US market out of China by the end of next year.

Other manufacturers previously battered by protracted uncertainty during Trump's 2018-2020 trade war are planning similar moves, Nikkei and others have reported. Traders may be betting on a quick resolution, but that's at odds with the dire situation on the ground. — Reuters

Oman & Spain: Partnership amidst global opportunities

THE Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Spain share a relationship marked by growing economic cooperation, building on a foundation of strong diplomatic ties. While the economic partnership is still developing, it holds significant potential for both nations, particularly as they navigate evolving global challenges and seek new avenues for growth.

This analysis explores the multifaceted relationship between Oman and Spain, examining its historical context, current economic ties and future opportunities.

The relationship between Oman and Spain is rooted in a history of diplomatic engagement, with formal relations established in 1972.

This initial step has been crucial in fostering a climate of mutual respect and cooperation, setting the stage for increased collaboration across various sectors.

The establishment of reciprocal embassies in the mid-2000s further solidified this foundation, enhancing communication and facilitating stronger economic links. High-level visits and agreements, such as the significant visit by King Juan Carlos I of Spain in 2014, have underscored the commitment from both sides to expand their cooperation.

Examining the economic ties between Oman and Spain reveals a trade relationship with growth potential. While the overall trade volume has been described as "relatively modest," it has shown a general upward trend over the past decade.

In 2023, Spain recorded a trade surplus with Oman, amounting to \$27 million. Data indicates Oman's exports to Spain were valued at \$246 million, while



The relationship between Oman and Spain is rooted in a history of diplomatic engagement, with formal relations established in 1972.



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

Spain's exports to Oman totalled \$249 million. However, more recent monthly data suggests a contraction in trade volumes, highlighting the influence of factors such as commodity price volatility.

Oman's exports to Spain are concentrated in mineral fuels, oils and aluminium, reflecting its resource-based economy. Spain's exports to Oman are more diversified, including

machinery, transport equipment and manufactured goods. Specifically, Oman's exports to Spain include mineral fuels, oils (\$33.57 million), aluminium (\$32.48 million) and plastics (\$19.10 million). Spain's exports to Oman feature ships (\$31.83 million), aircraft (\$24.93 million) and vehicles (\$23.07 million).

Investment is a vital component of the Oman-Spain economic relationship. The Spain Oman Private Equity Fund (SOPEF), a joint initiative between the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and the Spanish development finance institution COFIDES, is a key example.

SOPEF has allocated €300 million to support the internationalisation of Spanish companies and contribute to the economic development of both nations.

Spanish investments in Oman include Union Fenosa Gas's stake in Qalhat LNG and Indra Sistemas' provision of air traffic management systems.

These investments highlight Spain's involvement in Oman's energy and infrastructure sectors, while initiatives like SOPEF

aim to foster broader economic diversification and collaboration.

For Oman, this economic relationship presents opportunities to advance its Oman Vision 2040 diversification goals. Collaboration with Spanish firms offers avenues for technology transfer, access to new markets and enhanced competitiveness.

Spain's membership in the European Union provides a strategic entry point for Omani products into the EU market. Omani companies, particularly SMEs, can explore niche markets in Spain, focusing on unique products and leveraging platforms like the Barcelona seafood expo to connect with Spanish partners.

Spain also benefits significantly from this partnership.

Oman represents a growing market for Spanish exports, including machinery, transport equipment and manufactured goods. Initiatives like SOPEF facilitate the internationalisation of Spanish companies and provide access to new investment opportunities in Oman and the broader Middle East.

Furthermore, Oman is a reliable supplier of LNG to Spain, contributing to Spain's energy security.

Several sectors have been identified as key areas for enhanced collaboration. These include renewable energy, where Oman's potential aligns with Spain's expertise; tourism, where Spain's experience can support Oman's growth plans; logistics and infrastructure, leveraging Spain's advanced capabilities; technology and digital transformation, fostering innovation and knowledge transfer; and manufacturing and agribusiness, promoting diversification and food security.

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ART/LIFE



ENVIRONMENT

A FUTURE WARNING COMES TO LIFE AT OMAN SUSTAINABILITY WEEK₂₀

ENTERTAINMENT

Wes Anderson and his A-list cast dazzle at Cannes



US DIRECTOR Wes Anderson brought his latest A-list cast led by Benicio del Toro to the Cannes film festival on Sunday, ramping up the star power as the competition reaches the halfway mark.

Anderson's typically whimsical "The Phoenician Scheme", which also finds roles for Tom Hanks, Scarlett Johansson and Kate Winslet's daughter, Mia Threapleton, is in the running for the top prize at Cannes.

It tells the story of risk-taking and accident-prone European tycoon Zsa-zsa Korda, played by del Toro, who looks to bequeath his fictional business empire to his estranged God-fearing daughter.

Del Toro's character is loosely based on Anderson's Lebanese father-in-law.

"He was a completely different sort of person, but he was an engineer and quite alpha," the director said.

"His relationship with my wife is probably the DNA of the movie. He told her one day, 'I need to tell you about how my business works because I won't live forever.'

But "the way he told her about his business was he opened a closet and started taking out shoeboxes and said, 'This is the project that we are doing in Saudi. This is the project we are doing in Gibraltar,'" Anderson added.

"She came home and she said, 'This is crazy.' So all of that went in the movie," said the maker of such quirky hits as "Asteroid City", "The Grand Budapest Hotel" and "The Darjeeling Limited".

With Anderson's film always thick with stars, the film's red-carpet premiere was packed with celebrities, with Edward Norton, Julianne Moore, Benedict Cumberbatch and Oscar-winning director Guillermo del Toro also in town. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



MUSIC

Augusto, Mexican musician who travels around the world, plays his Celtic harp at one of the courtyards of the Hofburg Imperial palace in Vienna, Austria. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Laura Konig poses with her Poppy Hat in David Harber garden during the preview day at the RHS Chelsea Flower show, in London. — AFP



ART

A visitor looks at a slide show in a memorial room following the passing of Cameroonian art curator Koyo Kouoh at the Zeitz MOCAA in Cape Town. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Chicago museum’s fossil yields insights on famed early bird Archaeopteryx



A RECENT analysis of a pigeon-sized Archaeopteryx fossil at the Field Museum in Chicago has revealed new features, offering fresh insights into its feathers, hands, feet and head.

Discovered in southern Germany, this specimen is among the most complete of the 14 Archaeopteryx fossils known since 1861. Its discovery, with a mix of reptile-like and bird-like traits, supported Darwin’s theory of evolution by showing birds descended from dinosaurs.

Using UV light to examine soft tissues and CT scans to see tiny details in the rock, researchers uncovered more about this creature that flew around 150 million years ago during the Jurassic period. They found evidence that, while capable of flight, Archaeopteryx probably spent much time on the ground and may have climbed trees.

A key discovery was the identification of tertial feathers on both wings — specialised feathers attached to the upper arm bone. These feathers are common in modern birds but absent in feathered dinosaurs. Their presence in

Archaeopteryx suggests tertials evolved specifically for flight, helping to create a continuous aerodynamic surface vital for lift.

According to Jingmai O’Connor, lead author, “The presence of tertials supports the idea that Archaeopteryx could fly and was still ground-oriented.” The fossil’s three-dimensional preservation of soft tissues, glowing under UV light, was meticulously prepared to protect fragile features.

Archaeopteryx showed both reptilian traits, like teeth, a long tail and claws; and bird-like features, including wings with large feathers. Its toe pads indicate it was adapted for ground living, consistent with limited flight abilities.

Examination of its palate confirmed the skull was immobile, unlike modern birds but showing early steps towards independent beak movement. The complete vertebral column has 24 vertebrae, one more than previously thought. Acquired last year, this specimen is regarded as perhaps the best Archaeopteryx ever found and a vital link in evolution. — Reuters



For Some Immigrant Artists, This Is No Time to Retreat

FOR SOME immigrant artists, now is not the time to retreat. In the South Bronx, Ruddy Mejía works in a small studio, creating brightly coloured brass foil plates embossed with images of body parts — his interpretation of traditional Mexican milagros, tiny charms used for healing and offering prayers.

Crafting these requires hours of meticulous labour, symbolising sacrifice and hope. Mejía, 36, is part

labour. She sees this as a moment to celebrate despite adversity, emphasising love and solidarity.

Amezkuia’s journey reflects a lifelong pursuit of art and community, starting from her childhood crossings and separations — clinging to her parents’ cotton farming life, moving to South Central Los Angeles, returning to Mexico and reuniting as a teenager — before earning a painting degree in California. Her work and mentorship have fostered a vibrant

border violence. Rigo Flores, 36, created embroideries honouring the disappeared students of Guerrero, including Antonio Tizapa, whose family fought for justice after their tragic massacre.

Flores depicts Tizapa surrounded by lush plants, seeking to humanise victims and convey a message of hope. Patricia Espinosa, 54, crafted wings made from tissue paper, barbed wire and handcuffs, with the inscription “Nunca olvides que tienes alas” — “Never forget



of “¡Te Amo Porque S O S Pueblo!,” a new exhibition at BronxArtSpace featuring 34 artists — most of whom are Latino immigrants or children of immigrants. The show celebrates immigrant resilience amidst heightened crackdowns and deportations, serving as both an artistic expression and a community outreach, connecting attendees with legal resources and advocacy groups.

Organised by Blanka Amezkua, Marco Saavedra and Maria Ponce Sevilla — artists who themselves crossed the US-Mexico border illegally as minors — the exhibition’s title translates as “I love you because you are my people,” echoing a poem by Uruguayan writer Mario Benedetti, with a twist indicating an emergency. Amezkua, a key figure in the Bronx immigrant art scene, crafted the show as a tribute to those who enrich the world through their

community of artists who share similar turbulent paths: family separations, financial hardships, living under the shadow of legal insecurity. But this exhibition is not centred on trauma; instead, it offers a sanctuary. Sevilla notes that despite the political climate, the art demonstrates that beauty persists and resistance continues.

The artworks at BronxArtSpace evoke themes of border struggles and cultural resilience. Erika Harrsch’s “United States of North America” passport project envisions open borders, symbolised by a monarch butterfly — a migrant crossing freely from Mexico to Canada. The Colectivo Voces, a group of Indigenous women from Guerrero, embroider and crochet in their native Mixtec dialect, embodying cultural preservation and community bonding.

Some pieces subtly confront

you have wings.” She considers returning permanently to Mexico but remains engaged in helping her community amidst rising anxiety. Her career at institutions like MoMA and the United Nations offers a platform to lift spirits during turbulent times.

The exhibition’s opening on April 25 was lively, despite fears of interference from authorities. Preparations for the worst were made, including legal support on site. But the event was a celebration — raffling art prints and dancing — to honour those who have crossed borders and made a home in the Bronx. Amezkua declared, “We carry that border with us and many of us came as minors without consent. We created this space to celebrate what we bring to the world.” She concluded with determination: “And this is just the beginning, because we’re not going anywhere.” — NYT

FEATURES



A FUTURE WARNING COMES TO LIFE AT OMAN SUSTAINABILITY WEEK

BY KHALID MOHAMMED AL BALUSHI

DURING OMAN Sustainability Week, a powerful scene unfolded at the OQ8 pavilion that captured everyone's attention. It all began when a man stepped out from behind a curtain, dressed in black, with an oxygen mask over his face — appearing as a figure from a bleak future. His appearance, affected by what seemed to be environmental damage, signalled that he was more than just a visitor; he was a messenger from tomorrow.

A small crowd gathered towards a makeshift stage, eager to see what was about to happen. Children leaned forward with curiosity, elders sat silently and visitors paused their conversations, drawn by the seriousness of the moment. What followed was a short but impactful play titled "Ahmed... A Message from Tomorrow."

In this performance, Ahmed arrives from the year 2097, using a fictional time machine created by scientists desperate to warn humanity. But his message isn't about flying cars or high-tech robots; it's about what we stand to lose — our curiosity, compassion and the environment we depend on.

With a trembling voice, Ahmed described a future where the air is unbreathable, skies are filled with toxic clouds and green plants are replaced by faded images in old books. Children, he says, have never felt grass under their feet. Humanity now lives inside

domes, with existence reduced to simple survival — an existence disconnected from nature and human warmth.

He quietly asks the audience, "When was the last time you asked a real question?" The silence that followed felt heavier than any words spoken. It was a moment of reflection.

The story, brought to life by local actor Yazeed al Balushi, turned a dystopian future into a mirror of today's reality. Through raw emotion and thoughtful interactions, Yazeed became more than just an actor — he became a messenger. Each pause after his questions left a lasting impression. How did the audience react? Did they feel the urgency?

Ahmed confesses, "I couldn't stay in the future and watch it fall apart. So I came back — not to scare you, but to wake you up."

This short performance is designed to resonate with children, youth and visitors from all backgrounds. Using minimal set design and subtle visual effects, the focus is firmly on the message: The future depends on what we do today. Our actions now will determine the world our children will inherit.

Yazeed al Balushi explained that the goal was to evoke emotion and inspire thought: "We wanted something that would make people feel and reflect. That's exactly what happened."

Why Oman Sustainability Week Matters Globally

This performance took place during Oman Sustainability Week, a vital event dedicated to raising awareness about

environmental challenges and encouraging sustainable practices. Such initiatives are crucial — not just within Oman, but across the world. Climate change, pollution and resource depletion are universal issues that threaten future generations everywhere.

Oman, like many nations, faces specific environmental challenges — from water scarcity to preserving its rich biodiversity. However, the importance of global cooperation cannot be overstated. Events like this week serve as a reminder that sustainability is a shared responsibility requiring collective action. It's about uniting diverse communities, governments and organisations to commit to lasting change.

In the context of the world, climate crises and environmental degradation are accelerating at an alarming rate. Countries need to learn from one another, exchange ideas and implement innovative solutions. Oman's focus on sustainability and environmental education is part of this vital global effort. Each community's effort, no matter how small, contributes to a larger movement to protect the planet.

This celebration also underscores the need to educate future generations. The play's emphasis on questions and awareness encourages young minds to think critically about their environment, understanding that their choices today influence a world they will someday inherit.

A Global Call to Action

As the play drew to a close and Ahmed's question echoed in the audience's minds — Will we act now before it's too late? — it became apparent this was more than a theatrical performance. It was a clarion call. The urgency is clear: climate action cannot be delayed.

The message from the future was simple yet profound. If humanity continues on its current path, the world depicted in Ahmed's vision could become a reality. But there is still hope. By changing behaviours, adopting sustainable practices and fostering environmental awareness, we can steer towards a healthier, more resilient planet.

Yazeed al Balushi expressed his hope that the performance would inspire action: "It's about making people take responsibility. We wanted to stir people's emotions — make them reflect, think and hopefully, act. That's what this is all about."

As the audience dispersed, the lingering questions and powerful visuals served as a stark reminder: Our future is in our hands. The choices we make today — whether to prioritise sustainability, reduce waste, or simply ask how we can contribute — will shape the world of tomorrow.

