

O M A N
عُضَائِل
D A I L Y

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IN BRIEF

HIS MAJESTY GREETES
PRESIDENT OF ITALY

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Sergio Mattarella of the Italian Republic on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes for further progress and prosperity to Italy. His Majesty also wished for bilateral relations of cooperation and partnership further growth on all spheres. — ONA



The strategic value of
Oman's quiet diplomacy

In periods of international tension, it is usually the loudest voices that dominate the headlines. Yet history rarely turns on noise alone. More often, stability has depended on quieter actors — countries willing to keep channels open when others stop listening, and to preserve space for diplomacy precisely when it appears to be failing.

Few regions understand this reality more clearly than the Gulf. Geography here leaves little room for recklessness. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a substantial portion of the world's oil trade passes each day, is not simply a regional waterway.

It is one of the central arteries of the global economy. Instability in these waters does not remain local for long; it quickly affects energy markets, shipping lanes, insurance costs and international trade.

The Gulf has learned repeatedly, from the tanker wars of the 1980s to more recent maritime tensions, how rapidly miscalculation can unsettle the wider world. That is why language matters in moments of crisis — especially when directed at countries whose role has long been to reduce tensions rather than inflame them. **DETAILS ON P8**

ROYAL COUPLE'S SUMMER TOUR



Denmark's King Frederik and Queen Mary arrive at Odense harbour during the Royal couple's summer tour to Odense Municipality on Monday. — AFP

Royal Decrees promulgate,
amend cybercrime and heritage laws

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued two Royal decrees, reading as follows: Royal Decree No (61/2026) on the promulgation of the Law on Combating Cybercrime.

After the same was presented before the Council of Oman.

Article (1) stipulates that the provisions of the Law on Combating Cybercrime, attached to this decree, shall be enforced.

Article (2) annuls Royal Decree No 12/2011 on the Law of

Combating Cybercrime. It also cancels all that contradicts the attached law or contravenes its provisions.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published by the Official Gazette and enforced on the day following its date of publishing.

Royal Decree No (62/2026) on the amendment of some provisions of the Cultural Heritage Law.

After the same was presented before the Council of Oman.

Article (1) states that the text

of Article Two of Royal Decree No 35/2019 on the Cultural Heritage Law shall be replaced with the following text: "The Minister of Heritage and Tourism, after coordinating with the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, shall issue the executive regulation of the attached law, as well as the decisions necessary for its implementation. Till such time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to be applied without prejudice to the provisions

of the attached law." Article (2) stipulates that the amendments attached to this decree shall be applied to the Cultural Heritage Law, promulgated by Royal Decree No 35/2019.

Article (3) cancels all that contradicts the amendments attached to this decree or contravenes their provisions. Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publishing. — ONA

Oman denounces hostile
act against Kuwait

US - IRAN TRUCE ON THE ROCKS AS ISRAEL PRESSES INTO LEBANON

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN has expressed its condemnation and denunciation of the hostile act endured by the State of Kuwait. Oman also voiced its solidarity with Kuwait and its support for all measures taken by Kuwait to preserve its security and stability.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry today, the Sultanate of Oman affirmed its rejection of all provocative and military acts that threaten the security and sovereignty of nations. Oman called for intensified efforts to end the state of war and tension in the region, adherence to the path of negotiation and diplomacy to spare the region and its peoples the fallout from an ever-widening confrontation.

Meanwhile, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Tom Berendsen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, discussed during a telephone call on Monday and exchanged views on regional developments and ongoing efforts to restore freedom of maritime navigation, as well as the smooth flow of supply



People gather on a beach, as a vessel in the Strait of Hormuz is visible, near the beach of Bandar Abbas, Iran. — Reuters

chains and trade. They affirmed the importance of intensifying diplomatic endeavours to de-escalate tensions and achieve sustainable peace among all parties.

The United States and Iran traded strikes on Monday as negotiations between the two sides stalled and Tehran again insisted any peace deal must also cover Israel's escalating offensive into Lebanon. Weeks of indirect talks marked by stark threats and several waves of air strikes have so far failed

to agree on an end to the war or the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, the key shipping channel for Gulf oil and gas.

Iran said it was suspending all exchanges with the United States via mediators, Iranian news agency Tasnim reported, as the two sides remained apart on a deal to end the Middle East war. "Given the continuing crimes of the Zionist regime (Israel) in Lebanon and considering that Lebanon was one of the preconditions for the ceasefire and that this ceasefire

has now been violated on all fronts, including Lebanon, the Iranian negotiating team is suspending dialogues and exchange of texts through mediators," Tasnim reported.

The latest exchange of fire coincided with Israel expanding its offensive into Lebanon, with Prime Minister Netanyahu vowing to push deeper into the country and instructing the military to strike targets in a southern district of Beirut. The United States has backed its ally's operations in Lebanon against Hezbollah, while still trying to come to an agreement with Iran to end the war it launched in late February with strikes on Tehran, reopen Hormuz and impose controls on Iran's nuclear programme.

But Iran again said on Monday it had not yet reopened any nuclear negotiations and insisted that Israel must halt its offensive in Lebanon before any wider deal to end the war can be agreed. The US naval blockade on Iran's ports and the escalation in Lebanon were "clear evidence of US non-compliance with the ceasefire", Iran's chief negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf posted on X. — ONA/Agencies

Information Ministry records digital growth

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information (MoI) continued to register remarkable growth in media performance indicators throughout 2025. This progress reflects the expanding reach of Omani media content, rising engagement levels with digital platforms, and the ongoing enhancement of professional capabilities within the media sector.

These achievements align with the national approaches in the prosperous reigns of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik — which are focused on accelerating digital transformation and building a diversified, knowledge-driven economy in accordance with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The Total video and audio plays on 'Ayn' platform during 2025 reached



18,714,696, compared to 12,334,871 in 2024, representing a year-on-year increase of 35 per cent. This upward trajectory underscores the steady expansion of the audience base for national digital content and the increasingly central role of digital platforms in delivering media and knowledge content to wider segments of society, amid rapidly evolving global patterns of media consumption.

By the end of 2025, Oman Observer recorded 98.4 million visits. The combined content published by the two newspapers totalled 19,830 pieces, comprising reports, surveys, investigative features, interviews, and journalistic analyses.

During 2025, the MoI approved 621 applications for the licensing of diverse media activities and issued 53 new licences for artistic works. This expansion reflects the growing scope of media coverage of various development sectors across Oman, including development initiatives and projects in the governorates. Such efforts are in direct support of the Royal directives of His Majesty the Sultan — which call for strengthening decentralisation and empowering governorates to assume a greater role in leading local development. **SEE P2**

OMAN

SHORTTAKES



RIA serves as a link between heads of scientific chairs and researchers.

RIA UNVEILS
2ND EDITION OF
SCIENTIFIC CHAIRS
PROGRAMME

MUSCAT: The Research and Innovation Authority (RIA) on Monday announced the launch of the second edition of the ‘Programme of Cooperation with Sultan Qaboos Scientific Chairs’.

The programme highlights national efforts to maximise gains from the Sultan Qaboos Scientific Chairs and to enhance international research cooperation.

The programme aims to promote international research partnerships, enable researchers and innovators to acquire global expertise and skills and support the generation of quality research that contributes to pragmatic solutions to challenges. The programme also seeks to consolidate Oman’s position in the global scientific research and innovation system.

Dr Atika bint Yahya al Husseini, member of the RIA’s Programmes Department, said that the first edition of the programme saw a large turnout of researchers and academic and research institutions.

The second edition of the programme has so far drawn 46 research proposals from 9 research institutions from Oman, said Dr Atika, noting that the programme is implemented in cooperation with 12 scientific chairs from among Sultan Qaboos Chairs in prestigious international universities and academic institutions.

She added that the outcome of the evaluation of the entries to the second edition of the programme resulted in the approval of funding for 8 research projects. The funded projects cover the domains of humanities, social sciences and applied sciences, she said.

Dr Atika explained that the diversity of the projects reflects the programme’s success in developing sustainable research relations that serve domestic priorities and contribute to upgrading national research capabilities.

She explained that the RIA serves as a link between heads of scientific chairs and researchers, within the context of a drive to support joint research cooperation, exchange expertise and devise innovative solutions to national, regional and international challenges.

“The second edition of the programme stems from efforts to establish international scientific partnerships and support the system of research and innovation in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040,” said Dr Atika.

Sultan Qaboos Scientific Chairs, Professorships and Fellowships serve as initiatives that embody the role of the Sultanate of Oman in supporting human knowledge and enhancing global dialogue and cultural rapprochement between the Arab world and other countries of the world. — ONA

OMAN,
AUSTRALIA TO
STRENGTHEN
BILATERAL
COOPERATION



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani receives Miles Armitage, Australian Ambassador.

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received at his office on Monday Miles Armitage, Non-resident Ambassador of Australia to the Sultanate of Oman.

At the beginning of the meeting, the minister welcomed the guest and reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries, as well as ways to support and enhance them to achieve mutual interests. The two sides also discussed several developments in the regional and international arenas. For his part, the guest expressed his appreciation for the diplomatic efforts exerted by the Sultanate of Oman to bridge viewpoints between various parties, thereby enhancing security and peace in the region. — ONA

Info Ministry records
strong digital growth

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The kid’s interface on ‘Ayn’ platform — operational from its launch on April 24, 2025, through the end of the year — recorded approximately 763,982 video and audio plays. This figure includes 588,003 views of visual materials and 175,979 listens of audio content, signalling strong and growing demand for educational and entertainment media tailored to children.

Oman Radio, cultural programmes dominated the broadcast schedule on the general channel in 2025, registering the highest number of broadcast hours at 2,541 hours. Development-oriented programmes



The results affirm the expanding role of Omani media in accompanying the nation’s comprehensive development.

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and materials ranked second with 2,120 hours.

On Al Shabab ‘Youth’ Radio, entertainment and artistic content captured the largest share of broadcast hours during 2025, totalling 4,136 hours, followed by cultural materials and programmes with 2,020 hours. On the English-language radio channel, entertainment and artistic programmes led the broadcast lineup with 5,788 hours, followed by development-focused programmes with 1,360 hours.

In Oman TV, cultural programmes topped the programming grid on the general channel in 2025, recording the highest number of broadcast hours at 3,206 hours. Entertainment and artistic programmes came second with 2,672 hours.

Meanwhile, the MoI conducted 937 live and recorded external coverage operations during 2025, utilising engineering transmission units and vehicles equipped with state-of-the-art technologies.

In the domain of news production, the total volume of

news items disseminated by Oman News Agency (ONA) in both Arabic and English during 2025 reached approximately 23,564 items, compared to 16,132 items in 2024, marking a substantial increase of 46 per cent.

By the end of 2025, the website of Oman daily newspaper ‘Arabic’ recorded 176.6 million visits, while the website of Oman Observer ‘English’ recorded 98.4 million visits. The combined content published by the two newspapers totalled 19,830 pieces, comprising reports, surveys, investigative features, interviews, and journalistic analyses.

During 2025, the MoI approved 621 applications for the licensing of diverse media activities and issued 53 new licences for artistic works. This expansion reflects the growing scope of media coverage of various development sectors across Oman, including development initiatives and projects in the governorates. Such efforts are in direct support of the Royal directives of His Majesty the Sultan — which call for strengthening decentralisation and empowering governorates to assume a greater role in leading local development.

The MoI’s official accounts on social media platforms continued to experience sustained growth in follower numbers, reaching a total of 7,218,298 followers during 2025, compared to 6,482,680 followers in 2024 — an increase of 11.3 per cent.

In the context of developing national media competencies, the ministry implemented 172 training programmes during 2025, compared to 125 programmes in 2024, representing a growth rate of 37.6 per cent. These programmes benefited 2,198 trainees, up from 1,834 trainees in the previous year. This notable expansion underscores the ministry’s firm commitment to upskilling national cadres and raising their professional and technical competence to keep pace with the fast-evolving landscape of the media industry. — ONA

MoTCIT, Cybercrime laws boost national digital security

MUSCAT: The Law on Combating Cybercrime, promulgated by Royal Decree No (61/2026), aims to enhance national digital security, protect society from cybercrime, ensure the confidentiality and integrity of electronic data and information, protect digital evidence, and achieve legal deterrence by enacting penalties for crimes committed using information technology.

The law will enable the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology to combat cybercrime as well as prevent attacks on websites, information systems, and information technology tools.

The first chapter contains definitions of the most important terms and phrases used in the law as well as defines its scope of application to the crimes stipulated therein.

Chapter Two criminalises acts of infringement upon electronic data or information and information systems, including the intentional and unlawful acquisition of passwords, codes, or any other means of accessing an information system, website, or information technology tool.

Chapter Three outlines crimes of misuse of information technology tools, including the possession, provision, or distribution of any



devices, equipment, software or data for committing or facilitating the commission of any of the crimes set forth by this law, or for concealing their traces or digital evidence. Chapter Four criminalises concealing or refusing to provide the access codes for information technology devices used in

committing or facilitating any of the crimes stipulated in this law to a judicial officer.

Chapter Five criminalises impersonating a natural or legal person using a website, information system, or information technology device, or using a website, information system, or information technology device to obtain an unlawful benefit for oneself or others through fraudulent means.

Chapter Six outlines content-related crimes, which are divided into five categories.

The first category includes crimes against the state, such as using a website, information system, or information technology

device to produce or disseminate the principles of a terrorist organisation, ideas, or programs for terrorist purposes, or to promote such activities, or to publish methods for manufacturing explosives, weapons and tools used in terrorist operations.

Chapter Seven of the law criminalises using a website, information system, or information technology to forge electronic payment methods, or to use them to steal electronic payment data.

Chapter Eight criminalises the use of a website, information system, or information technology to form organised criminal groups.

— ONA

SHORT TAKES



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said holds talks with General Saïd Chanegriha.

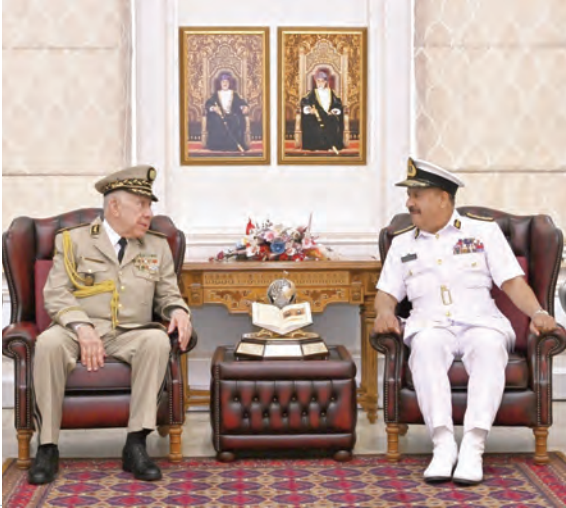
BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA RENEWED

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa, on Monday, General Saïd Chanegriha, Minister Delegate to the Minister of National Defense and Chief of People’s National Army Staff of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, along with his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the fraternal bilateral relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria. They also discussed a number of matters of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces, as well as the Ambassador of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

NDC COMMANDANT, SAF CHIEF RECEIVE ALGERIAN OFFICIAL



Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi holds talks with General Saïd Chanegriha.

MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC), received at his office in Bait Al Falaj on Monday General Saïd Chanegriha, Minister Delegate to the Minister of National Defence and Chief of People’s National Army Staff of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria and his accompanying delegation.

The two sides exchanged views on a number of topics of common interest, particularly in academic fields.

The guest and his accompanying delegation listened to a briefing about the National Defence College at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, including its facilities and equipment and viewed the various departments.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman.

Meanwhile, Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces, also received at his office in Muaskar Al Murtafaa General Saïd Chanegriha, along with his accompanying delegation.

Upon the arrival of the visiting guest at the headquarters of the COSAF, an official reception ceremony was conducted for him. The guard of honour performed the military salute, and a military band played the salute of honour, after which the guest reviewed the guard of honour.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed several military matters, as well as means of enhancing them in a manner that serves mutual interests.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

PACT TO SET UP PULMONARY UNIT AT KHOULA HOSPITAL SIGNED

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate-General of Khoula Hospital, signed a funding agreement with Al Yusr Charity Foundation to establish an integrated pulmonary unit at the hospital, to the tune of RO 560,000.

The agreement was signed by Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al Alawi, Director-General of Khoula Hospital, and Omar bin Mohammed al Farsi, Director-General of Al Yusr Charity Foundation.

The establishment of a comprehensive pulmonary unit at Khoula Hospital is in pursuance of the health sector’s efforts to achieve sustainable health for all, in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Rashid al Alawi said that the



project represents a step forward to develop specialised medical services and enhance the use of

modern technologies in diagnosing and treating respiratory diseases in accordance with best global practices. The unit is scheduled start operations in early 2027, he added.

Dr Rashid pointed out that the establishment of an integrated pulmonary unit helps achieve accuracy in diagnosis, accelerate treatment procedures and minimise complications.

He observed that partnership with Al Yusr Charity Foundation constitutes a model of integration between the public sector and civil society institutions, contributes to supporting national competencies, expanding the scope of specialised services and enhancing the readiness of the health system.

For his part, Omar al Farsi said,

“This kind of cooperation with the health sector is in pursuance of Al Yusr Charity Foundation’s programmes to support the health sector.

The foundation’s initiative embodies social responsibility. It aims to develop medical services and meet the health needs of the community.”

The pulmonary unit serves as a significant addition to specialised services at Khoula Hospital.

It will provide an integrated system for diagnosing and treating respiratory diseases in one composite facility that deals with microbronchoscopy and respiratory efficiency tests, in addition to the diagnosis and treatment of sleep disorders. — ONA

Muscat digitises accident damage assessment service

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

AS part of ongoing efforts to strengthen digital municipal services and improve the efficiency of public transactions, Muscat Municipality continues to provide its electronic service for issuing technical reports on damages resulting from traffic accidents involving public property. The service offers a streamlined mechanism for obtaining official assessments, enabling users to complete related procedures with greater ease, accuracy and transparency.

Available through the municipality’s official website, the service allows users to submit requests for technical reports that document and estimate the cost of damages caused to public assets and municipal infrastructure in traffic accidents. These reports serve as an official reference for determining repair costs and supporting administrative and financial procedures linked to compensation claims.

With the continued expansion of urban infrastructure and road networks across Muscat Governorate, the need for efficient systems to assess and document accident-related damage has become increasingly important. Traffic incidents often affect not only vehicles but also public facilities such as street lighting poles, traffic signs, safety barriers, pavements, landscaped areas and other municipal assets that require timely repair and restoration.

In this context, technical reports play a vital role in providing a professional and objective assessment of the extent of damage



The move reflects Muscat Municipality’s broader commitment to digital transformation and improved customer experience.

Technical reports play a vital role in providing a professional and objective assessment of the extent of damage and the estimated cost of repairs

and the estimated cost of repairs. Standardised evaluation procedures ensure accuracy and consistency, offering reliable documentation that can be used by all concerned parties throughout the compensation process.

One of the key advantages of the service is its ability to ensure precise and structured documentation of damages.

Accurate assessments help establish financial liabilities and support informed decision-making on repair and maintenance requirements.

This also contributes to safeguarding public resources by ensuring that damage to government-owned assets is properly recorded and addressed.

The service further enhances transparency in accident-related claims.

By issuing official technical reports, stakeholders are provided with verified information on the nature and value of damage, reducing ambiguity and supporting fair and efficient settlement procedures.

Insurance companies also benefit from these detailed assessments, as the reports serve as essential supporting documents in evaluating claims and compensation requests. Access to authenticated and structured data helps expedite processing and improves coordination between insurers and policyholders.

Beyond procedural efficiency, the initiative reflects Muscat Municipality’s broader commitment to digital transformation and improved customer experience. By enabling online applications, the municipality reduces the need for in-person visits, shortens processing time, and enhances convenience for users.

Applicants can access the service through the municipality’s electronic portal, complete required details, upload supporting documents, and submit requests through a simplified digital interface designed to ensure both ease of use and accuracy of information.

The initiative underscores the growing role of digital solutions in enhancing government efficiency and promoting sustainable management of public assets. As institutions continue to modernise their services, digital platforms are becoming essential tools for improving accessibility, strengthening service quality, and meeting evolving public expectations.

Through this service, Muscat Municipality demonstrates how technology can support transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency while contributing to the protection and maintenance of public infrastructure across the governorate.

MoHT launches film, ‘Treasures of Omani Craft Heritage’

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on Monday launched the documentary film ‘Treasures of Omani Craft Heritage’ under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

The documentary sheds light on Oman’s national crafts, exploring their diverse components. It aims to introduce selected elements of the craft heritage present in Oman, focusing on the aesthetic and utilitarian values embedded in the authenticity of handmade products while reinforcing national identity and ensuring its sustainability.

The film features a number of traditional crafts, including palm leaf weaving, copper and metalwork, textile weaving, stone and gypsum crafting, woodworking, mat weaving, pottery making, copperware



The documentary fosters public awareness of the importance of Omani craft heritage.

manufacturing and engraving (Al Tasfeer), wool weaving, cotton weaving, gypsum plaster crafting, and the craft of Al Manjour (traditional wood turning).

The documentary aims to document Oman’s traditional crafts as an authentic component of the nation’s cultural heritage. It seeks to safeguard inherited

craft knowledge, skills, and expertise and transmit them to future generations. The film also highlights crafts at risk of extinction or those with declining numbers of practitioners, underscoring their cultural and civilisational significance. It documents the various production stages, including raw materials, tools, and inherited techniques.

The documentary further fosters public awareness of the importance of Omani craft heritage and its role in preserving national cultural identity. It showcases the contributions of Omani artisans and their role in ensuring the continuity of craft practices across generations. Additionally, it provides documentary and reference material to support studies, research, and programmes concerned with cultural heritage. The film encourages artisans to balance authenticity with contemporary uses. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

AS THE ACADEMIC YEAR nears its end, households across Oman undergo a noticeable transformation. Leisure activities are replaced by study schedules, dining tables become revision stations, and conversations increasingly revolve around examinations, grades and future aspirations. For many families, exam season is not merely a test for students but a period of heightened emotional investment and shared anxiety for parents as well.

Across Oman, families are adapting daily routines to accommodate students preparing for examinations. Parents often find themselves closely monitoring study schedules, encouraging healthy habits and creating home environments conducive to learning.

“During exam season, it feels as though the whole family is sitting the exams together,” said Umm Khalid, a mother of three school-aged children. “We try to create a calm atmosphere at home and support our children in every possible way. However, there is always a degree of concern about whether stress might affect their performance.”

For many parents, the pressure extends beyond the examinations themselves, rooted in the hope of seeing their children achieve academic goals and secure promising futures. Mohammed al Salti, whose daughter is completing Grade 12 this year, believes emotional reassurance is as important as academic preparation.

“We constantly remind our daughter that effort matters more than perfection,” he said. “Every parent hopes for excellent results, but maintaining confidence and emotional well-being is equally important during this period.”

Students, meanwhile, experience exam-related stress in different ways. Some worry about forgetting information during assessments, while others fear their results may not reflect the hard work invested throughout the academic year. For Noura al Balushi, a secondary school student, psychological pressure can sometimes feel more difficult than the subjects themselves.

“There is always a sense of responsibility to perform well,” she explained. “Questions from relatives and friends about expected grades can add to the pressure. What helps me most is knowing that my family supports me regardless of the outcome.”

Similarly, student Abdullah al Mukhaini highlighted the importance of effective time management and balanced study habits.

“Planning ahead and revising consistently reduces anxiety,” he said. “When students feel prepared, they enter the examination hall with greater confidence.”

Educational and psychological specialists note that a moderate level of stress is natural – and even beneficial – as it can enhance focus and motivation. However, excessive anxiety may negatively affect concentration, sleep patterns and overall academic performance.

According to educational counsellors, one of the most common mistakes families make is placing excessive emphasis on final grades. Such pressure, they warn, can undermine students' confidence and heighten feelings of apprehension.

“Students need encouragement rather than constant reminders about results,” said Mariam Al-Nami, a school principal. “A supportive environment, healthy routines and realistic expectations can make a significant difference in how students cope with exam-related stress.”

Experts also encourage students to maintain adequate sleep, take regular study breaks and engage in light physical activity to better manage anxiety and improve concentration.

In recent years, social media has added another dimension to the exam season. The widespread sharing of study schedules, revision techniques and academic achievements can sometimes trigger unhealthy comparisons among students, intensifying pressure further. Educators emphasise that examinations should be viewed as one milestone in a broader educational journey rather than the sole measure of success. Personal development, critical thinking and life skills, they argue, are equally important to a student's growth and future prospects.

As students across Oman continue preparing for and sitting final examinations, families remain steadfast in their support. Behind every student entering an examination hall is a network of parents, siblings and loved ones offering encouragement, reassurance and hope.

Ultimately, exam season serves as a reminder that education is not an individual pursuit but a shared family experience — a period when aspirations, sacrifices and emotions converge, reflecting the collective commitment of Omani families to nurturing the next generation and helping them build a brighter future.

WHEN EXAMS TEST ENTIRE FAMILIES

FAMILIES ACROSS OMAN NAVIGATE STRESS, EXPECTATIONS AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AS THE ACADEMIC YEAR REACHES ITS FINAL STRETCH

STUDENTS FACE GROWING STRESS, FUELLED BY EXAMS, SOCIAL PRESSURE AND COMPARISONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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EXAMS

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SHORT TAKES



The governorate is implementing its 2026–2030 Strategic Plan with priorities focused on economic diversification.

AL BATINAH NORTH EYES GROWTH WITH \$30 BN INVESTMENTS

SUHAS: With investments exceeding \$30 billion, over 54,600 commercial registrations, and a population nearing 940,500, Al Batinah North Governorate is accelerating efforts to position itself as one of Oman’s strongest engines of economic growth, logistics, industrial expansion and sustainable urban development.

The governorate, home to Sohar Port and Free Zone, continues to attract major global investments, hosting more than 1,900 companies from 49 countries, while maintaining an Omanisation rate of around 94 per cent and generating over 42,000 jobs.

Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, said the governorate is implementing its 2026–2030 Strategic Plan, aligned with Oman Vision 2040, with priorities focused on economic diversification, digital transformation, service efficiency and quality of life. Among the key drivers of growth are infrastructure and urban development projects designed to stimulate tourism, attract private investment and improve public spaces across the governorate’s six wilayats. The Shinas Waterfront Project is expected to revitalise the historic centre of Shinas through a seaside promenade, mangrove park and hospitality investments, while Liwa’s RO 2.1 million entrance development project, now 50 per cent complete, aims to improve roads, green spaces, pedestrian walkways and cycling tracks.

In Suhar, plans are advancing to transform Wadi Salan into an integrated urban destination featuring investment zones, tourism facilities and recreational spaces. Meanwhile, the Majis Waterfront Project, valued at approximately RO 1.75 million, is under construction through a partnership between the governorate and OQ and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Economic indicators also reflect growing investor confidence. By the end of 2025, Al Batinah North recorded 54,603 cumulative commercial registrations, including 4,271 new registrations, while completed commercial licences reached 91,368, driven by ongoing reforms to improve the business environment and simplify procedures.

The governorate is also benefiting from strategic national infrastructure projects. — ONA

‘More English Please’ launched for Arab learners

LIJU CHERIAN
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

Veteran ELT author, publisher and teacher trainer Richard Harrison has launched ‘More English Please 1’, a beginner-level English language course designed specifically for Arab learners, marking another milestone in his long-standing contribution to English language teaching in the Middle East.

The course, published by his Muscat and London-based imprint Canford Publishing, takes learners from starter to elementary level through a structured, step-by-step approach covering speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

Richard, a graduate of King’s College London and the University of Reading, has taught and trained educators across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Iran and Oman, as well as working with the British Council in Russia as an ESP consultant.



Richard’s new book aims to make English learning more accessible and relevant for Arab students.

Speaking about the new series, Richard said the core aim was to make English learning more accessible and culturally relevant for Arab students. “Arabic is not closely related to English, so the progression has to be carefully staged,” he noted. “The idea is constant recycling of language

through review units and practical application so learners build confidence gradually.”

‘More English Please’ builds on the success of the earlier ‘English Please’ series, which was widely used across the Middle East for both adult and younger learners. The updated edition has been fully revised and modernised, with the workbook integrated into the main student book.

A key feature of the course is its strong regional grounding. Topics are designed to reflect familiar cultural and geographical contexts across the Arab world, while characters include a blend of Arab and international names. Each unit also includes focused work on pronunciation, vocabulary, punctuation and language use, followed by study summaries.

The latest edition is being printed by Mazoon Printing, further reinforcing Oman’s role in the production and dissemination of the series.

CONTRACT SIGNED FOR AL NUZHA STREET CARRIAGEWAY PROJECT

MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality on Monday signed a contract for the implementation of Al Nuzha Street dual carriageway project in Al Maabela South, the Wilayat of Al Seeb.

This project is one of the strategic initiatives aimed at developing the road network and enhancing the efficiency of the infrastructure to keep pace with the rapid urban growth in Muscat Governorate.

The contract was signed by Eng Ahmed bin Said al Amri, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, alongside the contracting company executing



Eng Ahmed bin Said al Amri, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, signed the contract along with contracting company.

the project. The on-site construction works commence during the current month. The project entails the construction of a dual carriageway spanning 11 kilometres, equipped with additional lanes to accommodate growing traffic volumes. It also includes the development of 3.5 kilometres of service roads to serve the areas and facilities located along the corridor, thereby enhancing accessibility.

The project further comprises the construction of six major intersections fitted with state-of-the-art intelligent traffic signal systems.

These are designed to regulate traffic movement, reduce waiting times, enhance travel fluidity, and elevate road safety standards.

In addition, the project features an integrated stormwater drainage system, including multi-cell box culverts and channels, along with lateral roadside drainage systems. This will reinforce the road’s resilience under various weather conditions and improve surface water management efficiency. A modern street lighting system using energy-efficient lamps will also be installed. — ONA

WALKWAY SHOWCASES SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAS, JUNE 1

THE VILLAGE of Al Ghizain in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah is emerging as a model of community-driven development, where heritage preservation meets sustainable tourism and public health promotion.

Through the ‘Al Ghizain Walkway’ project, sections of the historic village have been transformed into a vibrant recreational and tourism space for residents, visitors, and nature enthusiasts.

The initiative is led by the Al Ghizain Healthy Village Committee in collaboration with local citizens. The village, officially recognised as a Healthy Village under the supervision of the Office of the Wali of Al Khabourah, is part of broader efforts to encourage healthier lifestyles, enhance quality of life, and safeguard environmental and cultural assets.

The Al Ghizain Walkway stands as a strong example of effective community partnership, with residents, parents and volunteers actively contributing to development and beautification efforts.

“Al Ghizain Walkway reflects the power of community partnership and volunteerism in creating sustainable projects that benefit both residents and visitors. This initiative supports healthy lifestyles



The walkway encourages residents to engage in regular physical activity in a natural environment.

Al Ghizain village is officially recognised as a Healthy Village and is part of broader efforts to encourage healthier lifestyles

while showcasing the village’s rich natural and cultural heritage. We hope it will continue to grow as a model for community-driven development and sustainable tourism,” said Shaikh Ahmed al Housni.

Key works under the project include the restoration of Falaj Al Ghizain, one of the village’s traditional irrigation channels, along with cleaning and maintenance of its surrounding areas. Upgrades have also been carried out on public facilities, waste management, and access

roads, while environmentally friendly seating areas have been installed to enhance visitor comfort.

Tree planting and landscaping initiatives have further improved the site’s ecological value and visual appeal. Plans are also underway to introduce small food corners and kiosks offering local refreshments such as coffee and Omani halwa, adding to the visitor experience.

The walkway encourages residents to engage in regular physical activity in a safe, natural environment while promoting awareness of sustainable health practices. It also supports domestic tourism by highlighting the village’s cultural heritage and natural beauty, reflecting Oman’s authentic identity.

Project organisers say development is ongoing, with future phases set to include expanded walking trails, additional service facilities, and more green spaces to enhance the overall experience.

These improvements are expected to strengthen Al Ghizain’s position as a national model for healthy villages and community-based sustainable tourism.

The Al Ghizain Walkway demonstrates how community commitment, when combined with local resources and shared vision, can transform heritage spaces into meaningful public assets — benefiting people, preserving the environment and supporting sustainable development for future generations.

وزارة الصحة
Ministry of Health

Directorate General of Khoula Hospital

Auction Announcement

The Directorate General of Khoula Hospital invites you to the following Auction:

Auction No.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Auction Document	Bid Submission Date	Eligibility	Tender Box	Auction Fee (Non-Refundable)
02/2026	Renting of coffeeshop at Wattayah Complex for Obstetrics & Gynecology at Directorate General of Khoula Hospital	Thursday 25/June/2026 Before 01:00 PM	Wednesday 22/July/2026 Before 09:00 AM	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	Directorate General of Khoula Hospital (Building No. 4)	R.O 25,000

- Companies & institutions willing to participate can purchase Auction Documents from the Financial Affairs Department (Purchase & Tender Section) between 8.30 am and 12.30 pm on working days till date of 25/June/2026, on payment of Auction fee mentioned above.3
- Auction should be submitted in plain, sealed envelope, Enclosing A Chq issued by a Local bank for not less than (1%) of the value of the bid, addressed to the Directorate General of Khoula Hospital and it will be refunded if the bid is not awarded. Auction(s) Submitted without Chq will not be considered.
- Auction should be submitted in plain, sealed envelope with wax, on which the number and name of the auction should be written on the outside on the envelope, avoid writing the bidder name.
- Requested to Deposit their Auction Documents at the Directorate General of Khoula Hospital (Building No. 4), Before 09.00 AM on Wednesday, 22/July/2026, and bids submitted after this date shall not be considered, whatever the reasons for the delay.
- Copy of Commercial Registration Certificate & Chamber Certificate is to be attached along with the bid submitted.
- The Directorate General of Khoula Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offer.

US, IRAN NEGOTIATIONS STALL



A plume of smoke rises following an Israeli air strike on the outskirts of Tyre, southern Lebanon. — AFP

OIL PRICES UP 5 PER CENT OVER FRESH TENSIONS

Oil prices surged on Monday after Iran said it suspended all exchanges with Washington following days of inconclusive talks to end the war

ISRAEL ISSUES BEIRUT EVACUATION WARNING

Israel's military warned residents of Beirut's southern suburbs, long a stronghold of Hezbollah, of imminent strikes and called for them to evacuate

TEHRAN SUSPENDS NEGOTIATIONS WITH US

Iran was suspending all exchanges with the United States via mediators on Monday, as the two sides remained apart on a deal to end the war

KUWAIT DEFENCES INTERCEPTED ATTACKS

Kuwait's air defences intercepted missile and drone attacks while Washington said it had downed two Iranian missiles targeting US forces

EU CALLS TO 'STOP MILITARY ESCALATION' IN LEBANON

The EU urged Israel to halt its military operation in Lebanon, after Israel seized the strategic Beaufort Castle and said it would resume strikes.

THE UNITED STATES and Iran traded strikes on Monday as negotiations between the two sides stalled and Tehran again insisted any peace deal must also cover Israel's escalating offensive into Lebanon. Weeks of indirect talks marked by stark threats and several waves of air strikes have so far failed to agree an end to the war or the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, the key shipping channel for Gulf oil and gas.

Iran was suspending all exchanges with the United States via mediators on Monday, Iranian news agency Tasnim reported, as the two sides remained apart on a deal to end the Middle East war. "Given the continuing crimes of the Zionist regime (Israel) in Lebanon and considering that Lebanon was one of the preconditions for the ceasefire and that this ceasefire has now been violated on all fronts, including Lebanon, the Iranian negotiating team is suspending dialogues and exchange of texts through mediators," Tasnim reported.

The latest exchange of fire coincided with Israel expanding its offensive into Lebanon, with Prime Minister Netanyahu vowing to push deeper into the country and instructing the military to strike targets in a southern district

of Beirut. The United States has backed its ally's operations in Lebanon against Hezbollah, while still trying to come to an agreement with Iran to end the war it launched in late February with strikes on Tehran, reopen Hormuz and impose controls on Iran's nuclear programme. But Iran again said on Monday it had not yet reopened any nuclear negotiations and insisted that Israel must halt its offensive in Lebanon before any wider deal to end the war can be agreed. The US naval blockade on Iran's ports and the escalation in Lebanon were "clear evidence of US non-compliance with the ceasefire", Iran's chief negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf posted on X.

ESSENTIAL CONDITIONS

"We know when it is necessary to act on nuclear matters," foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei told a weekly news briefing. "No negotiations have taken place on the details of the nuclear file. At this stage, our priority is ending the war." "We insist that a ceasefire in Lebanon is an essential condition for any deal aimed at ending the war," Baqaei said, adding: "The United States is also violating the ceasefire, including this morning."

The US military said it had carried out "self-defence strikes" on Iranian radar

Weeks of indirect talks marked by stark threats and several waves of air strikes have so far failed to agree an end to the war or the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, the key shipping channel for Gulf oil and gas. Iran was suspending all exchanges with the United States via mediators on Monday

and drone control sites over the weekend — its third such wave in just over a week — this time in response to the downing of a US MQ-1 drone. Shortly afterwards, Iran's Revolutionary Guards told state media they had targeted an airbase used by the US military from which the attack originated. The Guards did not identify the country said to be hosting the base, but the Kuwaiti military said its air defence had intercepted "hostile missile and drone attacks".

STICKING POINTS

Iran was already in talks with the United States about the fate of its nuclear programme in February, when the US and Israel launched air and missile strikes that wiped out much of the Islamic republic's senior leadership and plunged the Middle East into war. While Tehran has long insisted that its nuclear programme is for purely civilian ends, the United States and its Western allies suspect it aims to develop am atomic weapon.

Late on Sunday, Trump posted on social media that the deal under discussion "states, very clearly, that Iran will not have a Nuclear Weapon".

Iran has said it needs the release of \$12 billion in frozen assets before engaging

in substantive talks on its nuclear programme, and dismissed earlier Trump comments suggesting that its stockpile of enriched uranium would be destroyed.

Meanwhile, France's President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday he had encouraged his US counterpart Donald Trump to pursue his "determined efforts" to reach a ceasefire deal with Iran to end the Middle East war. In a phone call on Sunday night, "I welcomed the determined efforts he is making to swiftly reach an agreement between the United States and Iran, which represents a unique opportunity to build a new security framework that brings together all the parties concerned, in order to allow for lasting stabilisation of the region," Macron said on X.

Tehran has said that a ceasefire in Lebanon remains a key condition for any deal with Washington, after Israel's military seized a medieval castle in south Lebanon as it expands ground operations against Hezbollah. "I also welcomed President Trump's commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and underscored the importance of a robust ceasefire and of our collective support for the Lebanese authorities," Macron wrote. — AFP

France seizes Russia-linked oil tanker in the Atlantic

PARIS: France said on Monday it had detained a Russia-linked oil tanker in the Atlantic, with the Kremlin comparing the latest seizure aimed at tackling Moscow's sanctions-busting shadow fleet to "international piracy". Since September, France has boarded three other ships believed to belong to the shadow fleet, used by Russia to circumvent Western sanctions on its fossil fuel exports imposed over the Kremlin's 2022 attack on Ukraine. The Tagor was detained on Sunday morning in international waters with the help of Britain and other partners, after its Russian captain refused to comply with orders, prosecutors said.

President Emmanuel Macron posted a video of the seizure, which showed commandos rappelling from a helicopter onto the ship. "We consider these acts illegal. They border on international piracy," said President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov. "Russia is taking measures to ensure the safety of its cargo".

Suspected of carrying Russian or Iranian oil despite international sanctions, the Tagor



French Navy personnel approach an oil tanker, subject to international sanctions and sailing from Russia, in the Atlantic Ocean. — Reuters

is linked to petroleum shipping magnate Mohammad Hossein Shamkhani, according to open-source database Opensanctions.org. According to French authorities, the Tagor was on its way from Murmansk in northwestern Russia

when it was boarded. The ship was falsely flying a Cameroonian flag and was heading toward Limbe, a seaside city in the west of the African country, said a spokesperson for France's Atlantic maritime prefecture. Shadow fleet vessels frequently change the flags they fly, a practice known as flag-hopping, or use invalid registrations in an attempt to escape tracking. "It is unacceptable for ships to circumvent international sanctions, violate the law of the sea, and fund the war that Russia has been waging against Ukraine for more than four years," Macron said on X. The UK ministry of defence said a British helicopter had "provided tracking and monitoring in support of the French operation to board the tanker Tagor". "We are stepping up our response to shadow vessels — to choke off the funds that fuel Putin's illegal attack on Ukraine," a ministry spokesperson said. The Atlantic maritime prefecture said the interception had taken place more than 740 kilometres west of Brittany. — AFP



GAZA MEDIATORS TO HOLD TALKS IN EGYPT

GAZA: A Hamas delegation is due to meet with mediators in Egypt on Wednesday to discuss ways of advancing the fragile Gaza ceasefire, officials from the Palestinian movement said. The Palestinian territory remains gripped by daily violence, with the Israeli military and Hamas accusing one another of violating the truce in effect since October. A transition to the second phase of the ceasefire, which was supposed to involve Hamas's disarmament and a gradual withdrawal of the Israeli army, has been stalled for months.

"Egypt has invited Hamas and other factions to participate in talks with mediators on Wednesday... which will also include Qatari and Turkish officials," a Hamas official said, declining to be identified as he was not authorised to speak publicly on the matter. "The mediators have presented ideas for formulating a new, revised proposal acceptable to both Hamas and Israel." The official said the Hamas delegation, headed by chief negotiator Khalil al-Hayya, as well as representatives from other Palestinian factions, was expected to arrive in Cairo starting on Tuesday for the talks to be held in the Mediterranean town of El-Alamein. — AFP

Israel orders attacks in Beirut's southern suburbs

BEIRUT: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered attacks on the southern suburbs of Beirut on Monday, signalling further escalation of a war that has complicated mediation towards resolving the US-Iran conflict. Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said that Israeli attacks in Lebanon were among factors causing a delay to the diplomatic process to end the US-Iran war, reiterating that a Lebanon ceasefire was an integral part of any deal. People began fleeing Beirut's southern suburbs, known as Dahiyeh, in response to the Israeli warning - the latest wave of displacement in a conflict that has uprooted more than 1 million people in Lebanon. "There will be no situation in which Hezbollah attacks our cities and our citizens, and its headquarters in Beirut, in Dahiyeh, will remain out of bounds," Netanyahu said in a video statement.

Netanyahu said Israel was continuing to deepen its ground activity in Lebanon, where Israeli troops have carved out a self-declared security zone in the south, saying they aim to shield northern Israel from Hezbollah attacks. Having pounded the southern suburbs of Beirut in the early weeks of the war, Israel has carried out only two strikes on the area since US President Donald Trump announced a Lebanon ceasefire on April 16, even as hostilities have raged in southern Lebanon. The conflict erupted on March 2 when Hezbollah opened fire at Israel in solidarity with Iran as it came under US-Israeli attack.

"This is the third time since the ceasefire that we're going from place to place," said Naji Musulmani,



Traffic on a road as people make their way while fleeing the southern suburbs of Beirut. — Reuters

People began fleeing Beirut's southern suburbs, known as Dahiyeh, in response to the Israeli warning - the latest wave of displacement in a conflict that has uprooted more than 1 million people in Lebanon. Hostilities have intensified in Lebanon despite a series of rare meetings between the Lebanese and Israeli governments, overseen by Washington

61, driving a pick-up truck full of mattresses through clogged Beirut streets away from the southern suburbs. Having fled the south in recent days, Musulmani said he would head to the city of Tripoli in northern Lebanon. Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz ordered the Israeli military to attack targets in the southern suburbs following Hezbollah's "repeated violations" of the ceasefire and "attacks against our cities and citizens", a statement from Netanyahu's office said.

The order followed an intensification of hostilities in the south over the weekend, with Israeli troops capturing the 900-year-old Beaufort Castle. Hezbollah, established by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 1982, said its fighters had fired a missile salvo targeting Israeli military infrastructure in the Israeli city of Tiberias at 1:00 am on Monday, among other attacks it said

were in response to Israeli ceasefire violations. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said there would be no "calm" in Beirut if there was no "calm" in northern Israel. Lebanese authorities say more than 3,400 people have been killed in the country as a result of Israeli attacks since March 2, when Hezbollah opened fire at Israel in support of Iran as it came under US-Israeli attack. Israel says 24 of its soldiers and four civilians have been killed over the same period. Hostilities have intensified in Lebanon despite a series of rare meetings between the Lebanese and Israeli governments, overseen by Washington. Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with both Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Netanyahu on the diplomatic negotiations between Israel and Lebanon and proposed a plan for "gradual de-escalation". — Reuters

OPINION

The strategic value of Oman’s quiet diplomacy



IN PERIODS of international tension, it is usually the loudest voices that dominate the headlines. Yet history rarely turns on noise alone.

More often, stability has depended on quieter actors — countries willing to keep channels open when others stop listening, and to preserve space for diplomacy precisely when it appears to be failing.

Few regions understand this reality more clearly than the Gulf. Geography here leaves little room for recklessness. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a substantial portion of the world’s oil trade passes each day, is not simply a regional waterway.

It is one of the central arteries of the global economy. Instability in these waters does not remain local for long; it quickly affects energy markets, shipping lanes, insurance costs and international trade.

The Gulf has learned repeatedly, from the tanker wars of the 1980s to more recent maritime tensions, how rapidly miscalculation can unsettle the wider world. That is why language matters in moments of crisis — especially when directed at countries whose role has long been to reduce tensions rather than inflame them.

For decades, Oman has followed a foreign policy shaped less by spectacle than by balance. While much of the region has often been drawn toward rigid alignments and public confrontations, Muscat has chosen another course: steady communication, political restraint and dialogue even in times of profound disagreement. This approach was never intended to attract attention. In many ways, its effectiveness has depended on avoiding it.

Harold Macmillan once remarked that “jaw-jaw is better than war-war.” Few states in

the modern Middle East have practiced that principle more consistently than Oman.

There remains, however, a persistent misunderstanding in some international commentary: the assumption that moderation equals weakness, or that diplomacy signals hesitation.

Oman’s approach has never been passive neutrality. It has been deliberate de-escalation — the patient work of preventing crises from hardening into open confrontation. Successive American administrations understood this reality well. Oman’s quiet role in facilitating communication between Washington and Tehran did not emerge overnight, nor was it accidental.

During the negotiations that led to the Iran nuclear agreement, Muscat created political space for dialogue at a moment when public rhetoric on all sides had made compromise extraordinarily difficult.

Even many critics of the agreement later acknowledged the importance of the channels that made negotiations possible.

True mediation, however, requires independence. A country trusted by all sides cannot fully belong to any single camp. That is not fence-sitting; it is the condition that allows mediation to function at all. Bridges, after all, are tested most when the waters rise.

This sometimes frustrates those who prefer simple categories and clear political camps. Yet the Middle East has rarely been simple. Countries that maintain open channels to multiple sides are not avoiding responsibility; in many cases, they are helping prevent the complete breakdown of regional communication.

Oman’s balanced relationships reflect a strategic culture shaped by geography, history and political realism. They also reflect

Oman has consistently treated freedom of navigation and maritime security not as political bargaining tools, but as shared international responsibilities

a basic national interest: stability in a deeply unstable neighbourhood.

That same realism explains Oman’s long-standing position on the Strait of Hormuz. Oman has consistently treated freedom of navigation and maritime security not as political bargaining tools, but as shared international responsibilities. This is not mere diplomatic language. Few countries understand more clearly than Oman that instability in the Strait harms everyone, beginning with the states of the region themselves.

In an era increasingly dominated by polarisation, public pressure, and political theatrics, quieter forms of diplomacy are easily overlooked. Yet the international system still depends on countries capable of lowering tensions before crises spiral beyond control. The alternative is a world in which every disagreement becomes a contest of threats, pressure and escalation.

That is not a world any region should wish to encourage. Power matters. No serious state can afford to ignore that reality. But in this region, memory matters too. Nations remember who helped keep doors open when others sought only to close them.

In a fractured region, diplomacy is not weakness. Restraint is not indecision. And moderation should not become a liability.

The larger question facing the international community is whether there will continue to be room in global politics for states that choose dialogue over spectacle, balance over polarisation and prevention over escalation. If that space disappears, the world may eventually discover — too late — that quiet diplomacy was never a luxury. It was part of the unseen architecture that helped hold stability together.

PASTORALIST WOMEN
UNITE FOR CLIMATE,
RIGHTS AGENDA

Pastoralist women from every inhabited continent have united to forge a renewed global agenda to strengthen rights, climate resilience, and sustainable rangeland stewardship, marking a major milestone during the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP 2026).

The Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women delivered three key outcomes: the establishment of a global network of pastoralist women, a draft Kathmandu Declaration (Mera +16) as a shared agenda and call to action, and a coordinated strategy to engage with global policy platforms.

Rangelands cover nearly half of the Earth’s land surface, while pastoralism remains the world’s most widespread land use system. Women and girls comprise nearly half of the global pastoralist population and play a pivotal role in livestock care, land stewardship, food security, and preserving traditional knowledge. However, they continue to face insecure land and mobility rights, limited political representation, and disproportionate impacts of climate change.

The draft declaration outlines common priorities, including land and resource rights, political participation, access to essential services, recognition of traditional knowledge, and climate justice.

“Pastoralist women are essential stewards of rangelands and biodiversity,” said Yi Shaoliang, Senior Intervention Manager for Rangelands at ICIMOD, emphasising their crucial role in climate adaptation and resilient landscapes.

Describing the development as historic, Srijana Joshi Rijal, Ecosystem Specialist at ICIMOD, said pastoralist women from across regions had united to safeguard future generations through a shared commitment to bring their voices to global platforms.

“This is a defining moment,” added Nitya Ghotge, Co-Chair of the IYRP Working Group on Pastoralism and Gender. “Women pastoralists from around the world have come together to shape a better future for their children and communities.”

Teaching empathy through
animal care in Oman

I WAS pleasantly surprised to read an essay in Arabic recently, published in one of our Omani newspapers, by an Omani author reflecting on a growing social phenomenon: more and more Omanis are opening their homes to cats, dogs and other animals.

What struck me most was not simply the observation itself, but the reminder that accompanied it. Bringing an animal into one’s home is not a passing hobby or a temporary source of entertainment. It is a commitment. The moment we adopt an animal, we become their entire world. And they become part of our family.

Unlike humans, animals cannot explain their fears, illnesses, or discomfort. They depend on us for food, water, shelter, medical care and affection. The essay rightly emphasised that this responsibility should not be abandoned simply because an animal becomes sick, grows old, or occasionally misbehaves.

Caring for a pet requires patience and compassion, especially during difficult moments. In many ways, our treatment of the most vulnerable creatures around us reveals much about our values as individuals and as a society.

Reading the essay immediately brought to mind another scene that has become increasingly familiar during Oman’s long summer months. As temperatures climb to uncomfortable levels, I often



DR NAJMA
AL ZIDJALY

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

notice stray cats sitting in the shade of cars with their mouths open, panting from the intense heat. Some search desperately for water. Others wander near rubbish bins hoping to find something to eat. Watching these animals struggle under the scorching sun serves as a powerful reminder that responsibility extends beyond the walls of our homes.

Not everyone is able to adopt an animal, nor should everyone feel obligated to do so. Yet there are many small acts of kindness that can make a significant difference. Leaving a bowl of water outside a gate, placing food in a safe corner, or setting out containers near rubbish collection areas can help stray animals survive the harshest days of summer. These simple gestures require little effort, yet they can mean everything to a thirsty or hungry animal.

Such acts are deeply rooted in our religious and cultural traditions. Islam teaches mercy not only towards fellow human beings but also towards animals. Stories from our religious heritage repeatedly remind us that compassion towards animals is rewarded and cruelty towards them is condemned. These teachings encourage us to recognise that all living creatures deserve dignity and care.

There is another aspect of animal welfare that deserves greater attention: education. Over the years, I have often written about the

importance of involving children in community service and acts of kindness.

Feeding stray animals can become one such activity. It is a simple yet meaningful way to teach children empathy, responsibility, and respect for life. A child who learns to fill a bowl of water for a thirsty cat may also learn to notice the needs of elderly neighbours, classmates, and others who require support.

Some of my fondest memories involve caring for neighbourhood cats. Children are naturally drawn to animals, and many take great pride in helping them. What may begin as a summer activity soon becomes a lesson in compassion that lasts a lifetime. The animal benefits from food and water, while the child develops a deeper understanding of care and responsibility.

As Oman continues to embrace the idea of pet ownership, we should celebrate this positive development while remembering the obligations that accompany it. At the same time, we should not forget the countless stray animals that share our streets and neighbourhoods. Whether by adopting a pet, supporting animal welfare initiatives, or simply leaving out food and water, each of us can play a small part.

After all, kindness is not always measured by grand gestures. Sometimes it is measured by a bowl of water left in the shade on a hot summer Omani day.

Bridging the gap between innovation and economic value



DR UMAR
SAFDAR KAYANI

The writer is an expert in innovation and technology management

OMAN HAS made significant progress in building the foundations of an innovation-driven economy. Oman Vision 2040, the National Digital Economy Programme, investments in digital transformation, entrepreneurship initiatives, research funding schemes, and the recently launched National Programme for AI and Advanced Digital Technologies all reflect a clear national commitment to innovation and economic diversification.

International indicators suggest that these efforts are yielding results. Oman improved its position in the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2025 by five places, reaching 69th globally and strengthening its standing among innovation-driven economies.

However, the next phase of Oman's innovation journey requires a different conversation. The issue is no longer whether Oman has policies, strategies, or governance frameworks to support innovation. The more important question is whether these investments are generating sufficient economic, technological and societal value.

Evidence suggests that Oman has been relatively successful in building innovation inputs but faces challenges in generating innovation outputs. According to the Global Innovation Index 2025, Oman performs considerably better in innovation inputs than in knowledge and technology outputs.

Perhaps the most important question for Oman is a simple one: What happens after a research project ends?

Every year, universities and research institutions across the country produce journal publications, conference papers, technical reports, postgraduate theses and other valuable academic outputs. These achievements contribute to scientific knowledge, strengthen institutional reputation and improve international visibility. Yet if the ultimate objective is to build a knowledge-based economy, publication should be viewed as an important milestone rather than the final destination.

Publications are counted, reporting requirements are completed, and success is declared. Yet from an economic perspective, the most important phase may only be beginning. Without systematic follow-up, many promising discoveries remain within journals and institutional repositories, never progressing toward commercialisation or practical application.

This does not diminish the importance of publications. Scientific publications remain essential for knowledge creation and academic excellence. However, leading innovation economies increasingly recognise that publications and commercialisation are complementary rather than competing objectives. Research creates knowledge; commercialisation transforms that knowledge into impact.

Another area that deserves attention is the structure of research funding itself. Oman supports a diverse portfolio of research projects across numerous disciplines. While diversity has undeniable benefits,

Oman has made substantial investments in digital transformation, and the digital economy contributes approximately RO 800 million to the national economy

excessive fragmentation can reduce national impact. Leading innovation economies increasingly organise a significant portion of public research funding around strategic national missions and economic priorities. For Oman, such priorities are already clear: green hydrogen, renewable energy, water security, logistics and smart ports, food security, tourism technologies, artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, and circular economy solutions. Concentrating a larger share of funding on these areas would increase the likelihood of generating innovations capable of creating economic value and strengthening national competitiveness.

The economic case for addressing the innovation output gap is compelling. Oman has already made substantial investments in digital transformation, and the digital economy contributes approximately RO 800 million to the national economy. National plans aim to increase the contribution of the digital economy to 10 per cent of GDP by 2040. Achieving this target will require more than infrastructure and digital services. It will require the creation of intellectual property, innovative enterprises, technology-based exports and competitive industries.

Oman has already laid many of the foundations required for a successful innovation economy. The country enjoys political stability, improving governance indicators, growing digital infrastructure, a strategic geographic location and a clear long-term vision.

EU WANTS TO BREAK UP WITH US TECH

RAZIYE AKKOC

Wary of being vulnerable to the whims of foreign governments, the European Union is preparing far-reaching new moves to ditch American digital companies and Chinese chips in favour of European alternatives.

The EU's technological sovereignty package is among many measures taken by Brussels to slash dependence on foreign firms and boost local manufacturing - but risks opening up a new front in transatlantic tensions.

The hotly awaited package of new rules on chips, cloud computing and AI will be presented on Wednesday as part of the EU's effort to "reclaim its place in the global race for geoeconomic power", a draft strategy document.

Of particular concern is how much the European Union relies on US cloud providers, which account for around 70 per cent of Europe's market.

Since President Donald Trump returned to the White House last year, Europeans worry that critical digital infrastructure could be brought to a halt by an American "kill switch" if tensions ever reached fever pitch.

Top EU officials don't directly name their target as the United States, but American tech dominates, from cloud computing to social media to e-commerce.

"We need to develop our own capacities. We cannot allow someone trying to influence our own decisions, our own values, our own well-functioning economy and services," EU competition tsar Teresa Ribera said this month.

EU officials often point to Washington's sanctions against International Criminal Court judges - imposed by Trump in February 2025 - to illustrate the grip of US firms. Judge Nicolas Guillou has described how he lost access to his Visa card since it is an American system.

But US envoy to the EU Andrew Puzder has warned against any protectionist moves, while American companies have urged Europe not to keep them out.

"Europe will not be able to pull itself into the AI economy by bringing other people down," Puzder said last month when asked about the plans.

The package will include:
- the "Cloud and AI Development Act", aimed at speeding up the deployment of data centre infrastructure
- a "Chips Act" proposal to reinforce the security of supply for semi-conductors by reducing dependence on foreign providers
- a push for public authorities to use more open-source software solutions as a way to gain greater control and flexibility and avoid being locked in. The package was "not about opposing our trading partners or closing markets", but said: "Europe must avoid becoming structurally dependent on any single external actor" for AI, cloud and chips. — AFP

Energy crunch fuels carpooling growth

RISING FUEL PRICES triggered by the Middle East war are driving a sharp increase in carpooling, with a ride-sharing platform reporting a surge in new users seeking cheaper ways to travel.

The world's largest carpooling platform BlaBlaCar said soaring energy costs have pushed 600,000 additional drivers onto the app this year — 20 per cent more than initially projected - as commuters look to offset the rising cost of fuel.

In India, its single biggest market with more than 20 million users in 2025, the number of passengers has increased by 40 per cent since the start of the US-Israeli air strikes against Iran on February 28.

Last year, the global carpooling leader posted record-breaking figures in the world's most populous country India — outpacing Brazil with 19 million users and France with seven million, according to Benjamin Retourne, the platform's product director.

This trend has been more pronounced in countries where fuel price increases driven by the war have been sudden and significant, combined with limited government support, such as in France.

The platform works by connecting drivers and passengers willing to travel together between cities to share costs, with the app in most of its 21 operating nations taking a 20-per cent commission.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier in May urged the country's 1.4 billion citizens to save fuel by making greater use of carpooling and public transport.

India imports approximately half of its crude oil via the Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran effectively closed in retaliation to US-Israeli strikes launched in February.

Retourne said a decade ago, when BlaBlaCar first launched in India, even "after two or three years, it just wasn't catching on".

The company, founded in France in 2006, therefore stopped investing



French ride-sharing platform BlaBlaCar mobile application on a smartphone against the backdrop of India Gate in New Delhi. — AFP



JULIE FRAYSSE

The writer is AFP correspondent

The trend has been more pronounced in countries where fuel price increases driven by the war have been sudden and significant

in the world's fastest-growing economy but kept its application running from its Paris headquarters, unlike many large foreign groups that outsourced their services to India.

Growth finally began to pick up after the Covid-19 pandemic, driven by the country's economic and digital acceleration, as well as word of mouth.

Retourne pointed to a growth in private car ownership as well as rapid urbanisation, with 200 million additional city dwellers over the past decade.

"People are very connected," he said, adding that "today, wherever you go, there is 5G".

That proved to be the "recipe for carpooling to take off".

But he was surprised that a driving factor was not the cost - but rather to avoid often crowded buses or trains.

"The number one reason people choose carpooling is not price, but comfort," he said.

The market potential remains

vast, with "a new segment of the population" eager to travel for leisure and visit friends and family.

Assistant bank manager Pratyush Anuraj, 24, from India's financial capital Mumbai, said he used the carpooling platform to travel to his family's home in Pune every weekend - a 150-kilometre journey of around 2.5 hours.

"It's cheaper than the train, the bus, or a private taxi," he said. "It also saves time, as there are few stops and the vehicle doesn't wait beyond the scheduled time."

He does, however, point out some drawbacks: either the trip is often cancelled at the last minute, or the drivers don't answer calls. So far, the French platform has not monetised carpooling in India, where people pay each other directly, often using the popular digital UPI mobile telephones payment systems.

It now wants to evolve its model.

The next objective is to "build a platform that aggregates multiple modes of transport" — connecting cars to buses and trains. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Aisha al Saeedi officiating a match.

Oman umpire named for ITTF World Masters

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

The Sultanate of Oman will be represented by a distinguished group of six international table tennis umpires at the prestigious ITTF World Masters Championship which is scheduled to take place in Gangneung, South Korea, from June 7 to 12. The championship, organised under the umbrella of the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF), is considered as one of the most significant global events for veteran table tennis players, bringing together more than 3,000 of participants from different countries and age categories in a unique festival that celebrates the sport and promotes friendship among athletes.

The Omani officiating delegation featured from two highly respected Blue Badge International Umpires including: Aisha al Saeedi and Ibrahim al Jassasi, in addition to four international umpires including: Al Nasr al Kindi, Thuraya al Wahaibi, Khalid al Alawi and Omar al Jassasi beside other members of the national officiating cadre. This selection reflects the growing reputation of Omani table tennis officials on the international stage and highlights the confidence placed in their capabilities by the global governing body.

Speaking to Oman Observer, Blue Badge International Umpire Aisha al Saeedi expressed her delight at being selected for the championship and highlighted the special nature of the event. “I am very pleased to be part of the officiating team at the World Masters Championship in South Korea. This tournament has a unique atmosphere because it brings together veteran players from all over the world in a friendly and competitive environment,” she said.

Al Saeedi noted that this will be her third consecutive participation in the championship after previously officiating at the event in Oman in 2023 and in Rome, Italy, in 2024. “I always enjoy being part of this championship. Although it is not a traditional elite competition, it remains a major international event that promotes friendship, sportsmanship and the love of table tennis among participants,” she added.

She also revealed that this year’s edition in South Korea will feature several technological enhancements, including the Introduction of tablets for match management and officiating purposes. “The use of tablets in this edition represents a positive step forward. It will help streamline officiating procedures and improve communication and efficiency throughout the tournament,” she ended.

Al Harthy, Williams and Sagrera shine at Monza

AHMAD AL HARTHY DELIGHTED WITH FIRST GTWCE SILVERWARE OF YEAR IN RD2

BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE AND STRATEGY FROM OMAN RACING BY CENTURY SQUAD

P3 IN CLASS LIFTS AL HARTHY, WILLIAMS AND SAGRERA TO FIFTH IN BRONZE STANDINGS

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

MONZA SPECIALIST Ahmad al Harthy celebrated yet another outstanding showing at the legendary Italian track during round two of the GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Endurance Cup on Sunday, 31st May, with Oman Racing by Century Motorsport’s first podium of 2026.

Thanks to an incredible performance from Al Harthy and team-mates Calan Williams and Javier Sagrera, added to excellent strategy from the team, the No.42 BMW M4 GT3 EVO came through a dramatic and crazy race in some style.

Rising from eighth in the Bronze Cup order, 47th overall on the grid, the OQ, Omantel, Oman LNG, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and BMW Oman supported entry avoided a multitude of incidents to rise to third in class and 13th position in the outright order.

Bright skies and very warm weather greeted the competitors for qualifying on Sunday morning and across the three periods Al Harthy, Sagrera and Williams combined to produce an average best lap which placed the No.42 BMW eighth in the Bronze Cup order.

Williams began the three-hour race, which got underway at 16.00 local time, and while air temperature alone was close to 32 degrees, the run into the first chicane from the rolling start was even hotter as chaos ensued – numerous cars at the front caught-up in an almighty collision.

Triggering an immediate Safety Car period, Williams had managed to safely thread his way through to maintain eighth in Bronze but gain 10 full positions overall to move into 37th place. With the cautionary



P3 in class lifts Al Harthy, Williams and Sagrera to fifth in Bronze standings.



period underway, the team took the opportunity to complete a pit-stop and when the race resumed 20 minutes later the Australian was eighth in class, but an elevated 17th overall.

Onto lap seven Williams had climbed to fifth in Bronze and 14th overall and he continued to make progress, taking class fourth and 13th place soon after. Quickly catching the Porsche of Ralf Bohn, Williams passed him into the Bronze top three with just over 30 minutes elapsed – although he was edged back to fourth in class by the similar BMW of James Kellett a couple of laps later.

With 10 minutes to go in hour one a car off at Ascari led to a Full Course Yellow period, Williams then pitted at the hour mark to hand over to Al Harthy. When the action

got back underway with one hour and 50 minutes to go, the Omani held fourth in Bronze and 15th overall.

Another, albeit very brief, FCY came 10 minutes later due to a stranded car and Al Harthy came under attack at the re-start from the No.91 Porsche and so slipped to fifth in Bronze. Moving back into fourth in next to no time, he closed to within half a second of the No.222 Mercedes as both cars zeroed in on the second placed No.991 BMW.

With a great battle developing, the next FCY period came early in the second half of Al Harthy’s stint due to a car in the gravel at the first of the Lesmos. At his first chance the Omani pitted, importantly the squad’s third regulation stop of the race, and he remained in the car.

When racing resumed, with less than 70 minutes to go, Al Harthy was third in Bronze and 11th overall and he swarmed all over the rear of the No.991 BMW before passing for second in class and climbing into the outright top 10. He then gained another overall position to ninth before pitting from third in Bronze with 50 minutes remaining. Sagrera got behind the wheel and with just under half an hour of racing left he had moved back up into the class top five. Dramatically, a stranded car with only 20 minutes left looked set to trigger another FCY and it duly came when, moments later, a Mercedes expired in a huge plume of smoke.

The action resumed with only seven minutes on the clock, Sagrera made his way into fourth in class and the outright top 15, and just three minutes later another collision at the chicane led to more chaos. Sagrera avoided any dramas and moved into third in Bronze before the Safety Car appeared, the race ending under caution with the BMW having gained an incredible 34 positions overall.

“I’m really happy to be back on the podium and it’s so special for it to be at Monza again. It was all down to really, really strong team work. We clearly didn’t have the fastest package but, together with the drivers making no mistakes and the amazing strategy by the team, we managed to put the car in a very strong overall position and be third in Bronze – our first podium of the season.” Al Harthy said.

Next for Al Harthy is the crown jewel event of the GTWCE Endurance Cup season – the Crowdstrike 24 Hours of Spa. Testing and practice will begin the third meeting of the campaign from Tuesday, June 23rd , with the huge 24-hour race itself beginning on Saturday, June 27th.

Omani clubs prepare for upcoming external competitions

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

Omani football will have a strong external presence in the 2026-2027 season, with Seeb Club and Al Nahda Club set to compete in the AFC Champions League Two, while Al Shabab Club will represent the Sultanate of Oman in the Gulf Club Champions League.

The three clubs enter their upcoming campaigns with different levels of experience and ambition. Seeb return to the Asian stage as the most successful Omani club in continental competitions, Al Nahda carry strong memories from previous AFC Cup campaigns, while Al Shabab approach their Gulf challenge after a notable run in the AFC Challenge League.

Seeb will once again be under the spotlight in the AFC Champions League Two. The club remain the only Omani side to have won a major Asian club title, after lifting the AFC Cup in 2022 with a historic 3-0 victory over Kuala Lumpur City of Malaysia in the final. That achievement remains one of the biggest milestones in Omani club football.

Their latest external participation came in the AFC Challenge League 2025-2026. Seeb opened their group campaign with a 3-2 win over Bashundhara Kings of Bangladesh, then drew 1-1 with Kuwait SC before losing 2-1 to Lebanon’s Al Ansar in their final group match, a result that ended their hopes of reaching the knockout stage. Despite the early exit, their previous



Seeb Club will return to the Asian stage in the AFC Champions League Two.

continental success gives them strong motivation to make a deeper run next season. Al Nahda will also return to Asia through the AFC Champions League Two, bringing with them valuable experience

in regional and continental competitions. The Buraimi-based side previously reached the AFC Cup semifinals in 2008 and later advanced to the West Zone final in the 2023-2024 edition, before bowing out against Lebanon’s Al Ahed.

Their return comes after winning His Majesty’s Cup in the 2025-2026 season, following a 2-0 victory over Oman Club in the final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. That triumph adds further confidence to a side looking to translate domestic success into a strong Asian campaign.

Meanwhile, Al Shabab will compete in the Gulf Club Champions League after gaining important experience in the AFC Challenge League 2025-2026. The club delivered one of

the most encouraging Omani performances in the competition, reaching the quarterfinals after topping their group. Al Shabab began their campaign with a 2-1 win over FC Abdysh-Ata of Kyrgyz Republic before defeating Turkmenistan’s Altyn Asyr 3-1 to secure qualification to the knockout stage. Their journey ended in the quarterfinals with a 5-3 defeat against Kuwait SC in Bishkek, but the campaign gave the club valuable continental exposure ahead of their Gulf assignment.

For Omani football, these three participations represent a valuable opportunity to strengthen the country’s presence in regional and continental competitions and reflect the growing competitiveness of local clubs.



AL SABII MAKES STRONG START IN MONGOLIA

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

OMANI COACH Mazin bin Saif al Sabii has described his new professional experience with Mongolian Premier League side Khovd Broncos FC as a major challenge and an important step in his coaching career, stressing that the opportunity is a responsibility to showcase the capabilities of Omani coaches abroad.

Al Sabii began his official journey with the Mongolian club in impressive fashion, guiding Khovd Broncos FC to a 3-2 victory in his first match in charge. The result gave the team an important early boost and offered the Omani coach a positive start in a new football environment.

“It is a special experience full of challenges. Working in a new football environment has given me the opportunity to gain different experiences and learn about a new football culture. I feel proud to represent the Omani coach in this experience,” Al Sabii said.

The Omani coach joined Khovd Broncos FC ahead of the current season after previous coaching experiences in Oman and the UAE, including a spell with FAJR FC. Those experiences, he said, helped shape his approach to player development, team management and building a professional working environment.

Al Sabii said his decision to accept the offer from Mongolia came from his belief that coaches must continue to challenge themselves beyond familiar surroundings.

“I believe that a coach should step out of the comfort zone and look for new challenges. The opportunity to work in the Mongolian league was suitable for developing myself, gaining international experience and proving the ability of the Omani coach to succeed outside the country,” he said.

The move to Khovd Broncos FC followed professional discussions with the club, including meetings on the team’s vision and objectives. Al Sabii said he found an ambitious club with a management keen to develop, while the Mongolian Premier League itself is showing signs of progress at both technical and organisational levels. His first victory carried added significance as it came in his official debut and strengthened confidence between the coaching staff, players and management.

“The first win is always important because it gives the team confidence and confirms that the work we have done during the past period is moving in the right direction,” he said.

Despite the positive start, Al Sabii acknowledged that working in Mongolia has presented several challenges, particularly in adapting to a new environment, language and culture. He said communication inside the dressing room has gradually improved through daily work, visual analysis and the support of a translator.

“Adapting to the new environment and the language difference were among the main challenges, but with time communication became easier thanks to cooperation within the club. I try to deliver technical messages in a simple way, using visual analysis and a translator, while respecting the players’ culture and habits,” he said.

On the differences between football in Oman and Mongolia, Al Sabii said each environment has its own football culture, style of competition and playing approach, but both share passion for the game and a desire to improve.

Explaining his coaching philosophy, Al Sabii said he aims to build a team with a clear identity, combining organisation with an attacking mindset.

“I believe in organised football and attacking football at the same time. I want to build a team capable of positive possession, pressing after losing the ball, quick transitions between defence and attack and maintaining tactical discipline,” he said.

Looking ahead, Al Sabii said the main objective with Khovd Broncos FC this season is to build a competitive team, achieve positive results and help the club move forward in the league standings while maintaining technical stability.

“The ambitions are always there, but we deal with every match separately. We focus on continuous development and avoid rushing into promises,” he said.

Al Sabii believes Omani coaches have the qualities required to succeed abroad if they are given the right opportunities and trust. He said greater international exposure, continuous technical and language development, and stronger professional networks are key factors that can help Omani coaches earn more chances in foreign leagues.

He added that overseas experiences can benefit Omani football by bringing back new ideas, methods and perspectives to the local game.

Al Sabii holds the AFC A Coaching Licence, in addition to a football diploma from UCFB in London and several specialised courses in technical analysis and player development. He continues to develop himself by following international football, attending courses and seminars, and studying modern coaching and analysis methods.

“The most important lesson I have learned so far from the Mongolia experience is that success requires the ability to adapt to different conditions and cultures. Football is a universal language that brings everyone together,” he said.

Al Sabii concluded by urging young Omani coaches to keep learning, believe in their abilities and not fear new experiences.

“Hard work, patience and continuous effort are the path to reaching your goals,” he said.

SPORTS

VINGEGAARD WINS GIRO ITALIA TO CAPTURE 4TH GRAND TOUR TITLE

VINGEGAARD WINS GIRO D'ITALIA, HIS FOURTH GRAND TOUR TITLE

DANE BECOMES THE EIGHTH MAN TO WIN ALL THREE GRAND TOURS

ITALIAN MILAN SPRINTS TO VICTORY IN FINAL GIRO STAGE

FRENCHMAN MAGNIER WON POINTS CLASSIFICATION

DENMARK'S JONAS VINGEGAARD won the 2026 Giro d'Italia on Sunday to clinch his fourth Grand Tour title, having also won the Tour de France twice before his triumph at the Vuelta a Espana last year. The Visma-Lease a Bike rider, competing at the Giro for the first time, effectively secured the pink jersey on Saturday when he launched a decisive attack during the climb to Piancavallo on stage 20, extending his overall lead to more than five minutes ahead of second-placed Felix Gall.

Frenchman Paul Magnier (Soudal Quick-step), who won three stages, prevailed in the points classification.

The final stage in Rome concluded with a sprint as Italian Jonathan Milan (Lidl-Trek) thrilled his home crowd with a spectacular attack to win the stage. Vingegaard, 29, finished the race soon after, surrounded by his teammates, as he became the eighth man to win all three Grand Tours, and the first from Denmark.

"It's amazing. It's something I dreamed of my whole life," an emotional Vingegaard said.

"It's a special day for me... I am lost for words."

The race, a 3,459-km journey that



started in Nessebar, Bulgaria, on May 8, ended with a 131-km final stage in Rome, including eight laps of a 9.5-km circuit.

Vingegaard and his teammates celebrated as they began the final stage in Rome, posing for pictures, distributing sweets among race staff and ceremonially riding in the front along with local favourite Giulio Ciccone of Lidl-Trek, who won the mountains classification.

Afonso Eulalio, in the white jersey for the best young rider of the race, also celebrated with his Bahrain Victorious teammates, as the Portuguese 24-year-old finished sixth after holding the overall lead

for nine stages until Vingegaard overtook him in the 14th stage.

MILAN WINS IN ROME

As the peloton entered the circuit, early attacks from Nico Denz, Remy Rochas and Tobias Bayer proved to be ineffective as the peloton remained just over 10 seconds behind them.

Going into the final lap, it was two Italians, Filippo Ganna and Matteo Sobrero, charging down the front with Belgian Jasper Stuyven close behind, with a 19-second lead over the peloton. But with three kilometres left, Lukas Kubis led the way as the peloton caught up with the breakaway group. Then, in the final kilometre, Milan scampered to the front to clinch his only stage win of the race. Vingegaard, who had to celebrate his Vuelta a Espana win in a car park after the final stage was cut short by anti-Israel protests, was met by his family at the finish.

"It gives me tears in my eyes. They are always there for me," Vingegaard said, as his voice broke.

Vingegaard, who has earned five straight top-two finishes in the Tour de France, will challenge for his third title in the race when it begins on July 4. — Reuters

Ministry of Information

May 31 إلى June 07

الدختر طومس

Don't miss the chance to watch the film in cinemas

Grand Mall – Muscat , 04:00 PM | Oman Mall – Muscat , 04:00 PM
Salalah Oasis Mall 06:30 PM | Grand Mall – Nizwa ,04:00 PM | City Centre Sohar ,04:00 PM

Free Tickets

Oman triumph over Singapore in Asian Games Qualifiers

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

Oman's youthful homegrown squad, featuring 10 international debutants, launched their Men's T20I Asian Games Qualifier campaign with a thrilling seven run victory over hosts Singapore on Monday.

Led by experienced all-rounder Sufyan Mehmood, the all-Omani side displayed composure beyond their experience to secure a morale-boosting win via the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method in a rain-affected Group B clash at the Singapore National Cricket Ground.

After weather interruptions reduced the contest to 15 overs per side, Oman posted a competitive 149 for 7 before restricting Singapore to 143 for 6 while defending a revised DLS target of 151.

The foundation for Oman's victory was laid by openers Mohammad al Balushi and Shuaib al Balushi, who put on a blistering 78-run stand in just seven overs.

Mohammad set the tone with a sparkling 44 off 26 balls, striking five fours and three sixes, while Shuaib played the anchor role with a composed 40 from 35 deliveries, including four boundaries and a six.

The strong start put Oman firmly in command before Singapore fought back through the middle overs. The Oman innings lost momentum after slipping to 115 for 4 in the 12th over, with Zubair al Balushi's quickfire 19 off 10 balls — featuring two sixes and a four — the only notable contribution thereafter.

Late boundaries from



Nawed al Balushi, Man of the Match.



Wasim al Balushi helped Oman push their total to 149 for 7, a score that ultimately proved enough.

Singapore responded aggressively, led by skipper Rezza Gaznavi's 49 off 33 balls and Aslan Jafri's enterprising 27 from just 17 deliveries. The hosts remained in the hunt despite losing wickets at regular intervals.

The turning point came through debutant pacer Nawed al Balushi, who produced a match-winning spell of 4 for 22 from his three overs. His incisive bowling ripped through Singapore's middle order and halted their momentum at crucial

stages of the chase. Nawed was later adjudged the player of the match. The win gives Oman an early advantage in Group B of the seven-team qualifying tournament, where the top two sides from each group will progress to the semi-finals and secure qualification for the Asian Games in Japan later this year.

Group A comprises Nepal, China, and Malaysia, while Group B features Oman, Singapore, Bahrain and Hong Kong. Oman will next face Bahrain on June 3 before concluding their group-stage campaign against Hong Kong on June 5.

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
7,795.374

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$91.41
BRENT \$93.76
LIGHT \$90.42



BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



The visits form part of wider efforts to deepen cooperation between Oman and Belarus.

Oman explores Belarus expertise in technology and food security

MINSK: An Omani delegation visiting Belarus ahead of the opening of the Belagro 2026 exhibition has explored the country's experience in food security, industrial development and technological innovation, as part of efforts to strengthen bilateral cooperation and identify new investment opportunities.

Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, accompanied by Ambassador Hamoud bin Salim al Towaiya, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation and non-resident to the Republic of Belarus, visited the Slutsk Cheese Factory in Minsk.

During the visit, the delegation was briefed on advanced dairy production technologies, manufacturing processes and the factory's role in supporting Belarus's food industry. Officials also received an overview of the facility's production capabilities and expertise in the dairy sector.

A delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, together with representatives of Oman Food Investment Holding Company and Oman European Food Industries Company, visited Belakt in the Volkovysk district of the Grodno region.

The delegation toured production lines for infant nutrition and dairy products; and reviewed the latest manufacturing technologies, quality assurance systems and food safety standards employed by the company.

Discussions focused on opportunities for cooperation, knowledge exchange and potential partnerships in the food and dairy industries. Both sides also explored avenues for expanding trade and investment links to support food security and strengthen economic ties between Oman and Belarus.

Meanwhile, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), led a trade delegation to the Belarus-China Industrial Park, a major industrial zone that offers access to the Eurasian market and provides ready-built industrial facilities for investors.

The delegation reviewed Belarus's industrial capabilities, manufacturing technologies and key economic sectors, while also learning about the incentives and services available to companies seeking to establish operations within the park.

MSX moves closer to emerging market status

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

REFORMS

at the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), combined with Oman Investment Authority's (OIA) divestment programme and a series of high-profile initial public offerings (IPOs), have significantly boosted market liquidity and strengthened Oman's bid to secure emerging market status, senior officials said during the Muscat Leadership Dialogue at the 2nd Oman Capital Market Conference, held under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Speaking during the ministerial-level panel discussion, Haitham bin Salim al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange, said improving liquidity has been the central objective of the exchange's transformation strategy.

According to Al Salmi, Oman has long been recognised as a dividend-yield market, with many listed companies demonstrating strong financial performance and attractive shareholder returns. However, limited liquidity had historically prevented stock prices from fully reflecting the underlying value of companies.

"The main obstacle towards recognising the value of stocks and companies has been liquidity", he said. "A lack of liquidity keeps prices at lower levels and prevents markets from adequately responding to positive corporate performance and developments".

To address this challenge, MSX placed the goal of achieving emerging market classification at the heart of its strategy, viewing it as a pathway to higher trading volumes, greater market capitalisation and stronger international investor participation.

Among the key reforms introduced was the removal of foreign ownership limits, a move Al Salmi said significantly reduced barriers to entry for international



Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, MSX officials and guests during the conference.



MSX placed the goal of achieving emerging market classification at the heart of its strategy, viewing it as a pathway to higher trading volumes, greater market capitalisation and stronger international investor participation

HAITHAM BIN SALIM AL SALMI
CEO, Muscat Stock Exchange

investors.

The exchange also introduced liquidity providers to support trading activity and improve price discovery, while working closely with major institutional investors, including OIA and pension funds, to increase free-float levels in listed companies.

These measures were complemented by a series of government-backed IPOs, which helped attract new investors and raise the profile of Oman within international investment circles.

Al Salmi noted that extensive investor outreach efforts were undertaken alongside the reforms.

These included meetings with global investors, brokers and financial institutions aimed at increasing awareness of investment opportunities in Oman.

The initiatives have delivered tangible results, he said, pointing to increased trading volumes and a recovery in stock valuations. He also highlighted the exchange's strong dividend yields, which continue to compare favourably with other Gulf markets.

During the discussion, Muneer al Muneeri, Deputy President for Operations at Oman Investment Authority, outlined the sovereign wealth fund's role in transforming the exchange and supporting its long-term development.

He explained that following the establishment of OIA in 2020, the authority developed

a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the capital market ecosystem, enhance governance standards and position MSX as an attractive destination for both local and international investors.

The strategy included restructuring the exchange's operating model, strengthening human capital and improving governance frameworks to create a more competitive and investor-friendly marketplace.

A major pillar of the strategy has been OIA's divestment programme. Since 2020, the authority has worked to monetise parts of its portfolio of more than 150 domestic companies, using public listings as a tool to deepen the capital market.

Al Muneeri said OIA has divested around 24 companies since the programme began, including six through IPOs.

These listings have also helped diversify the composition of the stock market. Several companies from the oil and gas sector have joined the exchange, including firms operating in exploration, production and energy infrastructure activities.

Historically, despite the importance of hydrocarbons to the national economy, the sector had limited representation on the stock exchange. The addition of energy-related listings has broadened investment opportunities and enhanced the market's sectoral balance.

Oman shifts to demand-led investment with guaranteed-offtake projects

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

Oman is seeking to redefine how industrial projects are developed and financed by introducing investment opportunities backed by guaranteed offtake agreements, a move aimed at reducing market uncertainty and attracting investors seeking greater commercial visibility.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), represented by Invest Oman, has launched a package of manufacturing projects under which designated entities commit to purchasing part or all of a project's future output through pre-arranged contractual agreements.

The initiative marks a shift from the traditional approach of promoting investment opportunities based primarily on land, infrastructure and incentives towards a model built around identified market demand.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Khalid bin Hamad al Kharusi, Director General of



KHALID BIN HAMAD AL KHARUSI
Director General of Investment Promotion

Investment Promotion at MoCIIP, said the programme was designed to address one of the most fundamental concerns facing investors.

"One of the first questions any investor asks is: who will buy my product? Traditionally, investors had to answer that question after establishing a factory

and entering the market.

Through these opportunities, we are aiming to address this question much earlier by linking investment projects to clear market demand and potential buyers", Al Kharusi said.

"What makes this model different is that it starts with demand. We are not simply offering investment opportunities and expecting the market to follow. We are identifying real market needs, engaging

potential buyers and structuring projects around commercially visible demand".

The guaranteed-offtake mechanism provides investors with greater visibility over future revenues, improving project bankability and strengthening prospects for securing financing and strategic partnerships.

Industry analysts view guaranteed-purchase arrangements as one of the most effective tools for reducing commercial risk, particularly in manufacturing sectors where demand visibility often determines the viability of new investments.

For Oman, the approach also supports broader efforts to strengthen domestic supply chains, expand local manufacturing capabilities and increase the contribution of non-oil sectors to economic growth.

"Our objective is not merely to increase the number of investment opportunities on paper, but to increase the number of projects that move into implementation, secure financing, create jobs, strengthen local supply chains and generate long-term economic value for Oman", Al Kharusi said.

The newly announced package includes a range of industrial projects targeting both domestic and export markets. These include refrigerator manufacturing, textiles and fabrics, computer and accessories production, stationery and office supplies, tyre manufacturing, military uniform accessories and energy-efficient air-conditioning systems.

Individual project values range from RO 2.5 million to more than RO 6.5 million, with most developments planned on sites of around 10,000 square metres. The projects have been structured following technical and economic studies assessing local demand, supply-chain requirements and export potential, according to Invest Oman.

"This initiative reflects a broader evolution in Oman's investment promotion approach under Oman Vision 2040. We want to move beyond promoting opportunities towards developing investment-ready projects that are commercially viable, scalable and aligned with the needs of both investors and the national economy", he said.

BUSINESS FEATURE



THE WORLD CAPITAL OF FRENCH FRIES HAS A PROBLEM

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JENNY GROSS
WALHAIN, BELGIUM

A THOUSAND tonnes of potatoes were stacked 15 feet high in a warehouse on Kris D’haeyere’s farm for months. Even though he offered to sell them for just a couple of euros per tonne, no one wanted to buy them.

So D’haeyere did the unthinkable: This month, he dumped the crop back into his fields in eastern Belgium, the cheapest way to dispose of enough potatoes to make 200 million French fries.

Other farmers are doing the same, as Europe faces a surplus of 5 million metric tonnes of the type of potato used for fries.

For months, the price of a metric tonne of potatoes on the spot market in Belgium, the world’s biggest exporter of frozen fries, has languished at precisely zero. It was nearly 600 euros (\$690) three years ago.

The great potato glut of 2026 is the result of several factors, some meteorological and others geopolitical.

Good weather produced the biggest European potato harvest in eight years, just as farmers were struggling to sell their crops because the Trump administration’s tariffs hit their exports and new competitors from Asia took market share. More recently, the war in Iran has pushed up prices for energy and fertiliser and made consumers cut back, shrinking profit margins that were already as thin as a shoestring fry.

“Of course it’s bad”, D’haeyere, 58, said, “but that’s life”. His unsold potatoes had started to sprout, making them impossible to offload. It hit him with a loss of 160,000 euros on soil, seedlings, fertiliser, labour and other costs and forced him to dip into his savings, he said.

D’haeyere planted 17 acres of potatoes for next season, a fraction of the 170 acres he usually plants on his 370-acre farm in Hermalle-sous-Huy, Belgium.

In Germany, another major potato producer, a farmer with 4,000 tonnes of unwanted potatoes arranged a series of giveaways in Berlin, which locals refer to as the “Kartoffel-Flut”, or potato flood.

But nowhere has a mismatch in potato supply and demand been more acutely felt than in Belgium, the world’s biggest exporter of frozen fries.

Frites are a national symbol and friteries — what French-speaking Belgians call the stands that sell cardboard cones stuffed with fries — are ubiquitous in public squares across the country. Belgians smother their frites in a variety of elaborate sauces, including andalouse, a mayonnaise blend with tomato paste and bell peppers; and dallas, which has fried onion, tomato and herbs.

Belgium exported \$3.3 billion of cooked, frozen potatoes in 2025, nearly triple the amount a decade earlier, according to the European Union’s statistics agency. Maintaining that pace of growth will be difficult.

The war in Iran is the latest source of strain on the supply chain for frozen fries, said Christophe Vermeulen, the CEO of Belgapom, Belgium’s potato processing association.

Higher energy costs make refrigeration and transport more expensive. Skyrocketing fertiliser costs also make farming more expensive, with ships carrying fertiliser ingredients unable to exit the Persian Gulf because of a blockade on the Strait of Hormuz.

The blockade has also made it harder to export fries to countries including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, all major French fry consumers. Persian Gulf

countries are likely to need fewer fries anyway, with fewer tourists staying at resorts and eating at restaurants, Vermeulen said.

Closer to home, rising inflation has forced many Europeans to think twice about going out to restaurants, where most fries are consumed, said Niels van der Boom, an analyst at DCA Market Intelligence, which specialises in commodity markets.

These challenges come as US tariffs on imports have made European fries more expensive in the United States, their second-largest market after Britain. Exports of frozen fries from the European Union to the United States were down 8% over the 12 months ending Feb. 28, according to World Potato Markets, a magazine.

Sales to Saudi Arabia, the third-largest market for European fries, were down 11% in that same period and they have probably fallen further since the start of the Iran war.

Imports of European fries in the Middle East as a whole have been tracking towards a double-digit percentage drop since the war began, estimated Cedric Porter, the editor of World Potato Markets.

“It hurts us”, Vermeulen said, “especially in a sector that has small margins”.

Margins are modest in part because farmers in Europe, compared with producers in other regions, adhere to much stricter regulations, said Jean-Pierre Van Puymbrouck, a farmer in Walhain, Belgium. Agricultural chemicals long banned in Europe for more than a decade are still authorised in some other countries, he said.

“That clearly complicates fair competition”, said Van Puymbrouck, 52, who is also a vice president of Belpotato, a trade group. “When exporting to another country that doesn’t have the same constraints as us, we’re not on the same level”.

While he said he was insulated from the recent fall in potato prices because he locked in prices on multiyear contracts in advance, the glut may ultimately mean lower prices in the future for him, too.

The potato industry is also grappling with what could be a longer-term issue: Consumers are choosing healthier snacks over fries.

In the United States, 1 in 8 adults said they were taking GLP-1 weight-loss medications like Ozempic and Wegovy. These medicines often lead people to significantly cut back not just their caloric intake but also their desire for processed and fried foods, like potato chips and fries.

Global demand for frozen fries is still growing, but at a recent rate of 2.5% a year, compared with 5% growth five years ago, Porter said.

European potato producers are also facing competition from China, India and Egypt, which have recently begun selling frozen fries at much cheaper prices.

The volume of frozen French fries exported from China and India is less than 10% of what Europe exports, but it doubled last year from the previous year.

But can potatoes from these upstart exporters compete on taste? Porter sampled fries from Europe, China and India last year and said there was not a clear winner. “If you’ve got a restaurant where your margins are tight and you want fries”, he said, “you’ll be looking for the best-value ones”.

Van Puymbrouck took over his farm from his parents and one day plans to pass it on to his 20-year-old daughter. “She is the one continuing”, he said, “so it has to be good”. D’haeyere, however, did not share his optimism. “I think the good years are over”, he said.

— The New York Times



KRIS D’HAEYERE
Farmer



SHORTTAKES



The treasury bills have a maturity period of 91 days.

TREASURY BILL
ISSUANCE REACHES
RO61 MILLION

MUSCAT: The total value of government treasury bills allocated this week reached RO 61.4 million, according to the Central Bank of Oman (CBO). In a statement issued on Monday, the CBO said the treasury bills have a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price stood at RO 99.047 per RO 100, while the lowest accepted price was RO 99.040 per RO 100. The average discount rate was 3.8235 per cent and the average yield reached 3.8603 per cent. The CBO noted that the interest rate on repurchase agreements (repos) linked to these treasury bills is 4.25 per cent, while the discount rate on treasury bill facilities stands at 4.75 per cent. Treasury bills are short-term government-backed financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, with the Central Bank of Oman acting as the issuing agent. They are designed primarily to provide investment opportunities for licensed commercial banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman. The instruments offer a high degree of liquidity, as they can be discounted with the Central Bank or used in repurchase agreements. Commercial banks may also use treasury bills in interbank repo transactions, helping to support liquidity management within the banking sector. In addition to providing secure short-term investment options, treasury bills play an important role in establishing benchmark short-term interest rates in the domestic financial market. — ONA

Omani, Thai oil firms to
explore upstream pact

PTT Exploration and Production Public Company Limited (PTTEP), Thailand's national oil and gas exploration and production company, has announced a new partnership with OQ Exploration & Production (OQEP), the upstream arm of Oman's integrated energy group OQ, aimed at exploring cooperation opportunities in the upstream energy sector both in their respective countries and internationally. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect was signed recently in Muscat by Montri Rawanchaikul, Chief Executive Officer of PTTEP and Mahmoud al Hashmi, Chief Executive Officer of OQ Exploration and Production New Ventures LLC (OQEP). "The MoU covers the exchange of technical expertise, experience and best practices, together with initiatives in human capital development, integrated digital solutions and continuous improvement for upstream operations", PTTEP said in a statement. "This collaboration reflects the shared commitment between PTTEP and OQEP to strengthening strategic



The CEOs of PTTEP and OQEP at the MoU signing in Muscat.

partnerships and enhancing organisational capabilities for long-term growth in the energy sector", the Thai company added. The agreement reflects a broader strategy by the two national energy companies to deepen partnerships with international energy firms and expand their upstream footprint. OQEP already works alongside PTTEP in Oman through existing joint ventures, including the giant Block 61 gas concession, where OQEP holds a 30 per cent stake and PTTEP a 20 per cent stake, alongside BP and PETRONAS. PTTEP also owns a 2 per cent

participating interest in Block 6 — Oman's largest producing onshore oil asset — operated by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). Elsewhere in southern Oman, PTTEP Group holds a 1 per cent participating interest in Block 53, home to the heavy oil-bearing Mukhaizna field, which is operated by Occidental Petroleum. On the midstream front, PTTEP holds a 2 per cent interest in Oman LNG and an indirect 0.7 per cent interest in Qalhat LNG, which together have a combined production capacity of 11.4 million tonnes per annum.

The latest MoU with PTTEP is also part of a wider international partnership drive pursued by OQEP in recent years. Last October, OQEP, through OQ Exploration and Production New Ventures LLC, signed an MoU with Petronas subsidiary Petronas Carigali International Ventures (PCIV) to jointly pursue upstream oil and gas opportunities in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. This was followed by the signing of a Joint Operating Agreement and concession agreement for offshore Block 18 in northeast Oman, in which Petronas holds a 70 per cent operating stake and OQEP retains the remaining 30 per cent. Earlier in July, OQEP entered into a tripartite exclusivity agreement with Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) to assess selected oil and gas blocks in Oman. Additionally, OQEP signed an Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) with UK-based Genel Energy and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals for the development of Concession Area 54 (Karawan Concession) in Al Wusta Governorate. Under the agreement, OQEP holds a 60 per cent operating interest, while Genel Energy retains the remaining 40 per cent.

Oman positioned to benefit from shifting capital flows

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 1

The Sultanate of Oman is emerging as one of the Gulf region's most strategically positioned destinations for investment as businesses and investors reassess supply chains, trade routes and capital allocation in response to recent geopolitical tensions, speakers at the Muscat Leadership Dialogue said. During a panel discussion at the 2nd Oman Capital Market Conference, regional business leaders, investors and financial executives highlighted how recent instability in the region is reshaping investment priorities, creating opportunities in infrastructure, logistics, defence, private credit and capital markets. Panellists noted that investors are increasingly focusing on resilience and preparedness, with capital expected to flow into sectors that strengthen supply chains, transportation networks and critical infrastructure. One senior investment executive said clients are already repositioning portfolios in anticipation of major investment opportunities emerging from these trends.



Panellists noted that investors are increasingly focusing on resilience and preparedness.

"We are seeing capital reshoring from abroad back into the region", he said, noting that investors are preparing for increased spending on infrastructure, defence and alternative trade routes. According to the discussion, recent disruptions have reinforced the need to reduce dependence on single transport corridors. Panellists pointed out that countries heavily reliant on the Strait of Hormuz experienced significant risks to energy exports and the movement

of essential goods during periods of heightened tension. As a result, governments and investors are increasingly exploring alternative logistics corridors through the Arabian Sea and Red Sea, opening new opportunities for ports, transportation infrastructure and related industries. Participants also highlighted growing demand for private credit as companies seek financing outside traditional banking channels. The rapid pace of investment across

the Gulf has created increased demand for flexible and customised funding solutions, leading borrowers to explore alternative sources of capital. "Availability of credit, speed of credit and customised structures are becoming increasingly important", one panellist said, adding that private credit has evolved from a relatively dormant asset class into one attracting substantial interest from both borrowers and investors. The discussion also touched on the evolving relationship between geopolitical developments and investment flows. Representatives from global financial institutions argued that periods of uncertainty often create opportunities for capital market development, particularly when governments respond with increased investment in infrastructure, resilience and economic diversification. Mark Elliott, Division President for East Arabia at Mastercard, said public-private partnerships are becoming increasingly important as countries seek to strengthen domestic economic capabilities while remaining connected to global trade and financial networks.

He noted that the Europe, Middle East and Africa region is becoming an increasingly important connector of international trade flows and investment activity. Much of the discussion centred on Oman's role within the changing regional landscape. Panellists argued that Oman possesses a unique competitive advantage due to its direct access to the Arabian Sea, allowing trade to bypass potential bottlenecks in the Strait of Hormuz. Combined with ongoing economic reforms, fiscal discipline and the expansion of capital markets, this geographical advantage could position Oman as a gateway for trade and investment flows into the wider Gulf region. One speaker described Oman's location as a "unique value proposition" capable of attracting both commercial and financial activity. The discussion also examined the performance of Gulf equity markets over recent years. Participants noted that GCC equities have demonstrated resilience and, in some cases, outperformed other major asset classes despite global economic challenges.

TRADE PERFORMANCE

Chip boom lifts South Korea's exports



South Korea's exports surged 53.2 per cent year-on-year to a record \$87.8 billion in May, marking the third month above the \$80 billion mark. The increase was driven by a semiconductor supercycle, with chip exports soaring 169.4 per cent to a record \$37.2 billion. Imports rose 20.8 per cent, resulting in a trade surplus of \$26.95 billion, while exports to the US and ASEAN posted strong gains. — ONA

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Türkiye growth slows further



Türkiye's economy expanded 2.5 per cent year-on-year in the first quarter, marking a third consecutive quarter of slower growth. The information and technology sector led growth with a 9.5 per cent increase, while industrial output contracted 0.8 per cent. Economists continue to monitor inflation and the central bank's policy response as price pressures remain elevated. — ONA

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold eases on oil gains



Gold prices edged lower as rising oil prices weighed on sentiment and investors awaited a decision by US President Donald Trump on a proposed extension of the Iran ceasefire. Spot gold slipped 0.2 per cent to \$4,527.36 per ounce, while US futures lost 0.8 per cent. Demand in India remained subdued due to high prices and import duties, while other precious metals recorded gains. — ONA

‘Let me ask ChatGPT’: That’s what really worries me!



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker

DURING the Eid gathering, I overheard a conversation between two university students in Muscat. One was busy working on an assignment, while the other was planning a family holiday.

The student working on his assignment was using ChatGPT to summarise a chapter from an e-book, generate ideas for a university presentation and draft an email to his professor regarding the assignment. Meanwhile, the other student was asking ChatGPT to create a holiday plan, compare hotels and recommend places for his family to visit.

This was just one conversation I happened to overhear during Eid. Yet, it perfectly reflects the reality we live in today. Almost everyone seems to be asking ChatGPT for answers. It is no longer limited to students. Professionals use it at work, parents use it for daily decisions and even some grandparents have begun turning to AI for assistance.

Many people view this as a sign of technological progress and societal advancement. While there is certainly value in the convenience AI provides, I cannot help but see a potential danger emerging.

The more we rely on artificial intelligence to think, write, plan, research and decide for us, the greater the risk that we gradually stop exercising those skills ourselves.

Today, millions of people rely on AI

assistants for tasks that once required searching websites, reading books, asking friends, consulting experts, or simply thinking things through. Do you need a food recipe? Ask ChatGPT. Do you need a business idea? Also, ask ChatGPT. Do you need help writing a speech, solve a problem, or understand a concept? Just ask ChatGPT again!

There is no doubt that AI has become one of the most useful tools ever created. It saves time, improves productivity and makes knowledge more accessible than ever before. However, life was different before ChatGPT.

When we wanted answers, we visited libraries, browsed search engines, read articles, compared sources and event spent hours researching.

When we faced challenges, we relied heavily on our own reasoning and experience. Yes, the process may have been slower, yet it forced us to think, analyse and learn. The real concern is not that ChatGPT exists, but what happens when we stop thinking because of ChatGPT.

Consider what happened with GPS navigation. Many today no longer remember routes that they once knew by heart. They follow the google maps (or the like digital map) without questioning it.

Studies and everyday experience suggest that heavy reliance on navigation systems can reduce our engagement with spatial awareness and route planning. The

convenience is undeniable, but some skills weaken when they are no longer used. The same risk exists with over reliance on AI too.

If people depend on ChatGPT for every answer, they may gradually lose important skills such as critical thinking, creativity, research, analysis and independent judgement. The danger is not that AI becomes smarter than human; the danger is that humans become less willing to use their own intelligence.

AI can sometimes be wrong, outdated, incomplete, or unaware of important context. People who blindly accept every answer may make poor decisions without realising it.

Just as a driver should not follow a GPS into a closed road, a user should not follow AI advice without applying common sense. The solution is simple: use ChatGPT as a tool, not as a replacement for thinking.

Ask questions, but challenge the answers. Use AI to learn, not to just simply copy. Let it accelerate your work, but do not allow it to do all your thinking. Continue reading books, seeking human perspectives, conducting research and exercising your own judgement.

To conclude my article this week, let me emphasise that technology is at its best when it enhances human capability, not when it replaces it. The future does not belong to people who know how to use AI, nor to people who avoid it. It belongs to those who can combine the power of AI with the power of their own minds.

There is no doubt that AI has become one of the most useful tools ever created. It saves time, improves productivity, and makes knowledge more accessible than ever before. However, life was different before ChatGPT

JAPAN’S TAKAICHI IS HER OWN WORST ENERGY ENEMY

HUDSON LOCKETT

For a head of state who recently bagged a generational win for her party at the polls, Sanae Takaichi is setting her sights awfully low. In response to Middle East turmoil spiking crude and natural gas prices, Japan’s prime minister is doubling down on expensive subsidies to cap energy costs to consumers.

It’s a myopic approach that fails to leverage the crisis as fuel for a systemic overhaul of the country’s lopsided energy mix.

Takaichi’s tactics are motivated by a campaign pledge to provide households with relief from inflation in a country that gets about 80% of its energy supply from fossil fuel imports. Yet the largest-ever release from Japan’s oil reserves in recent weeks has failed to mitigate rising gasoline prices, pushing Tokyo to burn around 300 billion yen a month to cap petrol at 170 yen per litre.

That has forced Takaichi to call for a new surplus budget of 3 trillion yen to cover growing fuel costs and account for summer energy subsidies, reviving fears of fiscal profligacy and heaping downwards pressure on the yen, which risks stoking inflation.

This approach ensures undiminished end-user demand for oil and gas even as shortages make both more costly to procure, rather than allowing higher prices to change consumers’ behaviour.

Nor has it seen off the threat of rising costs, as Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda warned on Wednesday that even short-term energy price shocks can lead to persistent inflation.

So it’s all the more puzzling that Takaichi, a known advocate for atomic power, is passing up the chance to prove to her country’s nuclear-wary populace that its addiction to foreign hydrocarbons is a threat to both household budgets and economic security.

Japan shut down its 54 nuclear reactors in 2011, before deciding to slowly restart them four years later. At present, though, only around half of the 33 that are still operable are back up and running, due partly to lingering safety concerns. That has left the country especially vulnerable to fossil fuel supply disruptions.

Allowing petrol prices more bite would also bolster the case for Japanese automakers to make a proper start on electric vehicles after years of intransigence have left them badly lagging Chinese competitors.

Recharging the country’s cars on atomic power, instead of gasoline or electricity generated with natural gas, would substantially lessen Japan’s exposure to volatile global energy markets.

Oman is not just a market for India; it is a launchpad

ON June 1, 2026, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and Oman enters into force.

Signed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s December visit to Muscat and since ratified by Royal Decree, it makes Oman India’s second CEPA partner in the Gulf after the United Arab Emirates.

The mechanics are striking from day one: 98.08% of Oman’s tariff lines covering 99.38% of India’s export value fall to zero duty. Indian exports worth roughly \$3.6 billion that until now paid duties of up to 5% become instantly cheaper at the Omani border. Bilateral trade, already near \$11 billion and rising, has a clear runway.

But to read this agreement as a tariff schedule is to miss its meaning. Consider the precedent.

Four years after the India-UAE CEPA took effect, bilateral trade has crossed \$100 billion for a second consecutive year — \$101.25 billion in 2025-26 — with non-oil commerce now roughly two-thirds of the total and the two governments have lifted their sights to \$200 billion by 2032.

Tariff lines did not produce that. Confidence did. A CEPA’s deepest export is certainty.

We are signing this agreement in an unkind season for global commerce. Investment flows are nervous, supply chains are being redrawn under political pressure and “uncertainty” has shifted from a risk to be managed into the operating environment itself.

Even Oman — with one of the Gulf’s most stable outlooks — saw FDI inflows contract by about a third in 2025 even as its cumulative FDI stock kept climbing, to RO 31.4 billion: capital that is committed for the long term but cautious in the short. In that climate, a CEPA is not paperwork; it is an instrument of predictability.

It tells a manufacturer in Surat or a founder in Bengaluru that the rules in Oman are fixed, the duties are zero and the welcome is institutional rather than discretionary. When capital is anxious, predictability is the highest-yielding asset a nation



Oman is the only Gulf economy that holds both a free trade agreement with the US (since 2006) and now a CEPA with India.



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

When the India-Oman CEPA takes effect on June 1, the real question is not what Indian firms will sell in Muscat, but what they will build there to reach the world. In an age where uncertainty has become the only constant, this is India’s most strategic Gulf bet yet.

can offer — and Oman is offering it.

Here is the point lost in the tariff arithmetic. Oman is the only Gulf economy that holds both a free trade agreement with the United States (since 2006) and now a CEPA with India. A product that qualifies as “Made in Oman” under the agreement’s rules of origin can reach the Indian and American markets duty-free from the same production line. Layer on Oman’s GCC membership and the India-GCC FTA now under active negotiation and the geometry becomes clear: Oman is not the end of the journey — it is the junction.

This reframes the opportunity for Indian business. The instinctive question is, “What can I sell into a market of five million people?”

The better question is, “What can I make in Oman to serve the GCC’s 60 million consumers, the 2.6 billion across Asia and Africa; and the US market — on preferential terms I cannot get from home?”

Engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, food processing, chemicals, electronics, textiles and gems are precisely the sectors this CEPA liberalises and precisely the ones served by Omani free zones at Suhar, Salalah, Al Duqm and Khazaen, where 100% foreign ownership, tax holidays of up to 25 years and single-window licensing already exist.

Oman’s location is not a brochure line; it is a balance-sheet item.

Suhar, Salalah and Al Duqm sit outside the Strait of Hormuz. For Indian energy and trade flows, that is supply-chain insurance

against the region’s most expensive chokepoint a consideration now reflected in discussions around alternative India-Middle East energy and logistics corridors designed to reduce dependence on Hormuz.

Oman has already become a vital LNG supplier to India during recent disruptions.

The CEPA is the legal scaffolding that lets Indian capital invest in turning that geography into commercial advantage.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS THE REAL ENGINE

And it is the private sector, not the communiqué, that will decide whether this potential is realised.

India today runs the world’s third-largest startup ecosystem — more than 157,000 recognised startups and over 110 unicorns — while its MSMEs already generate close to 40% of exports and are being asked to anchor the country’s march towards a \$7 trillion economy.

That entrepreneurial energy now has a Gulf runway. The UAE CEPA showed how quickly small and mid-sized firms move when barriers fall: it was their gems, engineering goods, electronics and agri-exports — not the headline conglomerates alone — that pushed trade past \$100 billion, which is why New Delhi rightly frames these agreements as opportunities “for the private sector”.

Oman should read the same signal. Across the GCC, some 675,000 formal SMEs already contribute up to 63.5% of non-oil GDP and one in four jobs; in Oman, SMEs sit at the heart of Oman Vision 2040.

The CEPA’s services and mobility terms — commitments across 127 sub-sectors and a rise in the intra-corporate-transferee ceiling from 20% to 50% — are tailor-made for IT, fintech, healthcare, engineering and education ventures. An Indian SaaS start-up can base its regional arm in Muscat; an Omani agri-tech or logistics SME can plug into Indian supply chains and capital.

The winners will be the firms small enough to be nimble and ambitious enough to treat two markets as one.

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SENIOR Accountant: Indian male 20 years experience in Oman, shipping & logistics, Trading & contracting upto finalisation, cont: 95915852

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

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

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

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

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

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

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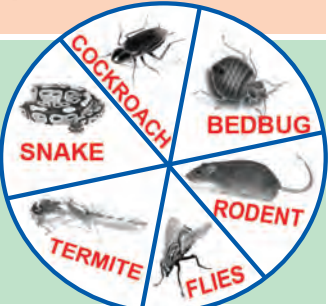
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LOOKING for SUPPLY CHAIN / SALES jobs Indian male 24 years. Commerce graduate, Experience in logistics, procurement and sales in reputed company in Oman. Valid Oman D/L. Contact +96891121694, issacantony2002@gmail.com

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

INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. Contact: 95645241

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAPITAL REDUCTION

In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law, the company Al Muhtagha for Trading and Construction (SPC), which is registered with the Commercial Registration No 1181359, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from Rials Omani 5,000.000 to 5,000.000.

Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretaries of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

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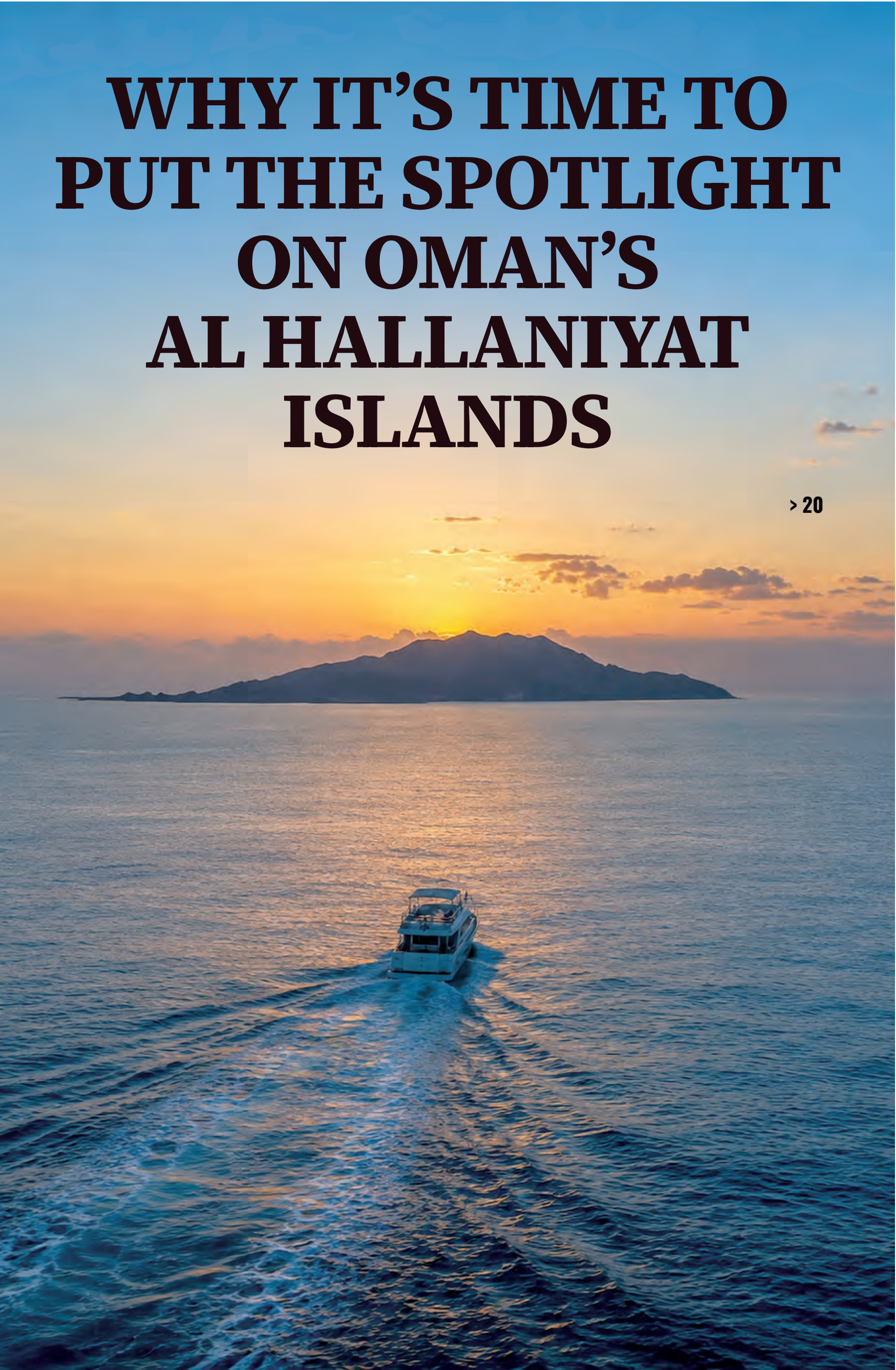


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ART/LIFE



UNEXPECTED DESIGNER



What began as hand-made directions for confused commuters turned Shuetsu Sato, a 72-year-old train station security guard, into an award-winning designer whose work now attracts brands such as Nike and Nintendo.

JAPANESE SECURITY GUARD FINDS FAME AS DESIGNER OF DUCT TAPE SIGNS

One of Japan's most in-demand graphic designers is neither hip nor an artist by training: he's a septuagenarian security guard who works the graveyard shift at a train station in Tokyo.

Shuetsu Sato found his hidden passion when he was asked in 2004 to help travellers navigate the crowded, labyrinthine Shinjuku station as it underwent renovations.

His solution was to make signage out of duct tape, covering the station's walls with directions to the myriad train lines, exits and more. He loved the work, the result was effective and the station master kept asking for more.

"No one would think to ask a security guard to make signs or posters, so when someone requests one, I can't help but do my best", said the bespectacled 72-year-old, dressed in a bright-yellow jumpsuit uniform.

As more signs went up, discerning eyes noticed. Soon, Sato was getting requests from all over Japan, to make lettering for movie posters, a museum sign. He even got work from corporate giants such as Nintendo and Suntory.

Last year, he won the Japan Sign Design Association's platinum award for his unique typography — now known as "Shuetsu-tai" after his name — characterised by rounded edges aimed at soothing commuters' irritation.

One of Sato's latest projects is collaborating on a logo for Nike's new brick-and-mortar store, which opened last month in the Shinjuku shopping district.

Shun Sasaki, a graphic designer hired by the sporting goods giant, said he immediately thought of Sato when he was asked to come up with a logo that evoked Shinjuku.

"I was blown away by his cool, powerful lettering", Sasaki said. "He's overflowing with incredible passion — a strong desire to create".

For all his work's popularity, Sato — who sometimes gets so lost in making signs he forgets to eat or sleep — has never charged a set fee, leaving compensation up to his clients. He only asks for meals to be provided while he works and transportation costs; and the understanding that he will use only duct tape to create his designs.

"For Shinjuku, I think I got a certificate of appreciation from the station master and a shampoo set", Sato said. Another station master he did signs for thanked him with new socks.

"I couldn't help but laugh at that... But for me, it's just fun and as long as it makes people happy, that's really all I need". — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



AWARDS

Jay McCarroll poses for a photo with his award for performance in a leading role in a comedy for "Nirvana the Band the Show the Movie" at the 2026 Canadian Screen Awards.

— Reuters



PERFORMANCE

US rapper and producer Kanye West performs on stage during a concert at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium in Istanbul as part of his tour "YE Live in Istanbul"

— AFP

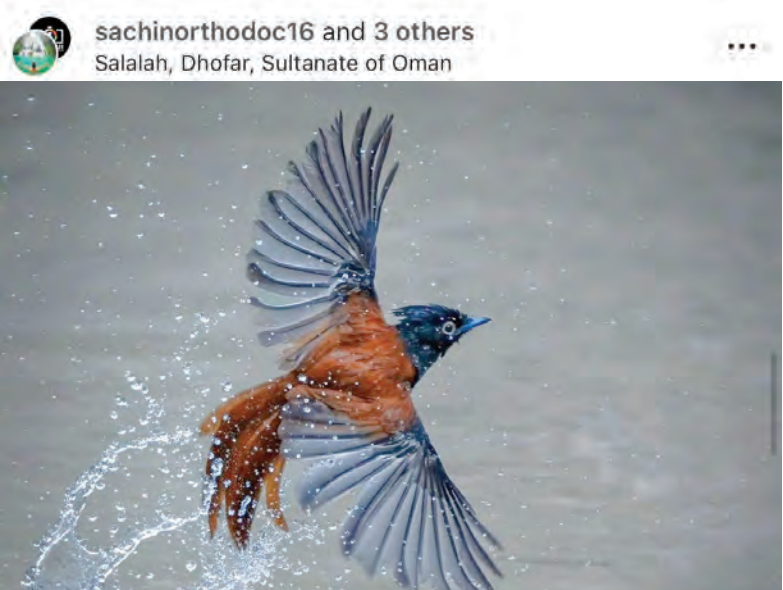


CULTURE

Dancers wearing traditional Panamanian costumes take part in a parade during a cultural performance featured in the city's Sunday cultural programme organised by the Panama City Municipality.

— AFP

INSTA PICKS



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LOUVRE HEIST TO BE TURNED INTO FILM



A new book about the \$100 million jewellery heist at the Louvre is set to be adapted into a film and documentary series, as the shocking 2025 robbery continues to inspire global intrigue and remain unsolved.

Last year’s brazen robbery of the Louvre — when thieves made off with jewellery worth some \$100 million — is set to become a movie and a documentary series, a publisher said on Tuesday.

French director Romain Gavras — whose work includes 2025 Hollywood film “Sacrifice” starring Anya Taylor-Joy and music videos including most recently a hypnotic schoolboy choreography for GENER8ION — will draw inspiration from the investigative book “Main basse sur le Louvre” (literally “A grab at the Louvre”).

Film rights to the book about the October 19, 2025 heist had been sold to the production company Iconoclast while rights for a documentary series were acquired by a British producer, the Flammarion publishing house said.

The book, written by three journalists, from French dailies Le Parisien and Le Monde; and weekly glossy magazine Paris Match, is to hit book stores on Wednesday.

According to trade magazine Le Film Francais, the movie project is in development, though neither the title nor the cast has been announced.

The Louvre heist sent shock waves around the world and sparked a security crisis within the world-famous museum that ultimately led to the replacement of its director, Laurence des Cars.

After seven months of investigation and despite the arrests of the main suspects, the jewels have still not been found.

The authors said their apparent disappearance “has become a dense mystery, a puzzle that has plunged investigators into deep confusion”.

The heist illustrates how “the theft of artworks has become a business like any other for many criminals”, they say. “The criminal underworld has found a new cash cow”. — AFP



‘Obsession’: A chilling new take on psychological horror



Obsession showcases the potential of a new generation of horror filmmakers willing to experiment with fresh ideas and storytelling techniques and proves that horror does not need an endless stream of jump scares to leave an impact

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

Every so often, a horror film arrives that reshapes expectations of the genre. Just as Scream revitalised slashers in the 1990s and Paranormal Activity breathed new life into found-footage horror, Obsession stands out as a fresh and compelling take on psychological horror.

Written and directed by YouTuber-turned-filmmaker Curry Barker, the film follows Bear, a young man who has long hidden his feelings for his best friend Nikki. Desperate to win her heart, he turns to the mysterious One Wish Willow and wishes that she would return his affection tenfold.

His wish is granted, but what begins as a dream come true soon descends into a dark nightmare as the consequences of tampering with fate emerge.

At its heart, Obsession is a cautionary tale about unhealthy attachment, emotional

Obsession has become an international horror sensation, going viral across social media with trending reels and reactions, as audiences are captivated by its unsettling twists and psychological terror.

dependence and the dangers of trying to force love. The film explores how obsession can distort genuine affection and how some desires come at a far greater cost than expected.

What sets the film apart is its reliance on atmosphere and suspense rather than cheap scares. Barker patiently builds tension through unsettling character behaviour, shadowy cinematography and an ever-present sense of dread. Instead of constantly resorting to jump scares, the film allows fear to grow naturally, creating moments that are genuinely disturbing and memorable.

The performances are equally impressive, particularly from lead actress Inde Navarrette, who delivers a compelling and emotionally layered performance. Combined with a cast of relatively fresh faces,

the film feels energetic and unpredictable. Although the premise may sound familiar, Obsession injects it with a modern twist and a level of psychological depth rarely seen in contemporary horror. Its blend of dark romance, supernatural elements and emotional complexity gives the story a unique identity.

More importantly, the film showcases the potential of a new generation of horror filmmakers willing to experiment with fresh ideas and storytelling techniques. Obsession proves that horror does not need an endless stream of jump scares to leave an impact. Sometimes the most terrifying stories are those rooted in obsession itself.

Disturbing, suspenseful and thought-provoking, Obsession is a refreshing addition to the genre and a promising sign of where horror may be heading next.

FEATURES

The Al Hallaniyat Islands offer one of Oman’s last truly untouched marine frontiers, a remote and protected archipelago where dramatic wildlife, rich history, and raw natural beauty remain far from modern tourism and mass crowds.



YERU EBUEN

At first glance, the Al Hallaniyat Islands do not seem designed for modern tourism. There are no resorts rising from the shore, no beach clubs and no crowds of influencers at a single viewpoint. Reaching them takes effort, the sea can be rough, phone signal fades and even many Omani residents have never been.

Yet this is exactly why the Al Hallaniyat Islands may be one of the most compelling destinations in Oman today.

Located around 40 to 50 kilometres off the Dhofar coast in the Arabian Sea, the Al Hallaniyat archipelago sits scattered across open water, with Al Hallaniyah as the only inhabited island. The group has quietly gained attention among divers, sailors and expedition travellers as one of the region’s last truly remote marine frontiers.

Online, interest is growing not through marketing campaigns but through word of mouth. Travel reels show dramatic cliffs, pods of dolphins cutting through turquoise waters and campsites under skies untouched by light pollution.

Comments often repeat the same reaction: “I had no idea Oman looked like this”.

The appeal lies in how untouched the islands still feel. Unlike heavily developed destinations in the region, Al Hallaniyat remains raw and exploratory. One diving publication described it as “untouched and undiscovered”, while visitors often note the striking absence of other vessels at sea, creating a rare sense of isolation.

For marine enthusiasts, the waters are especially significant.

The surrounding area is considered an important habitat for the Arabian Sea humpback whale, one of the world’s rarest whale populations, with Dhofar and Al Hallaniyat Bay identified as key feeding and breeding grounds.

This richness in marine life has become a growing attraction for travellers. Fishermen and tour operators regularly report sightings of spinner dolphins, Risso’s dolphins and humpback whales, while divers have also documented orcas in the region. The islands are increasingly seen as one of Oman’s most active marine ecosystems. Divers who visit

WHY IT’S
TIME
TO PUT THE
SPOTLIGHT
ON AL
HALLANIYAT
ISLANDS



often speak less about comfort and more about atmosphere. In online forums, one traveller described the sea life as “very interesting and varied” and said they “loved the trip”, while others highlight Oman’s wider appeal as a place of uncrowded and authentic nature.

Yet Al Hallaniyat is not only about nature. Beneath its waters lies a major archaeological discovery.

In 1503, the Portuguese ship Esmeralda, part of Vasco da Gama’s fleet and commanded by Vicente Sodré, sank near Al Hallaniyah during a storm. Centuries later, the wreck was rediscovered, yielding thousands of artefacts, including one of the world’s oldest known mariner’s astrolabes.

This discovery adds another layer to the islands’ identity, linking them to centuries of maritime exploration, trade and survival.

Travelling to Al Hallaniyat still requires planning. Most journeys begin in Salalah before continuing along Dhofar’s coastline to fishing towns such as Hasik, Shaleem, or Al Shuwaymiyah, where boats can be arranged. Visitors may join liveaboard diving expeditions or camp on organised trips, while accommodation is usually based on the mainland in Salalah, Mirbat, or nearby towns.

The Hallaniyat Islands Nature Reserve is now also under stricter protection following Decision No 56/2026 by the Environment Authority. Entry requires permits, fishing has been limited to local residents and new rules regulate anchoring, net use and visitor activity to protect fragile marine ecosystems.

In an age of overexposed destinations, that difficulty is part of the appeal.

While much of Oman is now associated with wadis, mountains and desert camps, Al Hallaniyat represents a different landscape altogether: quieter, wilder and less defined by tourism infrastructure. It is a place travellers recommend not for convenience, but for discovery.

At a time when so much of the world feels documented before arrival, the Al Hallaniyat Islands remain one of the rare places where visitors still leave with the feeling that they have found something hidden.