

OMAN OMAN DAILY

Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 181
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 210

2010000387405

IN BRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO PARAGUAY PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Santiago Peña of the Republic of Paraguay, on his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments to President Santiago for continued success in leading the people of his country and for achieving further progress and growth in all spheres.

UPDATED NET-ZERO STRATEGY LAUNCHED

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals unveiled an updated strategic plan for Net-Zero emissions and a regulatory framework for carbon markets, as part of the Sultanate of Oman’s push to achieve



ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUFI
Minister of Energy and Minerals

carbon neutrality by 2050 and strengthen its position as a regional hub for green hydrogen and renewable energy. The updated plan, developed by the ministry through Oman Centre for Net-Zero, is based on a realistic assessment of emission trends using the latest data. It identifies reduction priorities aligned with the national economy, determines necessary enablers

and financing and explores opportunities for a low-carbon transition. Eng Salim bin Nasser al Auafi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, said the adoption of the updated national Net-Zero plan is a strategic step towards a robust, sustainable, low-carbon economy, enhancing Oman’s global standing in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The Net-Zero pathway offers significant economic and climate benefits by promoting green industries, strengthening Oman’s competitiveness and introducing modern emission reduction technologies. **SEE P13**

EVALUATION OF 100 SCHOOLS COMPLETE

Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education held a media briefing highlighting its national competencies and strategic projects, while reviewing the latest developments in the education quality assurance system in the Sultanate of Oman, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukaili, Chairperson of the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education, delivered a visual presentation during which she reviewed the authority’s journey and its primary national roles in regulating and ensuring the quality of education across various levels and types. To date, the performance evaluation of 100 government and private schools has been completed, with 58 reports published on its website. **DETAILS ON P2**

Royal Decree promulgates Real Estate Register Law

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Wednesday issued Royal Decree No (56/2026) on promulgating the Real Estate Register Law, after presenting the same before the Council of Oman. It reads as follows: Article (1) stipulates that the provisions of the

Real Estate Register Law attached to this decree shall be enforced. Article (2) states that the Minister of Housing and Urban Planning shall issue the Executive Regulation of the law attached to this decree, as well as the decisions necessary for the implementation

of its provisions. Till such a time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to be enforced without prejudice to the provisions of this law. Article (3) cancels the Real Estate Register System promulgated by Royal Decree

No (2/98), as well as all that contradicts the attached law or contravenes its provisions. Article (4) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publication. — ONA

Trump arrives in China for super summit with Xi

U S P R E S I D E N T S A Y S N O N E E D F O R C H I N A ’ S H E L P O N I R A N

US President Donald Trump landed in Beijing on Wednesday for a high-stakes summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping aimed at easing deep tensions between the rival superpowers.

Giving a fist pump, Trump descended the steps of Air Force One after touching down at Beijing Capital International Airport, kicking off the first visit to China by a US president in nearly a decade.

Right behind him were Tesla boss Elon Musk and Nvidia chief Jensen Huang — potent symbols of the business deals that Trump hopes to sign between the world’s biggest economies.

Trump was greeted with a bunch of flowers and then walked along the red carpet, which was lined with 300 Chinese youth in white uniforms chanting “welcome” and waving small Chinese and US flags in unison.

While en route to Beijing, Trump said on social media he would “be asking President Xi, a Leader of extraordinary distinction, to ‘open up’ China so that these brilliant people can work their magic”.

Nvidia’s Huang was a surprise late addition to the trip, joining the plane at a stopover in Alaska. China is currently banned under US national security rules from buying the cutting-edge AI chips that the



US President Donald Trump receives flowers upon arriving at Beijing Capital Airport in Beijing on Wednesday. — AFP

company produces. But Iran and trade loom over the highly anticipated meeting, which Trump had already delayed from March because of the war the United States and Israel started in the Middle East. Earlier, Trump has said he does not expect to need China’s help to end the war in Iran and ease Tehran’s grip on the Strait of Hormuz, in remarks made before he arrived in Beijing on Wednesday. The war is expected to feature in talks between Trump and Xi over the next two days, but Trump downplayed Beijing’s potential role in ending the conflict, which has choked off traffic through a key waterway that typically carries about one-fifth of the world’s oil supply. “I don’t think we need any help with Iran. We’ll win it one way or the other, peacefully or otherwise,” he told reporters in Washington before departing for China. Trump and Xi will hold talks at 10:00 am (0200 GMT) on Thursday in Beijing’s opulent Great Hall of the People. The US president will also visit the historic Temple of Heaven, a world heritage site where China’s emperors once prayed for good harvest. The leaders will then enjoy a state banquet in the evening. On Friday, they are set to have tea and a working lunch before Trump heads home. — AFP

Oman, Canada call for freedom of navigation in Hormuz

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received in Muscat on Wednesday Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada. This marks the first official visit of a Canadian foreign minister to the Sultanate of Oman in over a decade.

The visit reflects the positive trajectory of bilateral relations over the past fifty years and reaffirms the shared commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region.

The two ministers agreed to elevate the level of their bilateral partnership and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on political consultations, aimed at establishing regular bilateral dialogue.



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received in Muscat on Wednesday Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada.

Specifically, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in the fields of trade, energy, critical minerals, higher education and tourism, in addition to strengthening people-to-people ties. They noted that bilateral trade volume reached CAD 222 million in 2025, while acknowledging significant potential for further economic growth. Regarding Canada’s domestic sphere and global economic indicators for 2025, Canada ranks as the tenth-largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$2.3 trillion. The two ministers exchanged views on the conflict in the region, stressing the importance of protecting civilian lives, supporting de-escalation efforts, and ensuring

freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, also expressed her appreciation for Oman’s longstanding role in regional diplomacy over the past years. The two ministers reaffirmed their shared commitment to international law, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. The Canadian minister extended her sincere gratitude for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, reaffirming Canada’s commitment to building a substantive and forward-looking partnership with Oman. **SEE ALSO P3**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The two sides also discussed latest developments on international arenas. — ONA

ROYAL OFFICE
MINISTER RECEIVES
AUSTRIAN
AMBASSADOR

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received Christophe Ceska, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting dealt with bilateral relations and ways to enhance them through consultation and joint coordination between the two friendly countries.

The two sides also discussed some of the latest developments on the regional and international arenas. They exchanged views about diplomatic efforts being made to resolve regional issues in a manner that supports security and peace in the region. — ONA

Oman participates in
GCC emergency meeting

THE Sultanate of Oman participated on Wednesday in the emergency meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers. Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, headed Oman delegation.

The meeting, held at the headquarters of the GCC Secretariat-General in Riyadh, discussed the latest security developments and joint coordination among member states, in addition to enhancing Gulf security cooperation in addressing current challenges, thereby contributing to the security and stability of the region.

The meeting underscored the importance of unifying efforts and exchanging information and expertise among security agencies. This is expected to advance the path of joint Gulf action and preserve the achievements of the member states.

Upon his arrival at the GCC Secretariat-General headquarters, Sayyid Hamoud



The meeting underscored the importance of unifying efforts and exchanging information and expertise among security agencies. — ONA

was received by His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif al Saud, Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Jassim bin Mohamed al Budaiwi, GCC Secretary-General.

The meeting was attended by Maj Gen Abdullah bin Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Operations.

It is worth to mention that Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, arrived at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh earlier.

He was received by Dr Khalid bin Mohammed al Battal, Deputy Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Najib bin Hilal al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Brigadier Hamad bin Ajlan al Amimi, GCC Assistant Secretary-General for Security Affairs and several officials from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. — ONA



TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) hereby announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Description of Project	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Distribution of Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
OW/T/10001/2026	Construction of Water Distribution Networks in the Wilayat of Al Kamil and Al Wafi, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 1000/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	4/6/2026	27/7/2026
OW/T/10002/2026	Construction of Water Distribution Networks in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 1000/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	4/6/2026	27/7/2026
OW/T/10003/2026	Construction of Water Distribution Networks in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, South Al Sharqiyah Governorate	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 1000/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	4/6/2026	27/7/2026
OW/T/10004/2026	Construction of Water Distribution Networks in Al Nahdah, Wilayat of Al Amerat, Muscat Governorate	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 1000/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	4/6/2026	27/7/2026
OW/T/10005/2026	Construction of Water Distribution Networks in Al Hajer and Deem, Wilayat of Al Amerat, Muscat Governorate	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in Excellent Grade and International works mentioned	R.O 1000/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	4/6/2026	27/7/2026
OWW/T/10001/2026	Consultancy for Advisory Services to Prepare PPP Tender documents for Sludge Utilization as a Materials Recovery Facility from Nama Water Services STPs	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	4/6/2026	6/7/2026

The tender documents can be obtained from the e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from this announcement date. The applicants shall pay the tender fee by logging into their (I-supplier Page).

Applicants who are not registered shall register through the following link: <https://nws.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> in order to receive the login credentials of the Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login <https://nws.nama.om/en-us/Business-with-Us/Supplierlogin>). All participating companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope. Bid Bonds must be obtained from a local Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman addressed to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 2:00 pm on the bid submission date.

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 2:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website www.nws.nama.om & in case of general queries you may contact us through the email ID of tender@owwsc.nama.om





@nws_oman



nws.nama.om

مركز الاتصال

1442

Call Center

SHURA AND STATE COUNCIL JOINT
SESSION ADDRESSES ITEMS OF DISPUTE

MUSCAT: The State Council and Majlis Ash'shura held on Wednesday their second joint session of the third regular annual sitting of the eighth term of the Council of Oman.

The session discussed the reports of the joint committees of the two Councils concerning items of dispute in the draft law on the “Unified System for International Land Transport between GCC States.”

The session, chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, addressed the following draft laws referred by the Council of Ministers: Draft Law Amending Certain Provisions of the Personal Data Protection Law, Draft



The session was chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, and attended by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura. — ONA

Law on Combating Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, Draft Law Amending Certain Provisions of the Penal Code, and Draft Law Amending Certain Provisions of the Mineral Wealth Law.

The session was attended by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, along with members of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura, as well as the Secretaries-General of both Councils. — ONA

EVALUATION SYSTEM TO INCLUDE
VOCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

The Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) held a media briefing to review its achievements and strategic projects, and to enhance levels of transparency and partnership.

Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukaili, Chairperson of the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education, said that the Royal Decree No (12/2026) represented a new stage in the Authority's path, through amending its name, establishing the National Centre for Measurement, and expanding its competencies to include vocational and technical education.

Dr Jokha explained that the Authority has undergone significant transformations in recent



Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukaili, Chairperson of the Oman Authority for Quality Assurance of Education.

years, including the launch of the national system for school performance evaluation. To date, the performance evaluation of 100 government and private schools has been completed, with 58 reports published on its website. Furthermore, academic accreditation systems have been developed, and

institutional and program accreditation processes have been executed. Institutional accreditation results currently stand at 22 accredited higher education institutions, three institutions with conditional accreditation, and two institutions under probation, alongside the accreditation of several academic programs.

OAAAQA has launched the National System for Evaluating School Performance, which aims to raise the standards of school education and ensure academic excellence by conducting comprehensive performance evaluations based on well-defined standards and indicators.

It targets 1,800 public and private schools, 39 higher education institutions, and 800 academic programmes that cater to more than one million students.

OMAN AND CANADA RELATIONS

Commitment to peace in the region

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 13

SAYYID

BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDY, Foreign Minister received in Muscat on Wednesday Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada. This marks the first official visit of a Canadian foreign minister to the Sultanate of Oman in over a decade. The visit reflects the positive trajectory of bilateral relations over the past fifty years and reaffirms the shared commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region.

The two ministers agreed to elevate the level of their bilateral partnership and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on political consultations, aimed at establishing regular bilateral dialogue.

Specifically, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in the fields of trade, energy, critical minerals, higher education and tourism, in addition to strengthening people-to-people ties.

They noted that bilateral trade volume reached CAD \$222 million in 2025, while acknowledging significant potential for further economic growth.

The two ministers exchanged views on the conflict in the region, stressing the importance of protecting civilian lives, supporting de-escalation efforts and ensuring freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

Anita also expressed her appreciation for Oman's long-standing role in regional diplomacy over the past years. The two ministers reaffirmed

MINISTER OF ROYAL OFFICE RECEIVES CANADIAN FOREIGN MINISTER



MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, on Wednesday received Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada. During the meeting, Gen Sultan and the Canadian Minister discussed the progress being made in developing relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Canada. For her part, the Canadian Minister commended the high level of coordination between Oman and Canada, hoping that bilateral cooperation would continue to be developed in a manner that achieves the common interests of the two countries. — ONA



Canada and the Sultanate of Oman share common objectives in promoting peace, security, and sustainable development, and maintain cordial bilateral relations.

their shared commitment to international law, including respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. Anita extended her sincere gratitude for the warm

welcome and generous hospitality extended by the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, reaffirming Canada's commitment to building a substantive and forward-looking

partnership with Oman. The first official visit by a Canadian foreign minister to Oman in more than ten years reflected the positive trajectory of bilateral relations over the past 50

years and underscored the shared commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region. Canada established diplomatic relations with Oman in 1974.

Canada and Oman share common objectives in the areas of international peace and social and economic development.

While Canada is represented by the Embassy to Saudi Arabia in Riyadh with an honorary consul in Muscat, Oman is represented in Canada by Oman embassy in Washington, DC.

According to an official statement, Canada and the Sultanate of Oman share common objectives in promoting peace, security, and sustainable development, and maintain cordial bilateral relations.

Canada exports a large variety of merchandise to Oman, with the primary goods being machinery, cereals, electronics, and scientific and precision instruments.

The top merchandise imports from Oman in 2025 were iron and steel, aluminum, electronics, and plastics.

Oman has been a member of Canada's Military Training Cooperation Program since 1980, and its military personnel have participated in several courses and training opportunities.

In both Canada and Oman, education is a high priority, and the Government of Oman offers annual scholarships to its citizens to pursue higher education in Canada.

The official statement said that both sides will also discuss defence and economic cooperation that aligns Canadian expertise with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

AN EVOLVING MODEL OF DIPLOMATIC, ECONOMIC COOPERATION

MUSCAT: The bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Canada represent an evolving model of diplomatic and economic cooperation, rooted in an extended history since their official inception on February 2, 1974.

This development comes amid mutual keenness from the leaderships of the two countries to strengthen their strategic partnership and diversify its investment and cultural trajectories.

Political relations between the two nations are witnessing high-level momentum, evidenced by direct phone calls involving His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik with the Canadian side. These included two phone calls from former Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and a phone call from Mark Carney, the current Prime Minister of Canada.

This is in addition to ongoing diplomatic meetings and mutual consultations between the foreign ministers of both countries at international forums, such as the United Nations General Assembly in New York, to coordinate positions and exchange views.

In terms of diplomatic representation, Jean-Philippe Linteau has served as the non-resident Ambassador of Canada to the Sultanate of Oman since his appointment in May 2023. Meanwhile, Ali Kamal Daud, Chairman of the Oman American Business Center, assumes the duties of the Honorary Consul of Canada in Muscat. Conversely, Talal bin Sulaiman al Rahbi, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the United States of America, has received approval to present his credentials as Oman's non-resident Ambassador to Canada.



The Sultanate of Oman sponsors over 250 male and female students to complete their undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Canadian educational institutions.

Within the framework of official visits aimed at consolidating economic ties, Scott Gilmore, Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister of Canada, paid an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman on 29 April 2026. During the visit, he met with the Foreign Minister to discuss promising investment opportunities. These visits build upon the

strategic report submitted by Robert Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, following his visit to the Sultanate of Oman in November 2022. In the report, he emphasised to the Canadian Foreign Ministry the necessity of enhancing cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman given its pivotal role in addressing regional

challenges. The mining and energy sector represents one of the most prominent pillars of current economic cooperation. A specialised Canadian trade delegation visited the Ministry of Energy and Minerals from January 19-20, 2026, to explore opportunities for technical partnership and investment in the

mineral wealth of the Sultanate of Oman.

These aspirations are further reflected in the intensive meetings held by the non-resident Canadian Ambassador with the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the Chief Executive Officer of Energy Development Oman, and the Chief Executive Officer of Minerals Development Oman.

Notably, Canadian investments maintain a solid presence in the Omani market, with approximately 280 Canadian companies operating with an estimated total capital of around RO 37 million.

On the cultural and educational front, academic cooperation stands out as a primary driver for bridging perspectives between the two peoples.

The Sultanate of Oman sponsors over 250 male and female students to complete their undergraduate and postgraduate studies at Canadian educational institutions. This includes sending doctors and medical professionals from the Ministry of Health to benefit from advanced medical expertise in Canada.

Regarding Canada's domestic sphere and global economic indicators for 2025, Canada ranks as the tenth-largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$2.3 trillion.

This is supported by a diversified industrial base combining traditional industries such as oil, gas, mining, and timbre, with high-value-added advanced industries like aerospace manufacturing through the pioneering company "Bombardier," and the automotive industry, which is structurally linked to the American market. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

TURNING AWAY FROM PLASTIC BOTTLES



AFRAH AL BALUSHI

In a move reflecting the growing global shift toward environmental sustainability, the Environment Authority has banned the use of plastic water bottles within its premises and is encouraging employees to adopt reusable alternatives.

The initiative aims to reduce plastic waste and promote a culture of responsible consumption and environmentally conscious behaviour.

The Authority stressed that sustainability begins with everyday choices and that workplaces can serve as important starting points for building long-term environmental awareness and responsibility.

Environmental reports continue to identify plastic as

Environment Authority stressed that sustainability begins with everyday choices and that workplaces can serve as important starting points for building long-term environmental awareness and responsibility

one of the world's most polluting materials due to its slow decomposition rate and its ability to remain in the environment for hundreds of years. Over time, plastic breaks down into microplastics that spread through water, soil and air.

Recent studies suggest that these microplastics may also be present in bottled water itself, raising concerns over their possible impact on human health, although scientific research is still ongoing to determine the full extent of the risks.

Some studies have linked prolonged exposure to plastic-related chemicals with inflammation, oxidative stress and other health concerns.

Globally, plastic recycling rates remain low, with reports indicating that only around 9 per cent of plastic waste is recycled.

Most discarded plastic ends

up in landfills or is incinerated, contributing to pollution in seas and oceans and posing serious threats to marine ecosystems.

Environmental experts recommend shifting to sustainable alternatives such as stainless steel or glass bottles, as well as containers made from safe, non-toxic materials. These alternatives not only reduce waste but also help limit exposure to harmful microparticles.

Experts also underline that meaningful environmental change starts with individual behaviour. Simple habits — such as carrying a reusable bottle and refilling it from reliable water sources — can significantly reduce dependence on disposable plastic containers.

Sustainability, they note, is not achieved through one-time grand gestures, but through small,

consistent daily actions whose positive impact accumulates over time.

These efforts align with global initiatives aimed at reducing plastic pollution, protecting natural resources and encouraging more sustainable lifestyles for future generations.

As advocates point out, people are often influenced less by advice and more by the habits they observe in others. Consistently choosing reusable alternatives can quietly inspire change within families, workplaces and communities.

Most importantly, environmental responsibility should not be viewed as perfection.

Forgetting once or occasionally buying a plastic bottle is not a failure. The goal is to gradually make sustainable choices the natural and preferred option in everyday life.

SHORTTAKES



NOVEL EXPLORES
ALIENATION
BETWEEN MOSCOW
AND MUSCAT

MUSCAT: Omani writer and translator Ahmed al Rahbi returns in his new novel ‘The Suitcase of Souls’, published by Oxygen Publishing, to the theme of alienation that has marked several of his earlier works.

This time, however, he presents it with a deeper and more complex vision, juxtaposing the cities of Moscow and Muscat to explore human transformations in the face of isolation, nostalgia and existential questions.

The novel extends Al Rahbi’s earlier explorations of alienation seen in “The Immigrant” and “I and the Grandmother Nina”, but with “The Suitcase of Souls” he broadens the artistic and psychological treatment through a narrative structure using what is critically known as the “broken glass” technique — the fragmentation of stories, the interweaving of fates and the psychological fractures of characters.

The novel is divided into three main sections and an appendix: “The Room of Crows”, “Spring and Other Coincidences” and “For the Sake of Writing”, plus an appendix. Each section has its own protagonist and events that intertwine with the others, giving the work a character close to a novelistic trilogy while retaining a coherent artistic and narrative unity.

Al Rahbi employs an experimental style that opens the door to multiple readings and interpretations, seeking to reveal the dimensions of alienation as a complex human and psychological experience where deferred freedom, thwarted ambitions and hidden relationships intersect.

The cover text notes that the novel evokes “a life fading into the details of a heavy past, before returning to collide with the reality of characters preoccupied with their freedom, their delayed ambitions and their hidden love.” — ONA

Ministry of Information to launch documentary titled ‘Dr Thoms’

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information is preparing to release a documentary titled Al Dakhtar Thoms ‘Dr Thoms’. The documentary chronicles the life of American physician Dr Wells Thoms, one of the most prominent figures associated with the history of healthcare services in the Sultanate of Oman.

The film blends historical narration, reenacted dramatic scenes, rare archival footage, and live-action footage in Oman and the United States, all within a contemporary cinematic approach.

The work traces the early journey



The documentary draws on testimonies and interviews with researchers, academics and figures associated with medical services. — ONA

of Dr Wells Thoms — locally known in Oman as ‘Al Dakhtar Thoms’ — from his childhood and early exposure to the suffering of leprosy and infectious disease patients in Oman, to the eventual dedication of his life to medical and humanitarian work in the Sultanate of Oman.

The film also covers key milestones in his life, including the development of Al Rahma Hospital, the launch of specialised initiatives to treat infectious diseases and leprosy, his medical journeys, and his close relationship with Omani society.

The documentary draws on testimonies and interviews with researchers, academics and figures associated with medical services in Oman, in addition to private interviews with family members of the doctor and academics in the United States.

Filming locations included the states of Florida, Kansas and Michigan, where aspects of his academic and family life were documented. Cinematic colour grading and sound mixing were carried out in specialised studios in London. — ONA

Sultan Haitham City reflects
sustainable development

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

AMBASSADORS who participated in the Oman Real Estate Conference and Exhibition praised Sultan Haitham City as a modern urban model reflecting the future vision of Oman in sustainable urban development and real estate investment, while highlighting its growing appeal as a regional investment destination supported by stability, advanced infrastructure and ambitious development plans.

Azerbaijani Ambassador Rashad Ismayilov said the first day of the exhibition witnessed the signing of several major agreements that reflect the scale of investment opportunities available in Oman’s real estate market.

Among the most significant agreements, he highlighted the partnership signed between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and Retal Urban Development Company, valued at RO 230 million, equivalent to approximately SAR 3.2 billion.

The ambassador noted that such agreements demonstrate increasing regional investor confidence in the Omani market and underline the strong growth potential of Oman’s real estate sector.

He further described Sultan Haitham City as a fully integrated urban destination offering high-quality residential districts, modern planning standards and comprehensive facilities that meet the aspirations of both citizens and investors.

Egyptian Ambassador Yasser Mohamed Shaaban referred to previously signed agreements between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and major Egyptian developers, including Talaat Moustafa Group and Al Ahly Sabbour.



Sultan Haitham City is an integrated urban destination offering high-quality living.

He said the entry of these leading companies into the Omani market reflects the attractiveness of Oman’s investment environment and the confidence of international developers in the country’s long-term economic vision.

According to the ambassador, investments by the two Egyptian companies exceed \$5 billion, with Talaat Moustafa Group investing approximately \$3.5 billion and Al Ahly Sabbour contributing around \$1.6 billion.

“These investments clearly demonstrate the seriousness of both companies in establishing a strong presence in the Omani market and delivering projects that meet the highest standards of quality,” he said.

“Oman offers a unique living experience within a brotherly Arab nation whose people are known for kindness, authenticity, hospitality and mutual respect. The country also provides all essential services required by families, including education, healthcare and modern infrastructure,” Shaaban said.

Turkish Ambassador Mohammed Hakeemoglu praised the projects being

developed in Sultan Haitham City, particularly the signing agreement for the Maarif School project, which he said would contribute significantly to the city’s educational landscape.

He noted that relations between Oman and Türkiye continue to witness remarkable growth, especially following the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Türkiye in late 2024, during which more than 30 important agreements were signed between the two countries. “These positive values, along with Oman’s rich history and civilisation, make the country highly attractive for both living and investment,” he said.

Commenting on Oman’s future, the Turkish ambassador stated, “The future of living and investment in Oman is very promising.” Meanwhile, Saudi Ambassador Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan highlighted the strong alignment between Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030, noting that both strategies place people and quality of life at the centre of development priorities.

Hobbyists urge youth to take up farming

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MAY 13

Farming enthusiasts in Oman gathered from various parts of the country to spread a unique message, ‘Farming is life, and it begins with planting a seed’, especially among the youth. The gathering was held as part of the Oman Krishikkootam Grand Harvest Festival 2026, where hundreds of farming hobbyists were also recognised and awarded for their achievements in agriculture-related activities.

In the ‘Pot Category’, Sumithra Selvan was awarded the 1st prize, while Sunitha Haridas and Thomas Alexander received the 2nd and 3rd prizes. The event was presided over by Santosh Varghese, with a renowned Malayalam film and serial actor as the Chief Guest.

In the ‘Pot and Soil Category’, Anitha Anilkumar, Shyjumon TT and Sreeshyla Arun were adjudged the winners, while in the ‘Soil Category’, Suneeda Beevi and Arunkumar Vijayan secured the top three positions.

Senior citizen farmers who shared



The gathering was held as part of the Oman Krishikkootam Grand Harvest Festival 2026, where hundreds of farming hobbyists were also recognised.

their expertise and knowledge were also honoured during the gathering, which distributed seeds to budding farmers.

Krishnaveni Praveen, Mallika Sukumaran, John Yohannan and Molly Abraham were recognised for their contributions. Diya Nair was awarded the Multifaceted Talent Award for her all-round expertise, presented by Mohammed Ashraf, Managing Director of Shahi Foods, with Reshmi Sandeep proposing the vote of thanks.

Adding vibrancy to the

celebrations, a musical evening featuring performances by Reshma Raghavendra, Archa Sreekumar, Ananthapadmanabhan and Saneesh P Sathyan, along with dance performances by members of Oman Krishikkootam, enthralled the audience.

Bincy James, who has achieved remarkable success in organic farming, was honoured with the Prakriti Mitra Award for her dedication and valuable contributions towards organic farming.

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

For the provision of a Group Medical Insurance Policy

Hay Al-Shrooq International School (HASIS), located near Lulu Hypermarket, in the Wilayat of Sur, South Al-Sharqiyah Governorate invites sealed bids from the insurance companies licensed to operate in the Sultanate of Oman for the provision of a **Group Medical Insurance policy** for HASIS Staff and their eligible family members.

Eligible bidders may obtain the tender documents by paying a non-refundable fee of **OMR 20** to the bank account below and sending the payment receipt to the mentioned email address. The documents will then be sent via email.

Email: aalfarsi@hasis.om | santosh.ps@hasis.om

Depositing Tender fee for participation and registration will close on **Thursday, May 21, 2026.**

Account Name	HAI AL SHROOQ INTERNATIONAL LLC
Account No.	0050-2004-2811
IBAN	OM270300000005020042811
Bank/Branch	Sohar International/Al Qurum
SWIFT Code	BSHROMRUXXX

Notes:

a) Hay Al-Shrooq International School reserves the right to accept or reject any bid without assigning any reason. The tender fee is non-refundable.

b) Insurance broking companies are not eligible to participate in this tender.

TRUMP PLAYS DOWN CHINA’S ROLE TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT

Shippers seek passage via Hormuz



A rally in support of Iran's new supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, in Tehran. — NYT file photo.

US President Donald Trump has said he does not expect to need China's help to end the war in Iran and ease Tehran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz, in remarks made before he arrived in Beijing on Wednesday for a summit with President Xi Jinping. Speaking before departing from Washington, Trump played down the role China could have in resolving the conflict, in which both sides have blocked maritime traffic through a waterway that normally carries one-fifth of the world's oil supplies. "I don't think we need any help with Iran. We'll win it one way or the other, peacefully or otherwise," he told reporters. Iran has appeared to firm up its control over the Strait of Hormuz in recent days, cutting deals with Iraq and Pakistan to ship oil and liquefied natural gas from the region, according to sources with knowledge of the matter. Iranian officials have

signalled they see that control as a long-term strategic goal. An army spokesperson said supervision of the waterway could generate revenue amounting to twice Iran's oil income, while strengthening its foreign policy leverage. "After this war ends, there will be no place for retreat," the spokesperson said, according to comments carried by ISNA news agency. More than one month after a tenuous ceasefire took effect, US and Iranian demands to end the war remain far apart. Washington has called for Tehran to scrap its nuclear programme and lift its chokehold on the strait, while Iran has demanded compensation for war damage, an end to the US blockade and a halt to fighting on all fronts, including in Lebanon, where Israel is battling Hezbollah. Trump has dismissed those positions as "garbage." The Trump administration said on Tuesday that senior



US President Donald Trump walks with Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng during an arrival ceremony at Beijing Capital International Airport. — Reuters

US and Chinese officials had agreed last month that no country should be able to charge tolls on traffic through the region, in an effort to project consensus on the issue ahead of the summit. China, a major buyer of Iranian oil

that maintains close ties with Tehran, did not dispute that account. On Wednesday, a Chinese supertanker carrying 2 million barrels of Iraqi crude was attempting to sail through the strait, ship-tracking data showed. If successful,

the voyage would mark the third known passage by a Chinese oil tanker through the channel since the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran on February 28. Other countries are exploring shipping arrangements similar to Tehran's deals with Iraq and Pakistan, sources said, potentially entrenching Tehran's control of the waterway through which fertilisers, petrochemicals and other bulk commodities vital to global supply chains normally flow. As the costs of the conflict mount, Trump said Americans' financial struggles were not a factor in his decision-making on the war. Data released on Tuesday showed that US consumer inflation accelerated in April, with the annual rate posting its largest gain in three years as food, rent and airfares rose. Asked to what extent the economic strain on Americans was motivating him to strike a deal, Trump replied: "Not

even a little bit." "I don't think about Americans' financial situation ...," Trump said before leaving for China. "I think about one thing: We cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon." The remarks are likely to draw scrutiny as cost-of-living concerns remain a top issue for voters ahead of November's midterm elections. The conflict is weighing heavily on global energy markets. Global oil supply will fall by around 3.9 million barrels per day across 2026 and undershoot demand due to disruptions caused by the Iran war, the International Energy Agency said on Wednesday, with more than 1 billion barrels of Middle East supply already lost. Brent crude futures edged up slightly to around \$108 per barrel, extending a three-day rally driven by the Hormuz deadlock. Surveys show the war is unpopular with US voters less than six months before elections. — Reuters

SECURING SUPPLIES



Guido Crosetto

ITALY TO SEND MINESWEEPERS CLOSER TO GULF

ROME: Italy said on Wednesday it was sending two warships closer to the Gulf but would only deploy them as part of an international mission in case of a lasting truce in the region. Speaking to parliament, Defence Minister Guido Crosetto also said that a possible mission to the Strait of Hormuz could only happen with prior approval from lawmakers.

Iran has effectively blockaded the Strait, through which around a fifth of global oil supplies used to transit, since it came under attack from the US and Israel in February. The confrontation has wrought economic havoc around the world, pushing up oil and fertiliser prices and disrupting global supply chains. The US has also accused Iran of laying mines in the Strait.

Iran's military spokesman said on Wednesday that Tehran's control over the Strait of Hormuz could generate "significant" economic revenue and strengthen the country's international position. Iran has largely blocked shipping through the strait since the outbreak of war with the United States and Israel. In peacetime, the route accounts for roughly a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, along with other key commodities.

Iran's grip over the waterway has rattled global markets and given Tehran significant leverage, while the United States has imposed its own naval blockade on Iranian ports despite a fragile ceasefire in place since April 8. "Our oversight of the Strait of Hormuz will generate significant economic revenues for our country — potentially even doubling our oil income — and will strengthen our influence on the international stage," military spokesman Mohammad Akraminia said. He added that the western part of the strait was controlled by the naval forces of the Revolutionary Guards, while the eastern section was overseen by the Iranian navy.

Iran's control over the strait remains one of the key sticking points in negotiations with the United States, which have so far failed to produce a breakthrough. On Wednesday, Ebrahim Azizi, head of the Iranian parliament's national security commission, said his committee had finalised a plan to manage the waterway. "The Islamic Republic of Iran intends to use this strategic position as a lever of power through strategic management of the Strait of Hormuz," he said

Crosetto said that the pre-condition for any deployment would be not the ceasefire currently in place "but a real, credible and stable truce or, even better, a definitive peace". He said it would take weeks for the minesweepers to reach the region and Italy was therefore "pre-positioning" them, initially to the eastern Mediterranean and then the Red Sea. "Solely as a precaution... we are arranging for two minehunter units to be positioned relatively closer to the Strait," Crosetto said.

Britain and France have led talks on a potential naval effort in the region to assist global shipping. Both countries have said they are "pre-positioning" warships nearby. Negotiations between the United States and Iran to end the Middle East war and re-open the crucial waterway appear to have stalled. — Reuters

Nations drawing down oil stocks at record pace: IEA

PARIS: Countries are tapping into oil inventories and strategic reserves at a "record pace" due to the "unprecedented" supply disruptions caused by the Middle East war, the International Energy Agency said on Wednesday. Global stocks were drawn down by a further 117 million barrels in April, the agency said, after a 129-million-barrel drawdown in March following the US and Israeli launch of attacks against Iran. "Rapidly shrinking buffers amid continued disruptions may

herald future price spikes ahead," it warned in its monthly report. Tehran has effectively closed the strategic Strait of Hormuz to Gulf oil and gas exports, sending prices soaring and forcing nations to scramble for alternative supplies. The IEA said in March that it would provide global markets with 400 million barrels from the emergency stocks of IEA members, of which around 164 million barrels has already been drawn. "The pace of emergency stock releases picked up pace in

April, with further volumes set to hit the market in the coming months," the agency said. Fears of shortages are rising with the summer travel season approaching in the northern hemisphere, with airlines already warning of jet fuel shortages in a matter of weeks if supply disruptions persist. "With global oil inventories already drawing at a record clip, further price volatility appears likely ahead of the peak summer demand period," the agency said. Surging prices are also weighing

on the demand outlook as end users such as petrochemical and heavy manufacturers reduce usage. The agency now expects global demand to shrink by 2.4 million barrels per day (mb/d) in the second quarter, down from its forecast of a 3.5 mb/d before the Mideast war erupted. "Higher prices, a deteriorating economic environment and demand-saving measures will further weigh on global oil consumption" going forward, it said. — AFP

ISRAELI STRIKES KILL 12 IN LEBANON AHEAD OF US-MEDIATED TALKS



First responders intervene on a vehicle targeted by an Israeli drone strike on a highway near the town of Jiyeh, south of Beirut. — AFP

BEIRUT: Twelve people were killed by a series of Israeli strikes on cars in Lebanon, the health ministry said, as conflict between Hezbollah and Israel continued on the eve of a third round of U.S.-mediated talks between Lebanon and Israel. More than 10 weeks into the war that spiralled out of the Iran conflict, Hezbollah confirmed that the commander of its elite Radwan force was killed in an Israeli strike in Beirut's southern suburbs last week.

Hezbollah and Israel have been trading blows despite a US-mediated ceasefire announced last month, with hostilities largely focused in southern Lebanon, where Israeli forces are occupying a self-declared security zone. Israel's attacks on Wednesday included three drone strikes targeting vehicles well beyond the main theatre of conflict in the south, on the coastal highway some 20 km south of Beirut, security sources in Lebanon said.

CHILDREN KILLED The health ministry said those strikes killed eight people, including two children. A fourth strike killed one person near the southern city

The health ministry said those strikes killed eight people, including two children. A fourth strike killed one person near the southern city of Sidon, 40 km from Beirut, it said. Three more people were killed in Israeli air strikes on cars in three locations further south in Tyre district

of Sidon, 40 km from Beirut, it said. Three more people were killed in Israeli air strikes on cars in three locations further south in Tyre district, the ministry said. The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the strikes.

It said it was striking Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon and told residents to leave nine towns and villages where it intended to act against the group. Hezbollah announced new attacks on Israeli forces in the south, including several using kamikaze drones.

WASHINGTON TALKS Israel announced last week it had killed the commander of Hezbollah's Radwan force in a May 6 strike on the Hezbollah-controlled suburbs, identifying him as Ahmed Ali Balout. A Hezbollah funeral notice confirmed the death of the "martyr commander Ahmed Ghaleb Balout". A Hezbollah official confirmed it was the same person.

Balout is one of the most senior Hezbollah figures killed in the war so far. It was Israel's first attack in the Beirut area since the April 16

ceasefire. The US-mediated ceasefire was initially declared for 10 days and then extended by three weeks, meaning it should expire around May 17. It emerged after the highest-level contacts between Lebanon and Israel in decades, with Washington hosting two meetings between the Lebanese and Israeli ambassadors to the US last month. Hezbollah strongly opposes the face-to-face contacts.

The US State Department will facilitate two days of talks between Israel and Lebanon on Thursday and Friday. The talks, which will build on an April 23 meeting led by US President Donald Trump, aim to advance "a comprehensive peace and security agreement", US State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott said in a May 8 statement.

During a meeting with the US Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa on Monday, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun urged the US to put pressure on Israel to cease fire and stop home demolitions in the south. Israel has been razing villages in the south, where it says it aims to shield northern Israel from Hezbollah embedded in civilian areas.— Reuters

1

ISRAEL STRIKES LEBANON

Israel intensified strikes on Lebanon on Wednesday, with Beirut's health ministry reporting 12 people, including two children, killed in attacks.

2

RECORD OIL DRAW-DOWN

Countries are tapping into oil inventories and strategic reserves at a "record pace" due to supply disruption during the Middle East war.

3

ITALY MINESWEEPERS

Italy said it was sending two warships closer to the Gulf but would only deploy them as part of an international mission in case of a lasting truce.

4

CHINA URGES PAKISTAN

China's top diplomat urged Pakistan to step up mediation efforts, and help to "properly" address the reopening of Hormuz.

5

IRAN'S MISSILE CAPABILITIES

The New York Times reported that classified US intelligence assessments say Iran still has substantial missile capabilities.

6

AUSTRALIAN SHIPPING DEFENCE

Defence Minister Richard Marles said Australia will join a "strictly defensive" mission led by France and Britain to secure shipping.

7

INDIA APPROVES GAS PLAN

India approved a nearly \$4 billion plan on Wednesday to expand coal gasification aiming to ease energy supply pressures.

8

US INFLATION SPIKES

Consumer inflation in the US hit a three-year high, with the economic fallout of Trump's Iran war rippling through the economy.

9

IRAN SAYS US MUST ACCEPT DEAL

Iran's chief negotiator said that Washington must accept Tehran's latest peace plan or face failure, after Trump warned the truce collapse.

10

US DOESN'T NEED CHINA'S HELP

US President Donald Trump insisted he does not need help from China on ending the war with Iran but said he would talk with Xi Jinping.

OPINION

Why are Britons so fed up?



MARK JOHN

The writer is Economics Editor at Reuters

LESS THAN two years, Britain's governing Labour Party has gone from a landslide election victory to a historic rout at last week's local and regional votes that has put Prime Minister Keir Starmer's job on the line. While incumbents across Europe face similar difficulties, Britain's politics have become ever more febrile in the decade since it voted to leave the European Union: Starmer, its sixth leader since then, promised change but has struggled to deliver. While much of the voter anger appears to be directed at Starmer himself, opinion polls consistently point to a handful of core sources of frustration at both national and local level. The gnawing sense of decline in current living standards and future prospects is felt by many households across the industrialised world. In Britain, that is sharpened by big earnings disparities between the wealthiest and the rest of society: OECD data show higher-than-average levels of income inequality and a big gap in the earnings of the top 10 per cent and those of the rest. Moreover, inflation has proven "stickier" in Britain than elsewhere - one reason why its interest rates are higher than in the euro zone, pushing up mortgage repayments for

houseowners. A high exposure to gas prices also means Britain's economy is seen as being hit harder than others by the Iran war. The tax take is also on course to reach a historic high, infuriating many voters, especially at a time when a record number of people are reliant on welfare benefits, feeding into an argument about fairness. This is among the most polarising themes in domestic politics and sometimes beats the economy into second place as a top voter concern. Controlling immigration was a top priority for pro-Brexit voters in the 2016 referendum, but net arrivals reached record levels after it left the bloc - boosting the ratings of the anti-immigration Reform UK party of Brexit-backer Nigel Farage. Since a 2023 peak, net immigration forecasts have been revised down, not least because more Britons are leaving the country. Improving public services eroded by years of austerity after the global financial crisis of the late 2000s was a key election promise of Starmer in 2024 - and in particular to revitalise a state-run National Health Service stretched close to breaking point by the Covid-19 pandemic. Waiting lists for healthcare hit a peak in 2023 and have since fallen back, but they remain above pre-pandemic levels with lengthy backlogs

While much of the voter anger appears to be directed at Starmer himself, opinion polls consistently point to a handful of core sources of frustration at both national and local level

for many services. There is also widespread exasperation at under-resourced local government and justice services, plus patchy access to NHS dentistry. Polling by the YouGov market research company ahead of the elections showed dissatisfaction with the state of Britain's roads ranked highest among local concerns, with 37 per cent saying it was the single most important issue facing their local area in a survey released last month. There has been a huge media focus on the dangers caused by unrepaired potholes despite extra funds to help local authorities fix their roads. One widely cited industry estimate in March said the backlog of repairs now meant only half the road network could be classified as in good condition. Although headline statistics show a long-term drop in crime rates for most offences, surveys show one in five people consistently see crime and insecurity as the most important issue facing the country. Analysts say some of that could be down to the way crime is portrayed in the media or features in TV shows. Others note genuine concern about the rise in specific offences like shoplifting, low conviction rates for other crimes and delays in justice due to lack of resources in the prosecution service.

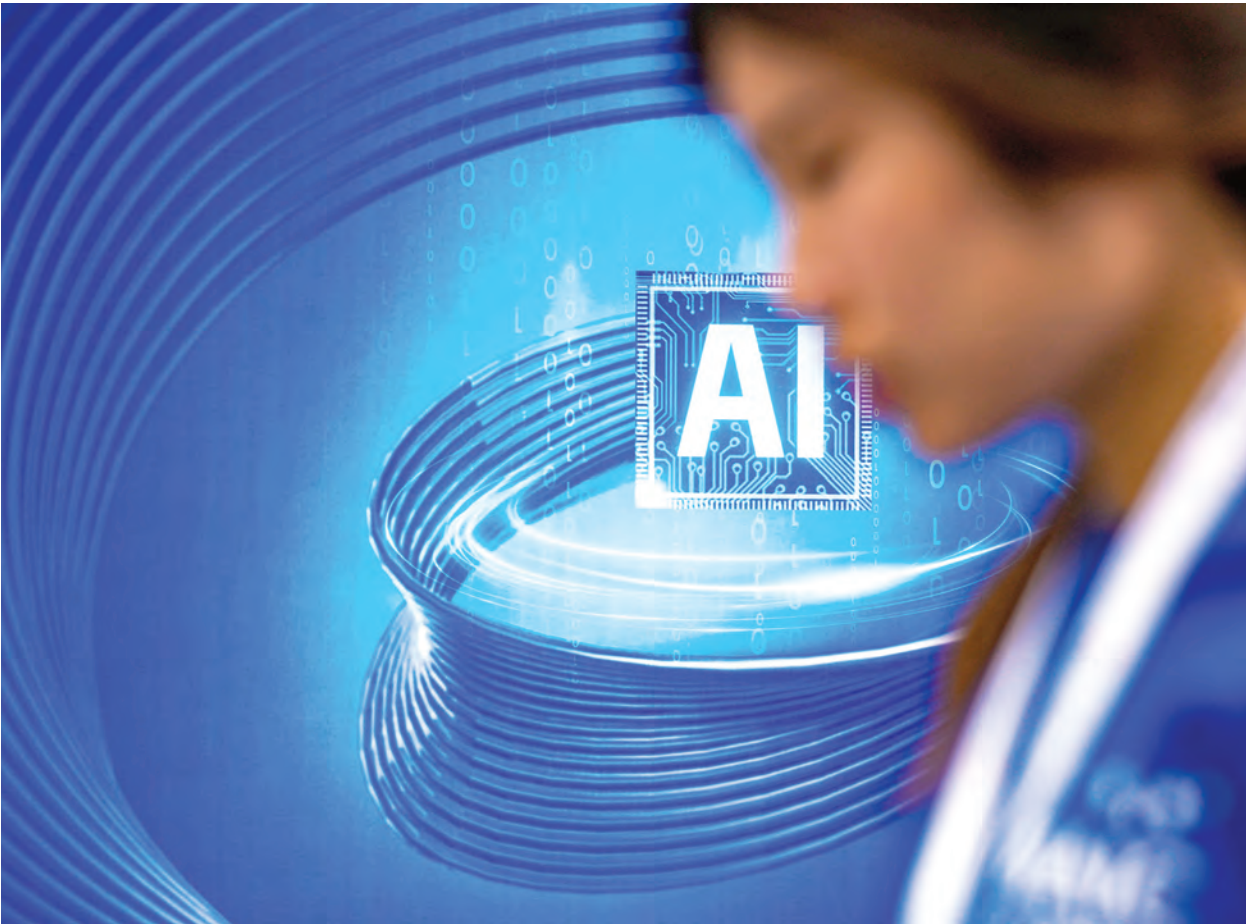
FOR HANTAVIRUS, EXPERTS AIM TO INFORM

CHLOE RABS AND ISABELLE CORTES

Thrust back into the front line by a deadly hantavirus outbreak, infectious disease experts have to balance informing the public about its potential risks without provoking undue fear of a Covid-scale pandemic. The deaths of three cruise ship passengers during a rare hantavirus outbreak have sparked international alarm — and flashbacks to when the world tipped into a pandemic six years ago. Among the living, seven people have been confirmed to have hantavirus, including a French woman in a critical condition, while an eighth case is considered “probable”, according to an AFP tally. All the suspected infections have been among people who were on board the ship; several nations have quarantined those who were in contact with passengers. The World Health Organization has said it expects more cases to emerge but emphasised there “is no sign that we are seeing the start of a larger outbreak”. In a throwback to the Covid era, the outbreak has put infectious disease specialists, virologists and epidemiologists back into the news. When epidemiologist Antoine Flahault addressed a French governmental health conference alongside other health experts on Tuesday, he urged scientists, journalists and the general public to “be wary of preconceived notions”. There are important lessons to be learnt from how the science of Covid was communicated, the professor at the Paris Cité University said. “First, that we did not know everything. Second, that knowledge was evolving... and that there were very lively debates among scientists on aspects that sometimes surprised the public,” Flahault said. Luc Ginot, who served as a regional public health director in France during the pandemic, said it was important doctors did not “disseminate just any information that might disrupt the coherence of the overall health response”. Health experts — and the WHO — have been emphasising that hantavirus is not comparable to Covid, and that the risk to the wider public remains low. Unlike Covid, the Andes strain of hantavirus is not new, and a few previous human-to-human transmission events have been studied. However, some experts have also called on health authorities not to overstate what is known about hantavirus while trying to tamp down pandemic fears. “I’m not particularly worried there will be much onward spread of hantavirus,” Jennifer Nuzzo, a professor of epidemiology at Brown University in the United States, wrote on Bluesky. — AFP

The chain of AI fears

FEAR OF Missing Out (FOMO) is a familiar psychological experience. It describes the uneasy feeling that others are enjoying experiences, opportunities, or achievements that we are not part of. With the rise of social media, this feeling has intensified. Continuous exposure to selected highlights of other people's lives has created a constant comparison loop, often leading to anxiety, distraction and even compulsive digital engagement. Today, however, FOMO is evolving into a new form shaped by AI. We are beginning to experience what might be described as a form of AI-driven FOMO, the fear of missing out on the opportunities and capabilities offered by AI. Unlike traditional FOMO, this is not only about social experiences, but about productivity, relevance and even professional survival. Many individuals now feel pressure to use AI not just within their expertise, but also beyond it, simply to keep pace with accelerating technological change. This raises an important question: is this adaptation a necessary step towards efficiency, or is it another layer of anxiety being amplified by technology itself? At its core, this reflects a shift in how we relate to progress. The faster innovation moves, the more pressure individuals feel to constantly upgrade their skills, tools and ways of working, sometimes without clear direction or boundaries. AI, in this sense, does not only offer capability; it introduces a new kind of urgency. At the same time, a contrasting fear is emerging: the fear of exposure through AI systems. As organisations and individuals adopt powerful AI tools, concerns



AI does not only offer capability; it introduces a new kind of urgency.



AHLAM AL BALUSHI

Head of AI Team, Ministry of Information and a Academic Researcher and also serves as lecturer at SQU

about data privacy, security and control are increasing. Ironically, many of the same global technology companies that provide email, search engines and cloud services are now also delivering advanced AI systems. So why does trust feel more fragile now? The answer may lie in perception. AI does not only process information; it amplifies uncertainty. Its scale, autonomy and generative capabilities make users question what is being collected, how it is used and who ultimately controls it. What emerges, therefore, is a paradoxical psychological state. On one side, there is the fear of missing out on AI-driven opportunities. On the other hand, there is the fear of being exposed or losing control through the same systems. We are no longer dealing with a single fear of technology, but a chain of competing fears that define our relationship with AI, pulling us simultaneously towards adoption and hesitation. In the end, perhaps the challenge is not to resolve these fears, but to recognise how closely they are tied to the way we now experience progress. Every major technological shift has carried its own sense of uncertainty, yet it is often this uncertainty that reshapes how societies adapt, learn and redefine balance. AI may be accelerating this tension, but it is also revealing something deeper about us: our constant negotiation between opportunity and control, between speed and understanding. And within that space, the way forward slowly becomes clearer.

The poetry of nature’s beauty...



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is a journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

IN A FAST-PACED world, we don’t have the time to weave into the spirit of a place or to root ourselves in the land. Yet, reconnecting with nature is more than a pastime. It is essential for imaginative expression, leading to art, poetry and photography that capture nature’s wonders.

I have met several designers, artists and photographers who spend hours looking for the right moment to capture the sunrise, the bees kissing the flowers, the colourful stones along the beach, the exquisite rocks in the desert, or the various colours and shapes of the dunes.

These acts of enchantment allow a person to slow down and reconnect with the simple beauty of nature. When one is enchanted by the land and its beauty, it is an experience that dissolves the boundaries between the self and the world. It is a form of love and a sublime experience.

I have been in love with Oman for the last 18 years. Each time I drive around the country, I feel a sense of respect for nature. There is an overwhelming feeling of turning the natural world into a feast for my eyes. I am grateful that I am capable of seeing it, and I admire such a source of quiet wonder as the glowing, bright yellow splendour

of sunset behind mountains, or when the desert explodes into life with lush grass and wildflowers.

There is this feeling as if I am witnessing the ‘beginnings of life’ or seeing the world as brighter and more magical. For a moment, I can rest my thoughts away from the news on politics, wars and genocide. I find myself lost in thoughts and listening to the stories of the land, the streams, the wind and the scenery.

The variety of natural landscapes gives me a better understanding of the linkages between individuals and their surroundings. Each village, each dirt track, each waterfall tells a unique story. People do not attach themselves to abstract classifications such as ‘the environment’ or ‘biodiversity,’ but to tangible landscapes they were born in, live in, or work in.

While the visual pleasure of high-definition natural landscapes (green spaces, water and blue skies) gives rise to a positive mood and a sense of calm, I recognise that it has also become a commodity.

The connectedness to nature has grown from a visual aesthetic perspective to a general understanding that encompasses social, cultural and economic dimensions. It highlights the close relationship between natural landscapes and tourism, with

I have been in love with Oman for the last 18 years. Each time I drive around the country, I feel a sense of respect for nature. There is an overwhelming feeling of turning the natural world into a feast for my eyes

landscapes serving as a key resource and attraction for nature-based tourism activities.

Natural landscapes as a common good and tourism are relevant drivers of territorial development, with both contributing to considerations of places and mobility. This has a complex relationship where landscapes serve as the primary attraction, resource and destination, while tourism actions actively transform, manage and commodify these environments.

The processes of valorisation and stereotyping of countryside areas are explored, emphasising their influence on tourists’ perceptions and destination choice.

It is easy to understand why I am in love with Oman. Despite its dramatic contrasts, which exist side by side, it is a fragile land. This enchantment is shaped by personal experiences and sociocultural factors.

It is a voyage to read my article, Jewels of a flourishing history, published by Oman Daily Observer two years ago, on the treasure trove of narratives from the country’s early 1970s. It highlights that Oman has amazing stories to tell the world, not just from people’s fascinating memories but also from its waters, mountains, dunes and the most beautiful starry nights. Tourism and culture shape how we perceive and value natural beauty.

WHY INDIA’S HIGHER TARIFFS ARE UNLIKELY TO DENT GOLD DEMAND

RAJENDRA JADHAV

India, the world’s second-largest gold consumer, has raised tariffs on gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent in a bid to curb imports and ease pressure on its foreign exchange reserves, as the Iran war strains New Delhi’s balance of payments. India meets nearly all of its domestic gold demand through imports and has repeatedly sought to curb consumption. Gold is deeply woven into India’s weddings, festivals and cultural traditions, making purchases more essential than discretionary.

India’s current account deficit is under pressure from precious metals imports, which New Delhi views as non-essential.

While gold and silver import volumes have remained broadly steady, soaring prices have sharply increased the bill, widened external outflows and weighed on the rupee.

India spent a record \$84 billion on gold and silver imports in the fiscal year to March, from \$35.5 billion a decade earlier.

India, which is also the world’s largest consumer of silver, uses it in jewellery, coins, bars and industrial applications ranging from solar energy to electronics.

Over the past year, demand has been driven more by investment than traditional jewellery and silverware, with inflows into silver ETFs rising to a record high. Indian buyers are price-sensitive, and sharp price rises often prompt them to delay purchases. Yet despite local gold prices rising by 443 per cent over the past decade, annual demand has remained broadly steady at 666-803 metric tonnes, averaging about 718 tonnes.

Demand was also resilient when India raised gold import tariffs to 10 per cent from 2 per cent between 2012 and 2013. After already absorbing a 76.5-per cent rise in gold prices in 2025, buyers are unlikely to stop purchasing because of a 9-per cent tariff hike. Indian households buy gold for long-term value and a hedge against inflation and currency weakness, while in rural areas farmers often use it as a financial buffer during emergencies.

Gold-backed loans are also among the quickest ways for millions of Indians to access funds, with banks and finance companies offering credit within minutes. Jewellery demand has traditionally accounted for nearly 75 per cent of India’s total gold consumption, while investment demand - in the form of coins, bars and gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) - makes up the rest.

Demand for jewellery was already weakening because of high prices, and further gains are likely to hit purchases in the short term and push buyers towards lower-carat items.

Investors buy gold in anticipation of price gains, while Indian consumers traditionally view the metal as a safe-haven asset and a hedge against inflation.

Higher tariffs raise local prices, reinforcing gold’s appeal as an appreciating asset. Rising prices can also draw in new investors worried about missing further gains. — Reuters

Trusted by all, but dependent on none

MANY romanticised versions of the emerging world order are now being projected. Yet the reality is more sober. The emerging fracture inside the Western alliance is not a divorce. It is something more subtle, and perhaps more consequential: strategic distancing.

Europe is not abandoning the USA, nor is Canada suddenly turning anti-American. Nato remains intact, the dollar remains dominant, and the USA remains the single most powerful military and financial actor in the world. Yet beneath the surface, something important is changing. Allies of Washington are increasingly trying to reduce their exposure to American unpredictability, domestic political volatility and the weaponisation of economic interdependence.

The recent gathering of European leaders alongside the Canadian Prime Minister reflected precisely this mood. What was once discussed quietly in strategic circles is now openly shaping policy: diversification of partnerships, supply chains, security arrangements and economic dependencies. Europe speaks increasingly of strategic autonomy. Canada is seeking broader trade and political anchoring beyond the USA. Across the G7 and wider OECD world, the language of resilience has replaced the older confidence in globalisation.

This shift matters because it signals the gradual transformation of the post-Cold War order. For decades, the Western system rested on a broad assumption: economic integration would deepen political trust, while security guarantees provided by the USA would underpin a relatively stable liberal order. That assumption has weakened. Trade wars, sanctions, tariffs, technology restrictions and supply chain disruptions have demonstrated that interdependence can be used coercively. The growing confrontation between the USA and China has accentuated and institutionalised this thinking.

The result is a new global logic: states are no longer asking only whether a relationship is profitable. They are asking whether it is survivable.



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

This is why central banks continue accumulating gold. It is why governments are redesigning industrial policy around critical minerals, semiconductors, food security and energy resilience. It is why middle powers are multiplying trade agreements, logistics corridors and financial partnerships.

In such an environment, smaller and medium-sized states face both danger and opportunity. The danger lies in becoming trapped inside rival blocs, losing strategic flexibility, or allowing security dependency to dictate national economic choices. The opportunity lies in becoming trusted connectors in a more fragmented world.

For Oman, this moment is remarkably important.

Oman’s long-term advantage has never been based on military weight or demographic scale. It has rested instead on credibility, moderation, access and trust. Those qualities are often underestimated because they are difficult to quantify. Yet in periods of fragmentation, they become forms of strategic capital.

The lesson from the current international environment is therefore not that Oman should choose sides. That would misunderstand both the nature of the transition and Oman’s own historical strengths. Instead, Oman should pursue a doctrine that can be summarised simply: trusted by all, dependent on none.

This does not mean isolationism, nor neutrality in the passive sense. It means active multi-alignment. Oman should preserve and deepen its strategic relationships with the USA and the UK, while simultaneously expanding structured partnerships with Europe, India, China, Asean economies, Africa, and emerging middle powers such as Canada.

Nor does “dependent on none” mean that Oman can or should eliminate all dependencies. No modern state can do that. The real objective is managed dependency: diversified exposure, deeper domestic capability and enough sovereign optionality to prevent any single partner, currency, market, route, platform or supplier from becoming a point of strategic vulnerability.

Economically, this means

reducing excessive reliance on any single market, transit route, reserve structure or technological ecosystem. Strategically, it means separating security cooperation from economic overreliance. Institutionally, it means building the national capacity to absorb shocks without losing policy independence.

This requires practical instruments, not slogans. Oman would benefit from a national strategic dependency dashboard, tracking exposure across currencies, food imports, shipping routes, insurance costs, technology platforms, defence procurement and critical supply chains. Such a tool would not replace diplomacy or markets, but it would give decision-makers a clearer picture of where dependence is becoming risk.

Oman’s geography gives it unusual leverage in this regard. Duqm, Suhar, Salalah and Muscat are not merely ports or industrial and administrative centres. Properly integrated, they can become neutral platforms linking Asia, Africa, Europe and the Gulf. In a world increasingly divided into competing blocs, trusted safe logistical and financial gateways become more valuable, not less.

The same logic applies to finance. The future may not produce a post-dollar world anytime soon, but it is clearly producing a less singular one. Reserve diversification, regional settlement systems, Islamic finance and strategic commodity holdings will increasingly shape sovereign resilience. The states that manage diversification prudently rather than ideologically will have greater policy flexibility.

Oman should also treat its growing relationship with India as a strategic platform, not merely a trade relationship. India’s rise, its energy needs, its technology capabilities and its access to the Indian Ocean make it a natural partner for Oman’s ports, logistics, manufacturing, food security and digital economy. Similar discipline should guide engagement with Europe, Canada, China, Africa and Asean: not dependence on any one corridor, but the deliberate multiplication of useful corridors to markets.

This is not opportunism. It is adaptation with resilience.

SPORTS

ITALIAN OPEN



Poland’s Iga Swiatek celebrates after winning against USA’s Jessica Pegula during the ATP Rome Open tournament at Foro Italico in Rome. — AFP

Revived Swiatek cruises past Pegula to book semifinals

ROME: Iga Swiatek gave another indication that she might be back to her brilliant best after destroying Jessica Pegula 6-1, 6-2 at the Foro Italico on Wednesday and breezing into the Italian Open semifinals.

A three-time champion in Rome, Swiatek took little more than an hour to take care of fifth seed Pegula on centre court, without facing a single break point.

It was a show of force on her preferred surface not seen since she last won the French Open two years ago, and gave Swiatek her first semifinal appearance of the season.

“I’ve been playing a bit differently, I would say. More similar to how I played couple years ago, more like a clay court player,” Swiatek told reporters.

“I guess all the things that we practiced really clicked during last few matches.”

Swiatek has set up a clash with either second seed Elena Rybakina or Elina Svitolina, also in action on centre court on Wednesday, in the last four.

A potential decider with reigning Roland Garros champion Coco Gauff awaits for the winner of that last-four match-up in Saturday’s final.

Pole Swiatek hasn’t won a clay-court tournament since claiming the most recent of her four Roland Garros titles, with personal problems a factor in her poor performances.

But since struggling through her second-round win against Caty McNally Swiatek has dropped just seven games in three matches.

Swiatek, a six-time Grand Slam champion, recently took on board Francisco Roig, the former coach of men’s clay-court icon Rafael Nadal after a difficult opening few months of the season.

In the men’s tournament Casper Ruud’s bid to reach his first Masters 1000 semifinal since winning in Madrid last year, was interrupted by rain in the Italian capital. — AFP

Oman start with 2 bronze medals in taekwondo

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 13

OMAN began their campaign at the fourth GCC Games Doha 2026 with two bronze medals in taekwondo, as the national teams opened their participation in the multi-sport event, which runs in the Qatari capital until May 22.

Nibras bin Mohammed al Touqi gave Oman their first podium finish after claiming bronze in the men’s 58 kg category, while Umaina bint Harib al Hinai added a second bronze in the women’s 49 kg division. In the men’s 80 kg category, Omar al Sinani bowed out after losing to Kuwait’s Abdullah Patel.

In women’s 3x3 basketball, Oman exited the competition in the first round after two defeats. The team lost their opening match to hosts Qatar 15-10, before producing a stronger performance against Kuwait. Oman pushed the match into overtime after the regular period ended 11-11, but Kuwait eventually edged the contest 13-12.

Oman’s table tennis team also started their campaign with a 3-0 defeat against Saudi Arabia in the team event. In another fixture, Bahrain defeated Qatar 3-1.

At the swimming pool, Oman’s aquatic sports team featured in three events. Hamad bin Sulaiman al Hasani finished fifth in the men’s 800m freestyle, while Mishal al Kulaibi came seventh in the men’s 50m freestyle with a time of 24.84 seconds. Mohammed al Wahaibi finished ninth in the same race in 25.11 seconds and also placed ninth in the men’s 100m backstroke with a time of 1:09.89.

Oman will return to action on the third day with athletics, shooting, fencing, table tennis and swimming events on the schedule. The athletics team will begin their campaign in sprint, relay and field events, including the 100m, 200m, 400m, 4x100m relay, long jump, triple jump, high jump and hammer throw.

The shooting team will take part in official training for the 10m rifle event ahead of the start of competition on Friday, while the fencing team begins its campaign in the men’s individual epee and women’s foil events.

In table tennis, Oman will continue their participation in the men’s doubles quarterfinals against Saudi Arabia. In the



Oman’s delegation was received by Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Qatar.



Nibras bin Mohammed al Touqi gave Oman their first podium finish after claiming bronze.



Umaina bint Harib al Hinai added a second bronze for Oman in taekwondo .

singles event, Muhannad bin Khalifa al Balushi will face UAE’s Issa al Balushi, Bilal al Rashdi will meet Saudi Arabia’s Ali al Khadrawi and Ahmed al Riyami will take on Qatar’s Mohammed Abdulwahab.

Oman’s aquatic sports team will conclude its participation with Mishal al Kulaibi competing in the men’s 50m butterfly.

AMBASSADOR RECEIVES TEAM

Earlier, Oman’s delegation was also received by Sayyid Ammar bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Qatar, in the presence of Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamakhalif, Secretary-General of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), Dr Marwan bin Juma al Juma, Deputy Head of Oman’s delegation to the Games, Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, Chairman of the Oman Basketball Association (OBA),

and members of the administrative and technical delegation.

During the meeting, the ambassador welcomed the Omani delegation and wished them success in their participation at the GCC Games, expressing hope that the national teams would achieve positive results that reflect the progress of Omani sport and its strong presence at Gulf events. He also praised the efforts of the OOC and the sports federations in preparing the national teams for the Games.

The delegation officials expressed their thanks and appreciation to the ambassador for the warm reception and his keenness to follow the participation of Oman’s national teams, stressing that such support provides a strong morale boost for the athletes and delegation members as they look to deliver their best performances during the Games.

All-Omani cricket squad eyes historic Asian Games berth

MUSCAT: A new chapter in the country’s cricket journey begins next month as an all-Omani squad competes in the Asian Games Men’s Qualifier in Singapore under the captaincy of Sufyan Mehmood.

The 14-member side, made up entirely of homegrown talent, marks a milestone in Oman cricket’s development as the ambitious squad prepares for its maiden appearance on the continental stage. The T20I qualifiers, featuring 13 nations, will be held from May 31 to June 9.

Oman begin their Group B campaign against Maldives on June 1 before facing hosts Singapore on June 3.

Under the tournament format, the top two teams from each of the four groups will advance to the quarterfinals, with the four winners progressing to the semifinals and securing qualification for the Asian Games.

Apart from Oman, Maldives and Singapore in Group B, the other teams competing for four qualification spots at the 20th Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya,

Japan, are Nepal, Thailand and Indonesia (Group A); Hong Kong, Bahrain and South Korea (Group C); and Malaysia, Qatar, China and Uzbekistan (Group D).

The top four teams from the qualifiers will join defending champions India, along with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and hosts Japan at the Asian Games, scheduled from September 17 to October 3.

With vice-captain Muzaffar Shiralkar as his deputy, Sufyan will lead a youthful squad. The team, coached by former Oman skipper Sultan Ahmed, will depart in the final week of May and arrive early in Singapore to acclimatise to conditions and play preparatory matches ahead of the tournament.

YEAR-LONG PREPARATIONS

With the aim of building a competitive side for the Asian Games, Oman Cricket (OC) launched the all-Omani team project in March 2025.

The initiative aims to develop a fully Omani squad as cricket strengthens its presence in multi-



Omani national team for the Asian Games Qualifiers 2026.

sport events such as the Asian Games and Olympics.

The squad has already gained valuable exposure through a bilateral series against Bahrain last year, where Oman suffered a narrow 1-2 defeat.

To further strengthen the programme, OC has introduced player contracts to support the squad’s semi-professional development while ensuring access to national-team-level coaching, fitness and preparation facilities.

The entire programme and tour

are being funded directly by Oman Cricket, underlining its long-term commitment to nurturing domestic talent.

Captain Mehmood highlighted the significance of the opportunity.

“It is great to lead an all-Omani team as we bid to make history by qualifying for the Asian Games. It would be a proud moment for Oman cricket if we qualify. It’s a huge platform for the players, especially with many of them set to make their T20 international debut. Hopefully, we can achieve the desired results, and I can use

my experience to help the team qualify,” he said.

Team manager Said bin Haider al Balushi also underlined the importance of the project.

“The Omani cricket team has been prepared over the course of a full year through a structured plan and intensive efforts by both the coaching staff and players in preparation for the Asian Games qualification tournament. The team proudly features a group of ambitious Omani youth, and we wish them every success on the international stage,” he said.

He added that the initiative aligns with Oman Vision 2040 and reflects the country’s commitment to empowering youth through sport.

OMAN SQUAD: Sufyan Mehmood (captain), Muzaffar Shiralkar (vice-captain), Mohammed al Balushi, Shoaib al Balushi, Zubair al Balushi, Abdul Jalil, Issa al Balushi, Samir Yousuf, Naveed al Balushi, Ahmed al Zadjali, Wasim al Balushi, Faris al Balushi, Rashad al Balushi, Munthir al Balushi.

Support staff: Coach Sultan Ahmed, assistant coach Parviz al Balushi, manager Said bin Haider al Balushi, physiotherapist Saravanan.

NBAPLAYOFFS



San Antonio Spurs' Victor Wembanyama (1) drives to the basket against Minnesota Timberwolves' Naz Reid (11) during game five. — *Imagn Images*

WEMBANYAMA LEADS SPURS TO BRINK AS T'WOLVES ROUTED

LOS ANGELES: Victor Wembanyama scored 27 points as the San Antonio Spurs moved to within one win of the NBA Western Conference finals with an emphatic 126-97 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Tuesday.

French star Wembanyama was back in the Spurs line-up after escaping a suspension for his ejection in game four on Sunday, when he smashed an elbow into the throat of Minnesota's Naz Reid in a heavy defeat.

The towering 7ft 4in center took full advantage of that disciplinary reprieve on Tuesday, scoring 16 points in a blistering opening to the first quarter as San Antonio surged into a 24-9 lead.

Wembanyama finished the night with 27 points, 17 rebounds, five assists and three blocks in a typically dominant performance at both ends of the court. The win leaves Spurs 3-2 ahead in the best-of-seven series, with game six in Minneapolis on Friday. While Wembanyama's individual brilliance grabbed the headlines, once again the Spurs' strength in numbers proved decisive, with six players finishing in double figures.

"We played with the appropriate fear, discipline, execution, physicality and poise, and we had it from an array of people tonight, and it was really good to see," Spurs head coach Mitch Johnson said.

Keldon Johnson scored 21 points while De'Aaron Fox finished with 18 and point guard Stephon Castle 17. "We did what we were supposed to do at home," Wembanyama told NBC. "We had to set the tone, we knew it was going to be a physical game. We won, so that's the point. But the job's not finished. We've got one more game to get to the conference finals."

Spurs coach Johnson praised Wembanyama's maturity in not letting the turbulent aftermath of game four affect his performance.

"There's a lot that happened in the last 48 hours after the last game," Johnson said. "I think how that young man came out tonight and played in a variety of situations, not just in his production, was extremely mature."

WONDERFUL WEMBY

Minnesota were left ruing their inability to maintain momentum after a stirring third-quarter fightback. Trailing 59-47 at half-time, Minnesota launched a 14-2 run to start the third that allowed them to tie it up at 61-61.

But the Wolves' rally was the catalyst for another dominant passage of play from San Antonio, who regrouped and pulled away to take a 91-73 lead by the end of the quarter.

"We went away from what was working," Timberwolves head coach Chris Finch said. "Then the defence just cratered — we gave up 30 points in the last six minutes of the third quarter.

"That's my job, I've gotta get us back on track." San Antonio kept the points flowing in the fourth, outscoring Minnesota 35-24 to wrap up a deserved victory. — *AFP*



Victor Wembanyama (1) reaches for a rebound over Minnesota Timberwolves' Julius Randle (30).

Al Rustaq post first home win, Sur secure safety

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

ROUND

24 of the Jindal League opened with two significant results at both ends of the table, as Sur secured their top-flight status with a 2-1 win over Al Khabourah, while already-relegated Al Rustaq celebrated their first home victory of the season with a 2-0 win over Ibri.

At Sur Sports Complex, the home side collected three vital points to guarantee survival in the Jindal League. Sur took the lead in the 23rd minute when foreign player Axel May converted from the penalty spot after the ball struck Al Khabourah defender Rashid al Hosni inside the area.

The match remained competitive throughout, with Sur enjoying more of the first-half control through better organisation and movement, while Al Khabourah looked to threaten on the break. The visitors nearly found an equaliser before the interval when Saeed Obeid struck the crossbar in the 38th minute, and they carried that attacking intent into the second half.

Al Khabourah were rewarded in the 53rd minute when Salem Habib took advantage of defensive hesitation to bring his side level. The equaliser shifted momentum in favour of the visitors, who began to dominate midfield and looked the more dangerous team for a spell. They came close again in the 71st minute, only for Sur's goalkeeper Bilal al Balushi to make an important save and keep the scores level.

With both sides still pushing for a winner, Sur regained the lead in the 78th minute. Fahad al Hajri delivered a cross into the area, and Axel May rose well to head home his second goal of the night, sealing a crucial win for the hosts. Seven minutes of stoppage time were added, but Sur held firm to complete a result that lifted them to 28 points in eighth place and confirmed their survival. For Al Khabourah, the defeat left them on 21 points in 12th, still deep in the relegation fight.

AL RUSTAQ BLANK IBRI

At Al Rustaq Sports Complex, Al Rustaq registered their first home victory of the campaign with a 2-0 win over Ibri in a result that dealt a blow to the visitors' survival hopes. Although Al Rustaq had already been relegated, they produced a disciplined display and showed greater



Sur confirmed their survival in the Jindal League with a 2-1 win over Al Khabourah.



Players challenge for the ball during Al Rustaq's victory over Ibri.

composure in key moments. Ibri came into the match under pressure, knowing a positive result could help them move further away from danger. They tried to impose themselves through the middle and along the flanks, but their attacking play lacked the finishing touch. Al Rustaq, by contrast, made better use of their opportunities and played with purpose in front of their supporters. Cristian Catrina opened the scoring before Jaira Jov added a second to put the hosts in control. From there, Al Rustaq managed the contest well, limiting Ibri's attacking threat and preserving a clean sheet until the final whistle. The win moved Al Rustaq to 14 points, although they remained at the bottom of the standings, while Ibri stayed on 20 points in 13th place, still battling to avoid the drop with only two rounds remaining.

Rabada skittles Hyderabad to put Gujarat on top

AHMEDABAD, India: South Africa's Kagiso Rabada led an inspired pace attack to power Gujarat Titans to the top of the IPL table with an 82-run thrashing of Sunrisers Hyderabad on Tuesday.

Hosts Gujarat defended 168 in Ahmedabad as Rabada took 3-28 and, with his fellow quicks, bowled out Hyderabad for 86, their lowest ever score in the IPL.

Fellow quick Jason Holder cleaned up the Hyderabad middle and lower-order to claim 3-20 from his four overs.

"Worked out for us nicely," said Gujarat skipper Shubman Gill. "We bowled very well. We knew if we bowled well, we would always be in the game."

Former champions Gujarat leapfrogged Hyderabad and defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru to top the 10-team table, moving closer to a playoff spot. Gujarat have 16 points with eight wins from 12 matches and are favourites to finish in the top two after the league stage.

'RHYTHM IS EVERYTHING'

The top four will make the playoffs with the top two getting an extra chance to make the final



Gujarat Titans' Kagiso Rabada celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Sunrisers Hyderabad's Smaran Ravichandran. — *Reuters*

in Ahmedabad on May 31. Gujarat pace spearhead Mohammed Siraj struck in the first over of the Hyderabad chase as he dismissed Travis Head for a duck with the fourth ball of the innings. In the next over, Rabada removed the dangerous Abhishek Sharma for six before striking twice in his next two overs, having

skipper Ishan Kishan (11) caught behind by Jos Buttler followed by Ravichandran Smaran (9) miscuing to Gill at mid-off. "Season in, season out, all you try to do is do the best you can," said player of the match Rabada. "I have been backed and it has been clear what my role has been: leave everything out for the team. "Rhythm is everything.

And for me, it's about bowling as much as I can, but also preserving myself to be match-ready." On the bowling group, Rabada said, "We each have our own natural attributes that we bring as bowlers. And then it's about seeing how much you can extract off those attributes without looking too far ahead." Wickets kept tumbling as Holder took two in one over including Heinrich Klaasen, who made 14 to regain top spot in this season's IPL batting chart with 508 runs. Afghanistan leg-spinner Rashid Khan trapped Praful Hinge lbw for the final wicket as Gujarat bowled out Hyderabad in 14.5 overs. The batters set up victory after Sai Sudharsan, who made 61, and Washington Sundar put on 60 for the fourth wicket to lift Gujarat from early trouble to 168-5. Hyderabad pace bowler Hinge struck two early blows including Gill (5) and Buttler (7) to put Gujarat on the backfoot. Sudharsan counter-attacked as he struck five fours and two sixes in his 44-ball knock and after his exit fellow left-hander Sundar steered the team to a challenging total with his 33-ball 50. — *AFP*

SPORTS



Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi on a charge at the Qatar International Rally in February.



Oman's Zakariya al Aamri hopes to earn more points this time.

ABDULLAH, ZAKARIYA LEAD OMAN CHALLENGE AT JORDAN RALLY



أنفق
SPEND
10

أحصل
GET
5

VOUCHER قسيمة

GARMENTS • FOOTWEAR • LADIES BAGS
BABY ACCESSORIES

Selected Products only

For every 10 spent, get back 5 worth Shopping Voucher instantly to buy more Garments, Footwear, Ladies Bags & Baby Accessories.

Innerwear, Jewellery & Accessories are excluded from this offer.

11 - 31 May 2026

Lulu FASHION STORE

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
@anuroop_ath

OMAN rally star Abdullah al Rawahi will hope to mount a challenge against top-ranked Nasser Saleh al Attiyah of Qatar in the Jordan Rally that begins at the Hover-Up park on the shores of the Dead Sea from 7 pm on Thursday evening.

Seventeen crews representing 10 nations in the third round of FIA Middle East Rally Championship 2026 (Merc) will be joined by 21 teams registered for points in a pair of national rallies running on Friday and Saturday. All competitors will tackle a dozen special stages in the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea areas with 196.80 competitive kilometres in a route of 557.11 km.

Nasser Saleh al Attiyah, a 20-time regional champion, teams up with Spanish co-driver Candido Carrera in a bid to move up the points' standings after a win in Oman and a surprise retirement at his home event in Qatar. The Qatari is fourth in the rankings in an Autotek Motorsport Škoda Fabia RS and is chasing an unprecedented 18th victory in Jordan since 2003.

Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi won the Jordan Rally for the first time in 2023 and shadowed Al Attiyah to the finish in Oman back in January to pick up points for second. Like his rival, he retired in Qatar and needs a useful points score to rekindle his challenge for a second regional title.

Al Rawahi again teams up with local co-driver Ata al Hmoud in an Oman Rally Team Škoda Fabia RS.

"Happy to be back in Jordan. This is where I started my first step in the rally world. Looking forward to a good performance here," Al Rawahi said.

"I'm thorough with all the stages here. I hope to be on the podium this time as the champion. It will be a tough challenge as Nasser al Attiyah has more experience and a better team. But we will fight for the top place," the Omani rally driver added.

The event is again based at the Mövenpick Resort and Spa Dead Sea.

A new Shakedown stage of 4.83 km kickstarts the competitive action on Thursday. A revised Friday timetable features two passes through the Shuna (15.25 km), Baptism (11.24 km) and Ma'in (16.87 km) stages, split by a return to the Dead Sea for a midday service and regroup.

Saturday's revised schedule includes two runs through the Panorama (16.95 km), Suwayma (11.12 km) and Rawda (26.97 km) specials in the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea areas before the ceremonial finish takes place in the Hover-Up Park at the lowest place on earth from 18.30hrs.

ZAKARIYA SET FOR CHALLENGE
Competition in Merc2 comes from Oman's Zakariya al Aamri (Subaru) and Jordan's Sami Fleifel (Mitsubishi). Al Aamri is already 36 points adrift of the young Jordanian.

Zakariya said: "I do hope to be on the podium like last year. The race is a difficult one. We have good experience in Jordan and our team aims to claim more points in the Merc2 championship."

Eleven of the 21 entries in rounds two and three of the Jordan National Rally Championship are also registered for the FIA event.

Top seed in the national series is Al Rawahi, with Rally2 competition coming from Al Fayeze and Abu Hamdan.



MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
8,178.760

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$104.64
BRENT \$107.41
LIGHT \$101.85



SHORTTAKES



In 2025, four concession areas were offered for investment, with bids currently under evaluation, alongside 28 active concession areas.

3 new mining blocks, 3 projects to be offered for investment in 2026

AFRAH AH BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

2025 marked a qualitative shift in Oman’s minerals sector, underscoring the accelerated development of mining as a promising driver of economic diversification, said Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

This was demonstrated through the signing of several agreements and mining concession areas covering copper, chromium and salt resources, contributing to future revenues and increasing the sector’s contribution to GDP, with expectations of accelerated growth in the coming years driven by the commencement of operations in new concession areas.

Speaking at the annual media briefing, Al Aufi said this direction also aligns with a national vision to strengthen local content through the development of national capabilities and the localisation of industries and services associated with the sector.

In addition, a significant milestone was achieved with the completion of the digitalisation of all operations through the “Taqa” platform, enhancing efficiency, transparency and the overall investment environment.

In 2025, four concession areas were offered for investment, with bids currently under evaluation, alongside 28 active concession areas operated by 13 companies.

He added that further progress will be advanced during 2026 through the offering of three additional concession areas and three public investment sites, reflecting growing confidence among investors and international partners in the Omani market.

Eng Saud al Mahrouqi, Director General of Minerals, delivered a visual presentation highlighting the continued positive growth indicators achieved by Oman’s minerals sector, driven by a package of development policies aimed at enhancing investment attractiveness, maximising added value and reinforcing environmental sustainability principles, thereby supporting the sector’s role as a key driver of economic diversification.

Oman unveils low-carbon transition strategy

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

THE Ministry of Energy and Minerals has launched the updated National Zero Neutrality Plan and the regulatory framework for carbon markets, as part of the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to achieve zero carbon neutrality by 2050 and strengthen its position as a regional hub for green hydrogen and renewable energy.

The updated plan, prepared by the Oman Net Zero Centre, is based on a realistic assessment of emissions trajectory using up-to-date data. It prioritises reductions in line with the national economy, identifies the necessary enablers and financing; and explores opportunities for transitioning to a low-carbon economy.

Addressing the media on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, said the adoption of the updated National Net Zero Plan represents a strategic step towards building a robust, sustainable and low-carbon economy, enhancing Oman’s global standing and aligning with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

He explained that the Net Zero path yields significant economic and climate benefits by promoting green industries and boosting Oman’s competitiveness, while also providing the Sultanate of Oman with modern technologies to reduce emissions and contribute to increasing GDP.

He noted that the regulatory framework for carbon markets is a key enabler for implementing the plan. This comprehensive national regulatory framework for carbon markets in Oman establishes clear rules and simplified procedures that encourage the participation of the private sector and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), thereby contributing to job creation and diversifying the national economy’s sources of income.

The regulatory framework for



The regulatory framework for carbon markets is a key enabler for implementing the plan. This comprehensive national regulatory framework for carbon markets in Oman establishes clear rules and simplified procedures that encourage the participation of the private sector and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), thereby contributing to job creation and diversifying the national economy’s sources of income.

ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUFII
Minister of Energy and Minerals



Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, addressing the media.

carbon markets aims to transform the targeted 33% emissions reduction by 2035 into investable, verifiable and tradable carbon credits.

It also seeks to attract international and private investment to mitigation and adaptation projects across seven key national sectors, while solidifying the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a reliable supplier of high-quality carbon credits in global markets.

For his part, Eng Mohsin bin Sulaiman al Jabri, Director General of the Oman Net Zero Centre, affirmed that the updated national plan represents a comprehensive and systematic roadmap for emissions reduction at the national level.

He explained that its development involved a participatory process that included more than 300 experts and specialists from various sectors, through 14 specialised workshops with the participation of government and private entities.

He added that the Cabinet’s adoption of the regulatory framework for carbon markets will contribute to attracting the necessary technologies and financing for implementing emissions reduction projects and will enhance Oman’s presence in regional and global carbon markets.

He explained that launching the National Carbon Register via the “Meezan” platform provides a sophisticated digital infrastructure for tracking carbon credits and managing issuance, transfer and trading processes according to the highest standards of transparency and international compliance, while ensuring the prevention of double counting.

The plan indicated that total greenhouse gas emissions reached approximately 94 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2024, with projections indicating a rise to 127 million tonnes by 2050 if no further interventions are implemented.

The oil, gas, transportation and electricity sectors account for approximately 70% of total national emissions.

The plan adopted a mitigation cost curve methodology to classify technological solutions across three levels: low-cost technologies such as renewable energy, energy efficiency and public transportation; medium-cost solutions such as carbon capture and hydrogen use; and more ambitious technologies including full grid conversion and hydrogen vehicles.

The plan aims to reduce emissions by 33% compared to the baseline year of 2024, with a 7% mandatory target and a 26% voluntary target linked to securing the necessary funding and technologies and enhancing national capabilities. The goal is to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Oman plans first Round-the-Clock renewable energy project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 13

State-owned power and water offtaker Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (Nama PWP) plans to initiate the procurement of Oman’s first large-scale Round-the-Clock (RTC) renewable energy project integrating solar, wind and battery storage technologies.

The landmark RTC project represents a major evolution in Oman’s renewable energy strategy, moving beyond conventional standalone solar and wind developments towards integrated, dispatchable clean energy systems capable of supplying electricity reliably around the clock.

Nama PWP announced in its 2025 Annual Report that it intends to release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the project in 2026, with the award also targeted within the same year.

Designed to combine solar



The proposed large-scale Round-the-Clock (RTC) renewable energy project seeks to integrate solar, wind and battery storage technologies.

photovoltaic (PV) generation, wind power and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), the project is expected to deliver around 1,000 MW of capacity with an annual capacity factor exceeding 70 per cent — a level that approaches the reliability traditionally associated with gas-fired generation.

Significantly, the initiative could position Oman among the early movers globally in utility-scale integrated renewable power systems capable of delivering stable baseload-style clean electricity.

Nama PWP’s report also outlines an ambitious pipeline of renewable energy initiatives targeted for launch, procurement

and implementation in 2026.

Leading the list is the planned release of an RFP for a roughly 280 MW Solar PV Independent Power Project dedicated to supporting the decarbonisation of the Marsa LNG project currently under construction at SOHAR Port and Freezone.

Additionally, Nama PWP is also expected to award several strategically important renewable energy projects in 2026, including the Al Kamil I Solar IPP and three wind-based Independent Power Projects located at Al Duqm (Ras Madrakah), Mahout and Sadah.

In parallel, Nama PWP plans to release RFPs for a new wave of large-scale solar projects, including Al Kamil II Solar IPP, Dhofar Solar IPP, Sinaw Solar IPP and Adam Solar IPP.

Collectively forming part of a broader solar programme with a combined capacity estimated at around 2,500 MW, these projects are expected to reinforce Oman’s

rapidly expanding utility-scale solar generation base.

Importantly, selected projects within the programme are expected to incorporate Battery Energy Storage Systems, reflecting a growing emphasis on grid flexibility, stability and dispatchability as renewable penetration increases.

Further strengthening the renewable energy development pipeline, Nama PWP also plans to issue Requests for Qualification (RFQs) for Duqm III Wind IPP, Al Jazir Wind IPP and Shaleem Wind IPP.

Nama PWP also plans to initiate pre-development activities for future projects under its Solar 2030 programme. These activities include early-stage planning, site identification, resource assessment and grid integration studies designed to support long-term renewable capacity expansion across the Sultanate of Oman.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



This participation reflected the bank’s commitment to strengthening its presence at leading events.

BankDhofar showcases investment solutions at OREC and ODBW

MUSCAT: BankDhofar participated in the 21st edition of the Oman Real Estate Conference (OREC) and Oman Design & Build Week (ODBW), held from May 10-13, 2026 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, with broad participation from real estate experts, project developers; and local and international investors.

This participation reflected the bank’s commitment to strengthening its presence at leading economic events, supporting efforts to enhance integration across various sectors and reinforcing strategic partnerships with both government and private entities. These efforts contribute to supporting sustainable urban development and shaping the future of urban planning in the Sultanate of Oman.

The conference highlighted a range of key themes aligned with the rapid economic and urban transformations in Oman, including real estate investment, capital markets, sustainability, digital transformation, modern property technologies (PropTech), as well as supply chains and construction execution processes.

The event also served as a key platform for knowledge exchange and showcasing best practices in urban development and investment enhancement.

BankDhofar signed a strategic agreement with Nama Real Estate to provide financing solutions for investors purchasing residential units in Al Namaa Neighbourhood, located in the Wilayat of Izki, as part of the Surouh Programme supervised by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

The agreement was signed by Ahmed bin Said al Ibrahim, Chief Retail and Government Banking Officer on behalf of BankDhofar, while Hilal al Hawqani, Chairman signed on behalf of Nama Real Estate.

Through its participation, BankDhofar aims to position itself as a key financial partner within the real estate ecosystem, strengthen relationships with developers and investors; and expand collaboration with government and semi-government entities.

The bank also seeks to promote a comprehensive suite of financing and investment solutions that cater to both individual and corporate needs, while enhancing its brand presence as a leading bank supporting urban development in Oman.

BankDhofar’s housing finance solutions are characterised by high flexibility and competitiveness, with interest rates starting from 4.35%, fast processing times, simplified procedures and repayment plans extending up to 25 years. The bank offers financing of up to RO 350,000 or up to 90% of the property value, along with a variety of options tailored to different needs, including purchasing a home or land, building a new property, renovating existing properties, or transferring loans from other banks.

ODBW 2026 sustains strong industry momentum

MUSCAT: Oman Design & Build Week (ODBW) 2026 has delivered a programme of genuine commercial depth and professional substance across its first three days, drawing together developers, investors, architects, engineers, contractors, project management professionals and government stakeholders at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat.

Held under the auspices of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, ODBW 2026 brings together three integrated components: Oman Real Estate Expo & Conference (OREX) running from May 10-13, the Oman Design and Build Expo (ODBX)



The ceremony was graced by Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance.

running from May 11-13; and the ODBW Symposium delivered in collaboration with the Project Management Institute (PMI) MENA

Modern Exchange celebrates International Nurses Day

MUSCAT: Modern Exchange, Oman’s leading remittance and money exchange company celebrated International Nurses Day with the dedicated nursing staff of Hala Medical Centre, Al Wadi Al Kabir, honouring their compassion, commitment and vital contribution to community healthcare.

The celebration began with a warm cake-cutting ceremony, attended by the management teams of both Modern Exchange and Hala Medical Centre. The event served as a heartfelt tribute to nurses, recognising their tireless service,



resilience and the important role they play in supporting patients and families every day.

The celebration included meaningful moments where a

few nurses shared their inspiring personal experiences, reflecting on what motivated them to pursue a career in nursing and how the profession continues to shape their lives.

Speaking about the initiative, Samson Samuel — Acting General Manager, Modern Exchange, said, “Nurses are true pillars of care and compassion in our communities. On International Nurses Day, we are honoured to celebrate and appreciate the nursing staff of Hala Medical Centre for their dedication, kindness and unwavering service”.

Kia Seltos named ‘SUV of the Year’ at Times Summit

THE all-new Kia Seltos has been named ‘SUV of the Year’ at the 2026 Times Drive Auto Summit & Awards in New Delhi, India, underscoring the model’s continued success in one of the world’s most dynamic and competitive automotive markets.

Organised by Times Drive, a key automotive and mobility platform under Times Group, India’s largest media conglomerate, the awards recognise outstanding vehicles across the industry.

The all-new Kia Seltos was selected by a panel of automotive journalists and media experts, based on comprehensive evaluation criteria including Design, Performance, Technology, Safety and Sustainability.

This latest recognition highlights the all-new Seltos’s strong customer appeal in India’s highly competitive B-SUV segment, while reinforcing Kia’s growing brand appeal and leadership in the global SUV market.

“This recognition for the Kia Seltos reflects our continued commitment to delivering vehicles that combine design, technology and practicality in ways that resonate with our customers across diverse markets. As a core model in Kia’s global SUV lineup, Seltos plays a key role in strengthening our presence in strategic regions such as India.

Accolades such as the 2026 Times Drive



Seltos plays a key role in strengthening our presence in strategic regions such as India.

Auto Summit & Awards ‘SUV of the Year’ highlight the importance of delivering design-led, safety-focused, customer-centric mobility solutions that offer both everyday usability and long-term value”, said Ho Sung Song, President and CEO of Kia Corporation.

The Seltos’s recognition reflects its broad range of capabilities and customer-focused features, combining authentic SUV design, advanced connectivity and practical versatility tailored to a wide range of user needs.

“The Seltos was developed with a

clear intent from the very beginning — to understand Indian customers and build around their needs. With this new generation, we have taken that forward by making it more spacious, more confident in its design, stronger in safety and technology; and more aligned with how families use their vehicles.

This recognition reflects the strength of that approach and the strong connect the Seltos continues to build with our customers”, said Gwanggu Lee, Managing Director and CEO of Kia India.

National Finance sets benchmark for ESG integration

MUSCAT: Contributing meaningfully to the nation’s sustainability transformation, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance and leasing company, continues to achieve significant milestones in sustainability and impact, reinforcing its commitment to embedding Environmental, Social, Operational and Governance (ESG) principles at the heart of its long-term strategy.

As highlighted in the company’s Sustainability Report 2025, National Finance



has made exceptional progress across responsible financing, environmental stewardship, community empowerment and operational excellence; aligning its growth trajectory with the ambitions of Oman Vision

2040, while setting a strong benchmark for sustainable business practices within the nation’s financial sector.

Commenting on the company’s sustainability progress, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, stated, “At National Finance, sustainability is not viewed as a standalone initiative, but as a strategic imperative that shapes how we operate, grow and create value. Our ESG journey reflects a deliberate commitment to responsible growth, balancing

financial performance with environmental responsibility, social advancement and robust governance.

Through consistent, measurable action, we are proud to support the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040 and to help advance a higher standard of ESG integration across the financial sector”.

A cornerstone of National Finance’s sustainability strategy is its continued commitment to responsible lending that actively supports SMEs and advances economic diversification.

Chapter, all advancing Oman’s real estate, construction and infrastructure agenda in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, who attended as Chief Guest for the Oman Real Estate Expo 2026. His presence, alongside senior representatives from government and industry, underlined the strategic importance of the platform in driving investment, development and long-term urban transformation across the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman Real Estate Expo (OREX) opened on May 10 to a strong industry turnout, reflecting continued confidence in Oman’s property market during a period

of sustained growth. The four-day expo brought together leading developers, financial institutions and government stakeholders to present a curated pipeline of residential, commercial and mixed-use investment opportunities.

Highlighted projects include Yenaier and Hay Al Naseem by Adante Realty, Wadi Zaha by Al Ahly Sabbour, Jood and Yamal by TMG Muscat, Hayy Majd Bazaar Salalah and Bazaar Sohar by MAJD; and major national developments including Sultan Haitham City, Al Khuwair Downtown and Uptown Muscat by Wujha, providing visitors with direct access to some of the most significant property propositions currently active in the Sultanate of Oman.

SHORTTAKES



The initiative reflects OQ’s continued focus on investing in human capital and strengthening the capabilities of Omani youth.

OQ LAUNCHES 100 GLOBAL SCHOLARSHIPS FOR OMANI TALENT

MUSCAT: OQ Group, in partnership with OQ Trading and Takatuf Oman, has launched a new phase of the “Oman Pioneers” programme, offering 100 international scholarships over the next five years to support the development of highly skilled Omani talent.

Under the agreement, 20 scholarships will be awarded annually, enabling students to pursue higher education at leading international universities in disciplines aligned with national priorities and future labour market demands.

The initiative reflects OQ’s continued focus on investing in human capital and strengthening the capabilities of Omani youth to support the transition towards a knowledge-based economy in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Eng Ali bin Mohammed al Lawati, Chief Human Resources and Technology Officer at OQ, said investing in national talent remains a core pillar of the group’s strategic direction.

“OQ has a long-standing commitment to empowering Omani talent. Through the ‘Oman Pioneers’ programme, we continue to provide educational and development opportunities that equip young Omanis with the skills and expertise needed to keep pace with future transformations and contribute to achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040”, he said.

The programme is designed to build national intellectual capital by exposing students to advanced academic environments and global research experiences. Beneficiaries will study specialised fields considered strategically important to Oman’s economic diversification and long-term development goals.

OQ said the initiative also reinforces its long-standing partnership with Takatuf Oman in creating educational and professional pathways that are closely aligned with evolving economic and industrial requirements. — ONA

Updated energy strategy targets production boost

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

THE Ministry of Energy and Minerals presented an updated strategic plan at a media briefing on Wednesday, reaffirming its commitment to its pivotal role in leading and developing the energy and minerals sectors. This strategy aims to optimise the utilisation of natural resources and support economic diversification and sustainable development.

The plan outlines a balanced approach that combines sustainable production, expanded exploration and enhanced operational efficiency in the oil and gas sector during 2025. In 2026, a bidding round was announced for five concession areas for investment, while efforts continued to maintain production levels and stabilise reserves.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, confirmed that indicators point to the continued strength of this vital sector, which underpins the Sultanate of Oman’s economy.

Average daily production of crude oil and condensates reached approximately one million barrels, with total annual production reaching 365.8 million barrels.

Sixty-four exploration and appraisal wells were drilled, including 47 oil wells and 17 gas wells, reflecting continued investment in enhancing reserves, which now stand at approximately 4.7 billion barrels of oil and condensates, in addition to 22.3 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

The gas sector continues to show positive indicators, with average daily production exceeding 151 million cubic meters and liquefied natural



Sixty-four exploration and appraisal wells were drilled in 2025, reflecting continued investment in enhancing reserves.

gas (LNG) exports surpassing 11 million metric tonnes, further solidifying Oman’s position as a reliable energy supplier.

The sector also continues to make significant progress in Omanisation rates, reaching nearly 92%, alongside strengthening local content through the localisation of industries and services related to the sector and supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), thereby maximising added value to the national economy.

In the minerals sector, four concession areas were offered in 2025 and bids are currently being evaluated.

There are also 28 operational concession areas, managed by 13 companies. We will further enhance our progress in 2026 by offering three concession areas and three public sites for investment, reflecting the growing confidence of international investors and partners in the Omani market.

This comes alongside a qualitative shift witnessed by the sector in 2025, reflecting its accelerated development as a promising engine for economic diversification.

This shift was driven by the signing of several agreements and mining concession areas for copper, chromium and salt, which will boost future revenues and increase the sector’s contribution to GDP. Accelerated growth is expected in the coming years, fuelled by the commissioning of new concession areas.

“The sector’s focus during the 2026 plan is on maintaining production levels and stabilising reserves, while also enhancing operational safety. The plan also includes marketing available concession areas through a bidding round that includes new areas, thereby attracting investments and bolstering the sector’s growth in the coming years”, said Dr Saleh bin Ali al Anbouri, Director General of the Directorate General of Oil and Gas Exploration and Production.

He added too that the indicators reinforce the empowerment of national talent, with Omanisation rates in operating companies reaching approximately 91.6%, in addition to providing nearly 20,000 direct job opportunities, as well as thousands of indirect ones.

Outstanding performance in safety and sustainability was also recorded through an integrated occupational health and safety system, achieving over 503 million work hours without injuries and zero fatalities, reflecting a high commitment to safety standards.

The sector continued its efforts to maximise local added value, with spending on local content exceeding RO 11 billion over the past decade, in addition to launching the “Majd” programme to support small and medium enterprises and localise energy-related industries.

Meanwhile, the number of social responsibility projects implemented reached approximately 1,521 with a total expenditure of RO 85.6 million over the past ten years, covering the fields of education, health, youth empowerment and community infrastructure.

The number of operating companies reached 17, working across 34 concession areas. Of these, 12 companies achieved commercial production in 18 areas.

Asyad Shipping Q1 profit jumps 41% to ~~£~~ 16.1 million

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 13

Asyad Shipping posted a 41 per cent increase in net profit for the first quarter of 2026, driven by stronger profitability, high fleet utilisation and continued expansion of its shipping portfolio, according to a filing on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

The company reported net profit after tax of RO 16.1 million for the three months ended March 31, 2026, compared with RO 11.4 million in the corresponding period of 2025. EBITDA rose to RO 51.8 million from RO 49.1 million a year earlier, while EBITDA margin expanded to 67 per



Asyad Shipping maintained a utilisation rate of 99.7% across its fleet during Q1.

cent.

Gross revenue stood at RO 77.3 million compared with RO 83.8 million in Q1 2025, while direct costs declined significantly to RO

52.6 million from RO 62.2 million, supporting improved operational efficiency and profitability.

In the MSX filing, Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi, Chief Executive Officer of Asyad Shipping, said the company’s first-quarter results reflected the resilience of its business model amidst cyclical market conditions. “Our first quarter results reflect the resilience of Asyad Shipping’s business model, with strong margins, improved profitability and high fleet utilisation driven by robust operations, balanced market exposure and a strong focus on safety and long-term value creation”, he said.

He added that the company has

successfully navigated multiple market cycles and global disruptions since inception by maintaining disciplined operations and focusing on long-term value creation.

“Our Q1 results further reinforce the strength of the business model, with strong EBITDA margin of 67% and net profit up 41% period-on-period, demonstrating solid performance across our diversified shipping portfolio”, he noted.

The company highlighted that its long-term resilience is supported by a balanced strategy combining owned and chartered vessels, long-term charter coverage and selective exposure to spot markets to preserve earnings visibility while capturing

upside opportunities.

Operationally, Asyad Shipping maintained a utilisation rate of 99.7 per cent across its fleet during the quarter, up from 97 per cent in Q1 2025. The company also reported zero lost-time incidents, zero major incidents and zero ship detentions during the period.

The company continued to advance its fleet renewal and expansion strategy during the quarter. It completed the sale of four older LNG carriers — Salalah, Ibri, Ibra and Nizwa — as well as the sale of one VLCC vessel. Meanwhile, two of three Newcastle dry bulk carriers were delivered under 10-year contracts of affreightment.

ENERGY SECURITY

Europe tilts to US LNG



Europe is expected to source 80 per cent of its liquefied natural gas imports from the US by 2028, according to a report by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

The report warned against overdependence on a single supplier as the European Union accelerates efforts to phase out Russian gas. US LNG is projected to meet two-thirds of Europe’s LNG demand in 2026. — ONA

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold steady before summit



Gold prices were unchanged in early Asian trading as investors awaited the upcoming US-China summit in Beijing. Spot gold traded at \$4,713.39 per ounce, while US futures gained 0.7 per cent.

Expectations of prolonged higher US interest rates strengthened after inflation rose in April. Meanwhile, India increased tariffs on gold and silver imports to 15 per cent to ease pressure on foreign exchange reserves. — ONA

ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

US, China hold trade talks



US and Chinese officials held trade discussions in South Korea ahead of this week’s summit between President Trump and Chinese President Jinping.

Talks focused on trade and investment facilitation between the world’s two largest economies. China is reportedly seeking eased US semiconductor restrictions, while US expects agreements covering aircraft, and energy purchases. — ONA

OPINION

Why do people care about electricity prices?



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI

A few days ago, the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) announced an important decision affecting all people, amidst the onset of what is set to be an intense summer season. The new decision stipulates reductions in electricity tariffs for one basic residential account during the summer of 2026, covering the period from May to August.

People everywhere are greatly concerned about energy prices in general, especially in countries where the costs of electricity, water, fuel and other essential services are high. These are basic necessities that people cannot do without regardless of their financial conditions.

During the summer, concern about electricity prices increases even more, particularly among those who cannot easily afford the expenses of this service due to low monthly salaries, unemployment, or financial debts.

People care deeply about electricity and energy prices because they directly affect daily life and influence the economy, families and the environment at the same time. Whenever electricity prices rise, the cost of living and production also increases, which in turn affects the prices of goods and services.

From this standpoint, the Authority directed all licensed Omani companies not to disconnect electricity services from any

citizen or resident in the country during the same period. It also requested these companies to provide flexible payment plans for subscribers with previous unpaid bills, enabling them to pay their dues in instalments through simplified mechanisms.

There is no doubt that such a decision will help reduce financial and psychological pressures on people, especially those suffering from economic and living difficulties in general. However, this also requires people to be mindful of operating electrical devices and turning them off when they are not needed.

Summer in a country such as the Sultanate of Oman is characterised by high temperatures, which greatly increases dependence on air-conditioning systems that represent the largest share of monthly electricity bills.

There are many steps that subscribers can take to reduce electricity consumption, such as setting air conditioners to moderate temperatures instead of excessive cooling, using thermal insulation for windows and rooftops to reduce heat leakage and operating heavy appliances such as washing machines during off-peak hours whenever possible.

Today, we also see that some people have begun benefitting from solar energy by installing certain systems to utilise it, considering that solar power is a natural resource abundantly available in the region.

People care deeply about electricity and energy prices because they directly affect daily life and influence the economy, families and the environment at the same time. Whenever electricity prices rise, the cost of living and production also increases, which in turn affects the prices of goods and services.

It is important to teach younger generations the principle of rationalising energy consumption, including electricity and to build this culture starting from the family and schools. This can be achieved when parents act as role models. When children see adults turning off unused appliances, they will naturally learn the same behaviour.

Awareness can also be promoted through simple explanations showing that electricity is a resource with financial costs and environmental impacts. Linking behaviour to outcomes, such as explaining how conservation lowers bills and protects the environment, is also effective.

In addition, motivational methods such as rewards for practicing energy-saving behaviours can encourage positive habits, alongside introducing concepts of sustainability in education, including reliance on renewable energy sources.

Ultimately, dealing with electricity is no longer merely a matter of switching devices on and off; it has become part of a broader economic and environmental awareness around the world. Every small step taken by family members towards conserving electricity contributes to achieving a better balance between our daily needs and the future of the resources upon which we depend.

AIRLINES’ GROWTH
SUNSHINE JARS WITH
FUEL STORM

OLIVER TASLIC

European airlines’ plans run counter to the news. With the Strait of Hormuz halfway through its third month of effective closure, credible sources like the International Energy Agency have warned the continent could see jet fuel shortages at select airports as early as June.

Yet intra-Europe flying is scheduled to rise over 5% this summer, according to data from aviation analytics firm Cirium.

Hormuz has pushed European jet fuel prices up to around \$1,300 a metric tonne as of Tuesday, 60% above pre-war levels. Crude prices 50% above February levels risk whacking economic growth, to which air travel demand is closely tied.

In turn, carriers including Tui and easyJet have warned cautious consumers are delaying bookings. One might therefore assume Europe’s airlines would fly less this summer and thus boost pricing power, save fuel and potentially protect margins.

There are plenty of reasons why they aren’t. The peak summer season is when many airlines make most of their annual earnings. Carriers’ extensive fuel hedging partly shields them from soaring costs.

And cutting routes too quickly could gift market share to rivals.

In any case, the CEOs of airlines including Ryanair, British Airways owner IAG and Wizz Air have all in recent weeks struck positive notes about fuel supplies, with the latter two noting booming US output. US jet fuel exports between January and April this year were 82% higher than in the same period of 2025.

That will partially offset Gulf shortages. Even so, a sector offering more flights to nervier consumers could be a recipe for weaker ticket prices. At Ryanair, Europe’s largest airline by passenger numbers, CEO Michael O’Leary said last month that average fares could be flat in the year to end-March 2027, rather than growing 4%-5% as previously forecast.

Long-haul routes look somewhat sunnier. Pricier fares mean higher fuel costs make less of a difference; and first and business class passengers are less price sensitive.

On key North Atlantic routes, major US rivals don’t hedge fuel purchases and will have little choice but to increase fares, giving Europeans cover to do the same.

Still, long-haul players are hardly immune. While Deutsche Lufthansa reckons, it can deliver “significantly” higher operating profit this year than in 2025, analysts are more sceptical.

— Reuters

War, jobs market weigh
on UK growth prospects

BUSINESS chiefs in the UK have warned that the services sector is set to keep the UK economy afloat this year, with contractions expected to come across construction and manufacturing. The economy will suffer from sluggish growth, a leading industry body has warned, with further tax rises on the horizon remaining as a “risk”.

The British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) revised its growth forecast for 2026 down to one per cent from a previous prediction of 1.2 per cent. Economists predicted the UK economy will inch back up to 1.3 per cent in 2027 and 1.1 per cent in 2028, far lower than the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR)’s projections of 1.6 per cent for both years.

The outlook on inflation also worsened, with prices set to rise by 2.7 per cent over 2026 despite previous hopes Bank of England may hit its two per cent target for the first time in several years. Head of research at the BCC, David Bhariar, said the risks around the war in Iran were “interrupting progress” on inflation.

“Higher energy prices linked to it could keep inflation firmly above the two per cent target and lead the Bank of England to hold the interest rate longer than expected”, Bhariar said.

Much depends on the duration of the conflict. Covid supply shutdown showed how sudden stops put long term damage into the trading system”.

Firms are scrambling to measure hits to their revenue as the war (or the threat of it) in the Middle East drags on. The BCC, which recently opened an ‘advisory hub’ body in partnership with the government on affairs relating to foreign economies, said export growth would slow to 0.7 per cent this year.

The downgrade was more than half that previously predicted as the new figure reflected “deepening global uncertainty”.

Import growth is also set to slow down due to weakened consumer demand and a depreciation in the pound sterling.



Workers walk through the Canary Wharf financial district in London, Britain. — Reuters



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

The chair of the BCC’s economic advisory council, Vicky Pryce, warned that a rise in unemployment to 5.5 per cent this year would be a “worrying drumbeat”. She added: “That will have a widespread economic impact, hitting consumer and household spending and potentially also the housing market”.

Business chiefs warned that pessimistic forecasts mean there was a “risk of further consolidation” before the next general election suggesting that chancellor Rachel Reeves may have to announce fresh tax hikes and spending cuts to meet her fiscal rules.

The Chancellor is scrambling to contain the effects of the energy supply crisis in the Middle East, with the government hoping a fall in energy bills from last month can be maintained in June.

With job vacancies and wage growth down to five-year low, the labour market is struggling.

The rate of unemployment dropped to 4.9 per cent from 5.2 per cent. The joblessness in the UK is now at its lowest level for a year.

Economists have predicted that unemployment could rise as a

result of consumers and businesses cutting spending to deal with increase in energy prices caused by the Iran war.

To tackle unemployment, business giants have come together to find ways of hiring more people currently out of work as private sector bosses move to play a more active role in improving the state of the UK labour market.

Company chiefs from the likes of BT, Shell, Marks & Spencer and Pret have joined a new, non-governmental ‘Employer Taskforce’ — chaired by Octavius Black CBE — to find solutions to improve people’s employment prospects.

Bosses at the firms said they would look to help people from disadvantaged backgrounds and identify the best practice in hiring and training workers given recruitment and retention schemes were “frustratingly fragmented”.

The employer-led initiative, which is spearheaded by the Jobs Foundation, a non-profit organisation focused on job creation and employment, will bring together around 30 companies to support the UK’s weakened labour market.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

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

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

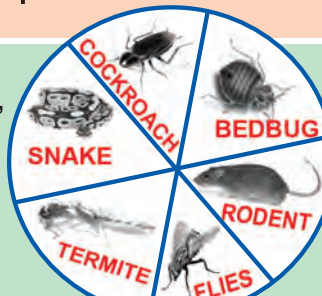
PROJECT
management
professional
with 20+ years'
experience
in tendering,
business
development,
business
systemisation, ISO
QMS, planning
and procurement.
Possesses
managerial
and team lead
skills. Seeking
an opportunity.
Contact: 91799438

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

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

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

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



Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

Driving School
Special offers for those
wishing to learn driving in
(Aziba - Khwair
Qurum - Ruwi
Al Amirat)
Contact No: 99074072

WJ Towell Group Company

Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
Choose from a wide range of brands & models
PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 - Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

اوربیت ORBIT Car Rental & Lease

FOR RENT

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

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

FOR RENT

STORE, shop and
studio room for
immediate rent in
Barka saqsuq.
contact:
93368865
94900612

SIT. WANTED

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

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care
Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com



FOR RENT

- Permanent Building accommodation available for rent in Al Ansab with 600 nos bed space.
- Workers Shared accommodation with common toilet & bathroom.
- Two gates for Entry and Exit with 24/7 security guard.
- Parking area, open yard with compound wall.
- Under CCTV surveillance.
- Contact person –

Mr. Varzhdad - +968-99440860

Mr. Prince - +968-94762289



JOB VACANCY

A reputed company in Oman is looking for SCADA Engineers (Omani) with the below qualifications:

- Bachelors' Degree in Electronics Engineering / Instrumentation Engineering
- Minimum of 5 Years' experience in SCADA, Automation and Instrumentation
- Should have experience with RTU Programming / SCADA Configuration (Any make)
- Experience in Oil & Gas will be a plus
- Good English Communication Skills

Please send your CVs to
jobsoman2016@outlook.com

SIT. WANTED

LOGISTICS
Indian male 24 years, graduate in BBA,PG diploma in logistics and SCM ,6 months of warehouse experience seeking a position in logistics and warehouse fields
Contact: +96896161349
Mail: nadanmathew2000@gmail.com

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

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

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

SIT. VACANT

A CONSUMER
goods distribution
company FMCG
headquartered
in Muscat with
several branches
across the
Sultanate of Oman
is seeking qualified
candidates for
the following
positions:
- National Sales
Manger
- Marketing
Manager
- Sales
Representative
- Product Display
Specialist
(Merchandiser).
Please send your
CV to the email
address below.
ssagriculture25@gmail.com

FOR SALE

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

SIT. WANTED

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

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

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

ازديهار izdihar



ART/LIFE



CHANGING WORLD

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF EID HOLIDAYS IN SUMMER



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
The writer is a Senior Editor at Oman Daily Observer

Eid Al Adha is coming and it's bringing its usual mix of family, food and that unmistakable smell of grills firing up across the neighbourhood. This year it's also bringing something else: Summer. And not the gentle, breezy kind. The kind where the air feels like a hair dryer set to high.

So how do you celebrate Eid when the sun is basically daring you to step outside? With a little planning, a lot of shade and the right mindset, you can have a holiday that's festive, restful and only mildly sweaty.

The trick is to shift everything to the cooler hours. Forget midday gatherings unless you want your kebab to cook on the driveway before it hits the grill. Mornings before 9 am and evenings after 7 pm are your golden windows.

That's when the light is soft, the breeze is real and kids can run around without turning into tomatoes. Plan your majlis visits, gift exchanges and quick catch-ups with relatives for these times. If you must meet during the day, keep it short, air-conditioned and indoors.

Nobody will judge you for keeping Eid greetings to ten minutes if it means avoiding heatstroke.

Water should be your constant companion. Treat it like your phone — you don't leave home without it. Set up a little hydration station at home too, with mint, lemon, or cucumber to make it feel festive rather than like medicine. For the kids, freeze juice into popsicles. It's Eid, it's hot and it's the one day they can have dessert before lunch without a lecture.

This is also the perfect excuse to lean into indoor traditions. Get everyone together for a board game tournament, a movie marathon with Eid-themed snacks, or a cooking session where the younger cousins learn to make your family's signature dish.

If you have a projector, take it outside after sunset, hang a white sheet, dim the lights and you've got an instant outdoor cinema without the 2 pm sun trying to roast you.

When it comes to food, keep things smart rather than heavy. Yes, Eid means meat, but in forty-degree weather, oily, heavy meals will knock you out faster than the heat. Balance the dishes with lots of salads, yoghurt and cold soups.

Giving back doesn't have to mean standing in the sun either. Organise your charity drop-offs, meat distribution, or visits to family in the early morning or evening. It's easier on you and it's kinder to the people receiving help. If you're donating, think about items that actually help in summer alongside the usual.

And don't forget to take thirty minutes just for yourself. Between family visits and social obligations, Eid can get hectic.

Sit in the AC, drink tea and scroll through nothing important. Eid is about gratitude and it's hard to feel grateful when you're exhausted and sunburnt.

Eid Mubarak. May yours be cool, kind and full of good company.

QUICK FEATURES



RED CARPET

French actor William Abadie arrives for the Opening Ceremony and the screening of the film "La Venus electrique" at the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival. — **AFP**



FASHION

A model presents a creation by Colombian designer Monica Fonnegra at Puente catwalk during Bogota Fashion Week. — **AFP**



CELEBRITIES

US actress and producer Demi Moore arrives for the Opening Ceremony of the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — **AFP**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



The ever-mesmerising Muttrah Corniche



A lovely Caspian tern under the Omani sun

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

SHAKIRA TEASES NEW WORLD CUP SONG

Global pop superstar Shakira has once again stepped onto football’s biggest stage, teasing the official song for the 2026 Fifa World Cup with a vibrant new video filmed at Brazil’s legendary Maracanã Stadium. The brief but energetic preview immediately sparked excitement among football fans and music lovers around the world, especially given Shakira’s long and celebrated connection with the tournament over the years.

The singer, whose music has become closely associated with the spirit and celebration of international football, announced the new song, titled Dai Dai, through a post shared on her Instagram account. In the 67-second teaser video, Shakira appears performing on the pitch of the historic Maracanã Stadium in Rio de Janeiro, one of the world’s most iconic football venues. The setting carried symbolic significance, as the stadium has hosted some of football’s most unforgettable moments and remains deeply connected to the passion of the sport in Latin America.

The teaser was released only days after Shakira delivered a massive free concert at Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, where more than two million fans gathered to watch the performance. The concert further highlighted the singer’s enduring popularity and her powerful connection with audiences across different cultures and generations.

Holding the “Trionda”, the official match ball of the 2026 Fifa World Cup, Shakira performed portions of the song in English while surrounded by dancers dressed in the colours



of various national teams, including the United States and Colombia. The visual style of the video emphasised unity, celebration and cultural diversity, themes that have long been central to World Cup music and ceremonies.

The track was produced in collaboration with Nigerian Grammy-winning artist Burna Boy and is scheduled for official release on May 14. The teaser clip, which was also shared by the Fifa World Cup account, concluded with the message: “We’re ready!”, building anticipation ahead of the upcoming tournament.

Shakira’s association with the World Cup stretches back nearly two decades. She performed at the 2006 and 2014 World Cup finals and achieved worldwide success with Waka Waka (This Time for Africa), the official anthem of the 2010 Fifa World Cup in South Africa. The song became one of the most recognisable World Cup anthems in history, blending music, dance and football into a global cultural phenomenon.

— AFP



COOKIES AND CAGES:
RESCUING ARMENIA’S
BEARS



FOR years, Syrian brown bears Nairi, Aram and their cub Lola lived trapped in a three-metre-wide cage in Armenia’s capital Yerevan, surrounded by their own waste and fed sweets instead of proper food. Rescued last year, they are now recovering at a wildlife refuge in Armenia’s highlands, though many other captive bears remain in poor conditions across the country.

Animal rescuers estimate that around 20 bears are still being kept in captivity in Armenia, where wealthy owners have long treated predators as status symbols. Bears have been discovered confined in hotel courtyards, petrol stations and private backyards, often deprived of sunlight and unable to hibernate.

“They had no proper care, no veterinary checks”, said Tsovinar Hovhannisyan, conservation manager at the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets (FPWC), which runs a rehabilitation centre for rescued animals. Some bears were found with rotting teeth after being fed “cookies, Coca-Cola and sweet stuff”, she said.

Armenia’s location between Europe and Asia has made it a hub for wildlife trafficking, while demand for exotic animals among the country’s wealthy elite has remained persistent. In 2015, an Armenian lawmaker drew criticism



after revealing he kept endangered Siberian tigers at his home. Public outrage intensified in 2016 when a private zoo in Gyumri fell into financial trouble, leaving animals starving in cages.

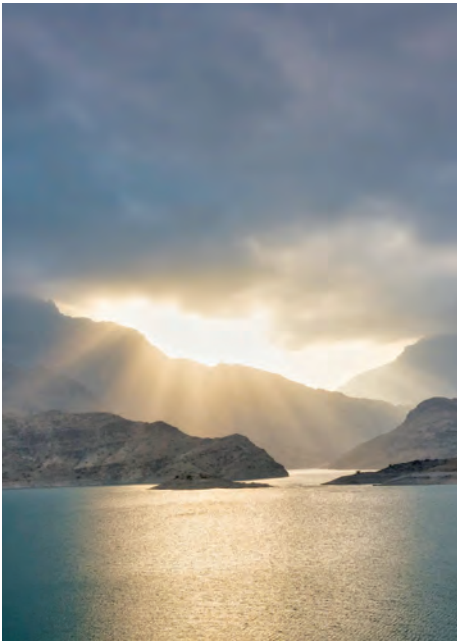
With Armenia preparing to host a biodiversity COP summit in October, rescuers are trying to free the remaining captive bears. However, the rehabilitation centre lacks space and funding to house more animals.

According to FPWC communications manager Ani Poghosyan, some oligarchs keep predators to project power and masculinity. “It is for them a status symbol. Something to brag about”, she said.

Rescuing the bears is often difficult. Owners sometimes agree to surrender animals before changing their minds. Hovhannisyan described the rescue of Nairi, Aram and Lola as one of the organisation’s hardest operations. Rescuers waited in the rain for more than eight hours to secure court permission to enter the property.

Today, the centre’s 32 rescued bears live in large mountainside enclosures where they can dig dens, climb trees and hibernate naturally. Their diet closely resembles what they would eat in the wild. Although many can never be released because they lost survival skills in captivity, caretakers say the goal is simple: to let them live the rest of their lives feeling wild again. — AFP

FEATURES



YERU EBUEN
YERU.EBUEN@GMAIL.COM

IN Oman, landscape is not merely geography, it is identity. For photographer Khalid al Kharusi, the country’s mountains, deserts and coastlines are not backdrops but narratives waiting to be told. Over the years, he has emerged as one of the visual storytellers who translate Oman’s quiet grandeur into images that travel far beyond its borders.

Born and raised in Oman, Al Kharusi’s connection to the land is personal and deeply emotional. “I was born and raised in Oman; and I have always felt incredibly fortunate to have grown up in a country with such a rich culture, diverse landscapes and unspoiled nature”, he reflects in one of his previous interviews.

His journey into photography began early. “I was gifted my first camera by my father when I was ten years old”, he recalls, a moment that quietly set the course for a lifelong pursuit of visual storytelling. What started as a hobby gradually evolved into a vocation shaped by travel, curiosity and human connection. “The greatest gift of life is friendship and I have received it”, he says, linking photography not only to landscapes but also to people and encounters that shaped his creative path.

Today, Al Kharusi specialises in landscape and travel photography, capturing Oman’s dramatic contrasts, from the terraced farms of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar to the dunes of Rimal Al Sharqiya and the fjords of Musandam. His work is rooted in an intuitive understanding of place, where nature, culture and history intersect. It is this sensibility that defines his broader creative vision: photography as both documentation and invitation.

Yet what distinguishes Al Kharusi is not only his artistic eye but his entrepreneurial instinct. Rather than confining his work to galleries, he has expanded his practice into books, prints and curated visual products. His photobook Oman: A Paradise of Land and People presents a sweeping portrait of the nation through landscapes and portraits, positioning photography as a cultural archive as much as an

Born and raised in Oman, Khalid al Kharusi’s connection to the land is personal and deeply emotional. “I was born and raised in Oman; and I have always felt incredibly fortunate to have grown up in a country with such a rich culture, diverse landscapes and unspoiled nature”, he reflects in one of his previous interviews.

His journey into photography began early. “I was gifted my first camera by my father when I was ten years old”, he recalls, a moment that quietly set the course for a lifelong pursuit of visual storytelling. What started as a hobby gradually evolved into a vocation shaped by travel, curiosity and human connection.

OMAN’S ENCHANTING LANDSCAPES AS MUSE FOR A PRINTED CALENDAR



aesthetic experience.

That same philosophy underpins his most recent venture: the Enchanting Oman calendar series. Conceived as a limited-edition visual journey, the calendar features twelve carefully selected images showcasing Oman’s mountains, beaches and deserts, transforming everyday timekeeping into a daily encounter with landscape.

Produced with premium materials and released in limited runs, the calendar reflects a growing trend among creatives who are redefining how art is distributed and consumed.

On social media, where he invites audiences to “explore the beauty of Oman”, Al Kharusi positions photography not just as art but as experience and storytelling. His calendar, prints and gift collections are not merely products; they are extensions of a narrative about place, memory and identity.

In a region where creative industries are increasingly intersecting with tourism, culture and commerce, Al Kharusi’s trajectory reflects a broader shift. His work demonstrates how photographers can move beyond commissions to build sustainable creative enterprises — turning images into books, calendars and curated collections that resonate with both local and global audiences.

More importantly, his practice reveals the possibilities for a new generation of creatives in Oman: storytellers who do not wait for institutions to validate their work but instead create platforms, products and audiences of their own. By translating landscapes into tangible experiences, Al Kharusi has positioned himself at the intersection of art and entrepreneurship.

In doing so, he has also redefined what it means to photograph home. For Al Kharusi, Oman is not simply a subject, it is a lifelong dialogue between land and lens, memory and imagination.

And through ventures like his calendar, that dialogue now finds its way into homes, offices and daily routines, reminding viewers that creativity, when paired with entrepreneurial vision, can transform even the passing of time into a celebration of place