

OMAN
Observer
عُمان

SUNRISE 05:20 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 03:54 AM

DHUHR 12:10 PM

ASR 03:29 PM

MAGHRIB 06:54 PM

ISHA 08:16 PM

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Hand Transplant

The Truth and the Myth

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INBRIEF

WORLD BANK PRAISES OMAN VISION 2040



The World Bank has commended the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to achieve sustainability and integration with the global economy, stating that the economic reforms implemented by the Sultanate of Oman serve as a model for economic diversification efforts.

In an article published on its website, the Bank highlighted that the Oman Vision 2040 places significant emphasis on developing human capital and improving education quality, while also fostering a culture of research and innovation. New programmes have been launched to fund research, transform ideas into marketable products and establish innovation hubs and business incubators to support startups and turn student projects into commercial ventures. **SEE P13**

CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL MUST END THE WAR

Hamas said on Saturday it had responded to a ceasefire proposal presented by US President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff to mediators and included a demand for an end to the war, which had previously been a red line for Israel. The Palestinian group said in a statement that under the deal, it will release ten living hostages and 18 bodies in return for Israel's release of a number of Palestinian prisoners, comments in line with Witkoff's proposal. The Hamas statement added: "This proposal aims to achieve a permanent ceasefire, a comprehensive withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and ensure the flow of aid to our people and our families in the Gaza Strip." — **Reuters**

FLOOD DEATH TOLL IN NIGERIA RISES TO 151

FLOODING in Nigeria's Niger State this week has killed 151 people and forced several thousand from their homes, an emergency official said on Saturday. Ibrahim Audu Hussaini, director of information at the Niger State Emergency Management Agency, provided the new death toll, which was previously reported at 117 on Friday. He added that over 500 households had been impacted and more than 3,000 people displaced.

The flooding incident in the central town of Mokwa in Niger State occurred on Wednesday night and continued into Thursday morning. Days later, rescuers were still picking through mud and debris in search of bodies. — **Reuters**

HM's greetings conveyed to Kazakhstan President

ALMATY: President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan, received Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance and his accompanying delegation, as part of his official visit to the Republic of Kazakhstan.

During the meeting, the minister conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq along with his best wishes to the president and further progress and prosperity for Kazakh people.

During the visit, an agreement was signed on double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and capital between the two sides. Investment opportunities were also discussed to increase trade volume in the



fields of logistics, mining and food security. Aspects of cooperation in the financial sector were also discussed, as well as investment cooperation related to the oil sector with the Kazakh side.

This visit comes within the framework of enhancing cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Kazakhstan, with the aim of fostering bilateral relations in the economic, financial and investment fields. The minister of finance accompanied a delegation comprising several officials from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Tax Authority and the Oman Investment Authority, to discuss areas of cooperation. — **ONA**

Ministers condemn Israel 'ban' on West Bank visit

THE FOREIGN ministers of five Arab countries, who had planned to visit the occupied West Bank this weekend, condemned on Saturday Israel's decision to block their trip.

The ministers condemned "Israel's decision to ban the delegation's visit to Ramallah today to meet with the president of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas", the Jordanian foreign ministry said.

Ministers from Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had been expected to take part alongside Türkiye and the secretary-general of the Arab League. Israel had announced late on Friday that it would not cooperate, effectively blocking the visit as it controls the territory's borders and airspace.

Abbas "intended to host in Ramallah a provocative meeting of foreign ministers from Arab countries to discuss the promotion of the establishment of a Palestinian state", an Israeli official said.

"Such a state would undoubtedly become a terrorist state in the heart of the Land of Israel. Israel will not cooperate with such moves aimed at harming it and its security".

Israel this week announced the creation of 22 new Jewish settlements in the West Bank, regarded by the United Nations as illegal under international law and one of the main obstacles to a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

During a visit to one of the new settlement sites on Friday, Defence Minister Israel Katz vowed to build a "Jewish Israeli state" in the Palestinian territory.

Taking aim at foreign countries that would "recognise a Palestinian state on paper", he added: "The paper will be thrown into the trash bin of history and the State of Israel will flourish and prosper."



A protester holds a Palestinian flag and makes a peace symbol with her fingers as she marches with others to the Israeli embassy to demand freedom for Palestine, in Athens on Saturday. — **AFP**

In June, Saudi Arabia and France are to co-chair an international conference at UN headquarters meant to resurrect the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Saudi Arabia was said to have been close to recognising Israel before the start of the Gaza war and US President Donald Trump, during a recent visit to Riyadh, called normalisation between the countries "my fervent hope

and wish". But de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has repeatedly said Saudi Arabia will not recognise Israel without an independent Palestinian state.

Firas Maksad, a fellow at the Washington-based Middle East Institute, said Israel's rejection of the visit indicated "how far Saudi and Israel have moved from normalisation to diplomatic confrontation". — **AFP**

Oman's first renewable energy storage project imminent: Minister

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is making significant efforts to implement green energy projects, as "Oman Vision 2040" aims for these projects to contribute nearly 30 per cent of the country's total electricity generation by 2030.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, revealed that five to six new renewable energy projects — focused on wind and solar power — will commence this year, with particular emphasis on wind energy due to Oman's strong potential in this sector.

Al Aufi noted that these projects will be located in various sites where wind energy has been measured, mostly in the Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates. They are expected to begin production by the end of 2027, generating over 2,000 megawatts.

He affirmed that the Ministry of Energy and Minerals is collaborating with its partners in Nama Group and the Authority for Public Services Regulation to explore the best methods for storing renewable energy, whether through



Five to six new renewable energy projects — focused on wind and solar power — will commence this year, with particular emphasis on wind energy due to Oman's strong potential in this sector. — **ONA**

conventional or innovative approaches applicable in Oman. He also confirmed that an announcement regarding Oman's first renewable energy storage project will be made soon. The minister added that these projects will strengthen Oman's transition to renewable energy while creating vast opportunities for industries reliant on clean and sustainable power.

He highlighted that Oman has already launched the "Manah 1" and "Manah 2" renewable energy plants, with a combined capacity of around

1,000 megawatts. Initial results indicate that each plant is producing over 500 megawatts, exceeding expectations.

Furthermore, he explained that the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; and Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) are working to establish a hydrogen pathway by setting up production and supply stations within concession areas. This initiative aims to use hydrogen as fuel for trucks operating between these zones. — **ONA**

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SHORT TAKES



MIDDAY BREAK
EFFECTIVE TODAY:
LABOUR MINISTRY

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The Ministry of Labour has urged all employers to strictly adhere to the midday break, which is effective from today, June 1, in line with Article 16, Clause 2 of the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations.

The Ministry has reiterated that it is prohibited to employ workers at construction sites or in areas exposed to high temperatures from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm during the months of June, July and August.

Earlier, the Ministry launched the ‘Safe Summer’ campaign to educate both employers and employees on the importance of taking a break from the summer heat for their health and safety through its Occupational Safety and Health Department.

“Every year, it is prohibited to employ workers outside shaded areas or in places directly exposed to the sun from June 1 to August 31 when temperatures rise to high levels. Stringent measures will be taken against violators of the midday break rule to ensure its implementation at all outdoor work premises”, a Ministry spokesperson said.

According to Section 118 of the Labour Law, anyone who violates the midday break law shall be punished with a fine ranging from RO 100 to 500 or imprisonment of up to one month, depending on the severity and frequency of the offense.

Last year, several companies were punished for Labour Law violations; and fines and legal proceedings were initiated against companies that did not fully adhere to the three-month noon break.

The Ministry has urged all construction, facilities management, maintenance and other sites where people work in open areas to allow labourers a break from work between 12:30 pm and 3:30 pm during the three months as per ministerial orders. Heat stress is a common issue in Oman, especially during the summer months when temperatures rise significantly.

The Ministry further calls on all private sector establishments to cooperate.

Al Dakhiliyah races ahead
with innovative projects

AL DAKHILIYAH

Governorate is fast-tracking its development agenda through strategic investments in infrastructure, tourism, innovation and agriculture with a new path towards inclusive and sustainable growth.

Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, announced that 68 projects worth over RO 44.7 million are in implementation across the governorate. An additional 10 projects worth RO 5.2 million are also being awarded under a development strategy aimed at modernising infrastructure and elevating services for citizens.

As part of the Governorates Development Programme, Al Dakhiliyah has already received 40 projects totalling RO 16.3 million. From 2022 to 2025, 70 per cent of the allocated budget — amounting to RO 12.68 million — has already been disbursed. Al Hajri stressed that



As part of the Governorates Development Programme, Al Dakhiliyah has already received 40 projects totalling RO 16.3 million. — ONA



SHAIKH
HILAL BIN
SAID
AL HAJRI

projects are prioritised based on readiness, impact and their ability to create lasting local value.

A standout performer in Oman’s knowledge economy, Al Dakhiliyah benefits from strong educational institutions, a network of cultural centres and a thriving youth population. The number of SMEs in the governorate has surged past 14,200, supported by RO 8 million in grants between December 2024 and February 2025. Local content

achievements climbed to 20.5 per cent in Q1 2025 — 7.5 per cent higher than the target.

The governorate’s commitment to youth empowerment is further reflected in initiatives like a dedicated award to foster innovation and entrepreneurship among the youth. Four specialised centres have also been set up to boost startups and skills training.

On the infrastructure front, road projects spanning 203 km are underway with a budget of over RO 16.2 million. Between 2022 and 2024, 245.5 km of roads were developed at a cost of RO 19.6 million, including 33 km specifically for industrial zones. Investment activity in the governorate has soared, with the number of projects increasing from just 8 in 2022 to 53 in 2025 — a remarkable 562.5 per cent jump. In tourism, projects like the redevelopment of Misfat Al Abriyeen, now 40 per cent complete and the revitalisation of the historic Al Aqr neighbourhood are key to transforming heritage into economic opportunity. - ONA

SQU expands partnerships with Russian varsities

MOSCOW: A delegation from Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), headed by HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, concluded a strategic academic visit to the Russian Federation. The visit, which lasted several days, aimed to enhance international cooperation; and expand academic and scientific partnerships.

During the visit, the SQU signed cooperation programmes with the Higher School of Economics (HSE) and the Institute of Science and Technology (Skoltech); and fostered existing agreements with Moscow State University and Kazan Federal University. Cooperation opportunities in the fields of medicine, biotechnology, agriculture, engineering, innovation and entrepreneurship were explored, as well. Student exchange programmes, joint research training and partnerships in technology development and entrepreneurship were also discussed.

The SQU’s delegation also met with the



The SQU’s delegation also met with the heads of universities and research centres in Kazan and Moscow. — ONA

heads of universities and research centres in Kazan and Moscow, including Kazan Federal University, Kazan State Agrarian University, Sechenov Moscow Medical University, Lomonosov Moscow State University, the Higher School of Economics (HSE), Skoltech Institute of Science and Technology, Skolkovo Innovation Center, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology; and the Russian Academy of Sciences.

HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, indicated that the visit sought to enhance academic cooperation, learn about best international practices and create effective partnerships in various scientific fields.

The visit comes as part of SQU’s commitment to strengthening its international presence and establishing effective strategic partnerships. — ONA

What are the options for visa-free entry for Omanis?

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, MAY 31

The summer outbound travel season begins in the Sultanate of Oman, but citizens are required to take note of the distinct visa requirements of each destination. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently announced a new visa-free entry policy for citizens of four Gulf countries: Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain. from June 9, 2025, to June 8, 2026, allowing ordinary passport holders from the four countries to enter China without a visa for stays of up to 30 days.

The Foreign Ministry said that the mutual visa exemption agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Russian Federation will

be effective upon completion of the necessary procedures by both parties.

According to Visaindex.com, options include visiting without a prior visa, visa-on-arrival countries and Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) countries. Oman passport holders can travel without a visa to the following countries that include Albania, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Botswana, Brunei, Cayman Islands, Colombia, Cook Islands, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Georgia, Haiti, Hong Kong, Iran, Kazakhstan, Jordan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritius, Micronesia, Morocco, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, South Korea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines,



Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, the UAE, Uzbekistan, Türkiye and Zambia among others. Omani nationals are eligible for a visa on arrival in the following 34 countries, some of which include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iraq, Maldives, Nepal, Rwanda,

Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Yemen.

Oman passport holders are eligible to obtain an Electronic Travel Authorization (eTA) before visiting the following 3 countries (Kenya, New Zealand and the United Kingdom). An eTA is a digital travel document required for eligible travellers who are visa-exempt for a specific countr, and it can be obtained online before travel. Omanis are required to apply for an electronic visa (eVisa) before travelling to 32 countries, including Bhutan, India, South Africa, Taiwan, Uganda and Vietnam. Oman passport holders need to apply for a regular visa before travelling to around 113 countries, including those in the Schengen area. “Visa processing times, fees and required

documents vary by the traveller’s nationality and the destination country.

Marita Bachhav, regional head of VFS Global, which processes visa documents and collects applications for most countries, said that Europe remains a popular destination for travellers from Oman and demand for visas. “Travellers can apply for Schengen visas up to six months before the intended date of travel and we urge applicants to plan and apply for their visas well in advance to avoid any delays,” she said.

According to Wego.com, GCC or Oman residents can travel without a visa or with a visa on arrival to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Indonesia, Jordan, Maldives, Nepal, Seychelles, Tanzania and Zanzibar, apart from GCC countries.

SHORT TAKES



SPACE STATION TO TRANSIT OVER OMAN

MUSCAT: The International Space Station will cross Oman’s skies on Monday, at a speed of 27,600 km/h, according to the Oman Society of Astronomy and Space. The time of appearance will be at 7:41 pm with a duration of only 5 minutes.

The direction will be Northwest to Southeast while the altitude will be 420 km above sea level. For viewing, it is recommended to choose an open spot away from lights and pay attention to the exact time. Wait for a bright star to appear, moving rapidly across the sky.



The workshop also discussed practical initiatives and solutions to address challenges in managing development of heritage and tourism sectors.

MoHT plans integrated governance system

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) plans to adopt an integrated governance system between ministries and governorates by the end of 2025.

At the end of the national workshop on ‘Addressing the Challenges of Governance in Heritage and Tourism Development Management with Governorates’, MoHT said the system includes developing an integrated governance system between the ministry and governorates, clearly agreeing on the division of powers and responsibilities, preparing and implementing tourism development plans for approved and new governorates, agreeing on the allocation of heritage and tourism lands and areas; and strengthening institutional partnerships with the private sector and civil society.

The workshop discussed practical initiatives and solutions aimed at addressing the challenges of governance in managing the development of the heritage and tourism sectors; and developing initiatives that will enhance the achievement of a set of goals by 2040, including raising the tourism sector’s contribution to the gross domestic product to 5.3 per cent, achieving heritage and tourism investments estimated at RO 12 billion, raising the competitiveness of the Sultanate of Oman in the travel and tourism index to 40th place globally and increasing the satisfaction rate of local and foreign tourists with tourism services and basic facilities to reach 80 per cent.

BODY OF A MISSING CITIZEN FOUND NEAR KHOR RORI

MUSCAT: Rescue teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDA) were able to locate the body of a missing citizen on Saturday in the Wilayat of Taqah, near the Khor Rori beach.

The missing person had gone fishing with his brother last Tuesday before they were reported missing. One of them was found the next day.

The rescue effort continued for several days due to high waves, sharp rocky cliffs and surrounding depressions.

The Royal Oman Police, the Royal Air Force of Oman, the CDA and a number of citizens participated in the search.

The CDA calls on all fishermen in the Dhofar Governorate to exercise caution while fishing and avoid going into the sea, especially during the autumn season, to ensure their safety. It is important to adhere to preventive measures and safety measures.



The rescue effort continued for several days due to high waves, sharp rocky cliffs and surrounding depressions.

‘Sagarmatha Day’ marked with call for conservation

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MAY 31

THE Embassy of Nepal in Muscat observed on May 29, 2025 the Sagarmatha Day, commemorating the historic first ascent of Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) by Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary on the same day in 1953.

This year’s event also coincided with Republic Day of Nepal, adding further significance to the celebration. Jamal bin Hassan al Mousawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, was the guest of honour.

In his address, the Ambassador of Nepal to the Sultanate of Oman, Dornath Aryal, said, “Sagarmatha Day is a reminder not only for human achievement but also for the majestic beauty of the Himalayas and the urgent need to address challenges being faced by climate change and other environmental issues”. He explained that the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region covers eight countries, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. This region has a huge area of mountains and it has the largest source of ice and snow outside the polar region.

He also pointed out that these mountains are vast sources of fresh water and lifelines of people, flora and fauna. “Our beautiful mountains are facing enormous challenges due to rising temperature and extreme weather conditions. Rising temperature has caused rapid melting of snow, rise of the sea level, drought, glacier lake outburst, floods, landslides, etc. The situation has been quite alarming in recent times”, he said.

Mountains are not just nature’s crown jewels; they are the shared heritage of humanity to maintain ecological balance — from highlands to islands.



Nadhira al Harthy, the first Omani woman to climb the Sagarmatha (Mount Everest), shared her experiences of her expedition.

the Sagarmatha from Oman. The late Khalid bin Sulaiman al Siyabi was the first Omani national to climb Mount Everest in 2010. The third Omani national to climb the Sagarmatha is Suleiman Hamood al Naabi.

The ambassador noted that beyond its natural splendour, Nepal is strategically positioned as a bridge between two neighbouring countries, India and China. “This unique geographical proximity provides tremendous opportunities for tourism, trade, investment and many more”, he said.

As part of the celebration, Ambassador Aryal honoured Nadhira al Harthy with a traditional shawl and felicitated Master Shiva Kochale, a 13-year-old teen who reached the Sagarmatha Base Camp in April 2025.

Nadhira said, “We could hear the sound of avalanches every day, but I was ready to go to the top of the world. Every step had a risk, but every risk was a step forward. I wanted to be on the Mount Everest summit.”

collective efforts and actions are required to protect them”. In May 2025, Nepal had organised the first edition of Sagarmatha Sambaad (Everest Dialogue) in Kathmandu under the theme of “Climate Change, Mountains and the Future of Humanity”. It concluded issuing a 25-point “Sagarmatha Call for Action”. Sagarmatha Sambaad, a flagship initiative of Nepal, aims to promote inclusive dialogue and encourage meaningful collaboration and cooperation to achieve tangible solutions.

The ambassador pointed out that a total number of 350 delegates, including 175 international delegates/participants, took part in the dialogue. The second edition of the Sambaad is expected to be held in 2027.

Nadhira al Harthy, the first Omani woman to climb the Sagarmatha (Mount Everest), took part in the conference as a panelist. She shared her experiences of her expedition to Sagarmatha and the recently held Sagarmatha Sambaad. So far, three mountaineers have climbed

Oman wins three medals at ITEX 2025 in Kuala Lumpur

KUALA LUMPUR: The Sultanate of Oman won three medals (two gold and a silver medal) at the International Invention, Innovation and Technology Exhibition (ITEX 2025) in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur.

Innovator Badr bin Salim al Maqbali won the gold medal for his invention, Remote Control for the Operation of the Ring Bonding Unit. Innovator Malak bint Khalifa al Harthyah won the gold medal for her project, Portland Cement Composite Reinforced with Carbon Nanoplates as a Dental Filling.

Innovator Yusra bint Yusef al Ghadaniyah won the silver medal for her project, Squid Ink Water Filter.

Innovator Badr bin Salim al Maqbali also received the Best Innovator Award from the Bunyan Foundation for Social Services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The International Invention, Innovation and Technology Exhibition (ITEX 2025) is one of the most prominent initiatives aimed at developing the capabilities of young innovators, enabling them to benefit from international forums to develop their ideas and exchange experiences with their peers from around the world.

The exhibition represents a destination for inventors to showcase their innovative ideas to investors and businessmen in



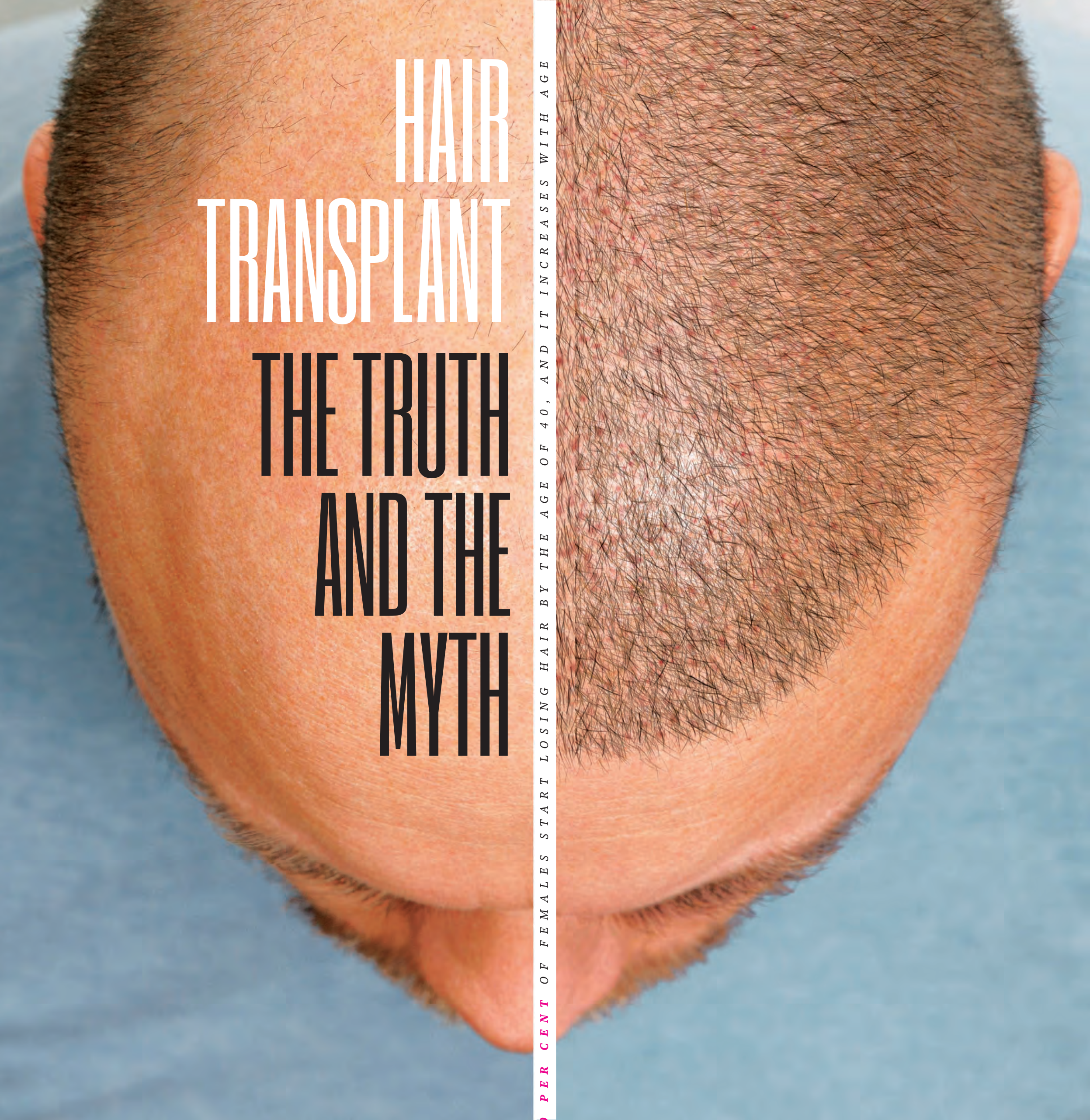
ITEX represents a destination for inventors to showcase their innovative ideas to investors and businessmen in various fields. — ONA

various fields, including agriculture, automation, manufacturing, biotechnology, construction, medicine, health, energy and other fields.

ITEX is an annual international exhibition that combines inventions, innovations and technology. It is also known as the Invention and Innovation Market and is a vital platform that brings together inventors, investors, businessmen and startups to showcase and market their latest innovations.

This year’s exhibition saw participation from more than 20 countries in Asia and Europe, showcasing more than 1,000 inventions across categories. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

BELIEVE IT or not, there has been a gradual increase in the number of bald people getting their hairline repaired with their own scalp strands, changing the way they look. Depending on their budget, customers opt for treatments within Oman or fly outside to get it done. Doctors say that hair fall and baldness are major concerns. By age 30, about 25 per cent of men start losing their hair, and by the age of 50, this number increases to 50 per cent. 40 per cent of females start losing hair by the age of 40, and it increases with age. However, those who may seem like simpletons wanting to look different also have a valid point - it

is all about boosting their confidence. “I got my hair done in Muscat while my friend became ‘hairy’ from India. The amount spent is more or less the same except for the flights, and we feel more confident than before because we are more accepted to be young ever,” a CEO of a private hospital and an airline executive told the Observer. However, with the rise in demand and the increase in the number of such centres, so did the number of low-quality services offered by some. Some people in the field say that there are fake clinics operating without a proper licence. Dr Neema M Ali, MD (PG Dip Cosmetic Medicine), Specialist Dermatologist at Al Manasir Skin Clinic in Al

Seeb, says that although a hair transplant is generally considered a safe procedure when done by a qualified and experienced surgeon in a sterile medical setting, the risks associated with it cannot be ruled out if it is done by an inexperienced professional. “Like any medical procedure, it carries some risks, but with proper technique, careful planning, and post-procedure care, it is a highly successful and low-complication treatment for hair loss. The overall complication rate is quite low - well under 5 per cent when done by trained professionals. Most side effects, if any, are mild and temporary. Serious complications are rare, especially with modern techniques like FUE (Follicular Unit



Doctors say that hair fall and baldness are major concerns. By age 30, about 25 per cent of men start losing their hair, and by the age of 50, this number increases to 50 per cent.

Extraction). Proper patient selection and adherence to pre- and post-operative instructions play a big role in minimising risks,” she said. Dr Sanjay Dalal, known to be the longest-serving Family Physician in Muscat who presently works for Lama Polyclinic, says that as with any surgical procedure, there are potential risks and complications. “Proper patient selection, surgical technique, and wound care can help minimise risks and maximise success rates. The potential risks and complications are severe pain during the transplant, bleeding and infection, scarring, nerve damage, allergic reaction to anaesthesia, and poor graft survival. Individual health and healing

abilities can influence the outcome of a hair transplant,” Dr Dalal said. The most widely used method today is FUE (Follicular Unit Extraction) due to multiple reasons, including its minimal scarring, faster recovery time, natural-looking results, less post-operative discomfort. For some patients with more extensive hair loss or specific scalp conditions, FUT (Follicular Unit Transplantation) is considered. Dr Dilip Kumar Singvi, Specialist in Internal Medicine at Burjeel Hospital, refutes many myths regarding hair transplants, such as the belief that hair transplant stops further hair loss. “The fact is, although transplanted hair is resistant to the hormone DHT, which is responsible

for hair loss, hair loss can still occur. However, the procedure cannot affect the brain because it only touches the scalp skin, not the brain, so it is safe,” Dr Dilip said. Dr Vijay George, Dermatologist at NMC Hospital Al Ghubra, says that it is a wrong belief that hair transplants are a one-time fix and the transplanted hair will never fall out. “Although transplanted hair requires no more maintenance than natural hair, this transplanted hair can still thin or fall out over time due to natural ageing or other factors,” said Dr George, adding that like in any surgical procedure, there are risk elements and it should be done under experienced supervision and at a reliable place.

SHORTTAKES



The programme included a series of workshops and dialogue sessions with experts specialising in the affairs of persons with disabilities. — ONA

OMAN AT PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES PROGRAMME IN US

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) for Persons with Disabilities in New York City, USA.

The Sultanate of Oman's participation comes in confirmation of its commitment to supporting the rights of persons with disabilities and enhancing their capabilities. The participation brought together a group of leaders and practitioners in the field of disability representing several institutions, including the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, as well as a number of persons with disabilities.

It aimed to learn about the American experience in providing programmes and services for persons with disabilities, exchange ideas and experiences, and learn about policies and legislation in place to promote the rights of this group. It also aimed to raise awareness and exchange knowledge between Omani experts and their international counterparts in this field.

The programme included a series of workshops and dialogue sessions with experts specialising in the affairs of persons with disabilities, providing participants with the opportunity to develop practical strategies to improve the quality of life for this group in their communities. — ONA

MILITARY HAJ MISSION HEADS TO THE HOLY LANDS



MUSCAT: The military Haj mission departed the country on Saturday, heading to the Holy Lands to perform the blessed Haj pilgrimage. The mission was seen off at Seeb Air Base by Air Vice Marshal (Ret.) Mattar bin Ali al Obaidani, and a number of senior officers from the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and other military and security agencies. At the ceremony, Al Obaidani delivered a speech in which he praised God and emphasised the significance of Haj as one of the pillars of Islam, which brings together Muslims from all over the world. He added that the dispatch of the military Haj mission is a noble gesture from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. — ONA

المركز الوطني للإحصاء والمعلومات
تعزيز المعرفة
سلطنة عمان

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR STATISTICS & INFORMATION
Enhancing Knowledge
SULTANATE OF OMAN

Pre-qualification announcement for companies

The National Centre for Statistics and Information announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Deadline for Purchasing Documents	Deadline for Submitting Documents
5/2025	Pre-qualification - Project to design, develop, implement and maintain the smart platform portal for the National Center for Statistics and Information	19/6/2025	22/6/2025

- Tender documents for companies wishing to pre-qualify can be obtained through the tendering service on the website (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) starting from the date of publication of this announcement until the final date.
- For inquiries related to technical support for the electronic tendering system, please contact (24402200) or email (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om)

OMAN AIR FLIGHT TECHNICAL GLITCH

An Oman Air flight en route to Bangkok was forced to return to Muscat International Airport shortly after takeoff on Saturday, due to a technical issue. In a statement, Oman Air confirmed that flight WY815, operating from Muscat to Bangkok, encountered a technical issue soon after departure on Saturday.

"All guests were accommodated on a replacement flight shortly after. We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience caused. As always, the safety of our guests and crew remains our top priority," Oman Air said.

Oman achieves progress in global indices: Report

THE National Competitiveness Office has released the third annual report on Oman Competitiveness 2024, highlighting the Oman's performance in various global indicators.

The report reveals that Oman has achieved remarkable progress in several global indices. The most notable leap was in the Environmental Performance Index, where Oman climbed 94 places, securing the 55th rank out of 180 countries.

Oman has also been ranked first globally in several sub-indicators, including marine protection stringency, growth rate of black carbon emissions and bottom-trawl fishing within the exclusive economic zone.

Oman also advanced 39 spots in the Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom Index, reaching the 56th rank globally.

The country's economy is now classified as "moderately free," compared to its previous status as "mostly unfree." This improvement is reflected in higher scores in key sub-indicators such as government spending (rising from 59.4 to 70.8 out of 100), investment freedom (from 60 to 70 out of 100), and financial freedom (from 50 to 60 out of 100).

Among the most notable advancements is the Network Readiness Index, where Oman moved up four positions, ranking



The office is actively working with national teams to strengthen Oman's position in global indices through various programmes and initiatives while addressing challenges that may arise.

DR SALIM BIN ABDULLAH AL SHAIKH



The report reveals that Oman has achieved remarkable progress in several global indices with a most notable leap in Environmental Performance Index, where Oman climbed 94 places, securing the 55th rank out of 180 countries. — ONA

50th globally.

The country excels in sub-indicators such as government promotion of investment in emerging technologies (ranked 9th globally), gender gap in Internet usage (ranked 11th globally), and ICT skills in education (ranked 23rd globally).

According to the Future Growth Index, Oman scored 50.59 out of 100, surpassing the global average. Furthermore, Oman ranked first globally in sub-indicators such as ICT capital (in US dollars) and electricity access in rural areas.

The country recorded 70.2 out of 100 in the Rule of Law Index, 66.5 in Regulatory Quality, and 62.2 in Government Effectiveness.

Dr Salim bin Abdullah al Shaikh, spokesperson for the Ministry of Economy, emphasised that the National Competitiveness Office continues to monitor Oman's position in key international rankings.

Dr Al Sheikh stated: "The office is actively working with national teams to strengthen Oman's position in global indices through various programmes and initiatives while addressing challenges that may arise." — ONA

سلطنة عمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة
Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
94/2025/ MTCIT	SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF ROLLER SAFETY BARRIERS	29-5-2025	15-6-2025	8-7-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (THIRD & FOURTH CLASSES)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIALS (LOCAL COMPANIES) (10/-) TEN OMANI RIALS (SMEs) NON-REFUNDABLE
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69/2025/ MTCIT (RECALL/1)	PURCHASE AND RENEWAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR NETWORK DEVICES	29-5-2025	15-6-2025	8-7-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (ALL GRADE)	(25/-) TWENTY FIVE OMANI RIALS (LOCAL COMPANIES) (10/-) TEN OMANI RIALS (SMEs) NON-REFUNDABLE

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INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



People wave flags and hold red placards during a rally in Seocho, Seoul. — AFP

SOUTH KOREANS
RALLY DAYS
BEFORE VOTE

SEOUL: Thousands of supporters of South Korea’s two leading presidential candidates rallied in Seoul on Saturday, three days before a vote triggered by the ex-leader’s disastrous declaration of martial law. Tuesday’s election caps months of political turmoil sparked by Yoon Suk Yeol’s brief suspension of civilian rule in December, for which he was impeached and removed from office.

All major polls have put liberal Lee Jae-myung well ahead in the presidential race, with a recent Gallup survey showing 49 per cent of respondents viewed him as the best candidate.

Kim Moon-soo, from the conservative People Power Party (PPP) that Yoon left this month, trailed Lee by 35 per cent.

Organisers from both camps told police they expected tens of thousands of supporters to rally in Seoul on Saturday. In Seocho, in the south of the capital, Lee supporters gathered holding signs condemning Yoon’s “insurrection”. Both frontrunner Lee Jae-myung of the liberal Democratic Party and conservative challenger Kim have cast the race as a battle for the soul of the country. — AFP

SAUDI FOREIGN
MINISTER ARRIVES IN
SYRIA FOR TALKS



Saudi FM Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud and Syrian FM Asaad Hassan al Shibani attend a press conference in Damascus. — Reuters

DAMASCUS: Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud travelled to Damascus on Saturday, where he said his country would be at the forefront of efforts to rebuild Syria. Prince Faisal had landed in the Syrian capital earlier, alongside an economic delegation on a visit to discuss ways to support Syria’s economy.

“We affirm that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will remain at the vanguard of countries standing by Syria in its path towards reconstruction and economic recovery,” Prince Faisal said in a joint press conference with his Syrian counterpart.

Saudi Arabia “will present joint financial support alongside Qatar to public sector workers” in Syria, he added. He said Saudi economic delegations would visit Damascus soon, noting that “work is underway to discuss investment support and economic and trade cooperation”.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al Shibani, meanwhile, expressed his country’s thanks “for the role Saudi Arabia has played, particularly on the lifting of sanctions” by the United States. The two countries “have entered a strong stage of joint investment and economic cooperation”, he said. — AFP

PAKISTAN
TO UPGRADE
DIPLOMATIC
TIES WITH
AFGHANISTAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will designate an ambassador to Afghanistan, the first since Kabul fell to the Taliban in 2021, the country’s foreign minister said, announcing an upgrade in diplomatic ties that shows some easing of tensions between the two neighbours. Currently, Pakistan and Afghanistan’s top envoy in each other’s country is a charge d’affaires, a lower level than ambassador. Pakistan has not yet said who will be nominated for the

upgraded post.

Announcing the decision to upgrade diplomatic representation, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, Ishaq Dar, said bilateral relations had been on a positive trajectory since he visited Kabul with a Pakistani delegation last month. “I am confident this step would further contribute towards enhanced engagement,” he said on X.

Afghanistan has welcomed the decision to upgrade diplomatic relations with Pakistan, where

the Taliban government’s foreign minister is due to travel in the coming days. “This elevation in diplomatic representation between Afghanistan & Pakistan paves the way for enhanced bilateral cooperation in multiple domains,” the Afghan foreign ministry said.

China, which hosted an informal meeting between the Pakistani government and the Afghan Taliban administration, said that the two countries planned to upgrade their diplomatic ties. — AFP

Ukraine evacuates 11 more villages in Sumy region

UKRAINE ordered the evacuation of 11 more villages in its Sumy region bordering Russia on Saturday amid fears Moscow was gearing up for a fresh ground assault. Russia claims to have captured several villages in the northeastern region in recent weeks, and has massed more than 50,000 soldiers on the other side of the border, according to Kyiv. The evacuations came just two days before a possible meeting between the two sides in Istanbul, as Washington called on both countries to end the three-year war.

Russia has confirmed it will send a delegation to the Turkish city, but Kyiv has yet to accept the proposal, warning the talks would not yield results unless the Kremlin provided its peace terms in advance. On Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Moscow of doing “everything” it could to sabotage the potential meeting by withholding its peace terms.

Authorities in Ukraine’s Sumy region said on Saturday that they were evacuating 11 villages within a roughly 30-kilometre range from the Russian border. “The decision was made in view of the constant threat to civilian life as a result of shelling of border communities,” the regional administration said on social media.

A spokesman for Ukraine’s border guard service, Andriy Demchenko, said on Thursday that Russia was poised to “attempt an attack” on Sumy. In total, 213 settlements in



A Ukrainian serviceman fires a gun toward Russian positions, in Donetsk region. — Reuters

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the region have been ordered to evacuate. Russia’s defence ministry said on Saturday that its forces had taken another Sumy region village, Vodolagy.

Moscow’s attack on Ukraine, launched in February 2022, has resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the destruction of towns and villages across parts of the east and south of the country.

The Kremlin’s army now controls around a fifth of the country and claims to have annexed five Ukrainian regions as its own, including Crimea, which it seized in 2014.

US President Donald Trump has spearheaded diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the fighting, but Kyiv and Moscow have both accused each other of not wanting peace. The Kremlin has proposed further negotiations in Istanbul on Monday,

after a May 16 round of talks that yielded little beyond a large prisoner-of-war exchange.

Kyiv has not yet said whether it will attend the Monday meeting, and said on Friday it did not expect any results from the talks unless Moscow provided its peace terms in advance. Russia says it will provide its peace memorandum in person on Monday. But Ukraine suspects it will contain unrealistic demands that Kyiv has already rejected, including that Ukraine cede territory still under its control and abandon its Nato ambitions.

In a statement to the United Nations on Friday, Russia’s UN ambassador Vassily Nebenzia suggested the memorandum might call for Western countries to halt armed supplies to Kyiv and for Ukraine to abandon its military mobilisation. — AFP

SUDDEN HAILSTORM LASHES ALEXANDRIA



ALEXANDRIA: An unseasonal rainstorm battered the Egyptian city of Alexandria on Saturday, flooding roads and damaging seafront businesses in the latest bout of erratic weather to hit the region. Hailstones pelted the city overnight, forcing people to flee cafes as gusts of wind blew the ice pellets through windows, according to footage posted on social media. Lightning lit up the skies and underpasses were submerged.

Alexandria Governor Ahmed Khaled Hassan raised the alert level and emergency crews worked through the morning to tow cars and clear debris. No casualties were reported, Egypt’s health ministry said. — AFP

TORRENTIAL RAINS

India monsoon floods kill five in northeast



Torrential monsoon rains in India’s northeast triggered landslides and floods that swept away and killed at least five people in Assam. The deaths recorded are among the first of this season, with scores often killed over the course of the rains across India. Rivers swollen by the lashing rain broke their banks across the region. City authorities have disconnected the electricity in several districts to cut the risk of electrocution. — AFP

CONTINUOUS BOMBS

New Israeli strike hits southern Lebanon



Lebanese official media said an Israeli strike killed one person in the south on Saturday despite a six-month-old ceasefire, as Israel said it targeted a Hezbollah site. The state-run National News Agency (NNA) said a man was killed when an Israeli drone targeted his car as he was heading to pray at a mosque in Deir Al Zahrani. Israel has continued to bomb Lebanon despite the November 27 truce. — AFP

FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT

German chancellor Merz to meet Trump



Germany’s Chancellor Friedrich Merz will next Thursday with US President Donald Trump for talks at the White House. The talks will focus on relations between the two countries, German spokesman Stefan Kornelius said, as well as “the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the situation in the Middle East and trade policy”. The talks will be the first time the two leaders have met and mark Merz’s first official visit as chancellor. — AFP

The New York Times

In Poland, presidential hopefuls battle for young voters



ANDREW HIGGINS

The writer is the East and Central Europe bureau chief for The New York Times

A tight presidential election in Poland hinges heavily on young voters, a restive demographic with a big stake in the direction of the country. But the two candidates facing off in a runoff election on Sunday share a big problem: Young Poles do not much like either of them. That is adding to the unpredictability of an election widely seen as pivotal for the future of the biggest economic and military power in the European Union’s formerly communist East. It is also critical to efforts by the country’s centrist prime minister, Donald Tusk, to unravel the legacy of his populist predecessor.

In a first round of voting on May 18, voters aged 18 to 29 overwhelmingly supported anti-establishment candidates who failed to make it to the runoff. They mostly shunned the candidates competing on Sunday, who represent Poland’s two dominant political parties — Civic Platform, led by Tusk; and Law and Justice, the former governing party led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski. The runoff pits Rafal Trzaskowski, the liberal mayor of Warsaw who is backed by Tusk’s party, against Karol Nawrocki, a nationalist historian and former boxer supported by Law and Justice.

Coming only two weeks after a presidential

election in Romania in which voters chose a centrist over a hard-right admirer of President Donald Trump, Poland’s vote is being closely watched in Europe and the United States as a test of right-wing populism’s staying power. “Don’t let the globalists and unelected bureaucrats steal your elections, as they did in Romania,” George Simion, the defeated hard-right candidate in Romania, told a gathering in Poland this past week of the American Conservative Political Action Conference. Kristi Noem, Trump’s homeland security secretary who also spoke at the event, endorsed the Law and Justice candidate.

What American and European fans of Trump see as a climactic battle between left and right is seen by many young Polish voters as an infuriating rerun of a decades-old struggle. “You only get angry looking at system politicians,” said Jan Stachura, 20, a student in Tychy, a town in Poland’s former industrial heartland in the southwestern region of Silesia. He said he had voted for neither of Sunday’s contenders in the first round on May 18 and did not know whether he would even bother to vote in the runoff.

Tusk, 68, and Kaczynski, 75, first entered politics more than 40 years ago when Poland

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was still a Soviet satellite. After Poland joined the European Union in 2004 they emerged as leaders of two hostile camps: one committed to embracing the values and rules of the European Union, the other infused with nationalism and fealty to the Roman Catholic Church. They have rotated in and out of power since, leaving Polish politics in a repetitive loop.

Kaczynski accuses Tusk of being a “German agent” more interested in serving Berlin and Brussels than ordinary Poles. Tusk has attacked his rival as a populist reactionary intent on dismantling democracy and withdrawing Poland from the European Union. Trzaskowski won the first round barely ahead of Nawrocki, who finished second. Whether Trzaskowski can prevail on Sunday depends heavily on how young voters who backed the far right and leftists in the first round, cast their ballots.

A widespread plague-on-both-your-houses feeling among younger Poles has brought unusual volatility to politics, said Tomasz Slupik, a political-science professor at the University of Silesia. The Polish presidency has no say in setting policy, but its veto power over legislation passed by the government allowed the departing president.

JUDGE’S DILEMMA IN THE GOOGLE SEARCH CASE



STEVE LOHR

The author is a reporter, covering technology, the economy and work

Data played a starring role in the government’s successful antitrust suit against Google accusing it of illegally protecting its monopoly in online search. Now, steps to force Google to unlock its data trove could figure prominently in a ruling on how to address the tech giant’s dominance, antitrust experts say. On Friday, the federal judge overseeing the case, Amit P. Mehta, heard closing

arguments in federal court in Washington on what corrective measures, known as remedies, he should order to restore competition. The government’s requests include forcing Google to share its search engine results and advertising data with rivals.

Justice Department lawyers have repeatedly described data as “the oxygen” for search engines. And in his ruling against Google in August, Mehta recounted in detail how the company harvests vast amounts of data from user searches and web crawling, then stores and analyses the data to rule the lucrative market for internet search.

Google, he noted, collects nine times as much user search data everyday as all its rivals combined. And as more data is fed into Google’s software, the results that the search engine returns on everything from biology to bluejeans become more accurate and relevant to the person seeking information. Better search performance, in turn, attracts more users and more advertisers, Mehta wrote. It’s a flywheel that steadily enhances Google’s search and acts as a barrier to competition. “At every stage in the search process,” the judge wrote, “user data is a critical input that directly improves quality.”

His decision on how to fix Google’s monopoly has the potential to reshape competition on the internet, particularly as a new age of generative artificial intelligence takes off and is expected to overhaul the way people search for information online. Tech companies are racing to win consumers over with chatbots and other tools that can answer more sophisticated questions, drawing from vast pools of data.

Mehta has already indicated that AI may factor into his deliberations, noting during a recent hearing the rapid development of the technology since the lawsuit went to trial in the fall of 2023. To fix Google’s search monopoly, the Justice Department and the group of states that brought the case have recommended a range of sanctions, from simply prohibiting anti-competitive deals with companies that Google pays to make it the automatic search engine to forcing the company to sell off its market-leading Chrome browser.

The government’s data-related proposal falls somewhere in between. It includes requiring Google to share user search information and license its search index, a database of hundreds of billions of webpages scored by popularity, quality and relevance.

White House unveils new details of budget cuts

THE Trump administration on Friday unveiled fuller details of its proposal to slash about \$163 billion in federal spending next fiscal year, offering a more intricate glimpse into the vast array of education, health, housing and labor programmes that would be hit by the deepest cuts. The many spending reductions throughout the roughly 1,220-page document and agency blueprints underscored President Donald Trump’s desire to foster a vast transformation in Washington. His budget seeks to reduce the size of government and its reach into Americans lives, including services to the poor.

The new proposal reaffirmed the president’s recommendation to set federal spending levels at their lowest in modern history, as the White House first sketched out in its initial submission to Congress transmitted in early May. But it offered new details about the ways in which Trump hoped to achieve the savings, and the many functions of government that could be affected as a result. The White House budget is not a matter of law. Ultimately, it is up to Congress to determine the budget, and in recent years, it has routinely discarded many of the president’s proposals. Lawmakers are only starting to embark on the annual process, with government funding set to expire at the end of September.

The updated budget reiterated Trump’s pursuit of deep reductions for nearly every major federal agency, reserving its steepest cuts for foreign aid, medical research, tax enforcement and a slew of anti-poverty programmes, including rental assistance. The White House restated its plan to seek a \$33 billion cut at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, for example, and another \$33 billion reduction at the Department of Health and Human Services.

Targeting the Education Department, Trump again put forward a roughly \$12 billion cut, seeking to eliminate dozens of programmes while unveiling new changes to Pell grants, which help low-income students pay for college. The maximum award would be capped at \$5,710 for the 2026-27 award year, a decrease of more than \$1,600. A spokesperson for the



House Speaker Mike Johnson speaks to reporters at the Capitol in Washington.



TONY ROMM

The writer is a reporter covering economic policy and the Trump administration

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Office of Management and Budget attributed the cap to a preexisting shortfall in the programme. So while it did not propose to cut spending on Pell grants, the Trump administration also opted against providing new money to sustain the student aid at its existing level.

Trump also targeted the nutritional programme for women, infants and children, which last year helped about 6.7 million poorer recipients afford food. His budget proposed to roll back a policy that had increased the benefits low-income families receive for fruits and vegetables under the programme. Georgia Machell, president of the National WIC Association, which represents providers, estimated in a statement on Friday that the move would result in breastfeeding mothers seeing those monthly benefits drop to \$13 from \$54, while for young children, the monthly allowance would be reduced to \$10 from \$27.

The Office of Management and Budget maintained that the top-line funding level for the programme had not changed and that it would still serve eligible participants. As part of a reorientation that slashed federal health spending, Trump

proposed chopping funding at the National Cancer Institute by more than \$2.7 billion, nearly a 40% decrease, drawing a sharp rebuke from cancer research supporters late on Friday.

“For the past 50 years, every significant medical breakthrough, especially in the treatment of cancer, has been linked to sustained federal investment in research” by the institute, the American Cancer Society Action Network said in a statement. “This commitment has contributed to the remarkable statistic of over 18 million cancer survivors currently living in the US today.” The cut to cancer research is part of a roughly \$18 billion reduction at the National Institutes of Health that Trump revealed this month, as the White House aims to consolidate health agencies and their research centers. Democrats immediately rebuked Trump on Friday for the deep proposed cuts to domestic programmes.

The White House did not include some key details in its updated budget, including estimates of tax revenues, and it did not offer a full set of spending proposals for the Pentagon, although it promised those in June.

OPINION

Listening to dementia caregivers



DR HAMED AL SINAWI
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The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

LISTENING to dementia caregivers is crucial in providing support for both the caregivers and the patients. Being able to offer a safe and non-judgemental space for caregivers to express their anger, frustration, and fear is an essential skill for healthcare workers dealing with people with dementia. Working with individuals with dementia and their caregivers can be emotionally draining, especially as you witness the decline in the patient’s condition and have limited treatment options. Family members often bring their loved ones to the clinic after hours of preparation, hoping for a miracle drug to ease their symptoms. Despite knowing the limitations, caregivers still seek solutions to stop the progression of dementia.

It is important to be mindful of your communication style when interacting with caregivers. Are you a reflective listener or do you jump to giving advice too quickly? Do you provide generic lists of do’s and don’ts that may not apply to the individual? Addressing caregivers’ misconceptions about their loved one’s behaviour tactfully can help them better understand the situation. I once encountered a caregiver whose mother developed vascular dementia after a stroke. The daughter struggled with her mother’s new behaviour of collecting used tissue paper, believing it to be intentional. Through discussion, it became clear that the behaviour was a result of the stroke, not deliberate defiance. Exploring strategies to keep the mother occupied during the daughter’s absence helped manage the situation without confrontation.

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Collaboration with psychologists, physiotherapists, and social workers is essential in caring for individuals with dementia. While some believe doctors should not provide psychoeducation, I believe it can be beneficial when delivered by someone familiar with the patient’s condition and the caregiver’s challenges. Providing personalised education based on scientific evidence can empower caregivers to better manage their loved one’s condition. In conclusion, understanding and supporting dementia caregivers is a crucial aspect of healthcare for individuals with dementia. By creating a safe and non-judgemental space for caregivers to express their emotions and providing personalised education, healthcare workers can improve the quality of care for both the patients and their caregivers.

US COURT WON’T LIFT JUDGE’S BLOCK ON GOVERNMENT OVERHAUL

BY DANIEL WIESSNER AND TOM HALS

A US appeals court on Friday refused to allow President Donald Trump’s administration to carry out mass layoffs of federal workers and a restructuring of agencies, leaving a lower court order in place that blocked the sweeping government overhaul.

The decision by the San Francisco-based 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals means that, for now, the Trump administration cannot proceed with plans to shed tens of thousands of federal jobs and shutter many government offices and programmes.

US District Judge Susan Illston in San Francisco on May 22 blocked large-scale layoffs at about 20 federal agencies, agreeing with a group of unions, non-profits and municipalities that the president may only restructure agencies when authorised by Congress.

A 9th Circuit three-judge panel on Friday, in a 2-1 ruling, denied the Trump administration’s bid to stay Illston’s decision pending an appeal, which could take months to resolve. The administration will likely now ask the US Supreme Court to pause the ruling.

“The Trump administration will immediately fight back against this absurd order,” the White House said in a statement.

“A single judge is attempting to unconstitutionally seize the power of hiring and firing from the Executive Branch.”

A coalition of plaintiffs praised the ruling: “The Ninth Circuit’s decision today rightfully maintains the block on the Trump-Vance administration’s unlawful, disruptive, and destructive reorganisation of the federal government.”

The appeals court said the administration had not provided any evidence it would suffer an irreparable injury if the lower court order remained in place and said plaintiffs were likely to prevail.

“The executive order at issue here far exceeds the president’s supervisory powers under the Constitution,” said the majority opinion from Judge William Fletcher, who was appointed by Democratic President Bill Clinton. He was joined by Judge Lucy Koh, who was appointed by Democratic President Joe Biden.

Judge Consuelo Callahan, who was appointed by Republican President George W. Bush, dissented, saying the administration was likely to succeed on appeal and had suffered irreparable harm from having its policy blocked.

Illston’s ruling was the broadest of its kind against the government overhaul that was spearheaded by Trump ally Elon Musk, the world’s richest person and CEO of electric vehicle maker Tesla.

Along with blocking layoffs, Illston barred the Department of Government Efficiency from ordering job cuts or reorganisation at federal agencies. — Reuters

Oman is a remarkable ornithologist’s paradise

AS someone who has harboured a lifelong passion for birdwatching, Oman represents one of the most remarkable ornithological destinations on earth. Back in England, we birdwatchers are affectionately known as “Twitchers”, a term whose origin remains a mystery to me, though it perfectly captures the excitement that courses through us when spotting a rare species.

Oman’s avifauna is truly extraordinary, with a total of 556 species recorded, making it a treasure trove for anyone passionate about birds. This incredible diversity stems from the country’s unique position at the crossroads of Africa, Asia and Europe, combined with its varied landscapes ranging from coastal plains and desert oases to mountainous regions and monsoon-fed southern areas. During the summer months in Oman, I’m treated to a spectacular display right from my bedroom balcony.

A small group of Bee Eaters regularly perches on my balcony wall, creating a living rainbow with their brilliant plumage. These magnificent birds have a beautiful array of colours – emerald greens, sapphire blues, golden yellows and rich rust-reds that shimmer in the sun. Their hunting technique is worth watching: they zoom down with incredible precision to snatch a bee from the air, then return to their perch to methodically beat their prey against my balcony wall before swallowing it whole.

This behaviour removes the bee’s stinger. The contrast between birdwatching in England and Oman couldn’t be more striking. In the UK we Twitchers will eagerly travel a hundred miles or more for the mere chance of glimpsing an Osprey, a bird so rare and magnificent that its appearance generates excitement throughout the birding community. These large hawks are slender, with long, narrow wings and long legs. Ospreys fly with a marked kink in their wings, making an M-shape when seen from below. I was astounded to spot an Osprey during a visit to the Al Mouj Golf Course, watching in awe as it performed its



Oman represents one of the most remarkable ornithological destinations on earth



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The author is Former School Principal Cambridge UK

spectacular fishing dive, plunging into the sea with deadly accuracy to emerge triumphant with a silvery fish clutched in its talons. The Marsh Harrier, another species considered rare in England, regularly graces the skies above my home in Oman. Their distinctive loud shrieking calls announce their presence as they soar overhead, hunting for prey with their keen eyes and impressive aerial manoeuvres. What would be a red-letter day for any British birdwatcher has become a part of my daily routine in Oman. Driving along November 18th Street has become an unexpected birding adventure, where I frequently spot magnificent raptors that would be the highlight of any European birding expedition. Spotted Eagles, with their broad wings and distinctive plumage patterns, are regular sights during these journeys.

One particularly memorable encounter occurred at dusk when a Barn Owl swept across the sky just ten metres above me, its ghostly white form cutting through the evening air silently. My garden has become a natural aviary, particularly enchanting when the brilliantly bright Arabian Purple Sunbird darts from flower to flower. These tiny gems move with hummingbird-like agility, their iridescent plumage catching

the light as they probe deep into blossoms for nectar. When I first saw one I thought it was a hummingbird because watching them feed is like observing a hummingbird dancing amongst the flowers. I saw one only yesterday. There are approximately one hundred different coloured Sunbirds. Oman’s natural heritage extends far beyond its remarkable bird life, encompassing creatures that I find beautiful rather than frightening. I particularly enjoy picking up and holding a tiny gecko. They have remarkably large eyes and the beneficial habit of consuming those pesky mosquitoes. While many Omanis remain inexplicably fearful of these harmless creatures, I find them charming. Oman’s snake population is largely harmless, though sadly many people’s first instinct is to kill these magnificent creatures rather than carefully relocating them to their natural habitat. The late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos was renowned for his deep love of all animals, and his compassionate philosophy has helped create an environment where Oman’s diverse wildlife can flourish. As we observe and appreciate Oman’s wildlife, it’s important to remember that we and they are all God’s creatures, deserving of respect and protection.

Mythology: Where much of history began... so they say



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

MYTHOLOGY whether Egyptian, Greek, or Roman mythology, has played a role in all our lives as stories, myths and legends that have influenced us virtually since the beginning of time. The deities, heroes, legends, characters and creatures have inspired us in the same way that our cultures and traditions have.

In Egyptian mythology, the mighty Sun God Ra ruled the Earth after creation as the King of gods and mortals. His alter ego, the ‘Eye of Ra’, was a malevolent force he could unleash to quell discontent among his followers. Yet it was Osiris, the God of life and fertility, who stimulated an almost fanatical devotion. He survived dismemberment by his brother Set and was brought back to life by his wife Isis long enough to conceive a son, Horus.

This genealogy sustained an amazing thirty-one dynasties of mythologically inspired rule in Egypt, with figures like ‘Hatshepsut’, the adored Queen Regent; ‘Amenhotep III’, the ninth Pharaoh; and ‘Ramesses II’, or ‘Ramesses the Great’, the mightiest of all the pharaohs, able to rule as the hand of the gods with absolute power. It is believed that this mythology inspired the religious and social order of the Middle East through Egypt’s strength and force.

These may not have been peaceful times, but reflective of the ancient Egyptian proverb that “To have peace there must be conflict”.

This is apparent in the iconic pyramids, which represent new life and each day’s sunrise, as well as being virtually indestructible pharaonic tombs and monuments. Today, many of us possess the ‘Eye of Horus’, protective amulets said to offer divine protection. The ancient Egyptians were great storytellers and writers, but sadly much of their formal and largely symbolic hieroglyphs and the cursive hieratic form in everyday use, rarely survived the test of time.

Roman mythology, as warlike as it was, or is, is essentially a reimaging of Roman history and was more of a literary response to hero worship. The gods and goddesses were heroic, with strong Roman cultural values and a belief that their manner of living and their passing was one of divine determination.

Their gods, such as Jupiter the god of thunder and lightning; Venus the goddess of love and desire; Neptune, the god of the seas; Mars the god of war; and Hercules, the god of great strength, were all like-for-like copies of the Greek gods.

What is Roman mythology’s legacy for today’s generation? Well, William Shakespeare was a staunch devotee of the form, especially through ‘Antony and Cleopatra’ and ‘Julius Caesar’. Throughout

The ancient Egyptians were great storytellers and writers, but sadly much of their formal and largely symbolic hieroglyphs and the cursive hieratic form in everyday use, rarely survived the test of time.

many of his plays, he utilised the symbolism and imagery of mythology, Greek and Roman, to get his points across. These are still key elements in the teaching of Shakespeare to hundreds of thousands of students today.

Greek mythology, more than any, lives on in our colloquialisms and our literature. To recall just a few in common use, we refer to being as handsome as Adonis; to be as rich as Croesus, or to have a Midas touch; a two-faced person as having a Janus face; or to have a weakness as an Achilles heel; something large being, like Titan, titanic, or something huge a Colossus; a romantic deed being inspired by Cupid; or of a platonic relationship being Plato’s description of Socrates’ affection.

Greek mythology is believed to have originated almost four thousand years ago as an oral-poetic literary form concerning the origins and nature of the world, greatly inspired by how the Trojan Wars were seen through the eyes of Homer in his two magnificent epic poems, the ‘Iliad’ and the ‘Odyssey’.

Those original ‘myths of origin’ featured plotlines that could be from any soap opera on television today of love, beauty, wealth, betrayal, fury, deception, hatred, jealousy and revenge.

Ironically, ‘Chaos’ was one of the original characters of Greek mythology and it’s still around!

INDIA DEFENCE CHIEF SAYS JET DOWNED IN PAKISTAN CONFLICT

SINGAPORE: India’s defence chief on Saturday appeared to confirm his country had lost at least one aircraft during the brief conflict with Pakistan earlier this month, he said in an interview.

India and Pakistan were engaged in a four-day conflict this month, their worst stand-off since 1999, before a ceasefire was agreed on May 10.

More than 70 people were killed in missile, drone and artillery fire on both sides.

Pakistan claimed its Chinese-supplied jets had shot down six Indian aircraft.

India’s chief of defence staff, General Anil Chauhan, called Pakistan’s claims that it shot down six Indian warplanes “absolutely incorrect”.

But Chauhan, when pressed as to whether India had lost any jets, appeared to confirm New Delhi had lost an unspecified number of aircraft — without giving details.

“I think, what is important is that, not the jet being down, but why they were being down,” he said, speaking on the sidelines of Shangri-La Dialogue defence meeting in Singapore.

There was no immediate response from New Delhi.

On May 11, a day after the ceasefire, India’s Air Marshal A K Bharti, speaking to reporters, had said that “all our pilots are back home”, adding that “we are in a combat scenario and that losses are a part of combat”.

A senior security source said three Indian jets had crashed on home soil without giving the make or cause.

But until the comments on Saturday, India had not officially confirmed any of its aircraft were lost.

“The good part is that we are able to understand the tactical mistake which we made, remedy it, rectify it and then implement it again after two days and flew all our jets, again targeting at long range,” Chauhan added.

“Why they were down — that is more important for us and what did we do after that”, he added.

The recent conflict between the nuclear-armed rivals was triggered by an attack on tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir on April 22, the deadliest on civilians in the contested Muslim-majority territory in decades.

New Delhi blamed Islamabad for backing the Islamist militants it said carried out the attack, charges that Pakistan denied.

On May 7, Indian jets bombed what New Delhi called “terrorist infrastructure” sites across the border. Pakistan has said it downed six Indian planes, including at least three Rafale fighters, in the initial clashes.

The ceasefire was announced on May 10 after bitter fighting in which both sides used fighter jets, missiles, drones and artillery.

General Anil Chauhan, India’s chief of defence staff, said in an interview that India suffered initial losses in the air, but declined to give details.

— AFP

Rethinking designing collaboration in age of AI

ARTIFICIAL Intelligence (AI) is rapidly redefining how interior designers think, work and imagine spaces. No longer a niche innovation, AI has become a vital tool that complements and enhances human creativity in architectural and spatial design. Through the integration of technologies like generative design algorithms, machine learning and predictive modelling, designers can now explore a wider range of possibilities, assess functional scenarios and visualise environments in real-time.

This shift marks a transition from tool-based design thinking to collaborative intelligence, where the designer and the digital system work in tandem to generate high-performing, user-centric interiors.

Interior designers have always navigated a complex intersection of art, psychology and function. However, with the advent of AI, their role has evolved into one that requires strategic digital literacy. The modern designer must understand not only how to create beautiful spaces but also how to curate data, interpret algorithms and frame intelligent queries that prompt meaningful design outputs from AI systems.

AI-driven tools such as parametric modelling platforms and automated layout systems empower designers to explore iterations at unprecedented speed. Still, the ability to extract cultural meaning, ensure emotional resonance and respond to human values remains a uniquely human strength — beyond the reach of even the most sophisticated machines.

AI’s ability to generate visual interpretations based on written or conceptual prompts — seen in systems like MIDJOURNEY or DALL-E — has sparked both excitement and debate in the creative industries. Designers can now produce complex visual compositions in minutes, rapidly testing ideas without the need for extensive manual input. Yet, what these images often lack is semantic depth — the embedded cultural,



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psychological and experiential context that informs truly human design.

This highlights a critical distinction: AI can produce images, but only designers can assign them meaning. While AI offers combinatorial creativity — reconfiguring what already exists — it does not originate ideas rooted in human memory, history, or place.

A significant challenge facing interior design education today is the disconnect between academia and industry practice. While professional environments increasingly rely on data-rich design tools and AI-integrated workflows, many academic programmes continue to focus on conventional drafting, limited software training and analogue ideation processes.

To prepare future designers, universities must revise their curricula to include cross-disciplinary modules in digital ethics, coding basics, environmental analytics and interactive systems. A comprehensive understanding of these tools, coupled with a critical approach to their use, ensures that graduates enter the profession with both technical skills and a grounded design philosophy.

As AI becomes more embedded in the design process, it raises

important ethical considerations. The question of authorship becomes complex when a designer uses AI tools that rely on massive data sets composed of pre-existing imagery. Who owns the creative output — the user or the machine’s developers? Similarly, where does originality lie in a design generated through algorithmic processes? Another concern is the risk of cultural erasure.

AI systems trained on dominant aesthetic traditions may unintentionally reinforce homogenised, global design trends, marginalising local styles, languages and user experiences. Designers must therefore actively critique the systems they use and advocate for inclusive databases that respect cultural nuance.

The next generation of designers will need to move beyond merely mastering digital tools. They must cultivate a post-digital mindset, where technology is seamlessly integrated into design thinking rather than treated as an external device.

Such a mindset enables designers to navigate complex ethical terrains, manage hybrid creative processes and apply digital outputs within socially and environmentally responsible frameworks.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Deccan Eagles players celebrate with the trophy.

DECCAN EAGLES WIN DBCL SEASON 4

Deccani Box Cricket League (DBCL) fourth edition was played on May 18, 2025 at Unity football Club Grounds Athaiba, Muscat. Twelve teams participated in league stage. Semifinals were played between Deccan Eagles Vs Deccan Chargers and Team Deccan Vs Hyderabad Paltan. Final played between Deccan Eagles and Team Deccan was a keenly fought affair. Team Deccan after winning the toss elected to bat and scored 51 runs for the loss of 6 wickets in 8 overs. Shahrukh, Sabir and Mohsin took 1 wicket each. In reply, Deccan Eagles made 52 runs for 6 wickets and reached the target in 7.5 overs. Mansoor was adjudged as Man of the Match.

Arshad was adjudged Man of the series for his all-round performance. Ahmed Khan received best batsman and Abdulhaseeb received best bowler awards respectively. Young Master Touseef of Deccan Muscateers was awarded 'Special Man of the Match' trophy.

Deccani Box cricket is organised by Hyderabad community in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. The evening event was attended by Deccani and Indian diaspora of all ages and also Omani cricket enthusiasts. Dr Wasifuddin Consultant Oncologist at Royal Hospital and other prominent community members including Abdulsamad, Abdulaziz, Dawood Khan and Ahmed Maseehuddin. Salman distributed the various prizes and awards.

The match played in the wee hours was attended by a significant crowd. Mansoor Sabri & Sohail Khan presented Champions trophy to the winning captain Mohammed Atif Hussain of Deccan Eagles. Runners-up trophy was handed over by Sayeed Quadri to captain Faiyaz of Team Deccan. The organising committee headed by Zaheer Al Deen and members Mirza Zulkhader, Fasi, Zaki Ahmed, Naimat, and Mohamed Ali Al Din received a lot of accolade for holding another successful tournament. The orgnisers were well supported on the ground by Kabir, Junaid and Mastan (Scoring). Zaheer Al Deen head of the organising committee thanked various Sponsors including HST Signs, Al Takamul Consultants, Abu Shifa Contractors, Ali Dental centers, Kazmi labs & Deccan Darbar Restaurant.

Prodhomme wins Giro stage as Del Toro holds lead

Nicolas Prodhomme claimed the first Grand Tour stage win of his career when he rode solo to victory on stage 19 of the Giro d'Italia on Friday, while Mexico's pink jersey holder Isaac Del Toro came second to extend his overall lead. On their penultimate day in the mountains, the riders faced a brutal 166 km ride from Biella to Champoluc with five classified climbs and a total elevation gain of nearly 5,000 metres. Decathlon AG2R La Mondiale's Prodhomme broke free on the fourth climb to take the lead and eventually the victory to become the first Frenchman to win a Giro stage this year. "I've worked a lot for this Giro d'Italia. I didn't want to compete for the GC (general classification), I wanted to try and win a stage. I've waited for long for this win to come," Prodhomme said. "I won my first race three weeks ago (on the Tour of the Alps) but to win at the Giro d'Italia makes me very happy.

PRODHOMME CLAIMS FIRST GRAND TOUR STAGE WIN OF HIS CAREER

DEL TORO FINISHES SECOND TO EXTEND LEAD OVER CARAPAZ

DEL TORO FAVOURITE FOR TITLE WITH TWO STAGES LEFT



Isaac Del Toro reacts after crossing the finish line during stage 20. — Reuters

It's a beautiful day." Prodhomme had attacked with over seven kilometres left to the summit and he quickly put distance between himself and stage 15 winner Carlos Verona and Antonio Tiberi while the group with Del Toro was more than a minute behind. As the general classification battle raged behind him, the 28-year-old pushed ahead and on the home stretch, he emerged through a cloud of pink smoke, holding his helmet in disbelief as he crossed the line to win by nearly a minute. "Our breakaway didn't have a big gap. I didn't feel great when I followed the first attacks. My legs were stiff on the first climb. Kilometre after kilometre, I felt better on the bike," Prodhomme added. "On Col de Joux, I realised that I needed to take risks - otherwise we were going nowhere... Before today I've had two top-five finishes because

I don't take a lot of risks. Today I wanted to play for the win." Richard Carapaz, who was second in the general classification, attacked with 6.8 kilometres left but UAE Team Emirates rider Del Toro responded by staying glued to his wheel as they left third-placed Simon Yates behind. Del Toro then beat his closest rival in the sprint to the finish to take second place and remain the firm favourite for the title with two stages left after his other rivals lost 24 seconds or more. Del Toro's lead is now 43 seconds over Carapaz while Yates is a minute and 21 seconds behind in third. "I had the legs to be with Richard... I cannot take more risks but today was incredible," Del Toro said. "Everyone in our country is starting to see how hard cycling is. It's just incredible... I can't believe I'm the guy representing the country!" — Reuters

2nd Place for Al Rawahi on day 6 of Jordan Rally

A puncture on the first special stage of the final morning proved to be mightily expensive for the Oman Rally Team's Abdullah al Rawahi and it ultimately cost him the chance to threaten the 19-time FIA Middle East champion Nasser Saleh Al Attiyah for victory at the Jordan Rally. Al Rawahi and his Jordanian co-driver Ata Al Hmoud pushed as hard as they could when conditions permitted but they were always running the risk of collecting a flat tyre on the day's six demanding gravel special stages in the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley areas of the Hashemite Kingdom. Another time delay with a flat tyre on the 10th stage eventually decided the outcome in Al Attiyah's favour and Al Rawahi had no alternative but to bring his Autotek Škoda Fabia R5 to the finish in second overall. Nevertheless, his day's result also netted a second Jordan National Championship event win of the weekend.

Al Rawahi said: "It was a long two days for us. The first day was quite good, especially with the pace and we were very close to Nasser. Unfortunately, today we had some punctures and we lost some time. Overall, we are very happy with our performance. It has been the closest we have been to him in the battle. "We don't really have enough seat time in the car. After this rally I have three months off not really driving my car. My car is also an older generation and there is experience difference between me and Nasser. That is why it is good that he is in the championship. He helps us to push and get closer to him. It is still good. We wanted to win but we are still happy."

A first pass through the iconic Panorama stage of 17.12km opened proceedings on the final morning. Outside temperatures were already up to 31°C at the start of the stage with a peak of 37°C in the afternoon.

Surface cleaning was evident on the opener but Al Attiyah laid down the gauntlet with a time of 11min 38.0sec. Al Rawahi dropped 32.3 seconds with tyre damage on a front-right wheel and that enabled Al Attiyah to extend his lead to 45.8 seconds.

The first pass through Suwayma was next in the itinerary. Al Attiyah stopped the clocks in 5min 47.0sec and was able to extend his advantage over Al Rawahi to 52.5 seconds with another stage win.

Wadi Nar was the last stage of the loop. Al Attiyah made it a clean sweep of morning stage wins and headed for the midday service and regroup with an advantage over Al Rawahi of 53.1 seconds. He beat the Omani by just six-tenths of a



Abdullah al Rawahi during the race.

2025 JORDAN RALLY - POSITIONS AFTER SS12 (UNOFFICIAL):

1. Nasser Saleh Al Attiyah (QAT)/Candido Carrera (ESP) Škoda Fabia RS Rally 2 2hr 13min 47.7sec
2. Abdullah al Rawahi (OMA)/Ata Al Hmoud (JOR) Škoda Fabia R5 Rally 2 2hr 16min 42.5sec
3. Abdulaziz Al Kuwari (QAT)/Lorcan Moore (IRL) Citroën C3 Rally 2 2hr 19min 01.3sec
4. Bassel Abu Hamdan (KSA)/Firas Elias (LBN) Škoda Fabia R5 Rally 2 2hr 33min 25.3sec
5. Abdullah al Zubair (OMA)/Taha al Zadjali (OMA) Subaru Impreza N14 2hr 37min 26.0sec
6. Nasser Khalifa Al Attiyah (QAT)/Ziad Chehab (LBN) Ford Fiesta Mk II Rally 2 2hr 38min 58.3sec
7. Shaikh Bader Al Fayez (JOR)/Vili Oslaj (SLO) Škoda Fabia Rally 2 2hr 40min 34.9sec
8. Zakariya al Aamri (OMA)/Mohammed al Mazroui (OMA) Subaru Impreza N14 2hr 41min 53.0sec
9. Shadi Shaban (JOR)/Samer Issa (JOR) Mitsubishi Lancer Evo IX (NAT) 2hr 42min 10.2sec
10. Rashid Al Muhannadi (QAT)/Gary McElhinney (IRL) Peugeot 208 Rally 4 2hr 46min 12.6sec, etc

second in the special.

After the opening loop of three stages, Al Rawahi said: "The first stage this morning we got a puncture and lost over 30 seconds. When you try to keep up and push this can happen sometimes. We were able to continue but the gap is bigger. It's not impossible but it was closer before. Now we are trying to maintain our speed. We have three more stages to go."

A second delay occurred in the afternoon with another puncture but

the Omani held on to take second place and maintain his push for a podium finish in this year's FIA Middle East Rally Championship.

The Oman Rally Team has backing from Al Manar Investments, the Oman Automobile Association, WMS, Zamakan, OQ, Strike, Size, the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture of Oman and National Finance.

The FIA Middle East Rally Championship continues in Lebanon on September 5th-7th.

SHORTTAKES



McLaren's Oscar Piastri during practice. — Reuters

PIASTRI STAYS ON TOP IN SPANISH GP PRACTICE

BARCELONA: Championship leader Oscar Piastri topped the times again ahead of title rival and McLaren team-mate Lando Norris in Saturday's third and final free practice ahead of the Spanish Grand Prix.

The 24-year-old Australian clocked a best lap in one minute and 12.387 seconds to outpace Norris, who is three points behind him in the drivers' championship, by 0.526 seconds.

Charles Leclerc was third for Ferrari, seven-tenths off the pace, ahead of Mercedes' George Russell, four-time champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull and Racing Bulls' impressive rookie Isack Hadjar.

Kimi Antonelli was seventh in the second Mercedes ahead of two-time champion and local hero Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin, seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton in the second Ferrari and Liam Lawson in the second Racing Bull.

Piastri will on Sunday seek not only to increase his lead in the title race, but also claim an eighth consecutive podium for McLaren, a feat achieved previously by only two drivers - Hamilton and three-time champion Ayrton Senna. The session began in hot and dry conditions with Alpine new boy Franco Colapinto leading the way soon followed by home favourite Alonso, greeted by a loud cheer from a big Saturday crowd basking in the sunshine. In a slow start, Lance Stroll and Gabriel Bortoleto joined in, but after 12 minutes only Bortoleto and Colapinto had set times.

The true action did not begin until the half-hour mark with Sainz clocking 1:14.124 followed by Leclerc and Hamilton taking over before Norris and Russell trimmed the top spot lap to 1:13.396.

Emerging last, Antonelli promptly endorsed the impression that Mercedes, like Ferrari, had found time overnight by going second on his first timed lap.

Russell was four-tenths clear. With only 17 minutes remaining, only six cars were on track as teams conserved tyres at a high-degradation circuit. It offered little entertainment for the fans before Verstappen, after set-up changes, went top in 1:13.375.

On their second runs, McLaren lifted the bar with Piastri clocking 1:12.387, a second faster than McLaren. Norris went second, 0.526 adrift and Leclerc third. Unexpectedly, the range of times from first to 10th was 1.4 seconds. — AFP



Sinner into last 16, Pegula and Andreeva advance

WORLD NUMBER ONE Jannik Sinner powered into the last 16 of the French Open on Saturday, punishing outclassed Czech Jiri Lehecka as American Jessica Pegula and Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva both booked their spots in the second week. Sinner won through 6-0, 6-1, 6-2, with world number 34 Lehecka unable to stop the Italian steamroller on Court Suzanne-Lenglen, slumping to his third defeat in as many meetings after a one-hour 34-minute battering. "Today I was playing really, really well, especially during (the first) two-and-a-half sets... so very happy," said top seed Sinner.

"I don't think there's much I could improve." Three-time Grand Slam winner Sinner next meets Russia's Andrey Rublev, the beneficiary of a walkover to the fourth round after France's Arthur Fils withdrew injured on Friday. n finding his feet since his comeback from a three-month doping ban at the Italian Open earlier in May, reaching the final before losing to reigning Roland Garros champion Carlos Alcaraz.

And the 23-year-old has continued his fine form on the red clay of Roland Garros where he has not dropped a set, extending his winning streak at Grand Slam events to 17 matches after titles at the 2024 US Open and Australian Open this January. German third seed Alexander Zverev, who lost last year's final to Alcaraz, will next face Italian Flavio



Cobolli, the world number 26 later in the day.

Novak Djokovic faces a Champions League clash as he steps up his pursuit of a record-breaking 25th Grand Slam against Austrian qualifier Filip Misolic in the primetime night session on Court Philippe Chatrier. In the women's tournament, American third seed Jessica Pegula battled into the last 16 with a 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 win over Czech Marketa Vondrousova.

Pegula, last year's US Open runner-up, will play the winner of the all-French duel between Lois Boisson, ranked 361, and Elsa Jacquemot, 138th, for a place in the quarter-finals. The 31-year-old, who missed the 2024 tournament due to injuries, is hoping to better her previous best run in Paris which was a quarter-final appearance three years ago.

ANDREEVA FEELING BETTER AND BETTER Earlier, 18-year-old Andreeva eased into the

last 16 with a 6-3, 6-1 win over Kazakh Yulia Putintseva. Sixth seed Andreeva took 78 minutes to dispatch Putintseva to set up a showdown with Daria Kasatkina, ranked 17.

Kasatkina, now playing for Australia after switching allegiance from her native Russia, got past Spanish 10th seed Paula Badosa 6-1, 7-5 in their third round match.

Andreeva is competing in just her ninth Grand Slam event, but the teenager has now reached the second week in five of them.

After a closely-contested first set, Andreeva took control winning nine of the last 10 games of the match.

"I felt a little nervous before the match, but overall, throughout I felt like I could do whatever I want on the court," said Andreeva.

"Like, you know, I felt free. I felt like even though the match is tight and even though sometimes she plays very tough shots, I felt like as soon as I recover and the point starts again, I felt like I can create what I want. It felt nice, honestly.

"I'm happy that with every match I play, I feel better and better. I think that this is a good thing.

Women's second seed and former finalist Coco Gauff will step up on Court Philippe Chatrier to play Czech world number 47 Marie Bouzkova later Saturday.

Three other American women are in action with Madison Keys and Sofia Kenin clashing for a place in the last 16, and unseeded compatriot Hailey Baptiste takes on Spaniard Jessica Bouzas Maneiro. — AFP

Farhan, Abrar lead Pakistan to win Bangladesh in T20 series

LAHORE: Opener Sahibzada Farhan notched his maiden half century and spinner Abrar Ahmed grabbed three wickets to guide Pakistan to another convincing 57-run win over Bangladesh in Lahore on Friday.

Farhan smashed a 41-ball 74 and Hasan Nawaz made 51 off 26 balls to help the home team post 201-6 before Abrar grabbed 3-19 to keep Bangladesh to 144-9 in 19 overs, with the last man Shoriful Islam unable to bat due to injury. Pakistan, who won the first match by 37 runs at the same venue, take an unassailable 2-0 lead with the final match on Sunday, also in Lahore.

The win also gives a kickstart to Pakistan's new white-ball head coach Mike Hesson, appointed

earlier this month to stem a slide which saw them win just three of their last 13 T20s before this series.

Bangladesh raced to 32 in the first two overs but openers Parvez Hossain (eight) and Tanzid Hasan (19-ball 33 with five boundaries and a six) fell within two runs of each other.

From 46-2, Bangladesh slumped to 56-5 with Abrar dismissing Towhid Hridoy (five) and Jaker Ali (nought) off successive deliveries while pacer Hasan Ali had skipper Litton Das for six.

Tanzim Hasan, who top-scored with a career best 31-ball 50, and Mehidy Hasan Miraz, 23 off 17 balls, added 33 for the eighth wicket but it was too little, too late. Pakistan's first T20 home series



Abrar Ahmed (R) celebrates with teammate Mohammad Haris. — AFP

win since December 2021 delighted skipper Salman Agha.

"It feels good, I didn't know it was three and a half years ago that we won a series at home," said Agha of Pakistan's last win over the West Indies at home.

"This is what I want, we should always have players who can come in and replace anyone, any captain would love that," said Agha, praising the new coach.

"It's been a few days and we are loving the environment, credit to Hesson. He has managed to gel the team really well and built a nice environment, he has done that very quickly."

Bangladesh skipper Litton rued the loss of wickets in clusters.

"There were back to back wickets

and in cricket you have to follow basics, sometimes you don't follow the basics that cost you," he said. "We still have a game to come back strongly."

Earlier, Pakistan posted a consecutive 200-plus total with Farhan and Nawaz ably supported by Mohammad Haris whose 41 came off 25 balls after the home team won the toss and batted. After losing fellow opener Saim Ayub to a run out for four, Farhan put the innings on a solid footing with a 103-run second wicket stand of 54 balls with Haris. The Farhan-Haris duo smashed Bangladesh bowlers to all corners, with Farhan hitting six sixes and four boundaries while Haris's knock had two sixes and four boundaries. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Karim Benzema walks with the championship trophy. — AFP

BENZEMA LEADS AL ITTIHAD TO SAUDI CUP WIN

Al Ittihad’s Karim Benzema scored twice to lead his side to a 3-1 victory over Al Qadsiah in the Saudi Cup final on Friday as they completed the domestic double.

Laurent Blanc’s side dominated the game to win the cup for the 10th time, while Al Qadsiah finished the game with 10 men after Ezequiel Fernandez was sent off in the 81st minute.

Moussa Diaby nearly put Al Ittihad ahead but missed a chance in the 21st minute.

Al Qadsiah’s former Spain defender Nacho escaped conceding a penalty when the ball touched his hand, but the referee didn’t award a spot kick despite a VAR check in the 32nd minute.

Benzema opened the scoring for the Saudi Pro League champions, using his chest to convert Steven Bergwijn’s precise cross 11 minutes before the interval.

Houssem Aouar made it 2-0 in the 43rd minute by following up after Koen Casteels saved a header from Benzema.

Al Qadsiah’s Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang reduced the deficit from the penalty spot in first-half stoppage time.

Benzema, who won the SPL Player of the Season, hit the bar after the break, but Al Ittihad were more cautious as they looked to maintain their lead.

Al Ittihad keeper Predrag Rajkovic saved Aubameyang’s shot in the 80th minute and Al Qadsiah suffered a big blow when Ezequiel Fernandez received a second yellow card, forcing them to play with 10 men for the final minutes. Then 2022 Ballon d’Or winner Benzema scored his side’s third goal, firing in Diaby’s low cross in stoppage time, before Aubameyang’s shot hit the woodwork. — Reuters



Al Ittihad players celebrate with the trophy.

Rohit stars as Mumbai knock Gujarat out of IPL

ROHIT SHARMA led Mumbai Indians’ batting charge with his 81 to knock Gujarat Titans out of the Indian Premier League with a 20-run win in the eliminator on Friday. Electing to bat, five-time champions Mumbai rode on a blazing opening stand between Rohit and England’s Jonny Bairstow, who hit 47, to post 228-5 at Mullanpur in New Chandigarh. Bowlers combined to restrict Gujarat to 208-6 despite a valiant 80 by in-form opener Sai Sudharsan in a do-or-die playoff clash.

Mumbai will now meet Punjab Kings in Qualifier 2 in Ahmedabad on Sunday to decide Royal Challengers Bengaluru’s opponent in the title clash on June 3.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Bairstow joined Mumbai ahead of the playoffs due to a few players leaving the tournament to fulfil international commitments and made an instant impact in his 22-ball knock.

Rohit, who recently retired from Test cricket along with Virat Kohli, picked up pace despite surviving two dropped catches on three and 12 in a sloppy display of fielding by Gujarat players. He made the most of the reprieves as he hit nine fours and four sixes in his 50 ball knock to be named player of the match.

“I’ve got only four fifties (this season), I think I would have liked to get more,” said Rohit.

“Today, after having some luck going my way, I knew I had to make the most of it. I’m glad I could do that, and get the team into a good position.”

Gujarat missed wicketkeeper-batter Jos Buttler and his replacement Sri Lanka’s Kusal Mendis dropped two catches with the gloves.

“Not easy when we drop three sitters, especially in the powerplay,” said Gujarat skipper Shubman Gill. “Not easy for the bowlers to control.”

Left-arm spinner Sai Kishore denied Bairstow his fifty with Gerald Coetzee taking a relay catch from Sudharsan’s rebound.

MASSIVE ASSERT BUMRAH

Rohit kept up the charge as he went past 7,000 IPL runs and reached his 47th fifty in the tournament with a four.

Suryakumar Yadav hit three sixes and one four in his 20-ball 33 before falling to Kishore.

Gujarat attempted to pull things back with some disciplined bowling in the middle overs as Prasidh Krishna dismissed Rohit and fellow quick Mohammed Siraj cut short Tilak Varma’s knock on 25.

Skipper Hardik Pandya finished with a flourish in his unbeaten 22 off nine balls as Coetzee conceded 22 runs in the 20th over.

In reply, Gujarat lost Gill in the first over when former New Zealand left-arm quick Trent Boult trapped the opener lbw for one.

Sudharsan, who leads the IPL batting chart with 759 runs, put the chase on track in key stands including an 84-run partnership with fellow left-hander Washington Sundar, who hit 48. Pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah bowled Sundar with a yorker and Mumbai’s latest England import Richard Gleeson



Mumbai Indians’ Rohit Sharma in action. — Reuters

rattled the stumps of Sudharsan to dim Gujarat’s hopes.

Bumrah returned figures of 1-27 from his four overs and head coach Mahela Jayawardene called him a “massive asset”.

Impact substitute Sherfane Rutherford fell on 24 in the 19th and with 24 needed in the final over Gleeson, who bowled just

three balls before pulling out with apparent cramp, and then Ashwani Kumar kept their calm to seal Mumbai’s win.

The league was extended by nine days after being paused due to a military conflict between India and Pakistan and some overseas players including Buttler left before the playoffs. — AFP

Taylor, Griffin share lead at PGA Tour

WASHINGTON: Nick Taylor conjured four birdies without a bogey in a four-under-par 68 on Friday to pull into a tie for the lead with Ben Griffin in the US PGA Tour’s Memorial Tournament in Dublin, Ohio.

Taylor, who claimed his fifth PGA title at the Sony Open this year, navigated rain-soaked Muirfield Village with little real trouble on the way to a 36-hole total of seven-under par 137. “The iron game was very, very sharp,” Taylor said. “Putting, made bunch of nice five-, six-footers on that back nine for par.”

Overnight leader Griffin, coming off his second win of the season at Colonial last week, had one bogey and one birdie in an even-par 71 to maintain a share of the lead. The leading duo were two strokes in front

of American Akshay Bhatia, who carded a 69, with world number one Scottie Scheffler three adrift after his second straight 70 for 140. “I think everyone would probably say it was kind of a grind,” Griffin said. “Fortunately, having a later tee time, I didn’t have to battle the elements quite as much as some of the early groups. “But a day like today when it’s really wet, I think hitting it in the rough is just even more penal. The ball just kind of goes straight to the bottom with the moisture, and then when there’s moisture, it’s harder to get to the ball down in the rough. So I had some very tricky lies. “I got some good breaks on a couple holes where I was in the rough and was able to get it up to the green. So all in all, coming off of yesterday where I made just



Nick Taylor putts on the 14th green during the second round. — Reuters

about everything I looked at, you can’t do that every day when you’re playing golf.” Taylor coped admirably, getting things moving with a 24-foot birdie put at the fourth hole. He added a two-foot birdie at the eighth and rolled in a 20-foot at the ninth. He grabbed his final birdie at the 13th.

SOLID’ SCHEFFLER

“The nice thing was for most of the day my speed was very good, so it was a lot of tap-in pars if I wasn’t making birdie,” he said. “It was nice to keep it as simple as possible.” Bhatia put himself in contention in the signature event hosted by Jack Nicklaus with five birdies.

“I felt like this was the best my iron play has been, ever,” Bhatia said. “I mean, I hit two flagsticks today and

then felt like pretty much anytime where my caddie told me to hit it, I was literally hitting it there. “So that was really nice.” Scheffler called his two-under effort a “solid day” despite a double bogey at the 10th.

“I had some good looks on the front nine that I didn’t hole, but on the back I rolled it really nice,” Scheffler said.

After his double bogey at the 10th — where he was in the rough off the tee and finally three-putted from 43 feet — Scheffler responded with birdies at the 11th and 12th. He finished the day alone in fourth, one stroke in front of Sam Burns, Shane Lowry and Jordan Spieth. Burns climbed the leaderboard with an impressive seven-under par 65, while Ireland’s Lowry posted an even par 72 and Spieth carded a 69. — AFP

BUSINESS

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The World Bank highlighted Oman Vision 2040's strong focus on sustainability, human capital development and innovation.

WORLD BANK PRAISES OMAN VISION 2040 FOR REFORM AND SUSTAINABILITY

NEW YORK: The World Bank has praised Oman Vision 2040, describing the Sultanate of Oman's economic reform strategy as a model for other nations seeking to diversify their economies and integrate more fully with the global market.

In an article published on its official website, the World Bank highlighted the Vision's strong focus on sustainability, human capital development and innovation. It commended the government's commitment to raising the quality of education and cultivating a culture of research and entrepreneurship.

This includes new programmes designed to fund research, turn ideas into market-ready products and develop innovation parks and business incubators that support startups and transform student projects into viable commercial ventures.

The article also underscored the Sultanate of Oman's successful implementation of major regulatory reforms aimed at boosting private sector growth and attracting foreign investment.

These reforms, the World Bank noted, are crucial in enhancing investor confidence and increasing the role of private enterprise in driving economic progress.

Significant investments in infrastructure — such as the modernisation of ports, airports and free zones — are further evidence of this strategic shift.

— ONA

HyDuqm hydrogen project eyes FID in 2027

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 31

HYDROGEN

Duqm LLC (HyDuqm), one of nine large-scale green hydrogen and ammonia projects currently in early development in Oman, anticipates a Final Investment Decision (FID) in 2027, with production slated to commence in 2030.

HyDuqm represents a joint venture set up by six leading global companies comprising POSCO Holdings, Samsung Engineering Company Limited, Korea East-West Power Company Limited, Korea Southern Power Company Limited, MESCAT Middle East DMCC (a subsidiary of ENGIE from France), and FutureTech Energy Ventures Limited (FTEV) - the clean energy arm of Thai energy conglomerate PTTEP.

In 2023, the JV partners won a concession from Hydrom, the master-planner of Oman's green hydrogen (GH2) economy, to develop a GH2 project in Block Z1-02 in Al Wusta Governorate. The project targets an annual capacity of 1.2 million tonnes of green ammonia, focusing on clean energy production from green hydrogen.

According to PTTEP



The project is slated to enter the engineering design phase this year.

subsidiary FTEV, the partners of HyDuqm are currently “in the process of assessing wind and solar energy potential (Renewable Resource Assessment) and conducting a feasibility study to evaluate the investment value and profitability of the project prior to starting engineering design”.

Significantly, FTEV's role as a JV partner in HyDuqm is the latest addition to parent organization PTTEP's expanding presence in Oman's energy industry.

“This investment supports the growth of new businesses aligning with the Company's business plan and provides an opportunity to apply knowledge and experience in green hydrogen production in Thailand, in line with future energy policies,” PTTEP noted in its recently issued 2024 Annual Report.

“PTTEP completed the installation of wind and solar potential measurement stations and has begun collecting data to support the project

operations. The ongoing feasibility study phase includes geographical, geotechnical, and hydrological assessments, as well as a Preliminary Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (Pre-ESIA),” it further stated.

The feasibility study, according to the Thai state-owned energy giant, will also help determine the amount of required capital expenditure and economic return before proceeding to the engineering design phase in 2025.

The Annual Report also sheds light on the performance of PTTEP's portfolio of investments in the upstream and midstream segments of Oman's oil and gas sector. One of its largest investments is in Block 61 in central Oman, which accounts for around a third of Oman's gas production.

PTTEP owns a 20 per cent interest in the BP-operated concession. In 2024, natural gas and condensate production averaged 1,511 MMSCFD (approximately 267,746

barrels of oil equivalent per day - BOED) and 56,087 bpd respectively.

Production from Block 6 – the largest producing oil asset in central Oman – averaged 66,490 bpd of crude oil in 2024. PTTEP Group holds a 2 per cent participating interest in this project, with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) as the operator.

In south Oman, PTTEP Group holds a 1 per cent participating interest in Block 53 (also known as the Mukhaizna field) with Occidental as the operator. In 2024, the average crude oil production was 75,227 bpd. Recently, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals signed an agreement to extend the Block 53 Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) with Occidental and its partners until 2050.

Rounding off its upstream assets is Block 12, a large onshore natural gas exploration block in central Oman. PTTEP Group holds a 20 per cent participating interest in the project, with TotalEnergies as the operator. In 2024, two exploration wells were completed, while geological and geophysical studies are currently underway.

PTTEP subsidiary PTTEP Oman E&P Corporation (POC), formerly Partex Oman Corporation, also has a 2 per cent stake in Oman LNG LLC and an indirect 0.7 per cent stake in Qalhat LNG.

OIA lauded for economic diplomacy via investments

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 31

A NEW report by the SWF Global has commended the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) for strengthening Oman's global ties through targeted foreign investments, joint funds, and reinvesting divestment proceeds and returns into national projects.

This approach sets OIA apart from its peers, as it adopts a unique philosophy centred on the ‘Omani Angle’ making it a foundational principle in its investment decision-making. SWF Global is a specialised organisation focused on tracking activities of state-owned investment organisations, including sovereign wealth funds, central banks, and pension funds worldwide.

The report highlighted OIA's success in building an extensive network of strategic relationships by promoting the concept of economic diplomacy with various countries across the Middle East, Asia, North Africa, Europe, and the Americas over the past five years.



Total capital investment spending in local projects rose to RO 1.9 billion, surpassing the initial target of RO 1.7 billion.

Among the most recent strategic partnerships is the signing of a joint fund agreement with Algeria worth \$300 million, targeting investments in vital sectors such as mining, food security, and pharmaceuticals.

Additionally, OIA partnered with Turkey's OYAK Fund to establish a joint investment fund valued at \$500 million and launched a joint fund with Uzbekistan,

which focuses on establishing a university in Tashkent in collaboration with Arizona State University of USA.

Furthermore, OIA has invested in the Vietnam-Oman Investment Company, which has allocated nearly \$400 million to projects in solar energy, infrastructure, healthcare, education, and food.

The report also noted that OIA's focus is not limited to

establishing strategic partnerships through joint investment funds alone, but also extends to direct investments in global companies, which primarily aim to localise advanced global technologies in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to generating returns that are later reinvested into local projects.

Notable examples include OIA's stake in Elon Musk's artificial intelligence firm ‘xAI’, in addition to ‘Tidal Vision’, a US-based company offering cutting-edge technological solutions to address pollution and climate-related challenges in the agriculture and water sectors.

In the technology sector, OIA partnered with ‘Golden Gate Ventures’ of Singapore to establish a \$100 million joint fund, leading to establish a local venture office in Muscat to manage joint investments between the two countries, and investing in local companies like ‘Bayanat’.

Collectively, these efforts underscore OIA's commitment to embedding the Omani angle across all its investments and

partnerships.

Moreover, the report highlighted OIA's policy to carry out strategic divestments from certain government assets, which contributed to revitalising the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Among the most notable of these divestments was the initial public offering (IPO) of 25% of ‘OQ Exploration & Production’ shares in October 2024, which marked the largest IPO in the history of the Sultanate of Oman.

The offering aimed to strengthen foreign investor confidence in the Omani market while also involving citizens in the transformational shift of Oman's economy, in which OIA plays a central role.

The report further noted that since mid-2022, OIA has successfully divested from 19 assets, generating returns exceeding RO 2.7 billion. These included public offerings such as ‘The Pearl REIF’, ‘Abraj Energy Services’ and ‘OQ Gas Networks’, all of which witnessed demand surpassing the supply.

ADVERTORIALS



This financing facility is designed to benefit a wide demographic, encompassing both Omani citizens and expatriate residents.

TAAGEER FINANCE AND MUSCAT PRIVATE HOSPITAL ANNOUNCE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

MUSCAT: In reaffirming its commitment to empowering communities through innovative financial solutions, Taageer Finance Company SAOG has announced a strategic partnership with Muscat Private Hospital (MPH) - one of the Sultanate of Oman's most premier healthcare providers.

This collaboration enables patients to access premium planned and elective healthcare services through flexible financing and easy EMI (Equated Monthly Instalment) options from Taageer Finance.

The tie-up makes world-class treatments and diagnostic procedures more financially accessible and just an EMI away, to a wider segment of the population, reinforcing both organisations' vision of putting patient well-being and empowerment at the forefront.

From specialist consultations and elective surgeries to advanced diagnostics and wellness programmes, eligible patients at MPH can now avail financing support that brings life-changing healthcare a step closer.

This financing facility is designed to benefit a wide demographic, encompassing both Omani citizens and expatriate residents.

Eligibility is determined based on the specific financial assessment and approval criteria set by Taageer Finance, ensuring that individuals facing financial constraints can access the healthcare services they need, provided they meet the necessary requirements.

By offering this inclusive solution, the partnership aims to remove economic barriers and extend the reach of quality medical care to a larger segment of the community.

Fahad al Bulushi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Taageer Finance Company SAOG, said: "Healthcare is a basic human right, and at Taageer, we believe that finances should never be a barrier to accessing the care one deserves. Our partnership with Muscat Private Hospital marks yet another step forward in our mission to support the nation's people with innovative, need-based financial solutions.

"This initiative allows us to extend our reach beyond traditional sectors, playing a more active role in enhancing lives and supporting Oman's healthcare transformation journey."

Founded on shared values of quality, compassion and accessibility, the partnership reflects the evolving expectations of today's healthcare consumer - where affordability and excellence go hand in hand. For Taageer, it is an extension of its diversified approach to supporting Oman's key sectors.

For Muscat Private Hospital, it represents a new chapter in delivering high-quality care with enhanced financial convenience.

NATIONAL FINANCE HONoured WITH 'BEST WORK CULTURE OF THE YEAR' TITLE

MUSCAT: In recognition of its exceptional efforts in fostering a dynamic and employee-centric work environment, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance company, was awarded the prestigious 'Best Work Culture of the Year' accolade at the 2nd edition of the Oman Career Fair.

Marwa al Kharusi, Chief People Officer – General Manager at National Finance, graciously accepted the award on behalf of the company. The event, held on 28–29 May at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the theme 'Empowering and Enhancing Talents', aligned closely with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.

This honour underscores National Finance's commitment to



This honour underscores National Finance's commitment to cultivating a culture of innovation and growth.

cultivating a culture of innovation and growth, where employees are

empowered to thrive. As a strategic partner of the event, the company further demonstrated its dedication to supporting national talent development and contributing meaningfully to the nation's economic advancement.

The Oman Career Fair stands as the nation's leading platform for developing local talent and aligning workforce capabilities with the evolving demands of the labour market.

The 2025 edition convened key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, government entities and aspiring job-seekers in a collaborative environment focused on bridging the gap between education, skills and career pathways.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils exciting offers

MALABAR Gold & Diamonds, the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 400 showrooms across 13 countries, has just launched exciting offers for summer shoppers.

The Golden Summer offers, which will run until the June 14 across all of brand's showrooms in Oman, will give customers the chance to get free cash vouchers on their diamond and precious gem jewellery purchases.

As part of the Golden Summer offers, customers will be eligible for a free cash voucher worth RO 10 for every diamond or precious gem worth RO 300.

The voucher is equivalent to cash and can be used for the purchase of gold or diamond jewellery, gold coins or gold bars. As part of the offers, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is also offering 8g gold coins at zero making charges.

"We have introduced the Golden

The voucher is equivalent to cash and can be used for the purchase of gold or diamond jewellery, gold coins or gold bars. As part of the offers, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is also offering 8g gold coins at zero making charges.



The Golden Summer offers will run until June 14 across all of brand's showrooms in Oman.

Summer offers to enhance the jewellery purchase experience of our customers, who are entering the last leg of their summer shopping.

"With diamond jewellery increasingly becoming the most preferred gifting article amongst individuals and families, the exquisite collection of diamond jewellery that Malabar Gold &

Diamonds offers makes it the perfect destination for jewellery shopping.

"Additionally, with the opportunity to get free cash vouchers along with their favourite jewellery, our customers are getting added value for money," commented Shamlal Ahamed, MD- International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

With a jewellery array comprising thousands of designs from numerous exclusive brands and collections such as Mine, Era, ViraaZ, Ethnix, Precia and Divine, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has been constantly updating their jewellery portfolio to cater to the refined tastes and preferences of its immense customer base.

With all purchases covered under the Malabar Promise of 100% value on diamond and gold exchange as well as free lifetime maintenance, Malabar Gold & Diamonds guarantees its customers unmatched value and service assurance on their purchase.

The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort hosts blood donation drive

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to the community, The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort recently hosted a blood donation drive and an awareness session, "A Drop of Giving Creates Hope", a heartfelt initiative organised in partnership with the Central Blood Bank and Oman Blood Donation Group.

The event brought together residents of Al Mouj Muscat, representatives of the Alfardan Group along with the dedicated hosts of the resort. The turnout was positive and served as a reminder of the continuous demand for blood donations and the importance of turning one-off campaigns into sustained efforts.

Guided by the timeless St Regis spirit of generosity and the Marriott International Serve 360 strategy, this initiative underscores the resort's unwavering commitment to



This initiative underscores the resort's unwavering commitment to making a meaningful and sustainable impact.

making a meaningful and sustainable impact.

The event is a reflection of Marriott's 2025 Sustainability and Social Impact Goals and resonates with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, demonstrating The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort's dedication to both global progress and local community enrichment.

At the heart of this initiative is the belief that every drop of blood donated carries the promise of hope, a sentiment echoed by all who participated.

The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort extends its deepest gratitude to everyone involved for their generosity and support, and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to fostering compassion, unity and well-being through such meaningful community initiatives.

Izdihar Real Estate Fund completes acquisition of school property

MUSCAT: Izdihar Real Estate Fund managed by Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has successfully completed the acquisition of the school premises of the latest school by GEMS, in partnership with the GEMS Group.

The acquired property is called GEMS School of Research and Innovation, a premier British Curriculum School in Dubai, UAE. Scheduled to open in September 2025, the state-of-the-art property is in advanced stages of being developed at a cost of \$100 million approximately.



The acquired property is called GEMS School of Research and Innovation, a premier British Curriculum School in Dubai, UAE.

Strategically located in the immediate vicinity of premium residential communities, Tilal Al Ghaf, Victory Heights and Jumeirah Golf Estates, the school has already seen strong early enrolments, demonstrating the continued demand for quality education in Dubai. The new School of Research and Innovation will offer British curriculum with focus on research-based learning, STEAM education and holistic student development in line with GEMS' visionary of academic excellence.

Speaking on the successful transaction, Khalifa al Hatmi,

Deputy General Manager – Investment Banking and Capital Markets at Bank Muscat, said: "We take pride in partnering with GEMS Education, a recognised leader in private education sector through this investment in GEMS School of Research and Innovation, Dubai.

"This investment aligns with Izdihar Fund's long-term strategy of supporting essential community infrastructure and generating sustainable value for our investors. Education remains a resilient and essential sector, and we are pleased to contribute to a project that will serve generations of students."

BUSINESS



Representatives of Arctech Solar and ACME Group at the contract signing.

CHINA’S ARCTECH TO SUPPLY SOLAR TRACKERS FOR OMAN’S GREEN AMMONIA PROJECT

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 31

INDIA’S integrated energy group ACME says it has signed a contract with Arctech, a global Chinese-based leader in solar tracking solutions, to supply 175 MWp of solar trackers for its 300 MTPD (metric tonnes per day) Green Ammonia Project in Duqm.

Arctech will deploy its Signature 1P Single Axis Solar Tracking System Skyline II, engineered for harsh environments, to support the solar PV component powering one of the first large-scale green hydrogen production facilities in the region.

The trackers will be delivered in phases starting from July 2025.

This milestone collaboration underscores Arctech’s growing role in enabling renewable energy megaprojects worldwide.

The Oman installation is a flagship initiative in industrial decarbonisation — integrating solar power with next-gen hydrogen fuel technologies, setting new benchmarks in clean energy integration.

Moreover, Arctech has an extensive track record of experience in numerous GW-scale large projects across the globe, which instils confidence in this partnership.

“We are pleased to partner with Arctech for our 300 MTPD Green Hydrogen project in Duqm. This collaboration marks an important milestone in our green hydrogen journey, and we are confident that Arctech’s advanced tracking solutions and project execution capabilities will support us in achieving optimal energy efficiency and reliability under challenging coastal and high-wind site conditions,” said Vipin Aggarwal, VP of Procurement in Green Hydrogen and International Business.

AL BURAIMI INDUSTRIAL CITY INVESTMENT SURPASSES RO 274 MILLION

MUSCAT: Al Buraimi Industrial City, operated by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), has recorded strong growth in 2024, with cumulative investments now exceeding RO 274 million.

According to Said bin Abdullah al Balushi, Director-General of Al Buraimi Industrial City, the city signed 16 investment contracts this year alone, totalling around RO 7.97 million. These contracts

cover over 165,000 square metres and span various sectors, including motor oil production, paper and cardboard manufacturing, food and water processing and cosmetics.

Al Balushi attributed this performance to Madayn’s continued efforts to build a competitive, business-friendly environment that supports job creation, empowers small and medium enterprises and promotes sustainable industrial development in line with Oman

Vision 2040.

He also noted the strategic importance of the ongoing Mahadha–Al Buraimi Road Dualisation Project, being implemented in coordination with Madayn. This major infrastructure upgrade will connect both phases of the industrial city and facilitate smoother traffic flow, easing movement for investors and improving access to key sites.

— ONA

Vietnam proposes boosting VOI to \$1 billion

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 31

VIETNAMESE

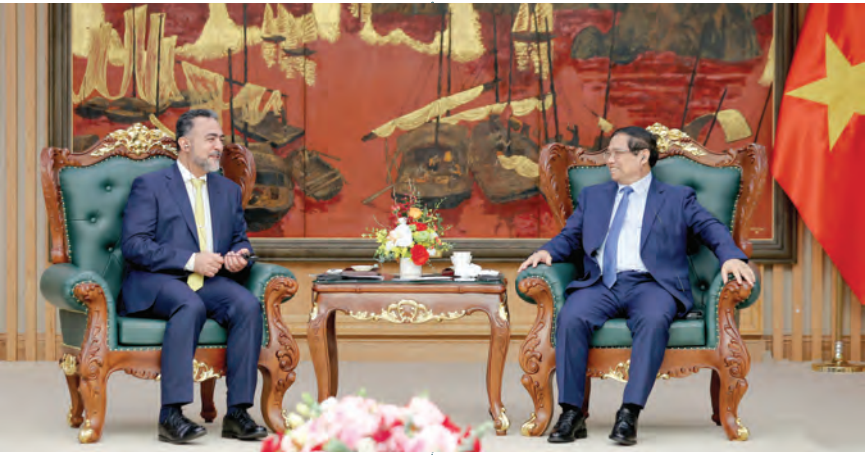
Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh has proposed raising the capital of the Vietnam–Oman Investment Fund (VOI) to \$1 billion.

The proposal was made during a high-level meeting in Hanoi with Shaikh Nasser bin Sulaiman al Harthy, Deputy President for Operations at Oman Investment Authority (OIA), and his accompanying delegation.

Reported by baochinhpvu.vn, the official information channel of the Government of Vietnam, the Prime Minister’s remarks reflect Vietnam’s intent to enhance its strategic engagement with Oman, a growing economic partner in the Gulf region.

The meeting took place against the backdrop of strengthening relations between the two nations, with cooperation expanding across trade, investment, infrastructure and energy.

Highlighting Oman’s growing relevance as a key Middle Eastern partner, Prime



Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh (right) with Shaikh Nasser bin Sulaiman al Harthy, Deputy President for Operations at Oman Investment Authority. Picture courtesy: baochinhpvu.vn.

Minister Chinh commended the longstanding presence and strategic investment role of VOI in Vietnam.

Established 17 years ago as a joint initiative between the State Capital Investment Corporation (SCIC) of Vietnam and the OIA, VOI has spearheaded a number of high-impact investments aligned with Vietnam’s development goals.

The Prime Minister emphasised that an expanded VOI — with a target scale of \$1 billion — would allow for greater investment in critical sectors including infrastructure, renewable energy, clean

water, healthcare, education, consumer finance and high-tech agriculture. He noted that beyond economic returns, these investments also contribute to social development and the improvement of public services and livelihoods across Vietnam.

“This fund has proven its long-term vision and commitment to Vietnam’s sustainable growth,” said Prime Minister Chinh.

“Now is the time to scale it up to match the size of our economy and development ambitions.”

The meeting also touched on Vietnam’s broader engagement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with Prime

Minister Chinh highlighting discussions held during the recent 2nd Asean-GCC Summit. He noted a shared interest in launching negotiations for a Vietnam-GCC free trade agreement and expanding cooperation in areas such as digital transformation, green economy, Halal food production and investment protection frameworks.

In response, Shaikh Nasser bin Sulaiman al Harthy welcomed the Prime Minister’s proposal and reaffirmed Oman’s interest in intensifying its economic partnership with Vietnam. He described the VOI as a platform for deeper strategic engagement and said Oman could serve as a regional gateway for Vietnamese products and services entering the Middle East.

Al Harthy also announced the launch of a new \$200 million “Vietnam New Era Growth Fund” in partnership with SCIC. This fund will focus on emerging and high-potential sectors including telecommunications, finance, technology, Halal agriculture and digital infrastructure.

“We value the Prime Minister’s vision and support the idea of expanding the Vietnam–Oman Investment Fund,” said Al Harthy.

ADNOC Drilling enters Oman market in \$112 million deal

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 31

IN A STRATEGIC move set to reshape Oman’s upstream oilfield services landscape, ADNOC Drilling has acquired a 70% stake in SLB’s land drilling rigs business in the Sultanate of Oman, marking the UAE-based firm’s first operational entry into the Omani market.

The deal involves the transfer of six fully operational land rigs in Oman, all under contract with national operators, including Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

The acquisition is part of a wider \$112 million agreement between ADNOC Drilling and SLB (formerly Schlumberger), and is expected to



The deal involves the transfer of six fully operational land rigs in Oman, all under contract with national operators, including Petroleum Development Oman.

close in the first quarter of 2026, pending regulatory approvals.

“This acquisition provides ADNOC Drilling with an immediate footprint in Oman’s high-growth drilling market,

supported by long-term contracts and a stable operating environment,” the company said in a statement.

The rigs are currently deployed in core oilfields that form part

of Oman’s energy backbone. ADNOC Drilling aims to scale up operations, introduce digital drilling optimisation tools and enhance rig performance through AI-enabled platforms.

The deal aligns with Oman Vision 2040 goals to attract regional investment, boost in-country value (ICV) and enhance efficiency in hydrocarbon production.

It also comes as the Ministry of Energy and Minerals accelerates upstream development, particularly in mature oil blocks requiring enhanced recovery and cost-effective drilling.

Industry analysts say ADNOC Drilling’s entry is a significant vote of confidence in Oman’s upstream sector.

With a majority of the assets located in Oman, the acquisition reaffirms Oman’s importance as a strategic energy partner in the Gulf.

“Beyond rig deployment, ADNOC Drilling’s model includes integrated drilling services, digital workflows and regional supply chain development — bringing advanced capabilities to Oman’s oilfields,” said an energy analyst based in Muscat.

The investment is expected to support Omani SMEs and contractors through subcontracting and local procurement. It could also generate new employment opportunities for Omanis in rig operations, logistics and technical services.

DEEPENING WAR

Trump to raise tariffs on steel, aluminium



US President Donald Trump said he planned to increase tariffs on imported steel and aluminium to 50% from 25%, ratcheting up pressure on global steel producers and deepening his trade war.

“We are going to be imposing a 25% increase. We’re going to bring it from 25% to 50% - the tariffs on steel into the US, which will even further secure the steel industry in the US,” he said at a rally in Pennsylvania. — Reuters

EXTRA SUPPLY

Opec+ agrees oil output hike of 411,000 bpd



Opec+ agreed on Saturday to hike July oil output by 411,000 barrels per day (bpd), the same as in May and June, as the group of oil-producing countries continues to bring back supply more rapidly than earlier planned.

The members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries have been raising output faster than scheduled since May, even though the extra supply has weighed on prices. — Reuters

SWEEPING DISCOUNTS

Automakers get stern ‘price war’ warning



A top industry group had a stern rebuke on Saturday for automakers fuelling a “price war”, a week after Chinese EV giant BYD announced sweeping trade-in discounts, with multiple competitors following suit.

“Since May 23, a certain automaker has taken the lead in launching a substantial price drop campaign... triggering a new round of ‘price war’ panic,” CAAM said. — AFP

The role of credit data in enhancing ICV in Oman



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

A specialist in local content/
In-country value,
the writer is the
Acting Director-
General of
Local Content,
previously
assigned to
the General
Secretariat of the
Tender Board.

THE Sultanate of Oman is undergoing a significant economic transformation, driven by its Vision 2040 that emphasises diversification, innovation and sustainability.

Central to this transformation is the concept of In-Country Value (ICV), a framework designed to maximise the retention of economic benefits within the national economy. ICV aims to stimulate local business development, enhance employment opportunities for Omanis and build resilient supply chains across sectors.

In parallel with these strategic goals, Oman has recognised the importance of robust digital and financial infrastructure. One key initiative in this domain is the establishment of Mala'a Credit Bureau.

As the national credit registry, Mala'a plays a crucial role in strengthening the financial ecosystem by enhancing transparency, reducing lending risks and promoting financial inclusion.

This article explores the vital synergy between Mala'a Credit Bureau and the ICV strategy. It highlights how credit data intelligence, when effectively leveraged, can catalyse economic development, support local enterprises and empower Omani citizens to participate actively in the nation's economic future.

Mala'a Credit Bureau was established under the supervision of the Central Bank of Oman to provide a centralised platform for credit information sharing. Its core mandate is to collect, manage and disseminate credit data

from banks, financing companies, telecom providers, utilities, and other entities that offer credit services.

Key functions of Mala'a include: Generating credit reports for individuals and companies, offering credit scoring services, providing credit monitoring and alerts, and enabling data-driven decision-making for lenders. Mala'a improves market efficiency by minimising information asymmetry between borrowers and lenders.

It promotes responsible borrowing and lending, which is critical for a stable and inclusive financial system. Importantly, it facilitates access to finance for previously underserved segments, including SMEs and start-ups.

SYNERGIES BETWEEN MALA'A AND ICV GOALS

The alignment between Mala'a Credit Bureau and ICV strategy is multifaceted. Both aim to empower local enterprises, increase economic resilience and ensure long-term sustainability.

Major areas of synergy include:

- Data-driven supplier development: Mala'a provides credit histories and risk assessments that help identify financially sound local suppliers. This supports procurement teams in selecting reliable Omani vendors.
- SME credit facilitation: SMEs often face challenges in securing financing due to lack of credit history. Mala'a enables the creation of digital financial footprints, allowing SMEs to access funding and

ICV aims to stimulate local business development, enhance employment opportunities for Omanis and build resilient supply chains across sectors.

participate in ICV-linked tenders.

- Enhanced transparency: Credit data increases market discipline and builds trust among stakeholders, from investors to consumers. This is essential for the credibility and sustainability of ICV programmes.

Small and medium enterprises are the backbone of Oman's economic diversification efforts. However, limited access to finance remains a critical barrier.

Mala'a addresses this by: Providing reliable credit data that lenders can use to assess SMEs risk profiles, enabling SMEs to monitor and improve their credit standing and facilitating the creation of sector-specific financial products. Moreover, Mala'a's data infrastructure supports fintech innovation, enabling platforms that offer microloans, invoice financing and peer-to-peer lending.

These tools are particularly beneficial for entrepreneurs participating in ICV programmes, allowing them to scale operations and meet procurement requirements.

FACILITATING HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Human capital is a core component of ICV. Mala'a contributes indirectly to its development by:

- Enabling educational and professional development loans based on individual credit profiles.
- Providing insights into population-level financial behaviours, helping policymakers identify gaps in financial literacy and inclusion.

TARIFF STRIKE-DOWN WIDENS THE US OMNI-CRISIS

BY GABRIEL RUBIN

THE TRUMP administration's norm-bending ranges from the dismantling of the global trade system to defiance of the co-equal legal apparatus of the US government.

An international trade court ruling on Wednesday striking down sweeping tariffs imposed on trading partners threatens to combine these crises.

The White House poses levies as a fix for various ills central to its agenda, making this setback critical. The range of possible outcomes now widens significantly, depending in turn on whether legal appeals succeed, how the president responds to them, or if legislators step in.

Investors and firms just getting to grips with recent chaos must contend with a new bout of unpredictability.

For now, the trade court's ruling leaves the administration 10 days to stop collecting most tariffs imposed thus far, including a 10% global retaliatory duty and separate "national security" levies imposed on Canada, Mexico and China.

President Trump still retains significant power to ratchet fees back up, and existing tariffs on steel, aluminium and cars are unaffected. The ruling also lays out that a 1974 trade law enables temporary levies of up to 15% for up to 150 days.

The administration appealed on Wednesday evening, and the urgency of the matter probably ensures speedy proceedings - after all, the first hearing in this case was just two weeks ago.

The Supreme Court, the nation's top legal body, has shown the White House some deference in the past, particularly over the conduct of foreign policy. However, President Trump's response to a case over a wrongfully deported man shows that consequences can continue after pushback. Regular attacks on federal judges set a worrying precedent.

It's one that's difficult for investors to price. Stock markets brutalised by Trump's initial tariff barrage had recovered after a series of climbdowns. A trade deal struck with the UK offered at least a hazy blueprint for ending the whipsaw of changeable whims, even if further agreements will be harder.

And revenue from levies, reaching an all-time high of \$16 billion in April, was one of few sops to concerns about bulging deficits as bond markets squirm over the rest of the president's agenda.

All of this is in the air. Negotiators in Europe and elsewhere, for the moment, face a muddled counterparty. Ad hoc attempts to rebuild tariffs will take time and invite a frenzied round of lobbying.

Of course, Congress could resolve the legal issue by reasserting its trade authority. — Reuters

Why Oman may hit 2040 targets ahead of time



Digital infrastructure readiness stands at 95%, while AI integration in government functions has reached 20%.

IN an age dominated by grand national visions, Oman's latest performance report of its 10th Five Year Plan, spanning the 2021-Q1 2025 timeframe, stands apart — not for its rhetoric, but for its results. While other nations amplify ambitions, Oman quantifies them. And what the numbers now reveal is nothing short of a silent transformation — precise, purposeful and increasingly irreversible.

This transformation — guided by Oman Vision 2040 — is not being proclaimed with slogans, but evidenced through percentages. From digital government to clean water access, from economic diversification to governance reform, the performance report issued recently by the Ministry of Finance underscores the progress Oman is making on multiple fronts, consistently and measurably.

STRATEGIC PLANNING THAT PRODUCES

At the heart of the report lies a compelling headline figure: 44.9% cumulative improvement in national performance indicators over just four years. This is not a marginal shift — it is a recalibration of how governance, services and citizen engagement function in the Sultanate of Oman.

The government's success in digital transformation is among the most visible. 85% of services are now accessible online, and 90% of citizens use digital identity systems, enabling faster, more transparent public services.

Digital infrastructure readiness stands at 95%, while AI integration in government functions has reached 20% — a significant foundation for the next generation of smart governance.

This is not just about technology; it's about access. Digital service satisfaction now stands at 80%, and 81% of public sector services have been automated, cutting red tape and raising accountability.



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HEALTHCARE THAT DELIVERS

Healthcare is one of Oman's standout reform areas. Preventive health service coverage has reached 95%, and public satisfaction with the sector stands at 86%. The digitisation of medical records has ensured 90% of patients can now access their health data with ease.

Key outcomes include a 4.6% increase in life expectancy, and an 11.9% decline in infant mortality since 2021 — proof that investment in the healthcare system is not only improving systems, but saving lives.

The health insurance coverage rate stands at 92%, and health system efficiency has improved by 6.1% — figures that show strategic policies are translating into tangible gains.

AN ECONOMY DIVERSIFYING BY DESIGN

Despite global economic volatility, Oman's efforts to reduce its dependence on oil are bearing fruit. The report shows an 8.7% increase in non-oil sector contribution to GDP, supported by 7.8% growth in the manufacturing sector and a 4.9% rise in SME contributions.

Public-private collaboration has become a pillar of this diversification, with a PPP success rate of 90% and private sector engagement in development at 92%. These numbers reflect not

just alignment with Vision 2040, but a structural shift in how Oman's economy is financed, built and grown.

FDI inflows have risen by 2.0% annually, while business environment indicators improved by 2.8%, driven by ongoing regulatory reform and streamlined licensing procedures. Inflation control measures delivered a 2.6% improvement, and economic diversification indexes rose by 3.2%, signalling that Oman's economy is expanding in both depth and scope.

EDUCATION IN SERVICE OF EMPLOYMENT

The education sector has undergone substantial reform. Tertiary enrolment stands at 60%, and a significant 86% of graduates now meet labour market needs. Vocational training participation sits at 59%, and digital literacy among youth is an impressive 95% — a critical asset for a future economy built on innovation.

Still, gaps persist. STEM graduates comprise 45% of total graduates, and only 15% of students specialise in entrepreneurship-related fields.

While female labour force participation has improved to 40%, perceptions of gender equity in the workplace remain modest at 57%. These metrics will need sharper focus to meet inclusivity and competitiveness targets.

CITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Urban development efforts have kept pace with citizen expectations. Access to electricity and clean water has reached 95% and 90% respectively, and 81% of the population expresses satisfaction with infrastructure.

Housing remains accessible to 83%, while smart city initiatives have achieved 59% implementation. Yet public transport coverage remains at 55%, and green infrastructure integration at 25% — areas where Oman can scale up to ensure sustainable urban living.

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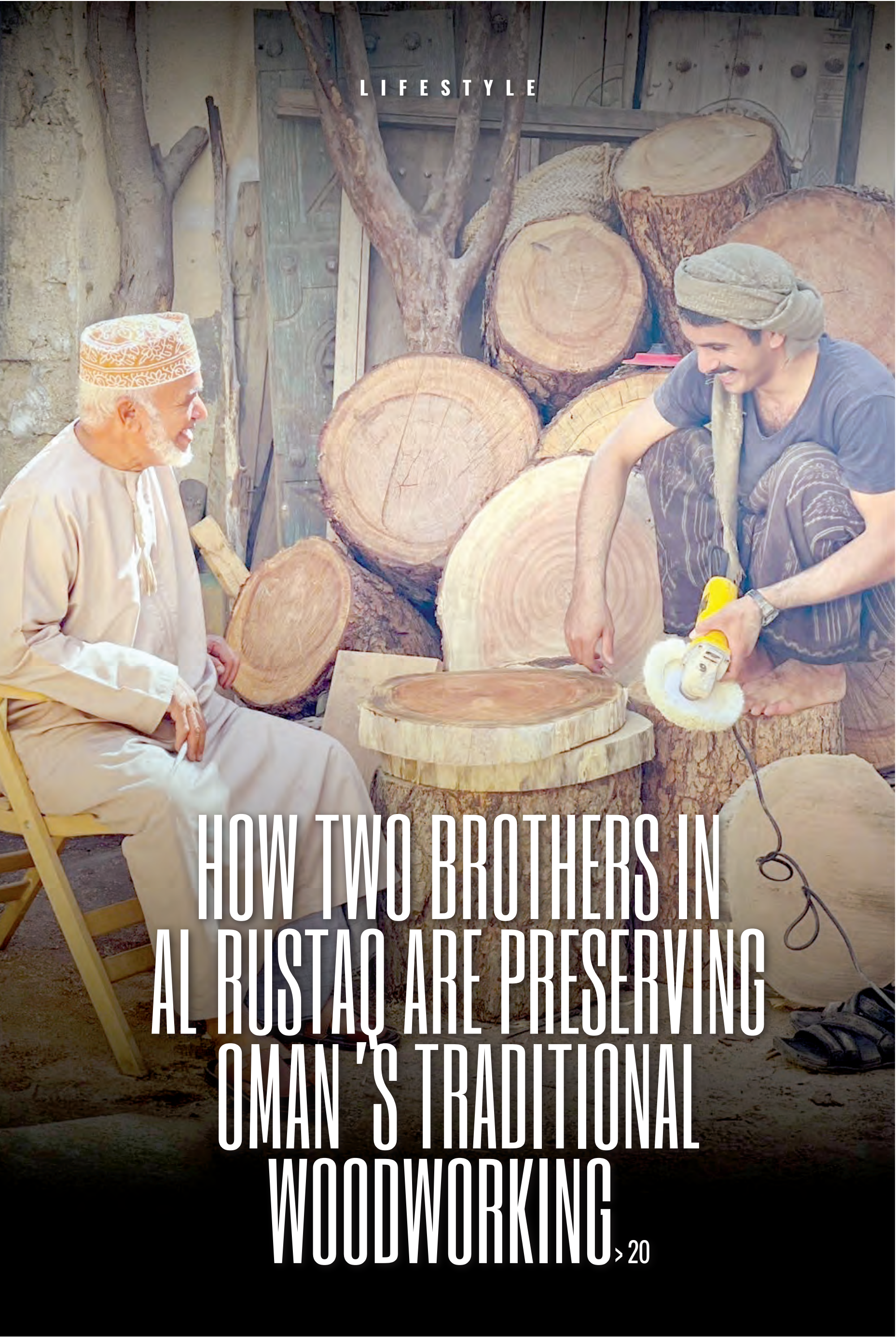
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ART/LIFE



FASHION

Dior shows Maria Grazia Chiuri's cruise collection in Rome



FRENCH FASHION house Dior showed creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri's cruise 2026 and fall-winter haute couture 2026 collections at a fashion show in the gardens of the Villa Albani Torlonia in Rome on Tuesday at night.

Guests sat under transparent umbrellas as models marched past on a gravel walkway lined with hedges. They paraded sheer gowns covered with lacework, textured dresses with rows of ruffles and long, tailored coats - mostly in white, ivory and nude colours. A sharp-shouldered trench coat, military jackets and tailcoats over skirts brought contrast to the airy looks, as did a few dresses in red or black velvet.

After the show, Chiuri rounded the gardens for her bow as the audience stood, cheering and clapping, while mist rose from the gardens.

The catwalk presentation, which drew on references to Italian cinema and theatre, follows last week's cruise fashion show from Louis Vuitton, another LVMH-owned label, in Avignon, France.

The shows come as the luxury industry grapples with a prolonged slump in business, and a number of high-end fashion labels are seeking new creative direction to reignite interest from shoppers.

Over the last five years, Chiuri has established herself as a groundbreaking leader, blending activism, craftsmanship and innovation to redefine the brand's identity. Since taking the helm in 2016, Chiuri has championed feminism and social justice through her collections, making Dior a platform for powerful messages.

Her 2019 "We Should All Be Feminists" T-shirts became an instant icon, sparking global conversations about gender equality. Subsequent seasons incorporated slogans, symbolic motifs, and references to female empowerment, turning runway shows into potent statements. Chiuri's respect for Dior's heritage is evident in her reinterpretation of classic silhouettes, emphasising artisanal techniques and sustainable practices. She has prioritised eco-friendly materials and collaborations that promote ethical production, aligning luxury with responsibility.

Her partnerships with contemporary artists and activists, including Judy Chicago, have expanded Dior's cultural impact, fostering dialogue around gender, identity and creativity. These efforts have garnered widespread praise for authenticity and influence. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



LIFESTYLE

A giant mechanical whale is paraded along a street as part of a theatrical show inspired by the novel "Moby-Dick" by Herman Melville during the 4th annual Water Festival. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

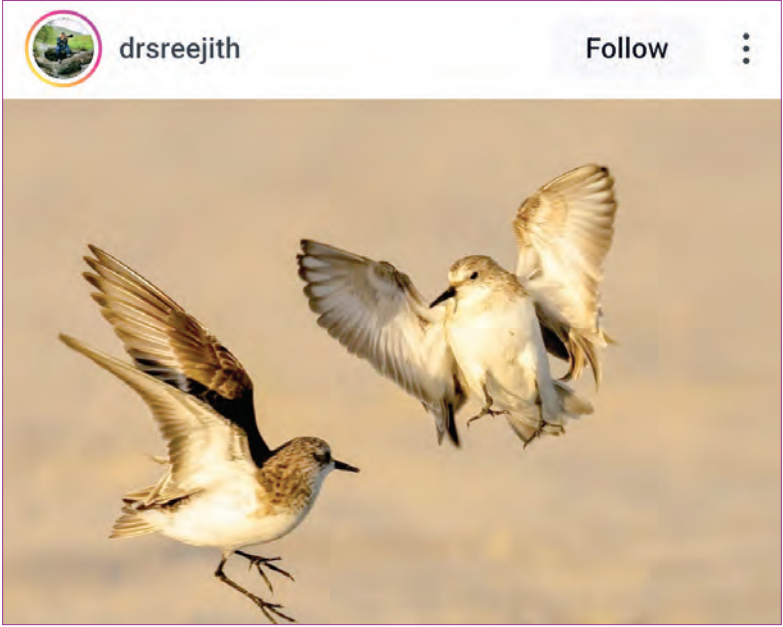
US actress Sarah Jessica Parker poses for pictures in front of the Eiffel Tower during a photocall for the TV series "And Just Like That..." in Paris. — AFP



FILM

Bollywood actor Ajay Devgn (R), with his son Yug, attends the trailer launch of his produced upcoming Indian Hindi-language mythological horror film 'Maa' in Mumbai. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Tools made of whale bones reveal inventiveness of prehistoric people



ARTEFACTS discovered at archaeological sites along the Bay of Biscay shoreline in France and Spain reveal that humans have been crafting tools from whale bones for over 20,000 years. These findings highlight the ingenuity of prehistoric populations during the Ice Age. The tools, mainly hunting implements such as projectile points, were made from bones of at least five whale species, with sperm whales being the most common, followed by fin, gray, right or bowhead, and blue whales. However, due to limited seafaring capabilities at the time, these hunter-gatherers likely did not hunt whales directly. Instead, they probably obtained bones from stranded animals or carcasses drifting ashore.

The 71 examined artefacts were recovered from 27 cave and rock shelter sites. The oldest pieces, made from fin whale bones, date back around 20,500 and 19,800 years ago, respectively. The artefacts

generally range from 14,000 to over 20,000 years old, with most dating around 16,000 to 17,500 years. Unlike typical tools made from reindeer or red deer antler, some whale bone projectile points are notably large, with lengths exceeding 16 inches (40 cm), likely mounted on spears for hunting large game like reindeer, red deer, horses, bison and ibex.

Using modern analytical techniques, researchers identified the whale species and determined the artefacts' ages. These findings suggest that Ice Age humans, while primarily inland hunters, also exploited coastal resources. The use of whale bones for tools and possibly fuel underscores their resourcefulness and deep ecological knowledge of their environment. This research pushes back the earliest evidence of whale bone tool use by 1,000 to 2,000 years, expanding our understanding of prehistoric human-resource interactions.

— Reuters



Air from beehives comforts patients in Türkiye



AT his farm tucked away in an idyllic valley near the Aegean Sea, beekeeper Huseyin Ceylan helps people recover from ailments by having them inhale air from hives.

Ceylan says people come regularly in late spring to Karaburun, in Türkiye's Aegean coastal province of Izmir, mainly to supplement conventional treatment with traditional "apitherapy", a term derived from the Greek for bees.

Guests tend to stay several days in cabins in lush greenery, inhaling air from beehives for up to three hours a day, which Ceylan says helps with issues from allergies to migraines.

The government does not officially recognise the therapy though it is practiced by many other beekeepers round Türkiye as well as in other countries including Germany and Russia.



Ceylan, who comes from a family of beekeepers and studied agriculture, started his bee farm in Karaburun 30 years ago. He has lobbied for years for the sector to be accepted, conducting research and presenting findings to officials.

"We are not against what we call Western medicine. After all, it is also very important too," he said, adding that his method goes hand-in-hand with conventional treatment.

"I have been doing this for fifteen years, trying to bring this into medicine."

CHILDHOOD NOSTALGIA

Ulku Ozman, 69, decided to try the therapy method after a friend suggested it when several surgeries and frequent use of medicines weakened her immune system.

In her nearly week-long visit, Ozman and others enter a cabin where ventilators connected to



beehives deliver air. Each session lasts 45 minutes, with participants moving every 15 minutes to breathe from three different beehives, each with a different smell. Guests pay around 5,000 lira (\$128) per day for the treatment plus accommodation and food.

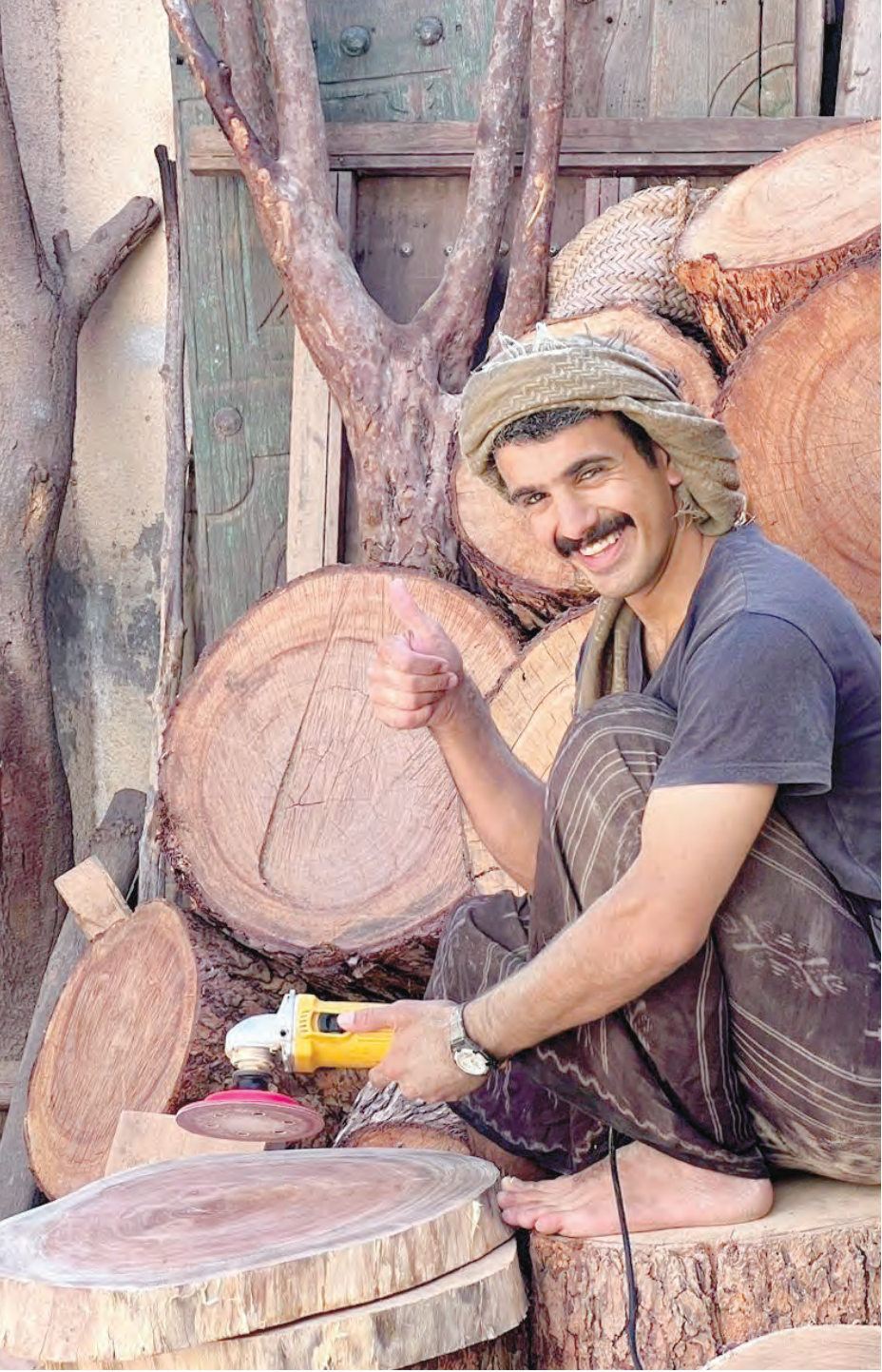
Seated across from the beehives with ventilators on their faces, the guests take deep breaths.

Senay Ilham, 68, has breast cancer that metastasized to her spine but is in remission after receiving conventional treatment.

"This smell seems familiar. It's like it is (coming) from my childhood," she said, recalling being stung by bees while playing outside as children with beekeepers working nearby.

"(The beehive air) always brings me a breeze from these things. It relaxes me both psychologically and physically." — Reuters

FEATURES



HOW TWO BROTHERS IN AL RUSTAQ ARE PRESERVING OMAN'S TRADITIONAL WOODWORKING

BY ARWA AL HASHIMI

IT'S EASY to miss their modest workshop. But once you ask around Al Rustaq, you will definitely be pointed to the right direction where upon entering this piece of creative hub, you will be greeted by the rich aroma of wood and the gentle rhythm of hands working meticulously. The space is alive with the scent of fresh timber and the warm glow of sunlight filtering through the roof, illuminating a cluttered but organised chaos of wooden planks, chisels and carving tools. Old-fashioned hand saws hang neatly on the wall alongside modern machinery, a testament to the blend of tradition and innovation that defines this place. Amidst the sawdust and shavings, two brothers, Ahmed and Majid al Hattali, are busy bringing their vision to life — a passion rooted in heritage, woven into every beam and

carving. Their workshop isn't grand, but it's full of character. Walls are lined with completed pieces, each telling a story. Some are intricate boxes with detailed geometric patterns, others are smooth, polished furniture pieces with a natural glow. There's a tangible energy, a sense that here, craftsmanship isn't just work — it's a cultural act. As they work side by side, their conversation reveals their deep respect for the material, the heritage it reflects, and the future they hope to carve for Oman's artistic artisanship. The story of Ahmed and Majid is intertwined with Oman's long tradition of woodworking, a craft that has been part of the country's history for centuries. The majestic forts, houses and mosques scattered across the landscapes are silent witnesses to this craftsmanship. The ceilings are decorated with elaborate wooden panelling, doorways are framed with carved motifs and windows feature intricate latticework, all showcasing the artistry passed down through generations. These architectural works not only serve aesthetic purposes, but also reflect the skill



and cultural identity of Oman's craft tradition. Historically, Oman's architecture demonstrates influences from various cultures, a testament to its position as a trading hub along ancient maritime routes. The craftsmanship on the grand facades of forts like Nizwa and Bahla incorporates repeating geometric patterns, floral motifs and symbolic designs, often carved by hand with incredible precision. Such details speak of a society that valued artistry as part of daily life and spiritual expression — a legacy that Ahmed and Majid continue through their woodwork today. The brothers' work is inspired by these traditions but also infused with a modern sensibility. They source locally grown woods such as ghaf, sidr, acacia, almond and Omani walnut, which grow in the rugged mountains surrounding Al Rustaq. These trees are harvested sustainably by local suppliers who follow strict guidelines to protect the environment. The wood's natural patterns, grain and colour inform their designs, ensuring each piece retains a piece of Oman's natural beauty. Working with these materials presents its own challenges. No two blocks of wood are identical — each has its personality, its quirks. Some pieces need delicate chiselling to reveal intricate patterns, while others require sturdy sawing for larger furniture. Their workshop's unique blend of traditional hand tools and modern machinery allows them to balance authenticity with precision. This combination preserves the soul of craftsmanship while ensuring every detail is perfect. Creating a piece isn't quick work. Small decorative items might take a few days, while larger furniture or detailed carvings can span several weeks, sometimes even months. Behind every item lies patience, passion, and a desire to honour ancient techniques while

making something that can serve contemporary life. One of their main obstacles is aligning these traditional techniques with the demands of today's market. In a world saturated with mass-produced, cheaply made goods, Ahmed and Majid stand out by offering handcrafted items that carry stories and history. They're continually exploring new designs, building relationships with suppliers and sharing the



stories behind each creation — stories of the trees, the mountains and the skilled hands that shape them. Social media has become a vital tool in reaching a wider audience, both locally and internationally, especially tourists who seek authentic souvenirs embodying Oman's cultural heritage. The public response has been encouraging. Omanis value their roots and appreciate handcrafted wooden items that echo their history. Tourists, too, increasingly seek meaningful, locally made crafts that stand apart from the usual souvenirs. The brothers find joy in knowing their work nurtures a connection to Oman's heritage and helps keep traditional skills alive. They plan to expand the workshop, open a gallery where visitors can see their entire process from raw wood to finished product, and even establish training programmes for aspiring artisans. Reaching global markets through digital platforms, participating in international exhibitions and experimenting by combining wood with other natural materials are all on their horizon. Most importantly, they want to motivate young Omanis to see craftsmanship not just as a trade but as a pathway to preserve their cultural identity. For Ahmed and Majid, wood isn't merely a raw material. It's a repository of memory, culture and storytelling. Every cut, carving and polish echoes centuries of tradition, but it's also a dialogue between the old and new. Their work asks us to look closer at the beauty in natural imperfections, to cherish handmade artistry. Ahmed and Majid's dedication proves that at a time when many things are mass-produced or fleeting, true craftsmanship — born from patience, skill and love — endures.