

O M A N
عُمان
D A I L Y

Observer



معروض مسقط
الدولي للكتاب ٢٠٢٥
Muscat International
Book Fair 2025
29 | الدورة التاسعة والعشرون
Twenty-ninth Edition

VOL. 44, NO. 164
PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 05:36 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 04:16 AM
DHUHR 12:10 PM
ASR 03:36 PM
MAGHRIB 06:38 PM
ISHA 07:53 PM



2010000387405

INBRIEF



FROM PAGES TO TREASURES

The 10-day-long Muscat International Book Fair which is being held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, serves as a central hub for literati, academia and reading enthusiasts from Oman and beyond. This edition is alive with vibrant activities and an enthusiastic crowd. **SEE P4**

REPRESENTING KNOWLEDGE

MUSCAT: Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information has affirmed that the Ministry of Information’s launch of the Kids’ Interface on Ayn platform is inspired by the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his dedication to nurturing Omani children and developing their potential. In a press statement, he said: “This is a strategic step towards creating meaningful media content for children, who represent a vital part of Oman’s future. This interface is not just a source of entertainment, but a comprehensive learning space that supports the psychological, educational and moral needs of Omani children, while staying aligned with global digital developments.” — **DETAILS ON P2**

SHARK PERMITS SUSPENDED



MUSCAT: As part of the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Environment Authority (EA) has monitored shark trading companies and detected violations by some of these companies of the Law Regulating Wildlife Trade promulgated by Royal Decree No 45/2024 and the Sultanate of Oman’s obligations under CITES. The EA disclosed that those companies were involved in illegal export of endangered sharks and their derivatives after attempting to deceive regulatory authorities by mixing shark species and their derivatives (such as fins) that are permitted for export with prohibited species. — **ONA**

HM sends national day greetings to leaders

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Julius Maada Bio of the Republic of Sierra Leone on the occasion of his country’s Independence Day.

His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings to President Julius Maada wishing him success in leading the friendly people of Sierra Leone to achieve further development and progress.

His Majesty the Sultan also sent a cable of greetings to President Cyril Ramaphosa of the Republic of South Africa on the occasion of his country’s National Day.

His Majesty expressed his sincere wishes to President Ramaphosa to fulfil the aspirations of his people, hoping that the relations of cooperation and partnership between the two countries would continue to grow and expand at

all levels. His Majesty sent a cable of greetings to President Faure Gnassingbe of the Republic of Togo on the occasion of his country’s National Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to President Faure and to the friendly people of his country.

Meanwhile, His Majesty sent a cable of greetings to His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the

occasion of his country’s National Day.

His Majesty expressed his sincere wishes for success in leading the friendly Dutch people and fulfilling their aspirations for further progress and prosperity. His Majesty affirmed the strong relations between the two friendly countries and his keenness to bolster them through further partnerships and investments. — **ONA**

Iran, US discuss nuclear deal in 3rd round of talks

ANOTHER HIGH-LEVEL MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MAY 3: SAYYID BADR

THE UNITED STATES and Iran went into detail about a potential nuclear deal on Saturday at their third consecutive round of talks, hoping to strike an accord that would ease regional tensions.

US special envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Abbas Araghchi again led the talks, which this time included a technical-level meeting between experts from both sides. The discussions, lasted more than seven hours, according to Iranian officials and state media.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister said that the US-Iran talks held in Muscat on Saturday affirmed a shared desire to reach an agreement based on mutual respect and permanent commitments. “The basic principles, objectives and technical concerns were discussed. Talks will continue next week with a further high level meeting provisionally scheduled for May 3,” he said.

Dr Abbas Araghchi, Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed his satisfaction over the third round of talks with the United States, which was characterised by seriousness and determination from both sides. He noted that the Sultanate of Oman will announce the venue for the fourth round.

The discussions are aimed at striking a new deal that would stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons — an objective Tehran denies pursuing — in return for relief from crippling sanctions.

US President Donald Trump pulled out of an earlier multilateral nuclear deal during his first term in office. The US and Israel have repeatedly threatened Iran with military strikes.

The latest talks took place in a “serious atmosphere”, Tehran’s foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baqaei said, according to the Tasnim news agency.



OMAN VOICES
SYMPATHY
ON VICTIMS
OF IRAN
EXPLOSION

Men ride a motorcycle amid the devastation on a boulevard following an explosion at the Shahid Rajaei port dock southwest of Bandar Abbas in the Iranian province of Hormozgan on Saturday after several containers exploded at Iran’s largest commercial port. — **AFP**

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman expressed its condolences and sympathy to the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran for the victims of the explosion that occurred in the port of Bandar Abbas on Saturday. In a statement issued by the Foreign

Ministry on Saturday, the Sultanate of Oman wished a speedy recovery for the injured. At least four people have died and more than 500 people were injured, many of them severely, in a serious explosion at the southern Iranian port of

Shahid Rajaei, Iranian media reported on Saturday. Authorities fear the death toll will rise further. The blast caused considerable damage to the harbour infrastructure at the site, according to Iranian state broadcaster IRIB and other media. **SEE P6**

Iran’s defence and missile capabilities were not discussed, Baqaei said separately to state TV, while an Iranian negotiator said that the talks were “uniquely about sanctions and nuclear questions”.

Michael Anton, the State Department’s head of policy planning, headed the US expert-level delegation, while deputy foreign ministers Kazem Gharibabadi and Majid

Takht-Ravanchi led Tehran’s, according to Tasnim. The delegations were placed in separate rooms and communicated via the hosts, Baqaei said in a statement.

Araghchi had earlier expressed “cautious optimism”, saying this week: “If the sole demand by the US is for Iran to not possess nuclear weapons, this demand is achievable”. — **Agencies**

Hamas says open to 5-year Gaza truce, one-time hostages release

CAIRO: Hamas is open to an agreement to end the war in Gaza that would see all hostages released and secure a five-year truce, an official said on Saturday ahead of talks with mediators.

A Hamas delegation was in Cairo to discuss with Egyptian mediators ways out of the 18-month war, while, on the ground, rescuers said an Israeli strike on a family home in Gaza City killed at least 10 people with more feared buried under the rubble. The Hamas official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Palestinian group “is ready for an

exchange of prisoners in a single batch and a truce for five years”.

The latest bid to seal a ceasefire follows an Israeli proposal which Hamas had rejected earlier this month as “partial”, calling instead for a “comprehensive” agreement to halt the war ignited by the group’s October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

The Israeli offer included a 45-day ceasefire in exchange for the return of 10 living hostages.

Hamas has consistently demanded that a truce deal must lead to an end to the war, a full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza



Palestinians queue for a hot meal at a charity kitchen run by the United Nation’s World Food Programme (WFP) at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. — **AFP**

Strip and a surge in humanitarian aid into the besieged territory — where on Friday the United Nations warned food stocks were running out.

Israel, for its part, demands the return of all hostages seized in the 2023 attack and Hamas’s disarmament, which the group has rejected as a “red line”. More than a month into a renewed Israeli offensive in Gaza that followed a two-month truce, a Hamas official said earlier this week that its delegation in Cairo would discuss “new ideas” on a ceasefire. — **AFP**



Experience Better

Their future starts today!

Change to AWASR, Fastest Internet In Oman

☐ Get Ashel Educational Platform for free!

☐ Unlimited data for all plans





SUBSCRIBE NOW !
WhatsApp
80001000
Website: [awasr.om](#)

SHORTTAKES

SOLAR HOMES PROJECT LAUNCHED IN BARKA



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

MUSCAT: Seventeen homes in the Wilayat of Barka will soon be powered by independent solar energy systems, each with a capacity of 8 kilowatts, directly contributing to lower electricity bills for beneficiary families and promoting the use of renewable energy within the local community.

An introductory meeting to highlight the Solar Energy Project for Healthy Villages was recently convened by Nama Electricity Distribution Company in Barka.

The meeting, held at the office of Sayyid Tariq bin Mahmoud al Busaidy, Wali of Barka, featured a comprehensive presentation by a team of engineers on the project’s objectives and mechanisms.

Speaking on the sidelines of the event, Sayyid Tariq bin Mahmoud al Busaidy described the initiative as a major step towards promoting clean energy, aligning with Oman Vision 2040 and the national net-zero goals.

Project details, implementation mechanisms; and expected economic and environmental benefits were discussed at the gathering, which was attended by government officials, community leaders and members of the Municipal Council.

Management representatives and engineers from Nama Electricity Distribution Company and Al Forsan Al Asrah Company were also present.

The project is part of Nama Electricity Distribution’s broader efforts to adopt sustainable solutions and strengthen community partnerships. Completion is targeted for the fourth quarter of 2025.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the company reaffirmed its commitment to advancing clean energy initiatives, serving citizens and society; and supporting the national transition to sustainable energy sources.

Minister highlights Ayn for kids as knowledge hub

MUSCAT: Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information has affirmed that the Ministry of Information’s launch of the Kids’ Interface on Ayn platform is inspired by the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his dedication to nurturing Omani children and developing their potential.

In a press statement, he said: “This is a strategic step towards creating meaningful media content for children, who represent a vital part of Oman’s future. This interface is not just a source of entertainment, but a comprehensive learning space that supports the psychological, educational and moral needs of Omani children, while staying aligned with global digital developments.”

He added: “Today’s children are active contributors to knowledge and the future. That’s why the Kids’ Interface was designed to provide content that speaks their language, sparks curiosity and strengthens Omani identity and values. It features illustrated stories, simple educational programmes and engaging audiovisual materials that help develop thinking, language and communication skills in an age-appropriate and appealing way.”

“We believe that building a strong society starts in childhood. The interface offers a safe, enjoyable alternative that connects children to their heritage, their identity and life in Oman. Looking ahead, we plan to expand its features by adding interactive



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, at the launch of the Kids’ Interface on Ayn platform

educational games that support creative and innovative learning,” pointed out Dr Abdullah.

He concluded: “We are committed to continuously developing the platform in collaboration with experts in childhood, education, digital media and pedagogy. Our goal is to make it a national initiative that brings together families, educators and communities — helping raise a generation that contributes to Oman’s growth and advancement.”

It may be noted that the Ministry of Information had on Thursday launched ‘Ayn for Children’, a dedicated media platform for young audiences.

The launch took place during the opening of the 29th Muscat International Book Fair under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University, in the presence of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information.

The platform aims to enrich child-focused media content by providing youth with knowledge resources that shape their awareness, develop their personalities and strengthen their national identity. It offers content that reflects Omani culture and values while nurturing future-ready generations capable of engaging effectively with modern technology.

Ayn for Children features diverse educational, entertainment and cultural content, including cartoons, programmes, audio content, audiobooks and other age-appropriate materials for children aged 4 to 18.

Dr Amal Mohammed al Nawfali, Director General of Digital Media at the Ministry of Information, stated that the platform delivers a carefully designed digital edutainment experience with an intuitive, child-friendly interface featuring vibrant colours inspired by the Ayn platform. It ensures accessibility for all children, including those with visual or hearing impairments and offers exclusive content that reinforces national identity and ethical values. — ONA

AWARD-WINNING RESEARCH ADVANCES BREAST CANCER IMAGE CLASSIFICATION

MUSCAT: Among the standout projects at the 11th National Research Award organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the study titled ‘Feed-forward networks using logistic regression and support vector machine for whole-slide

breast cancer histopathology image classification’ by Dr ArunaDevi Karuppasamy, Assistant Professor at the Department of Computing Sciences, Gulf College, received top honours in the Information and Communication Technologies field (PhD category). Dr ArunaDevi’s

research addresses the critical challenge of histopathology image classification, essential for breast cancer diagnosis. While traditional methods rely on hand-crafted features, her study explores feed-forward approaches, proposing Convolutional Logistic Regression (CLR) and Convolutional Support Vector Machine (CSVM-H) networks. These methods leverage predefined or externally learned filters, overcoming limitations of back-propagation techniques such as vanishing gradients and heavy

data requirements. Experiments showed that CLR and CSVM-H achieved superior accuracy and faster training times on small datasets from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) and BreaKHis, outperforming traditional models like VggNet-16 and ResNet-50. Both models demonstrated high Area Under Curve (AUC) scores (0.83 and 0.84 on the SQUH dataset), highlighting their efficiency for small, labelled datasets with limited computational resources.

First dermatology conference held in Al Sharqiyah North

AL MUDHAIBI: The First Dermatology Conference in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate emphasised the need to advance dermatological care across healthcare institutions by adopting modern diagnostic and treatment technologies; and promoting collaboration among various health sectors through the implementation of international treatment protocols.

Organised by the Directorate General of Health Services in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, the conference brought together a group of consultants and specialists in dermatology from various health

institutions across the Sultanate of Oman.

The event, held in Al Mudhaibi under the auspices of Saud bin Amer al Nazairi, Director General of Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Health, aimed to strengthen the professional competencies of healthcare workers by discussing the latest developments in dermatology and contemporary treatment protocols. It also sought to encourage the exchange of expertise regarding recent advancements in the field and their impact on improving diagnostic and treatment skills. Additionally,



the conference provided an opportunity to showcase the latest skincare and cosmetic products from pharmaceutical, medical,

cosmetic and laser companies, while highlighting topics such as drug interactions and the roles of pharmacists and nurses in primary

healthcare settings.

A series of working papers were presented, with ten prominent papers addressing developments in the treatment of skin diseases, skin cancers, pharmaceutical advancements and reviews of local cases involving genetic skin conditions, dermatological manifestations of internal diseases and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome. Other topics included the role of gut microbes in dermatological conditions, contradictions in cosmetic dermatology and pediatric skin diseases. — ONA



Terms And Condition Applies

Enjoy priority for transactions

With Al Rifaa Privilege Account

Visit your nearest branch today



الأعمال المصرفية الحصرية
PRIVILEGE BANKING

2479 1111

[www.bankdhofar.com](#)



bankdhofar



Scan to learn more



Al Rifaa

SHORT TAKES



The automated landing craft is part of the ‘Sawari’ project in Thailand

RNO MARKS MILESTONE IN LANDING CRAFT PROJECT

BANGKOK: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) celebrated the laying of the first iron plate for the construction of four automated landing craft, part of the ‘Sawari’ project, at Marsun Shipbuilding Company in the Kingdom of Thailand.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence and attended by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), Issa bin Abdullah al Alawi, the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Thailand, senior officers from the Ministry of Defence and Thai officials.

On the sidelines of the visit, HE the Secretary-General and his accompanying delegation met with HE Lieutenant General Nattapon Narkpanit, Deputy Minister of Defence of Thailand, discussing ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The delegation also toured the Defence Industries and Military Energy Centre at the Thai Ministry of Defence and participated in a workshop with leading Thai defence manufacturers. — ONA

EIGHT GIFTED OMANI STUDENTS COMPETE IN APHO



The Olympiad features 240 students representing 30 Asian countries

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is participating in the 25th Asian Physics Olympiad (APhO), which will be held from May 4 to 12 in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The event will feature 240 students representing 30 Asian countries.

The Sultanate of Oman’s participation in this prestigious international scientific competition reflects its leading position in nurturing fledgling talents and promoting innovation at both regional and global levels. It also highlights the qualitative development and tangible progress the Sultanate of Oman achieved in the fields of science education, particularly physics, as well as its focus on successful national strategies for human resource development and advancing national talent.

The Asian Physics Olympiad (APhO) is an annual continental physics competition targeting school students from Asia and Oceania.

Established in 2000 at the initiative of Indonesia, the competition consists of a five-hour theoretical exam and five hours of laboratory tests. Eight students from each country participate, competing for gold, silver and bronze medals or certificates of appreciation. — ONA

OMAN MARKS REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT DAY

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman joined regional efforts in observing Regional Environment Day, which commemorates the 1978 signing of the Kuwait Regional Convention for Cooperation in the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution. The event, observed annually on April 24, also highlights the establishment of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) in 1979.

All GCC states, along with Iraq



The Environmental Emergency Centre serves as a national hub for rapid response to environmental disasters

and Iran, mark this occasion by reaffirming their commitment to preserving the quality of marine waters, protecting ecosystems and raising awareness of the growing environmental challenges facing the region. These include marine pollution, climate change, carbon emissions and the increasing threat posed by plastic waste. Oman’s Environment Authority emphasised the country’s proactive stance in implementing environmental policies and projects. — ONA

ROP research earns global acclaim in vet sciences

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

A SCIENTIFIC research paper published by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) Scientific Research team in Veterinary World has earned critical acclaim from equine experts and enthusiasts worldwide. It marks the world’s first scientific documentation evaluating the effect of the EBN nutritional supplement on Arabian horses.

The paper, published in Veterinary World — a prestigious peer-reviewed journal ranked in the second quartile (Q2) globally — reflects ROP’s strong commitment to applied scientific research. It also highlights Oman’s rich cultural heritage by weaving in the story of ‘Zad al Rakeb’ within a scientific and documentary framework.

Speaking to Observer, Lieutenant Colonel Dr Khalid bin Obaid al Khalidi, Assistant Director of the Veterinary Services Department at the Mounted Police Command and the lead researcher, said: “The Royal Oman Police places great importance on scientific research, guided by the belief that institutional development must be rooted in a solid knowledge base. This achievement is a testament to our commitment to nurturing national talent



The study places ROP at the forefront of specialised veterinary research worldwide

through collaboration with leading local and international institutions.”

Lt Col Dr Khalid added that the study represents the first global scientific evaluation of the EBN nutritional supplement, prepared using spray-dried technology, on purebred Arabian horses during regular training.

The research compared the EBN

supplement with the Premium E supplement, known for its high vitamin E content, to assess impacts on immunity, liver function, muscle condition and physical stress indicators. Results showed that the EBN supplement significantly outperformed Premium E, proving to be a more effective anti-inflammatory and immune booster while avoiding some of the negative effects associated with prolonged vitamin E use.

“This gives our study high scientific value and places it at the forefront of specialised veterinary research worldwide,” Lt Col Dr Khalid noted. Beyond scientific findings, the paper also captures the cultural significance of Arabian horses in Oman. It recounts the historical tale of Zad al Rakeb — gifted by the Prophet Sulaiman (peace be upon him) to Azd Oman — as referenced in Omani historical records and the Omani Encyclopedia, underlining the deep-rooted bond between Omanis and Arabian horses.

The study was conducted under the direct supervision of the Mounted Police Command, in collaboration with Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), the National University of Malaysia (UKM), the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources; and with support from the Research and Studies Centre at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences.

MELA marks 15 years of excellence

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

MUSCAT: The Middle East Leadership Association (MELA), the region’s premier leadership development network with members spanning industries, cultures and borders, celebrated 15 years of fostering transformational leadership last week. Held under the auspices of Her Highness Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU, the celebration included MELA’s 15th Leadership Masterclass and a Partners’ Dinner, bringing together the individuals and organisations who have sustained and grown the MELA vision since its founding in 2010.

Titled ‘Celebrating Our Partners: The Driving Force Behind MELA’s Success,’ this year’s Leadership Masterclass — a transformational 10-day programme for 27 distinguished



MELA held a a transformational 10-day programme for 27 distinguished leaders

MELA has served as a catalyst for over 400 leaders from the Middle East and North Africa; and more than 2,000 leaders globally.

leaders — was made possible with the support of dedicated partners from Oman, such as Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Omran, Al Sorat Consulting and LITT Investment, as well as SIGMA Paints from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Built on a powerful network of trust, collaboration and impact, MELA has served as a catalyst for over 400 leaders from the Middle East and North Africa; and more than 2,000

leaders globally. The Partners’ Dinner honoured those whose leadership and generosity have fuelled MELA’s growth, beginning with an address by Shaikh Hassan al Kabbani, Chairman of the MELA Board and CEO of IKK Group of Companies.

Speaking at the event, Dr Hisham al Siyabi, PDO Gas Director, highlighted the significance of the MELA/PDO alliance, underlining its contribution to industry leadership and capacity building in Oman. He praised PDO’s decision to associate with the MELA Masterclass. Continuing the evening’s theme of partnership, Dr Meda Al Rowas, co-founder of Al Sorat Consulting, emphasised that trust is the cornerstone of advancing leadership development and strengthening international relations.

“Our engagement with MELA has grown over the past few years and we see great alignment between our values and the MELA network. We see a bright future ahead,” she said.

Royal Hospital first in GCC to use AlphaVac for clot removal

MUSCAT: The Royal Hospital has marked a significant medical milestone by becoming the first healthcare institution in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to introduce the advanced American AlphaVac system for treating venous thromboembolism, including pulmonary embolism and deep vein thrombosis.

This achievement is part of the hospital’s ongoing commitment to keeping pace with the latest

global medical technologies and enhancing specialised treatment services in the Sultanate of Oman.

The AlphaVac system is a cutting-edge, minimally invasive device that enables the safe and efficient removal of blood clots from major veins without the need for open surgery. Its introduction signals a shift in traditional treatment approaches, offering faster recovery times and fewer complications for patients.

The Interventional Radiology Department at the Royal Hospital said that this system addresses a critical need for safer and more effective clot removal, especially for patients ineligible for surgery or at high surgical risk.

X-RAY GUIDANCE

The technique involves inserting a catheter into the femoral vein under X-ray guidance, using a control device to extract clots

while minimising blood loss. Procedures typically last between 30 to 60 minutes, with patients often discharged from intensive care within 24 hours.

Clinical data from the hospital shows a success rate of over 90 per cent in clot removal with the AlphaVac, alongside significant reductions in post-operative complications and bleeding. Patients also reported improved recovery speeds and restored

vitality within days of treatment.

The introduction of the AlphaVac system aligns with the Royal Hospital’s strategy to position itself as a national reference centre and reflects the Sultanate of Oman’s ambition to strengthen its standing on the regional and global healthcare map. Officials emphasised that this advancement highlights Oman’s readiness to adopt pioneering medical technologies in the pursuit of world-class patient care. — ONA



GERMAN WRITERS SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON OMAN

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, APRIL 26

THE 29TH EDITION of the Muscat International Book Fair is alive with vibrant activities and an enthusiastic crowd.

At the Art Hall in the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, visitors are treated to works by prominent Omani artists, alongside a stage hosting writers and authors whose works are featured at the fair.

This year, the Embassy of Germany made its debut at the fair, showcasing a special talk titled ‘Oman – Seen by German Women’ featuring two authors and a documentary director.

The event opened with the international preview of the documentary Arta, directed and produced by journalist Nadia Frenz. Following the screening, Frenz was joined by Natascha Plankermann, editor, journalist and author of 1001 Friendships; and Sabine Reining, author of Oman from Above, for a lively discussion.

“This is the first German participation at the book fair. We wanted to highlight friendships and projects between Oman and Germany,” said Natascha, who has been visiting Oman for a decade. “My first visit ten years ago changed my life. I formed lasting friendships, including with Germany’s first ambassador to Oman, who remains deeply connected to the country.”



Germans celebrate Oman at the Muscat International Book Fair

The Embassy of Germany made its debut at the fair, showcasing a special talk featuring two authors and a documentary director

Nadia, who works with German-French television, shared that her two-part documentary focuses on Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Dhofar, with the second part highlighting the beauty of the desert and the Luban harvest. The full documentary will premiere on May 8, 2025.

“Oman’s people have been incredibly supportive,” she said, adding, “I wanted to highlight women’s roles because many in Europe misunderstand the position of women in the Arab world. Through my documentary, I showcase women as teachers, entrepreneurs and designers, emphasising that working mothers

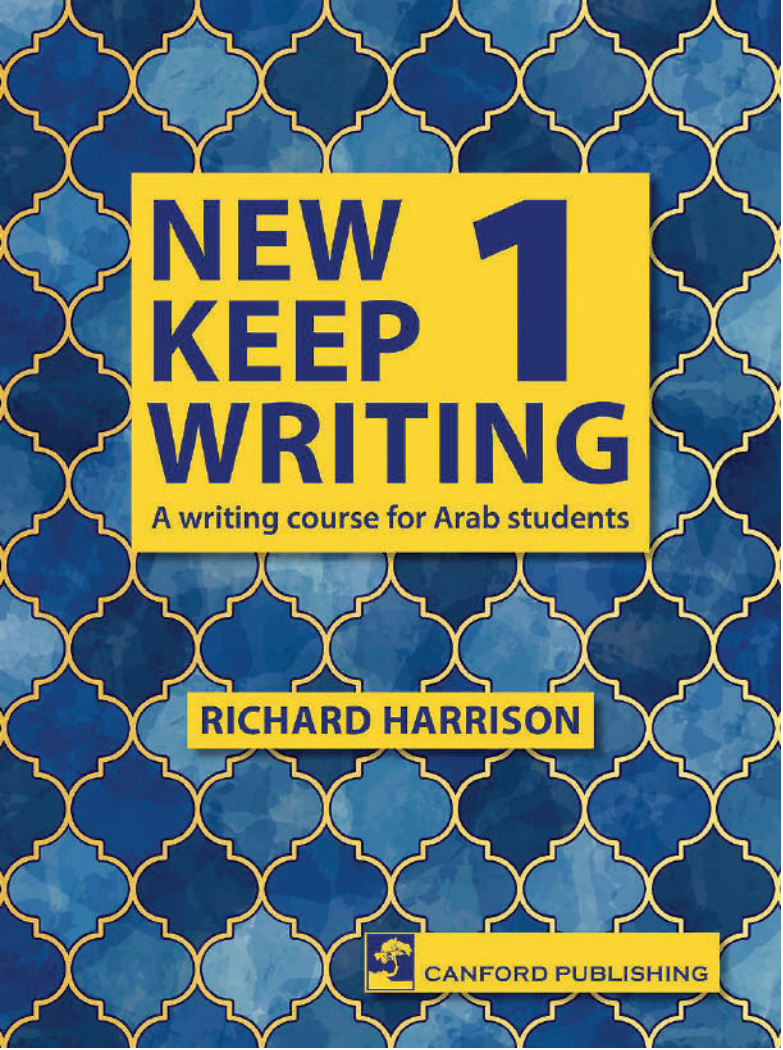
around the world face similar struggles.”

Sabine, blogger and photographer behind MidnightOman, is attending the fair with two books celebrating Oman’s landscapes.

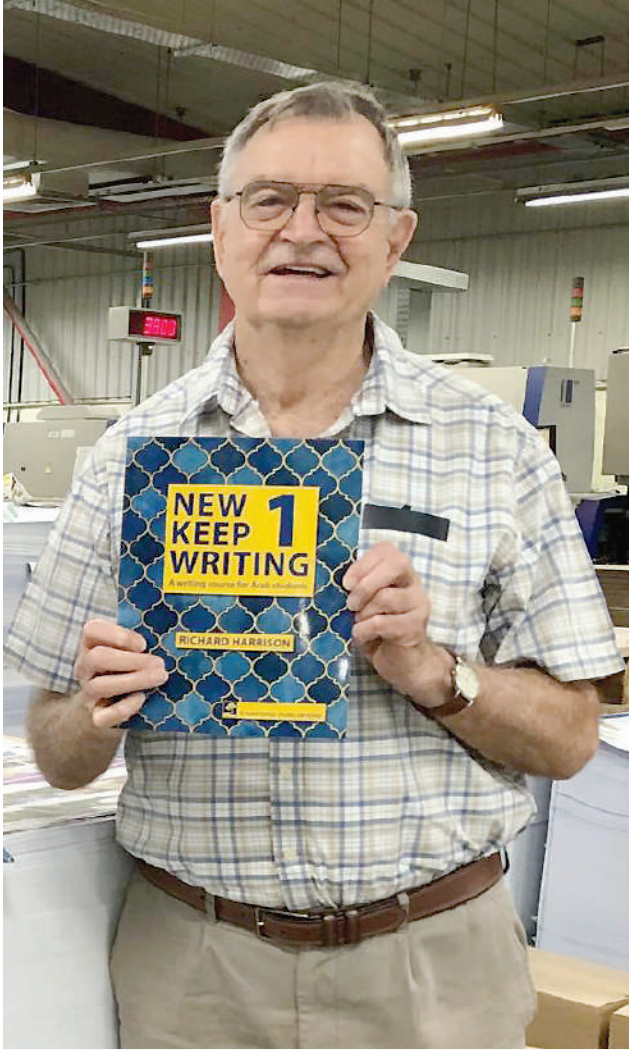
“My coffee table book captures the diversity of Oman, while Oman from Above gives readers a bird’s-eye view, complete with QR codes that lead to the exact locations,” she explained.

When asked about her favorite place in Oman during April, she smiled and said, “Of course, it’s Al Jabal Al Akhdhar – especially during rose harvesting season. It’s featured in my book.”

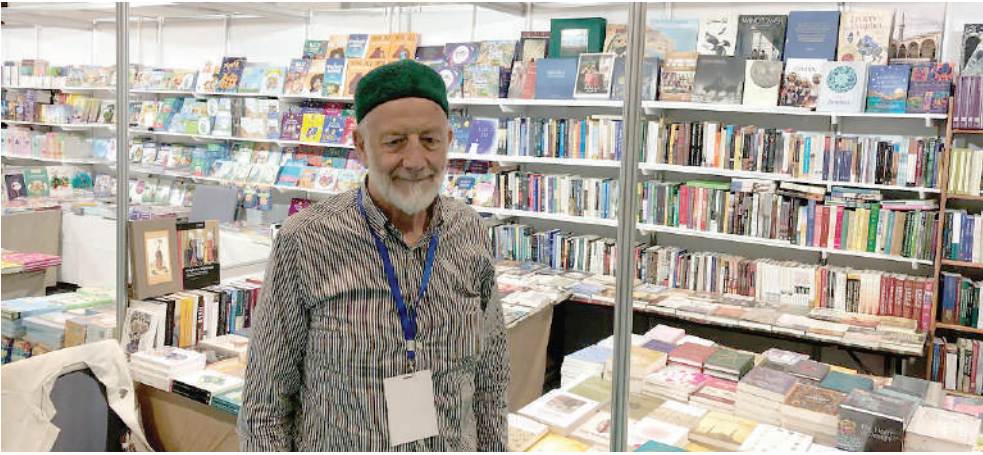
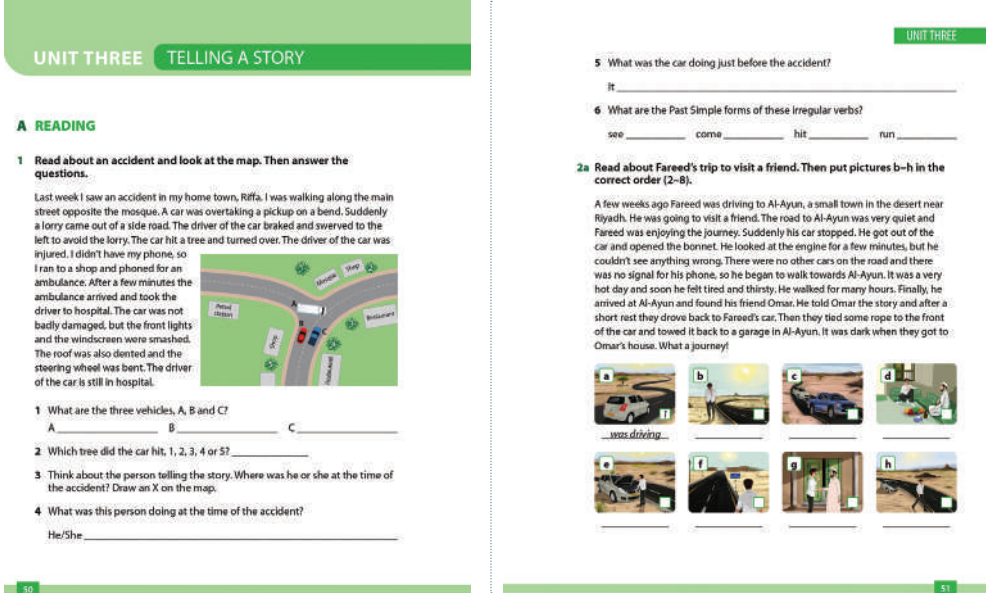
British ELT pioneer revives ‘Keep Writing’ series for Arab learners



Richard Harrison’s new book Keep Writing



Richard Harrison displays his new book



LIJU CHERIAN
@lijucherianoman

AT THE 29TH MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR, Richard Harrison, a veteran author and English Language Teaching (ELT) pioneer, returns with a refreshed version of his acclaimed New Keep Writing 1 and 2 series.

Represented by UAE-based Blackstone and Holywell, Richard promotes the books, continuing a legacy that began over three decades ago in the Sultanate of Oman.

“Writing remains one of the hardest skills to teach – and to learn,” Richard says. “But when approached step by step, even the most reluctant students can grow confident. That was my goal with Keep Writing and it still is.”

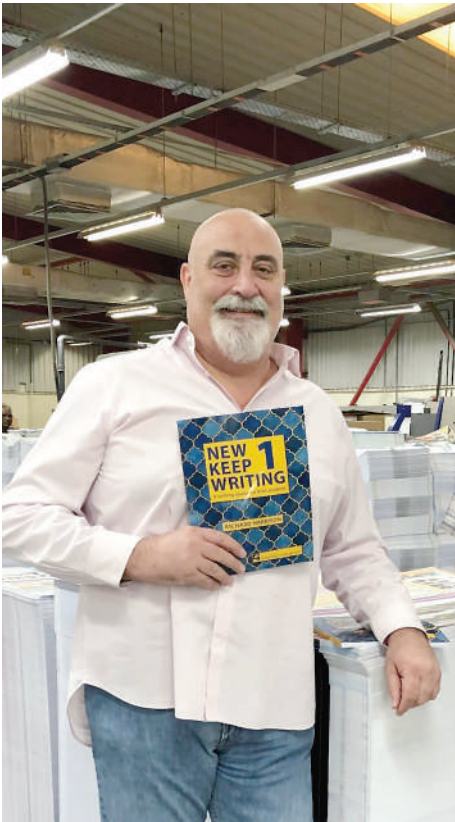
Originally conceived in the 1980s while Richard taught in Oman, Keep Writing was first published by Longman in 1989 and quickly

became a bestseller across the Middle East. The course was designed to address the specific writing challenges faced by Arab learners, filling a gap in educational materials at the time.

Now, New Keep Writing has been reimagined by Richard’s own imprint, Canford Publishing. The books, printed in Oman by Mazoon Printing, feature local illustrations by Ali al Hinai; and Octagon Design and Services, strengthening Richard’s deep ties to the country.

“As both a teacher and a publisher, I’ve always believed in the power of local references and culturally relevant themes in learning materials,” Richard says.

The series focuses on foundational writing skills like punctuation, sentence structure and paragraph development. Themes familiar to students in the Arab world – such as family, work, hobbies, shopping malls, transport



and food – are used to make the course relatable. This structured, step-by-step approach has been a key reason for its success.

The books are particularly helpful for elementary and intermediate learners. “In the early stages, students need guidelines or ‘scaffolding’ to support their writing,” Richard explains.

“The emphasis on accuracy – punctuation, capitalisation and spelling – helps students build confidence. The feedback I’ve received shows that this approach works.”

Khalid bin Mohammed al Abri, Assistant Director for Language Programmes at the University of Nizwa, states, “Richard’s books have greatly improved our students’ writing skills. His approach makes it easier for them to meet academic writing requirements.”

Richard’s commitment to Oman continues in this revised

edition. Alongside the Omani-based illustrations, the books offer students a chance to engage with culturally relevant content. “Oman has been central to my professional life,” Richard reflects. “It’s where my writing journey began and where it continues.”

In a world increasingly dominated by digital learning tools, Richard remains a strong advocate for printed textbooks. “Despite the rise of digital formats, students and teachers are returning to print. Physical books offer a focused, tactile learning experience that digital resources often lack.”

Richard’s ‘New Keep Writing 1 and 2’ series is an essential resource for learners of English in the Arab world. With its structured approach and culturally relevant themes, it continues to empower students, helping them develop strong writing skills and build confidence in their communication.

SHORT TAKES



THIRD SCOUT CAMP LAUNCHED IN AL DHAHIRAH

IBRI: The third scout camp in Al Dhahirah Governorate kicked off at the Youth Complex in Ibri. Organised by the Directorate General of Education in Al Dhahirah, the camp will run until Sunday.

The camp aims to enhance scouting activities and training programmes in the Governorate. The camp is being attended by 85 scouts and 15 scout leaders from various scout units across the governorate.

The opening ceremony featured a detailed presentation of the camp programme, an introduction to scouting traditions to be followed during the camp and the distribution of participants into groups under designated leaders.

The first day's activities included administrative and organisational tasks such as dividing delegations into sub-camps based on regions and schools, assigning leadership roles; and preparing and distributing camp supplies and tools. Under the supervision of scout leaders, participants also engaged in practical exercises, including tent pitching and teamwork activities, to build skills in discipline, organisation and cooperation. — ONA

Symposium fosters ethical adoption of AI in education

IBRI: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), in collaboration with the ICESCO Chair in AI Ethics and the Human Resources Development Committee at the UTAS Ibri branch, organised a virtual symposium on April 15, titled 'An Introduction to How Universities Can Ethically Adopt Artificial Intelligence.'

The symposium, targeted at global faculty members and students and featured Azhar Ziaur Rahman, an international expert in governance and digital transformation. It was moderated by Dr Himlatha Gunasekaran from the Ibri branch. Discussions focused on AI's significance in higher education, phased and ethical adoption methods and strategic future steps.

With 158 participants — including 141 academic and administrative staff; and 17 students — the session highlighted that AI is no longer a future prospect but a present-day imperative, demanding clear ethical frameworks and transparent standards. Survey feedback showed strong engagement



UTAS Ibri in collaboration with the ICESCO Chair in AI Ethics organises a virtual symposium

and a desire for more training in ethical AI applications.

In continuation of these efforts, UTAS participated in an interactive workshop during Unesco AI Chair Day at Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat on April 17. Led by Dr Musab al Rawi and Dr Preethi Bhaskar, the workshop addressed ethical challenges in AI integration, presenting case studies and forming key recommendations like establishing governance policies, bias detection mechanisms and transparency protocols.

Both events reflected a growing awareness in Omani academic circles of the urgent need to integrate AI responsibly. They also demonstrated a collective commitment to shaping a future where artificial intelligence enhances learning without compromising ethical and human values, setting a model for other institutions in the region to follow.

Oman enacts new organ transplant law

IN A LANDMARK move to enhance the healthcare framework in the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has announced the issuance of a new Royal Decree regulating the transfer and transplantation of human organs and tissues. The new legislation forms a vital part of the country's evolving health laws and addresses the growing need for advanced organ transplant procedures.

Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, said that the law underpins the National Organ Transplant Programme and provides a clear legal structure for organ donation — whether from living donors or posthumous contributions. The decree guarantees the rights and safety of donors and recipients, regulates the responsibilities of healthcare institutions and outlines medical procedures and ethical standards in accordance with international best practices.

"The organ transplant law reflects Oman's progressive approach to public health and meets an urgent need in addressing cases of terminal organ failure," Dr Al Sabti said. "It ensures that the system operates with transparency, respect for human dignity and



The organ transplant law reflects Oman's progressive approach to public health and meets an urgent need in addressing cases of terminal organ failure. It ensures that the system operates with transparency, respect for human dignity and medical integrity.

DR HILAL BIN ALI AL SABTI
Minister of Health



The new law ensures that the system operates with transparency and respect for human dignity

medical integrity."

The minister also stressed the importance of comprehensive legislation such as the Public Health Law, which serves as a reference framework for all aspects of healthcare. The new organ transplant law aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises quality healthcare and well-being as a national priority.

Dr Al Sabti praised His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his unwavering support of the health sector and his vision to provide integrated and advanced healthcare services across the Sultanate of Oman.

The new law marks a significant step towards ensuring ethical medical practices, expanding access to life-saving procedures and reinforcing public confidence in Oman's healthcare system. — ONA



Invest in Oman's Future

Steady & Attractive Returns

Auction of RO 100 Million for 5 Years at 4.6% Per Annum

Government Development Bonds

On behalf of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Oman announces the 74th issue of Government Development Bonds (GDBs) to be auctioned. The 74th issue of GDBs will be issued on Thursday, 01st of May 2025, carrying a coupon rate of 4.6% per annum for a maturity period of 5 years (maturing on 01st of May 2030). These Bonds will be auctioned and priced on Tuesday, 29th of April 2025. Investors may apply for these Bonds through licensed commercial banks by completing the application form.

Security of Capital	How to buy the bonds?
The GDBs are direct and unconditional obligations of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman.	Investors may obtain bonds through any licensed commercial bank operating in the Sultanate of Oman, upon the submission of an eligible application form. Investors must provide their MCD Investor Code in the application form.
Steady Returns	Bank Account Details
Interest shall accrue from the date of issue, and will be paid semi-annually on the 01st of May and 01st of November of every year until maturity. The first payment will be made on 01st November 2025 . Interest payments will cease once the Bond matures.	The investor must provide the same Bank Account details registered with Muscat Clearing and Depository Co. S.A.O.C. (MCD).
Liquidity	MCD Investor Code
The bonds will be listed and can be traded before maturity in the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) at the prevailing market price.	Anyone without an MCD Investor Code can obtain it from MCD's website (www.mcd.gov.om) or via the Oman Stocks app at least one day before applying through the commercial bank.
Collateral Advantage	For any enquires:
The Bonds can be used as a collateral security to obtain loans from any licensed commercial bank.	Tel: +968 24822222 / 24822260 24822303 / 24822302 E-mail: mcd.support@mcd.om
Who Can Invest?	
The 74 th issue of GDBs is offered to all categories of investors, residents and non-residents (irrespective of their nationalities).	



Announcement of the tender TND GSI G3 0006/04/2025 for the supply of Maintenance Trolley.

GS INIMA (AL GHUBRA) LLC has been awarded with the Engineering, Procurement and Construction of AL GHUBRAH III IWP in Oman, for CAPITAL DESALINATION COMPANY S.A.O.C.

Omani companies are invited to quote their most competitive price for the supply of **Maintenance Trolley**.

To participate in the bidding please send copy of CR, copy of VAT certificate and copy of SME card (if any), via e-mail: [ghubrah.3.site@inima.com](#), subject: **TND GSI G3 0006/04/2025** by **30th April 2024** 1:00 PM.

A reply with bid documents will be sent to candidates on the same day.

Bid closing date: 8th May 2025 1:00PM

TO ADVERTISE WITH OMAN DAILY OBSERVER

CONTACT: 71455532

Subscription & Auction Period

74th issue

Open: Tuesday, April 22nd, 2025

Close: Monday, April 28th, 2025

Auction: Tuesday, April 29th, 2025

The minimum subscription amount

RO 100

To view the prospectus of the 74th issue of GDBs, please visit the following websites:

Ministry of Finance | [www.mof.gov.om](#)Central Bank of Oman | [www.cbo.gov.om](#)

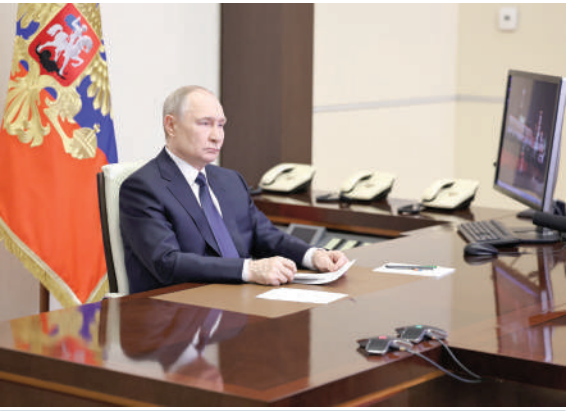
Contact the Central Bank of Oman (Market Operations Department) or any commercial licensed bank for details.

Tel: + 968 24777145/24777832/24777429E-mail: [mod@cbo.gov.om](#)

P.O Box 1161, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Russian President Vladimir Putin listens to General Gerasimov report, Moscow. — Reuters

PUTIN HAILS END OF UKRAINE’S KURSK INCURSION

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed on Saturday what he called the complete failure of an offensive by Ukrainian forces into Russia’s Kursk region after they were expelled from the last village Moscow said they had been holding. Putin, speaking amid intensified diplomatic efforts by the Trump administration to end the Ukraine conflict, said that the expulsion of Ukrainian forces from Russian soil opened the way for further Russian successes inside Ukraine.

“The Kyiv regime’s adventure has completely failed,” Putin said in video footage released by the Kremlin that showed him receiving a report from the head of Russia’s military general staff, Valery Gerasimov. “The full defeat of the enemy in the Kursk border region creates conditions for further successful actions by our forces on other important parts of the front,” Putin added.

Gerasimov told Putin that the last occupied settlement in the Kursk region, the village of Gornal, had been “liberated from Ukrainian units” on Saturday. “Thus the defeat of the armed formations of the Ukrainian armed forces that had attacked the Kursk region has been completed,” Gerasimov said. — Reuters

OPEN TO NEUTRAL PROBE INTO KASHMIR, SAYS PAKISTAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s leader said that his nation was open to a neutral investigation on Saturday into a deadly attack in Indian-run Kashmir that has sent fraught relations into a tailspin with soldiers exchanging gunfire across their contested frontier. Indian police have issued wanted posters for three men — two Pakistanis and an Indian — who they say are members of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba group, a UN-designated terrorist organisation. Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the country was “open to participating in any neutral, transparent and credible investigation” into the attack. Indian security forces have launched a giant manhunt for those responsible for the attack in Pahalgam, blowing up homes in Kashmir of Indian citizens suspected to be linked to the attack. Both sides have imposed a slew of diplomatic measures and exchanged gunfire in Kashmir two times in as many days.

India’s army said “unprovoked” small arms firing was carried out by “multiple” Pakistan army posts overnight. “Indian troops responded appropriately with small arms,” it said in a statement, adding that no casualties were reported. There was no confirmation from Pakistan, but both sides had confirmed gunfire between their respective forces the previous night. “Our valiant armed forces remain fully capable and prepared to defend the country’s sovereignty,” Sharif said at a military ceremony in Abbottabad. The United Nations has urged the neighbours, which have fought multiple wars, to show “maximum restraint”. — AFP

PATIENTS DISCHARGED

Uganda declares end to ebola outbreak



Uganda on Saturday declared an end to the country’s latest outbreak of ebola, three months after authorities confirmed cases of the fatal viral hemorrhagic infection in the capital Kampala. “Good news! The current ebola Sudan Virus Disease outbreak has officially come to an end,” the health ministry said. It added the declaration of the end of the outbreak followed 42 days “without a new case since the last confirmed patient was discharged.” — Reuters

MILITARY EQUIPMENT

North Korea unveils new warship



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attended a ceremony for the launch of a “new multipurpose destroyer”. The 5,000-tonne warship was equipped with the “most powerful weapons” and built “within 400-odd days perfectly with our own strength and technology”, the report said, quoting Jo Chun Ryong, a secretary in the ruling Workers’ Party. Kim said the warship would be handed over to the navy and go into service early next year. — Reuters

PROBE OPERATION

Türkiye detains 47 of Istanbul municipality



Turkish authorities on Saturday detained 47 more members of the Istanbul municipality over accusations of corruption, amid a widening legal crackdown against the opposition and the city’s jailed mayor. On Saturday, NTV said that the municipality’s secretary general, Imamoglu’s chief of staff, the chairman and deputy chairman of the municipality’s administration (ISKI), as well as a department head at ISKI were detained, among others. — AFP

Huge blast at Bandar Abbas injures hundreds



Smoke from the explosion is seen at the Shahid Rajaei port in Bandar Abbas, Iran. — Reuters

A HUGE blast on Saturday likely caused by the explosion of chemical materials stored at Iran’s biggest port, Bandar Abbas, killed at least four people and injured more than 500, Iranian state media reported. Hossein Zafari, a spokesperson for Iran’s crisis management organisation, appeared to blame the explosion on poor storage of chemicals in containers at Shahid Rajaei.

“The cause of the explosion was the chemicals inside the containers,” he said. “Previously, the Director General of Crisis Management had given warnings to this port during their visits and had pointed out the possibility of danger,” Zafari said.

Citing local emergency services, state TV reported that at least 516 people were injured and “hundreds have been transferred to nearby medical centres”. “Unfortunately, at least four deaths have been confirmed by rescuers,” said the head of the Red Crescent Society’s Relief and Rescue Organisation, Babak Mahmoudi.

State TV had quoted Esmaeil Malekizadeh, a regional port official, as saying authorities were working to put out a fire at the facility. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed sympathy for the victims of the deadly blast, adding he had “issued an order to investigate the situation and the causes”, dispatching Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni to

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian expressed sympathy for the victims of the deadly blast, adding he had “issued an order to investigate the situation and the causes”, dispatching Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni to the area to look into the incident.

the area to look into the incident. Shahid Rajaei, more than 1,000 kilometres south of the capital Tehran, is the most advanced container port in Iran, according to the official IRNA news agency.

An Iranian government spokesperson, however, said that although chemicals had likely caused the blast, it was not yet possible to determine the exact reason. Iran’s official news channels aired footage of a vast black and orange cloud of smoke billowing up above the port in the aftermath of the blast and an office building with its doors blown off and papers and debris strewn around.

Bandar Abbas is Iran’s largest port and handles most of its containers in transit. The blast shattered windows within a radius of several kilometres and was heard in Qeshm, an island 26 kilometres south of the port, Iranian media said. The semi-official Tasnim news agency posted footage of injured men lying on the road being tended to amid scenes of confusion. State TV earlier reported that poor handling of flammable materials was a “contributing factor” to the explosion. A local crisis management official said that the blast took place after several containers stored at the port exploded. As relief workers tried to put out fires, the port’s customs officials said trucks were being evacuated from the area and that the container yard where the

explosion occurred likely contained “dangerous goods and chemicals.” Activities at the port were halted after the blast, officials said.

Mehrdad Hassanzadeh, head of Hormozgan province’s crisis management authority, said that “the cause of this incident was the explosion of several containers stored in the Shahid Rajaei Port wharf area”. “We are currently evacuating and transporting the injured to nearby medical centres,” he said. The explosion was so powerful that it could be felt and heard about 50 kilometres away, Fars news agency reported, with residents saying they could feel the ground shake even at a distance. “The shockwave was so strong that most of the port buildings were severely damaged,” Tasnim news agency reported.

A series of deadly incidents have hit Iranian energy and industrial infrastructure in recent years, with many, like Saturday’s blast, blamed on negligence. They have included refinery fires, a gas explosion at a coalmine and an emergency repairs incident at Bandar Abbas killed one worker in 2023. Oil facilities were not affected by the blast on Saturday, Iranian authorities said. The National Iranian Petroleum Refining and Distribution Company said in a statement that it had “no connection to refineries, fuel tanks, distribution complexes and oil pipelines.” — Reuters



People attend the funeral Mass of Pope Francis at St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. — Reuters

The world bids farewell to Pope Francis with massive funeral



Pallbearers carry the coffin of Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. — Reuters

Aerial views of the Vatican showed a patchwork of colours — black from the dark garb of the world's leaders, red from the vestments of some 250 cardinals, the purple worn by some of the 400 bishops and the white worn by 4,000 attending priests



Faithful watch as pallbearers carry the coffin of Pope Francis during his funeral. — Reuters

VATICAN CITY: Presidents, royalty and simple mourners bade farewell to Pope Francis on Saturday at a solemn funeral ceremony, where a cardinal appealed for the pontiff's legacy of caring for migrants, the downtrodden and the environment to be kept alive. US President Donald Trump, who had clashed with the pope on those issues, sat with the rows of foreign dignitaries on one side of Francis' coffin in the vast St. Peter's Square.

On the other side sat cardinals who will pick Francis' successor at a conclave next month, deciding if the new pope should continue with the late pontiff's push for a more open Church or cede to conservatives who want to return to a more traditional papacy. The Argentine pope, who reigned for 12 years, died at the age of 88 on Monday after suffering a stroke.

"Rich in human warmth and deeply sensitive to today's challenges, Pope Francis truly shared the anxieties, sufferings and hopes of this time," said Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, who presided over the funeral Mass. In spiritual language, the 91-year-old Re gave a simple message: there was no going back. The first pontiff from Latin America had been "attentive to the signs of the times and what the Holy Spirit was awakening in the Church," he said.

Applause rang out as Francis' coffin, inlaid with a large cross, was brought out of the basilica and into the sun-filled square by 14 white-gloved pallbearers at the start of the Mass. The Vatican estimated more than 250,000 people attended the ceremony, cramming the square and the roads around. The crowds clapped loudly again at the end of the service when the ushers picked up the casket and tilted it slightly so more people could see. Aerial views of the Vatican showed a patchwork of colours — black from the dark garb of the world's leaders, red from the vestments of some 250 cardinals, the purple worn by some of the 400 bishops and the white worn by 4,000 attending priests.

After the funeral, as the great bells of St. Peter's pealed in mourning, the coffin was placed on an open-topped popemobile and driven through the heart of Rome to St. Mary Major Basilica. Francis, who shunned much of the pomp and privilege of the papacy, had asked to be buried there rather than in St. Peter's — the first time a pope had been laid to rest outside the Vatican in more than a century. The burial itself was conducted in private.

The popemobile left the Vatican from the Perugino Gate, a side entrance just yards away from the Santa Marta guesthouse where Francis had chosen to live,



Youssef Absi, Patriarch of Antioch and All the Orient, of Alexandria and of Jerusalem and head of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church blesses with myrrh the coffin of late Pope Francis, at the Vatican. — AFP



A man holds a rose outside the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major. — Reuters

instead of the ornate Renaissance apartments in the papal palace. Crowds estimated by police as numbering some 150,000 lined the 5.5-km route to St. Mary Major. The scene resembled many popemobile rides Francis took in his 47 trips to all corners of the world. Some in the crowd waved signs and others threw flowers towards the casket. They shouted "viva il papa" (long live the pope) and "ciao, Francesco" (goodbye, Francis) as the procession made its way around Rome's ancient monuments, including the Colosseum.

Among the other heads of state who attended the funeral were the presidents of Argentina, France, Gabon, Germany, the Philippines and Poland, together with the prime ministers of Britain and New Zealand, and many royals, including the king and queen of Spain. Francis' death ushered in a meticulously planned period of transition, marked by ancient ritual, pomp and mourning. Over the past three days, around 250,000 people filed past his open coffin, laid out before the altar of the cavernous basilica. Choirs at the funeral sang Latin hymns and prayers were recited in various languages, including Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese and Arabic, reflecting the global reach of the 1.4-billion-member Roman Catholic Church. Many of the faithful camped

out overnight to try to secure spots at the front of the crowd, while others hurried there in the early morning. "When I arrived at the square, tears of sadness and also joy came over me. I think I truly realised that Pope Francis had left us, and at the same time, there is joy for all he has done for the Church," said a French pilgrim, Aurelie Andre.

Francis, the first non-European pope for almost 13 centuries, battled to reshape the Church, siding with the poor and marginalised, while challenging wealthy nations to help migrants and reverse climate change. "Francis left everyone a wonderful testimony of humanity, of a holy life and of universal fatherhood," said a formal summary of his papacy, written in Latin, and placed next to his body. Traditionalists pushed back at his efforts to make the Church more transparent, while his pleas for an end to conflict, divisions and rampant capitalism often fell on deaf ears.

Attention will now switch to who might succeed him. The secretive conclave is unlikely to begin before May 6, and might not start for several days after that, giving cardinals time to hold regular meetings beforehand to sum each other up and assess the state of the Church, beset by financial problems and ideological divisions. — Reuters

OPINION

Why many abuse victims choose silence



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

I MUST admit that am not a big fan of Arabic drama but when I heard about the Egyptian series ‘Lam shamsiya’ I was curious to check it out. The 15-episode series centres around an 8-year-old boy called Yousif who is subjected to abuse from Wisam his teacher and father’s best friend. We learn that Wisam is a respected university professor who is married and has a teenage daughter. When Yousif’s stepmother discovers the abuse no one believes her and the abuse continues. We discover that Wisam uses the code “our secret game” for his encounter with the boy and gives him a star for each time they “play”. Youssef then finds out that other boys receive similar stars from Wisam which means they are victims too. The series explores the sensitive topic of abuse from a realistic point of view, showing the abuser as someone trusted by the child and how some children don’t speak out. We also see the stepmother who was the whistleblower being called a lair because others were fooled by

Wisam charismatic persona. Working as a psychiatrist, I came across a few victims and sometimes perpetrators of abuse and have witnessed the fear, guilt and confusion experienced by victims, and how sometimes families resolved to keep quiet about it which allows perpetrators to continue abusing others. In some occasions, victims of abuse become perpetrators which is known as ‘the cycle of abuse’. The psychological impact of abuse on the victims and their families is devastating as most victims start distancing themselves from others, become withdrawn from school and experience sudden mood changes. In many occasions, the abuse causes long-lasting emotional scars that can affect the victim’s development, self-image and relationships for a lifetime. People who read or hear about abuse often wonder why some victims remain silent. This can be because most abusers say manipulate the victim by saying “This is our special

As a psychiatrist, I came across a few victims and sometimes perpetrators of abuse and have witnessed the fear, guilt and confusion experienced by victims and their families

secret” or “No one will believe you”. In many cases, the child is too young to understand what is happening is actually abuse. Victims who are emotionally neglected can mistake attention for love, especially when it comes from a trusted person like a sibling, a parent or a teacher. So, how can we help victims of abuse? Psychological therapies such as trauma-focused cognitive behavioural therapy and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing are reported to help victims regain a sense of safety, self-worth and control over their lives. However, such therapies take time and need to be delivered by an experienced therapist who is also compassionate. By shedding light on stories like Yousif’s, society can begin to break the silence and stigma surrounding abuse. Protecting children is not just about reacting after the fact — it’s about building environments of trust, awareness and courage, where children are heard, believed and protected.

NEPAL’S LONG ROAD TO QUAKE RESILIENCE

PAAVAN MATHEMA

A decade has passed since a massive earthquake ripped through Nepal, but in Ram Bahadur Nakarmi’s home the damage is still visible — and so is the fear another might strike. Ten years ago, on April 25, 2015, the ground beneath Nepal shuddered with a magnitude-7.8 earthquake, killing nearly 9,000 people, injuring over 22,000 and leaving millions homeless.

The disaster also reduced monuments to ruins, including centuries-old temples and royal palaces in the Kathmandu valley that attracted visitors from around the world.

Nakarmi’s four-storey home in historic Bhaktapur city was damaged, but financial constraints made it impossible for him to rebuild.

The 61-year-old continues to live in his house despite the cracks. “Even now, it is still scary,” Nakarmi said. “We are still feeling the tremors and they terrify us -- we run outside the house”.

The aftermath of the quake exposed deep cracks in Nepal’s disaster response system and the rebuilding efforts were initially hit by political infighting, bureaucracy and confusion. Yet over the last decade, significant progress have been made. According to official figures, nearly 90 per cent of the homes destroyed have been rebuilt, alongside thousands of schools, health institutions and public buildings.

Temples and cultural landmarks are also slowly rising again. A joint assessment of affected districts by Nepal’s National Society for Earthquake Technology, and the international Global Quake Model showed marked improvements for resilience in the face of another quake.

They estimated there had been a 44-per cent reduction in the number of buildings at risk of complete collapse, after Nepal’s rebuilding and retrofitting drive.

“Our initial years were focused on rebuilding. Now our focus should be in areas which were not affected in 2015 but are at risk of a quake,” Dinesh Prasad Bhatt chief of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), said. “We have to extend the reach of lessons learnt from the earthquake to all parts of the country.”

The disaster was a wake up call for a country that is situated on a dangerous geological faultline, where the Indian tectonic plate collides with the Eurasian plate to form the Himalayas.

According to the UN, Nepal ranks 11th in terms of earthquake risk. Experts question if the country is prepared for the next one.

In the decade since the quake, the country has taken important steps.

The NDRRMA disaster reduction and management authority was established, and building codes were updated to reflect seismic safety standards. — AFP

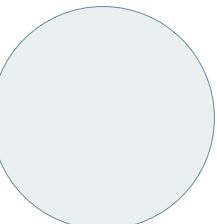
Food plan risks ‘world’s largest’ deforestation

AN INDONESIAN soldier gives a thumbs up as he crosses a rice field on a combine harvester in remote Papua, where a government food security mega-project has raised fears of mass deforestation. Keen to end its reliance on rice imports, Indonesia wants to plant vast tracts of the crop, along with sugar cane for biofuel, in the restive eastern region. But environmentalists warn it could become the world’s largest deforestation project, threatening endangered species and Jakarta’s climate commitments. And activists fear the scheme will fuel rights violations in a region long plagued by alleged military abuses as a separatist insurgency rumbles on. The project’s true scale is hard to ascertain; even government statements vary. At a minimum, however, it aims to plant several million hectares of rice and sugar cane across South Papua province’s Merauke. One million hectares is around the size of Lebanon.

Deforestation linked to the plan is already under way. By late last year, more than 11,000 hectares had been cleared — an area larger than Paris — according to Franky Samperante of environmental and Indigenous rights NGO Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat. That figure has only increased, according to analysis by campaign group Mighty Earth and conservation start-up The TreeMap. Their work shows areas cleared include primary and secondary natural dryland and swamp forest, as well as secondary mangrove forest, savanna and bush. “Usually, deforestation is a product of government not doing its job,” said Mighty Earth chief executive Glenn Hurowitz. “But in this case, it’s actually the state saying we want to clear some of our last remaining forests, carbon-rich peatlands, habitat for rare animals,” he said.



Officials on a combine harvester during the first rice harvest attended by government officials, military officers and villagers at Kaliki Village in Merauke, South Papua, as part of Indonesia’s Food Estate Programme launched to improve food self-sufficiency through large-scale farming. — AFP



MARCHIO
GORBIANO
AND
SARA HUSSEIN

Activists fear the scheme will fuel rights violations in a region long plagued by alleged military abuses as a separatist insurgency rumbles on

Indonesia’s government says the land targeted is degraded, already cultivated or in need of “optimisation”, dismissing some areas as little more than swamps. Environmentalists argue that misunderstands the local ecosystem. “In South Papua, the landscape and the ecosystem is lowland forest,” said Samperante. “There are often misconceptions or even belittling” of these ecosystems, he added. Mapping done by Mighty Earth shows the project threatens a broader ecosystem range — including peatlands and forests the group says should be protected by a government moratorium on clearing. “The tragedy in this project,” said Hurowitz, “is that Indonesia has made so much progress in breaking the link between agricultural expansion and deforestation.” “Unfortunately, this single project threatens to undermine all progress.” Indonesia has some of the world’s highest deforestation rates and Papua retains some of the largest remaining untouched tracts. Indonesian think-tank CELIOS

says cutting down so much forest could derail Jakarta’s plan to reach net-zero by 2050. For President Prabowo Subianto’s government, criticism of the project ignores Indonesia’s agricultural and economic realities. He has made the scheme a priority, visiting soon after taking office. In January, he said the country was on track to end rice imports by late 2025 and reiterated its energy independence needs. The agriculture ministry did not respond request for comment. In Papua, planting is in full swing. In the region’s Kaliki district, saw farmers supported by soldiers tending rice paddies in recently-cleared land. “This location used to be like the one on the right here. Non-productive and neglected land,” said Ahmad Rizal Ramdhani, a soldier serving as the agriculture ministry’s food resilience taskforce chief, at an event lauding the project. That characterisation is disputed by Mighty Earth’s satellite analysis, which found that at least two areas in the region cleared for rice overlap with government-designated peatland. — AFP

Parents: Be, do and say good... or fail



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

MOST OF US, it would appear, are just trying to get through life and its myriads of challenges. The problem is that the ‘rules,’ society’s boundaries and limitations, keep changing, so all that which we rely upon to justify our actions and choices, our social frameworks and expectations, are rarely consistent.

Education and learning for example, in which the learning of the alphabet and numbers; and the ability to read and write, add, subtract, multiply and divide, which for centuries have led to an ability to achieve shared levels of understanding and fostered trade, across generations, cultures, faiths and nationalities, have almost become redundant.

Certainly, when I first attended school, like every other pupil, I was confronted daily with several initial tasks, every day the same. These were aided by having the entire alphabet, in capital (big letters) and lower case (small letters) in banner form across the top of the blackboard at the front of the classroom, as Aa Bb Cc... and so on. Each letter also had a pictorial image pinned below it, as a reminder; hence, apple, ball, cat, duck and so on were linked inextricably to learning, reading and writing.

The entire class, immediately after attendance, would have to recite together the alphabet formally, by rote, as A, B, C... all the way through to Z. Woe betides those

who made mistakes, as Miss Finlayson’s wooden ruler would ‘caress’ one’s knuckles, or she would administer a humiliating ‘clip’ around the ear. Those were the days you see, of corporal punishment in schools, which, while distasteful and certainly humiliating, degrading, demeaning, humbling, or chastening, ensured accuracy next time. So, despite short-term discomfort... the hierarchy worked.

Ellen Key wrote that corporal punishment in schools was “humiliating and ineffective, as neither physical pain, nor shame, could achieve any other result than hardening against its administration.” Most of my generation, though, would strenuously disagree, as current thinking, where the learner is ‘encouraged’ towards self-discipline, is failing both socially and educationally. It allows too many of today’s parents the luxury of what can only be seen as lazy parenting, where their offspring’s social and educational nuances are frequently neglected as a matter of expediency and comfort, or should that be discomfort?

Having removed genuine discipline from education and with too few parents taking an active interest in setting standards of behaviour, compliance and respect at home, let alone supporting them in school, the respect and self-respect among the youth today are, to say the least, disappointing. In this, what occurs to me is that too many

Every new generation’s parenting comes at a cost and that has always been the indulgent joys of birth, love and affection, in any order

young people only want to do what they want to do; and will say and do anything, to not do what they don’t want, as honesty and respect, at home, in the classroom, in communities and societies, have become rare qualities.

Why? Because you, their parents, have allowed them too much leeway and the more chances you give them, the less respect they will have, both for you and consequently, anyone else. They choose to ignore the boundaries of behaviour and respect because you have let them and they see your forgiveness or weakness as permission. Make no mistake, they are children only because you see them as such. Too many of our youthful generation are grossly entitled anarchists and you, as parents, are too easy on them and don’t care enough!

Facing those realities is a rude awakening you probably don’t want. You can’t be that indolent parent that still has whatever freedoms you had as a young adult and still have them as a parent; that’s not at all what it is. It is selfish and myopic.

Every new generation’s parenting comes at a cost and that has always been the indulgent joys of birth, love and affection, in any order. The price, that unwritten and too often unsaid cost, is that you give up much of your indulgence because you wanted children, so welcome to parenthood, with all its purity... and its flaws.

WAVE OF MOMENTUM FOR HIGH SEAS TREATY

AMELIE BOTTOLLIER-DEPOIS

A *treaty to protect the high seas will not come to life by the time the UN Oceans Conference opens in June, but persistence by member states has nudged the landmark pact towards enactment. Adopted in June 2023 after years of exhausting negotiations, the pact aims to protect marine habitats vital to humanity but threatened by pollution in vast waters beyond any national jurisdiction.*

It now has 113 signatories, but just 21 have ratified it. After the past two weeks of United Nations meetings in New York — with the conspicuous absence of the US — negotiators came “one step closer to shaping the institutional backbone” of the agreement, said Nichola Clark of the Pew Charitable Trusts after the first preparatory commission for the treaty’s entry into force.

However, as the treaty can only take effect 120 days after the 60th ratification, there is no chance of its enactment happening before the UN Oceans Conference gathers in Nice, France on June 9-13.

Experts now hope the 60-ratification threshold can be reached by June so the treaty can still take effect this year. The Nice summit will feature dozens of heads of state and will be preceded by a conference bringing together 2,000 scientists from around 100 countries. A special ceremony in Nice on June 9 will serve as “a unique opportunity to reaffirm our collective political commitment” to the treaty’s implementation, French delegation head Sandrine Barbier said.

In a sign of growing enthusiasm, the opening preparatory commission moved more quickly than expected through discussions on multiple issues, including formulation of a system to exchange information between the parties.

There was “a lot of love in the room” for the treaty during the preparatory meetings, High Seas Alliance director Rebecca Hubbard said, describing the text as “one of our best opportunities to deliver action to protect the ocean.”

And beyond the technical elements, said Pew’s Clark, “there’s been some exciting progress and movement” on the issue of marine protected areas that are emblematic of the treaty.

Overall enthusiasm was dampened however by the absence of the United States — which had signed on to the treaty under Joe Biden’s administration but did not ratify it — and a shock announcement by Donald Trump on a major, controversial issue for the oceans: deep-sea mining.

On Thursday, the US president opened the door to commercial extraction of rare earth minerals from the ocean floor, including in international waters, bypassing the jurisdiction of the International Seabed Authority, of which Washington is not a member.

Trump’s executive order “is an insult to multilateralism and a slap in the face to all the countries and millions of people around the world who oppose this dangerous industry,” said Arlo Hemphill, project lead on Greenpeace USA’s campaign to stop deep-sea mining. — AFP

Climate action requires debt relief at G20 meeting

TODAY’S GLOBAL economic turmoil is not just about

trade. As G20 finance ministers gather in Washington during the annual spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has warned that growing economic uncertainty and financial market stress pose serious threats to developing countries.

The danger is particularly acute for highly indebted economies, which are now facing weaker growth prospects and reduced financial support from the US and other donor countries. In February, the IMF estimated that nearly half of the lowest-income countries were at risk of debt distress, at which point they may no longer be able to meet their debt obligations. That number is expected to rise as conditions continue to deteriorate.

Compounding the crisis, the world’s poorest countries — especially small island developing states — are highly vulnerable to climate change and biodiversity loss. Extreme weather events like hurricanes, droughts and floods can wipe out critical infrastructure and cripple agricultural production in an instant, while slower-onset changes like rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns require continuous and costly adaptation measures.

The debt and climate crises are closely intertwined. As more public funds are diverted towards disaster relief and recovery, fewer resources are available for climate adaptation, nature conservation and long-term investment. This, in turn, increases vulnerability, weakens growth prospects and drives up borrowing costs, shrinking fiscal space even further. The result is a self-reinforcing, vicious circle.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. Over the past year, we have co-chaired the Expert Review on Debt, Nature and Climate — an initiative launched by the governments of Colombia, Kenya,



VERA SONGWE

The writer is a former under-secretary-general at the UN



MORITZ KRAEMER

The writer is a former global chief ratings officer at S&P Global

France and Germany. In our final report, ‘Healthy Debt on a Healthy Planet,’ we outline several steps that emerging and developing economies can take to break free from the debt-climate trap and move towards a virtuous cycle of low-carbon, climate-resilient and nature-positive growth.

First, climate and nature considerations must be integrated into macroeconomic and fiscal analyses. This is especially critical in the debt sustainability frameworks used by the IMF and World Bank to assess developing countries’ fiscal health. Although both institutions have made some progress in recent years, much more needs to be done to ensure that these frameworks fully account for climate-related risks.

Equally important, such assessments must recognise not only the risks posed by climate change but also the economic benefits of investing in resilience. Their value — especially their potential to fuel medium-term growth and reduce a country’s financial risks — must be properly reflected in economic and financial models to encourage governments to act.

Second, many developing countries need assistance in reducing their debt burdens. Some are already in debt distress, while others suffer from liquidity

problems. Our report proposes new mechanisms for restructuring and refinancing debt in return for investments in climate adaptation and conservation projects that promote sustainable growth.

Third, proven approaches to addressing debt, nature and climate risks must be scaled up. These include contingency clauses in debt contracts that suspend repayments during natural disasters and various forms of sustainability-linked finance. While debt-for-climate and debt-for-nature swaps are not yet scalable due to a lack of standardisation, they have already delivered vital funding for environmental initiatives, demonstrating their value and warranting greater support.

More broadly, MDBs must significantly boost lending to support low-carbon, climate-resilient and nature-positive growth. While discussions on much-needed recapitalisation are ongoing, optimising MDB balance sheets remains the most effective way to stretch scarce public resources and accelerate sustainable development.

Lastly, our report calls for the development of new financing instruments aimed at mobilising private capital for climate mitigation and adaptation. For example, we propose establishing a Finance Facility against Climate Change (F2C2) — a special-purpose vehicle designed to issue green bonds backed by future donor commitments. The proceeds would be directed primarily towards climate-mitigation investments in developing countries.

These are all practical, actionable proposals. When combined with technical assistance and policy support, they could significantly improve the growth prospects of developing countries grappling with debt and climate risks. Making debt management both fiscally and environmentally sustainable is not only feasible but also essential to safeguarding global growth, which is in the interest of all countries — not just the poorest.

©Project Syndicate

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



The match between Seeb and Nizwa

JUNIOR BASKETBALL LEAGUE FINALS WITNESSES CRUCIAL WINS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 26

The Second round of the 2024-2025 Junior Basketball League Finals witnessed Seeb Club defeating Nizwa Club 79-71, while Al Amerat Club prevailed over Salalah Club 66-43. Both matches were held at the secondary hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. With these results, Seeb now tops the standings with 6 points, followed by Al Amerat with 5 points and Nizwa with 4 points.

The first match showcased varying levels between the two teams, as Seeb managed to secure a deserved victory over Nizwa 79-71 without facing major difficulties, benefiting from their early dominance in the first two quarters.

Seeb entered the match strongly, imposing their superiority in the first quarter by scoring 26 points against just 12 for Nizwa, relying on quick spread and organised attacks. Their dominance continued in the second quarter, adding 22 points compared to Nizwa's 18, ending the first half with a comfortable 48-30 lead for Seeb.

At the start of the third quarter, Nizwa mounted a successful offensive surge, managing to narrow the gap by scoring 19 points while limiting Seeb to just 9, bringing the score to 57-49 at the end of the third quarter. In the final quarter, both teams exchanged points evenly, with each scoring 22 points, allowing Seeb to maintain their lead until the final whistle and win the match 79-71.

Key scorers for Seeb were Azd al Bahlani, Jaid al Kindi, Saif al Yahyai and Ammar al Khawas, who played pivotal roles in maintaining their team's advantage throughout the game. Nizwa's standout players included Adam al Hinai, Abdulsamad al Subhi and Elias al Obaidani, who continuously fought to close the gap and stage a comeback.

The match was officiated by a referee team consisting of Mazin al Hilali (First Referee), Taha al Amri (Second Referee) and Al Mahdi al Alawi (Third Referee), supported at the scorer's table by Ghalib al Hasani, Saeed al Ghamari and Musa al Siyabi, who all managed the game with precision and discipline.

AL AMERAT OVERCOME SALALAH

Al Amerat asserted their dominance from the start, scoring 15 points to Salalah's 5 in the first quarter. They continued to widen the gap in the second quarter by adding 24 points against Salalah's 8, ending the first half with a commanding 39-13 lead. In the third quarter, Al Amerat further strengthened their advantage by scoring 18 points to Salalah's 13, keeping a comfortable lead at 57-26. Although Salalah managed to narrow the margin slightly by scoring 17 points against Al Amerat's 9 in the final quarter, the match concluded with Al Amerat securing a 66-43 victory. Top performers for Al Amerat included Mazin al Owaisi, Tervin Player and Muhannad al Battashi, while Mishaal Kafkaf and Mohab al Balushi stood out for Salalah.

The match was officiated by Majid al Akhzami (First Referee), Ali al Salmani (Second Referee) and Thabit al Hinai (Third Referee), with support at the scorer's table from Ghalib al Hasani, Saeed al Ghamari and Mahmood al Ajmi.

Oman to battle Chinese Taipei in AHF Cup final

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 26

THE OMAN national hockey team continued writing chapters of brilliance after securing a spot in the final of the 2025 Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) Cup, handing Bangladesh their first loss in a dramatic semifinal match that ended 5-4. The thrilling encounter took place at the hockey stadium in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta.

The “Omani Red Warriors” are now set to face Chinese Taipei in the final on Sunday evening. Oman started the match with clear dominance, applying early pressure on Bangladesh's defence. Adnan al Hassani came close to scoring the opening goal. In response, Bangladesh attempted to get back into the game with a few timid efforts that posed no real threat to the outstanding Omani goalkeeper, Ibrahim al Farsi. In the 8th minute, Aliyas al Noufli succeeded in opening the scoring with a precise shot after a brilliant team move in midfield.

Oman maintained control of the game while Bangladesh tried to exploit counter-attacks. From a penalty corner in the 13th minute, Shohanur Sobuj equalised with a powerful low shot. Before the end of the first half, Ammar al Shuaibi almost restored Oman's lead from a dangerous penalty corner, but Bangladesh's defence managed to block it skillfully. The first half ended with a 1-1 draw.

At the beginning of the second half, Oman intensified their pressure and earned a penalty corner but failed to capitalise. Bangladesh responded with a swift counterattack, where Ashraful Islam scored their second goal in the 24th minute. Despite falling behind, Oman didn't back down. They kept pressing and soon equalised through Rashad al Fazari, who converted a penalty corner in the 27th minute.

Oman continued to dominate and in the closing moments of the second quarter, Fahad al Lawati capitalised on a defensive blunder to score the third goal, ending the quarter with Oman leading 3-2.

At the start of the third quarter, Aliyas al Noufli doubled the lead with a fourth



Oman and Bangladesh players in action

goal, following a brilliant assist from Khalid al Shuaibi. Bangladesh temporarily improved their performance, with Obidul Joy narrowing the gap with a stunning goal in the 38th minute. However, Rashad al Fazari quickly restored Oman's two-goal cushion by scoring a beautiful fifth goal in the 44th minute.

The fourth quarter was filled with excitement. Fahad al Lawati had a goal disallowed for offside after a VAR review. Oman's defence withstood Bangladesh's heavy pressure, but Bangladesh was awarded a penalty stroke after another VAR review, which Shohanur Sobuj successfully converted in the 51st minute.

Despite Bangladesh's relentless attempts to equalise, Oman's players remained resolute and defended skillfully to secure a hard-fought 5-4 victory, booking a place

in the grand final with high hopes of clinching the title.

Aliyas al Noufali Awarded the best player in the match, Khalid al Shuaibi said From the start, “our goal was to reach the final and compete for the title. Now, we are just one step away, and while the toughest challenge awaits, we trust in our skills and experience.” He praised the coaching staff for their technical and mental preparation, emphasising the team's strong focus and responsibility.

Al Shuaibi also expressed his gratitude for the tremendous support received from the Oman Hockey Association, stressing that the continuous care and encouragement from the officials gave the players a strong morale boost. “This has made us even more determined to give our absolute best on the field,” he said.

Al Salam, Seeb reach 1st Division OVL final

AHMED AL KAABI
SUHAR, APRIL 26

Al Salam and Seeb have qualified for the final match of the 2024/2025 First Division Oman Volleyball League (OVL), which will be held on Monday, May 5, at the Sohar Sports Complex.

Al Salam secured their place in the final after defeating Majees by three sets to one in the match played at the Sohar Sports Complex.

The match witnessed standout performances from Mohammed al Maamari, Khalid al Muqbali, Adam al Jaradi, Graciano and Majid al Shibli for Al Salam, while Majees' notable players included Pakistani player Imal, Hilal al Muqbali and Christian.

Majees started strongly, relying on powerful serves and solid defensive organisation, which allowed them to take an early lead and maintain it, winning the first set 25-20 despite late attempts by Al Salam to close the gap.

In the second set, Al Salam



Al Salam and Majees players in action

entered more focused and imposed their rhythm thanks to Graciano's attacking moves and Majid al Shibli's powerful serves. The set was closely contested until midway, after which Al Salam pulled ahead to win 25-22 by capitalising on critical points.

During the third set, Al

Salam continued to exploit Majees' disorganisation, asserting dominance through a solid block and quick counter-attacks, winning the set 25-21 despite Majees' efforts to recover.

Al Salam maintained full control from the start of the fourth set, taking advantage of Majees' serving and receiving errors, to comfortably win the set 25-18 and the match by three sets to one.

SEEB EDGE AL BASHAYER

On the other side, Seeb booked their spot in the final after an exciting win over Al Bashayer by three sets to two, in a fiercely contested match held at the Nizwa Sports Complex.

Key performers for Al Bashayer included the professional player Islam, along with Mazin al Hashmi and Haitham al Shaqsi, while Seeb's stars were the Russian professional Bogdan, along with Saud al Maamari and Artem.

The first set saw a balanced start between the two sides

with point exchanges, but Al Bashayer managed to edge ahead, relying on strong serves and concentrated attacks by Islam and Saman, to win 25-23 despite late resistance from Seeb.

Seeb responded strongly in the second set, implementing a more vibrant playing style with diversified attacks and solid defensive coordination, dominating the set to win 25-19. Their momentum continued into the third set, with technical superiority evident as Bogdan and Artem excelled in powerful spikes and solid blocks, enabling Seeb to win the set comfortably 25-17.

Al Bashayer showed great fighting spirit in the fourth set, capitalising on Seeb's service and reception errors and won 25-22 after a thrilling end to the set. The two teams exchanged leads up to the midpoint of the decisive fifth set, but Seeb's players, drawing on their experience in critical moments, clinched the win 15-13, thus advancing to the final.

SHORTTAKES



Dr Abdulrahim bin Musallam al Droushi

DR AL DROUSHI
ELECTED VICE
CHAIRMAN OF ABF

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 26

Oman’s Dr Abdulrahim bin Musallam al Droushi, the Chairman of Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC), elected as Vice Chairman of Arab Badminton Federation (ABF) for the 2025–2028 period while Mai Obaid al Rasheed from Saudi Arabia was elected as Chairman of the Arabian Badminton Federation (ABF) after a competitive competition against Iraq’s candidate Faan Shawqi. Despite its recent formation in July 2023, ORSC had managed to organise several sports activities and events as they had hosted a number of international and regional events including West Asian junior badminton tournament which organised in Muscat in last October.

Beside that, ORSC achieved notable accomplishments in elite competitions beside the development of technical and administrative candidates. Commenting on his election as Vice Chairman of the Arab Badminton Federation, Dr Abdulrahim said: “It is a great honour to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the general assembly members for their trust and recognition by electing me to the post of Vice Chairman. I hope to meet their needs and contribute to enhancing the positive momentum of the Federation in the coming phase. The Arab Badminton Federation plays a significant role in developing badminton players and bringing them together in a sporting, cultural and social environment that also strengthens our unity and Arab identity. My candidacy for this position stemmed from a strong belief in our role in Oman in making a significant contribution to the Arab movement in badminton. Oman, through the Committee, has over the past two years organised regional championships and hosted leaders’ meetings which are clear evidence of our commitment.” he concluded.

The general Assembly of the Arabian meeting took place recently in China as sideline meeting of the Badminton World Federation (BWF) and Badminton Asia recently in Xiamen, China. The Arabian meeting featured participation of 18 members from 21 countries. Oman’s representative took part in all the Arabian, Asian and World Badminton meetings during April 23 to 27 in Xiamen, China.

The first meeting was for Badminton Asia and during this meeting several issues were discussed and newly introduced policies as well as approved sponsorship and marketing companies for the upcoming events and activities. This was followed by the Badminton World Federation (BWF) Forum which addressed ways to develop badminton locally and ensure the sustainability of federation driven activities. In the forthcoming day, the Arab Badminton Federation’s General Assembly meeting took place and new Executive Committee elections took place. On the concluding day, the General Assembly meeting Badminton World Federation was held and it included elections for the international body. All the meeting occurred in Xiamen city which was hosting two of the most prestigious international badminton tournaments — the Thomas Cup and the Uber Cup.

On the sidelines of the meetings, Dr Abdulrahim al Droushi discussed partnership and development opportunities with various international and regional federations as well as national federations such as the Malaysian Badminton Federation, the Qatar Racket Sports Federation, the Cyprus Badminton Federation and the Spanish Badminton Federation. He also held a special meeting with the Development and Competitions Committees of Asia Badminton to discuss new committee directions and its activity calendar for the upcoming period.



Mamelodi Sundowns’ Khuliso Mudau celebrates after the match. — Reuters

Sundowns to meet
Pyramids in CAF
Champions League final

AL AHLY defender Yasser Ibrahim conceded a 90th-minute own goal to give Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa a place in the CAF Champions League final, where they will face another Egyptian club, Pyramids.

Al Ahly and Sundowns drew 1-1 before a capacity 73,000 Cairo crowd and, after a 0-0 semi-final first leg, Sundowns qualified on the away-goal rule and will host the first leg of the final on May 24.

Democratic Republic of Congo-born Fiston Mayele was the hero as Pyramids came from behind twice to beat Orlando Pirates of South Africa 3-2 in the return match and on aggregate. In stark contrast to the earlier match, only a few thousand spectators watched Pyramids qualify in only their second Champions League appearance as they lack the huge fan base of Al Ahly.

Title-holders Al Ahly, seeking a historic third consecutive title in the premier African club competition, led from the 24th minute of the second leg through a clinical

Taher Mohamed finish. Sundowns were dispossessed in midfield and Emam Ashour sent unmarked Mohamed through with a superb cross-field pass.

Mohamed, whose previous Champions League goal this season came last September, took the ball to the edge of the area, then beat goalkeeper Ronwen Williams at his near post with a fierce shot.

If record 12-time African champions Al Ahly erred it was believing that the goal would suffice to take them to a seventh final in eight seasons.

They seldom threatened to increase their second-leg lead while Khuliso Mudau came close to levelling after half-time with a glancing header off a corner.

With the match about to enter added time at the Cairo International Stadium, disaster struck for Al Ahly and their supporters, virtually all of whom wore red replica shirts.

The ball was crossed into the Al Ahly goalmouth, where a desperate scramble developed that ended with the ball striking

Ibrahim and landing in the net.

Al Ahly were stunned and the crowd silenced. A match they were convinced had been won had slipped from their grasp with no further goals during 10 minutes of added time. Ibrahim had been involved in an earlier second half drama as he appeared to foul Lucas Ribeiro in the area, but the Mauritanian referee disagreed after checking the incident on a VAR monitor.

Meanwhile, Pirates’ failure to hold on to a lead cost them dearly at the June 30 Stadium as goals by Relebohile Mofokeng and Mohau Nkota gave them advantages that lasted just four minutes.

Mayele made it 1-1 in first half added time and substitute Ramadan Sobhi made an instant impact to bring the clubs level again on 57 minutes.

The decisive goal for Pyramids came after 84 minutes when a Sodiq Ougola header after a corner was saved by Sipho Chaine and Mayele reacted quickest to slam the rebound into the net. — AFP

Patel, Mendis help Sunrisers beat Chennai



Sunrisers Hyderabad’s Harshal Patel celebrates with Pat Cummins after taking the wicket of Chennai Super Kings’ Noor Ahmad. — Reuters

CHENNAI: Fast bowler Harshal Patel grabbed four wickets and Kamindu Mendis showed his all-round skill as Sunrisers Hyderabad upstaged Chennai Super Kings by five wickets in Chennai on Friday. Patel grabbed 4-28 and was ably assisted by skipper Pat Cummins and Jaydev Unadkat — both finishing with identical figures of 2-21 — to dismiss the home team for a below-par 154 in 19.5 overs.

South African youngster Dewald Brevis was the top scorer for the Kings with a blistering 25-ball 42, cracking four sixes and a boundary on his debut for the franchise. Skipper M S Dhoni failed to make his 400th T20 a memorable occasion, managing

just six runs and coming out on the losing side. Sunrisers achieved the target in 18.4 overs for the loss of five wickets with Ishan Kishan leading the way with a solid 34-ball 44 with five boundaries and a six.

Mendis struck an unbeaten 32 off 22 balls, adding 49 in an unbroken sixth wicket stand with Nitish Kumar Reddy who finished with a 13-ball 19 not out. The victory lifted Sunrisers to eighth on the 10-team table topped by Gujarat Titans with 12 points in eight matches while five-time champions Kings are at the bottom with four points in nine.

Patel, declared man-of-the-match, attributed discipline as the key for his fine bowling.

“I figured out pretty early that hitting it on a good length around the stumps was important because it was hard to hit with the horizontal bat,” said Patel.

Dhoni blamed losing a cluster of wickets for the poor batting show. “I think we kept losing wickets and another thing is in the first innings the wicket was slightly better,” said Dhoni. Earlier, Chennai Super Kings were rocked by Sunrisers’s pacer Patel who ripped through the middle and lower-order batting. The home team started on a wrong note when opener Shaik Rasheed was caught in the slip off the very first delivery of the match by fast bowler Mohammad Shami. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES

BADOSA PULLS OUT OF MADRID OPEN WITH INJURY



Paula Badosa

MADRID: Spanish world number nine Paula Badosa announced on Friday her withdrawal from the Madrid Open due to a persistent lower back injury. “I wanted to let you know that unfortunately I won’t be able to play Mutua Madrid Open,” the former world number two announced on social media.

“I’ve tried to do everything possible until the last moment because you know how excited I am to play at home, but it’s being a complicated injury. “I hope to be 100 per cent soon,” Badosa added.

The 27-year-old has not taken to the court since pulling out at the round-of-16 stage of the Miami Open in March with a back problem.

Badosa was scheduled to make her return on Friday in the second round at Madrid, but compatriot Cristina Bucsa now takes her spot in the main draw to face Veronika Kudermetova of Russia.

Prior to the start of the tournament, Badosa did hint at her possible withdrawal, telling the WTA’s site: “It’s been a tough injury, honestly, this one because it was totally different from the last one. It was an injury that was touching the nerves, so I was constantly having pain.

“Every day I’m feeling a bit better. Hopefully I will be my 100 per cent soon. Not right now, but soon.” Badosa has regularly struggled with injury throughout her career, with a chronic lower back problem leading her to consider retirement last year.

Her withdrawal from Madrid follows that of fellow Spaniard Carlos Alcaraz, who pulled out on Thursday with a thigh issue suffered during his Barcelona Open final defeat last weekend. — AFP



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (23) drives to the basket past Minnesota Timberwolves guard Mike Conley (10) in the first half during game three at Target Center. — Reuters

T’Wolves top Lakers, Magic & Bucks grab wins

THE MINNESOTA Timberwolves turned it up late to beat the Los Angeles Lakers 116-104 on Friday, withstanding a vintage performance from LeBron James to take a 2-1 lead in their NBA Western Conference first-round playoff series.

Jaden McDaniels scored a career playoff-high of 30 points and Anthony Edwards added 29 for the Timberwolves, who closed the game on a 13-1 scoring run.

With Slovenian star Luka Doncic slowed by illness, James led the Lakers with 38 points — surpassing the playoff record for a player past his 40th birthday, the 32 points scored by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in the NBA Finals in 1987. The teams had split the first two games of the best-of-seven series in Los Angeles. The Timberwolves host game four on Sunday looking to take a 3-1 lead.

James added 10 rebounds, four assists, two steals and two blocked shots, drilling a trio of three-pointers in the fourth quarter that helped the Lakers keep it close.

They tied it at 103-103 with 4:37 remaining on a basket by Doncic, who was battling a stomach ailment that Lakers coach JJ Redick said had him throwing up throughout the day.

Edwards responded with a three-pointer and Naz Reid followed with another. After driving for a layup Edwards blocked Rui Hachimura at the other end and after McDaniels pushed the lead to 116-104 with 39 seconds left Redick pulled his starters.

MAGIC, BUCKS CLAW BACK

In the Eastern Conference, the Orlando Magic and Milwaukee Bucks grabbed their first victories, the Magic holding off the defending champion Boston Celtics 95-93 and the Bucks beating the Indiana Pacers 117-101.

The Celtics and Pacers had both won the first two games of their series at home, so the victories to cut their series deficits to 2-1 were crucial for the Magic and Bucks — both teams aware that no NBA team has rallied from 3-0 down to win a playoff series.

Germany’s Franz Wagner scored 32 points and handed out eight assists and Paolo Banchero added 29 points with six rebounds for the Magic in Orlando — where the Celtics erased a 12-point fourth quarter deficit but were thwarted in the frantic final minutes.

Six-time All-Star Jayson Tatum scored 36 points for the Celtics, showing no sign of the wrist injury that caused him to miss game two.

Boston’s Derrick White drove for a finger roll layup to tie it at 91-91 with 2:31 remaining.

But Wagner made back-to-back baskets to put Orlando back in front. Boston pulled

within two on White’s dunk with 28.1 seconds left but Orlando held on.

“High intensity,” Banchero said of the final few possessions. “I love moments like these.”

With Banchero leading the way, the Magic erased an early eight-point deficit to lead 31-27 after the opening period.

But Boston used a 14-0 scoring run in the second quarter to regain the lead, Tatum delivering eight straight points in the spurt and Jaylen Brown capping the first half with a three-pointer that pushed Boston’s lead to 59-49 at the break. In Milwaukee, two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo and Gary Trent Jr. scored 37 points apiece for the Bucks.

Trent drilled nine three-pointers on 12 attempts — equalling the Bucks record for treys in a playoff game set by Ray Allen.

“It’s a testament to my hard work, a testament to my team-mates finding me,” Trent said. “It’s a blessing — we needed this win to continue to keep going.”

Trent’s performance helped the Bucks rally from a 10-point halftime deficit. They out-scored the Pacers 39-18 in the third quarter to take control, leading by as many as 20 in the fourth. Pascal Siakam led the Pacers with 28 points while Tyrese Haliburton had 14 points and 10 assists. Both the Bucks and Magic will try to level their series at home on Sunday. — AFP

Al Hilal hit 7 past Gwangju to reach Asian semifinals

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA: Four-time winners Al Hilal booked their place in the AFC Champions League Elite semifinals on Friday night with a thumping 7-0 win against South Korea’s Gwangju in Jeddah.

The Saudi Arabian champions, who began the campaign with Brazil superstar Neymar in their ranks before his February return to Santos, romped to victory at King Abdullah Sports City, with 2022 Asian Footballer of the Year Salem al Dawsari the standout. The quarterfinal encounter kicked off the inaugural AFC Champions League Elite Finals, where the continent’s top eight teams - four from West Asia, four from the East - compete in a centralised location for the trophy.

Al Hilal are one of three Saudi

sides in the last eight, alongside Cristiano Ronaldo’s Al Nassr and Al Ahli, the home team who boast the likes of Riyadh Mahrez and Ivan Toney.

Al Hilal underlined their credentials by cruising into the last four. They needed all of six minutes to take the lead, when former Lazio midfielder Sergej Milinkovic-Savic met AlDawsari’s corner to power home a header.

Al Hilal doubled their advantage on 25 minutes, Brazilian winger Malcom cutting the ball back for compatriot Marcos Leonardo. The summer signing from Benfica swept his finish past Kim Kyeong-Min in the Gwangju goal.

Eight minutes later, Leonardo sent Al Dawsari through on goal, leaving the Saudi Arabia captain to race clear



Al Hilal’s player Marcos Leonardo celebrates with his team-mates scoring the 2nd goal.

and slide a low shot into the net.

Al Dawsari moved to nine goals, making him the joint-top scorer in this season’s tournament, alongside Gwangju’s Albanian winger Jasir Asani.

The only drawback for Al Hilal was that Joao Cancelo, a treble-winner with Manchester City, was forced to leave the pitch shortly before half-time with what appeared to be a hamstring injury.

Al Hilal maintained their dominance after the break, with Aleksander Mitrovic adding a fourth in the 55th minute.

The ex-Newcastle United and Fulham striker, who has missed a large portion of this season through injury, met fellow Serbian international Milinkovic-Savic

cross to side-foot home. With 12 minutes remaining, Malcom exchanged passes with Mitrovic to slot past Kim for 5-0. Substitute Nasser al Dawsari made it six with a deflected effort from the edge of the penalty area.

Abdullah al Hamdan then rifled home from range following Mitrovic’s set-up. In next Tuesday’s semifinal, Al Hilal will meet either fellow Saudi club Al Ahli or Thailand’s Buriram United.

Those teams face off on Saturday, also at King Abdullah Sports City. Meanwhile, Ronaldo resumes his quest for continental glory on Saturday, when Al Nassr take on last year’s runners-up Yokohama F-Marinos at Prince Abdullah Al Faisal Sports City. — AFP

BUSINESS

Terms And Condition Applies



Enjoy priority for transactions

With Al Rifaa Privilege Account

Visit your nearest branch today



الاعمال المصرفية الحصرية
PRIVILEGE BANKING



2479 1111



www.bankdhofar.com



bankdhofar

Scan to learn more





Al Rifaa

KEY STRATEGY



Officials at the MoU signing on Thursday.

MOU SIGNED FOR OMAN’S FIRST DESALINATION MEMBRANE PLANT

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 26

MUSCAT Gases Company, a leading player in the gas and energy sector in the Sultanate of Oman, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IonClear, a US-based technology company headquartered in Silicon Valley, California.

Signed under the auspices of Eng Dawood bin Salim al Hadabi, CEO of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), the MoU aims to establish the first-of-its-kind facility in the Sultanate of Oman in Al Rusayl Industrial City for manufacturing advanced water treatment and desalination membranes.

The plant, covering an area of 3,000 sqm, represents a strategic move that supports the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to water security and environmental sustainability.

The partnership with IonClear, which is specialised in the production of Reverse Osmosis (RO) and Nanofiltration (NF) membranes, will introduce innovative technologies used in seawater and brackish water desalination.

These membranes are also employed in key sectors such as power plants, chemical industries, and industrial water treatment, thereby enhancing the Sultanate of Oman’s capabilities in this key sector.

The MoU also aims to bring advanced technology to the Omani market and localise strategic industries that contribute to increasing the In-Country Value, hence aligning with Oman Vision 2040 and generating quality employment opportunities for the Omani youth, while positioning the Sultanate as an ideal investment hub in the field of environmental manufacturing.

This project also comes along the lines of the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to achieve carbon neutrality, by supporting clean energy and water industries and investing in advanced environmental solutions.

Established in 1983, Muscat Gases Company stands as a model of Omani industrial growth, having expanded its core activities to include clean energy projects such as LPG generators, gas recovery technologies, composite gas cylinders, self-service systems, and its new venture into water and environmental treatment industries.

3rd operator has positively impacted telecom market

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 26

IN RESPONSE to a question from the *Observer* regarding the declining net profits of telecom companies in Oman, Eng Omar bin Hamdan al Islamili, Chairman of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), emphasized that the entry of a third operator may have impacted existing providers. However, he noted that each company’s financial performance should be assessed individually, given that most are publicly listed and their reports are available to the public.

“What matters most to us is ensuring healthy market competition,” he stated.

“The introduction of the third operator has had a positive effect in this regard. Still, we also care deeply about sustainability, which hinges on multiple factors—not just the number of operators. Operational efficiency is equally vital.”

The TRA chief also pointed to the importance of consumer pricing.

“At the start of your question, you referenced the issue of profit margins, which is indeed a critical subject. It requires a careful balancing act—maintaining margins while also ensuring affordability.”

When asked if there was a plan to address these concerns, he confirmed: “Yes, we recognize that markets tend to self-correct



ENG OMAR BIN
HAMDAN AL
ISMAILI
*Chairman – TRA
Oman*

over time. Yet as you rightly pointed out, sometimes consumers are unable to afford services.

This creates what I call the ‘hammer and anvil’ dilemma: we must strike a balance between offering affordable services and ensuring quality and continuity.”

The Authority, he added, is working closely with entities responsible for competition and pricing to ensure that tariffs remain near actual cost—or even lower in some cases.

“This is a crucial issue, and the TRA is monitoring it continuously.” He further stressed that telecom companies must play a constructive role in driving national economic growth.

“We hope they contribute to solving challenges not only within the telecom sector but across other economic sectors as well. For instance, the growth of tourism is directly linked to the availability of advanced and diverse telecom services.”

He urged telecom companies to diversify their revenue streams beyond traditional services. “This is central to our vision. Profit margins may be affected in the short term,

but competition can also serve to enhance those margins over time.”

Addressing the issue of investment, he reiterated the importance of companies committing a fixed percentage of their revenue to capital expenditure.

“Telecom companies are the real developers of the sector through infrastructure projects. The TRA regularly reviews financial reports and data from all telecom operators. A healthy reinvestment rate in this sector typically ranges between 15% and 20%.”

He noted that Oman has reached a reinvestment rate of 28%, reflecting the importance of current investment plans to upgrade network infrastructure and fulfill obligations around advanced technologies like 5G and broadband. Cooperation continues between telecom companies and the Authority, and at times with the government—such as the initiative launched three years ago that reduced royalty fees on fixed services from 10% to 7%.

“There were clear investment conditions for market players, though some missteps occurred among the three companies involved. Nevertheless, we believe—as you have also emphasized—that sustainability requires substantial infrastructure and service investments. This level of capital expenditure is essential to guarantee service quality and long-term continuity,” he concluded.

Oman, Russia forge stronger trade and tourism ties

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Russian Federation have launched a new era of economic cooperation, signing a series of agreements, memoranda of understanding, and protocols during the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said to Russia on April 21–22.

Key agreements included a protocol on economic and technical cooperation, an agreement on mutual visa exemption, a draft pact to establish a joint economic committee, and memoranda covering transport and transit, anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing, fisheries collaboration, and private sector investment promotion.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, highlighted the significance of building on the historical ties between Oman and Russia, in line with Oman Vision 2040.

“The visit reflects continuous efforts at both government and private sector levels. Oman and Russia enjoy deep, constructive relations, and we aim to enhance economic integration, strengthen supply chains, and explore new areas like digital transformation and the green economy,” he said.



The agreements will accelerate economic cooperation, encourage joint projects and strengthen Oman’s standing as a player in international trade.

Al Yousef emphasised Oman’s commitment to creating a secure and attractive investment climate, positioning the Sultanate as a reliable international partner.

In the private sector, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, praised the memorandum signed between the Chamber and Russia’s Roscongress Foundation.

“This is an important step in expanding partnerships, boosting trade relations, and opening new avenues

for investment between business communities in both countries,” he said.

He added that the agreement will accelerate economic cooperation, encourage joint projects, and strengthen Oman’s standing as a player in international trade.

Tourism was another major focus. Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said the mutual visa exemption agreement will stimulate tourism flows between the two

countries.

“The agreement allows Russian tourists to stay longer without visa hassles, aligning with the Ministry’s promotional efforts in Russia. With direct flights now operating year-round between Oman and Moscow, we expect a sharp increase in visitor numbers,” he noted.

In 2024 alone, over 44,000 Russian tourists visited Oman.

Meanwhile, in the fisheries sector, Dr. Masoud bin Sulaiman al Azri, Director General of Agricultural and Fisheries Marketing, welcomed the memorandum signed with Russia’s Federal Fisheries Agency.

“This partnership will enhance bilateral cooperation in marine resource development, foster joint investments in fishing and aquaculture, and drive scientific research collaboration,” he said.

Al Azri emphasized that cooperation with Russia, a global leader in fisheries, would help transfer expertise, boost food security, and improve the global competitiveness of Omani fish products. The visit and agreements mark the beginning of a broader, more dynamic partnership between Oman and Russia — one focused on mutual growth across multiple sectors. — ONA

BUSINESS

KEYCOMMODITY



Growth through mergers and acquisitions remains a cornerstone of OFM's strategy.

OMAN FLOUR MILLS STRENGTHENS FOOD SECURITY EFFORTS

MUSCAT: Oman Flour Mills Company (OFM) is advancing its initiatives to support food security in the Sultanate of Oman by promoting self-sufficiency in key commodities. Haitham bin Mohammed al Fannah, CEO of Oman Flour Mills, said the company continues to prioritise food security by expanding its storage and logistics capabilities. As part of this strategy, OFM has acquired a 50,000-square-metre plot of land adjacent to its facilities and reinforced its presence at Port Sultan Qaboos through grain silos and unloading operations. Al Fannah noted that the company's lease at the port has been extended for another 50 years, underscoring its long-term commitment to Oman's food security. Growth through mergers and acquisitions, he added, remains a cornerstone of OFM's strategy, with two acquisition opportunities currently under evaluation in line with the group's core businesses and five-year plan. The CEO highlighted that OFM achieved significant progress in 2024, both financially and operationally, by successfully delivering key projects. Audited financial statements for the year ending December 2024 showed strong results. Group revenues rose by 3.9 per cent to RO 128.8 million, while the cost of goods sold fell by 2.2 per cent, largely due to lower global commodity prices. This contributed to an improvement in the gross profit margin. The feed sector grew by 3.7 per cent, while the bakery and flour segment saw a slight decline. At the company level, Oman Flour Mills recorded a 6.5 per cent increase in revenues, reaching RO 109.35 million compared to RO 102.68 million in 2023. Total sales volume grew from 616,000 tonnes to 690,000 tonnes, and gross profit jumped by 68.8 per cent to RO 18.63 million. Stronger cost management and lower commodity prices helped reduce the cost of goods sold by 1 per cent, boosting the gross profit margin by 67 per cent. — ONA

Oman Air focuses on sustainability, efficiency

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 26

OMAN AIR is steadily building a roadmap toward a leaner, greener future as it balances environmental responsibilities with profit margins and intensifying global aviation standards. Speaking at a recent media briefing hosted by Oman Air and Oman Airports, Con Korfiatis, CEO of Oman Air, provided deep insight into how the national carrier is aligning sustainability ambitions with operational discipline and financial performance. In an exclusive interview with the *Observer*, Korfiatis emphasised the airline's granular approach to key performance indicators (KPIs), saying, "Our budgets are line-by-line build-ups—from revenue to every little cost item—and everything is accountable for. When your margin isn't that big, everything matters." This precision-led approach extends beyond profit and loss statements. On the sustainability front, Oman Air is keeping a close eye on evolving international requirements, particularly those from the European Union, where aviation emissions are under sharp scrutiny. "Europe is probably the most progressed in the world in terms of sustainability requirements.



One of Oman Air's most impactful moves was the rationalisation of its fleet — retaining only the most modern, fuel-efficient aircraft.

In this region, it's not as legislated yet, but we know we have to do more," Korfiatis noted. He revealed that one of Oman Air's most impactful moves was the rationalisation of its fleet—retaining only the most modern, fuel-efficient aircraft. "That's a big step, but it's just the beginning. We are building a fuller sustainability programme for 2025," he added. Pressed on how international carbon regulations and emissions trading schemes shape Oman Air's strategy, Korfiatis was candid: "It's not a case of choosing to factor them in or not—you just have to. It's the way



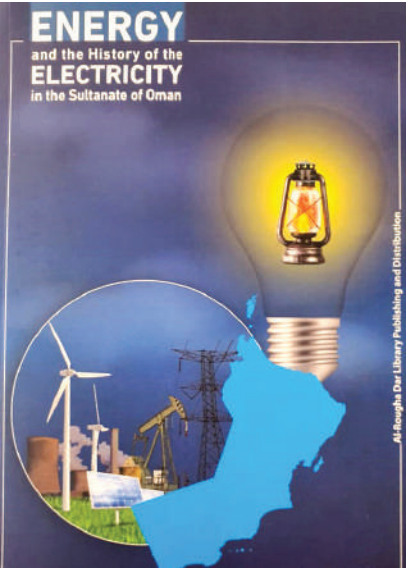
CON KORFIATIS
CEO of Oman Air

the world is going." He pointed out that current global rules are uniform and non-discriminatory, but hinted that any future asymmetries could potentially alter strategic decisions. One of the toughest hurdles, he admitted, is fuel—specifically the availability and scale of sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs). "We hear about oil-based sustainable fuels. We hear about hydrogen. But can the industry produce it in enough volumes to make it 100% of your uplift? That's still far off," said Korfiatis. He added that the solution likely lies in a combination of fuel technologies rather than a

single silver bullet. On the technological front, Oman Air is keeping its sights set firmly on artificial intelligence and digital transformation. "AI is the next biggest step since the internet," he said. "Think of its applications in maintenance, customer service, airport operations, staffing, and route planning—it's endless." With the aviation sector globally facing both environmental and economic headwinds, Oman Air's dual-track strategy aims to not only comply with emerging global regulations but also position itself as a future-forward airline ready to embrace innovation and sustainability. Oman Air's upcoming sustainability program for 2025 is expected to consolidate its initiatives into a unified strategy. This will likely include a stronger push into digitalisation, data-driven operational decisions, and continued investment in fleet efficiency. As Korfiatis put it: "We're the airline—we don't develop the technology, but as soon as it's there, we'll be on board. The industry needs multiple solutions, and we're ready to explore all viable paths." With global aviation increasingly judged by its carbon footprint and its adaptability to change, Oman Air's transparency and firm grip on both numbers and new technologies may well serve as a blueprint for regional carriers navigating similar turbulence.

NEW BOOK CHRONICLES HISTORY OF OMAN'S ELECTRICITY SECTOR

MUSCAT: An insightful new book exploring the history of the Sultanate of Oman's electricity sector — and the broader energy landscape — has been launched at the ongoing Muscat International Book Fair 2025, currently taking place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. Authored by Dr Ali Hamed Al Ghafri, a distinguished veteran of Oman's energy industry, the book offers a comprehensive and meticulously researched account of the sector's evolution. Dr Al Ghafri's career spans over three decades, during which he held senior positions in ministerial institutions, operational roles, and academia,



making him uniquely qualified to pen this landmark work. Believed to be the first literary work of its kind with a dedicated focus on Oman's electricity sector, the book provides industry professionals, researchers, and readers alike with unparalleled insight into the development of electrical energy in the Sultanate. It covers a wide range of topics, including the sources of energy, the means of energy used in Oman before the advent of electricity, the oil and gas industry's role, the introduction and growth of electrical energy, the evolution of electricity usage across the country, the organizational

development of the sector from 1970 to 2020, the status of the sector as of 2022, and the future outlook for the electricity sector. Dr Al Ghafri holds both a Master's Degree and a Doctorate in Electrical Engineering from the University of Strathclyde in the United Kingdom. Beginning his professional journey in 1986 as an Electrical Maintenance Engineer, he rose through the ranks to become Director General of Electricity in 2001, and later served as Advisor to the Minister of Energy and Minerals, focusing on Electricity and Renewable Energy, from 2018.

Sohar Islamic main sponsor of Haj and Umrah Exhibition 2025

MUSCAT: In a continued demonstration of its purpose-driven banking ethos, Sohar Islamic, the Islamic banking window of Sohar International, served as the Main Sponsor of the Haj and Umrah Exhibition, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). Organised by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, the three-day event brought together key stakeholders, including government entities, private sector representatives, and Haj and Umrah service providers, creating a dynamic platform for collaboration and dialogue. This initiative reflects the bank's steadfast dedication to supporting platforms that catalyze service innovation and foster community engagement while strengthening collaboration across the Haj and Umrah value chain. Speaking on the bank's initiative, Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief



This initiative reflects the bank's steadfast dedication to supporting platforms that catalyze service innovation and foster community engagement

Executive Officer of Sohar International, said, "In today's financial landscape, meaningful impact arises from a purposeful alignment with the evolving aspirations of the communities we serve.

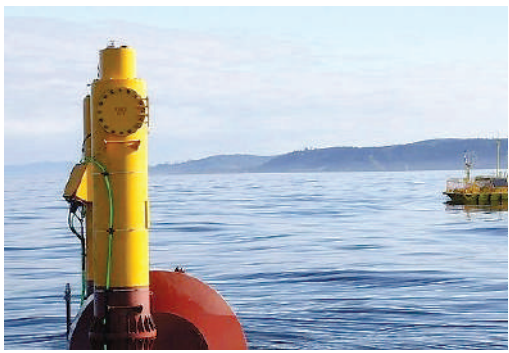
Supporting the Haj and Umrah Exhibition is not just an act of sponsorship but a strategic engagement that reflects our ongoing commitment to responsible growth, sector-wide collaboration, and sustainable value creation.

The platform serves as an important convergence point for stakeholders, enabling dialogue, fostering transparency, and accelerating innovation across the Hajj and Umrah ecosystem." As part of its active involvement in the exhibition, Sohar Islamic also showcased a robust portfolio of financial products and services designed to elevate the pilgrimage experience for travelers. Among the key offerings was Murabaha Financing, a Sharia-compliant solution that enables customers to secure the necessary funding for Haj-related expenses through a transparent mechanism. Sohar Islamic is extending bespoke financing solutions to Omani Hajj and Umrah operators, including the financing of buses and provision of working capital. These solutions are intended to empower service providers to secure travel and accommodation arrangements in advance, thereby

ensuring efficient and streamlined logistics for pilgrim groups. The Haj and Umrah Exhibition 2025 served as a dynamic platform to unite stakeholders, foster healthy competition, and drive innovation across the sector. Through its active participation, Sohar Islamic reaffirmed its role as a strategic financial partner—facilitating transparent service delivery, enabling informed decision-making, and contributing to the ongoing evolution of services within the ecosystem. The event also witnessed the signing of key cooperation agreements and featured a range of insightful programs spanning history, culture, and knowledge-sharing. Initiatives such as these underscore Sohar Islamic's commitment to supporting platforms that inspire progress, strengthen partnerships, and create lasting value for the wider community.

BUSINESS

BREAKTHROUGH



Wave energy converters (Credit: Oman LNG)

OMAN LNG TO FUND LANDMARK STUDY ON WAVE ENERGY POTENTIAL

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 26

OMAN LNG, the operator of the Sultanate of Oman’s triple-train liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant at Sur, is funding a key study that aims to assess the feasibility of harnessing wave energy as a source of renewable power along the country’s coast. Titled, ‘The Potential of Wave Energy in Sur: Resources Assessment and Techno-Economic Feasibility”, the study will be conducted by the Sustainable Energy Research Center (SERC) at Sultan Qaboos University, according to Nasser al Rizeiqi, Decarbonisation Adviser – Oman LNG. In a social media post over the weekend, Al Rizeiqi underlined the promising potential of wave energy, given especially the expansive length of Oman’s coastline abutting multiple seas and marine environments.

“Oman, with its extensive coastline along the Arabian Sea and the Sea of Oman, holds significant potential for harnessing wave energy. This renewable energy source offers a promising alternative to traditional fossil fuels, contributing to the global effort to mitigate GHG emissions,” he stated. Significantly, Oman LNG’s decision to fund the study comes in the wake of provisional findings by SERC underscoring the wave energy potential of Oman’s coastal waters.

Further investigations would be necessary to identify optimal hotspots for the deployment of Wave Energy Converters (WECs).

Initial studies have already pointed to sites in Barka, Qurayyat, Muscat, Qurum, Al-Bustan, and Al-Sifah as being ideal for WEC deployment based on their energy production intensity.

“The scope of this strategic study is designed to cover a larger area of the Sea of Oman with the goal to evaluate the techno-economic feasibility of wave energy,” Oman LNG’s Decarbonization Adviser noted.

“It aims to systematically assess the feasibility of wave energy al the coast of Oman by investigating different locations along the coast, particularly the Sur coastline. In particular, the objective is to conduct a detailed analysis of wave data to determine energy generation capabilities and ensure a consistent wave energy supply.”

Also participating in the study are Dr Saleh Al Saadi, Head of the Sustainable Energy Research Centre (SERC), and members of Oman LNG’s ICV and Technology Departments.

The initiative is an integral part of a broader effort by Oman LNG to reduce its carbon footprint in part by mitigating its carbon emissions while also exploring clean energy alternatives to fossil fuels.

Tatweer’s asset portfolio in Duqm tops RO 1.2 bn

OMAN DEVELOPMENT Company for the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Tatweer) announced that its asset portfolio has grown to approximately RO 1.2 billion by the end of 2024.

Tatweer, the executive and investment arm of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, manages a wide range of public assets and facilities across Duqm.

These include wastewater treatment plants, main and secondary road projects, public amenities, dams, drainage channels, parks, and administrative buildings.

The company also oversees the operation, maintenance, and sustainability of key infrastructure such as Duqm Port, Duqm Airport, the dry dock, the government wharf, among other projects.

Eng Abdullah bin Sulaiman al Wahaibi, CEO of Tatweer, said the company has played a crucial role in enhancing the investment environment at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) through the development of strategic projects and high-quality infrastructure over the past years.

He noted that Tatweer has successfully completed more than 46 projects over the past five years and internally managed an additional



Tatweer manages a wide range of public assets and facilities across Duqm.

seven projects, resulting in savings of over RO 12 million.

“This achievement reflects the company’s technical expertise, led by skilled Omani professionals, as well as its operational efficiency and adherence to governance standards,” he said.

Among Tatweer’s major undertakings is the development of road infrastructure in Duqm, with road projects alone valued at around RO 210.4 million. Last year, the company completed several phases of the dualisation of Southern National Road No. 32 (Sultan Said bin Taimur Road), improving traffic flow and supporting the growing investment activity in the zone.

Looking ahead, 2025 will see the completion of several key infrastructure projects, including the internal road

network, drainage systems, and sewage networks in the Say commercial district, as well as the second phase of the dualization of National Road No. 32 and the dualization of the road linking Duqm Airport to Ras Markaz.

Eng Al Wahaibi stressed Tatweer’s focus on enabling investment and maximizing economic returns. The company supports the business environment by forming strategic partnerships with companies and investment funds, targeting joint investments in enabling and economically sustainable ventures. Tatweer also assists project developers in selecting sites, registering companies, securing approvals and licenses, and accessing financing through local banks and funds.

Highlighting Tatweer’s

Al Dakhiliyah Governorate implements specific urban development projects

NIZWA: The Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah continues to implement a series of strategic urban development projects aimed at creating an integrated urban environment that meets community aspirations, ensures sustainability, and builds a prosperous future.

Among these projects are transforming the facades of the Governorate’s wilayats into attractive facades that reflect the natural beauty and needs of the community, establishing parks and public gardens, and providing essential services that enhance the quality of life in the governorate.

Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, emphasized the governorate’s commitment to enhancing the urban appearance and improving the environment for citizens and residents, noting that the governorate’s plans complement the priorities of Oman Vision 2040, which focuses on sustainable cities.

Al Hajri indicated the commencement of implementation of the Al Dakhiliyah Square (Al Dakhiliyah Boulevard) project, a comprehensive development project aimed at enhancing services and infrastructure.

Work is expected to be completed over a period of two years and includes 10 diverse investment sites and 50 usufruct contracts across various sectors, reflecting the drive to diversify the local economy and enhance commercial activity.



Among these projects are transforming the facades of the wilayats into attractive facades that reflect the natural beauty and needs of the community.



SHAIKH HILAL BIN SAID AL HAJRI
Governor of Al Dakhiliyah

Al Hajri explained that Al Dakhiliyah Governorate currently includes 35 parks and gardens spread across its nine wilayats, with a total area exceeding 1,353,807 square metres.

He emphasized that work is ongoing to develop the infrastructure of

these spaces. The Manah Public Park has been opened, the designs for Al Hamra Park have been completed, the Nizwa Entrance Development Project has been completed, and work is progressing on the Jabreen and Basya Entrance Development Projects in Bahla.

Al Hajri stated that the consultancy services for the Bidbid Entrance Development Project have reached 95 per cent, while the Jabal Al Akhdar dual carriageway and entrance development projects are currently in the design consultancy services phase.

Al Hajri added that the Governorate is committed to enhancing community well-being through the implementation of public parks and gardens projects, which are witnessing progress.

The Nizwa Public Park and Al Maamoura area projects in Bahla are 30 per cent complete, and 90 per cent of the development and rehabilitation work on the Al Hadeeth Park in Adam has been completed.

The Al Khatm Park Rehabilitation and Development Project in Manah has also reached more than 65 per cent completion, and the Al Aqil Park Rehabilitation Project in Izki has reached 75 per cent completion.

The Hasas Park Rehabilitation Project in Samayil has reached 4 per cent completion.

— ONA

IN RETALIATION

Tanzania lifts ban on agriculture imports



Tanzania has lifted a ban on imports of agricultural produce from Malawi and South Africa, days after imposing it in retaliation for similar measures imposed by the two southern African nations.

Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority’s director-general, Joseph Ndunguru, said that Tanzania was lifting the ban effective immediately to allow for “a diplomatic ministerial discussion.” — Reuters

BOOSTING PRICE

US pharma tariffs would raise drug costs



A 25% US tariff on pharmaceutical imports would increase US drug costs by nearly \$51 billion annually, boosting US prices by as much as 12.9% if passed on, a report commissioned by the industry’s US trade group shows.

The analysis found the US imported \$203 billion in pharmaceutical products in 2023, with 73% coming from Europe — primarily Ireland, Germany and Switzerland. — Reuters

KEY AREA

Xi calls for self sufficiency in AI



China’s President Xi Jinping pledged “self-reliance and self-strengthening” to develop AI in China, state media reported on Saturday, as the country vies with the US for supremacy in artificial intelligence, a key strategic area. Speaking at a Politburo meeting study session on Friday, Xi said China should leverage its “new whole national system” to push forward with the development of AI. — Reuters

OPINION

Oman sets stage for world’s next investment conversation



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The writer is the head of business and politics section at Oman Observer

AS THE sun rises over the Sea of Oman, leaders from across the globe are gathering under the lofty ceilings of the St. Regis Muscat for something more than a business forum. Today, the Sultanate of Oman begins an ambitious new chapter—not just as a host of capital, but as a curator of the world’s next big investment conversation.

The Advantage Oman Forum opens this morning with a promise: to rewire how we think about investment in an era of broken paradigms. And unlike the hundreds of forums that quietly faded into corporate memory, this one starts with a pulse. A purpose. A provocation. It’s not just about money. It’s about mindset.

OMAN IS NOT PITCHING. IT’S POSITIONING

For years, investment forums in emerging markets have followed a predictable playbook: project showcases, investor brochures, keynote promises. But Oman, ever the measured voice in a loud region, is doing something different. It is not shouting its arrival—it is shaping the conversation.

Today’s agenda is built on megatrends, not market clichés. Artificial intelligence, climate resilience, the evolution of global supply chains, the rise of storytelling as corporate currency—these are not abstract ideas.

They are existential questions for companies and countries alike. From the first session—“The Shape of Things to Come”—

Oman places itself at the intersection of technology, sustainability, and strategic foresight. Not as an observer, but as a co-architect of the future economy.

WHY THIS FORUM, WHY NOW?

Timing is not incidental. As capital shifts away from high-risk volatility and toward strategic reliability, Oman offers rare attributes: geopolitical stability, rule of law, fiscal discipline, and a long-term vision under Oman Vision 2040.

The forum arrives amid quiet but radical transformation: new laws enabling 100 per cent foreign ownership, green hydrogen projects under development, a stock exchange restructuring, and global partnerships that go far beyond oil.

This is Oman’s moment not because it shouts louder—but because the world is ready to listen to a place that thinks deeper.

Few would expect a Gulf investment forum to include sessions on vulnerability in leadership or storytelling as a trust-building tool. Fewer still would build an entire day around the psychology of risk.

Yet here in Muscat, thought leadership isn’t just performative—it’s policy-informing. Whether it’s Richard Quest leading dialogue on global volatility or CEOs mapping new ESG frontiers, the forum isn’t content with panel platitudes. It is built to move the needle—on ideas, deals, and diplomacy.

While international guests may marvel at

The Advantage Oman Forum opens this morning with a promise: to rewire how we think about investment in an era of broken paradigms. And unlike the hundreds of forums that quietly faded into corporate memory, this one starts with a pulse. A purpose. A provocation.

the mountains of Al Jabal Al Akhdar or the cultural heritage of Nizwa, the real Oman transformation is happening in boardrooms and ministries.

It’s in the way the Ministry of Commerce now talks about AI. In how OPAZ speaks of “investment ecosystems” instead of “zones.” In the way the Oman Investment Authority speaks less about scale—and more about impact. This is not branding. It’s a reset.

SOFT POWER MASTERCLASS

CNN is here, not merely to broadcast Oman’s story—but to participate in writing it. With anchors like Becky Anderson and Eleni Giokos moderating, this isn’t media coverage—it’s media convergence.

Oman is placing its narrative on the global stage through one of the world’s most trusted channels, ensuring that the forum is not only seen—but understood. As a journalist, I’ve covered dozens of such events. But rarely have I sensed a country using an event not to catch up to the future—but to help define it.

This morning, Muscat becomes more than a capital—it becomes a canvas. For ideas, for policies, for partnerships. As Oman bridges its natural elegance with economic intelligence, the Advantage Oman Forum is not a one-off. It is a declaration.

And as the doors open today, the message to every investor, policymaker, and visionary is clear: You’re not just entering a forum. You’re entering the future—from Oman.

THE ROAR GOES GREEN: HYDROGEN POWER IN THE FAST LANE



NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master’s graduate skilled in diverse writing formats, specialising in storytelling, branding, and in-depth journalism.

FOR OVER A CENTURY, the sound of an engine has defined the thrill of the automotive world. From city streets to high-octane racetracks, that unmistakable roar has been both a symbol of power and, more recently, a target in the fight against climate change.

But as the race toward carbon neutrality accelerates, a new clean fuel is emerging—one that promises to keep the spirit of motorsport alive while driving the industry toward a greener future: green hydrogen.

Green hydrogen, produced through renewable-powered electrolysis, offers a zero-emission alternative to fossil fuels. And in the hands of innovators like Honda, it’s proving that environmental responsibility doesn’t mean toning down performance.

Far from it. In fact, the next generation of Formula 1 engines may just roar louder—with purpose. At the heart of Honda’s efforts is its groundbreaking work with carbon-neutral synthetic e-fuels, created from green hydrogen and captured CO2.

These fuels are designed to behave just like traditional gasoline—delivering explosive speed and high-octane energy—without the environmental cost. For motorsports fans worried that “sustainable” means slower, quieter, or tamer: think again.

Honda’s commitment to this tech isn’t just a nod to the future—it’s a full-throttle leap into it. As Formula 1 gears up to adopt 100% sustainable fuels by 2026, Honda is already putting its expertise to the test.

The race track becomes a proving ground where clean energy meets uncompromising performance, showing the world that climate-conscious engineering can still deliver podium-worthy results.

This evolution of motorsport is about balance—between innovation and tradition, speed and sustainability. While battery-electric vehicles have carved a path for cleaner urban driving, hydrogen and synthetic fuels offer a compelling solution for the sectors where EVs face limits: long-range travel, heavy-duty transport, and yes, elite racing.

And here’s the kicker: the technology developed on the track doesn’t stay there.

Impact of R&D on ICV development in Oman

OMAN’S VISION 2040 has provided a roadmap to achieve a diversified and knowledge-based economy. In-Country Value (ICV) — a national development strategy to maximise the economic value retained within the Sultanate of Oman from both domestic and foreign investments — requires particular focus.

Although nurturing SME’s, local employment, and procurement by itself provides an economic value, one critical component that has been overshadowed is Research and Development (R&D).

R&D accelerates development in innovation, economic sustainability, and competitiveness. Oman is challenged to augment its local research capabilities to generate new technologies, develop intellectual property, and achieve sectoral transformation. This article analyses how enhancing ICV in Oman requires significant R&D investment and discusses the ongoing initiatives, sectoral prospects, and long-term endeavours for Oman.

IP COMMERCIALISATION FOR OMAN

Incorporating R&D into the ICV policies allows Oman to advance from being a global technology consumer to an innovative problem solver.

Oman is of utmost importance to cultivating its research ecosystem, its core players focus primarily on:

- MoHERI manages national-level research strategies along with disbursing the appropriate funds.
- Innovation Park Muscat (IPM) serves as a toolkit for startups and research centres by giving them the needed infrastructure and guidance.
- Sultan Qaboos University, GÜtech and University of Nizwa can be termed as active participants of applied research, along with various other universities and research institutes.
- EDO and Oman Energy Association actively participates as well in promoting R&D in energy-related fields.

Oman is still to make some important decisions from a holistic point of view around R&D spending



Oman requires a policy framework that enables and finances talent towards innovative ecosystems.



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.

which is lower than 1 per cent of Oman’s GDP. In addition there is no significant contribution from the private sector in research. ICV improvements require addressing these issues.

HOW ICV CAN BE ENHANCED ACROSS MAJOR INDUSTRIES FOCUSING ON R&D

Oil and Gas

- Increase Recovery Efficiency (EOR): Research related to CO2 injection and the use of nanotechnologies can potentially result in improving oil yield.
- Digital Oilfields: AI and IOT-Based Monitoring Systems Development and Safety applicable for local engineering solutions.
- Environmental Research: Developing solutions for sustainable decommissioning and sustainable flaring reduction.

Health Sector

- Medical Research: Local studies on illnesses prevalent within Oman such as diabetes and other genetic disorders.
- Pharmaceutical Development: The production of local medication can be supported through bioequivalence and clinical trials.
- Digital Health: Development of telemedicine and health information system applications.

Renewable Energy and Green Hydrogen

- Solar and Wind Research: Wind and solar power technologies that are applicable to Oman’s climatic conditions and geographical features.

- Green Hydrogen: Construction of electrolyser technology, storage systems and development of the value chain.
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Cybersecurity and AI: Creating data security and automation systems within Oman.
- Smart Cities: Development and research of advanced technology for urban infrastructure expansion.

OBSTACLES TO ICV R&D

Integration of Research and development into the integrated added value of the company’s core offer is slow due to the following potential barriers:

- Weak private investment in R&D
- R&D is viewed as an expenditure rather than an investment in the future;
- Limited Collaboration Between Industry and Academia
- Lack of collaboration between research institutions and market-oriented industries;
- Talent Drain
- Researchers with great potential tend to relocate to other countries with better professional prospects; and
- Gaps in the Commercialisation of Intellectual Property
- Ineffective structures for converting innovations into commercially viable goods.

SUGGESTED POLICIES

These are the recommendations Oman could take to reasonably incorporate R&D into their ICV strategy:

- Integrate Patented Research Initiatives Into Evaluation Process;
- Reinforce ICV scoring system by incorporating issued patents, research partnerships, and R&D costs;
- Encourage Private Sector R&D through Economic Incentives;
- Create tax incentives or grants for businesses that support local research;
- Define National R&D Programmes;
- Create specific innovation funds for various sectors, such as health, energy and ICT;
- Aid the Commercialisation of Laboratory Research along with comprehensive training in research areas that align with the country’s national priorities.

Oman is at a point of transformation in terms of economic stimulation.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

Auditors & Accountants
• Audit & Accounting • CFO Services • Secondment
• VAT & Tax Return Filing • VAT Refund Assistance
Contact: 92182750 • Email: contact@umpauditors.com

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

SIT. WANTED

SEEKING a new Job / Logistics & supply chain professional with 10-plus years experienced in Export & Import of Sea, Land & Air transport modes (Email: nouchimp1986@gmail.com, Mob: 79820286)

MASTER'S graduate in MSc Global logistics, operations & supply chain management from London, seeking a full-time job in Oman. Possess 2 years of sales executive experience in London and 1 year as a purchase executive in Oman. Holding a valid Oman D/L. Contact: 77231865, email: finan8157@gmail.com

Indian male (Mechanical Engineering) with 3 years experience in Diesel engine works (Gensets/Engines), 2 years in Machine Maintenance, seeks job. Contact: 78022420

INDIAN male 14 years experience light/ heavy driver. Looking for suitable opening currently in Oman. Contact: 77050986/ 91280205, email: kokkad mou@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT/ AUDITOR Indian Female, 3+ yrs exp. in Accounting & Auditing. Expertise in IFRS, GAAP, VAT, Financial Mgmt & Compliance. Contact: 7841408, fzahrasr@gmail.com

Mechanical Engineer - 4+ yrs exp. in CAD, GA/ fab drawings, BOMs. AutoCAD, SolidWorks, CATIA. Ready to join. Ph: +968 72807858

ACCOUNTANT with overs 6 years of experience Detail-Oriented Financial Professional: Expert in Accounting, Audit Prep and Expense Management. Contact: +968 78320801, Ready to join immediately.

CHIEF accountant, MBA finance, 9+ years experience in financial statements, auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full-time or part-time position in a senior role. Contact: akramhaniffa@yahoo.com / 93988825.

A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, BSc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet). Contact: +968 98510880.

INDIAN Male, Storekeeper / Document Controller 2+ yrs of experience in GCC, Completed BCA, ready to join immediately. Email: swamierezhassouth@gmail.com GSM: +968 71818173

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male MBA, 20 years experience in Oman & GCC in Project sales/ Dealer market in All construction materials including Cables & Accessories having D/L looking for the post of Sales Manager/ Assistant Manager. Contact: 00968 78099493

SRI LANKAN Male - (CGMA ACMA+ CPA+BBA) Asst. Finance Manager/ Chief Accountant, 12+ Experience in Oman & GCC, Expert in Finan. Reporting (MIS), VAT, Audit, Cashflow, Budget, AR AP Recon, IFRS, Payroll, Banking. Contact: 78773250. Email: ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

INDIAN Male /CPA, CMA, CA Finalist & BCOM/ 10+ years of Experience/ Currently Working as Finance Manager, Looking for Senior Management Roles in Finance. Contact: 78611653. Email: jobcpacma@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with 5 years expertise in Accounts Payable, Receivables, Financial Reporting, VAT, Payroll, and Bank & Cash Reconciliation. Actively looking for new opportunities. Contact: 79791746 Email: Ibrahimsaw52@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

MECHANICAL ENGINEER (8+ yrs exp, Indian Male) Planning, MEP, QA/QC certified. Elevator & construction industry background. Contact: 92712939, anwarmhdas@gmail.com

INDIAN Male /10+ years of experience in Sea, Air & Land shipments/ Looking for Sr. Logistics operations role. Aware of Incoterms & international procedures. MOB: 79820286 EMAIL: nouchimp1986@gmail.com

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

CHIEF accountant, MBA finance 9+ years experience in financial statework auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full/ part time position in a senior role. 93988825 .

INDIAN Female, M-Tech in Environmental Engineering, B-Tech in Civil Engineering. 7 years of Teaching experience as Asst. Professor, 2 years of professional experience in civil construction and soil investigation. Seeking suitable job, now in Muscat. Contact: 95136664, 79620397 Email: mayakrish.1804@gmail.com

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving Licence. Contact: 78002582 Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

PTC Rent A Car
Travel & Tours
Daily, Weekly, Monthly Car Rental Available
9345 3444

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.
Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

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

SIT. WANTED

"Master's graduate in MSc Global logistics, operations & supply chain management from London, seeking a full-time job in Oman. Possess 2 yrs of sales executive experience in London and 1 yr as a purchase executive in Oman. Holding a valid Oman D/L. Contact: 77231865, email: finan8157@gmail.com"

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

Draftsman ,Indian male, Arch, Civil, Infra, Marine.15+ years exp, CAD, Civil 3D, Revit. Contact: 98724049

B. COM. 35 years of experience in accounts, sales coordinator, admin, HR, personal assistant, document controller with Oman D/L, looking for a job. Contact: 92558734

PROJECT ASSISTANT

Female, well-versed in **Project Administration** with 13 years of proven experience in training, recruitment, administration, finance, and secretarial support. As an **Executive MBA** holder, I can contribute effectively to your organizational goals and looking forward to an interview call and the opportunity.
Contact: 98260708 | meena.v24@gmail.com

WE ARE HIRING
A **3-STAR HOTEL MANAGER** is required in Ad Dakhiliyah Governorate. The candidate for this position must have 7-10 years of experience in the hospitality field, including 3-5 years in a managerial position. Must be fully fluent in English, possess strong leadership skills, and have experience in food and beverage management and event organization. A degree in hotel management or a related field is required.
Send your CV to the following email: **hrdoman@omantel.net.om**

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.
Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocroaches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA
PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]
Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS
• **SITUATION WANTED**
* **NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY**
Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.
To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



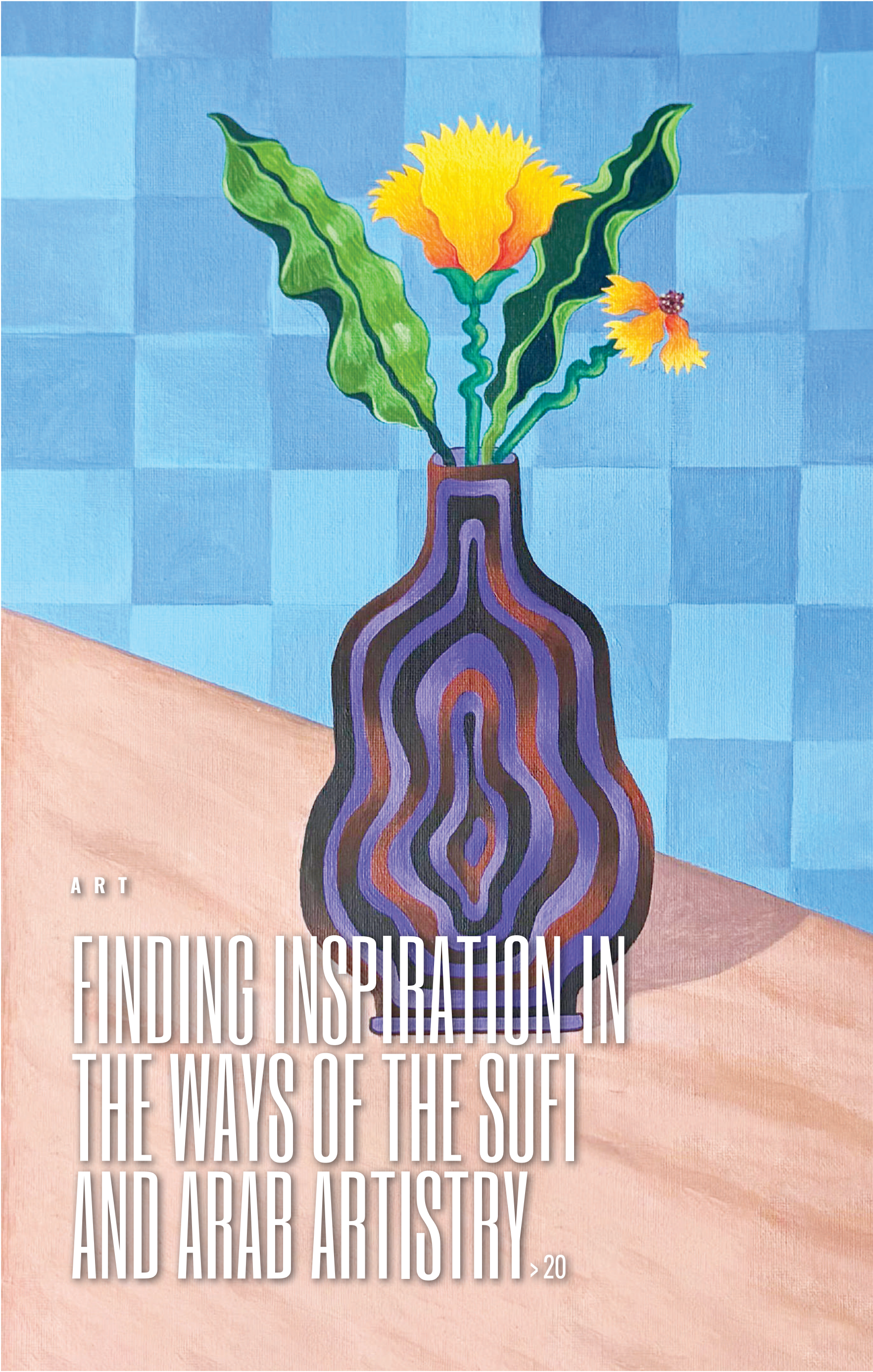
To advertise

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

ازديهار izdihar



ART/LIFE



A R T

FINDING INSPIRATION IN THE WAYS OF THE SUFI AND ARAB ARTISTRY > 20

DIGITAL TRENDS

Turner Prize shortlist includes artist who uses ‘salvaged’ dolls



THE TURNER PRIZE 2025 has announced its shortlist of four artists, including Peterborough’s Rene Matic, who creates compelling artwork using dolls salvaged from charity shops and online platforms. This announcement took place at Tate Britain for Matic’s first institutional solo exhibition, titled “As Opposed To The Truth”, which explores themes of right-wing populism and identity.

Matic, 27, received commendation from the jury for effectively addressing concerns of belonging and identity. Their work resonates with broader experiences faced by today’s youth and their communities. Matic’s creations delve into themes such as “the constructed self” through the lens of rudeness, drawing inspiration from rudeboy culture, a Jamaican subculture in the UK. The exhibition features personal photographs of family and friends, displayed in stacked frames and accompanied by sound installations, banners, and an installation at the Centre for Contemporary Arts in Berlin. Matic’s ongoing collection, titled Restoration, focuses on antique black dolls salvaged by the artist and includes a flag referencing calls for “no place for violence” following the attempted assassination of former US President Donald Trump.

Joining Matic on the shortlist are three London-based artists: Nnena Kalu, born in Glasgow; Mohammed Sami, who emigrated from Iraq to Sweden; and Zadie Xa, originally from Canada. Nnena Kalu, a resident artist at ActionSpace, is known for large-scale abstract sculptures and drawings made from vibrant repurposed materials, including fabric and VHS tape. Her installation “Hanging Sculpture 1-10” was commissioned by Manifesta 15 Barcelona and showcased ten colourful sculptures against the backdrop of a former power station, highlighting her command of materials and responses to architectural space.

Zadie Xa, 41, draws from her Korean heritage, incorporating cultural influences into her work. She was nominated for “Moonlit Confessions Across Deep Sea Echoes: Your Ancestors Are Whales, and Earth Remembers Everything (2025),” a collaborative piece with Spanish artist Benito Mayor Vallejo, presented at the Sharjah Biennial in the UAE. The work features sound inspired by Salpuri, a Korean exorcism dance, and a mobile sculpture with 650 brass bells.

Mohammed Sami, 40, born in Baghdad, seeks to capture the confusion between reality and imagination in his paintings. His nomination stems from “After the Storm: Mohammed Sami at Blenheim Palace,” featuring 14 paintings exploring conflict in Iraq.

An exhibition of the shortlisted works will be held at Cartwright Hall Art Gallery from September 27, 2025, to February 22, 2026. — dpa

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



LIFESTYLE

A woman wearing a traditional Chinese costume takes pictures during a photo shoot at the Jiayu Pass fortress in Jiayuguan in China’s northwestern Gansu province. — AFP



FILM

Bollywood actor Ajay Devgn attends the launch of a song for his upcoming Indian Hindi-language film ‘Raid 2’ in Mumbai. —AFP



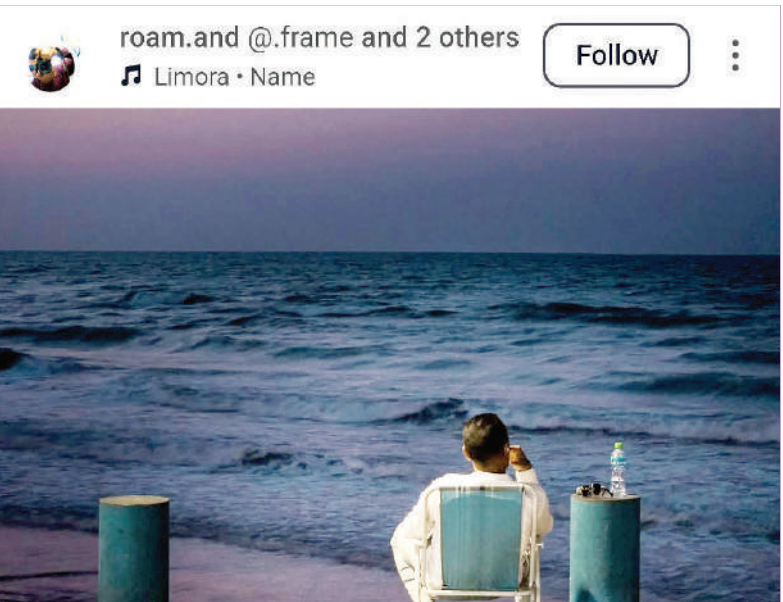
CULTURE

A Taliban security personnel looking inside a niche carved into a rock at an ancient site of Gowarjan village in eastern Laghman province. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Out for a Walk



Alone with the Sea

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. To be selected, follow us on Instagram and every time you upload or share your photos, make sure to tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Shakespeare folios expected to fetch more than £3.5m at auction



William Shakespeare’s four folios, published more than 300 years ago, are set to go under the hammer, where they are expected to fetch between £3.5 million and £4.5 million. The tomes, which compile Shakespeare’s plays, will be sold at Sotheby’s in London on May 23, a month after the Bard’s birthday on April 23. Experts state that the first folio, which contains 36 of Shakespeare’s plays, is “the most significant publication in the history of English literature,” adding that without it, up to half of the writer’s works would have been lost, including “Macbeth,” “Twelfth Night,” and “Julius Caesar.” Alongside the King James Bible, the auctioneers assert that this book has had “the greatest impact on the development of the English language itself.” The initial print run of the first book is believed to have been around 750 copies, which led to the release of

subsequent volumes to meet demand, with the books published between 1623 and 1685. It is thought that producing the first 750 copies would have cost nearly £100 due to the price of the 227 sheets of crown paper used in each. The folios were compiled by John Heminges and Henry Condell, who were close friends of Shakespeare, both being actors and shareholders in the King’s Men, the acting company to which Shakespeare belonged for most of his career. Shakespeare even bequeathed money for a mourning ring to the pair in his will. The earliest recorded purchase of the first folio was in December 1623, when Edward Dering bought two copies for £2. The third folio is the rarest of the books, with the Shakespeare Census listing 182 copies still in existence, which is just over half the number of surviving second and fourth folios. — PA Media/dpa



Ralph Lauren Introduces the Big Pants Index

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump is not the only one with the last Gilded Age on his mind. On Thursday, Ralph Lauren held his fall 2025 fashion show in the bank hall of the Clock Tower Building in lower Manhattan, an Italian Renaissance revival edifice that opened in 1898 as the home of New York Life Insurance Co., complete with marble Corinthian columns, a 29-foot coffered ceiling, an ornate staircase and its own vault. The setting was a departure from Lauren’s recent trend of re-creating his own environments as the backdrops of his collections: He has brought guests out to Ralph Hampton, his fantasy of Long Island; opened up his Madison Avenue headquarters; and re-created his Colorado ranch at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. But given the tenor of the time, his latest show venue felt pretty apropos. Actor Anne Hathaway was there, in a beige trenchcoat and bedazzled beige denim. So were singer Kacey Musgraves, in a white tank top and cowboy hat; actor Ariana DeBose, in pinstripes; and “The White Lotus” ingenue Sarah Catherine Hook, in a necktie. What was not there, however: corsets. Or bustles. (That was good news.) Instead, Lauren offered a parade of pants — and not just any old pants, but big pants. Pants that were almost always pleated and that billowed around the legs. Pants in leather and wool. Pants that were almost... pantaloons, which sometimes were tucked into knee-high boots so they puffed out around the thighs and sometimes truncated into knickerbockers so they only looked like they were tucked into the boots. With the pants he showed a lot of lacy jabots and ruffled white shirts, frothing at the neck. Also beat-up leathers and the occasional slinky backless halter dress, almost always complete with its own jabot. Everything was in black and white or camel and brown, with the occasional flash of amethyst glittering in the light. Lauren called the show “The Modern Romantics.” But its references seemed to be his own



work from around the last turn of the century (especially the go-go Wall Street era when he built his empire) with, perhaps, a nod to the “dandy” theme of the upcoming Met Gala, that celebration of fashion and financial excess, mixed in. And all of it was made more interesting by the tensions — between masculine and feminine, hard and soft — running like threads through the looks. The effect was less escapist than is often the case with Lauren’s cinematic productions and more pointed. It seemed to say, forget the hemline index — that folksy “economic indicator” suggesting that skirts go up when things are good and come down when things turn bad — and instead consider the



big pants gauge: the idea that when things get unpredictable, when you feel like you are teetering on the edge of the volcano, a lot of material around the legs may be exactly what everyone wants to wear. Well, it is a form of protective covering. Why not also a bellwether? At the end of the show, Lauren materialised on the grand hall’s mezzanine, wearing a black longhorn sweater. Julia Louis-Dreyfus, who was sitting next to Lauren’s wife, Ricky, craned her neck upward and snapped photos on her smartphone as her fellow guests applauded and Lauren waved to the audience spread out below — lord, for the moment, of all he surveyed. — NYT

FEATURES

BY RUQAYA AL KINDI
Instagram: @ruqaya.alkindi

SINCE HER childhood, Razan al Jabri has been mesmerised by the rugged beauty of Wilayat Al Rustaq, where she grew up. As soon as she could grasp a pencil, she began creating drawings of peculiar creatures frolicking between the realms of reality and imagination, capturing her early wonderment at the world around her.

“I believe that art conveys a message, and I strive to let my art fulfil this role by employing expressionist and surrealist styles, focusing primarily on acrylics in my paintings,” she remarked.

One of Razan’s notable artworks, “Beyond the Mind,” is sure to captivate art enthusiasts, brimming with surrealist symbols. The central image features a woman’s head adorned with lush green hair, resting in a decorative bowl — an emblem of female sacrifice. The calm expression on her face offers a stark contrast to the implied violence, evoking a serene stillness. Accompanying elements like an open mirror, a pearl necklace and scattered grapes represent the squandering of pleasure and beauty, as Razan elaborated.

Furthermore, the two arches in the background “suggest the presence of unknown passages,” adding dramatic flair and establishing a balance amid the tension present in the scenes.

Razan’s artworks frequently showcase geometric patterns that evoke a sense of order and balance. Alongside this, she often draws upon motifs and symbols inspired by Arab culture, using vibrant hues of blue and red to juxtapose calmness with movement, and order with chaos. In some of her pieces, you’ll discover elements that defy conventional nature, drawn with unique shapes and identities as an attempt to liberate them from natural constraints. “There are indeed rules in drawing, but an artist need not feel bound by them. For me, drawing serves as a pathway to freedom from stringent guidelines.”

Razan navigates two contrasting worlds: law as her profession and art as her cherished hobby. Among the most significant challenges she faces as an artist is “the stark difference in the nature of work in both fields; law demands logical and analytical thinking, while visual art thrives on creativity and spontaneity. Furthermore, the legal profession often requires strict adherence to deadlines and prolongs working hours, which naturally reduces the time available for artistic pursuits.”

To counter this, she shared that “art acts as an escape from work-related stress and allows me to articulate humanitarian and legal issues, ultimately enhancing my performance in both arenas.”

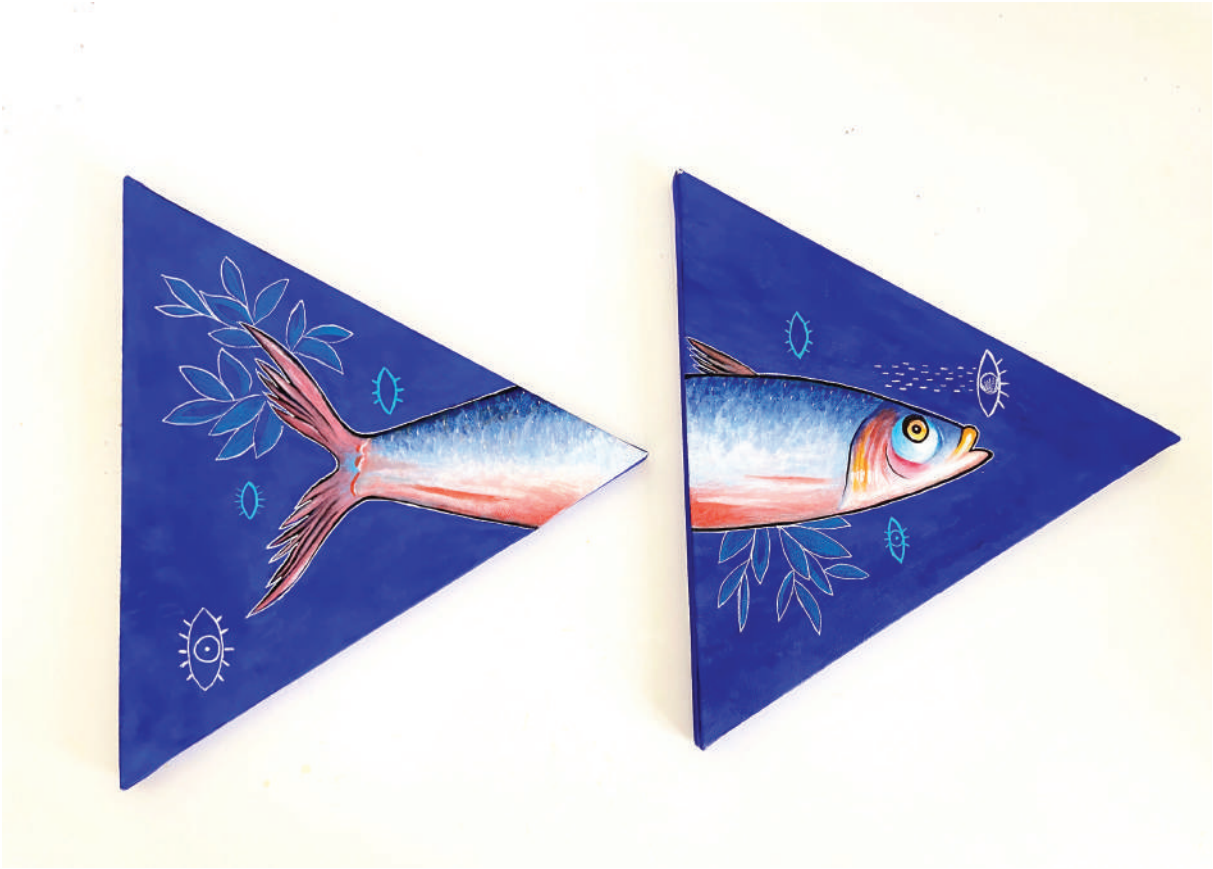
For Razan, painting provides a moment of reflection and a medium through which she expresses her emotional state. “Art doesn’t always need to narrate a story; it’s sufficient to let your emotions and thoughts flow into the painting,” she explained. Listening to music aids her in connecting with deeper feelings. “I’ve completed many books and audiobooks while working on my paintings; listening to books is one of my cherished rituals,” she noted.

Sufi methodology serves as a significant source of inspiration for Razan’s artworks. “It represents a universal emotional state, not confined to any particular religion or sect, contrary to common belief. Instead, it’s a sentiment that embodies love and beauty, guiding the soul through varied experiences.”

Participation in art forums and events ignites the imagination of artists and encourages the creation of new works. Razan has been involved in numerous art exhibitions, with her most recent participation in the “Muscat Art” exhibition organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth last October. “Through my latest engagements, I discovered that my style resonates with a considerable audience and collectors, resulting in numerous sales of my works. I aspire to broaden my reach in art



Finding inspiration in the ways of the Sufi and Arab artistry



exhibitions.” Razan believes that an artist’s passion can be transformed into a viable income source by taking simple steps, aided by the Internet. “This can be achieved through the creation of social media channels to showcase your art, selling digital prints, fulfilling personalised drawing commissions, collaborating with writers on book illustrations, and much more.” She encourages emerging artists to relish the journey of artistic production and not to fear making mistakes. With the wealth of tutorials available online, she emphasises the importance of setting aside time to learn and practice art regularly, as well as not shying away from sharing their work for constructive criticism and feedback. Ultimately, Razan asserts that the beauty of artwork lies in the artist’s unique touch, liberated from idealistic constraints.