

OMAN
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SUNRISE 05:20 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 03:53 AM
DHUHR 12:10 PM
ASR 03:29 PM
MAGHRIB 06:55 PM
ISHA 08:17 PM

INBRIEF

HM CONGRATULATES POLISH PRESIDENT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Karol Nawrocki on being elected as the new President of the Republic of Poland.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan wished President Nawrocki success in leading the Republic of Poland and achieving the Polish people’s aspirations for economic prosperity and development.

His Majesty the Sultan also expressed the hope that the interests of Oman and Poland would expand to advanced levels in various sectors.

OMAN GIFTS MURAL TO WTO TO MARK ROYAL VISIT



GENEVA: Oman has gifted a commemorative mural to the World Trade Organization (WTO) to mark the visit of HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Honorary President of the ‘Programme of Promising Omani Startups’ (POPS) to the WTO headquarters on June 21, 2023.

The artwork, created by Omani artist Salim bin Khamis al Salami, highlights Oman’s heritage, natural diversity and forward-looking vision. Selected through a national competition, it will be displayed permanently at the WTO’s central hall in Geneva. The initiative, led by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion with support from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, reflects Oman’s use of art in cultural diplomacy and global engagement under Oman Vision 2040.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said the mural symbolises Oman’s commitment to international dialogue through art. Ambassador Idris al Khanjari added it stands as a lasting symbol of Oman’s strong ties with the WTO.

COUNTDOWN
TO HAJ

People perform Tawaf in the Grand Mosque during the annual Haj pilgrimage in the holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday. More than two million pilgrims are expected to perform Haj which starts on June 5. — Reuters

Oman opens first copper waste recycling plant

RO 41 million plant in Suhar, was unveiled under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef

STAFF REPORTER
SUHAR, JUNE 2

OMAN HAS inaugurated its first industrial plant dedicated to converting legacy copper mining waste into high-purity copper using renewable energy and eco-friendly technologies — a major step toward green industrialisation and sustainable resource management in line with Oman Vision 2040 goals.

Located in the Wilayat of Suhar, the plant was officially opened on Monday under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. The launch was attended by ministers, senior officials and business leaders from across Oman’s public and private sectors.

Developed by Green Tech Mining and Services, the project is the first of its kind in the country. It was made possible through a strategic partnership between Oman Mining Company and Austria-based BPG



The first production phase is scheduled to begin in June 2025 with an output capacity of 60 tonnes of copper cathodes per year.

Group, with support from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. Total investment exceeds RO 41 million.

The initiative aims to turn environmental liabilities into economic value by reprocessing waste from historical copper mining operations. The first production phase is scheduled to begin in June 2025 with

an output capacity of 60 tonnes of copper cathodes per year. By December 2026, capacity is expected to scale to 12,000 tonnes annually — significantly enhancing Oman’s footprint in the regional green mining sector.

Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, described the project as a “qualitative leap” in Oman’s industrial trajectory.

“This plant integrates environmental sustainability with economic diversification and industrial localisation. It reflects our commitment to innovation-led development and cleaner industrial practices.” The project also supports the Oman Industrial Strategy 2040 by boosting value-added production, attracting high-tech investments and localising industries that harness the country’s natural resources. Copper cathodes produced at the facility will be classified as sustainably recycled metal — a key asset in global decarbonisation supply chains.

World coming up short on promised marine sanctuaries

BREST: A global target of having 30 per cent of the oceans become protected areas by 2030 is looking more fragile than ever, with little progress and the United States backing away, conservationists say.

“With less than 10 per cent of the ocean designated as MPAs (marine protected areas) and only 2.7 per cent fully or highly protected, it is going to be difficult to reach the 30 per cent target,” said Lance Morgan, head of the Marine Conservation Institute in Seattle, Washington.

The institute maps the MPAs for an online atlas, updating moves to meet the 30 per cent goal that 196 countries signed onto in 2022, under the Kunling-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

The ambition is notably at risk because “we see countries like the US reversing course and abandoning decades of bipartisan efforts” to protect areas of the Pacific Ocean, Morgan said.

That referred to an April executive order by President Donald Trump authorising industrial-scale fishing in big swathes of an MPA in that



This photograph shows a school of mullets swimming above marine plants known as Posidonia, the pearl of the Mediterranean Sea, off the National Park of the island of Port Cros in Hyeres, France. — AFP file photo

ocean. Currently, there are 16,516 declared MPAs in the world, covering just 8.4 per cent of the oceans.

But not all are created equal: some forbid all forms of fishing, while others place no roles, or almost none, on what activities are proscribed or permitted.

“Only a third of them have levels of protection that would yield proper benefits” for fish, said Joachim Claudet, a socio-ecology marine researcher at France’s CNRS.

Daniel Pauly, a professor of fisheries science at Canada’s University of British Columbia, said “The marine protected areas have not really been proposed for the protection of biodiversity” but “to increase fish catches”.

A proper MPA “exports fish to non-protected zones, and that should be the main reason that we create marine protected areas — they are needed to have fish”, he said.

When fish populations are left to reproduce and grow in protected areas, there is often a spillover effect that sees fish stocks outside the zones also rise. — AFP



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SHORTTAKES

NO CONTRACTS WITH FIRMS NOT MEETING OMANISATION RATES

MUSCAT: The General Secretariat of the Tender Board has issued Circular No (2025/2), directing all ministries and government units subject to the Tender Law to refrain entirely from contracting with private sector companies that fail to meet government-approved Omanisation rates.

As per the circular, government entities are required to take the following measures: A mandatory clause related to Omanisation compliance and the employment of the national workforce must be incorporated into all tender documents prior to issuance, following the official template provided.

Before awarding any contract, entities must verify that the bidding companies meet the Omanisation requirements through the electronic tendering system (Isnad), which is directly linked to the Ministry of Labour’s database.

For international companies and institutions not registered in the Sultanate of Oman but participating in international tenders, compliance with Omanisation obligations will be monitored post-award and during contract execution, in alignment with the local content plan. The circular underscores the government’s commitment to enhancing employment opportunities for Omanis.

REMAIN IN TENTS ON ARAFAT DAY: HAJ MISSION



MUSCAT: The Oman Haj Mission has called on Omani pilgrims to remain in their designated tents on the Day of Arafat from 10.00 am until 4.00 pm, in accordance with directives issued by the authorities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In an online statement, the mission said that pilgrims should avoid going out to Jabal Al Rahmah or Namirah Mosque. This move aims at ensuring the pilgrims’ safety from intense sunlight and high temperatures.

The directive seeks to prevent cases of heat exhaustion or heatstroke. The mission confirmed that the Arafat sermon will be broadcast live inside the Omani camp, allowing pilgrims to follow the proceedings from within the safety and comfort of their tents.

The statement came as part of efforts by both Omani and Saudi authorities to safeguard the health and well-being of pilgrims during the peak days of Hajj.

Oman exerts efforts to support innovation

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is making dedicated efforts to support research and innovation, which has positively reflected in its advancement by 10 positions in the Global Innovation Index (GII) issued by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) over four years

— rising from 84th to 74th place. Additionally, Oman improved its ranking in innovation outputs by 23 spots, moving from 109th to 86th.

Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and

Innovation, affirmed that the recent commendation by the World Bank for Oman Vision 2040 — which places significant emphasis on human capital development, education quality enhancement, and fostering a culture of research and innovation — reflects the concerted

efforts of all relevant stakeholders working diligently to achieve the vision’s goals.

He explained that the innovation index is one of the most critical indicators as it influences competitiveness and other key metrics. — ONA

GCC Council hails Oman for facilitating US-Iran talks

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN participated in the 164th session of the GCC Ministerial Council in Kuwait, which discussed the latest developments in joint Gulf cooperation across political, economic, security and developmental fields to enhance integration and prosperity in the region.

Oman’s delegation was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, while the session was chaired by Abdullah bin Ali al Yahya, Kuwait’s Foreign Minister and current President of the Council, in the presence of GCC foreign ministers and the GCC Secretary-General.

As for the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, the heads of delegations stressed the need to intensify efforts in cooperation with the international community to halt Israeli aggression, protect Palestinian civilians, ensure unimpeded humanitarian aid delivery and facilitate the safe return of displaced people. They underscored their firm stance demanding the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and all occupied Palestinian territories in accordance with



Oman’s delegation was headed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister. — ONA

international legitimacy resolutions.

The Council commended the intensive efforts of Qatar, Egypt and the United States to reach a comprehensive ceasefire agreement in Gaza.

Additionally, the Council welcomed the talks between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran, lauding Oman’s role in hosting and facilitating these high-level discussions. It expressed support for these diplomatic efforts, emphasising

the importance of dialogue in resolving disputes peacefully, and expressed hope that the talks would contribute to regional and international security and stability.

As far as Syria is concerned, the Council welcomed the formation of the new Syrian government and viewed positively US President Donald Trump’s response to lift sanctions on Syria, as well as the UK’s announcement to amend or cancel certain sanctions. — ONA

World Down Syndrome Day marked

SUHAR: The Ministry of Social Development, in collaboration with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), on Monday celebrated World Down Syndrome Day under the slogan “A Smile on the Faces of People with Disabilities.” The event, organised by the General Directorate of Social Development in Al Batinah North, was held under the auspices of Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development.

Amani al Amri, head of the event committee from Sohar Industrial City, emphasised the integrated efforts between government and private institutions in supporting people with disabilities, recognising their capabilities and promoting their inclusion in society. She added that such events provide an

The ceremony witnessed the signing of employment contracts for a number of people with disabilities in Al Batinah North Governorate, coordinated with the General Directorate of Labour in the governorate.



The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development. — ONA

opportunity to connect with them and help them integrate into society as active contributors. The ceremony witnessed the signing of employment contracts for a number of people with disabilities in Al Batinah North Governorate, coordinated with the General Directorate of Labour in

the governorate. The contracts were with several companies in Sohar Industrial City. Ahmed bin Salem al Hajri, Director-General of Labour in Al Batinah North, confirmed that 43 job-seekers with disabilities have been employed since the beginning of the year. — ONA

Session discusses women’s leadership empowerment

MUSCAT: A dialogue session titled “Women’s Leadership Empowerment in Decision-Making Positions”, was organised by the Ministry of Social Development in Muscat.

The session discussed enhancing societal awareness on the importance of women’s participation in electoral councils and highlighting their role in decision-making processes.

The session, which included 70 women members of the State Council, Majlis Ash’shura, municipal councils, government institutions

and Omani Women’s Associations, aimed to motivate female leaders to participate effectively and confidently in electoral councils. It also addressed the legal, economic, intellectual and media enablers for women, alongside reviewing the role of civil society institutions in empowering Omani women and supporting their participation. The first session, titled “Strategies and Success Enablers”, covered knowledge empowerment and capacity-building for women in leadership and



The session aimed to motivate female leaders to participate effectively and confidently in electoral councils. — ONA

strategic communication, women’s empowerment in the private sector and their pioneering roles, as well as the legal and legislative frameworks supporting their participation in electoral councils and the associated challenges.

The second session, titled “The Role of Civil Society Institutions and Media in Promoting Women’s Participation in Electoral Councils”, analysed the experience of Omani women in the Majlis Ash’shura and emphasised the role of civil society institutions

and Omani Women’s Associations in raising societal awareness of women’s participation in the electoral process. The session also reviewed “The Parliamentary Experience in Childhood and Its Role in Leadership Empowerment.” It is worth noting that the session aligns with the ministry’s efforts to strengthen women’s presence and provide a supportive environment that enables them to contribute effectively to development pathways and decision-making. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT



ARE YOU A VICTIM OF ADULTERATED PRODUCTS?

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

WHEN SALIM RASHID purchased a jar of honey from a well-known marketplace in Muscat, he never imagined it would turn out to be nothing more than ‘coloured sugar’ as he put it. “I paid over RO 15, but within two days the taste and texture changed. A lab test confirmed it was entirely fake,” he said in frustration.

Salim’s experience is not the only one. It is one of hundreds of cases the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) handles every year in Oman. As part of its ongoing efforts to combat fraudulent practices in the market, the CPA – in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion – recently launched a public awareness campaign to highlight the most common methods of commercial fraud and

encourage consumer vigilance. Commercial fraud refers to any deceptive practice intended to mislead consumers about the nature, quality, quantity or origin of a product. It is more than a breach of trust – it is a direct threat to public health, economic stability and market integrity.

According to the CPA’s awareness campaign, commercial fraud comes in many forms, including falsifying product weight. Some merchants reduce the actual quantity in a package while displaying a higher weight on the label as reported by Fatma who discovered her 5kg rice bag contained only 4.3 kg. “It felt unusually light, so I weighed it – and found I’d been cheated,” she said.

There is also misrepresentation of product quality or composition that includes selling synthetic items as natural or substituting original components with inferior

ones, use of counterfeit packaging or labels where fraudsters use containers that resemble those of reputable brands to mislead consumers into believing they are buying high-quality goods as well as selling expired or spoiled products with altered dates, a practice that poses severe health risks, especially when it comes to food and pharmaceuticals.

Another concern is the issue of forging country of origin. Some products are falsely labelled as imported from countries known for high standards, when in fact they originate from unknown or unverified sources.

Perhaps the most dangerous form of fraud is filling capsules with banned or unknown substances which are sold as medicine – sometimes with fatal consequences.

According to CPA, commercial fraud is a criminal offence – not

Commercial fraud refers to any deceptive practice intended to mislead consumers about the nature, quality, quantity or origin of a product. It is more than a breach of trust – it is a direct threat to public health, economic stability and market integrity.

only economically but also medically. It conducts regular inspections and runs continuous awareness campaigns. “We strongly encourage consumers to report any suspicious products or practices through our official channels. A vigilant consumer is our strongest ally. The CPA provides two toll-free hotlines for reporting fraud in addition to its website and mobile app,” CPA stated.

The CPA and relevant government entities routinely conduct field inspections across markets, warehouses, and factories. Suspected products are sent for laboratory testing, and legal action is taken against offenders. In the past year alone, hundreds of fraud cases were uncovered, involving counterfeit goods, expired items, and unsafe medications. Many of these cases resulted in court rulings and penalties.

CPA emphasises that consumer awareness is the most effective weapon against

commercial fraud.

Citizens and residents are advised to always verify the source of products, read labels and expiration dates carefully, check for signs of tampering, retain receipts and report any suspected cases. “Your report can protect hundreds of others – never stay silent when you suspect fraud,” the CPA urges.

Under the campaign slogan “Shop Safely,” the CPA aims to foster a culture of informed consumerism and ethical trading. A market free of fraud requires more than inspections and laws – it depends on proactive consumers who demand transparency and hold sellers accountable.

Commercial fraud is not just a violation of regulations – it is a violation of trust and safety. The battle against this menace will only be won through collective action: firm legislation, rigorous inspections and, most importantly, an aware and engaged public.

SHORT TAKES



The ministry stated that the veterinary team at the quarantine facility is working continuously and diligently to inspect and apply the necessary health measures. — ONA

OVER 393,000 LIVESTOCK IMPORTED: MOAFWR

MUSCAT: The number of livestock imported from the beginning of April until June this year exceeded 393,000 heads, including 25,047 cattle and 368,452 sheep and goats.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) affirmed that it is working to meet the local market's demand for live animals and red meat in coordination with livestock import companies, providing all necessary facilities by streamlining import procedures. The ministry noted that the number of approved permits reached 155 from the beginning of April until June this year.

The MoAFWR stated that the veterinary team at the quarantine facility is working continuously and diligently to inspect and apply the necessary health measures on all imported live animal shipments to prevent the entry of infectious, epidemic, or zoonotic diseases into the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Habta markets mark the beginning of Eid Al Adha

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

THE VARIOUS governorates of the Sultanate of Oman are currently witnessing Eid Al Adha Habtas, serving as a bridge between the past and the present. This seasonal and traditional event is deeply rooted in Omani culture, carrying the fragrance of heritage and the spirit of social solidarity. It is characterised by vibrant commercial activity, with a large influx of citizens and residents purchasing Eid supplies.

The scene highlights the significance of this annual event as one of the most prominent aspects of Eid preparations in the Sultanate of Oman. The Eid Habta is marked by exceptional commercial activity, especially in the sale of sheep and livestock to meet the needs of citizens and residents. It offers a diverse range of options to suit different purchasing power levels. Traditional customs during the holidays include the slaughter of sacrificial animals on Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha to honour guests and visitors, and for families to gather around the Eid feast.

Masoud bin Sulaiman al Azri, Director-General of Agricultural and Fisheries Marketing, stated that there are approximately 318,000 sheep and 25,000 cows, with an expected 50,000 sheep to arrive in the next few days. He said these numbers are sufficient and will not impact prices or livestock availability.



Markets are plentiful and the Habta remains a prominent landmark as the most active Eid market, where adults and children alike find their shopping before Eid.

The timing of the Habta varies from one wilayat to another, providing variety and allowing those who miss the Habta in their area to shop at a neighbouring Habta the next day. Markets are plentiful, and the Habta remains a prominent landmark as the most active Eid market, where adults and children alike find their shopping before Eid.

Many municipalities in Oman have designated public spaces for these events,

including areas dedicated to livestock sales. Demand for local livestock breeds increases at Habta, as well as locations selling other Eid necessities such as sweets, spices, clothing, household items, popular meals and other needs of Omani families in the days leading up to Eid.

Shopping in Habta markets is an old Omani tradition that people are keen to observe before Eid.

THREE HELD WITH LARGE QUANTITY OF ALCOHOL IN MUSANDAM



MUSCAT: The Coast Guard Police, in cooperation with the Musandam Governorate Police, seized a boat carrying three Asian nationals found in possession of a large quantity of alcoholic beverages intended for trafficking. Authorities stated that legal procedures are currently underway against the accused.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/ 2025/ 009-002	Migration and Deployment of Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS) to Nama Electricity Supply Company On-Premises Environment	11.06.2025	23.06.2025	Specialized Companies	52.5

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit https://supply.nama.om, under NESC vendor / E Tender
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to Tender@supply.nama.om, using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website https://supply.nama.om, under NESC vendor / E Tender
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF MINOR TENDER COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - A certificate confirming a minimum Omanization level of 60% within the organization is obligatory , bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries
Wealth and Water Resources

سلطنة عمان
وزارة الثروة الزراعية
والسمكية وموارد المياه

GENERAL PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Country: Sultanate of Oman
Project: Climate Resilience Flood Protection Dams Project
Sector: Water

GENERAL PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Mode of Financing: Installment Sale
Financing No. OMN1028

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources has applied financing in the amount of (US\$ 602,160,000/-) equivalent from the Islamic Development Bank toward the cost of the Climate Resilience Flood Protection Dams Project, and it intends to apply part of the proceeds to payments for goods, works, related services and consulting services to be procured under this project.

The project will include the following components:

- Construction of Wadi Al Khoud Flood Protection Dam (AK01), Wilayat Seeb, Muscat Governorate, using ICB Open procurement method.
- Construction of Wadi Rijma Flood Protection Dam (R2A) in Wilayat Liwa North Al Batinah Governorate, using ICB Open procurement method.
- Construction of Wadi Majlas Flood Protection Dam in Wilayat Qurayat, Muscat Governorate, using ICB Open procurement method.
- Construction of Wadi Ahin Flood Protection Dam in Wilayat Saham North Al Batinah Governorate, using ICB Open procurement method.
- Construction of (Saham Agriculture City), Using ICB/MC
- Construction of Institutional Development and Capacity Building Centre, Using ICB/MC

Procurement of contracts financed by the Islamic Development Bank will be conducted through the procedures as specified in the Guidelines for **Procurement of Goods, Works and related services under Islamic Development Bank Project Financing** (April 2019, revised Feb. 2023), and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the guidelines. Specific procurement notices for contracts to be bid under the Islamic Development Bank's international competitive bidding (ICB) or international competitive bidding - member countries (ICB/MC) procedures and for contracts for consultancy services will be announced, as they become available, in **ISDB website, E-Tendering website** Trade publications of wide international circulation and official newspaper.

Interested eligible firms and individuals who would wish to be considered for the provision of goods, works and consulting services for the above-mentioned project, or those requiring additional information, should contact the Beneficiary at the address below:

Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources,
Department of Dams, Eng. Yousef Al Manthari,
Al-Khuwair, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 2495 2292
Email: director.dams@mafwr.gov.om

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Egypt's FM Badr Abdelatty (C) meets with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi (L) and Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Cairo. — AFP

IRAN STRESSES NEED OF NUCLEAR ‘PEACEFUL ACTIVITIES’

CAIRO: Iran said on Monday it will not accept a nuclear agreement that deprives it of what it calls “peaceful activities”, a reference to uranium enrichment, as it pressed the United States for guarantees it will drop sanctions. Speaking in Cairo, where he met the UN nuclear watchdog’s chief Rafael Grossi, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said: “If the goal is to deprive Iran of its peaceful activities, then certainly no agreement will be reached.”

Araghchi insisted that Iran has “nothing to hide” on its nuclear programme. “Iran has a peaceful nuclear programme... we are prepared to provide this assurance to any party or entity,” he said.

The remarks came after Grossi of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Monday called for more transparency from Iran following a leaked report that showed Tehran had stepped up uranium enrichment. On Monday, Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei told a news conference: “We want to guarantee that the sanctions are effectively lifted.” “So far, the American side has not wanted to clarify this issue,” he said. — AFP

GUNMEN KILL 25 IN RESTIVE CENTRAL NIGERIA STATE



A woman stands next to debris from damaged buildings in Mokwa. — AFP

JOS: Gunmen killed 25 people in two attacks across north-central Nigeria’s Benue state over the weekend, the latest violence in a region known for deadly land disputes and reprisals. Attackers killed 14 people on Sunday in the community of Ankpali, said Adam Ochea, chairman of the Apa local government council, warning that “there are still some threats here and there”. Fulani nomadic herders have long clashed with settled farmers, many of whom are Christian, in Benue over access to land and resources.

In a recent report, Amnesty International tallied 6,896 people killed over the last two years in Benue, part of Nigeria’s so-called Middle Belt, a mixed-religious region where such disputes often take on a sectarian dimension. A police spokeswoman confirmed the attack but did not provide a toll.

In a similar attack on Sunday evening on Naka village, of Gwer West local government area, 11 people were killed by what authorities said were suspected Fulani militias. Herders across the region say they are also the victims of deadly attacks by farmers, land grabs and cattle poisonings. — AFP

TACKLING THREATS

Philippines, EU to set up security dialogue



The Philippines and the European Union have agreed to start a dialogue on security and defence in order to tackle emerging threats like cyber attacks and foreign interference, Foreign Minister Enrique Manalo said. “We hope that through the security and defence dialogue we will remain proactive and united in addressing emerging security threats, cyber attacks and foreign interference and manipulation of information”. — Reuters

SOUTH AFRICA REOPENS INQUIRY INTO DEATHS OF APARTHEID-ERA ACTIVISTS

JOHANNESBURG: A South African court opened an inquest on Monday into the murders 40 years ago of four anti-apartheid activists by a police hit squad in one of the most notorious atrocities of the apartheid era. No one has been brought to justice for the 1985 killings of the so-called Cradock Four, and their families have accused the post-apartheid government of intervening to block the case from going to trial.

Teachers Fort Calata, Matthew

Goniwe and Sicelo Mhlauli and railway worker Sparrow Mkonto were abducted and killed while returning home from a political meeting in the southern town of Cradock. “After 40 years, the families are still waiting for justice and closure,” Advocate Howard Varney, representing relatives of the four men, told the court in an opening statement. “We intend to demonstrate that the deaths of the Cradock Four were brought about by way of a calculated

and premeditated decision of the apartheid regime taken at the highest level of the government’s state security system,” Varney told the court in the Eastern Cape city of Gqeberha.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up to uncover political crimes carried out under apartheid refused amnesty to six men for the Cradock Four killings. This left them open to prosecution but the post-apartheid authorities took no action, Varney said. — AFP

UN calls for probe into deaths near Gaza aid site

UN chief Antonio Guterres called on Monday for an independent investigation into the killing of dozens of Palestinians near a US-backed aid centre in Gaza after rescuers blamed the deaths on Israeli fire and the military denied any involvement. Gaza’s civil defence agency said Israeli gunfire killed at least 31 people and wounded 176 near the aid distribution site in the southern city of Rafah, with photos showing civilians at the scene carting away bodies and medics at nearby hospitals reporting a deluge of gunshot wound victims.

The Israeli military, however, denied its troops had fired on civilians in or around the centre, and both it and the aid site’s administrator accused Hamas of sowing false rumours.

“I am appalled by the reports of Palestinians killed and injured while seeking aid in Gaza yesterday. It is unacceptable that Palestinians are risking their lives for food,” Guterres said in a statement, without assigning blame for the deaths. “I call for an immediate and independent investigation into these events and for perpetrators to be held accountable.”

The Israeli government has cooperated with the group running the site, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), to introduce a new mechanism for distributing aid in Gaza that has bypassed the longstanding UN-led system. The UN has declined to work with the group out of concerns about its neutrality, with some aid agencies saying it appears designed to cater



Palestinian children reach out with their pots as they wait for food at a distribution point in Nuseirat. — AFP

I am appalled by the reports of Palestinians killed and injured while seeking aid in Gaza yesterday. It is unacceptable that Palestinians are risking their lives. I call for an immediate investigation into these events and for perpetrators to be held accountable

ANTONIO GUTERRES

to Israeli military objectives.

An eyewitness from the scene in Rafah, Sameh Hamuda, 33, had said he was headed towards the aid site amid a crowd of other Palestinians when “quadcopter drones opened fire on the people, and tanks started shooting”. “Several people were killed right in front of me,” he said. Another witness, Abdullah Barbakh, 58, also said that “the army opened fire from drones and tanks”.

Following the reports, the Israeli army said an initial inquiry found its troops “did not fire at civilians while they were near or within the humanitarian aid distribution site”. Army spokesman Effie Defrin said in a video message that “Hamas is doing its best, its utmost, to stop us from” distributing aid, and vowed to “investigate each one of those allegations” against Israeli troops. “I urge you not to believe every

rumour spread by Hamas,” he added.

Israel has come under increasing international pressure to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza following a more than two-month blockade on aid that was only recently eased. The UN has warned the entire population of the territory is facing the risk of famine. It has also reported recent incidents of aid being looted, including by armed individuals.

After the two sides failed to agree on a new ceasefire proposal last week, Hamas said it was ready to “immediately begin a round of indirect negotiations to reach an agreement on the points of contention”. Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said that he had told the army “to continue forward in Gaza against all targets, regardless of any negotiations”. — AFP



HEAVY GUNFIRE

Mali army camp in Timbuktu under attack



An army camp in the Malian city of Timbuktu on Monday was under attack by “terrorists” and heavy gunfire was heard, officials said. “We are dealing with terrorists attacking Timbuktu. We are fighting back,” a military source said. “The camp in the city centre has been attacked,” the source added. UN staff were instructed in a message “to take shelter” and “stay away from windows” due to “shooting in the city of Timbuktu”. — AFP

DEMOCRATIC DEMANDS

Bangladesh govt launches fresh reform bid



Bangladesh’s caretaker government launched a fresh bid to seek agreement between rival political parties on critical democratic reforms after a mass uprising. The National Consensus Commission is headed by Muhammad Yunus who is leading the government as its chief adviser until elections are held. “Let’s not miss this opportunity”, Yunus said at the opening as a second round of meetings began. “The remaining differences can be narrowed”. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Britain's PM Keir Starmer delivers a speech during a visit to the BAE Systems Govan facility. — AFP

UK TO BUILD ATTACK SUBS AS PART OF DEFENCE REVIEW

LONDON: Britain announced it will build 12 new attack submarines as it was set to unveil a major defence review to deal with “growing” Russian aggression and the changing nature of warfare. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that “there is greater instability on defence and security than there has been for many, many years, and greater threats.” His Labour government will publish its Strategic Defence Review, a document that will assess threats facing the UK and make recommendations.

The review warns that Britain is entering “a new era of threat” as drones and artificial intelligence transform modern warfare. “I wanted a review that told me the challenges we’re actually facing and likely to face for the foreseeable future,” Starmer told the BBC on Monday. “And the principles are clear: war-fighting readiness, integrating our forces... and a Nato first approach,” he added.

The UK has been racing to rearm in the face of the threat from Russia and fears that US President Donald Trump will no longer help protect Europe. Starmer said it would serve as “a blueprint for strength and security for decades to come”. — AFP

ASH, GAS SPEW FROM MOUNT ETNA



A huge plume of ash, gas and rock spewed forth on Monday from Italy's Mount Etna, Europe's largest active volcano, after a portion of its southeastern crater likely collapsed, authorities said. Surveillance cameras showed “a pyroclastic flow probably produced by a collapse of material from the northern flank of the Southeast Crater”. A pyroclastic flow occurs when volcanic rock, ash and hot gasses surge from volcanos. They are extremely dangerous. — AFP

EU SLAPS DELIVERY HERO COMPANY WITH 329 MILLION EUROS FINE

BRUSSELS: The EU on Monday slapped German food delivery company Delivery Hero and its Spanish subsidiary Glovo with a fine worth 329 million euros after they violated antitrust rules. EU regulators concluded Delivery Hero used its stake in Glovo between 2018 and 2022 to limit competition by exchanging sensitive information, agreeing not to poach each other's employees, and to divide among themselves national markets for food delivery.

Based in Germany, Delivery Hero has held a 94 per cent stake in Spain's Glovo since July 2022, but the EU's formal probe — launched last year — focuses on the period before it took sole control. They are two of the biggest food delivery companies in Europe, delivering meals from restaurants, grocery shopping and other non-food products to customers at home ordering via their apps or websites. The European Commission, which acts as the EU's competition

watchdog, said the two companies admitted their involvement in the cartel and agreed to pay the fines to settle the case. “Cartels like this reduce choice for consumers and business partners, reduce opportunities for employees and reduce incentives to compete and innovate,” it said. Delivery Hero will have to pay a fine worth 223 million euros, while Glovo must pay around 106 million euros, the commission said. — AFP

Ukraine attack on Russia overshadows peace talks

PEACE

talks between Russia and Ukraine in Istanbul ended barely an hour after they began on Monday, a day after a massive Ukrainian drone attack on Russia's nuclear-capable strategic bombers. The talks — the second such direct contacts between the sides since 2022 — had already begun nearly two hours later than scheduled with no explanation of the delay. Although the atmosphere was subdued and dialogue brief, the talks did yield an agreement to conduct a new prisoner exchange and Ukraine said another round of talks was on the agenda.

In Russia, before the talks began, angry war bloggers had called on Moscow to deliver a fearsome retaliatory blow against Kyiv after Ukraine on Sunday launched one of its most ambitious attacks of the war, targeting Russian nuclear-capable long-range bombers in Siberia and elsewhere. Ukraine and Russia have issued starkly different assessments of the damage done to Russia's fleet of strategic bombers — a key element in its nuclear arsenal - but it was clear from publicly available satellite imagery that Moscow had suffered some serious equipment losses. “The eyes of the whole world are focused on the contacts here,” Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan had told the Russian and Ukrainian delegations at the start of talks as they faced off against each other on opposite sides of the room in the sumptuous Ciragan Palace by the Bosphorus. He said the aim of the meeting was to evaluate the conditions for a ceasefire, to discuss a possible meeting between the Russian and Ukrainian presidents, and to look at more prisoner exchange opportunities. Ukrainian Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, who headed Kyiv's delegation, announced after the talks that a new prisoner exchange had been agreed to follow up on the biggest prisoner swap of the war brokered at the last round of talks. He said the new exchange would focus on those severely injured in the war and on young people. Umerov also said that Moscow had handed its own draft peace accord to Ukraine and that Kyiv - which has drawn up



Members of Ukrainian (R), Russian (L) and Turkish (C) delegations attend the second meeting at the Ciragan Palace, in Istanbul. — AFP

its own version — would review the Russian document. Ukraine has proposed holding more talks before the end of June, but believes that only a meeting between Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and Russian President Vladimir Putin can resolve the many issues of contention, Umerov said. Zelensky's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said Kyiv's delegation had handed over a list of children it said had been deported to Russia and which it wanted back. Moscow says such children were moved in order to protect them from fighting. The two sides had been expected on Monday to discuss their respective and wildly different ideas for what a full ceasefire and a longer term path to peace should look like amid pressure from US President Donald Trump, who has said the US could abandon its role as a mediator if there is no progress. But Umerov said Kyiv had been unable to react to Russia's proposals for peace because it had only seen them on Monday.

While both countries, for different reasons, are keen to keep Trump engaged in the peace process, expectations of a breakthrough on Monday had been low. Ukraine regards Russia's approach to date as an attempt to force it to capitulate — something Kyiv says it will never do — while Moscow, which advanced on the battlefield in May at its fastest rate in six months, says Kyiv should submit to peace on Russian terms or face losing more territory. Putin set out his opening terms for an immediate end to the war last June: Ukraine must drop its Nato ambitions and withdraw all of its troops from the entirety of the territory of four Ukrainian regions claimed and mostly controlled by Russia. According to a proposed roadmap drawn up by Ukraine, a copy of which was seen by Reuters, Kyiv wants no restrictions on its military strength after any peace deal, no international recognition of Russian sovereignty over parts of Ukraine taken by Moscow's forces, and wants reparations. — Reuters

Nawrocki wins Polish presidency polls in setback for pro-EU govt

WARSAW: Nationalist opposition candidate Karol Nawrocki narrowly won Poland's presidential election, results showed on Monday, delivering a big blow to the centrist government's efforts to cement Warsaw's pro-European orientation. In a victory for European conservatives inspired by US President Donald Trump, Nawrocki secured 50.89% of the vote, election commission data showed. The outcome presages more political gridlock as he is likely to use his presidential veto to thwart Prime Minister Donald Tusk's liberal policy agenda. Tusk's government has been seeking to reverse judicial reforms made by the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) government that lost power 18 months ago but President Andrzej Duda, a PiS ally, has blocked those efforts. Nawrocki is likely to continue that pattern as president. The judicial

reforms helped sour relations with Brussels under the PiS government. The European Union's top court ruled that a new procedure for appointing judges did not guarantee their impartiality, opening the way for rulings to be questioned, and Brussels sued Poland after its Constitutional Tribunal questioned the primacy of EU law. Nawrocki's rival, Rafal Trzaskowski, Tusk's ruling Civic Coalition (KO) candidate, had declared victory immediately after the publication of an exit poll late on Sunday that showed the result would be very close. “I'm sorry that I didn't manage to convince the majority of citizens of my vision of Poland,” Trzaskowski said on X. “I congratulate Karol Nawrocki on winning the presidential election.” Nawrocki, a conservative historian and amateur boxer who was backed by PiS, had presented



Karol Nawrocki addresses supporters as exit polls were announced, in Warsaw. — AFP

the vote as a referendum on Tusk's 18-month-old government. “The referendum on the dismissal of the Tusk government has been won,” PiS lawmaker Jacek Sasin wrote on X. Poland's blue-chip stock index had shed around 2% by early afternoon

on Monday as investors anticipated more political paralysis. The zloty currency also fell versus the euro. Nawrocki's success follows two weeks after the election of centrist Nicusor Dan as Romania's president, a result that dealt a blow

to hard-right and nationalist forces in central Europe. Nationalist and eurosceptic politicians in the region congratulated Nawrocki. George Simion, the defeated hard-right candidate in Romania's election, wrote on X “Poland WON” and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban hailed a “fantastic victory”. The result could lend momentum to the Czech Republic's eurosceptic opposition leader Andrej Babis, a former prime minister who leads opinion polls before an October election. Babis offered “warm congratulations” on X. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said she was convinced the EU could continue its “very good cooperation” with Poland. Krzysztof Izdebski, policy director at the Batory Foundation, said the result meant “Trump will have more to say in Polish politics”. —AFP

OPINION

Optimising student readiness for final examinations



DR ZAINAB AL AJMI

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FINAL examinations serve as summative assessments that evaluate students’ mastery of academic content. However, many students rely on ineffective study strategies, such as last-minute cramming, which undermine both exam performance and long-term knowledge retention (Dunlosky & Rawson, 2015). Promoting readiness for final exams requires a multifaceted approach that integrates cognitive, metacognitive, motivational and wellness strategies. Enhancing students’ exam preparedness has significant implications for instructional practice and contributes meaningfully to overall academic success. In light of this, cognitive and metacognitive strategies that support exam readiness include the following: 1. Retrieval Practice and Spaced Repetition: Retrieval practice, which involves actively recalling information rather than passively reviewing it, has been shown to substantially enhance long-term retention (Roediger & Butler, 2011). Techniques such as self-testing, flashcards and practice quizzes enable students to strengthen memory traces and improve information retrieval under exam conditions. In parallel, spaced repetition — distributing study sessions over time — outperforms massed practice (i.e., cramming) in supporting durable learning (Cepeda et al.,

2006). Educators can encourage students to adopt distributed review schedules to maximise retention. 2. Metacognitive Self-Regulation: Effective learners monitor and regulate their cognitive processes, adjusting study strategies based on task demands (Dunlosky & Rawson, 2015). Teaching metacognitive skills — such as setting study goals, evaluating understanding and adapting strategies — empowers students to become self-regulated learners. On the other hand, affective and motivational factors include the following: 1. Growth Mindset and Self-Efficacy: Students’ beliefs about intelligence and their ability to succeed shape motivation and perseverance. Dweck (2006) demonstrated that a growth mindset — the belief that abilities can develop through effort — correlates with academic resilience and higher achievement. By providing constructive feedback and emphasising effort over innate ability, teachers can cultivate students’ self-efficacy and encourage adaptive learning behaviours. 2. Goal Setting and Self-Regulation: Setting specific, achievable goals enhances focus and academic motivation (Zimmerman, 2002). Encouraging students to create study plans, set realistic targets and monitor progress fosters a sense of agency and commitment to preparation. Conversely, considerations related to health and well-being include the following:

Preparing students for final examinations extends beyond mere content review; it necessitates a comprehensive approach that incorporates cognitive strategies, metacognitive development, motivational support and attention to student well-being.

1. Sleep Hygiene: Sleep is critical for memory consolidation and cognitive performance. Walker and Stickgold (2006) emphasised that adequate sleep improves recall, problem-solving and learning efficiency. Educators should raise awareness about the cognitive costs of sleep deprivation and encourage healthy sleep habits, especially during exam periods. 2. Stress Management and Mindfulness: High-stakes exams can induce anxiety that impairs performance. Mindfulness practices, deep-breathing exercises and stress-management workshops have been shown to reduce exam-related stress and enhance well-being (Zeidan et al., 2010). Integrating mindfulness strategies into classroom routines can help students manage test anxiety effectively. In summary, preparing students for final examinations extends beyond mere content review; it necessitates a comprehensive approach that incorporates cognitive strategies, metacognitive development, motivational support and attention to student well-being. When these evidence-based practices are systematically embedded within instructional design, they contribute to more effective learning and improved academic outcomes. Educators who integrate such strategies into their pedagogy not only enhance students’ exam preparedness, but also foster greater confidence, autonomy and academic competence.

NEW HOPE FOR BREAST CANCER PATIENTS

ISSAM AHMED

A new treatment nearly halves the risk of disease progression or death from a less common form of breast cancer that hasn’t seen major drug advances in over a decade, researchers reported on Monday. Results from the study, presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Clinical Oncology, are expected to be submitted to regulators and could soon establish a new first-line therapy for people with HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer — the advanced stage of a form that comprises 15-20 per cent of all breast cancer cases. HER2-positive cancers are fuelled by an overactive HER2 gene, which makes too much of a protein called human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 that helps cancer cells grow and spread. Patients with HER2-positive breast cancer that has spread to other parts of the body live around five years. “Seeing such a striking improvement was really impressive to us — we were taking a standard and almost doubling how long patients could have their cancer controlled for,” oncologist Sara Tolaney, chief of the breast oncology division at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, said. The current standard of care, known as THP, combines chemotherapy with two antibodies that block growth signals from the HER2 protein. The new approach uses a drug called trastuzumab deruxtecan (T-DXd), an antibody attached to a chemotherapy drug. This “smart bomb” strategy allows the drug to target cancer cells directly. “You can bind to the cancer cell and dump all that chemo right into the cancer cells,” explained Tolaney. “Some people call them smart bombs because they’re delivering chemo in a targeted fashion — which is how I think we’re able to really increase efficacy so much.” Common side effects included nausea, diarrhoea and a low white blood cell count, with a less common effect involving lung scarring. In a global trial led by Tolaney, just under 400 patients were randomly assigned to receive T-DXd in combination with pertuzumab, thought to enhance its effects. A similar number received the standard THP regimen. A third group, who received T-DXd without pertuzumab, was also enrolled — but those results haven’t yet been reported. At a follow-up of 2.5 years, the T-DXd and pertuzumab combination reduced the risk of disease progression or death by 44 per cent compared to standard care. — AFP

Living to die well: Find freedom the body offers

MY patient, stoic and pensive, told me that he’d made it through his last year of work by dreaming of the European cruise he and his wife planned to take the week after he retired. “I thought I’d paid my dues,” he whispered. “I was just waiting for the best part of life to finally start.” He rarely took time off and had pushed through nausea and occasional abdominal pain that had worsened during his final months of work. Freedom, he’d thought, lay just beyond the newly visible finish line. But a diagnosis of stomach cancer, which had spread to his liver and lungs, had left him too breathless to walk, too nauseous to endure a boat ride, too weak to dress himself. Instead of living out his dreams, he was living out his death. We live alongside death. It speeds down highways recklessly and blooms clandestinely within our bodies. We have no idea when we will meet death, or how. Living with an awareness of this specific uncertainty can be terrifying, yet I’ve found that death also shimmers with a singular magnificence: the possibility of living freely. Popular culture would have us believe in cliché bucket lists, which call to mind outlandish activities that defy the physical limitations imposed by illness or the emotional limitations of common sense. Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson skydive in “The Bucket List”, despite terminal lung cancer. Queen Latifah withdraws her life savings and jets to Europe after learning she has weeks to live in “Last Holiday”. Greeting death with the fantasia of daredevil activities or adopting a newly carefree persona is a tempting salve for our fear of that



DR SUNITA PURI

The author is a palliative care physician

Rearranging our waning lives around previously buried desires isn’t always practical or possible, emotionally or financially. But even if we cannot upend our existence in the name of slumbering passions, we can find freedom in the life the body offers, paying attention to the burn of grief and the pulse of joy, the intensity of an embrace or the taste of butter on toast.

last great unknown. But in my experience, considered reflection on mortality nudges people towards a more complicated version of the ordinary, not novel permutations of extremes. I often hear variations on similar wishes: A daughter wants a small wedding ceremony in the hospital so her dying parent can attend. A brother calls an estranged sister, asking her to visit so that he can say goodbye. I have heard uncommon goals too: wanting to take a long-postponed trip to the Alamo, to write a romance novel, to breed one last litter of puppies and inhale, one final time, the milky sweet of their young fur. These wishes are at their core the same desire, reconciling the differences between the life we have and the one we longed for. While contemplating our deaths can guide us to a place of deep honesty with ourselves, sometimes helping us to live more fully, it also can teach us to inhabit and understand our bodies more fully, too. Death will unravel our bodies in ways we cannot predict. Will we die in a sudden car crash, avoiding the indignities of a physical decline? Or will dementia claim our bodies and minds in an uncertain sequence? Our bodies absorb our lives; terror and joy alike live in our skin. My patient began to cry regularly about the traumas of his youth and losing his loving relationship with his wife. Dying offers the opportunity to face what we have simply accepted as part of our lives — formative events and experiences that we don’t challenge or question, but simply accept and accommodate like a messy roommate. But we don’t have to wait until we are dying to consider what it means to live freely. For all of us,

reconceptualising death as a guide can help us to begin an ongoing conversation with ourselves about who we are and what we’d like our lives to mean. Think about how you spent the last six months. What and who brought you fulfilment and joy? What would you do differently if you could? If those were the last six months of your life, what would your regrets be? These questions, deceptively simple, are as commonplace and ordinary as death itself. Our answers to these questions evolve as our lives unfold. What and who seems to matter the most to you right now may change. If we begin this inquiry before death arrives, we may die as fully as we have lived. Rearranging our waning lives around previously buried desires isn’t always practical or possible, emotionally or financially. But even if we cannot upend our existence in the name of slumbering passions, we can find freedom in the life the body offers, paying attention to the burn of grief and the pulse of joy, the intensity of an embrace or the taste of butter on toast. Even as we die, our bodies are capable of more than devolution from illness. Several months after I first met my patient who dreamed of European travel, his wife rushed him to the emergency room, her voice trembling as she described the way his skin glowed yellow seemingly overnight, the ferocity in his voice when he refused to go to the hospital, their daughter’s decision to leave school to help care for him. He smiled when I pulled up a chair next to his bed. “It would have been so nice to see Belgium,” he murmured. “I could have brought you some really good chocolate.” — The New York Times

Between the sunrise and sunset



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is senior editor of Observer

WHAT do you do when a person leaves this world and you never knew they were even ailing? We flow with life until something shocks us to reality. It is when the person makes an exit that so many memories rush in.

A few months back, I met Mahmood Obaid, and it was full of laughter and recording sessions of video. To know he has gone is hard to accept, but that is the reality. Looking back, I realised all of those memories leave a smile. It must have been special being Mahmood Obaid.

His sense of humour brought laughter at every gathering. But his seriousness about this profession as a broadcaster, writer, actor and director could be seen in his dedication.

A quality I remember is being proactive. As a team, we had gone for the coverage of Khareef Salalah, and Wadi Darbat was not then how it is today. The mud was so slippery that I could have easily slipped into the water if not for his quick action. We laughed so much then. And the memory brings a smile

to all the colleagues even today.

Not many people even knew that he was fighting illness. The power of positivity is what he must have been practising.

My early days on the radio had him, and he was such a considerate person. Although our radios were different, he came and checked on this newcomer and guided whenever needed. Speaking to Mahmood’s childhood friend and colleagues on the day he left, I learned a lot more about him.

He lived well by staying true to his passion and craft.

There is so much we miss out in life because we are too busy. The sun rises and the sun sets each day, and between those many hours, things happen. We say hello, and we say goodbye, and sometimes we have to say goodbye with no response. And then we are just left with memories. And so this Eid we will not receive a greeting from him.

Most often we tend to live in the past or live in the future filled with anxiety and forget to live in the present. Moments pass by without us enjoying their essence. We ask

Most often we tend to live in the past or live in the future filled with anxiety and forget to live in the present. Moments pass by without us enjoying their essence. We ask mechanically, ‘How are you?’ Almost always expecting an answer of ‘yes’. Most of the time we cannot handle disappointments because situations go against our expectations.

mechanically, ‘How are you?’ Almost always expecting an answer of ‘yes’. Most of the time we cannot handle disappointments because situations go against our expectations. When the sun rises, we wake up with intentions and expectations, and life has special meanings when we have dreams. People have not had the perfect setting for the ideal life, yet they excelled. Our expectations are more often based on our limitations. But life has endless potential for possibilities. There would be no use if everyone were to have identical lives. We all have unique fingerprints, and so must be the case with the blueprints. Sometimes we are able to find the solutions by sunset or by the next sunrise, or it might take a few more. But we have to remember the sun will rise again the next day, as it has done so for billions of years. Between all that, we must take rest, as that is how we have been designed, and so rest we must. And that is when it is time for gratitude.

To hold the breath to reflect with gratitude. To take the voyage of a new day as the sun rises again.

Hey chatbot, is this true? AI ‘factchecks’ sow misinformation

ANUJ CHOPRA

As misinformation exploded during India’s four-day conflict with Pakistan, social media users turned to an AI chatbot for verification — only to encounter more falsehoods, underscoring its unreliability as a fact-checking tool.

With tech platforms reducing human fact-checkers, users are increasingly relying on AI-powered chatbots — including xAI’s Grok, OpenAI’s ChatGPT, and Google’s Gemini — in search of reliable information.

“Hey @Grok, is this true?” has become a common query on Elon Musk’s platform X, where the AI assistant is built in, reflecting the growing trend of seeking instant debunks on social media.

But the responses are often themselves riddled with misinformation.

Grok — now under renewed scrutiny for inserting “white genocide,” a far-right conspiracy theory, into unrelated queries — wrongly identified old video footage from Sudan’s Khartoum airport as a missile strike on Pakistan’s Nur Khan airbase during the country’s recent conflict with India.

Unrelated footage of a building on fire in Nepal was misidentified as “likely” showing Pakistan’s military response to Indian strikes.

“The growing reliance on Grok as a fact-checker comes as X and other major tech companies have scaled back investments in human fact-checkers,” McKenzie Sadeghi, a researcher with the disinformation watchdog NewsGuard, said.

“Our research has repeatedly found that AI chatbots are not reliable sources for news and information, particularly when it comes to breaking news,” she warned.

NewsGuard’s research found that 10 leading chatbots were prone to repeating falsehoods, including Russian disinformation narratives and false or misleading claims related to the recent Australian election. In a recent study of eight AI search tools, the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University found that chatbots were “generally bad at declining to answer questions they couldn’t answer accurately, offering incorrect or speculative answers instead.” When AFP fact-checkers in Uruguay asked Gemini about an AI-generated image of a woman, it not only confirmed its authenticity but fabricated details about her identity and where the image was likely taken.

Grok recently labelled a purported video of a giant anaconda swimming in the Amazon River as “genuine,” even citing credible-sounding scientific expeditions to support its false claim.

Researchers have repeatedly questioned the effectiveness of “Community Notes” in combating falsehoods. Human fact-checking has long been a flashpoint in a hyperpolarised political climate, particularly in the United States, where conservative advocates maintain it suppresses free speech and censors right-wing content — something professional fact-checkers vehemently reject.

AFP currently works in 26 languages with Facebook’s fact-checking programme, including in Asia, Latin America, and the European Union.

The quality and accuracy of AI chatbots can vary, depending on how they are trained and programmed, prompting concerns that their output may be subject to political influence or control. — AFP

India and Pakistan: Friends, not enemies

INDIA and Pakistan were once the same country. Before 1947, there was no border between them. They were part of British India—a large land with many people, cultures, and religions living together. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and others lived side by side. They fought together to get freedom from British rule. Leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah, and others wanted self-rule. It was not always peaceful, but there was a feeling of unity and shared a future. That history is often forgotten today, but it is important.

In 1947, the British decided to divide the country into two parts—India and Pakistan. This is called the Partition. It was very fast and caused a lot of pain. Millions of people had to leave their homes. More than a million people died. Many families were broken. The Partition left deep wounds and started problems between the two countries. Kashmir became the main issue. India and Pakistan fought wars, and the mistrust grew. But even in those first years, some efforts were made to keep peace. In 1950, the Liaquat–Nehru Pact tried to protect minority communities in both countries.

In 1960, the two countries signed the Indus Waters Treaty with help from the World Bank. It was about sharing river water. Even during wars, the treaty remained in place. This showed that both sides could work together if they wanted to. There were other positive moments too. People travelled across the border. There were cricket matches, cultural events, and artists from both countries worked together. Bollywood movies were popular in Pakistan. Pakistani music and TV shows were liked in India. Writers visited each other’s book festivals. These small actions helped people remember that they have a common past and culture.

But the relationship has always been weak. One good step is often followed by a bad one. There have been many problems—like the Kargil war in 1999 and the Mumbai attacks in 2008. The main issues, especially about Kashmir and terrorism, were never solved. This led to the most recent fight. In May 2025, a terrorist attack in Pahalgam, in Indian Kashmir, killed 26 people. India blamed Pakistan-supported militants. In response, India started Operation Sindoor, attacking alleged



Pakistani Rangers and Indian Border Security Force soldiers take part in the Wagah-Attari border ceremony. —AFP



BADR AL DHAFRI

The writer is head of proofreading and translation at Oman Daily Observer

terrorist camps inside Pakistan. For four days, there were air strikes, drone attacks, and heavy firing. Both sides were close to full war again.

Both governments said they were strong and successful. They used national pride to gain support. But war always brings pain. Soldiers died. Civilians were afraid. There was fear of things getting worse — maybe even nuclear war. A ceasefire was agreed on 10 May, but peace still looks far away. Indian Prime Minister Modi said the operation is “not over.” This shows that India wants to continue a strong military approach instead of talks.

At the same time, social media made the situation worse. Fake news and videos were shared widely. Both sides used online platforms to spread hate and lies. People believed wrong information. This made it harder for peace to grow because emotions were high and trust was low. Even after the fighting stopped, the damage to people’s minds and feelings stayed.

Still, there is hope. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he is ready for talks. This is not a full solution, but it is a start. Talking is not a weakness. Peace does not mean defeat. Both countries have nuclear weapons. A future war could destroy everything — not just in

India and Pakistan, but in the whole region.

India and Pakistan cannot move away from each other. They are neighbours forever. While leaders may argue, the people in both countries still share many things. They speak similar languages. They enjoy the same food and music. They have common history and traditions. This does not mean that problems are not real. But they must be handled with calm minds and smart thinking — not with anger.

This is not only about politics. It is about people. Many families were separated during Partition. Grandparents still tell stories about life in Lahore or Delhi, about friends who were like family. Those memories are still alive. They are not just old stories—they are reminders that peace is possible.

India and Pakistan have fought for too long.

It is time to think differently. What if both countries worked as hard for peace as they did for war? What if the story of Partition ended not in endless fighting, but in understanding? People in both countries want a better life. They deserve a future without fear, with more friendship. They should remember — they were once one. Maybe not again in borders, but in heart and hope.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Shifas during the award ceremony

SHIFAS EXCELS IN WORLD MASTERS GAMES IN TAIPEI

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

An expatriate sports teacher in Oman has bagged bronze medal in the 35+ handball category at the World Masters Games 2025 held in Taipei which in turn has also marked India’s first-ever international medal in Handball.

PB Shifas, a handball and basketball coach at the Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir (ISWK) feels all his 15 years of imparting training at the school, clubbed with his skill and leadership on the court were instrumental in securing this milestone victory at the international sporting event.

“This is a proud moment not only for handball as a sport but for every aspiring player across the continent who wants to excel in their chosen sports arena,” said Shifas, adding “It’s an honour to represent the country of my birth and the country of my choice ‘Oman’, and is an incredible honour.” The team led by Shifas displayed exceptional teamwork, determination, and passion, overcoming tough international competition to bring glory to the nation.

The ISWK school management said that this achievement not only marks a personal milestone for Shifas but also India’s first-ever international medal in handball, making it a defining moment in the country’s sporting history. The teams have consistently excelled, participating in national-level tournaments for the last 11 years under his mentorship.

“This is a remarkable achievement and a proud moment for Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir and all Indian schools in Oman. Shifas’ dedication, perseverance, and passion for sports have not only led to this prestigious international recognition but also continue to inspire our students every day. We salute his spirit and contribution,” said DN Rao, Principal of ISWK.

GRIEZMANN TO STAY WITH ATLETICO MADRID UNTIL 2027



MADRID: France’s 2018 World Cup winning forward Antoine Griezmann has extended his Atletico Madrid contract until 2027, the Spanish club announced on Monday.

“Griezmann and Atletico have reached a deal to renew the French footballer’s contract until June 30, 2027,” said Atletico in a statement. Griezmann, 34, is Atletico’s all-time top scorer with 197 goals over two spells at the club and his previous deal was due to run until 2026. The veteran forward has struggled for form in 2025, last finding the net in February as his team finished third in La Liga, ending the season trophyless. Griezmann, who scored in France’s 2018 World Cup win over Croatia, signed for Atletico from Real Sociedad in 2014. — AFP

Red Warriors eye triumph against Jordan in Muscat

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

ALL EYES will be on the final two matches of the AFC Asian Qualifiers — Road to 26 as Red Warriors will take on Jordan on Thursday in Muscat. It will be followed by Palestine match on next Tuesday in Amman. Red Warriors will focus to target for the triumph against Jordan to get inch closer for an automatic spot at the Fifa World Cup 2026 which will be hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Oman under the coaching guidance of the experienced domestic coach Rasheed Jaber are seeking for a historic appearance at the global showpiece and all the fans are looking for achieving this dream which is getting closer in this qualifier.

Coaching staff headed by Rasheed Jaber and his assistant Yaqoob al Sabahi are very busy to find the alternative for Amjad al Harthy in the defending line and the goalie Ibrahim al Mukhaini who both were suffering to an injury. Jameel al Yahmadi, Thani al Rushaidi and Mulhem al Sunaidy are different options for the coaching staff to cover Amjad’s position while the goalie Fayez al Rushaidi is currently under a tight training sessions to register a come back to the team after his absence in the last few matches due to the injury.

As part of their comprehensive preparations, Oman played two successful friendly matches behind closed doors including a 4-1 win against Niger and a 1-0 victory over Lebanon, with the team showing clear progress in attacking fluidity and defensive structure. In contrast, Jordan’s recent friendly ended in a 2-0 defeat to Saudi Arabia last Friday with goals from Hassan Al Tambakti and Muhanad Al Saad. Jordan’s head coach Jamal Salami is expected to focus on addressing tactical lapses and defensive errors from that match, though they also face injury concerns of their own, including the absence of Ihsan Haddad, while Noor Al Rawabdeh and Ali Alwan



Focusing on skills is part of the training session

under medical team supervision before returning to action.

Oman will be seeking revenge after suffering a 4-0 defeat to Jordan in the first-leg encounter in Amman last October. With a passionate home crowd behind them and momentum on their side, the

Red Warriors will aim to flip the narrative and move a step closer to making history. Following the Jordan clash, Oman will conclude their qualification campaign with an away fixture against Palestine on Tuesday in what could be a decisive match for a place in the 2026 Fifa World Cup.

Oman Sail, bp Oman launch SailFree programme

MUSCAT: Oman Sail in partnership with bp Oman have launched the second edition of SailFree, the region’s first para sailing programme designed to empower people with disabilities through the sport of sailing.

The programme will be delivered in three phases to support 100 young people with disabilities at Oman Sail’s Mussanah Sailing School and Al Mouj Sailing School, with 20 advancing to form the 15-18 national youth sailing team.

Khamis al Anbouri, Oman Sail’s Acting Commercial Director, said, “We are very pleased to renew SailFree for a second edition and provide more opportunities for young people with disabilities. The programme has proven that sailing can have a long-term positive impact on the lives of people with disabilities and unlock valuable life skills through learning, teamwork and participation. We are looking forward to introducing 100 young people to the sport and showing that sailing is a sport for all.” Ibrahim al Hinai, Social investment manager at bp Oman, Kuwait



and Qatar, commented: “The achievements of the SailFree programme is remarkable, whereby the first edition of this programme, launched in 2019, benefitted 110 people with disabilities and formed the first parasailing national team consisting of 25 exceptional members that competed in approximately

10 international and local competitions representing Oman. We are incredibly proud to continue investing in the community by supporting such a valuable initiative.” SailFree has provided the framework for people with no prior sailing experience to learn, develop and compete internationally and the

SailFree team is currently in training ahead of regattas at home and abroad. Beginning with the UK Hansa Class Championship from June 13-15 in Weymouth, UK, then returning to Oman for the Oman Sailing Championship from August 17-21 and Mussanah Race Week from October 16-22.

SHORTTAKES



Oscar Piastri celebrates on the podium with a trophy after winning the Spanish GP. — **REUTERS**

OSCAR PIASTRI WINS SPANISH GRAND PRIX

BARCELONA: The Formula One 2025 Spanish Grand Prix finished the way it started on Sunday, with the McLaren pair of Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris finishing 1-2 to further build their commanding lead in the team standings.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc finished third to grab the remaining podium spot at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya. The quest for third was where all the real drama happened in the race.

Piastri, from Australia, was in command from the start, sacrificing the early lead after the initial pit stops when four-time F1 champion Max Verstappen grabbed first.

Piastri retook the lead as Red Bull's Verstappen, from the Netherlands, took an early second stop. The question at that point was whether Verstappen would take a third pit-stop, which could give him a tire edge late in the race.

Verstappen did pit for a third time, but any strategic advantage he could have had was lost when Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli was forced off the track due to a problem with his car, with a safety car being deployed.

That sent the leaders back to the pit stop again, with Piastri and Norris, from Great Britain, still 1-2 with six laps to go. But Verstappen was passed by Leclerc on the restart, and Verstappen then tangled with Mercedes' George Russell as they collided twice. Verstappen was penalised 10 seconds, plummeting him to 10th place, with Monaco's Leclerc finishing third and Russell fourth.

Kick Sauber driver Nico Hulkenberg of Germany drove a masterful race, finishing fifth after starting 15th.

This was the fifth win of the season for Piastri, who leads the driver standings with 186 points, followed by Norris (176) and Verstappen (137). On the team side, McLaren has a huge advantage over Ferrari, 362 to 165 points. — **Reuters**

Pyramids beat Sundowns to win 1st CAF title



Pyramids players celebrate with the trophy. — **Reuters**

PYRAMIDS OF EGYPT survived late pressure to beat Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa 2-1 in Cairo on Sunday and win the CAF Champions League for the first time.

Competing in the premier African club competition for only the second time, Pyramids triumphed 3-2 on aggregate after the first leg was drawn 1-1 in Pretoria last weekend.

Fiston Mayele scored after 23 minutes and Ahmed Samy on 56 minutes for the Egyptian outfit before Iqraam Rayners reduced the arrears in the 75th minute.

Listless for much of the match, Sundowns pressed in the closing stages, but the second goal that would have given them overall victory on away goals proved elusive.

Pleas by Pyramids, who normally attract crowds of just a few thousand, for support led to their 30,000-seat stadium being about half full for the second leg.

Both clubs made one change to the first-leg starting line-ups last weekend in Pretoria, where Walid el Karti headed an added-time equaliser after Lucas Ribeiro gave Sundowns an early second half lead.

Pyramids coach Krunoslav Jurcic, a former Croatia midfielder, dropped forward Ibrahim Adel, scorer of six goals en route to the final, and promoted ex-English Premier League forward Ramadan Sobhi.

Sundowns' Portuguese coach Miguel Cardoso left out Brazilian forward Arthur Sales and gave a starting place to midfielder



Ramadan Sobhi raises the trophy as Pyramids' players celebrate winning the CAF Champions League final. — **AFP**

Jayden Adams. Cardoso is only the second coach after Argentine Oscar Fullone to reach consecutive Champions League finals with different clubs.

Fullone, who died in 2017 aged 78, guided ASEC Mimosas of the Ivory Coast in 1998 and Raja Casablanca of Morocco the following year to victory in finals of the premier African club competition.

MAYELE SCORES

Cardoso took Esperance of Tunisia to the 2024 final, which they lost to Al Ahly of Egypt with an own goal separating the sides.

A new Champions League trophy, unveiled before the first leg, was brought to the touchline at the 30 June Stadium by 48-year-old Nigerian legend and former Inter Milan and Arsenal star Nwankwo Kanu.

On a warm, windy first day, both teams constantly surrendered possession cheaply before Pyramids took the lead when Mayele scored his ninth goal of the African campaign. A cross by Ahmed Atef was partially cleared by Grant Kekana and Mayele pounced to slam a snap low shot across goalkeeper Ronwen Williams into the far corner of the net.

Tensions rose and the Somali referee yellow-carded Atef and Aubrey Modiba after the duo had an angry clash, leading with their heads.

Sundowns squandered a great chance in first half added time when Tashreeq Matthews broke through only to see his shot parried by the left leg of goalkeeper Ahmed el Shenawy.

It was the only time the Pretoria outfit threatened in the opening half despite having much more possession. Pyramids struck again when Mohamed Chibi placed a free kick into the goalmouth and central defender Samy headed powerfully into the net. It was the first goal for Samy in the 16-match Champions League campaign and he became the 19th Pyramids player to score in the competition this season. Sundowns replied when a weak headed clearance offered Rayners a chance and he fired past El Shenawy from close range. — **AFP**

Punjab beat Mumbai to book IPL final with Bengaluru

AHMEDABAD: Punjab Kings batter Shreyas Iyer played a captain's knock as the Indian Premier League (IPL) table toppers beat Mumbai Indians by five wickets in the second qualifier on Sunday to set up a tantalising final with Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

Punjab had won the toss and opted to field before the rain came down and delayed the start of the game by more than two hours. But they did not lose any overs, with the match eventually finishing at well past 1:30 a.m.

Chasing a target of 204 for victory, Iyer smashed an unbeaten 87 off 41 balls with eight clean sixes as Punjab returned to the final for the first time in 11 years.

The result means Tuesday's final

at the same venue will crown a new IPL champion, with Bengaluru also falling short in the summit clash in 2009, 2011 and 2016.

Punjab lost to Bengaluru in the first playoff match on Thursday, but they will now have another shot at winning their maiden trophy.

"I love big occasions. I always tell my team, the bigger the occasion, the calmer you are," said Iyer, who captained Kolkata to the title last year before moving to Punjab.

"We shouldn't think about where we went wrong (against Bengaluru) because throughout the season we've been playing amazing... One match cannot define us as a team."

GOOD START

Punjab had a good start when Rohit



Punjab Kings' Shreyas Iyer and Marcus Stoinis celebrate after winning the match.

Sharma fell cheaply in the third over but Jonny Bairstow (38) and Tilak Varma (44) went after the bowling before Suryakumar Yadav smashed three sixes and four boundaries in his quick-fire knock of 44. A mammoth total looked on the cards but Yuzvendra Chahal dismissed Suryakumar while Azmatullah Omarzai picked up two wickets, including skipper Hardik Pandya, to restrict Mumbai to 203-6.

In response, Punjab scored 64 runs in the powerplay with Josh Inglis (38) leading the charge before Iyer and Nehal Wadhera stitched together an 84-run partnership for the fourth wicket to frustrate Mumbai.

While Iyer effortlessly accelerated the run rate with three consecutive

sixes in an expensive Reece Topley over, Wadhera rode his luck with some loose shots that found the boundary to put the pressure back on Mumbai.

Wadhera fell for 48 but Iyer notched up his half-century in 27 balls before denying Jasprit Bumrah a wicket with a fine boundary off a yorker.

Iyer then welcomed Ashwani Kumar back into the attack with a high and handsome six before clearing the ropes three more times as the 19th over went for 26 runs and Punjab won the game with an over to spare.

"The way he batted, he took his chances. Some of the shots he played were really outstanding," a bitterly disappointed Hardik said. — **AFP**

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Maja Stark holds up championship trophy.

STARK WINS US WOMEN’S OPEN GOLF TOURNAMENT TITLE

Maja Stark has won tournaments around the world, but a professional victory in the United States eluded her.

Now she’s a US Women’s Open champion. Stark carded an even-par 72 to win the second major of the year by two shots on Sunday at Erin Hills in Erin, Wis.

Stark led the championship by one stroke through 54 holes and outlasted World No. 1 Nelly Korda, who got within a shot of the lead before petering out on the back nine.

Stark posted a 7-under-par 281 for the week. Korda (71) tied for second with Japan’s Rio Takeda (72) at 5 under, and South Korea’s Hye-Jin Choi posted a 68 to claim a share of fourth place at 4 under with countrywoman Mao Saigo (73) and China’s Ruoning Yin (70).

Korda had a 2-under front nine to get to 6 under for the championship. Stark was nursing a one-stroke lead over Korda when she birdied No. 11 from 14 feet.

Korda bogeyed the par-3 13th and birdied the next hole, but only after an eagle opportunity slid by.

Stark made a two-putt birdie at No. 14 to get to 9 under and had enough cushion to absorb bogeys at the difficult Nos. 17 and 18, where she missed each fairway.

The 25-year-old has six wins to her name on the Ladies European Tour. One of those, the ISPS Handa World Invitational in Northern Ireland, was co-sanctioned by the LPGA and earned her a tour card in 2022.

Before Sunday, the highlight of Stark’s minimal major resume was placing second to Korda at the 2024 Chevron Championship.

Korda came up short of a would-be third major victory. She earned her best finish at a US Women’s Open and her third top-10.

Julia Lopez Ramirez of Spain played in the final pairing with Stark after shooting a 68 on Saturday. She struggled from the outset and finished 1 over for the event after a triple-bogey 8 on the final hole destined her to a score of 79. — Reuters



Scottie Scheffler poses for photos with the tournament trophy after winning the Memorial Tournament. — Reuters

Scheffler holds off Griffin to defend PGA title

WORLD NUMBER ONE Scottie Scheffler captured his 16th career PGA Tour victory on Sunday, joining Tiger Woods as the only players to defend titles at the Memorial tournament.

The 28-year-old American took his third triumph in a month, firing a two-under par 70 to finish 72 holes on 10-under 278 at Muirfield Village in Dublin, Ohio.

American Ben Griffin, coming off a victory last week at Colonial, was four strokes back in second on 282 after shooting 73 with Austrian Sepp Straka third on 283, one stroke better than Canada’s Nick Taylor.

“It’s always a hard week to play this tournament,” Scheffler said. “I battled really hard over the weekend and Ben made things interesting down the stretch.”

The triumph marked the ninth consecutive time Scheffler has turned a 54-hole lead into a victory, this one coming at the event hosted by 18-time major winner Jack Nicklaus.

“Overall it was a great week and definitely proud to be shaking Mr. Nicklaus’s hand at the end of another good week,” Scheffler said.

Scheffler won last month’s PGA Championship at Quail Hollow for his third

major crown after taking the CJ Cup Byron Nelson two weeks earlier.

By winning his first 16 PGA titles in just under 3.5 years, Scheffler became the fourth-fastest to go from his first to 16th tour wins after Sam Snead, Nicklaus and Woods, a 15-time major winner who took the Memorial from 1999-2001.

The victory marked the first defended title among the nine crowns Scheffler won worldwide last year, having edged compatriot Collin Morikawa by a stroke at the 2024 Memorial.

It also ensured Scheffler will be seen as the man to beat in two weeks at the US Open at Oakmont, where Scheffler seeks a fourth career major victory and second in a row.

“This is definitely a golf course that’s going to expose your weaknesses,” Scheffler said of Muirfield Village. “I’ve got a few things I can practice on next week. Overall, it was a really solid week, did some really good battling.”

Scheffler sank a par putt from just inside 10 feet at the 14th hole and reached 10-under with a tap-in birdie at the par-five 15th.

Griffin, however, reached the 15th green in two and sank a 12-foot eagle putt to pull within three strokes with three holes to play.

Griffin then followed with a 27-foot birdie putt at the par-three 16th to pull within two of the lead. Scheffler responded by dropping

his approach at 17 just inside 20 feet on the way to a routine par while Griffin needed four shots to reach the 17th green on his way to a double bogey, falling four adrift.

Scheffler closed out matters with a seven-foot birdie putt at 18.

SCHEFFLER SOLID EARLY

Scheffler, who began the day with a one-stroke lead, birdied the first six holes to keep his one stroke lead while Griffin stayed on his heels by answering bogeys at the first and par-three fourth holes with birdies at the second and par-five fifth.

Scheffler left his third shot at the par-five seventh within four feet of the hole and sank the birdie putt to reach nine-under.

Scheffler curled in a par putt at the ninth from just inside nine feet to make the turn with a two-stroke lead, but missed a 12-footer for par at the 10th for a bogey that dropped his advantage to one shot once more.

At the par-five 11th, Scheffler responded by blasting out of the rough to 14 feet and curling in the birdie putt to restore a two-stroke edge on nine-under.

Griffin found a bunker on the way to a bogey at the par-three 12th and never found the fairway at 13 on the way to another bogey that left Scheffler ahead by four with five holes remaining. — AFP

Gauff and Andreeva sweep into French Open quarters

PARIS: Coco Gauff reached a fifth straight French Open quarter-final and was joined in the last eight by Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva, with Jannik Sinner and Novak Djokovic also seeking last-eight spots on Monday.

World number two Gauff brushed Russian 20th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova aside 6-0, 7-5 to step up her pursuit of a first Roland Garros crown, and second Grand Slam title.

“It was tough. The whole match I think I played well to be honest,” said Gauff, a losing finalist in Paris in 2022.

Former US Open champion Gauff will play reigning Australian Open champion Madison Keys or unseeded Hailey Baptiste in an all-American quarter-final.

Sixth seed Andreeva also moved

through in straight sets as she cut short an attempted fightback by hitting partner and ex-compatriot Daria Kasatkina to advance 6-3, 7-5.

Kasatkina, ranked 17, is now playing for Australia after switching allegiance from her native Russia.

“It was a hell of a match,” said Andreeva.

“Honestly I’m so so happy I won, I hate playing against her, we practise a lot and even practice is a torture for me.”

She is through to her second major quarter-final, having reached the last four at Roland Garros 12 months ago when she knocked out Aryna Sabalenka.

The 18-year-old Andreeva is the youngest woman to reach back-to-back Roland Garros quarter-finals



Gauff in action during her fourth round match. — Reuters

since Martina Hingis in 1997-98.

She next plays either third-ranked American Jessica Pegula or France’s last remaining player in Paris, Lois Boisson.

World number 361 Boisson is the lowest-ranked competitor left in the draw.

“Obviously... (Boisson’s) going to have some crazy support,” said 2024 US Open runner-up Pegula.

“I think it will be fun. It will be cool to be a part of that.”

Sinner will seek to light up the night session as the top seed clashes with Andrey Rublev, and 24-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic will renew his rivalry with Cameron Norrie.

Last year’s runner-up Alexander Zverev also takes to the court against Tallon Griekspoor.

Italy’s Sinner will look to continue his quest to make it three Grand Slam titles in a row when he takes on Russian 17th seed Rublev.

The pair have met nine times in their career with Sinner holding the edge with six wins to three, but the former world number five emerged the victor in their only previous meeting at Roland Garros at the same stage in 2022.

Sinner retired injured from that encounter but should come into Monday’s headline match in fine nick after limiting his time on court so far this tournament by winning all his matches in straight sets.

However, his opponent has spent even less time playing after receiving a walkover past France’s Arthur Fils in the third round. — AFP

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The improved rating reflects the sustained efforts of the General Federation of Oman Workers (GFW) at both national and international levels.

OMAN AMONG LEADING ARAB COUNTRIES IN ITUC GLOBAL RIGHTS INDEX

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

Oman has emerged as one of the leading Arab countries in the ITUC Global Rights Index, published by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). The country's rating improved from Level 4 to Level 3 — a notable step forward in terms of trade union rights and freedoms.

This progress reflects the sustained efforts of the General Federation of Oman Workers (GFW) at both national and international levels. According to the Index, the improved rating is the result of a series of reforms to labour legislation and regulatory frameworks.

These reforms include enhanced access to justice for workers and the promotion of more effective tripartite dialogue between the government, employers, and workers' representatives.

This has been achieved through the establishment of a joint dialogue committee comprising representatives of all three parties, tasked with drafting, reviewing, and amending labour laws and policies.

The reforms introduced in recent years have contributed to fostering constructive dialogue on labour and employment issues and to strengthening mechanisms for the resolution of labour disputes.

Oman deploys AI to drive Vision 2040 goals

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

THE Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy, has launched a portfolio of artificial intelligence (AI) pilot projects across strategic sectors, as part of the "AI Economics" initiative under Oman's National Programme for Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Digital Technologies.

According to the MoTCIT's 2024 annual report, the initiative seeks to embed AI tools within priority sectors including healthcare, energy, investment, public administration, and tourism.

The overarching aim is to accelerate economic diversification, build national digital capabilities, and align with the long-term objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The newly introduced projects are designed to improve decision-making, service delivery, and operational efficiency across both public and private sectors. Each initiative reflects the government's strategic intent to position Oman as a regional leader in the digital economy.

One of the flagship initiatives is the National Center for Virtual Health, which leverages AI to provide remote specialised healthcare services. The project aims to



The newly introduced projects are designed to improve decision-making, service delivery and operational efficiency across both public and private sectors.

expand access to medical care, particularly in remote areas, while reducing the overall burden on physical health infrastructure.

In the field of energy and natural resources, the Geological Data Analysis project applies AI to enhance the accuracy of identifying oil, gas, and mineral deposits, as well as locating potential sites for renewable energy development.

The government has also launched an Environmental Information Bank, which combines AI and blockchain technologies to create a secure and intelligent system for managing environmental data. This platform is expected to support more informed policymaking in areas such as climate change, conservation, and pollution control.

In the media sector, the Ain Media Platform has been introduced to improve the quality and personalisation of media services offered to users.

The platform uses AI algorithms to streamline content delivery and tailor experiences based on user preferences.

Another key initiative is the Investment Data Dashboard, an interactive tool powered by AI that enables real-time analysis of investment flows and economic indicators. This dashboard is designed to support evidence-based policymaking and attract foreign direct investment by improving data transparency.

To support tourism and transport, the Smart Gates in Dhofar project has been rolled out to monitor vehicle

movements, congestion levels, and tourist volumes, particularly during high season.

The initiative is expected to enhance traffic management and facilitate more efficient planning for tourism services in the southern governorate.

Within the realm of public sector reform, the Smart Administration programme focuses on automating administrative procedures to improve efficiency and responsiveness in government services.

The project aligns with national efforts to digitise service delivery and reduce bureaucratic delays.

The Training Workshop Management system is another AI-enabled platform designed to optimise content organisation and evaluate the effectiveness of capacity-building programmes. It will provide real-time feedback and analytics to improve training outcomes across government institutions.

To stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship, the government has introduced a Support Programme for Promising Omani Companies.

Implemented in coordination with the Promising Omani Startups Programme, the initiative offers targeted financial and technical assistance to startups developing AI-based solutions. Together, these projects reflect a coordinated national approach to harnessing the economic potential of AI and advanced digital technologies.

Oman's liquid H2 corridor a model for global hydrogen trade

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

A LANDMARK agreement signed recently by Oman to establish the world's first trade corridor for liquid hydrogen (H2), marks a pivotal step in consolidating the Sultanate's position as a global hub for green hydrogen production and export.

This was the central message of a recent article by Attaqa, a Washington-based Arabic-language platform dedicated to energy news and analysis.

Titled "Exporting Liquefied Hydrogen Represents a Qualitative Leap for Oman and a Promising Opportunity for Middle East Countries", the article summarizes the views of several international energy experts who see the agreement as a model for global hydrogen trade.

The proposed Liquid Hydrogen Corridor will connect the Port of



The Liquid Hydrogen Corridor could serve as a clean energy artery linking the Middle East with Europe.

Duqm in Oman with the Port of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, enabling the transport of liquid hydrogen deeper into Europe via logistics hubs in Germany and beyond.

Key players in this

groundbreaking initiative include Hydrom—the master planner of Oman's green hydrogen sector—and OQ, the Sultanate's integrated global energy group.

Oman's leadership in this transformative venture has earned

international praise. Salah Mahdi, Global Director of Hydrogen at Chart Industries, a major player in hydrogen liquefaction and transport technologies, described the project as a "qualitative leap" that reflects a forward-thinking vision combining ambition and pragmatism.

By taking a pioneering role in this initiative, Oman is demonstrating its intent to go beyond exploring hydrogen potential and instead develop a large-scale, integrated value chain.

The country is leveraging not only its abundant renewable energy resources and strategic geographic location but also its growing partnerships with European nations, he said.

"If this project is implemented well—and initial signs are promising—this corridor could become a global model for intercontinental hydrogen trade," Mahdi told Attaqa.

He called Oman's decision to adopt liquid hydrogen a "strategic choice," noting that liquefied hydrogen, like LNG, can be transported in bulk over long distances.

Mahdi highlighted the project's integrated system, which includes large-scale hydrogen production, advanced liquefaction, refrigerated container shipping, and regasification facilities in Europe. Such an ecosystem, he said, could serve as a clean energy artery linking the Middle East with Europe.

Chart Industries, he said, is currently collaborating with a number of developers in the MENA region to produce and liquefy hydrogen locally for eventual export to Europe. He noted in this regard that, as a pioneer in this field, Oman would set standards and establish infrastructure models for other Arab countries to emulate.

ADVERTORIALS



With over 30 years of experience, Zuraiq Textiles has woven itself into the fabric of Oman's history.

THE STORY OF ZURAIQ TEXTILES: A LEGACY OF INTEGRITY, QUALITY, AND INNOVATION

MUSCAT: Founded in 1990, Zuraiq Textiles emerged from humble beginnings in the heart of Oman, starting with a modest 50-square-metre shop in the old souq of Wadi Hatat. This small space, filled with authentic Omani fabrics, laid the foundation for a journey marked by dedication, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to quality.

A HUMBLE BEGINNING
In its early days, Zuraiq Textiles catered to the local market, sourcing raw materials from Oman and Dubai to meet the fabric needs of every household. The shop became known for its deep connection to traditional Omani culture, providing textiles that were not just materials, but symbols of heritage and identity. As the demand for high-quality, authentic Omani fabrics grew, so did Zuraiq Textiles, expanding its reach and refining its expertise.

A VISION INSPIRED BY LEADERSHIP
Throughout its growth, Zuraiq Textiles drew inspiration from the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik. Their dedication to Oman's progress and prosperity became a guiding light for the company. Zuraiq Textiles embraced this vision, striving to contribute to the nation's success by delivering excellence in the textile industry.

EXPANSION AND EXCELLENCE
From its modest beginnings, Zuraiq Textiles expanded its footprint across Oman, now boasting 16 showrooms strategically located in various governorates. This extensive network allows Zuraiq to serve a wide range of customers, from individual households to large-scale enterprises. The company has become synonymous with premium fabrics and a beacon of quality.

A TRIBUTE TO OMAN'S LEGACY
With over 30 years of experience, Zuraiq Textiles has woven itself into the fabric of Oman's history. The company's journey from a small shop to a leading industry player is a testament to its enduring values and commitment to excellence. Through hard work, innovation, and a deep respect for Omani culture, Zuraiq Textiles continues to win the hearts of the Omani people, contributing to the prosperity of the nation. As Zuraiq Textiles moves forward, it remains rooted in its rich heritage while embracing the future, redefining the textile industry in Oman and setting new benchmarks of success.

MITSUBISHI MOTORS OMAN WINS BEST CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AWARD

MUSCAT: Mitsubishi Motors Oman, represented by General Automotive Company, has been awarded the Best Brand in Customer Experience – SUV Category at the Oman CX Awards 2025, reaffirming its leadership in the automotive sector and commitment to delivering an outstanding customer experience. The recognition highlights Mitsubishi Motors Oman's strategic focus on fostering strong customer relationships through consistent service quality, responsive



support, and a seamless ownership experience across its portfolio. From

showroom engagement to after-sales care, the brand continues to enhance touchpoints that matter most to vehicle owners in Oman. Manoj Ranade, General Manager of General Automotive Company, expressed his gratitude for the recognition, stating: "This award is a testament to our dedication to customer satisfaction. At General Automotive Company, we are committed to creating exceptional experiences at every step of the ownership journey."

Amouage unveils first boutique in Guangzhou

AMOUAGE, the independent Omani High Perfumery House, has opened its first boutique in South China, located within Tianhe Parc Central in Guangzhou. This launch marks a defining moment in Amouage's strategic global expansion, extending the House's craftsmanship and artistry to one of China's most vibrant cities. Conceptualised by Amouage's Chief Creative Officer, Renaud Salmon, together with architectural collaborators Héroïne, the new space brings the House's story to life, offering a sensory experience that transcends boundaries.

WHERE LEGACY MEETS NEW BEGINNINGS
Amouage's journey in China has always been grounded in cultural understanding and long-term perspective, a market the House has approached with care and conviction. While Amouage's presence



The new space brings the House's story to life, offering a sensory experience that transcends boundaries.

has evolved in recent years, its story in China began over a decade ago, with creations such as Epic Woman, Memoir Man and Honour Woman resonating deeply with connoisseurs and securing top ranking presence on platforms like Nosetime. com, a leading fragrance review platform in China. This enduring connection has been further recognised through several prestigious

accolades, including the Golden Osmanthus Award for Epic Woman for Best Female Perfume, Gold Award and the special attention mAPA Award for Guidance 46. **AN ARCHITECTURE OF TRANSIENCE AND PERMANENCE** Designed to embody the House's philosophy, the boutique invites visitors to engage with

the timeless art of fragrance. Its façade opens to a serene interior, shaped by natural materials and the shifting play of light. Sculptural elements evoke the movement of desert dunes, with surfaces that catch the light, subtly mirroring the flow of sand. Travertine tables, in hues of desert sand, echo the rugged beauty of Oman's landscapes, while the silhouettes of the Amouage bottle, carved from sandstone, recall the majestic architecture of the country. This blend of texture and form invites reflection, where sand becomes a symbol of both impermanence and preservation, framing Amouage's perfumes as representations of depth, heritage, and beauty. At the heart of the boutique, the Gift of Kings shines through, its central placement further symbolising the House's opulence.

MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS UNVEILS 2ND SHOWROOM IN CANADA

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally with 402 showrooms across 13 countries, has launched their 2nd showroom in Canada at British Columbia, Vancouver. The new showroom was inaugurated by Ms. Niki Sharma, Deputy Premier and Attorney General of British Columbia. In attendance were Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Faisal A K, Head of Manufacturing at Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Sakkeer P, Head of Merchandising & SCM at Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Joseph Eapen, Regional Head-North America, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Sharfaz N K, Canada Business Head-Malabar Gold & Diamonds, other senior management team members, customers & well-wishers. Located at Payal Business Centre in Surrey, British Columbia, the showroom showcases an exclusively curated collection of over



20,000 jewellery designs in 18K, 21K & 22K Gold and diamond jewellery across over 25+ exclusive brands & collections from Malabar Gold & Diamonds. The design portfolio also presents an extensive array of bridal jewellery, alongside a wide range of options for occasional wear, daily wear and office wear. Other amenities such as the customized jewellery designing

facility and ample parking is also available for shoppers. "Continuing our journey of success in North America, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is proud to expand our presence in Canada with the launch of our 2nd showroom in Vancouver Our dedication to delivering an exceptional jewellery shopping experience, encompassing top-quality products and exemplary service, has been the driving force behind our ascent as one of the most premier international jewellery retailer and we are reinforcing our commitment to be the preferred shopping destination for jewellery lovers in Canada. As Malabar Gold & Diamonds inches steadily towards our goal of being the world's No. 1 jewellery retailer, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our customers and well-wishers for trusting in our vision," commented M P Ahammed, Chairman of Malabar Group.

Celebrate Eid Al Adha with exclusive offerings at St Regis Al Mouj Muscat

MUSCAT: The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort is set to celebrate Eid Al Adha with a collection of exclusive offerings designed to welcome the summer season in style and comfort. Renowned for its bespoke service complemented by timeless and elegant ambiance, the resort continues to be the best address for those seeking a refined escape along the Arabian Sea. The resort invites Omani nationals and local residents to indulge in a staycation that artfully balances relaxation and elegance amid the rising summer temperatures through a specially curated summer staycation offer, "Rising Heat, Cool Retreat". Guests can enjoy a stay in a Deluxe Room, available with options for single or double occupancy. Families are warmly welcomed, with children under 12 benefiting from complimentary breakfast and an extra bed at no additional charge. To enhance the sense of leisure, the resort also

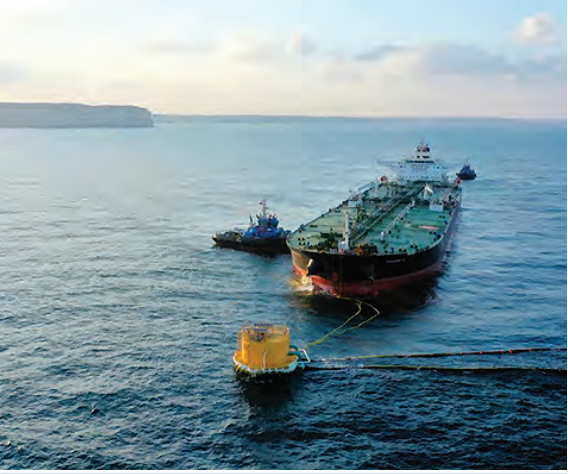


The resort invites Omanis and residents to indulge in a staycation that artfully balances relaxation and elegance.

provides a complimentary late check-out until 8 pm, allowing guests to extend their time in the serene surroundings. Throughout the day, families are also invited to unwind by the pool, where curated amenities include playful floaters and beach toys for the little ones. A thoughtfully selected array of culinary offerings will be available throughout the day from artisanal pizzas, and shawarmas to fresh detox juices, popcorn, cotton candy, and handcrafted ice creams, ensuring indulgence for every member of the family. In addition to these experiences, The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort is preparing a range of culinary delights. At Zorba, guests can savor the traditional Greek delicacy "Kleftiko Lamb" exclusively from June 6 to 9, between 6:30 pm and 11:30 pm. This all-you-can-eat lamb kleftiko features slow-cooked lamb marinated in garlic and lemon, wrapped in parchment paper with vegetables for a tender and

flavorful feast. Karibu offers a special Eid set menu which will be available in June from 5 to 7, featuring a refined three-course meal. Beverages will be offered à-la-carte, while children may choose from the kids menu, ensuring a dining experience that caters to all ages and tastes. Additionally, the restaurant invites families to its "Mommy and Me Masterclass" every Saturday in June from 4 pm to 5 pm. This hands-on session offers mothers and their little chefs the chance to bond over flour and fun, learning to mix, shape, and cook delicious flatbreads together — a joyful experience designed for making cherished memories. The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort remains dedicated to creating memorable experiences that combine the rich heritage of Oman with contemporary luxury. Complementing these offerings, the resort's Guerlain Spa offers signature packages designed to rejuvenate and pamper.

BUSINESS



Hydrocarbon exports from the Gulf to Korea fell by 47.2% in 2023.

GULF EXPORTS TO KOREA NEARLY HALVE IN 2023

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

TRADE between member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Republic of Korea amounted to \$58.9 billion in 2023, according to a recent report by the GCC Statistics Organisation. The figure represents a 39.5% decrease – equivalent to \$38.4 billion – from the previous year.

The decline was fueled by a roughly 50% decline in GCC exports to Korea, which slumped to \$46.3 billion in value in 2023, down from \$86.1 billion in 2022.

Exported hydrocarbon products, which made up 94.2% of total exports, were valued at \$43.6 billion in 2023, representing a decrease of 47.2% in comparison to the previous year (\$82.5 billion). This was followed by miscellaneous items, which made up 2.0% of total exports, valued at \$0.9 billion, which decreased by \$0.4 billion from the previous year.

Aluminium products made up 1.5% of exports with a value of \$0.7 billion and decreased by \$0.3 billion in 2023. Organic chemical products, which represented 1.1% of total exports, dipped by \$0.2 billion in 2023 to reach \$0.5 billion. Copper exports experienced a slight decrease of \$0.1 billion, amounting to \$0.3 billion, followed by inorganic chemical product exports, which decreased by \$0.2 billion in 2023, also amounting to \$0.3 billion. Both copper products and inorganic chemical products made up 0.6% of total exports respectively.

On the other hand, imports from the Republic of Korea into the GCC experienced an increase of 11.1% (\$1.4 billion) in 2023. Total imports were valued at \$12.6 billion in 2023, in comparison to \$11.2 billion in 2022. Miscellaneous items, which represented 33.3% of total imports, remained unchanged with a value of \$4.2 billion.

Motor vehicles and parts, which represent 27.8% of total imports, experienced an increase of \$0.6 billion in 2023, amounting to \$3.5 billion. Imports of machinery and mechanical appliances also increased in 2023 by \$0.4 billion, amounting to \$2.1 billion.

This was followed by electrical machinery and apparatus, which also experienced a slight increase of \$0.1 billion in 2023.

PRODUCER PRICES RISE ON OIL GAINS

MUSCAT: Oman’s overall Producer Price Index (PPI) rose by 4.1% in the first quarter of 2025, compared to the same period in 2024, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The rise was largely driven by the mining and quarrying sector, which posted an 8.9% increase due to a 9.2% surge in crude oil and natural gas prices. However, prices of mineral ores dropped 3.8%, while stone and sand prices edged down 0.6%.

In contrast, the manufacturing sector recorded a 3.8% decline. This was mainly due to an 8.8% drop in the prices of other transportable goods.

DROP REACTION

Shares, dollar tumble as tariff tensions flare



Stocks and the dollar slipped on Monday as US-China trade tensions bubbled and investors turned defensive ahead of US jobs data and a widely expected cut in European interest rates.

Shares in Asian and European steelmakers, which export metal to the US, dropped in reaction to President Trump’s threat late on Friday to double tariffs on imported steel and aluminium to 50%. —Reuters

Oman launches hotel training drive for youth employment

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has signed a partnership agreement to launch a training-for-employment program in hotel reception across various establishments in Dhofar Governorate.

The initiative aims to equip young Omanis with skills for front desk and hotel management roles, reflecting a broader strategy to enhance national employment in the growing tourism sector. The three-month training will be conducted by the Muscat Hospitality Academy, in affiliation with the internationally accredited Swiss



The initiative aims to equip young Omanis with skills for front desk and hotel management roles.

School of Business, Hospitality, and Hotel Management.

This collaboration between the public and private sectors is intended to boost service quality in the hospitality industry while aligning with Oman’s vision for sustainable tourism development.

The programme also supports long-term economic diversification by creating new job opportunities for national talent. The agreement is part of a broader set of initiatives launched by the Ministry to build a skilled local workforce and support the continued growth of Oman’s tourism sector. — ONA

OETC completes fault current limiter project

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

OMAN Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) announced the successful completion of all construction and commissioning works for the Fault Current Limiter (FCLR) project on the 132kV transmission network in Muscat.

The project has a total investment value exceeding RO 4 million. The Fault Current Limiters (FCLs) are installed to limit fault current to a safe level without interrupting the circuit, thereby protecting transformers, circuit breakers, cables, and other infrastructure from excessive thermal and mechanical stress.

They also help avoid costly equipment upgrades when fault levels exceed design ratings due to system growth or new network interconnections, and ensure the overall stability,



The project has a total investment value exceeding RO 4 million.

safety, and reliability of the electricity network while maintaining uninterrupted power supply to other parts of the grid.

This project is part of OETC’s ongoing efforts to enhance the sustainability and resilience of the national transmission network, in line with the company’s strategic objectives to improve efficiency, reduce

system failures, and ensure swift emergency response using modern smart technologies and global best practices.

Eng Masoud bin Salam al Riyami, Chief Operations Officer at OETC, stated: “This project marks a significant milestone in improving operational efficiency and the quality of power supply. It reflects our commitment to investing

in smart infrastructure that ensures optimal grid performance and meets national energy development goals.”

He further highlighted the company’s strategic five-year plans to assess network conditions and implement both current and future projects aimed at building a world-class smart grid capable of adapting to growing demand and sectoral transformation.

“OETC is fully committed to continuous development, cost-effective investments, and adopting high-standard systems to maintain a reliable and sustainable power transmission network. The FCLR system is a key step in that journey,” Al Riyami added.

OETC, a member of Nama Group, is the only company responsible for the transmission and control of electricity across the Sultanate of Oman’s network.

The electricity is transmitted from production stations to distributed load centers in the governorates.

OPAZ ENGAGES WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY VIA ‘TAJAWOB’ PLATFORM

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) engaged with several suggestions, complaints, reports and inquiries submitted via the national platform ‘Tajawob’ until the end of May.

A total of 44 requests were received, including 12 suggestions, 10 complaints, 20 inquiries and 2 reports, reflecting a growing interaction aimed at enhancing public participation tools.

Dr Ahmed bin Saif al Mamari, Acting Director of Customer Services Department at OPAZ, confirmed that all requests received via the platform have been given due attention since its launch in late February.

Complaints were handled within record timeframes, with the shortest response time recorded at under 10 minutes and the longest at two days. Most inquiries focused on investment procedures, company registration and investor visas.



DR AHMED BIN SAIF AL MAMARI
Acting Director of Customer Services Department at OPAZ

at Duqm (SEZAD), and the renaming of certain industrial cities under the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

All suggestions have been referred to the relevant departments within the Authority

Complaints, meanwhile, were referred to the relevant departments for resolution.

He stated that the received suggestions were diverse, including the development of incubators in industrial cities, enhancement of the tourism front in the Special Economic Zone

and the zones it supervises for study and evaluation.

Al Mamari also mentioned that some of the submissions received via the platform included innovative proposals, reflecting the level of public engagement with global technological and scientific advancements.

One notable suggestion involved utilising the advancements in drone technology for the transport sector, which was referred to a specialised consultancy, while technical experts in the zone provided their input directly to the proposer.

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones affirmed that the national platform for suggestions, complaints, reports and inquiries, will contribute to strengthening community partnership and effective communication, as well as improving the business environment through continuous engagement, high transparency and prompt responsiveness.

HEAVY TOLL

Asia’s factory activity shrinks in May



Asia’s factory activity shrank in May as soft demand in China and the impact of US tariffs took a heavy toll on companies, private surveys showed on Monday, highlighting the darkening outlook for the once fast-growing region.

Trade-reliant Japan and South Korea continued to see manufacturing activity contract in May as US President Donald Trump’s automobile tariffs cloud the outlook for exports. — Reuters

SAME LEVEL

Oil jumps as output increase unchanged



Oil prices jumped by about 3% on Monday after producer group Opec+ kept output increases in July at the same level as the previous two months. Brent crude futures climbed to \$64.52 a barrel. West Texas Intermediate crude was up \$1.94 at \$62.73.

Opec+ decided on Saturday to raise output by 411,000 barrels per day (bpd) in July as it looks to wrestle back market share. — Reuters

OPINION

How Oman is embracing agrivoltaics for a sustainable future



NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master's graduate

BENEATH the bright Omani sun, a quiet transformation is taking root. Fields that once lay exposed to the harsh desert heat may soon be shaded by rows of solar panels - not as a replacement for agriculture, but as its ally.

This is agrivoltaics: a forward-thinking approach where farming and solar energy generation go hand in hand, promising a new model of land use for arid regions like Oman.

Agrivoltaics - the practice of combining solar panels with agriculture on the same land - was first proposed in 1981 by German physicist Adolf Goetzberger as a solution to the competing demands for land, food, and energy (AgTech Digest, 2024).

By shading crops and reducing water loss while generating electricity, agrivoltaics is particularly suited to arid, sunny regions like Oman. Globally, the market is expanding rapidly: Global Market Insights (2024) valued the agrivoltaics sector at \$6.3 billion, forecasting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.6% through 2034.

A UK-based study by the University of Sheffield (2024) further highlighted that deploying agrivoltaics on 20,272 km² of high-grade farmland could generate around 338 terawatt-hours of electricity annually, while maintaining agricultural output - a model

with clear potential for countries seeking sustainable land use.

For Oman, where Vision 2040 prioritises both sustainable agriculture and renewable energy, agrivoltaics offers an opportunity to make its land work smarter: producing food, conserving water, and harvesting energy from the sun.

The concept is simple but powerful. By combining agriculture with solar installations, land can serve two purposes at once; growing crops while generating clean electricity.

The panels provide shade that reduces evaporation and heat stress for plants, while the ground below helps cool the panels, improving their efficiency. It's an elegant solution to some of the most pressing challenges facing Oman today: water scarcity, food security, and the urgent need to expand renewable energy.

Earlier this year, Oman announced plans for its first large-scale agrivoltaics project: a 300-acre agri-solar park backed by an investment of over RO 61 million. Singapore's V-Plus Agritech will contribute advanced technologies, including vertical aquaponics and circular farming systems. The project supports Oman's Vision 2040, which calls for economic diversification and greater sustainability across all sectors.

Agrivoltaics - the practice of combining solar panels with agriculture on the same land - was first proposed in 1981 by German physicist Adolf Goetzberger as a solution to the competing demands for land, food and energy (AgTech Digest, 2024)

Few countries are better suited to agrivoltaics than Oman. The Sultanate of Oman enjoys year-round sunshine — an abundant natural resource that remains underutilized.

At the same time, water is precious, and conventional agriculture faces rising challenges due to climate change. In this context, the ability to grow food while producing clean power and conserving water represents a major opportunity.

The country's recent momentum in solar energy supports this path. By the end of 2025, Oman's small and mid-scale solar capacity is expected to reach about 130 MW, and the launch of giga-scale solar projects signals growing ambition.

Integrating agrivoltaics into this mix could multiply the benefits, generating local jobs, enhancing food resilience, and positioning Oman as a regional leader in sustainable land use.

For Oman, agrivoltaics is more than a technological innovation — it's part of a broader journey toward a balanced, sustainable future where land works harder and smarter for the people who depend on it. If successful, the first projects could pave the way for more; transforming the landscape of farming, energy, and opportunity in the years to come.

OPEC+’S CRUDE OUTPUT HIKE COMES AMID TEPID ASIAN OIL DEMAND

CLYDE RUSSELL

THE CRUDE oil market devotes considerable energy to what Opec+ says, but perhaps a little less to what it actually does when it comes to the supply of the world’s most important commodity.

The eight members of the wider group that had implemented voluntary production cuts met at the weekend and decided to raise output by 411,000 barrels per day (bpd) in July, the third straight month of the same increase.

More than half of the lift in output will be split among the big three of the Opec+ group, namely Saudi Arabia, Russia and the United Arab Emirates. However, there are two questions that need answering.

Firstly, will the eight members party to the agreement actually increase output by the agreed volumes, and secondly, if they do will they find buyers for the additional oil?

A point worth noting is that Opec+, and much of the wider market, talk in terms of production, but the more important metric is export volumes, as it’s the amount of crude flowing around the globe that sets the price and the supply-demand balance.

The group’s top producer, Saudi Arabia, actually saw weaker exports in April of 5.75 million bpd, down from March’s 5.80 million bpd, according to data compiled by commodity analysts Kpler.

Saudi Arabia’s exports kicked up to 6.0 million bpd in May, the Kpler data showed, and are expected to rise even further in June, suggesting that there is a lag between output agreements and actual exports.

Russia’s seaborne exports of crude were 5.07 million bpd in March, remained largely flat at 5.12 million bpd in April and then dipped to 4.82 million bpd in May, showing that the agreed increase in output didn’t translate into higher shipments.

The question still remains as to whether any additional oil is actually needed, especially in the top-importing region Asia.

In the statement after the May 31 meeting, Opec+ reiterated its view that the global oil market has “healthy” fundamentals “as reflected in low inventories.” This is the position they have held since they started easing the 2.2 million bpd of voluntary production cuts in April.

However, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries monthly report for May showed crude inventories in the developed world rose in March by 21.4 million barrels to 1.323 billion barrels, which is 139 million barrels less than the average from 2015-2019.

In other words, inventories in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development are slightly below the pre-Covid average, and are were already rising before Opec+ started raising output. — Reuters

Oman’s creative economy: A path to diversification

OMAN'S strategic development of its non-oil sectors, particularly the creative industry, mirrors a wider Middle Eastern trend of leveraging the creative economy for growth.

This industry, which relies on creativity and intellectual capital, includes key sub-sectors such as film, fashion, visual arts, music, digital media and architecture. Digital technologies play a vital role in modernising creative practices and preserving cultural heritage.

With its Vision 2040 agenda, Oman is at a pivotal point, and the creative industry offers significant potential for sustainable growth beyond the traditional oil sector.

The global creative industry has become a true economic powerhouse, contributing over 6% to the world economy with a value exceeding \$2.25 trillion annually.

This dynamic sector fuels innovation and provides livelihoods for more than 30 million professionals worldwide.

Within the Middle East, the UAE has established itself as a regional leader, with Dubai's cultural and creative industries alone contributing 4.6% to its GDP in 2022, generating approximately \$5.98 billion in added value and attracting substantial foreign direct investment. This regional success story illuminates the path forward for Oman.

By developing a vibrant creative ecosystem that leverages its rich cultural heritage and strategic geographic position, Oman can unlock substantial economic value while preserving and promoting its distinctive cultural identity on the global stage.

Oman has taken significant steps in this direction with the launch of the Oman Creative Industries Roadmap — the first research-based guideline for the sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Initial findings reveal promising activity across multiple creative domains, with performing arts representing the largest sector (12%), followed by digital arts (9.6%).

The Creative Software market is projected to reach \$1.85 million by



With its Vision 2040 agenda, Oman is at a pivotal point, and the creative industry offers significant potential for sustainable growth beyond the traditional oil sector.



DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI

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2025, while the Music Events market is expected to generate \$2.93 million in revenue by 2024. The ambitious Vision 2040 target to increase the digital economy's contribution from approximately 2% to 10% by 2040 underscores the strategic importance of creative industries to Oman's future prosperity.

This forward-looking approach positions Oman to capitalise on global digital transformation trends and create new revenue streams that complement its traditional economic sectors. Oman's creative sector draws strength from its authentic cultural heritage that spans centuries, providing rich content and inspiration for contemporary creative expression.

The increasing government support for economic diversification has created a favourable environment for creative entrepreneurship, while growing interest from the younger generation ensures a pipeline of fresh talent and innovative ideas.

The global appetite for authentic Middle Eastern cultural experiences presents tremendous export possibilities for Omani creative products and services.

Cultural tourism stands as a particularly promising growth area, creating demand for local creative offerings while showcasing Oman's heritage to international visitors.

The rapidly expanding digital landscape offers substantial potential for growth in digital arts, gaming and esports — sectors that align perfectly with the

preferences and skills of Oman's youth population. The job creation potential of a thriving creative economy cannot be overstated.

Looking at Dubai's example, where creative industries employ over 175,727 individuals across 47,500 companies, we can envision similar growth for Oman as its creative sector develops.

These jobs span a wide spectrum of skills and education levels, providing opportunities for diverse segments of Omani society.

Particularly encouraging is the creative industry's proven ability to engage young people, offering meaningful employment for the next generation of Omani talent.

The planned establishment of a cutting-edge 'Film City' with multi-million investment demonstrates the government's commitment to developing specific creative sub-sectors with high growth potential.

Such strategic initiatives create direct employment and generate extensive spillover benefits across the economy.

The ongoing development of the Oman Cultural Complex represents another significant investment in the infrastructure needed to nurture creative talent and showcase Omani creativity to the world.

To fully realise this potential, Oman can implement several strategic initiatives: enhancing the policy framework through a comprehensive national strategy, increasing funding access for creative ventures through dedicated programmes, developing talent by integrating creative arts into education, investing in both physical and digital infrastructure and strategically promoting Omani creative offerings globally.

The integration of digital technologies with traditional creative practices offers particularly exciting possibilities.

From virtual reality experiences showcasing Oman's heritage sites to blockchain-enabled platforms for Omani artists to monetise their work globally, technology can amplify the reach and impact of Omani creativity. The intersection of creativity and technology also creates opportunities for innovation that may generate entirely new industries.

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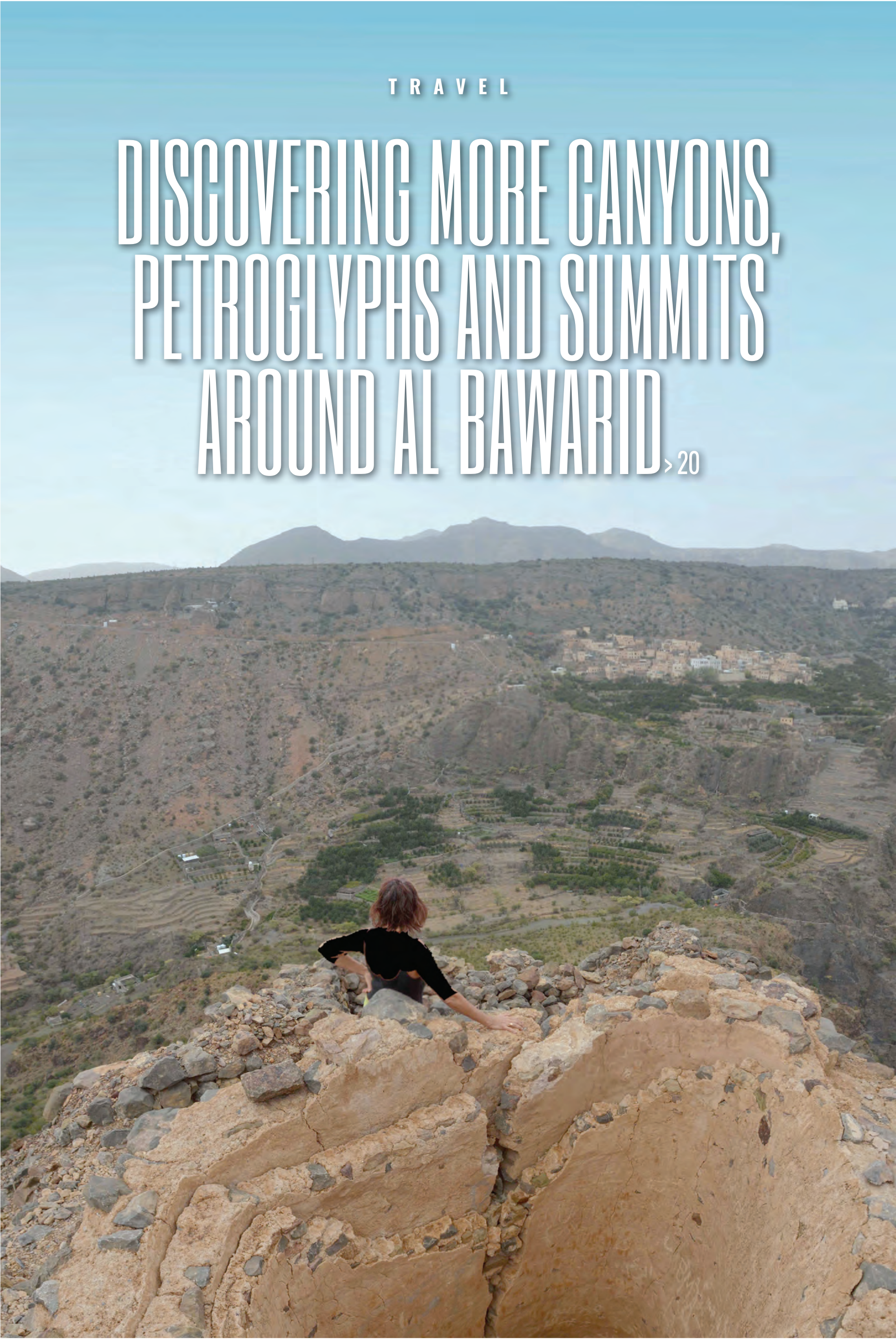
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ART/LIFE



ART

Van Gogh Museum features African artist for first time



EXPRESSIVE brushstrokes depict a man seated at a table, his face hidden behind a book of Japanese prints, a plastic chair in the corner, and a Nigerian passport lying on the table.

It is one of 10 new paintings by Nigerian artist John Madu, created for “Paint Your Path” — the first solo exhibition by an African artist at Amsterdam’s Van Gogh Museum, which opened on Friday.

Madu, 42, produced the 10 works in just three months in his Lagos studio, each responding to one of seven paintings by the Dutch master.

“Before I even knew who Van Gogh was, I knew about his work,” said the artist, recalling how as a child he admired his father’s calendars filled with Impressionist art.

“Van Gogh’s works actually stuck out to me because of the yellows, the swirls, the strokes,” he said.

Madu plays on the global familiarity of Van Gogh’s work to build connections between local and universal themes, notably through self-portraiture and the use of symbols.

Van Gogh’s famous wooden chair is reimagined by Madu as a white plastic seat — sometimes the main subject, sometimes carried on the shoulder of a protagonist resembling the artist entering a cafe in France’s Provence region with a yellow facade.

“So I feel the world of Van Gogh plays out for people to relate to you,” he said.

“I really wanted to pay homage to this master I really love.

“So I thought for it to blend perfectly, the strokes, the brush strokes, the colour theme should connect together.

“That would make the works actually feel like one.”

This is not Madu’s first dialogue with Western art — his previous works have drawn inspiration from Gustav Klimt, Edward Hopper and Norman Rockwell.

These references resonated with the “Beeldbrekers” (Image Breakers), a group of young adults who co-commissioned the exhibition with the goal of making the Van Gogh Museum more inclusive — both in its exhibitions and outreach. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



LIFESTYLE

Attendees watch the character Morpheus appear on screen during the first shared reality screening of the movie “The Matrix” on an immersive dome screen inside Cosm Los Angeles at Hollywood Park. — AFP



FILM

Australian actor Josh Heuston attends the Los Angeles premiere of “Dangerous Animals” at the Egyptian theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP



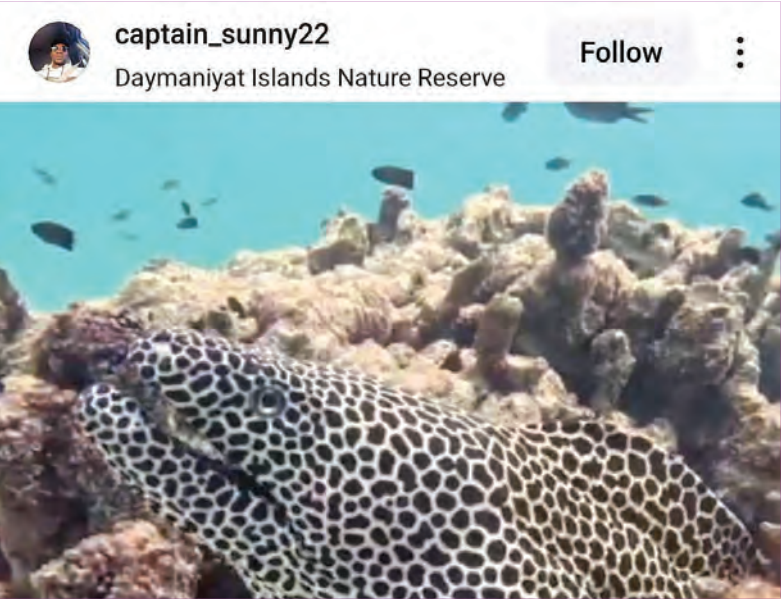
MUSIC

German musician David Garrett plays during the entertainment ahead of the Uefa Champions League final football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Inter Milan in Munich. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Visiting an Old Fort



Beauty of Underwater Life

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.

Rome’s ‘Hollywood on the Tiber’ plans comeback despite Trump tariff threat



EUROPE’S largest film studio, Cinecittà, is launching an ambitious plan to restore Italy’s prominence in the global film industry amid growing concerns over US President Donald Trump’s proposed tariffs on foreign productions. The historic Rome-based studio, managed by Cinecittà, approved a five-year development strategy funded partly by the EU’s post-COVID Recovery Fund. The initiative aims to expand production capacity by 60% through the construction of state-of-the-art sound stages, positioning Cinecittà as a leading hub for international filmmaking. Founded in 1937 during Mussolini’s regime, Cinecittà has earned the moniker “Hollywood on the Tiber,” hosting over 3,000 films and attracting legendary directors such as Fellini, Coppola and Scorsese. The company’s CEO, Manuela Cacciamani, expressed confidence in the project’s potential, stating, “Cinecittà must be a factory that works at full capacity, with excellence

as a minimum standard.” Financially, Cinecittà predicts revenues of nearly €52 million (\$58.8 million) by 2029, almost doubling its 2024 earnings, and aims to turn a net profit after a recent loss. Meanwhile, Trump’s intention to slap a 100% tariff on foreign-produced movies threatens to reshape industry dynamics, potentially disrupting global productions that rely on international studios for expertise, cost advantages and scenic locations. The tariffs were temporarily blocked by a US federal appeals court, which ruled that Trump exceeded his authority. Cinecittà remains cautiously optimistic, with CEO Cacciamani emphasising Italy’s competitive advantage, including a lucrative 40% tax credit for film production. Films like Gibson’s upcoming “The Resurrection of The Christ” highlight Italy’s continuing appeal as a filming destination, despite geopolitical uncertainties. — AFP



Moroccan women embroider ‘art with purpose’



IN A SMALL village on the coast of southern Morocco, women gather in a house to create collaborative works of textile art, and also earn a living. Several hunch over large canvasses, embroidering their latest piece at the women-only workshop, in the village of 400 people. Some of their works have been shown internationally. “This project has changed my life,” said Hanane Ichbikili, a 28-year-old former nursing student turned project creative director. “And yet I had never held an embroidery needle before,” she said. Just 19 per cent of Moroccan women hold steady jobs, according to official figures, and in rural areas they are particularly affected by poverty, unpaid labour and a lack of opportunity. An artist with roots in both Morocco and France has tried to make a difference. Margaux Derhy founded the workshop in 2022 in her father’s native village of Sidi R’bat, around 70 kilometres (45 miles) south of Agadir, to fulfil her “dream to make art with purpose”. The project uses textiles and old photographs to explore her family heritage before they left the country in the 1960s, turning sepia-toned portraits and scenes into large silk-and-linen canvases.



The North African country was a protectorate of France before gaining its independence in 1956. **CREATIVE PROCESS** The project is more than just personal for Derhy — it also provides local women in the small fishing village employment. “I wanted to be engaged on the ground,” said Derhy, adding that she hired 10 local women to work full-time for a monthly salary exceeding Morocco’s private-sector minimum wage of 3,045 dirhams (\$330). The women’s hands glide over frames that were once used by Paris’s prestigious Maison Lesage, the world-famous embroidery house that has worked with some of the greatest names in fashion. The creative process is collaborative, with Derhy drawing an outline and the team then gathering to choose the threads and colour palette for each section. A canvas can take up to five months to complete. The finished works, priced at up to \$5,620, have been shown in exhibitions in Marrakesh, Paris and Brussels. Future exhibits are planned for Casablanca’s L’Atelier 21 and Tabari Artspace Gallery in Dubai. The workshop has also helped to challenge perceived ideas about women in the village. “At first, some of the women had to hide to come because it



was frowned upon,” said Khadija Ahuilat, 26, who oversees operations. **A BLESSING** She said some people thought the project “was nonsense, and a woman should stay at home.” “But we managed to change that. I’m very proud to have contributed to this change, even if on a small scale.” Her mother, Aicha Jout, 50, a widow who once gathered mussels and raised livestock to support her family, is now one of the embroiderers. “It changes a lot for me to be here,” she said. “I love the idea of embroidering on pictures, but also of passing on the craft to other women.” Jout learned to embroider at the age of 12, and has trained the rest of her mostly single or widowed colleagues. “There aren’t really a lot of job opportunities here, so when the chance came I didn’t hesitate for a second,” said Haddia Nachit, 59, one of the workshop’s most efficient embroiders. Her nickname among the women is “TGV” — after France’s high-speed train. Seated next to Nachit, Fadma Lachgar, also 59, said the work allowed her to help her family. “Resuming embroidery at my age, after 20 years of stopping, is a blessing,” she said. — AFP

FEATURES



The Sayq Plateau itself is a captivating scene, characterised by rolling hills, terraced farms and unique limestone formations. At around 2,000 metres above sea level, it forms part of the Al Hajar Mountains range. This range is among the oldest on Earth, dating back over 100 million years, and has shaped the country’s terrain over millennia. The plateau also encompasses terraced agriculture and traditional villages that reflect the region’s ancient adaptation to its rugged environment.

As we descended into Al Bawarid, the landscape quickly became more challenging. The canyon was steep and strewn with loose scree, requiring careful navigation. The terrain here is typical of many of Oman’s wadis — dry riverbeds that fill with water

been discovered along wadis and mountaintops. In fact, Oman boasts an extensive array of prehistoric petroglyph sites, with some dating back as far as 8,000 years. These engravings depict animals, hunting scenes and abstract symbols, providing a fascinating window into the lives of its early peoples.

After enjoying the rugged beauty of the canyon, we noticed a distinctive pyramid-shaped mountain, with structures perched atop it. Intrigued by its unusual shape, we decided to investigate. A dirt track led us to the base of this mountain, and we commenced a climb. The ascent took approximately 30 minutes, with each step heightening our anticipation of the views to come.

Reaching the summit, we found a small basin —



most likely an old water collection site — alongside the remains of an ancient mosque. Such structures are evidence of Oman’s long history of settlement and trade, especially in remote regions where water sources were precious. The summit offered a panoramic vista of surrounding mountains, deep valleys and sprawling desert plains. The colour palette was astonishing: earthy browns, vibrant greens in the terraces and the shimmering blue of distant waters from wadis hidden below.

We took time to photograph the scene, capturing the silent grandeur of the landscape. These moments of stillness often reveal details missed in passing. As we descended, our thoughts shifted to the next phase of our journey: an evening setting up camp near Hail Al Masbit, a fertile area rich with ancient archaeological sites and natural springs.

The drive to Hail Al Masbit, just half an hour from our current location, offered another perspective of Oman’s varied terrain. We could see evidence of traditional life still thriving in the area, with farms, stone-built houses and water channels. As the sun dipped lower, casting golden hues over the landscape, our gratitude for being able to encounter such a diverse and untouched part of the country grew stronger.

The next day, we woke with the sunrise, eager to continue our exploration. On our way to Muscat, we planned to stop and examine some petroglyphs carved into the rocks of Wadi Halfain, situated between Birkat Al Mouz and Qurai. The prospect of uncovering ancient art and history filled us with anticipation, promising yet another unforgettable experience in the heart of Oman.

With our spirits high and our cameras at the ready, we set off, excited for the discoveries that lay ahead.

during sporadic rainy seasons — and showcases a remarkable array of geological formations. Towering rocks and narrow passages framed our path, echoing the slow yet persistent forces of nature that carved these features over countless years.

One of the most striking moments came when we encountered a sheer drop of approximately 60 metres — the kind of natural feature that raises both awe and respect for the region’s geological complexity. We paused, taking in the expansive view that stretched around us. The silence was punctuated only by the gentle trickle of water in the distance, a reminder of the intermittent streams that sustain life in these arid surrounds. These wadis serve as vital ecosystems, nurturing flora and fauna adapted to survive in extreme conditions.

Our exploration led us past ancient rock formations, shaped by erosion and tectonic activity, forming caves and overhangs that once offered shelter to early inhabitants. Oman is famous for its petroglyphs — rock engravings that span thousands of years of human history — many of which have

DISCOVERING MORE CANYONS, PETROGLYPHS AND SUMMITS AROUND AL BAWARID

BY KHALED ABDUL MALAK

ON A CLEAR Friday morning, I found myself eager to explore a new corner of Oman I had only previously glimpsed on Google Earth. As an enthusiast of the country’s striking landscapes, I often spend moments imagining the terrain in vivid detail — a habit that has fuelled my passion for discovering its hidden natural treasures. Over the past two decades, this curiosity has led me to identify and document around 45 canyons across Oman, a land renowned for its diverse geography, from rugged mountains and vast desert plains to lush wadis and dramatic gorges.

This particular day’s adventure began early on the Sayq Plateau, a high-altitude expanse in Al Hajar Mountains. Standing in the cool dawn air, with its crispness invigorating, I was accompanied by my wife and Jeffrey Rose, a renowned archaeologist affectionately known as Abou Warda, whose expertise has deepened our understanding of Oman’s historical landscapes. Our destination was Al Bawarid, a lesser-known tributary of Wadi Salut, a canyon system that offers a glimpse into the geological history and natural beauty of Oman’s interior.