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دولة عمان

DAILY

Observer

12

RONALDO SUFFERS MORE AGONY AS AL NASSR LOSE 1-0 IN AFC FINAL

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IN BRIEF

HM GETS MESSAGE FROM MAURITANIA



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, concerning bilateral relations between the two countries. The message was received by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, when he received in Muscat the Envoy of the President of Mauritania Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the relations of cooperation and partnership between the two countries. They also exchanged views on regional and international developments, underscoring the importance of supporting efforts aimed at containing tensions and advancing political solutions to various issues.

Dhofar 'S FUTURE PLANS



The Governorate of Dhofar organised a media briefing at Sultan Qaboos Youth Compound for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah under the theme 'Dhofar Flourishes with You.' **SEE P2**

INFLATION CLIMBS 3.2% IN APRIL

Inflation in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 3.2 per cent in April compared to the same month last year, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information. The data showed that the average inflation rate during the January-April 2026 period increased by 2.6 per cent, reflecting continued upwards pressure on consumer prices across several key sectors. The miscellaneous personal goods and services category recorded the highest increase at 9.2 per cent, followed by food and beverages at 6.2 per cent and transportation at 6 per cent. **DETAILS ON P15**

First day of Eid Al Adha on May 27

MUSCAT: The crescent moon of Dhul Hijjah, 1447 AH, has been sighted making Monday (May 17) the first day of Dhul Hijjah, while the first day of Eid Al Adha will fall on Wednesday (May 27), the Main Committee for Determining the Crescent Moons of the Islamic Months announced on Sunday. The Committee issued a statement reading as follows: The Main Committee for Determining

the Crescent Moons of the Islamic Months convened on Sunday, Dhul Qa’ada 29,1447 AH, corresponding to May 17, 2026, under the chairmanship of Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, in the presence of the committee’s members. The committee received reports confirming the sighting of the crescent moon of Dhul

Hijjah, 1447 AH. Following a review of the reports received, the committee decided that the crescent moon of Dhul Hijjah, 1447 AH has been sighted. Accordingly, Monday (May 18) will be the first day of Dhul Hijjah 1447 AH, and the first day of Eid al Adha will be Wednesday (May 27) corresponding to the 10th of Dhul Hijjah, 1447 AH. On this blessed occasion, the

Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs would like to extend its sincerest congratulations and best wishes to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, praying to Allah Almighty to grant His Majesty continued health, well-being and blessings, and to grant the Sultanate of Oman everlasting prosperity and glory, and all Muslims peace security, and blessings. — ONA

IRAN WAR DEADLOCK ENDURES

TEHRAN HAS TIGHTENED GRIP ON STRAIT OF HORMUZ

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Sunday threatened consequences for Iran if its leaders do not act quickly. “For Iran, the Clock is Ticking, and they better get moving, FAST, or there won’t be anything left of them. TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE!,” he wrote in a Truth Social post. Meanwhile, a drone strike caused a fire at a nuclear power plant in the United Arab Emirates, officials in Abu Dhabi said on Sunday, at a time when progress appears to have stalled in efforts to end the US-Israeli war with Iran and restart shipping in the Gulf. Emirati officials said they were investigating the source of the strike and that the UAE had the full right to respond to such “attacks”. The drone hit an electrical generator outside the inner perimeter of the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant, the Abu Dhabi Media Office said. Radiological safety levels were unaffected and there were no injuries, it said. The International Atomic Energy Agency said emergency diesel generators were providing power to the plant’s “unit 3”, and called for “maximum military restraint” near any nuclear power plant, adding that it was following the situation closely. The UAE defence ministry said two other drones had been “successfully” dealt with, and that the drones had been launched from the “western border”. It did not elaborate.

DIPLOMATIC DEADLOCK More than five weeks after a tenuous ceasefire in the conflict took effect, US and Iranian demands remain far apart despite diplomatic efforts to end the war and reopen the strait, the world’s most important shipping route for oil and gas. Washington has called for Tehran to dismantle its nuclear programme and lift its hold on the strait. Iran has demanded



People look at the gold shop display in Tehran Bazaar, in Tehran, Iran, on Sunday. — AFP

compensation for war damage, an end to a US blockade of Iranian ports and a halt to fighting on all fronts, including in Lebanon. Trump, who held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping last week without securing an indication from China that it would help resolve the conflict, has threatened to resume attacks if Iran does not agree to a deal. A senior spokesperson for the Iranian armed forces, Abolfazl Shekarchi, said on Sunday that if Trump’s threats were carried out, the US would “face new, aggressive, and surprise scenarios, and sink into a self-made quagmire”.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei said the US and Israel had tried to shift the blame for destabilising energy markets following their “unprovoked military aggression against Iran”. The disruption to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz has caused the biggest oil supply crisis in history, pushing up prices. The US has imposed its own blockade of Iranian ports and said that as of Sunday, it had redirected 81 commercial vessels and disabled four vessels to ensure compliance. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

‘Plant Oman 2050’ project boosts vegetation cover

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is witnessing a gradual improvement in vegetation cover density and an expansion of green areas, alongside the stabilisation and sustainability of natural habitats, the return of some wild species to affected areas, higher survival and sustainability rates of planted trees, improved air quality indicators, reduced desertification and soil erosion, increased efficiency of coastal ecosystems – particularly in mangrove

sites – and enhanced biodiversity indicators across natural environments. The Environment Authority relies on scientific and environmental indicators to measure the health and stability of the ecosystem, said Dr Mohammed bin Rashid al Maamari, Director of the Cultivation and Nurseries Department. Vegetation cover is improving in several locations as a result of cultivation and environmental rehabilitation programmes, though some



‘Plant Oman 2050’ project is part of an integrated national vision for environmental sustainability.

areas still face challenges such as overgrazing, urban expansion, water scarcity and climate change. The Environment Authority is strengthening long-term sustainability and protection programmes, using remote sensing, satellite imagery, field surveys and geographic information systems to monitor vegetation cover, track environmental changes and measure success and sustainability rates across afforestation sites, Al

Maamari said. Relevant departments continuously review and update national plans to combat desertification in line with environmental and climate developments and Oman’s international obligations, particularly the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, he said. The National Plan to Combat Desertification (2018-2030) focuses on protecting natural vegetation cover, restoring degraded areas. — ONA

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Dr. Vishalakshi Urundady
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Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair

SHORT TAKES



The temporary closure is due to maintenance works.

Athaiba Health Complex to close temporarily from June 7

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to enhance the national healthcare system and upgrade specialised medical services, the Ministry of Health (MoH) announced the temporary closure of the Al Athaiba South Health Complex for essential maintenance works, effective on Sunday, June 7.

To ensure uninterrupted care, patients with appointments at specialised clinics will be redirected to the Bausher and Al Seeb Specialised Health Complexes, with details regarding updated times and locations sent via SMS notifications.

Meanwhile, individuals seeking general clinic services are advised to visit the nearest health centre to their place of residence, and all emergency cases are urged to attend the Accident and Emergency Units at nearby hospitals.

757 vacant posts announced in several government units



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour announced today the availability of 757 vacant positions across a number of government units.

The positions are distributed across various educational qualifications, ranging from bachelor's degree holders to those with qualifications below the General Education Diploma. These include 646 vacancies for applicants holding a bachelor's degree or a post-General Education Diploma, and 111 vacancies for those holding a General Education Diploma or lower qualifications.

The ministry further announces that registration for competition for the advertised opportunities will open today and continue until May 31. — ONA

SQU HOSPITAL PERFORMS FIRST RARE EAR SURGERY

MUSCAT: A surgery team from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) recently performed the Sultanate of Oman's first surgical operation using internal lymphatic duct closure technique to treat a disease (Ménière's disease) in the ear of a patient.

The step reflects the development of national capabilities in providing specialised healthcare in Oman. The operation was run by Dr Nasser bin Mohammed al Tamami, Consultant Surgeon at Sultan Qaboos

University Hospital, University Medical City.

It underlined integrated specialised expertise in providing advanced treatment options for cases that do not respond to traditional treatments.

This contributes to improving the quality of life of patients and spares them the need to travel abroad for treatment. Ménière's disease is a chronic inner ear disorder that causes spontaneous and severe vertigo, fluctuating hearing loss,

tinnitus and ear pressure.

If left unattended, this disease may lead to partial or complete loss of hearing. The success of the operation embodies an institutional approach to upgrade health services and enhance the integration of healthcare, diagnosis and therapeutic intervention.

It also lends support to the educational and research environment that contributes to the localisation of modern medical knowledge. — ONA

Dhofar showcases plans, confirms Khareef readiness

THE GOVERNORATE of Dhofar on Sunday organised a media briefing at Sultan Qaboos Youth Compound for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah under the theme 'Dhofar Flourishes with You.'

The event was held in the presence of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, and with broad participation comprising over 150 officials from government entities and media representatives.

The event featured an interactive experience across five main stations, showcasing the outcomes of the first year of implementation of the governorate's comprehensive strategy. This was achieved through highlighting performance indicators and achievements realised across the six development pillars, alongside presenting plans and projects related to enhancing the governorate's competitive advantages and supporting sustainable development pathways.

In the Human Resources Development Pillar, the governorate presented its efforts to empower national competencies and align training outputs with the labour market needs in the governorate, particularly in the fields of renewable energy, artificial intelligence and logistics services.

This was in addition to achieving three awards in the Digital Excellence Award 2025 and the ranking of Dhofar University among the top 50 Arab universities and top 250 Asian universities for 2026.

The media briefing also revealed the employment of 7,985 citizens



The media briefing was held in the presence of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The briefing also highlighted the completion of 25 strategic projects and initiatives, including the inauguration of the 'Sustainable Business Environment'

in the private sector during 2025, the implementation of training programmes linked to employment, as well as the employment of 101 persons with disabilities.

In the Economic Diversification Pillar, the governorate unveiled a package of strategic investments and projects that have strengthened Dhofar's position as a promising economic destination. Accumulated investments in Salalah Free Zone reached RO 5.1 billion, while OQ Basic Industries recorded a net profit of RO 47.7 million, representing a growth rate of 18 per cent.

The event also highlighted investments in the medical sector exceeding RO 55 million, the inauguration of Salalah Data Center (Ooredoo) to support digital transformation and the business environment, as well as food security projects including the offering of 67 investment opportunities, an investment project to cultivate one million olive trees

with a total value exceeding RO 15 million, in addition to the largest meat and poultry investment valued at RO 57.7 million. Furthermore, the implementation of a project to establish a cheese production facility using camel milk in the Wilayat of Rakhyyout was presented, along with the commencement of construction work on the integrated agricultural product collection and marketing centre in Al Najd, with an annual capacity of 50,000 tonnes.

In the tourism sector, the event reviewed the laying of the foundation stone for an integrated tourism complex valued at RO 80 million, the opening of the Sea of Oman Resort in the Wilayat of Mirbat, in addition to the signing of contracts for the development of the nature reserves (Jabal Samhan, Khor Al Maghsil, and Wadi Dawkah), thereby enhancing the balance between economic development and the preservation of natural resources.

The media briefing touched on the completion of 25 strategic projects and initiatives, including the inauguration of the 'Sustainable Business Environment' activities, the launch of the Golden Residency Programme for investors, alongside the automation of services through 'Oman Business' platform.

Meanwhile, the governorate enhanced its industrial readiness by signing a natural gas supply agreement for Salalah Free Zone and hosting the 'Middle East Transport Conference and Exhibition 2025,' which focused on the digitalisation of supply chains and smart ports.

— ONA

Special commemorative plates announced for Khareef Dhofar 2026

ZAKIYA AL HUSSAINI
MUSCAT, MAY 17

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) announced on Sunday the launch of special commemorative vehicle licence plates for the Khareef Dhofar 2026 season. The initiative offers motorists a unique opportunity to feature a custom-designed plate celebrating one of Oman's most popular seasonal events.

The commemorative plates feature a distinct design, incorporating the 'Khareef Dhofar 2026' branding alongside standard registration details. According to the ROP announcement, vehicle owners can easily submit their requests

through multiple convenient channels starting ahead of the season. Applications can be made via Service Centres, the ROP website, or the ROP mobile app. It has been specified that these commemorative plates will have a fixed period of validity, active from June 1 until December 31, 2026. According to the ROP, the commemorative plates will be issued using the vehicle's existing registration number. The ROP emphasised that all standard vehicle registration rules, traffic laws and insurance regulations will apply normally to vehicles sporting the special plates.

Meanwhile, the ROP issued Ministerial Decision No 74/2026,



The commemorative plates feature a distinct design, incorporating the 'Khareef Dhofar 2026' branding alongside standard registration details.

amending several provisions of the Executive Regulations of the Traffic Law. The new amendments officially introduce 'Commemorative Licence Plates' for vehicles, along with their

associated fees and penalties. This legislative update coincides with the ROP's announcement regarding the roll-out of these special plates for the upcoming Khareef Dhofar 2026.

The newly issued decision introduces a new clause titled 'Commemorative' under Article (2) of the Executive Regulations of the Traffic Law. It also adds a new article permitting the issuance of these commemorative number plates under specific conditions, stipulating that their use will be strictly limited to the duration and purpose determined by the relevant authority. According to the amendments, these special plates have been added to the official

annex governing metal plate types and dimensions, ensuring they match the design approved by the administration.

The decision has set a fee of RO 70 to obtain a commemorative licence plate, which has been added to the fee schedule of the Traffic Law's Executive Regulations. To ensure compliance, the amendments feature a new traffic violation added to the traffic fines and points schedule. The decision states that any previous regulations contradicting or conflicting with these new amendments are cancelled, and the decision will come into effect the day after its publication in the Official Gazette.

DIRECTORS' REPORT

For the Three-Month Period Ended 31 March 2026



Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the unaudited financial results of Ominvest Group for the three-month period ended 31 March 2026.

Below I would like to present macroeconomics overview, and financial performance of Ominvest Group and our major portfolio companies for the three-month period ended 31 March 2026.

A Brief on Macroeconomics

The global economy entered 2026 under heightened volatility, as a major geopolitical escalation disrupted expectations of a gradual normalization in growth and inflation. While this has materially increased uncertainty, financial markets particularly in the United States, have demonstrated notable resilience, with equity indices continuing to reach record highs. This has occurred alongside emerging supply disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz and early signs of re-accelerating inflation, reinforcing a higher-for-longer interest rate environment. This was evident in the latest US Federal Reserve meeting, where policymakers pushed back against an easing bias, highlighting persistent inflation risks.

Across the GCC, the impact has been more pronounced, reflecting the region's structural exposure to the Strait of Hormuz. The effects remain uneven, with more dependent economies facing sharper growth pressures, most notably Qatar, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been partially insulated through alternative export routes. Despite this, most GCC economies retain strong fiscal buffers and policy flexibility to absorb near-term shocks, although Bahrain remains comparatively more constrained.

In Oman, economic conditions continue to demonstrate resilience, with the Sultanate among the least directly impacted economies in the region. This reflects its neutral foreign policy stance, strategic geographic positioning, and well-established logistics infrastructure, with key ports operating outside the Strait of Hormuz. Higher oil prices during the quarter, alongside stable production, are expected to support fiscal revenues.

Importantly, Oman's strengthened macroeconomic framework continues to anchor investor confidence, as reflected in the reaffirmation of its investment-grade credit rating by S&P Global Ratings amid heightened geopolitical tensions. While inflationary pressures have begun to re-emerge, primarily driven by food and transport costs, overall financial conditions remain stable. Domestic capital markets have also shown strong momentum, with the Muscat Stock Exchange ranking among the top-performing markets globally during the quarter. This performance, supported by improved liquidity and sustained investor participation, reinforces the case for Oman's potential inclusion on the MSCI Emerging Markets watchlist as early as June 2026.

This progress is complemented by ongoing initiatives to deepen the financial ecosystem, including the development of an international financial centre, reinforcing Oman's longer-term ambition to position itself as a regional financial and investment hub.

Looking ahead, the global outlook remains closely tied to geopolitical developments. However, underlying resilience, supported by fiscal strength and policy buffers across the region, is expected to sustain stability. Inflation dynamics and financial conditions will remain key watchpoints in the period ahead.

Group Consolidated Performance

During the quarter ended 31 March 2026, the Group revenue increased by 16.1% to **₹ 150.00 million** as compared to **₹ 129.23 million** during the corresponding period in 2025, and the net profit attributable to Ominvest's shareholders increased by 5.3% to **₹ 11.02 million** as compared to **₹ 10.46 million** during the corresponding period in 2025. The results highlight the continued resilience and strength of Ominvest Group's diversified portfolio. Overall, the majority of our key strategic investments delivered performance broadly in line with

expectations, consistent with the corresponding period in 2025.

Parent Company Performance

During the quarter ended 31 March 2026, the Parent Company reported total revenues of **₹ 19.72 million**. The net profit attributable to equity holders of the Parent Company increased by 8.3% to **₹ 11.04 million** as compared to **₹ 10.19 million** during the corresponding quarter in 2025, demonstrating enhanced earnings quality and operational efficiency. The performance reaffirms the strength of our strategic investments, effective portfolio management and the sustained operational performance of underlying businesses.

Performance of Key Subsidiaries and Associates

Bank Muscat SAOG (Bank Muscat) our major associate in the banking sector continues to perform well and maintain its leadership position in Oman's financial services sector. Bank Muscat sustained its strong performance in the first quarter of 2026, reporting a 9.2% increase in net profit to **₹ 63.95 million** from **₹ 58.56 million** during the corresponding period in 2025, demonstrating sustained business momentum and operational efficiency. As of 31 March 2026, the Bank's total assets grew by 7.1% to reach **₹ 15.38 billion**, reflecting steady growth and strong market confidence. Bank Muscat's capital adequacy ratio stood at a healthy level of 19.16%. Bank Muscat reported a 4.9% increase in customer deposits, reaching **₹ 10.49 billion**, while its loan portfolio grew by 6.3% to **₹ 11.21 billion**, supported by expansion across corporate and retail segments, as well as continued growth in Islamic banking.

Liva Group SAOG (Liva Group), our insurance subsidiary, delivered a stable performance in the first quarter of 2026 underpinned by disciplined execution and continued focus on strategic priorities. Insurance revenue increased by 18.4% year-on-year to **₹ 111.41 million** in the first quarter of 2026, reflecting strong business momentum across markets with health and personal lines delivering particularly strong performance. The insurance service results decreased by 13% to **₹ 4.19 million** in the first quarter of 2026, mainly impacted by unfavourable claims development. The Group's investment income increased by 6% to **₹ 3.70 million** compared to **₹ 3.49 million** in the corresponding period of 2025, result of stable portfolio performance and prudent investment strategy – consistent with the Group's disciplined investment allocation. Net profit after tax for the quarter was **₹ 1.9 million**, compared with **₹ 4.2 million** in the prior period. Performance was achieved despite external headwinds on adverse weather events and regional geopolitical tensions affecting the market. Liva Group remains focused on disciplined underwriting, tightened risk selection, and active portfolio management to support sustainable long-term performance.

International General Insurance (IGI), our high-performing strategic associate in the insurance sector, is a leading international specialty insurance and reinsurance group, registered in Bermuda and publicly listed on the Nasdaq Capital Market under the symbol "IGIC." IGI is recognized for its financial strength, holding an "A" (Strong) rating from S&P Global Ratings and an "A" (Excellent) rating from AM Best, both with a Stable Outlook.

For the quarter ended March 31, 2026, IGI reported net profit of **\$21.7 million**, compared to **\$27.3 million** in prior period. The decline in profitability was primarily attributable to foreign exchange losses arising from adverse movements in the IGI's major transactional currencies, principally the Pound Sterling and the Euro, against the U.S. Dollar. Underwriting income amounted to **\$37.7 million**, compared to **\$27.9 million** in prior period, resulting in a combined ratio of 89.1%, compared to 94.4% in prior period. Gross written premiums for the period were **\$197.2 million**, compared to **\$206.5 million** in prior period, while net premiums earned totalled **\$111.2 million** versus **\$112.8 million** in the prior period. Net investment income decreased to **\$13.5 million** from **\$15.5 million** in the prior period. Book value per share increased to **\$15.6** at 31 March 2026, up from **\$14.64** at prior period end.

Oman Arab Bank SAOG (OAB) our associate in the banking sector, reported a consolidated profit of **₹ 8.22 million** for the quarter ended 31 March 2026, up 10.8% compared to **₹ 7.42 million** during the corresponding period in 2025. OAB's net loans and advances, including Islamic finance, increased by 7.4% to **₹ 3.81 billion** as at 31 March 2026 compared to **₹ 3.54 billion** as at 31 March 2025. Customer deposits increased by 5.4% to reach **₹ 3.86 billion** as at 31 March 2026 compared to **₹ 3.67 billion** as

at 31 March 2025. Alizz Islamic Bank SAOC, a fully owned subsidiary of OAB consistently increased its profits and assets since the merger with OAB in 2020 and its profit grew by 8.7% to **₹ 2.62 million** for the three-month ended 31 March 2026 compared to **₹ 2.41 million** for the same period in 2025.

National Finance Company SAOG (NFC), our associate in the leasing sector remains the largest Finance and Leasing Company in the Sultanate of Oman in terms of asset size, branch network, revenues and profit. NFC reported an increase of 15.7% in profit to **₹ 3.83 million** for the quarter ended 31 March 2026 compared to **₹ 3.31 million** during the corresponding period in 2025. Loan book grew by 10.5% to **₹ 664.00 million** as at 31 March 2026 compared to **₹ 600.74 million** as at 31 March 2025. National Finance's total regulatory capital of **₹ 144.12 million** as at 31 March 2026 is the highest among Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs) in Sultanate of Oman, which gives them a strong base to build business.

Oman Real Estate Investments & Services SAOC (ORIS), our real estate subsidiary, launched the prestigious LA VIE project in 2023, featuring a world-class golf course, luxury hotel, and premium residential units. The project has been successfully completed, with only minor snagging items being progressively closed. The hotel was handed over to the operator on 29 March 2026, and the handover of residential apartments commenced from April 2026. As of today, over 90% of the premium units have been sold, reflecting strong demand in the luxury apartment segment. Strategic partnerships have been established with "Benihana" and "The Coffee Club", with their launch in the Oman market expected by Q3 2026. ORIS remains dedicated to strengthening the performance of its group companies and subsidiaries through active support in their real estate development and investment activities.

Other key investments

Other key investments include, private equity investments, which are focused on diverse sectors and expanding into new growth markets in Asia, amounted to **₹ 68 million**.

Corporate Citizenship

Ominvest remains firmly committed to our purpose to enrich societies, consistently integrating it into its strategy and day-to-day operations. This exemplifies our role as a responsible investor and underscores our commitment to long-term, sustainable growth.

As part of our commitment to empowering Omani youth and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, Ominvest was proud to renew its sponsorship of the INJAZ Oman Company Program for 2026. The initiative provides hundreds of high school and university students across the Sultanate with practical experience in entrepreneurship, business management, and financial literacy, equipping them with essential skills for future leadership and innovation.

Ominvest also continued promoting people wellbeing in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as it successfully concluded the fourth edition of the Ominvest Ramadan Football Championship for Group Companies. This year's edition featured seven teams representing Ominvest Group companies, alongside a guest team, the Authority for Public Services Regulation. The championship reflects Ominvest's deep commitment to promoting a healthy and active lifestyle and strengthening the unity among its employees across its companies.

The group continued in 2026 its commitment to invest in developing future talent through providing comprehensive internship opportunities. During Q1, our internship programme provided 11 students and fresh graduates with meaningful hands-on experiences within a high-performance investment company environment.

Through these impactful initiatives, Ominvest continues to demonstrate its commitment to creating enduring societal value while delivering sustainable, long-term returns to its stakeholders.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to our inspirational leader His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his vision and initiatives as he continues to lead the country on the path of development, peace, and enduring prosperity.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank the Financial Services Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange, and Central Bank of Oman for their continued support and guidance. I would also like to thank our dedicated teams at Ominvest and across our Group companies for their commitment and hard work.

Rashad Muhammad Al Zubair
Chairman

UNAUDITED INTERIM CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2026				
	Consolidated		Parent Company	
	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-26	(Audited) 31-Dec-25	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-26	(Audited) 31-Dec-25
	(₹'000)	(₹'000)	(₹'000)	(₹'000)
Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	67,468	47,557	4,448	3,764
Deposits with banks	135,330	169,929	-	-
Insurance contract assets	343	166	-	-
Re-insurance contract assets	73,698	72,053	-	-
Investment securities	343,149	334,143	14,474	15,594
Investment in associates	582,259	597,504	320,657	327,591
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	388,010	461,757
Due from subsidiaries	-	-	80,508	67,612
Other assets	76,448	55,890	5,519	2,511
Investment properties	6,210	6,210	2,000	2,000
Property and equipment	20,195	19,662	444	481
Work in progress	49,307	46,186	-	-
Intangible assets	49,673	49,554	-	-
Total assets	1,404,080	1,398,854	816,060	881,310
Equity and liabilities				
Equity				
Share capital	112,285	93,571	112,285	93,571
Legal reserve	26,222	26,222	26,222	26,222
Mandatory convertible bonds	13,367	13,367	13,367	13,367
Other non-distributable reserves	12,086	8,234	12,086	8,234
Cumulative changes in fair value reserve	8,821	8,431	8,130	7,805
Retained earnings	49,425	69,637	41,828	66,807
Equity attributable to equity holders of the Parent Company	222,206	219,462	213,918	216,006
Perpetual bonds / sukuks	110,720	116,720	112,159	112,159
	332,926	336,182	326,077	328,165
	88,011	87,813	-	-
Non-controlling interests				
Total equity	420,937	423,995	326,077	328,165
Liabilities				
Due to banks	623,095	614,671	440,429	507,067
Insurance contract liabilities	262,020	268,805	-	-
Reinsurance contract liabilities	24,817	20,104	-	-
Other liabilities	70,028	67,954	49,074	45,598
Taxation	3,183	3,325	480	480
Total liabilities	983,143	974,859	489,983	553,145
Total equity and liabilities	1,404,080	1,398,854	816,060	881,310
Net assets per share (₹)	0.198	0.235	0.191	0.231

UNAUDITED INTERIM CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTH ENDED 31 MARCH 2026				
	Consolidated		Parent Company	
	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-26	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-25	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-26	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-25
	(₹'000)	(₹'000)	(₹'000)	(₹'000)
Insurance revenue	120,152	103,162	-	-
Interest income	4,087	3,782	1,036	588
Investment income	4,233	3,229	482	50
Fee and commission income	1,264	1,704	26	36
Other operating income	4,342	2,911	-	-
Share of results from subsidiaries	-	-	10,232	11,206
Share of results from associates	15,928	14,446	7,946	7,175
Total revenue	150,006	129,234	19,722	19,055
Insurance service expense	(105,413)	(80,469)	-	-
Net reinsurance expense	(8,778)	(15,587)	-	-
Fee and commission expenses	(1,828)	(2,186)	-	-
Interest expense	(8,566)	(8,306)	(7,413)	(7,157)
Operating expenses	(12,308)	(8,501)	(1,271)	(1,708)
Total expenses	(136,893)	(115,049)	(8,684)	(8,865)
Profit before tax	13,113	14,185	11,038	10,190
Income tax expense	(971)	(1,537)	-	-
Profit for the period	12,142	12,648	11,038	10,190
Profit for the period attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	11,016	10,458	11,038	10,190
Non-controlling interests	1,126	2,190	-	-
	12,142	12,648	11,038	10,190
	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009
Basic earnings per share attributable to the equity holders of the Parent Company (₹)				
Other comprehensive income / (expense) :				
<i>Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:</i>				
Movement in cash flow hedge	3,859	(193)	3,859	(193)
Foreign currency translation reserve	(7)	6	(7)	6
Changes in fair value of debt instruments at fair value through other comprehensive income	(1,506)	314	(1,506)	295
<i>Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:</i>				
Changes in fair value of equity instruments at fair value through other comprehensive income and share of OCI from equity accounted investee	2,606	139	1,827	(761)
Other comprehensive income/(expense) for the period	4,952	266	4,173	(653)
Total comprehensive income for the period	17,094	12,914	15,211	9,537
Total comprehensive income for the period attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	15,189	10,425	15,211	9,537
Non-controlling interests	1,905	2,489	-	-
	17,094	12,914	15,211	9,537

OMAN

SHORTTAKES



The workshop brought together leading government entities and industry stakeholders.

WORKSHOP EXPLORES FUTURE OF HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT

MUSCAT: As part of national efforts to promote environmental sustainability, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, in cooperation with be'ah, organised a specialised workshop titled “Industrial and Hazardous Waste Management” on May 17 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The workshop was held in alignment with Oman

The workshop was held in alignment with Oman Sustainability Week, reflecting the Sultanate of Oman's continued commitment to advancing circular economy initiatives.

waste. The workshop brought together leading government entities and industry stakeholders, highlighting key topics such as the current landscape of industrial and hazardous waste management in Oman, be'ah's capabilities in this field, and the application of circular economy practices within the industrial and energy sectors.

A dedicated brainstorming session, facilitated by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, provided a platform to address existing challenges and explore future opportunities to enhance the national waste management framework and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders.

Participating organisations, including Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Oman LNG, presented their experiences in implementing best practices in hazardous waste management, demonstrating a shared commitment to sustainability and regulatory compliance.

The workshop concluded with an open discussion session, enabling participants to exchange insights and develop recommendations to support the advancement of national policies and practices in this vital sector.

NEW GROUP OF CITIZENS JOINS ROP

MUSCAT: A new group of citizens holding general education diplomas (GED) and post-GED has joined the Royal Oman Police (ROP) after passing the evaluation and acceptance phases in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, on Sunday.

The recruits will undergo training at the Police Institute for New Recruits at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences. They will be groomed with the fundamentals and skills of police work, as well as acquire legal and academic knowledge of police work.



The new recruits will undergo training at the Police Institute for New Recruits at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences.

Hamoud bin Ali al Rashdi, a new police recruit, said, "Joining the Royal Oman Police is an honour and a great responsibility. I will do

everything in my power to serve the nation and always live up to expectations.” Saif bin Malik al Rajhi, a new police recruit, said,

"I am going to start a new chapter in my life, a chapter defined by commitment and discipline. I will always be a loyal soldier committed to protecting the security of the nation and safeguarding its resources with utmost dedication." Hawas bin Ali al Amri, a new police recruit, said, "My acceptance into the Royal Oman Police came after completing the registration procedures for the mechanical engineering specialisation, which deals with machinery, pumps, and troubleshooting their malfunctions."

Livestock markets come alive as Eid Al Adha nears

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MAY 17

WITH THE month of Dhul Hijjah beginning (Monday), the livestock markets have come alive ahead of Eid Al Adha.

To meet the high seasonal demand, Oman regularly imports hundreds of thousands of animals, such as sheep, goats, and cattle, from countries like Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, and Australia.

Meanwhile, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has intensified inspection efforts and field visits to livestock markets.

“The inspection drive at livestock markets across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman is conducted as part of our seasonal plan aimed at ensuring the availability of livestock, maintaining price stability, and protecting consumers from unfair commercial practices ahead of Eid Al Adha,” said a CPA official.

The inspection efforts include extensive field visits to livestock markets, holding pens, and distribution points to verify the availability of different types of livestock, monitor buying and selling activities, ensure suppliers' compliance with declared prices and market regulations, and detect any unjustified price increases or monopolistic practices that may affect market stability.

To meet the high seasonal demand, Oman regularly imports hundreds of thousands of animals, such as sheep, goats, and cattle, from countries like Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, and Australia.



Hundreds of flocks of sheep and goats are currently being traded both from local farms and international imports.

Dr Ahmed bin Said al Busaidy, Director-General of Consumer Services and Market Monitoring, stated that the Authority continuously monitors livestock markets across the governorates in light of the increased demand during Eid Al Adha. He affirmed that inspection teams have intensified field campaigns to ensure the availability of livestock, maintain price stability and prevent practices that may harm consumers.

“However, the current indicators confirm the availability of livestock in sufficient quantities to meet consumer demand, and we, at the CPA, are coordinating with importers and suppliers to ensure continuity of supply chains and enhance the smooth movement of trade in the

markets," he added.

He added that the Authority will not tolerate any attempts to exploit seasonal demand or impose unjustified price increases, stressing that any violations will be addressed in accordance with the Consumer Protection Law. He also confirmed the continuation of surprise inspection campaigns at livestock markets and holding pens across various governorates.

The Authority further called on traders and suppliers to comply with market regulations and laws, and to provide goods at fair prices and appropriate quality standards, contributing to market stability and fostering a fair and balanced commercial environment during Eid Al Adha.

Over RO 100m allocated for road projects in Al Dakhiliyah

NIZWA: Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, is continuing to implement an integrated system of road and infrastructure projects across the governorate's wilayats, with total investments exceeding RO 100 million. The projects include internal and developmental roads being executed by the governorate at a cost of over RO 17.7 million, alongside strategic road projects being implemented by the ministry at a cost exceeding RO 82 million.

These initiatives enhance infrastructure readiness, improve the efficiency of the transport

network and support economic, tourism and urban development in the governorate. Ongoing projects are distributed between internal roads serving residential neighbourhoods, urban plans and service centres under governorate development programmes, and strategic projects implemented by the ministry that include links between wilayats and governorates, as well as tourist and mountain roads. These align with the urban expansion and economic and tourism dynamism that Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has witnessed in recent years, boosting its developmental and investment competitiveness.



These initiatives enhance infrastructure readiness, improve the efficiency of the transport network and support economic, tourism and urban development in the governorate.

Shaikh Mahmoud bin Rashid al Saadi, Wali of Nizwa and Acting Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, affirmed that road projects are key enablers of comprehensive development in

the governorate, playing a pivotal role in improving connectivity between wilayats, population centres, economic and tourist sites, supporting commercial and investment activity and enhancing quality of life. In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), he said that Al Dakhiliyah Governorate is coordinating with relevant authorities to implement high-quality projects that respond to current and future development needs, contributing to a more efficient road network, better road safety levels and greater readiness to absorb urban and investment growth, in line with Oman Vision 2040. In Nizwa, the governorate is

continuing to implement internal road projects totalling 26 kilometres at a cost of over RO 2.2 million, with completion reaching about 76 per cent by the end of April 2026, supporting urban expansion and improving links between residential and service areas. A project to create an additional exit and add parking spaces at the Nizwa Central Market is also underway, with 33 per cent completion, helping to improve traffic flow and ease congestion in the wilayat's commercial and vital district. On the strategic side, the ministry is implementing the Izki-Farq dual carriageway project, 30.4 kilometres long, at an estimated cost exceeding RO 46 million. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



SQHCC LAUNCHES ‘IQRA’ READING CONTEST 2026

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to encourage reading and develop the skills of gaining knowledge among rising generations, the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science (SQHCCS) on Sunday launched the 15th edition of ‘Iqra’ Reading Contest (2026) for young people. The organising committee said that subscription to the competition begins today and continues until October 1, 2026— the deadline for submitting summaries and receiving entries. The competition aims to develop the skills of students in reading, summarising and analysing contexts. The contest contributes to grooming a well-informed generation that is capable of keeping pace with the developments of time and events. — ONA

SQU DELEGATION PARTICIPATES IN KAZAN FORUM 2026



MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University concluded its participation in the Russia-Islamic World International Economic Forum 2026, which commenced on May 12 at the Kazan Expo International Centre in Kazan, Russia, with wide participation from countries across the globe. The University was represented at the forum by Sulaiman bin Daud al Sabei, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, and Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Kindi, Director of the International Cooperation Office. SQU’s participation came within the framework of its ongoing cooperation with academic and cultural institutions in the Russian Federation. The visit aimed to strengthen the University’s international presence and explore opportunities for academic and research collaboration with universities and educational institutions participating in the forum. The delegation also took part in workshops and lectures addressing contemporary challenges in the higher education sector, while engaging in discussions on emerging trends in academic development and international cooperation. In addition, the delegation held several meetings with representatives of participating academic institutions to explore avenues for joint collaboration, exchange expertise and strengthen partnerships.

National Committee for Family Affairs holds meeting

MUSCAT: The National Committee for Family Affairs held its first meeting for 2026 under the chairmanship of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development and Chairperson of the Committee. The meeting discussed a number of topics related to family affairs,



The meeting discussed topics related to family affairs.

including divorce and the proposed mechanisms to mitigate its resulting impacts, the withholding of alimony, and finding pathways that achieve the best interests of children in particular and the family in general. Additionally, the meeting reviewed some laws relevant to family affairs. — ONA

A journey through time in Al Dakhiliyah’s museums

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MAY 17

IN Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, museums are more than quiet buildings filled with old objects and fading photographs. They are living spaces where memory can be seen in clay walls, carved wooden doors, handwritten manuscripts, and the scent of rosewater drifting through centuries-old corners. As the world marks International Museum Day on May 18 under this year’s theme, ‘Museums for Education and Research’, private museums and heritage houses across Al Dakhiliyah continue to offer visitors something deeper than a historical tour. They give visitors a chance to step into Omani life as it once was. From the mountain villages of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar to the ancient harats of Nizwa and Al Hamra, each museum tells its own story, preserving fragments of everyday life that have quietly become history. High above the terraces of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, in Harat Al Aqur, Bait Al Sharaf Museum welcomes visitors into a traditional mountain home where carved wooden doors, stone passageways, rosewater distillation tools, and old household items reflect the simplicity and resilience of life in the highlands. French tourist Elaine Morris said, “It did not feel like a museum. While walking through the old rooms overlooking the mountain farms, it felt like entering someone’s memories. Every object seemed to carry a story.” In Nizwa, the Nizwa Museum offers another journey through time. Ancient manuscripts, traditional weapons, pottery, silverware, and artefacts reveal layers of Omani history shaped by trade, scholarship, craftsmanship, and everyday life. The museum does not merely display objects; it helps visitors understand how people lived, worked, learned,



Private museums and heritage houses across Al Dakhiliyah continue to offer visitors something deeper than a historical tour.



AHLAM AL QASABI

Director, Heritage and Tourism Department

Private museums and heritage houses across Al Dakhiliyah continue to offer visitors something deeper than a historical tour

and connected with the world around them. Just a short walk away in Harat Al Aqur, the Gateway Museum of the Past recreates the atmosphere of a traditional Omani home. Narrow corridors, old kitchens, water wells, and family gathering spaces transport visitors into another era, where daily routines unfolded at a slower, simpler pace. German traveller Lara Schmidt said, “You begin to realise that these ordinary tools and rooms once meant everything to the people who lived here. It was a truly fascinating experience to reflect on how these people lived, and to find ourselves contemplating their everyday objects with such wonder and amazement. I also loved drawing water from the well, which was perfectly potable. It was a beautiful experience that made you wonder how they used to obtain water in this way.” In the Wilayat of Al Hamra, Bait Al Safah Museum transforms heritage into a living experience. Visitors watch women preparing traditional bread, grinding grains, extracting oils, and practicing crafts that once shaped everyday Omani

life. The museum’s architecture and interactive atmosphere allow guests to experience heritage beyond glass displays and written descriptions. Also in Al Hamra, the Museum of Coins, located inside Al Ghanima Fort, showcases rare Omani, Islamic, and international coins that trace centuries of trade routes and cultural exchange connecting Oman with the wider world. Ahlam bint Hamad al Qasabi, Director of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said, “The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is increasingly focused on supporting these museums by providing technical and advisory support, organising participation in cultural events and exhibitions, and encouraging museum owners to develop their display methods and utilise modern technologies that enhance the visitor experience and increase the appeal of cultural tourism.” She explained that the governorate’s six licensed private museums are no longer merely sites for displaying heritage artefacts, but have become vibrant cultural and tourism platforms that strengthen national identity, connect generations with their history, and present Omani heritage in a contemporary style that combines knowledge and experience. She added that the ministry continues its efforts to empower private museums and enhance their local and international presence, helping consolidate Al Dakhiliyah Governorate’s position as a cultural destination rich in history and heritage. Beyond tourism and preservation, museums often leave visitors with quieter, more personal reflections. Standing before old kitchen utensils, handwritten letters, antique coins, and everyday tools once used without a second thought, many begin to wonder what objects from modern life may one day sit behind museum glass.

Omani Writers’ Society announces release of 42 new titles

MUSCAT: The Omani Society for Writers and Authors has announced the release of 42 new literary and intellectual titles in 2026, as part of its annual publishing project aimed at enriching Oman’s cultural landscape. The diverse collection spans poetry, novels, short stories, intellectual, critical and historical studies, as well as children’s literature, reflecting the growing cultural movement in Oman and continued support for Omani writers and creators. This year’s initiative marks a significant milestone, with the Musandam Printing, Publishing and Distribution House, affiliated with the Society, independently handling the printing of all publications for the first time — a move considered a

qualitative addition to Oman’s cultural and publishing scene. Said bin Mohammed al Saqlawi said that the publishing project remains one of the Society’s most important cultural initiatives, embodying its commitment to promoting Omani writers and books while strengthening their presence locally and internationally through modern and diverse creative methods. STUDY AND RESEARCH He added that, through Musandam Publishing and Distribution House, the Society aims to revitalise the publishing sector and offer professional services at competitive prices to members, institutions and individual beneficiaries.



CULTURAL HERITAGE Among the new study and research titles are ‘The Biography of Shaikh Al Faqih Khalaf bin Ziyad,’ ‘Dhofar: The Symbol and the Human Being,’ ‘The Omanis and the Haj,’ ‘Identity and Citizenship,’ and ‘Gamification and its Role in the Future of Education.’ The collection also includes publications on Omani literature, cultural heritage, foreign policy and history, alongside titles focused on voluntary work, scouting and literary criticism. In poetry, the Society released several collections, including ‘The Voice of Ginger,’ ‘The Joy of Souls,’ ‘Three Steps to Pick Jasmine,’ and ‘Silver Chains.’ The publishing programme

also covers travel literature, short stories and novels, including ‘Europe as I Saw It,’ ‘When It Was Blue,’ and ‘Two Eyes Carrying the Sea.’ English-language titles released this year include ‘Travel Ticket’ and ‘Enterprise Application Integration for Omani Government.’ Meanwhile, children’s and young adult literature featured works such as ‘Muhannad’s Secret Adventure’ and ‘Can I Buy a Mountain?’ Al Saqlawi noted that the Society has published more than 430 titles since the launch of its publishing project in 2008, underscoring its role in supporting Omani authors, promoting national cultural products and strengthening their presence in the literary arena. — ONA

M I D D L E E A S T L A T E S T D E V E L O P M E N T S

‘CONSTRUCTIVE’ WORLD CUP MEETING

FIFA secretary general Mattias Graftstrom described as ‘excellent’ and ‘constructive’ the meeting in Istanbul with the Iranian federation to ensure Iran’s participation in the 2026 World Cup in the US, Canada and Mexico.

FRESH ISRAELI STRIKES TARGET LEBANON

Israeli strikes targeted eastern and southern Lebanon, state media reported, despite a fragile ceasefire, as a Hezbollah lawmaker called Lebanon’s negotiations with Israel a ‘dead-end.’

IRAN’S SPEAKER TO OVERSEE TIES WITH CHINA

Iran’s parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who recently emerged as a chief negotiator in talks with the US, has been appointed to oversee relations with China, Iranian media reported.

US AIRCRAFT CARRIER RETURNS TO MIDDLE EAST

The USS Gerald R Ford aircraft carrier, dispatched to the Middle East ahead of the outbreak of war with Iran, returned home to the US after a 326-day deployment, the Pentagon said.

IRANIAN WORLD CUP TEAM TO DEPART

Iran’s World Cup squad will travel to Turkiye for a training camp, friendlies and to complete visa applications before heading to the US, head coach Amir Ghalenoei said.

ISRAELI SOLDIER KILLED IN LEBANON

Israel’s military said that one of its soldiers had been killed in combat in southern Lebanon, bringing its losses to 21 personnel since the war with Hezbollah began in early March.

PAKISTAN MINISTER ARRIVES IN TEHRAN

Pakistan’s interior minister arrived in Tehran ‘to facilitate’ the peace talks between Iran and the US that have stalled despite a fragile ceasefire, Iranian media reported.

DEADLY FUEL PRICE RIOTS IN COMOROS

Days of protests in Comoros over rising fuel prices, stemming from the US-Israeli conflict with Iran, turned deadly when one person died following overnight clashes with police, officials said.

EUROPEAN NATIONS SEEKING HORMUZ TRANSIT

Iranian state TV said that European countries were in talks with Tehran over transit for ships through the Strait of Hormuz.

IRAQ OIL EXPORTS PLUNGES TO 10M BARRELS

Iraq’s oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz plunged to just 10 million barrels in April, compared to the usual 93 million, the country’s new oil minister said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Iran’s military spokesperson Abolfazl Shekarchi warns US President Donald Trump against restarting attacks on Iran.

IRAN MEDIA SAYS US RESPONSE LACKS CONCESSIONS

TEHRAN: Iranian media said on Sunday that the United States had failed to make any concrete concessions in its latest response to Iran’s proposed agenda for negotiations to end the war. The Fars news agency said Washington had presented a five-point list which included a demand for Iran to keep only one nuclear site in operation and transfer its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to the United States. The US also refused to release “even 25 per cent” of Iran’s frozen assets abroad or pay any reparations for the damage inflicted on Iran during the war which broke out on February 28, according to Fars.

The report added that the US had conditioned the cessation of hostilities on all fronts on the start of negotiations. The Mehr news agency, meanwhile, said: “The United States, offering no tangible concessions, wants to obtain concessions that it failed to obtain during the war, which will lead to an impasse in the negotiations.” In its proposal, Iran had called for an end of the war on all fronts including Israel’s campaign in Lebanon, as well as a halt to the US naval blockade on Iranian ports in place since April 13.

It also called for lifting all of the US sanctions and the release of Iranian assets frozen abroad under longstanding US sanctions, according to the Iranian foreign ministry in a press conference last week. Fars said the Iranian proposal had emphasised that Tehran would continue to manage the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy conduit which it has largely kept closed since the start of the war. On Sunday, Iranian armed forces spokesman Abolfazl Shekarchi warned US President Donald Trump against restarting attacks on Iran. “The desperate American president should know that if his threats are carried out and Iran is attacked again, his country’s resources and military will be confronted with unprecedented, offensive, surprising and tumultuous scenarios,” he said, according to state television. Similarly, deputy speaker of parliament Hamidreza Hajibabaei warned against attacking Iranian oil infrastructure. “If Iranian oil is harmed, Iran will take measures that will prevent the United States and the world from accessing oil from the region for an extended period,” he said, according to the news agency ISNA. — AFP



Smoke rises following Israeli bombardment on the village of Zibqin as seen from nearby Tyre in southern Lebanon. — AFP

ISRAELI STRIKES targeted eastern and southern Lebanon on Sunday, state media reported, despite a fragile ceasefire, as a Hezbollah lawmaker called Lebanon’s negotiations with Israel a “dead-end”. Two Israeli strikes hit the town of Sohmor in eastern Lebanon’s Bekaa valley, the state-run National News Agency (NNA) said, adding that others took place across southern Lebanon.

Israeli attacks since the start of the war have killed more than 2,900 people in Lebanon, including more than 400 since the truce began on April 17, according to Lebanese authorities. The latest strikes came after envoys from Israel and Lebanon held a third round of negotiations in Washington and agreed to extend the ceasefire. Nevertheless, fighting has continued, with Israeli strikes and Hezbollah attacks on Israeli forces. Hezbollah

has repeatedly denounced talks with Israel. “The direct negotiations that the authorities in Lebanon have conducted with the Israeli enemy have... led them down a dead-end path that will result in nothing but one concession after another,” Hezbollah lawmaker Hussein Hajj Hassan said on Sunday. “Neither they nor anyone else will be able to carry out what the enemy wants, especially when it comes to the issue of

disarming the resistance,” he said, adding that the authorities are bringing the country to “very big predicaments”. On Saturday the group said it had struck a military target in northern Israel, having earlier announced several operations against Israeli forces in southern Lebanon. Israel sent ground forces into southern Lebanon during the latest war and they continue to occupy territory near the border between the two countries. — AFP

IAEA SAYS UAE RADIATION LEVELS NORMAL AFTER DRONE STRIKE



The IAEA headquarters in Vienna.

Authorities in Abu Dhabi responded to a fire caused by a drone strike on an electrical generator outside the inner perimeter of the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant in the Al Dhafra Region, the Abu Dhabi Media Office said on Sunday. No injuries were reported, radiological safety levels were unaffected and the Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation confirmed the plant’s essential systems were operating normally. The statement did not give any indication of how the drone strike happened. The International Atomic

Energy Agency said the UAE told it radiation levels at the Barakah plant remained normal following the incident. “The IAEA is following the situation closely and is in constant contact with the UAE authorities, ready to provide assistance if needed,” the UN nuclear watchdog said. The UAE’s foreign ministry said on Friday it categorically rejected what it called Iranian allegations and attempts to justify attacks on the UAE, adding that it reserved its sovereign, legal, diplomatic and military rights to respond to any threat or hostile act. — Reuters

Mass Ukrainian drone barrage kills 4 in Russia

A wave of almost 600 Ukrainian drones attacked Russia overnight killing four people, authorities said on Sunday, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called the barrage an ‘entirely justified’ retribution for Moscow’s own pummelling of Ukraine. Air defences shot down 556 drones overnight across the country, Russia’s defence ministry said, with another 30 drones intercepted after dawn in one of the largest Ukrainian barrages of the ongoing conflict so far. These interceptions — far above the few dozen more often reported — took place across 14 Russian regions, as well as the Crimean peninsula annexed from Ukraine and the Black and Azov seas, the ministry added. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Kyiv’s attack on Russia — days after a massive drone and missile bombardment of the Ukrainian capital killed at least 24 people — was “entirely justified”. “Our responses to Russia’s prolongation of the war and its attacks on our cities and communities are entirely justified. This time, Ukrainian long-range sanctions reached the Moscow region, and we are clearly telling the Russians: their state must end its war.” The Ukrainian defence ministry said that Moscow and the region “have experienced the largest-scale attack since the full-scale attack began” in February 2022. Ukraine’s priority “remains the consistent build-up in the use of long-range strike capabilities to the fullest extent possible against a wide range of military targets,” Commander of Ukraine’s Unmanned



Residents clear broken windows in a damaged apartment building following a Ukrainian drone attack in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict in Krasnogorsk, in the Moscow region. — Reuters

Forces, Robert Brovdi, said in a recent, exclusive interview before the strikes. In Russia’s capital region, “a woman was killed as a result of a UAV hitting a private house,” governor Andrey Vorobyov posted on Telegram, adding that the early morning attack also claimed the lives of two men. One of the victims was an Indian citizen working in Russia, the Indian embassy in Moscow said in a statement. Vorobyov added that infrastructure facilities had been targeted. Within the capital, local authorities reported that air defence systems had intercepted more than 80 drones overnight, wounding 12 people.

One of the strikes wounded construction workers at a job site near an oil and gas refinery, Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said. “Refinery production has not been disrupted. Three residential buildings were damaged,” he added. While the capital region is often subjected to drone attacks, the city of Moscow, around 400 kilometres from the Ukrainian border, is less frequently targeted. “The hit was so powerful that it almost knocked me out (of bed), and I weigh a lot. I opened my window and saw smoke rising,” Konstantin, a 39-year-old resident of the area where a high-rise was damaged in the Putilkovo neighbourhood, outside Moscow, said on the site. — AFP

MILITARY CAMPAIGN

Libyan National Army conducts grand exercises



The Libyan National Army (LNA), commanded by Marshall Khalifa Haftar and controlling southern and eastern Libya, is conducting what officers describe as its biggest military exercise yet. The sand whipped across a barren landscape as armoured vehicles sped along. The two-week exercises, will culminate on May 19 to mark the anniversary of the Operation Dignity’ campaign. — AFP

GAZA CHILD THERAPY

Clowns entertain war-hit Palestinian girl



Clowns entertain a Palestinian girl affected by the war as part of the treatment at the clinic of Doctors Without Borders or Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in Gaza City. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel had almost completed a key goal of the war in Gaza — eliminating all those responsible for orchestrating the October 7 attacks. — AFP

Artificial Intelligence is redefining creativity



SANDHYA
RAO MEHTA

The writer is
Associate Professor,
Sultan Qaboos
University

THE PANIC around Artificial Intelligence is not going away anytime soon. While the initial excitement seems to have waned, concerns around job losses, ethical considerations, and implications on education continue to be discussed.

A larger concern that has still not been sufficiently addressed is the impact of AI on human creativity, or even the creative industries today.

If a novel has been written, or partially written by AI, is it even a novel? Would anyone read it? Would AI provide insights not available to humans?

The answers are not as simple as they seem. Instinctively, one draws back upon hearing about AI-driven artistic work. As researchers have observed, AI can only produce and re-produce what it already has as data, but humans can think beyond the data.

Whether it is composing music, a poem, or an artistic piece of work, human rely on their inspiration, the creative process, and their own lived experience. None of this can be duplicated by existing data.

Today, when chatbots can create incredible content, including art and music, traditional definitions of creativity are being challenged.

In some ways, it is not difficult to imagine how AI could create artistic content. Large models analyse existing data to discern patterns and make predictions of how an individual artist could create a new piece of work by mirroring existing forms.

This makes many of us uneasy as we are used to thousands of years of civilisational knowledge being produced with original, human thought.

However hard we may try to resist, AI is here to stay. In fact, studies have shown that people who were actually curious but cautious about AI actually engage more deeply with it, critiquing and adapting it for their specific goals and ends.

Skeptics, on the other hand, disengaged completely, leading to them being shut off from new possibilities in their field. Interestingly, those who were willing to involve AI in their creative processes actually showed minimal changes to their original work, asserting the value of human intervention.

Unlike scientists who may use AI to generate data, creators use it to explore possibilities and develop an idea

AI is not just augmenting creativity but reshaping the way that we understand art in any form. The value of any composition may soon be re-interpreted, based on how effectively it captures human emotions with technical prowess.

For artists themselves, using AI may help to generate ideas, have an impartial critic, and help in the later processes of disseminating and marketing their work.

In fact, research over the last couple of years has shown that those involved in creative industries, including visual artists, film-makers and writers, have come to see AI as co-creators. Unlike scientists who may use AI to generate data, creators use it to explore possibilities and develop an idea.

Humans bring emotional depth and a cultural context to their art. This is the core of creativity. AI may never replace this and hence cannot create a work from scratch.

What we are seeing today is a re-definition of creativity, with humans and machines engaging in collaboration to innovate and create new forms of art and storytelling. Whether such forms will win our hearts and engage us remains to be seen.

SPANISH PM FACES FRESH BLOW IN ANDALUSIA VOTE

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez’s Socialists appeared headed for another setback as a key regional election in Andalusia began on Sunday, a possible dress rehearsal for next year’s national vote.

Corruption investigations into his family and former top political allies have eroded Sanchez’s popularity at home, even as clashes with US President Donald Trump and Israel increase his standing abroad.

Regions wield wide-ranging powers in areas including health, education and housing in Spain’s decentralised political system, making the election in the country’s most populous region especially significant.

Andalusia, a sun-soaked tourist magnet famed for its Mediterranean beach resorts and historic cities such as Seville, Granada and Cordoba, was governed by the Socialists for almost 40 years.

But polling suggests the main conservative Popular Party (PP), which came to power in the southern region in 2019, will again defeat the Socialists in their historic heartland.

Whether the PP would achieve another majority was unclear, which could make far-right party Vox a kingmaker - a scenario that played out after recent regional elections in Extremadura, Aragon and Castile and Leon.

After resounding defeats for the left in those regions, another drubbing in Andalusia would be particularly painful for Sanchez, whose candidate is his former deputy and ex-finance minister Maria Jesus Montero.

The PP has presented Montero as the face of central government failures - as finance minister, she failed to pass a budget during the current parliament.

A vote for Andalusia’s PP leader Juanma Moreno “is worth double: to ensure Andalusia wins and to change the government of Spain”, the party’s national leader, Alberto Nunez Feijoo, told a final campaign rally on Friday.

The PP has agreed coalition governments with Vox in Extremadura and Aragon and not ruled out cooperation at the national level if a general election, expected in 2027, yields inconclusive results.

That has set it apart from other mainstream European conservative parties, which have insisted on a “sanitary cordon” against the far right.

In his final campaign address on Friday, Sanchez urged Andalusians to back Montero, “a tenacious, committed, hard-working woman with convictions”, to avoid Vox entering the regional government with the PP.

Polling stations in the region of almost nine million people - roughly 18 per cent of Spain’s population - opened at 9 am (0700 GMT) and were due to close at 8 pm. — AFP

What next after a wild week in UK politics?

DESPITE THE resignation of one Cabinet minister and demands from almost a quarter of Labour Party lawmakers that he stand aside, Britain’s beleaguered prime minister, Keir Starmer, remains in Downing Street. When Wes Streeting quit as health secretary, he was scathing about Starmer, but did not trigger an immediate leadership contest. That suggested he had not gathered the requisite support of 81 Labour lawmakers.

On Saturday, Streeting confirmed that he intended to compete in a leadership contest if and when one was triggered. That may not happen for several weeks, however.

“We need a proper contest, with the best candidates on the field, and I’ll be standing,” he said to loud applause in an appearance at a left-leaning British think tank.

A former minister who has not been part of Starmer’s accident-prone government, Burnham is the only Labour politician significantly more popular than the prime minister, polls suggest. He also outperforms Nigel Farage, an ally of President Donald Trump and the leader of the right-wing populist Reform UK party, which is considered a serious threat to Labour after a recent set of elections.

But Burnham needs a seat in Parliament before he can fight for the leadership of his party and the country. On Thursday, a potential slot was found when a Labour lawmaker representing Makerfield, a district in northwest England, promised to resign. Burnham announced plans to fight for the seat in a special election.

Burnham can run, but the timetable hasn’t been set. The party’s governing National Executive Committee — which includes Starmer — on Friday approved Burnham’s request to run in Makerfield.

This year, it blocked him from running in a special election in



STEPHEN
CASTLE

The writer is
the London
correspondent of
The Times



Commander Clair Haynes and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer meet with the members of the police to discuss operational planning in London. — Reuters File

another northern seat, saying he should not quit as mayor of Greater Manchester because there would have to be an election to replace him. Many political analysts argued the real reason was that Starmer saw him as a threat, and several Labour Party figures have called the decision a mistake.

Burnham now needs to be selected by Labour activists locally.

Next, the government must set the special election. Given the preparation time needed, the earliest likely dates are June 18 or June 25.

Can Burnham beat Reform UK in a special election?

Assuming Burnham runs, this promises to be one of the most important and closely watched special parliamentary elections in decades.

Makerfield has voted for Labour lawmakers for decades. But the area is now heavily targeted by Reform, which came second there in the 2024 general election, only around 5,000 votes behind Labour.

And in recent local elections, Farage’s party secured more than

half of all votes cast in Makerfield, according to the Manchester Evening News, while Labour won 23 per cent. The party will likely try to galvanise supporters of Brexit — for which Farage campaigned — by pointing to Burnham’s pro-European politics. Farage has promised that Reform would “throw absolutely everything” at the vote.

Precisely because running in Makerfield would be high risk for Burnham, it could also be high reward. Victory would prove that he could help Labour defeat Reform, which has led every national opinion poll for more than a year.

If he returns to Parliament, Burnham would be the favourite to succeed Starmer. Burnham’s northern roots may appeal to voters in the north and middle of England, some of whom are switching to Farage’s party. He is also seen as being to the left of Starmer. That could equip him to confront the challenge from Labour’s left flank, where the Green Party has won over disenchanted progressive voters. — New York Times

When machines begin to think with us



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and a
communications
professional

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE has entered our lives quietly, almost politely. It finishes our sentences, recommends what we should watch, and answers our questions before we have fully formed them. It writes, translates, predicts, and learns at a pace that feels less like steady progress and more like acceleration without a clearly visible destination. However, we are still asking a dishonestly simple question: what exactly is it to us? Is it a tool, a threat, a partner, or something more complex?

Historically, technology has been understood as an extension of human capability. The printing press expanded ideas, the engine amplified physical strength, and the computer extended logic itself. In this sense, artificial intelligence appears to continue the same path: a powerful tool designed to enhance what humans can do and how efficiently they can do it. In many ways, it succeeds remarkably. Doctors use it to detect diseases earlier than ever before, and engineers rely on it to optimise systems too complex for human calculation. Writers, designers, and researchers use it to generate ideas, refine drafts, and explore possibilities that might otherwise remain out of reach. In its most optimistic form, artificial intelligence is not a replacement for human intelligence, but a support to it.

However, tools are rarely neutral. A hammer can build a home or break a window. Artificial intelligence operates at a scale and speed that amplify both its promise and its risks. It can automate tasks, but it can also displace livelihoods. It can support decision-making, but it can also reinforce biases hidden within the data it learns from. It can clarify reality, but it can also blur the boundary between what is real and what is fabricated.

At this point, the narrative often shifts from promise to threat. There is genuine concern in watching machines perform tasks that once required human skill, judgment, and creativity. There is discomfort in the possibility that decisions — financial, medical, even legal — may increasingly be shaped by systems we do not fully understand. And there is a deeper philosophical anxiety: if intelligence is no longer uniquely human, what does that mean for our sense of identity?

Yet framing artificial intelligence only as a threat may be too narrow and perhaps already outdated. Artificial intelligence is no longer on the horizon; it is embedded in the systems we use every day, shaping choices in ways both subtle and significant. The question is no longer whether we will interact with it, but how we will choose to do so.

This is where the idea of partnership begins to take shape. A partner is neither a passive instrument nor an uncontrollable

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force. A partner is something we work with; something that requires understanding, boundaries, and responsibility. If we approach artificial intelligence as a partner, the conversation shifts. It becomes less about fear or blind optimism and more about design, ethics, and intention.

The real question is what kind of partner we want artificial intelligence to become in our lives. The answer will not emerge from the technology itself, but from the choices we make around it. How we regulate it, how we integrate it into society, and how we educate ourselves to use it responsibly.

It requires recognising that while artificial intelligence can generate answers, it cannot define meaning. It can process information, but it cannot replace judgment shaped by lived human experience.

It can simulate creativity, but it cannot replicate the depth of emotion, culture, and context that gives human expression its weight.

Hence, it is not whether artificial intelligence is a tool, a threat, or a partner; it is all three, depending on how we choose to engage with it.

It becomes a tool when used with intention, a threat when left unchecked, and a partner when guided with purpose. The real danger is not that artificial intelligence becomes too human, but that we, in response, become too mechanical in how we think, choose, and live.

GERMAN ‘CHEMICAL TOWN’ FEARS IMPACT OF INDUSTRIAL DECLINE

SAM REEVES

Germany’s industrial decline is taking a painful toll on communities that have long relied on local manufacturing titans for jobs, prosperity and a sense of a secure future. Among the places affected by the downturn is Ludwigshafen, a company town of chemical giant BASF, which has shed thousands of jobs while shifting its focus to China. “The mood is obviously not good,” Sinischa Horvat, chairman of BASF’s works council, which represents staff interests, said during a visit to the city of about 175,000 people.

“The entire market is currently so weak. When you watch the news, you hardly hear any positive messages.”

BASF is among Germany’s manufacturing heavyweights in sectors ranging from autos to steel and factory equipment that have been cutting back in their domestic markets.

They are battling surging energy costs, fierce competition from China, and weak demand at a time when Europe’s biggest economy is mired in a long stagnation. Some 2,500 jobs have been axed since 2022 in Ludwigshafen, which is dominated by sprawling chemical plants that stretch along the Rhine River, and more cuts are set to come.

A recent decision to sell off thousands of company-owned apartments, many occupied by current and former workers, has added to unease.

“The sale of these apartments sends a signal to the city and to the people who live here and, in some cases, work at BASF - BASF is scaling back its operations,” Patrick Thiel, who lives in one of the apartments and works at the firm, said.

“There is growing concern that this won’t stop at the apartments but will also affect the main plant,” added the 29-year-old, who also ran as a candidate in recent local polls for far-left party Die Linke. Horvat said having BASF staff in the properties helped create a “symbiosis” between the company and community.

“This has fostered an understanding of chemistry and shaped the relationship with BASF in the city,” he said.

BASF - a supplier of base inputs to the agricultural, automotive and pharmaceutical sectors — says the proceeds will go to bolstering its core businesses, but acknowledged that the sale had “raised uncertainties”.

A company spokeswoman, however, insisted that it would handle the sale responsibly, adding: “No one has to fear losing their home.”

“We will continue to see ourselves as an integral part of the local community in the future,” she said. Underlining its commitment to Ludwigshafen, where the group has over 30,000 employees — around a third of its global workforce — BASF has agreed to hold off on compulsory redundancies there until at least 2028 and continue investing. — AFP

Crackdown pushes scam networks to Sri Lanka



AMAL
JAYASINGHE

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Colombo Bureau
Chief for AFP news
agency

A SURGE in arrests of suspected foreign scammers in Sri Lanka has authorities concerned that the island is fast becoming a hub for online crime, following sweeping crackdowns in hotspots Cambodia and Myanmar.

Officials say some scam networks forced out of countries in Southeast Asia have simply shifted to new bases, increasingly moving operations to Sri Lanka - an attractive destination due to a relaxed visa regime and reliable, high-speed Internet.

Since the start of the year, police have arrested more than 1,000 foreigners, mainly from China, Vietnam and India, for alleged involvement in cybercrime, spokesman Fredrick Wootler said, a jump from 430 for the entirety of 2024 and even fewer last year.

Last month, Sri Lankan customs officials intercepted nine Chinese nationals attempting to smuggle used mobile phones and laptops in the hundreds, raising suspicion they were to be used in large-scale fraud operations.

Fraud compounds have flourished across Southeast Asia.

Initially largely targeting Chinese speakers, the criminal groups behind the compounds have expanded operations into multiple languages.

Those conducting the scams are sometimes willing con artists, and other times trafficked foreign nationals forced to work.

Officials say the networks operating in Sri Lanka target victims across Asia, including in India, Vietnam and the Philippines, but there are growing concerns Sri Lankans could be next.

Authorities are also investigating whether foreign syndicates were involved in a recent cyberattack on the Sri Lankan treasury that resulted in around \$2.5 million in losses.

China, which has stepped up cooperation with regional governments in recent years to crack down on scam networks, has acknowledged the geographical shift.

Beijing’s embassy in Colombo said illicit activity in Sri Lanka had risen following enforcement actions in

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Prison guards escort a foreign national to a court in Kaduwela, a suburb of Colombo, last Thursday, after authorities cracked down on two suspected cyber scam centres. — AFP

Cambodia and Myanmar.

“The Chinese government attaches great importance to this trend,” the embassy said in a statement, pledging closer cooperation with Sri Lankan law enforcement agencies.

The networks displaced from Myanmar and Cambodia, where authorities have stepped up raids and deportations, exploit the island’s 30-day tourist visas for nationals of more than 40 countries, including India and China, while others can easily apply for permits online.

Criminal gangs are setting up in rented spaces ranging from luxury villas to office complexes.

Police have begun warning property owners against renting villas and apartments to suspected scam operators, saying they could face prosecution for aiding criminal activity.

The vast scale of these operations has become clearer in recent weeks, with police “getting a lot of calls on a daily basis”, according to spokesman Wootler.

He said that in a single night this week, “we carried out five raids” in the coastal Galle and Matara districts, netting 192 Indian suspects and 29 Nepalis.

Another 280 foreign suspects were arrested last week near the capital Colombo, and 135 Chinese nationals were apprehended in March at a single scam centre. As cases surge, immigration authorities are now playing a larger role in investigations.

“We are getting our agents directly involved because of the increase in the number of cases handled by police,” an immigration official said on condition of anonymity.

The expansion of criminal networks mirrors a broader regional crisis. A United Nations report issued this year estimated that at least 300,000 people have been trafficked into scam compounds across Southeast Asia.

While Sri Lankan officials say they have not identified foreigners being trafficked into the country, dozens of Sri Lankans have been rescued from scam compounds abroad over the past year.

Wootler said authorities were doing all they could to tackle the growing problem, deporting foreigners who overstay their visa and ensuring those who engage in online crime are “punished by our courts”.

SPORTS



Players show focus and discipline during the assessment programme organised by the OBA. — Ammar al Musafir

OBA CENTRES COMPLETE TECHNICAL TESTS, WORKSHOP

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 17

THE OMAN Basketball Association (OBA) concluded the technical and skills assessment gathering for players of the Basketball Athletes Development Centres at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Saturday.

The gathering, held at the indoor sub-hall, featured a comprehensive programme of technical, physical and skills tests for male and female players from the development centres. It also included a specialised workshop for coaches aimed at unifying the technical approach across all centres.

The programme was organised under the supervision of Iskandar al Nabuli, General Supervisor of the Basketball Athletes Development Centres, and was attended by Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, Chairman of the Oman

Basketball Association, along with a number of officials from the association and the participating centres.

The assessment covered players from the girls' centre at Bausher Sports Complex, Seeb Club Centre, Al Amerat Club Centre, Nizwa Club Centre, Al Bashayer Club Centre and Sohar Sports Complex Centre. The tests were designed to measure players' technical progress, physical readiness and basketball skills with greater accuracy, while also creating an official database to help the technical staff monitor each player's development throughout the training period. The Basketball Athletes Development Centres are among the key national projects launched by the Oman Basketball Association with the support of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The initiative aims to widen the base of the game and develop a new generation of male and female players across different governorates of the



Players show focus and discipline during the assessment programme organised by the OBA. — Ammar al Musafir

Sultanate of Oman.

Alongside the players' assessments, the association organised a workshop for centre coaches. The session focused on standardising technical work,

explaining the approved skills and training drills, and ensuring that coaches apply the same methodology across the centres. It also included practical sessions on the correct progression of skills, common training mistakes and the best mechanisms to correct them. Speaking on the occasion, Iskandar al Nabuli said the technical and physical assessments were part of a wider plan to evaluate players across the centres and build a detailed database that would support the preparation of unified training programmes suitable for each age group.

We have completed the assessments in a number of centres. We started with Al Amerat and Seeb, then continued with Al Bashair and Nizwa, before concluding the programme with Sohar, he said. Al Nabuli explained that the purpose of the tests was to identify the current level of each player from the beginning of the programme, both in terms

of basic basketball skills and physical preparedness. This, he said, would allow the technical team to monitor the progress of every player after three months of regular training.

He stressed that continuous assessment is an important element in player development, as it helps identify strengths and areas that require improvement, while enabling coaches to prepare more effective training plans for the next phase.

Al Nabuli also praised the efforts of the coaches across all centres, noting that the centres are working seriously to implement the approved training programmes and follow up on players' progress.

He added that early indicators show positive development in the players' levels, expressing hope that the tests and accompanying programmes will contribute to improving their technical and physical abilities in the coming period.

Oman adds GCC medals despite volleyball loss to Bahrain

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 17

Oman's national teams continued their impressive run at the 4th GCC Games, currently taking place in Doha, Qatar, by adding more medals to the Sultanate of Oman's tally, while the men's volleyball team suffered an opening defeat against Bahrain.

Oman increased its medal count to 22 medals after the national athletics and shooting teams secured one gold and one silver medal.

The gold medal came through Salim bin Saleh al Ya'arubi, who claimed first place in the triple jump event, while the silver medal was won by Oman's mixed 10m air rifle team, represented by Salim bin Ali al Naabi and Al Anoud bint Abdullah al Khalili.

The achievement marked a second medal for both athletes, with Salim al Naabi previously winning a medal in the 10m rifle event, while Al Anoud al Khalili had already secured a bronze medal in the women's team 10m rifle competition. Oman's shooting team now looks ahead to the 10m



Salim al Naabi and Al Anoud al Khalili during their participation in the Venice final.

pistol individual events for men and women, scheduled to begin on Tuesday, before concluding participation on Wednesday in the mixed 10m pistol event, with hopes of adding more medals to the national tally.

Brigadier Khalid bin Ali al Maqbali, Director General of Military Sports at the Sultan's Armed Forces and Secretary-General of the Oman Shooting

Association, said the shooting team entered the Games with high ambitions despite the increasing competitiveness of Gulf shooting.

"Our ambitions were higher, but the results achieved are positive considering the remarkable development of shooting standards across the Gulf," Al Maqbali said. "We have won three medals so far and remain hopeful of claiming gold in the remaining

competitions."

He added that the standard of competition at the Games reflected the rapid development of Gulf shooting, describing the level as comparable to international finals.

Meanwhile, Oman's men's volleyball team opened its campaign with a straight-sets defeat to Bahrain, losing 25-22, 25-21, 25-18. Despite entering the tournament following a lengthy

preparation period, Oman struggled to match Bahrain's consistency after a competitive opening set.

In another volleyball match, Qatar defeated the UAE in straight sets (25-17, 25-13, 25-13) to strengthen its position in the competition.

Away from competition, Omani officials and referees continued to play a prominent role in the organisation of the Games, reflecting growing Gulf confidence in Omani expertise.

Dr Amer bin Humaid al Touqi served on the volleyball technical committee, while international referee Mohammed bin Salim al Shedi joined the shooting technical committee.

Omani officials also contributed across aquatic sports, taekwondo, fencing, table tennis and athletics.

The Omani administrative delegation has also been working extensively to ensure smooth operations for participating teams, while the Qatar Anti-Doping Agency continues testing athletes to maintain integrity and transparency throughout the Games.

SHORTTAKES



Full-day seminar brought together professionals and sports enthusiasts from different disciplines.

OMAN RUGBY SEMINAR ATTRACTS STRONG TURNOUT

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 17

The Training Development Committee at Oman Rugby successfully concluded the “Coaching Fundamentals & Pathway Seminar,” held on Friday at Golden Tulip Muscat, with strong participation from coaches, teachers, players, volunteers and representatives from various sports across the Sultanate of Oman.

The full-day seminar brought together professionals and sports enthusiasts from different disciplines, reflecting the growing interest in developing coaching competencies and enhancing the sporting education environment across multiple fields in Oman.

The programme focused on key areas for coaching development and understanding while also highlighting modern best practices in athlete preparation and building a high-performance culture — contributing to the advancement of the sports sector and preparing future-ready sporting professionals.

The sessions were led by Shane Smit, Brian Hopkins, Mohammed al Hashmi, and Ali bin Said al Dhahri, who delivered interactive presentations and open discussions that allowed participants to exchange experiences and benefit from practical insights in coaching and athlete development.

The seminar also featured networking activities and discussion sessions focused on strengthening professional connections among participants, addressing common challenges faced within the sports sector and exploring ways to develop professional pathways in sport.

At the conclusion of the seminar, participation certificates were presented to attendees, with widespread praise for the quality of the content and organisation of the programme. The event successfully brought together specialists and enthusiasts from various sports under one platform, reflecting Oman Rugby’s commitment to supporting sports education, expanding knowledge and contributing to the development of a more professional and sustainable sporting community in Oman.

They key outcome was to give sports coaches and the community further professional development, to build on existing knowledge - Continuous Personal/Professional Development. More sessions will follow and be open to everyone in sport.



Manchester City players celebrate with the FA Cup trophy. — Reuters

Manchester City defeat Chelsea 1-0 to win FA Cup

SEMENYO BACK-HEEL IN 72ND MINUTE DOWNS CHELSEA

CITY’S EIGHTH FA CUP FOLLOWS LEAGUE CUP TRIUMPH

CHELSEA SUFFER SEVENTH STRAIGHT DOMESTIC FINAL LOSS

MANCHESTER CITY’S Antoine Semenyo produced a moment of magic to win the FA Cup on Saturday, a 1-0 victory over Chelsea completing an English cup double for Pep Guardiola’s side.

Forward Semenyo turned and deftly back-heeled the ball past Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez from an Erling Haaland cross in the 72nd minute to delight the City supporters.

“Everything happened so fast to be honest,” Ghana’s Semenyo, who joined City in January, told the BBC. “It came straight to me and I had to improvise myself as quickly as I can.”

“I have never competed for trophies like this before, so everything is new to me. Hopefully, we can finish the job off.”

The former Bournemouth player’s goal sparked what had been a cautious game into life with both sides having chances in the last 20 minutes, Rayan Cherki forcing a fine save from Sanchez and teammate Matheus Nunes hitting the post.

City captain Bernardo Silva, who is leaving at the end of the season, described the victory as very special.

“It’s really nice to finish this way and maybe we can still have a small dream that



Manchester City players and staff celebrate with the FA Cup trophy Action. — Reuters

we can still fight for the Premier League,” the Portugal midfielder said.

City trail leaders Arsenal by two points in the title race going into the last two games of the season.

Semenyo said: “I don’t think there will be much celebration tonight - it is getting ready for Tuesday.”

City face sixth-placed Bournemouth in the

league on Tuesday.

SILVA AND STONES LIFT TROPHY

Silva received the FA Cup from Prince William and raised it aloft alongside defender John Stones, who is also leaving the club, to wild cheers from the sky-blue end of Wembley Stadium.

It was City’s eighth FA Cup triumph and followed victory in the League Cup in March, in what could also be Guardiola’s last season after 10 years in charge.

But it was a seventh successive domestic cup final defeat - the fourth in the FA Cup - for Chelsea, who had looked to the showpiece match for some relief after a turbulent season and two managerial changes.

Enzo Fernandez, Joao Pedro and Liam Delap all had chances to score for Chelsea but failed to find the target in what for long periods was an even, if unexciting, clash.

The London club’s hopes of European football next season now look very slim, while their American BlueCo owners search for a new manager to replace interim boss Calum McFarlane, who took over from the sacked Liam Rosenior.

Rosenior lasted less than four months following the new-year departure of Enzo Maresca, with Chelsea having plunged down the Premier League to ninth place. — Reuters

Svitolina fights off Gauff to win third Italian Open title

ROME: Ukraine’s Elina Svitolina signalled her French Open ambitions by battling past world number four Coco Gauff 6-4 6-7(3) 6-2 in the Italian Open final on Saturday to lift her first clay court title of the season ahead of Roland Garros.

Victory over the American followed Svitolina’s wins over world number two Elena Rybakina and third-ranked Iga Swiatek, making her a strong contender to claim a maiden Grand Slam title in Paris, where the main draw begins on May 24.

Svitolina’s third title in the Italian capital comes eight years after her second successive triumph at the Foro Italico, a spell that included a maternity break in which she gave

birth to her daughter with fellow player Gael Monfils in late 2022.

“It’s hard to believe it’s been eight years since I had this trophy here,” Svitolina said.

“I’m very pleased with my two weeks here. Congratulations to Coco for a great tournament. You’re such a great champion, and I hope we can have more battles in the future.”

Seventh seed Svitolina twice came from a break down to level a tight first set at 4-4 against Gauff, and the Ukrainian held on under huge pressure during exhausting rallies to get ahead in the ninth game with some powerful hitting.

A couple of untimely double faults from Gauff’s racket in the next game gifted Svitolina the opening set, and the 31-year-old dialled up



Ukraine’s Elina Svitolina celebrates with the trophy as Coco Gauff of the US celebrates with the runners-up trophy after the women’s final match. — Reuters

the intensity late in the next set to go within touching distance of a third Rome title.

Gauff, the reigning Roland Garros champion, held on bravely until 5-5 in the second set and then broke with a reflex volley at the net after a shot that clipped the net-cord unsettled Svitolina and forced her into making a flat return.

That joy was short-lived as Svitolina broke back immediately, but Gauff raised her game in the tiebreak to drag the match into a deciding set, where there was little to separate the duo after the opening four games.

A backhand error from Gauff meant Svitolina sealed a vital break in the fifth game, and the Ukrainian pounced again for a double break, before holding her nerve in a tense finish to secure victory on her third match point.

SVITOLINA THANKS UKRAINIANS

Svitolina later thanked Ukrainians back home as the country continues to grapple with war following Russia’s 2022 invasion.

“Many of them are in bomb shelters and it’s been really heavy in the past couple of weeks for Ukraine,” she added.

“I want to thank you for all the support from afar, I feel all the love.”

A distraught Gauff was left to digest her third straight defeat by Svitolina, following losses in the Australian Open quarterfinals and Dubai semifinals this year.

“Another tough battle between us. I’m on the other side but hopefully one of these days I can get over that,” Gauff said. — Reuters

SPORTS



Ronaldo suffers more agony as Al Nassr lose 1-0 in AFC final



Gamba Osaka players celebrate with the trophy after their victory over Al-Nassr of Saudi Arabia in the AFC final.

CRISTIANO RONALDO suffered heartache for the second time in a week when his Saudi club Al Nassr were stunned at home 1-0 by Japan's Gamba Osaka in the AFC Champions League Two final on Saturday.

Ronaldo's wait for his first piece of major silverware since signing a big-money deal to join Al Nassr in 2023 was extended by the Japanese club, who withstood a second-half barrage by the Saudi side.

In front of 26,000 fans at the King Saud University Stadium, Al Nassr were hot favourites to become the first Saudi Arabian side to win the AFC Champions League Two, the second-tier Asian continental crown equivalent to UEFA's Europa League.

But it was Gamba who struck

the only goal of the game, against the run of play, when forward Deniz Hummet latched onto Issam Jebali's through ball and buried his finish from the edge of the box after 29 minutes.

"We had prepared well but they were very fast and they surprised us," said Al Nassr's Portuguese coach Jorge Jesus.

"For the first 30 minutes, we were not at our best but after that, we dominated. They only had one opportunity and they scored from it."

Earlier in the week, Ronaldo had been forced to wait longer for a first Saudi Pro League title when Al Nassr goalkeeper Bento conceded a bizarre injury-time own goal that gave second-placed Al Hilal a 1-1 draw.

A win would have secured a first Saudi domestic title for the Portuguese great, who then endured more agony in Riyadh

four days later.

"The dream is close," the 41-year old wrote on X to his 107.5 million followers on Wednesday, after his side had been seconds from the league title glory against Al Hilal.

"Heads up, we have one more step to take! Thank you all for the amazing support tonight!"

Al Nassr are two points ahead of Al Hilal with one game to play and can seal the title at home to Damac on Thursday. Al Hilal play their final match away to Al Fayha on the same night.

"We didn't get what we wanted here but there is one more final for us, the Saudi Pro League title, which is very important to us," Jesus said.

"We have five days to recover and prepare and there is no time for grieving. We have to get going again." — AFP

USM beat Zamalek on penalties to win CAF Confederation Cup

JOHANNESBURG: Algerian club USM Alger beat Egyptian hosts Zamalek 8-7 on penalties in Cairo on Saturday to win the CAF Confederation Cup for a second time.

Zamalek won the second leg of the final 1-0 through a fifth-minute penalty from Palestinian Oday Dabbagh to level the aggregate score at 1-1.

USM had won the first leg 1-0 last weekend, also through a penalty, converted by Ahmed Khaldi eight minutes into added time.

In the penalty shootout, each team successfully converted their first seven kicks, then stand-in Zamalek captain Mohamed Shehata blazed over.

Before taking his kick, Shehata struggled to place the ball on the penalty spot, then USM goalkeeper Oussama Benbot came forward from his goalline to further delay the kick.

The next USM penalty fell to Congolese substitute Glody Likonza, and he scored with



USM Alger players celebrate winning the CAF Confederation Cup.

a kick into the left corner that goalkeeper Mohamed Awad got his fingertips to, but could not stop.

USM also won the African equivalent of the UEFA Europa League in 2023, pipping Young Africans of

Tanzania on away goals.

It was the first Confederation Cup final failure for Zamalek after two triumphs over Moroccans Renaissance Berkane.

The first in 2019 was won on penalties and the second

in 2024 on away goals.

USM became the first club to win a final in the second-tier African competition after taking a 1-0 lead into the second leg.

Dolphins of Nigeria, Club Africain of Tunisia and

Berkane were unable to defend the slender advantage in previous title deciders.

The return match between Zamalek and USM was often a scrappy affair with many delays for injuries and arguments with the excellent

Gabonese referee over his decisions.

Less than two minutes had elapsed when Cameroonian Che Malone fouled Palestinian Adam Kaied, but as protests developed it took a further three minutes before the kick could be taken.

Dabbagh, who joined Zamalek last year after a loan spell at Aberdeen, remained calm and sent Benbot the wrong way to restore overall equality.

Zamalek had the ball in the net again after 15 minutes, but a headed goal from Juan Bezerra was ruled offside. The Brazilian also had a goal disallowed in the first leg.

USM pocketed a Confederation Cup record \$4 million while debt-stricken Zamalek collected \$2 million.

The Algerian club also qualify for a one-off CAF Super Cup match against the winners of the CAF Champions League, either Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa or FAR Rabat of Morocco. — AFP

MUSCAT
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BUSINESS

Pact to advance sustainable fuels

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 17

In a move designed to reinforce the Sultanate of Oman's position within the global green economy, UK-based biotechnology firm HutanBio has entered into a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with Oman's Utopia World Investment (UWI) to support the growth of a sustainable fuels sector in Oman.

Utopia is a majority shareholder in Wakud International, which owns and operates Oman's first dedicated biodiesel refinery.

The collaboration seeks to develop and scale next-generation sustainable biofuel production, directly supporting the industrial innovation and economic diversification goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

Faris al Kharusi, CEO of UWI, shared, "Solar density conditions, abundance of water with appropriate salinity ranges and development with partners both public and private allow HutanBio to be strategically placed as an economic local content generator in the biochain".

The partnership centres on the

commercialisation of HutanBio's proprietary algae-based oil technology, regarded as a scientific breakthrough for its proven ability to harness a newly discovered genus of algae identified by Dr John Archer of Cambridge University.

Under the terms of the agreement, Wakud will act as an offtaker as both entities scale their operations simultaneously, creating a robust framework for the domestic production and deployment of low-carbon fuels.

This initiative arrives at a critical juncture for the aviation industry, which currently utilises less than 0.5% sustainable aviation fuel despite aggressive long-term decarbonisation targets of 25%.

This localised biotechnology initiative has the potential to simultaneously enhance food security, as the second byproduct, aside from the biofuel, is protein-rich biomass.

Beyond its environmental impact, the project is expected to stimulate the growth of a specialised biotechnology industry in Oman, generating skilled employment opportunities and fostering local research and development capabilities.

Following successful



High-level executives representing HutanBio and Utopia World Investment (UWI) at the MoU signing recently.

discussions with government representatives and industry leaders, Manshu Agarwal, CEO of HutanBio, said the partnership reflects a shared ambition to position Oman at the forefront of the global clean energy transition.

"Oman is perhaps the single best place on Earth to build and scale this project, particularly because of its geopolitical stability, excellent human capital and refinery infrastructure in oil and

gas; and of course the ideal climate for growing this algae", he stated.

Significantly, the technology underpinning this venture is the result of over a decade of research led by Dr John Archer, whose distinguished career includes leadership roles at Cambridge, MIT and being one of the founders of KAUST's biology department.

HutanBio's novel microalgae strain demonstrates significantly higher productivity than

conventional varieties, offering a potential path to producing sustainable crude alternatives at cost parity with traditional fossil fuels.

Project stakeholders have highlighted Oman's unique geographical and industrial profile as a primary driver for this collaboration.

The Sultanate of Oman's exceptionally high solar radiation, extensive coastline and access to saline water provide an ideal environment for coastal aquaculture and algae cultivation.

Furthermore, the ability to integrate this technology into Oman's established oil and gas infrastructure and utilise its political stability makes the country a premier candidate for global leadership in the sustainable fuels sector.

Omani scientist Aziza al Mughairy added: "HutanBio's initiative could position Oman as a regional leader in next-generation biofuels, strengthening the Sultanate of Oman's contribution to global decarbonisation and food security efforts while supporting economic diversification, green innovation and the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 on several fronts".



Coastal waters off North Oman possess a stable low-to-moderate wave resource: Study. (Picture for illustration only)

First-of-its-kind Oman wave energy study set to be unveiled

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 17

The findings of a first-of-its-kind assessment of Oman's wave energy potential will be unveiled by a team of local scientists and researchers at the Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) taking place in Muscat later this week.

According to Dr Saleh al Saadi, Director of the Sustainable Energy Research Centre (SERC) at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the study — centring on the techno-economic feasibility of wave energy in Oman — is the product of collaborative research involving Oman LNG, EJAAD, Sustainable Energy Research Centre (SERC) and the Department of Civil and Architectural Engineering, College of Engineering; and the College of Agriculture and Marine Science of Sultan Qaboos University.

"Our findings demonstrate that North Oman possesses a stable low-to-moderate wave resource that can serve as a complementary renewable energy source within the national energy mix", Dr Al Saadi noted in a post.

This work contributes towards Oman Vision 2040 and supports ongoing efforts towards achieving net-zero carbon, sustainability, innovation and diversification of the energy sector through emerging ocean renewable energy technologies. Although Oman has hosted multiple initiatives to assess the potential of its coastal wave energy resources, this latest study is unique in terms of the

comprehensive approach used to evaluate the country's potential for generating electricity from ocean waves. The study combined real-life wave measurements collected at sea with advanced computer modelling to gain a detailed understanding of wave conditions and energy potential along Oman's coastline.

It also examined a range of wave energy technologies to determine which options would be the most technically and economically viable for local conditions.

In addition, the study assessed how electricity generated from wave power could be delivered efficiently to the national grid, while also developing an interactive digital platform to support analysis of the technical and financial feasibility of future wave energy projects.

According to Dr Al Saadi, the study also stressed that the success of wave energy projects in Oman will depend on choosing technologies that are well suited to the country's wave patterns, minimising electricity losses during transmission to the grid and introducing projects gradually as technology improves and costs come down.

It further highlighted the need to factor in real-world electricity grid requirements when planning future renewable energy projects.

Among the technologies studied, the WaveDragon system showed strong potential in terms of the amount of electricity it could generate, while Oscillating Water Column (OWC) systems appeared to offer better cost-effectiveness under Oman's sea conditions.

Target LLC Announces Strategic Investment at Samail Industrial City



TARGET LLC, a leading Omani construction company with a growing portfolio of capabilities and services, announced the signing of a strategic agreement with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates "Madayn" as part of its long-term investment plans at Samail Industrial City.

To augment its diversification drive and growth, Target will establish a full-fledged facility for manufacturing, logistics, and fleet management in Samail Industrial City. This multi-million Oman Rial investment will improve Target's operational capabilities, produce high-quality Made in Oman products, and also cater for future expansion.

The agreement was signed recently during a ceremony held at Samail Industrial City in the presence of Mr. Ghassan Shammas, General Manager of Target LLC, and Eng. Yasser bin Ibrahim Al Ajmi, Director General of Samail Industrial City, marking an important milestone in the company's long-term growth strategy and its continued contribution to the Sultanate's economic development.

This initiative reflects Target's commitment to strengthening its manufacturing capabilities and contributing to the development of a future-ready industrial ecosystem aligned with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The investment is expected

to support local value creation, industrial innovation, employment generation, and the competitiveness of Omani-made products across regional markets.

Commenting on the occasion, Mr. Ghassan Shammas, General Manager of Target LLC, stated:

"Our collaboration with Madayn reflects a shared commitment to advancing Oman's industrial transformation and creating sustainable economic value. This initiative at Samail Industrial City represents an important step in our long-term strategy to strengthen local manufacturing capabilities, enhance In-Country Value, and contribute meaningfully to the Sultanate's industrial growth ambitions."

He added:

"We highly value Madayn's continuous support in enabling private sector growth and fostering an investment environment that encourages development and innovation."

Furthermore, this agreement marks Target's second strategic collaboration with Madayn, following the company's successful presence and ongoing operations at Nizwa Industrial City. The company's presence at Samail Industrial City reflects its confidence in Oman's industrial ecosystem and its commitment to supporting the Sultanate's long-term manufacturing and economic development goals.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES

Digital Debit Card
Ready in seconds!



The digital debit card is a digital-only variant of a regular debit card which can be used to make online cashless transactions.

BANK MUSCAT
LAUNCHES INSTANT
DIGITAL DEBIT CARD
ON MOBILE BANKING

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has continually invested in cutting-edge solutions that not only satisfy the evolving needs of its customers, but also establish new standards for innovation in the sector.

In a landmark stride, Bank Muscat has announced a transformative technological advancement; the launch of an instant digital debit card on mobile banking. This milestone represents a fundamental revamping of how customers access, activate and interact with financial solutions, providing a seamless digital experience from the moment they apply.

The digital debit card is a digital-only variant of a regular debit card which can be used to make online cashless transactions through e-commerce platforms or by tokenising their card for payments via Apple or Samsung Pay, enabling quick tap-and-pay transactions at any point-of-sale terminal.

The digital debit card is issued with its own unique card number, expiry date and CVV and can only be accessed through Mobile Banking. The application process is instant, allowing customers to receive and use the digital card immediately upon submission.

Digital Debit Cards offer customers a variety of benefits, including enhanced convenience as the card can be generated and activated instantly with zero issuance fees. Beyond local use, the card supports global transactions, empowering customers to shop confidently worldwide, including online and e-commerce purchases.

In addition, it offers customers added security, as digital debit cards can't get physically lost or duplicated like physical cards and offers secure OTP enabled transactions and advanced authentication, ensuring a protected and fully digital banking experience.

On this occasion, Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager — Digital Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "The launch of the new Digital Debit Card marks an important step in the Bank's digital transformation journey.

It reflects Bank Muscat's commitment to innovation, security and seamless banking experience, which is in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and it will contribute greatly to enhance financial inclusion in Oman. This achievement is the result of dedicated efforts to meet our valued customers' evolving needs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our customers for their trust and continued support".

ahlibank
holds financial
literacy
workshop for
youth

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to social responsibility and community empowerment, ahlibank hosted an insightful financial literacy workshop titled 'Start It Right — Your Journey in the World of Finance'.

The session was designed to equip youth from the Child Care Centre with the knowledge, tools and habits needed to make informed



financial decisions and build a strong foundation for future success. This initiative underscores

ahlibank's focus on creating meaningful impact beyond banking excellence, fostering essential financial literacy skills among the next generation and preparing them to manage their financial responsibilities with confidence.

Held on May 6, 2026, the workshop brought together 24 participants aged 13 to 18 for an enriching experience.

BYD Atto 3 elevates
electric driving in Oman

AS the Sultanate of Oman embraces a new era of sustainable mobility, the BYD Atto 3 stands out as a sophisticated blend of performance, personality and pioneering technology. This all-electric SUV is not just about moving from point A to B; it is about redefining the journey through a pervasive sporty design and a high-tech interior that resonates with the energy of a modern lifestyle.

By combining a sleek, aerodynamic exterior with unmatched electric efficiency, the BYD Atto 3 offers Omani drivers a forward-thinking choice that balances environmental responsibility with the thrill of the drive.

Drawing visual inspiration from the strength of the Chinese dragon, the BYD Atto 3 features a sharp-lined design anchored by signature wing-shaped headlights and 18-inch "Wing of Wind" alloy wheels.

Beneath this elegant surface lies a high-performance electric powertrain producing 201 horsepower and 310 Nm of torque.

This allows the SUV to sprint from 0 to 100 km/h in a swift 7.3 seconds, making it a leader in its segment for acceleration. With a reliable driving range of 410 km (WLTP), the BYD Atto 3 is perfectly suited for navigating the vibrant streets of Muscat or embarking on longer coastal expeditions with total confidence.

The interior of the BYD Atto 3 is a true



The BYD Atto 3 offers drivers a choice that balances environmental responsibility with the thrill of the drive.

departure from the ordinary, featuring a "gym-themed" cockpit designed to inspire movement and joy.

The cabin is meticulously crafted with premium leather and bespoke details, including dumbbell-shaped vertical AC vents and a treadmill-style central armrest. Adding a touch of musical flair, the door panels feature unique "guitar strings" that can be strummed to create a melody or used to secure bottles.

Technology takes centre stage with the

revolutionary 12.8-inch Entertainment system with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, which seamlessly integrates navigation and entertainment.

Safety is at the core of BYD's engineering philosophy and the Atto 3 is equipped with an extensive suite of intelligent driver-assistance features. By pairing the ultra-safe BYD blade battery with these cutting-edge safety innovations, the Atto 3 ensures that every journey in Oman is secure, sustainable and filled with infinite possibilities.

NBO graduates complete development programme

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) continues to advance its commitment to developing national talent through its Graduate Programme (NBO Tomorrow's Leaders), with participants completing ten months of the programme, including on-the-job training across different areas within the Bank.

Designed to attract and nurture talented graduates from diverse academic disciplines, the programme provides young Omanis with valuable exposure to the banking and financial services sector.

Through structured learning, practical experience and guided development, participants are equipped with the technical knowledge, professional skills and workplace experience needed to build successful careers in banking.

Over the past ten months, participants have gained hands-on experience through rotational placements across three different departments, tailored to their academic



The programme provides Omanis with valuable exposure to the banking, financial services sector.

backgrounds and career interests.

These rotations have included key areas such as Fraud Risk, Compliance, Customer Experience, Retail Banking and Corporate Banking, enabling participants to develop a broader understanding of banking

operations while strengthening their adaptability, collaboration and problem-solving capabilities in a professional environment.

In addition to on-the-job training, participants have also taken part in targeted development initiatives, including workshops focused on emotional intelligence, as well as a team-building offsite, further enhancing their interpersonal skills, self-awareness and ability to work effectively in diverse teams.

The programme spans a period of two years and reflects NBO's commitment to inspiring the next generation of leaders in the banking sector.

It brings together selected graduates who met the programme's entry criteria, including holding a bachelor's degree with a minimum GPA of 2.7, with the aim of cultivating skilled Omani professionals capable of contributing to the future of the national economy.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils exciting offers for summer shoppers

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 445 showrooms across 14 countries, has just launched exciting offers for summer shoppers.

The Sparkling Summer offers, which will run until June 6, across all of the brand's showrooms in Oman, will give customers the chance to get free cash vouchers on their diamond & precious gem jewellery purchases.

As part of the offers, customers will be eligible for a free cash voucher worth RO 10 for every diamond or precious gem worth RO 300. The voucher is equivalent to cash and can be used for the purchase of gold or diamond jewellery, gold coins or gold bars.

As part of the offers, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is also offering chains and bangles



The Sparkling Summer offers will run until June 6.

with making charges starting at 1.99%.

"With the Sparkling Summer offers, we're

making jewellery shopping even more exciting for our customers.

Diamond jewellery has become a top gifting choice and our diverse selection, especially the Zoul lifestyle collection, ensures there's something special for everyone.

The added advantage of free cash vouchers gives customers exceptional value with every purchase", commented Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also introduced its Zoul Lifestyle Jewellery collection, featuring exceptional lightweight designs crafted in 18K gold and natural diamonds.

The collection is thoughtfully created for

effortless everyday elegance, stylish occasional wear and meaningful gifting, making it a versatile choice for every jewellery lover.

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

With all purchases covered under the Malabar Promise of 100% Value on Diamond & Gold exchange, Assured lifetime maintenance, guaranteed buyback and more, Malabar Gold & Diamonds guarantees its customers unmatched value & service assurance on their purchase.

SHORTTAKES



The average inflation rate during the January-April 2026 period increased by 2.6 per cent.

INFLATION IN OMAN CLIMBS 3.2% IN APRIL

MUSCAT: Inflation in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 3.2 per cent in April 2026 compared to the same month last year, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The data showed that the average inflation rate during the January-April 2026 period increased by 2.6 per cent, reflecting continued upwards pressure on consumer prices across several key sectors.

The miscellaneous personal goods and services category recorded the highest increase at 9.2 per cent, followed by food and beverages at 6.2 per cent and transportation at 6 per cent.

Restaurants and hotels registered a 4.5 per cent rise, while furniture, household equipment and maintenance services increased by 3 per cent. Education costs were up by 2.2 per cent.

Health-related prices rose by 1.8 per cent, while culture and entertainment recorded a modest increase of 0.2 per cent. Meanwhile, prices remained unchanged in housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, as well as clothing and footwear, communications and tobacco.

Within the food and beverages category, vegetables posted the sharpest rise at 25 per cent, followed by fruits at 11.6 per cent and fish and seafood at 6.1 per cent.

Meat prices increased by 3.7 per cent, while beverages rose by 3.4 per cent. Sugar, jam, honey and sweets recorded a 3 per cent increase, while milk, cheese and eggs were up by 2.5 per cent. Bread and cereals, along with other food products, each increased by 1.6 per cent, while oils and fats edged up by 0.9 per cent.

Al Dhahirah recorded the highest inflation rate at 4.4 per cent. Al Dakhiliyah and Muscat Governorates followed with increases of 3.7 per cent, while Al Buraimi registered 3.5 per cent.

Al Wusta Governorate recorded a 3 per cent increase, followed by Musandam Governorate at 2.9 per cent and Al Batinah South Governorate at 2.6 per cent. Al Sharqiyah North and South Governorates each recorded inflation of 2.5 per cent, while Al Batinah North and Dhofar Governorates posted the lowest increase at 1.9 per cent. — ONA

Oman energy maps shift to hydrogen economy

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT MAY 17

OMAN is accelerating its transition from a hydrocarbon-driven economy towards a future anchored in green hydrogen, renewable energy and lower carbon emissions, as the Sultanate of Oman seeks to balance energy security with long-term sustainability goals.

The country's oil and gas sector continues to play a central role in supporting economic growth and public finances, while new investments are being channelled into clean energy infrastructure and decarbonisation initiatives.

According to a post by the Ministry of Economy (MoE), the oil and gas sector contributes 68 per cent of the 2025 state budget, underlining the continued importance of hydrocarbons to the national economy.

The ministry highlighted that Oman currently manages a pipeline network extending more than 7,000 kilometres and is implementing 1,275 development projects valued at RO 74 million. The sector also maintains a high Omanisation rate of 92 per cent, reflecting efforts to strengthen local workforce participation in strategic industries.

Oil production stands at around 1.002 million barrels



The oil and gas sector contributes 68% of the 2025 state budget, underlining the continued importance of hydrocarbons to the national economy.

per day, while gas output has reached approximately 151.2 million cubic metres daily, according to the figures released by the ministry.

Oman is also developing 28 mining concession areas as part of wider diversification efforts linked to industrial growth and resource development.

At the same time, the Sultanate of Oman is intensifying investments in renewable energy and hydrogen projects to position itself as a

major regional exporter of clean fuels.

The Ministry of Economy stated that Oman plans for renewable energy to account for 10 per cent of the energy mix by 2026, marking a significant milestone in the country's energy transition roadmap.

The ministry added that Oman is investing around \$44 billion in green hydrogen projects, reinforcing the sector's role as a key pillar of Oman Vision 2040 and the national net-

zero strategy. The country aims to produce up to one million tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030, leveraging its abundant solar and wind resources as well as its strategic location near major shipping routes.

Oman has already attracted substantial interest from international developers and energy firms seeking to establish large-scale hydrogen and ammonia production facilities, particularly in Al Duqm and Dhofar.

The government has also launched supportive frameworks and regulatory mechanisms to facilitate investment in the emerging industry.

As part of broader climate commitments, the ministry said Oman targets a 33 per cent reduction in emissions by 2035. The Sultanate of Oman has also introduced the "Meezan" platform to manage carbon markets and support carbon trading mechanisms aligned with international sustainability standards.

The clean energy push is expected to complement, rather than replace, Oman's conventional energy sector in the near term, with policymakers pursuing a balanced transition that safeguards revenues while preparing the economy for a lower-carbon future.

NCSI LAUNCHES AI OPINION SURVEY IN OMAN

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information on Sunday launched a nationwide public opinion survey to assess the use of artificial intelligence technologies in daily life as part of efforts to monitor digital transformation trends in the Sultanate of Oman.

The survey, which runs until May 28, targets Omani citizens aged 18 and above and seeks to evaluate the extent of AI adoption, levels of trust in AI-generated outputs, perceived benefits and potential risks associated with the technology.

Mahfoudh bin Salem al

Musharfi, Director of the Public Opinion Measurement Department at the NCSI, said the survey aims to measure the prevalence of AI usage among members of society and identify patterns of use across different fields, including the frequency and motivations behind adoption. —ONA

Raysut port upgrade boosts fisheries investment

SALALAH: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has completed the rehabilitation of Raysut Fishing Port in Salalah at a cost exceeding RO 2.9 million, strengthening fisheries infrastructure in Dhofar Governorate and supporting future investment opportunities in the sector.

The project forms part of the ministry's broader strategy to enhance the operational efficiency of fishing ports and reinforce their contribution to economic growth, food security and the development of coastal communities.

The rehabilitation works included the construction of a new 610-metre breakwater designed to protect the port basin from sand encroachment,



The project forms part of the strategy to enhance the operational efficiency of fishing ports.

sea currents and high waves. A further 250-metre breakwater was built to reduce the intrusion of sand and silt while improving water circulation within the harbour.

The project also involved reclaiming around 34,000 square metres of land earmarked for future

expansion and service facilities linked to fisheries and logistics activities. In addition, a 70-metre fixed pier was constructed to facilitate the berthing of artisanal fishing vessels and support fish handling operations, while a new slipway was developed to improve

boat launching and maintenance services.

Engineer Mohammed bin Abdullah al Rashdi, project manager, said the rehabilitation project had reached full completion and would significantly improve the port's operational readiness and maritime safety standards.

He noted that the works included the construction of 1,000 metres of internal roads fitted with lighting systems to improve traffic movement and safety within the port area. A comprehensive surveillance camera network was also installed to enhance security and monitor operational activities.

Al Rashdi said the project would help reduce sand accumulation inside the port basin, improve

navigation efficiency and enable the port to accommodate vessel movement more effectively.

He added that the newly reclaimed area would support future investment and service projects linked to the fisheries sector, enhancing the port's economic value and strengthening its role as a logistics and development hub.

According to the ministry, fish production in Salalah reached 14,059 tonnes in 2025, with a total value of RO 9.2 million.

Al Rashdi stressed that continued investment in fishing ports remains essential to supporting food security, stimulating economic activity and creating employment and investment opportunities across coastal regions. — ONA

ECONOMIC BALANCE

China posts account surplus



China recorded a current account surplus of \$184.1 billion in the first quarter of 2026, according to the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

The country's goods trade surplus reached \$247.4 billion, while the services trade deficit stood at \$59.6 billion. The current account surplus amounted to 134.4 billion units during the period, reflecting continued strength in China's external trade position. — ONA

TECH INDUSTRY

Seoul seeks to avoid Samsung strike



South Korea said it would use all available measures, including emergency arbitration, to prevent a labour strike at Samsung Electronics, the country's largest employer and biggest chipmaker.

Prime Minister Kim Min-seok warned that even a one-day shutdown at Samsung's semiconductor facilities could result in losses of up to 1 trillion won. — Reuters

TRADE TALKS

China signals tariff easing with US



China and the US have agreed to expand agricultural trade through tariff reductions and improved market access following talks linked to the summit between President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

China's commerce ministry described the agreements as preliminary and said they would be finalised soon, amidst efforts to revive bilateral farm trade affected by tariff disputes. — Reuters

OPINION

The cost of delayed decisions in competitive markets



KAMLA AL RAHBI

The writer is a leadership and business strategist

THERE is a form of organisational paralysis that does not look like paralysis. The meetings continue. The analyses are commissioned. The consultations happen. The options are reviewed, revised and reviewed again. From the outside — and often from the inside — it resembles thoroughness. It resembles responsible leadership. In competitive markets, it is frequently something else: it is the cost of a decision that was never quite made accumulating silently while the organisation waits for a certainty that will not arrive. Delayed decisions are among the least visible costs in organisational life precisely because they do not appear on any balance sheet. A wrong decision has consequences that can be traced, analysed and learned from. A delayed decision has consequences that are distributed across time, diffuse in their attribution and rarely connected clearly to the moment the decision was deferred. The competitor who moved while the organisation deliberated is rarely identified as such. The opportunity that closed while the approval process continued is rarely measured against the cost of the process itself. The talent that departed while leadership debated the restructuring is rarely counted as a consequence of the delay. In a competitive market, not deciding is itself a decision one that transfers initiative to whoever is willing to move first. The organisational mechanisms that produce decision delay are, individually, entirely defensible. Seeking additional analysis before committing significant resources is prudent. Consulting widely before making changes

that affect many stakeholders is responsible. Building consensus before proceeding with direction that requires broad cooperation is strategically sensible. Each of these practices, in appropriate measure, improves decision quality. The problem arises when they become the default response to any decision that involves genuine uncertainty when the organisation has learned, implicitly, that the way to manage the risk of being wrong is to delay the moment of commitment indefinitely. This pattern is particularly costly in environments where competitive advantage is determined not only by what organisations decide but by when. In markets where the first mover captures disproportionate value, where customer relationships are established early and difficult to displace, where talent gravitates towards organisations that demonstrate clear direction — the timing of a decision is itself a strategic variable. An organisation that reaches the right conclusion six months after its competitors have already acted has not made a good decision. It has made a late one. And lateness, in competitive markets, has costs that correctness alone cannot recover. The organisation that waits for certainty before deciding will always be waiting. Certainty is not a precondition for good decisions; it is a reward that comes after them. The leaders who manage decision timing most effectively share a specific discipline: they distinguish clearly between the uncertainty that warrants additional analysis and the uncertainty that is simply the irreducible condition of operating in complex environments. Not all uncertainty is reducible. In many strategic situations, the information that

Delayed decisions are among the least visible costs in organisational life precisely because they do not appear on any balance sheet. A wrong decision has consequences that can be traced, analysed and learned from.

would make a decision clearly correct will never be available because the future is genuinely open, because the market is genuinely unpredictable, because the decision itself will partially determine the conditions under which it plays out. Treating irreducible uncertainty as if it were a solvable information problem produces organisations that analyse indefinitely and decide rarely. There is also a cultural dimension to decision delay that is worth examining directly. In organisations where the personal cost of a wrong decision is high where careers are damaged by visible failures more than by invisible inaction rational individuals will systematically delay decisions that carry personal risk. The organisation as a whole pays the competitive cost of that delay. The individuals within it are responding entirely rationally to the incentive structure they face. This means that addressing chronic decision delay requires not only better analytical frameworks but a clear-eyed look at whether the organisation's culture and incentive structure make timely decision-making personally rational for the people responsible for it. Speed in decision-making is not a virtue in itself. Decisions made hastily, without adequate consideration of consequences and alternatives, produce their own category of organisational damage. The goal is not faster decisions but better-timed ones — decisions made at the point where the cost of additional deliberation exceeds the expected value of the information it would produce. This is a judgement that cannot be reduced to a formula. But it can be developed, through practice and reflection, into a reliable organisational capability.

TRUMP POURS COSTLY GASOLINE ON US FISCAL FIRE

GABRIEL RUBIN

For someone who so desperately wants lower interest rates, President Donald Trump has an odd way of pursuing them. A standoff with Iran and more spending won't work any better than his Federal Reserve bullying campaign. Yields on longer-maturity bonds are rising as investors fret about the country's fiscal trajectory. US federal debt just surpassed annual economic output for the first time in 80 years. The ratio is on track to rise beyond 150% of GDP by 2050, the Congressional Budget Office projects. Unpredictable events that feed inflation and lower growth will only worsen the debt spiral and investment prospects. Recent developments amplify Trump's interest-rate missteps. Brute force backfired, with Jerome Powell deciding to stay on the Fed board after his chairmanship ends this month rather than resign, as is convention. If he stays until January 2028, when his term expires, it would prevent the president from nominating someone to replace him. Trump's decision to join Israel in attacking Iran, meanwhile, triggered a supply shock. Secondary effects are pushing up production costs and creating shortages of jet fuel and other essentials. The US budget strain may intensify, with the administration now seeking \$1.5 trillion for the military next year. The Middle East conflict has already cost \$29 billion, an official figure that sounds low and doesn't take into account second-order costs. All of this recalls the folly of last year's outlandish promises to slash \$2 trillion in federal spending. Billionaire Elon Musk's now-disbanded Department of Government Efficiency achieved little. Trump's latest tax cuts will chew up some \$4.5 trillion over the next decade, with only small offsets from cuts to nutrition and health programmes, which tend to produce more economic growth than they cost anyway. What's more, the president is asking for another \$70 billion for immigration enforcement to help preserve congressional Republican majorities. Trump also wants \$1 billion authorised for his ballroom project, adding to an annual deficit already projected to reach about \$1.9 trillion this year. The country already pays about \$1 trillion a year for interest on its debt. The yield for 30-year Treasury bonds has jumped to 5% from 4.6% on the day before the bombing in Iran began. — Reuters

Fashion's hidden costs

IN an attempt to fulfil our complex needs and find a unique expression of identity and to feel comfortable, or many a time to be accepted by the community or society-set standards, we turn to appearance through clothes. Fashion is about turning and changing ideas about style, status and self expression into clothes we buy and wear. Fashion is not just about draping the body with clothes; it is a conscious choice, a way we script our personality, taste, values, cultural and religious identity and membership in a subculture. The urge to express ourselves through clothes, amplified by social media and globalisation, has fuelled a mammoth industry — fashion — which emerged with mass production and department stores a century ago and today is a modern global business worth \$1.8 trillion, employing hundreds of millions of people and expending natural resources unsustainably. According to the 2025 apparel statistics, the average number of garments purchased per person worldwide is estimated at 50-60 per year, with major differences between high and low-income countries. The statistics also indicate an increase in garment purchases in the early 2020s, partly driven by fast and ultra-fast fashion. The data indicates that the number of clothes purchased exceeds their price. Younger customers and new rules are driving circular experiments in repair services, resale platforms, rentals and take-back programmes from the periphery into the mainstream, even within the fashion industry. Scientists are working on true innovation in materials and procedures behind the scenes. For example, they are learning how to recycle old clothing into new fibres and spin fabric from fungus, algae and agricultural waste, which is evidence that the technology for an alternative fashion system



Garment workers make clothing in the sewing section of a factory in Gazipur, Bangladesh. — Reuters



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an Assistant Professor at the Marketing and Management Department, CBFS

Fashion is not just about draping the body with clothes; it is a conscious choice, a way we script our personality, taste, values, cultural and religious identity and membership in a subculture.

already exists. Despite all these efforts behind the thread, beads, selfies and seasonal trends, is one of the world's most polluting and exploitative supply chains. The strife is hidden, churning out billions of garments a year at a cost borne by the planet and its workers that the world can no longer afford. The hidden costs behind the low prices that rarely appear in mainstream media are indelible. One cotton T-shirt requires 2,700 litres of water, which is about what one person would use in two and a half years; a massive, imperceptible drain on rivers and water bodies results when multiplied by the number of garments produced. Textile dyeing and finishing are responsible for roughly 20 per cent of industrial water pollution worldwide. 10 per cent of global CO₂ emissions come from fashion, especially fast fashion, which is more than those from international flights and shipping combined. What is alarmingly irresponsible is that around 85 per cent of textiles produced each year end up in landfills. The fashion industry generates approximately 92 million tonnes of textile waste annually. Synthetic fibres like polyester

shed microplastics during every wash, contaminating rivers, oceans and even drinking water. To keep prices down, garment workers are paid a meager \$3 a day and work extremely long hours. The constantly changing trends led to overconsumption and debt, creating financial stress for people. The unsold clothes from the Global North end up in landfills and informal markets in the Global South, including Ghana and Chile. The deepening single-use mindset is becoming part of our culture, where the idea of caring for and repairing what we own is slowly eroding. The article is not written to curb people's desire to enhance their appearance through a variety of clothing choices, but rather to introduce a layer of consciousness into people's consumption patterns. When you see the price tag and feel the texture, pause to feel the thread's journey and the people involved. The responsibility lies with consumers and, more importantly, with producers in this industry. Let us all listen to the untold narrative behind the price tag that the planet and its people are paying for our good looks, woven into every thread of the fabric.

CLASSIFIEDS

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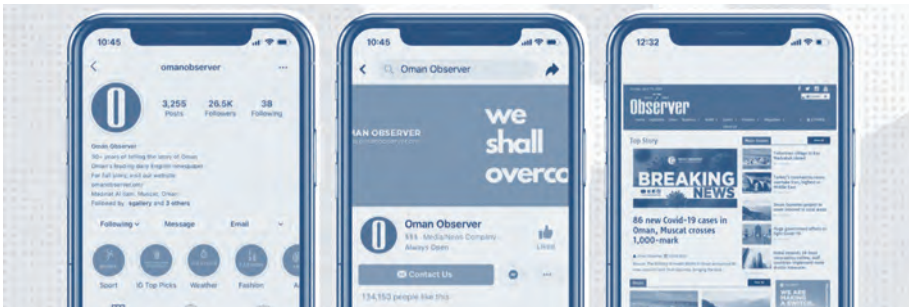
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ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAPITAL REDUCTION

In accordance with the provision of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law, the company Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Saif Al Mahrooqi Establishment for Trading (SPC), which is registered with the Commercial Registration No 1312587, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from Rials Omani 20,000.000 to 20,000.000.

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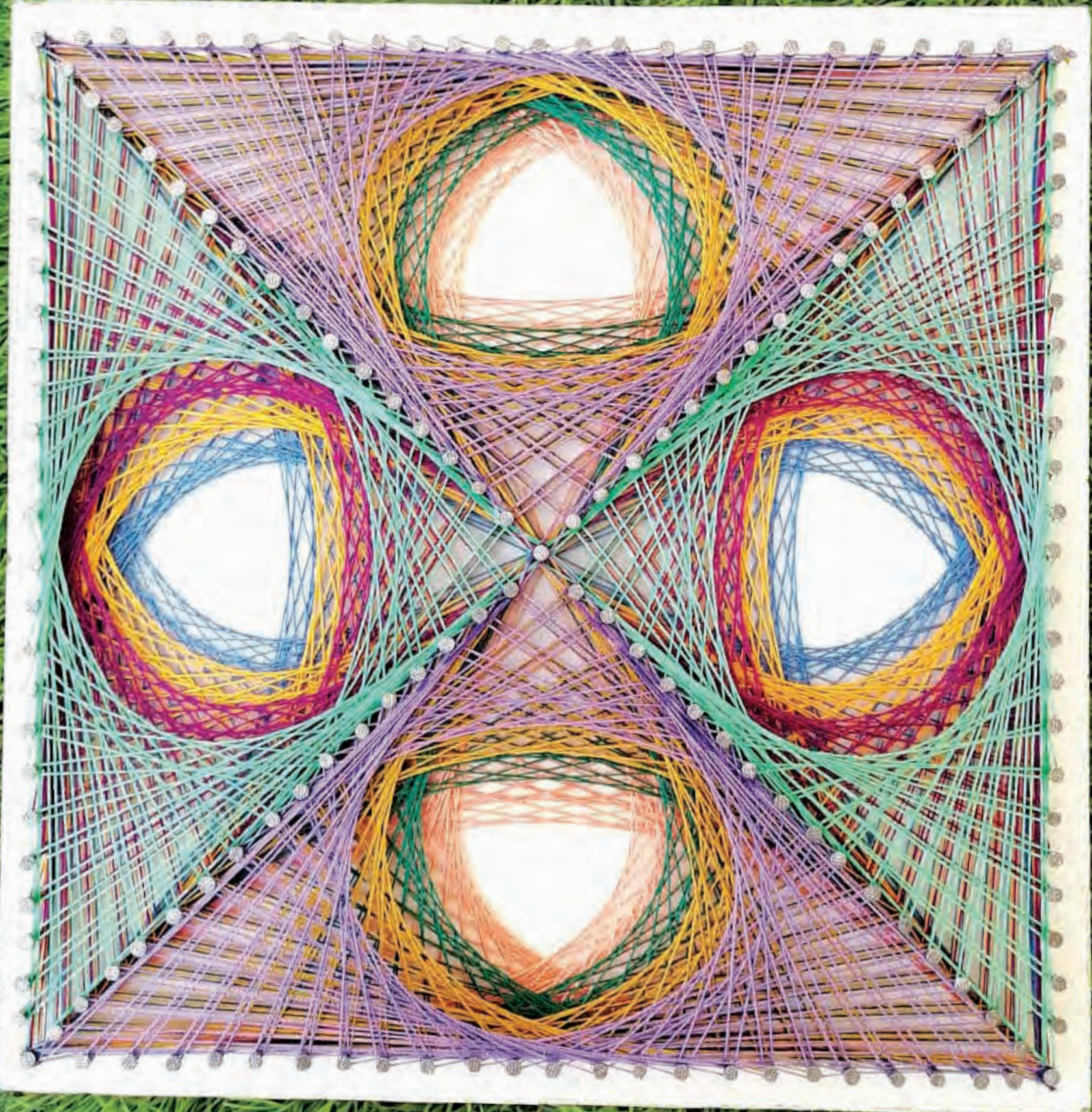
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ART/LIFE

V I S U A L A R T



A VISUAL ART FORM BOOSTS CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN OMAN > 20

INFASHION

DIOR NODS TO HOLLYWOOD’S GOLDEN AGE WITH CRUISE COLLECTION



The French fashion house has unveiled an ode to the golden age of cinema in Los Angeles at its highly anticipated Cruise 2027 show, the first of its kind under creative director Jonathan Anderson.

At the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Anderson — who took the creative reins at Dior last year — presented a runway show inspired by Hollywood glamour, with nods to the natural beauty of California.

Singers Sabrina Carpenter and Miley Cyrus; and actors Al Pacino, Jeff Goldblum, Anya Taylor-Joy and Macaulay Culkin were among the celebrities who attended the glitzy extravaganza in LACMA’s newly opened David Geffen Galleries.

The audience was transported to the set of a classic detective film, with colourful vintage cars placed amidst the museum’s stark concrete curves and moody lighting.

Models emerged from the smoky haze in effervescent hues of yellow, purple and orange.

The collection explores the French house’s historical relationship with Hollywood, taking as its starting point the ultimatum Marlene Dietrich gave to director Alfred Hitchcock before the filming of “Stage Fright” in the late 1940s: “No Dior, no Dietrich!”

Just like the legendary actress’s wardrobe, Dior’s show late Wednesday exuded glamour and female empowerment. Flowers played a prominent role, with a spray of daffodils bursting from one skirt or the red-orange petals of California’s poppy, the state flower, cascading down a dress.

NOSTALGIA

The nostalgic tone of the collection was captured by some attendees who praised the juxtaposition of pieces, resulting in fluid, less cinched silhouettes reminiscent of 1940s Hollywood.

Anderson, former artistic director of the Spanish fashion house Loewe, in June 2025 became the first designer since Christian Dior to oversee all three lines (women’s, men’s and haute couture) for the legendary French house.

Following an acclaimed first menswear collection in June and a less enthusiastically received first womenswear collection in October, Anderson presented a second, more extravagant menswear collection in the French capital in January.

Then, for his first haute couture collection, the 41-year-old Northern Irish designer presented a line with punk touches and floral accents, true to his rebellious spirit.

Like Dior, nominated for an Oscar in 1955 for the costumes in “Indiscretion of an American Wife”, Anderson has built a connection with Hollywood, contributing to productions such as “Challengers” (2024), starring Zendaya and directed by Luca Guadagnino.

Dior holds its Cruise, or resort, shows in different locations each year, showcasing the luxury house’s designs in new locales. — **AFP**

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



MUSIC

U2 drummer Larry Mullen Jr (C) is seen during the second day of recording a music video in downtown Mexico City. — **AFP**



FILM

Actor Aidan Djuadi poses during a photocall of the film “Quelques mots d’amour” (Words of Love) at the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — **AFP**



FASHION

Models walk the runway during the Dior 2027 Cruise collection fashion show at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in Los Angeles. — **AFP**

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Marriage of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera at heart of dreamy opera

Like a macabre scene from one of her vivid canvases, Frida Kahlo holds Diego Rivera in her arms as he dies at the foot of a gaunt red tree, their silhouettes framed by blue curtains, at the end of an opera devoted to their tumultuous relationship.

Sung in Spanish, “Frida and Diego: The Last Dream” is being staged for the first time at New York’s Metropolitan Opera starting on Thursday, before an international cinema broadcast on May 30.

The 2022 opera is not a biopic, but a “fantasy”, said American composer Gabriela Lena Frank, who worked with Cuban-American playwright Nilo Cruz.

The story is set in 1957, three years after Kahlo’s death, in the final hours of Rivera’s life — as he is haunted by regrets about their stormy relationship, his infidelities, their inability to have a child together and his overshadowing his wife’s career while she was still alive.

Their posthumous reunion — a way to find “redemption”, Cruz said — happens on the occasion



of Día de los Muertos, Mexico’s celebration of the dead, when Kahlo seeks her husband in the world of the living and a chance to paint again.

“Latinos, you know, we’re in a very difficult moment right now”, Frank said. “It’s incredible to me that this is when a cultural institution like the Met Opera is celebrating a deeply Latino story”. The opera draws visual inspiration from Kahlo’s paintings, which were sometimes overshadowed by Rivera’s monumental murals while she was still alive.

now made her work the most expensive art made by a woman in the world. — AFP



A gallery assistant looks at Daria dress (2019) by British fashion designer Molly Goddard. — AFP

New London museum woos younger visitors

NEW London museum designed with and for under-30s is aiming to attract younger audiences by exploring themes such as climate, identity and gender.

Set in the former 2012 Olympic Park in east London, the honey-coloured concrete building of V&A East is the newest branch of the 174-year-old Victoria and Albert Museum. It is specifically targeted at younger visitors and opened on April 18.

Just nearby is the Storehouse, which opened earlier and offers a contrasting experience: it showcases the museum’s vast collections in a dense, encyclopedic display. V&A East, by contrast, takes a more restrained approach, exhibiting only around 500 objects in a bright, open space with large windows.

Its permanent galleries feature a mix of historical and contemporary works, including shoes by punk designer Vivienne Westwood and a dress by 18th-century designer Anna Maria Garthwaite, one of the earliest known female fashion designers. These sit alongside modern pieces by east London artists, including textiles inspired by Althea McNish’s African-Caribbean heritage.

Museum officials say the space was developed after years of consultation with young people. Brendan Cormier, chief curator, said the team worked closely with under-30s to shape everything from gallery design to the selection of objects. The aim is to present collections through themes that reflect younger audiences’ concerns, including health, community and identity.

The project also responds to declining museum attendance among young adults. UK



Chief Curator Brendan Cormier says the new V&A East arose out of years of consultations with young adults. — AFP



Ballet costumes are displayed as part of the exhibition ‘The Music is Black: A British Story’ at the new V&A East Museum in east London.

cultural data from July shows that only around 31% to 37% of people aged 16–24 visited a museum in the past year, compared with 41% of adults overall.

The opening comes at a time when museums are facing increased scrutiny over how they present social and political issues. In the United States, for example, government

officials have recently reviewed museum exhibitions, accusing some of promoting “wokeness” or ideological bias.

In contrast, V&A East involved more than 30,000 young people during its development, including through school programmes and direct participation. Curators describe the visitor experience as exploratory rather than linear, encouraging people to follow their curiosity from one object to another.

Cormier described the design as “following a thread”, where an item captures attention and leads visitors into broader stories and connections.

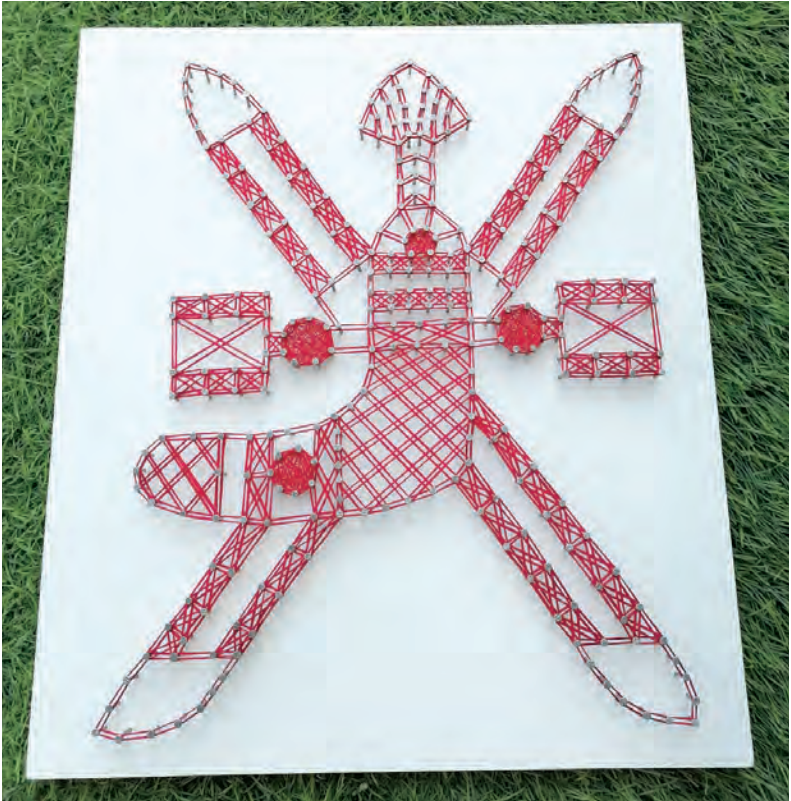
Visitors have responded positively to the unconventional format. One 27-year-old London visitor said the experience felt “unnerving” but engaging, noting that it encourages wandering rather than seeking specific exhibits. Her father, visiting with her, joked that you “mustn’t be afraid to dive into the unknown”.

A temporary exhibition titled *The Music is Black: A British Story* runs until January 2027. It uses connected headphones that change audio as visitors move through the space, creating an immersive experience.

The exhibition explores more than a century of Black music in Britain, from jazz and reggae to hip hop and rock, shaped by migration and cultural exchange. It highlights themes of resilience, struggle, excellence and joy, while also addressing Britain’s colonial history.

This includes a large introductory map showing the extent of the British Empire and routes of the transatlantic slave trade from the 16th to 19th centuries, setting the historical context for the museum’s broader narrative approach. — AFP

FEATURES



A VISUAL ART FORM BOOSTS CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN OMAN

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

IN A PEACEFUL corner of the Wilayat of Samayil, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, threads intertwine across wooden planks, telling tales of art and identity. This art form is the work of Omani artist Idris bin Thani al Harasi, who has chosen to transform nails and threads into a visual language brimming with creativity and wonder.

The art of threads and nails stands out as a modern art form that successfully combines traditional craftsmanship with contemporary artistic vision. This art does not rely solely on traditional painting with colours; rather, it involves creating artistic compositions by fixing hundreds of nails to wooden planks and then weaving threads between them with geometric precision, giving the work unique aesthetic dimensions.

In the world of visual art, Al Harasi does not limit himself to traditional painting. He lets his imagination run wild, creating artistic compositions that rely on geometric precision and colour harmony. The intertwined threads transform into works that bear the hallmarks of Omani heritage with a modern spirit. Through this art, he has been able to present a distinctive experience that combines craftsmanship, patience and profound artistic sensibility. Al Harasi's journey began with drawing before he discovered his passion for string and nail art. He then embarked on developing his tools and techniques, using various types of wood, string and paints. The time it takes to complete his artwork varies depending on the size and complexity of the piece. Some pieces can take weeks to finish, while others are completed in just a few days.

Al Harasi believes the most challenging part of the process lies in the meticulous planning of nail placement and ensuring parallel spacing, requiring intense concentration and precision. He emphasises that the success of a piece depends on the harmony of lines and colours, which gives the work an attractive visual dimension. Despite the challenges artists face, such as limited marketing opportunities and exhibition participation, Al Harasi perseveres with determination, striving to promote this art form by conducting workshops and participating in art events both within and outside the Sultanate of Oman. He has also presented numerous educational workshops at universities, schools and associations, aiming to introduce young people to this art and hone their creative talents. Al Harasi believes that the art of thread and nail art can integrate with Omani identity by embodying heritage symbols such as the Omani dagger and traditional landmarks in modern styles, reflecting a balance between authenticity and modernity.

At a time when creative industries are becoming part of cultural and tourism development, this art form emerges as a promising space that can open new horizons for Omani youth and give local art a wider presence on both the cultural and tourism levels, carrying a message that affirms that Omani identity is always capable of expressing itself through the language of art and beauty. This art form holds a special place in the Omani art scene because it resonates with the spirit of heritage and local identity. Artists draw inspiration from symbols of the Omani environment, such as the Omani dagger, traditional doors, geometric patterns and historical landmarks, reinterpreting them in a modern style that combines authenticity and innovation.

Experts believe that the future of thread and nail art in Oman is promising, especially with the provision of institutional support and ongoing training. This art form is not merely aesthetic; it carries a cultural message that reflects Omani heritage with a contemporary spirit, offering young people a space for expression, creativity and participation in the Sultanate of Oman's cultural and economic development.

Today, thread and nail art represents one of the modern creative arts that can contribute to supporting the cultural and economic goals of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in developing creative industries and empowering Omani youth.

