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IN BRIEF

INSURANCE REVENUES SURPASS 500 MILLION

Oman’s insurance sector recorded strong growth in 2025, with total insurance revenues exceeding RO 500 million, supported by higher investment returns, expanding insurance activity and increased adoption of digital services, according to the Financial Services Authority. Audited financial data showed that insurance revenues rose to RO 501.6 million in 2025, compared with RO 483 million in 2024, representing growth of 3.86 per cent. National insurance companies generated RO 404.2 million in revenues, up from RO 389.5 million a year earlier, while foreign insurance companies recorded revenues of RO 97.4 million, reflecting continued competitiveness and growing demand for insurance services in the Omani market. **DETAILS ON P15**

HAMAS ARMED WING CHIEF KILLED IN GAZA STRIKE



A person uses a megaphone during a solidarity rally to mark the 78th anniversary of the Nakba to commemorate the mass dispossession of Palestinians in 1948 in Berlin. — Reuters

The Israeli military on Saturday confirmed that Ezzedine Al Haddad, chief of Hamas’ armed wing, was killed in an air strike in Gaza the day before. “The IDF and the ISA announce that yesterday, in a precise strike in the area of the City of Gaza, the terrorist Ezzedine Al Haddad was eliminated,” the military said, referring to itself and the Shin Bet domestic security agency. Two Hamas officials also said that Haddad had been killed in an Israeli strike on a residential apartment and a civilian vehicle in Gaza City on Friday. The military said Haddad was “one of the last senior commanders in Hamas’s military wing who directed the planning and execution of the October 7th massacre”. “Throughout the war, Haddad was involved in the holding of many Israeli hostages in Hamas captivity,” the military said. “Haddad managed Hamas’s hostage captivity system and surrounded himself with hostages in an attempt to prevent his elimination.” — AFP

STAFF REPORTER MUSCAT, MAY 16

The Main Committee for Sighting the Crescent of Dhul Hijjah for the year 1446 AH will convene today (Sunday) at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, under the chairmanship of Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

The ministry called on citizens and residents to observe the crescent and to collaborate with the field teams in the wilayats or the subcommittees at the walis’ offices. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labour is expected to announce the official Eid Al Adha holiday dates in the Sultanate of Oman this week, with early indications

pointing to a potential six-day break. Preliminary expectations suggest that the holiday may begin on Arafat Day, likely to fall on Tuesday, May 26, and continue until Sunday, May 31. If confirmed, the extended holiday is likely to encourage early travel and leisure planning, with residents considering both domestic and

international destinations during the Eid period. Tourism and hospitality sectors typically witness increased activity ahead of Eid Al Adha, as families book accommodation and travel arrangements in advance. Popular destinations within the Sultanate of Oman, particularly coastal and mountain areas, are expected to see higher demand.

Talks on with Tehran for Hormuz transit

PAKISTANI MINISTER ARRIVES IN TEHRAN TO ‘FACILITATE’ US-IRAN PEACE TALKS

PAKISTAN’S INTERIOR minister arrived in Tehran on Saturday “to facilitate” the peace talks between Iran and the United States that have stalled despite a fragile ceasefire, Iranian media reported. “Mohsin Naqvi arrived today in the Islamic Republic of Iran on an official two-day visit as part of Pakistan’s ongoing efforts to facilitate talks and promote regional peace,” the Tasnim news agency reported. Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni received Naqvi, whose visit to Tehran comes days after that of Pakistan’s influential army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Friday that Tehran had received messages from Washington indicating that President Donald Trump’s administration was willing to continue negotiations. Iranian state television said on Saturday that European countries were in talks with Tehran over transit for ships through the Strait of Hormuz. “Following the passage of ships from East Asian countries, notably China, Japan and Pakistan, we received information today indicating that Europeans have also begun negotiations with the Revolutionary Guards navy” to get permission to pass, state television reported, without specifying which countries. US President Donald Trump said Chinese President Xi Jinping had agreed Tehran must reopen the Strait of Hormuz, though China gave no indication it would weigh in. Flying back from Beijing on Friday after two days of talks with Xi, Trump said he was considering whether to lift US sanctions on Chinese oil companies buying Iranian oil. China is the biggest buyer of Iranian oil. “I’m not asking for any favours because when you ask for favours, you have to do favours in return,” Trump said when asked



People walk in Tehran Bazaar in Iran on Saturday. — Reuters

by a reporter on Air Force One whether Xi had made a firm commitment to put pressure on the Iranians to reopen the strait. Xi did not comment on his discussions with Trump about Iran, although China’s foreign ministry criticised the war, calling it a conflict “which should never have happened, has no reason to continue”. On Saturday, Ebrahim Azizi, head of the Iranian parliament’s national security commission, said Iran “has prepared a professional mechanism to manage traffic” through the strait, adding that it will be “unveiled soon”. “In this process, only commercial

vessels and parties cooperating with Iran will benefit from it,” he noted, adding that “the necessary fees will be collected for specialised services”. “This route will remain closed to the operators of the so-called ‘freedom project,’” he said, referring to a temporary US military operation to guide stranded commercial ships through the strait. Meanwhile, Israel and Lebanon agreed to extend a ceasefire and hold expanded talks on a political settlement, the United States announced Friday, even as Israel carried out new strikes that it insists are not subject to the truce. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

Collector roads key to smarter Muscat Expressway expansion

SAUD AL ANSARI MUSCAT, MAY 16

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) awarded the Muscat Expressway expansion project, stretching from Al Qurum Natural Park interchange to the Halban interchange, at a total cost exceeding RO 157.2 million. The ambitious project aims to increase road capacity, ease traffic congestion during peak hours, enhance road

safety and significantly reduce travel times. Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport, described the project as a strategic milestone within the ministry’s plans to strengthen the efficiency of the national road network and accommodate Oman’s rapid urban and population growth. He stressed that



The ambitious project aims to increase road capacity, ease traffic congestion during peak hours, enhance road safety and significantly reduce travel times.

the expansion will improve connectivity between governorates while providing a safer and more efficient transport environment. **BROAD PACKAGE** The project includes a broad package of infrastructure upgrades, most notably the conversion of Al Qurum Natural Park and Seih Al Maleh roundabouts into signalised intersections, expansion of the expressway up to the Halban interchange and improved integration

with the Al Batinah Expressway. The scope also includes upgrading bridge entry and exit points through additional lanes and constructing a direct exit at Rusayl Bridge for motorists travelling from Muscat towards Burj Al Sahwa Roundabout. Additional improvements include standalone flyover bridges designed to streamline traffic movement between major routes, including links from Ruwi to the expressway. **TURN TO P2**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The appointment helps enhance the efficiency of Oman's judicial system

19 public prosecutors join judicial sciences programme

NIZWA: The Higher Institute of the Judiciary in Nizwa has welcomed a new batch of 19 male and female Public Prosecution assistants to the Postgraduate Diploma in Judicial Sciences (Public Prosecution Division), as part of efforts to strengthen national competencies and enhance the efficiency of Oman's judicial system.

Dr Nabhan bin Rashid al Maawali, Dean of the Higher Institute of the Judiciary, said the institute remains committed to providing an integrated academic and training environment that equips students with essential legal knowledge and practical skills. He also praised the efforts of the Supreme Judicial Council in supporting the sector with qualified national talent.

The reception programme included an introductory session on academic courses and regulations, along with a field tour of the institute's facilities, including classrooms, the library and technical support amenities. — ONA

Programme for preparing young leaders concludes



The three-day programme saw the participation of more than 60 students.

MUSCAT: The National Programme for Preparing Young Leaders, 'Qiyadi,' organised by Muscat Governorate in collaboration with the Centre for Preparing Young Leaders, concluded on Saturday.

The three-day programme saw the participation of more than 60 students, aged between 11 and 14, from different wilayats of Muscat Governorate, and was held at the Civil Aviation Authority Hall.

Ahmed bin Ali al Shuhi, Wali of Al Seeb and chief guest of the closing ceremony, said that the Qiyadi programme embodies the governorate's commitment to supporting development initiatives that aim to discover promising talents and abilities at an early age, guiding them on the correct paths in order to prepare generations capable of actively participating in building society.

At the event's conclusion, six participants were announced as qualifiers for representing Muscat Governorate in the next stage at the national level in the Sultanate of Oman.

These qualifiers are: Al Hawari bin Rashid al Hinai, Hamad bin Madin al Sabti, Hadi bin Aqeel al Ajmi, Sakina bint Abdullah al Sawafi, Reema bint Hamid al Bimani, and Baraa bint Darwish al Balushi. — ONA

FROM P1

COLLECTOR ROADS KEY TO SMARTER MUSCAT EXPRESSWAY EXPANSION

Upgrades will also be carried out at the Al Khoudh Sixth traffic signals to minimise traffic conflict points, alongside enhancements to collector-distributor (CD) roads extending from Al Ghubrah to Al Maabela to improve access and exit movements.

Speaking to Observer, Eng Falah bin Said al Falahi, Manager of the Muscat Expressway Expansion Project, said the ministry has adopted a flexible design strategy that combines the expansion of main carriageway lanes with the introduction of collector roads, tailored to the traffic density and characteristics of each section.

He explained that the primary challenge lies not simply in increasing lane numbers, but in



SHAIKH
AYMAN BIN
AHMED
AL HOSNI
CEO, Oman Air-
ports

effectively managing traffic conflicts. The collector road system, he noted, is designed to separate local traffic from long-distance through traffic, reducing congestion at merging points and improving both traffic efficiency and road safety.

According to Al Falahi, the main carriageways will cater to through traffic travelling longer distances, while collector roads will primarily serve local residential and commercial areas. Lane distribution will vary according to demand,

ranging between three and four lanes for main carriageways and two to three lanes for collector roads. He highlighted that advanced traffic studies and simulations demonstrated that traffic separation through collector roads is more effective than expanding the highway into six continuous lanes, particularly in densely populated areas. The approach is expected to deliver superior operational performance in both the short and long term.

Addressing traffic bottlenecks in heavily congested areas such as Al Maabela, Al Khoudh and Rusayl, Al Falahi said the project incorporates targeted solutions, including continuous collector roads, enhanced bridge connectivity, direct exits and dedicated flyovers to ease congestion.

OMANI HAJ MISSION TEAM DEPARTS FOR MADINAH



The team's work in Medina will include providing religious guidance and preaching services. — ONA

A TEAM from the Omani Haj Mission for 1447 AH, headed by Dr Zaher bin Abdullah al Hosni, Deputy Head of the Omani Haj Mission for Pilgrims Affairs and Haj Companies, departed for Madinah to provide services to Omani pilgrims arriving in the city.

Al Hosni explained that about 3,000 pilgrims will travel to Madinah to visit the Prophet's Mosque before proceeding to Makkah to perform Haj. He added that the team will remain in Madinah until the Dhul Hijjah 5.

He explained that the team's work in Medina will include providing religious guidance and preaching services by the Fatwa and Religious Guidance delegation, health services by the medical delegation and security and safety services by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) delegation.

Members of the Haj companies supervision delegation will also conduct field visits to check on the Omani pilgrims arriving in Medina and will visit their accommodations to ensure they receive the services agreed upon in their contracts with the Haj companies.

It is worth noting that the number of pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman this year reached 14,000, including 13,560 Omani citizens and 440 residents.

Meanwhile, the Omani Haj Mission for the year 1447 AH reviewed operational mechanisms and preparations aimed at ensuring seamless services for pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman during the upcoming Haj season.

The discussions took place during a meeting of delegation heads and mission members at the mission headquarters in Makkah, chaired by Ahmed bin Saleh Al Rashidi, Undersecretary at the Ministry of

Endowments and Religious Affairs and Head of the Omani Haj Mission.

The meeting focused on preparations for Mina and Arafat camps, operational plans, and field coordination mechanisms to ensure pilgrims can perform rituals with ease and peace of mind.

Ahmed stressed the importance of integration among participating delegations and adherence to the highest standards of quality and efficiency in serving Omani pilgrims. He described serving pilgrims as both an honour and a national responsibility that requires collective teamwork.

Participants also reviewed the readiness of specialised teams responsible for administrative, medical, guidance and media services, while discussing ways to strengthen emergency response systems and ensure round-the-clock support for pilgrims. — ONA

Ibri hatchery project boosts poultry production and food security

IBRI: An ambitious Omani entrepreneur is helping strengthen the Sultanate of Oman's food security system through a pioneering poultry initiative that has grown into the first chick hatchery in the Wilayat of Ibri, contributing to local production and economic diversification.

The 'Al Najid Heights' project, established by Bader bin Salim al Kalbani in Al Dhahirah Governorate, has evolved from a private investment into a model national venture supporting poultry production and enhancing supply chain efficiency in line with the country's food security goals.

Al Kalbani said the project

was born out of a passion for animal production and a desire to make productive use of available environmental resources to create sustainable income and serve the community.

His journey began in 2003 with the purchase of a small farm in Ibri. While seeking an additional source of income, he explored agriculture and livestock activities and identified poultry hatching as a promising but relatively rare venture at the time. Starting with a modest incubator capable of hatching just 350 eggs, primarily local chicken eggs, he gradually expanded operations before establishing a small commercial



The facility currently has a production capacity of around 700,000 chicks annually.

hatchery in 2009. In 2024, Al Kalbani inaugurated a larger and more advanced hatchery equipped with high-performance incubation technology, reinforcing its position

as the first hatchery dedicated to chick production in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

He explained that the hatchery follows a specialised production process beginning with egg storage in cooling rooms, followed by sorting and arrangement in dedicated trays. Eggs are then transferred to incubation halls for an 18-day incubation period before moving to modern hatching units for a further three days, after which chicks are collected, packaged and delivered to customers and farms.

The facility currently has a production capacity of around 700,000 chicks annually, while actual production has reached

approximately 450,000 chicks per year. Most of the output is marketed across governorates including Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Batinah South and Al Sharqiyah, highlighting the project's growing contribution to domestic food supply chains.

Al Kalbani noted that his long journey in poultry production strengthened his expertise and reaffirmed the importance of perseverance and continuous learning. Looking ahead, he aims to establish an integrated poultry production cycle — from eggs and chick production to rearing and slaughtering through modern processing facilities — to further support food security. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



About 25 tourism companies and travel agencies from Oman took part in the forum.

Forum showcases heritage push to boost cultural tourism

AMAL AL RIYAMI
BAHLA, MAY 16

Bahla Fort hosted tourism professionals, travel operators, and industry stakeholders for the ‘Tourism Companies Forum,’ organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The event brought together 25 tourism companies and travel agencies from across Oman to explore ways of integrating Bahla’s rich heritage assets into curated travel itineraries targeting both domestic and international visitors. Discussions focused on positioning Bahla not merely as a heritage stop, but as a holistic cultural destination capable of driving higher tourist footfall to Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Key attention was directed toward the growing tourism value of Bahla Historical Mosque, traditional neighbourhoods and the historic market area, alongside ongoing restoration and development initiatives aimed at enhancing visitor experience while preserving architectural authenticity. Eng Ali bin Ahmed bin Amer al Shaqsi, General Manager of Al Marasim Tourism and Investment — the operator responsible for Bahla Fort and the historical mosque — said the forum reflects a broader vision to activate heritage sites as living cultural spaces.

He noted that Bahla’s heritage landscape offers a distinctive blend of architecture, traditional crafts, and authentic Omani experiences, making it well-suited for structured cultural tourism programmes. The forum also included guided familiarisation visits across key heritage sites. Participants explored Bahla Heritage Souq, where they were briefed on its historical role in the social and economic life of the wilayat.

The tour further highlighted nearby heritage cafés, guesthouses, and emerging tourism projects contributing to the area’s evolving hospitality ecosystem. Delegates visited surrounding old neighbourhoods where restoration work is underway to rehabilitate traditional homes and repurpose them for tourism use, while maintaining their original architectural identity.

At Bahla Historical Mosque, participants observed its architectural and religious significance, including inscriptions, restored features, and newly developed museum spaces displaying artefacts, coins, antiquities and archival photographs documenting its transformation over time.

Inside Bahla Fort, tourism operators were introduced to upgraded visitor facilities, including enhanced lighting, safety systems, surveillance infrastructure, and improved public amenities. The site now hosts a range of curated cultural exhibits, including displays on traditional collectibles, antique doors, Omani honeybees.

AL RUSTAQ HOSPITAL INTRODUCES VARICOSE VEIN TREATMENT

RUSTAQ: Al Rustaq Hospital in Al Batinah South Governorate has launched a sclerotherapy foam injection service for the treatment of varicose and spider veins as part of efforts to enhance healthcare quality and expand specialised medical services for patients.

Dr Mahmoud bin Salim al Subhi, Director of Al Rustaq Hospital, said the introduction of the service reflects the hospital’s ongoing commitment to advancing medical care and adopting the latest treatment technologies.

He explained that sclerotherapy foam injection is a modern and effective treatment used to manage varicose and spider veins through safe, non-surgical procedures, helping improve both the health and cosmetic condition of patients while



This confirms Al Rustaq Hospital’s commitment to keeping pace with global medical developments.

reducing recovery time.

Dr Al Subhi noted that the launch of the service underscores Al Rustaq Hospital’s commitment to keeping pace with global medical

advancements and providing advanced treatment options that contribute to improving the quality of healthcare services offered to the community. — ONA

Omani students achieve top places at global science fair



Ward bint Badr al Balushi and Rimas bint Qais al Balushi from Al Amal School.



Mohammed al Zarouni and Abdulrahman bin Khalid al Balushi

THE OMANI students participating in the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF 2026) in the United States, have achieved outstanding scientific accomplishments, reflecting the capabilities and excellence of Omani students in research and innovation at the global level, and enhancing the Ministry of Education’s distinguished presence in international scientific forums.

Ward bint Bader al Balushi and Rimas bint Qais al Balushi, from Al Amal School (grades 10-12) in Al Batinah South Governorate, won fourth place globally in the field of environmental engineering for their invention, ‘A Passive Ophiolite-Based System Using Plasmonic and Photocatalytic Technology for Treating Associated Water in Oil Production,’ which offers innovative solutions to address environmental challenges in the oil sector.

Additionally, students Ibrahim bin Mohammed al Zarouni and Abdulrahman

bin Khalid al Balushi, from Saad Bin Abi Waqas School (grades 9-12) in Al Batinah North Governorate, received a special award and student membership from the American Psychological Association in the field of social and behavioural sciences for their invention: ‘An AI-Based System for Analysing and Supporting Student Interaction Inside the Classroom.’

The exhibition brings together a select group of innovators and researchers to compete in 22 diverse scientific fields, including engineering, computer science, social sciences, and other areas reflecting the latest scientific and technological advancements.

It serves as a leading global platform for showcasing student research and innovations and promoting a culture of scientific research and innovation.

The exhibition provides students with opportunities to exchange scientific experiences and expertise with their peers from around the world, broadening their

horizons for learning, cultural exchange and knowledge sharing, and contributing to the development of globally competitive scientific minds. These achievements are a continuation of the Ministry of Education’s efforts to support scientific innovation and empower students to participate in international competitions, thus enhancing the Sultanate of Oman’s presence in global scientific forums and affirming the ability of Omani students to compete and achieve excellence.

Such participation sharpens students’ skills in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), preparing a generation equipped with the tools of the future and capable of applying knowledge to find innovative solutions to contemporary challenges. They also foster students’ critical thinking, teamwork, research and analytical skills, in addition to developing technological awareness and establishing a culture of innovation and creativity. — ONA

Oman and India highlight share maritime history in New York

NEW YORK: The Permanent missions of the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India to the United Nations in New York organised an event entitled ‘Ancient Trade Routes: The Voyage of INSV Kaundinya’ showcasing the voyage of the Indian Navy’s sailing ship which departed from Porbandar Port in the Indian state of Gujarat on December 29, 2025, and arrived at Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat on January 14, 2026.

Omar bin Said al Kathiri, Permanent Representative of Oman to the United Nations, explained that the INSV Kaundinya’s voyage evokes the long-standing and strong relationship between Oman and the Republic of India, a relationship that has flourished in the heart of the Indian Ocean for centuries adding that the INSV Kaundinya’s visit to the Sultanate of Oman is a testament



The event showcased the voyage of the Indian Navy’s sailing ship which arrived at Muscat Port.

to the deep-rooted ties that bind the two friendly nations.

He reviewed the legacy of the maritime partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and India as both countries sought to build bridges of communication between

civilisations, pointing to the role played by ports such as Muscat, Sur, and Mumbai as vital gateways for trade and cultural exchange across the globe.

He added that the spirit of cooperation which characterised

the relationship between Oman and India inspires the adoption of collaborative approaches in managing marine resources and preserving biodiversity.

This spirit has demonstrated leadership in promoting responsible fishing practices, combating marine pollution, and supporting scientific research through the exchange of expertise, contributing to a global vision of sustainable and productive oceans accessible to all and serving the interests of future generations.

The Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, explained that the voyage of the Indian ship ‘INSV Kaundinya’ underscores the long-standing maritime relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and India.

It also recalls the rich maritime traditions of trade and cultural exchange between India and the

countries of the Arabian Gulf region, and the role these traditions have played in enhancing the deep-rooted relations between India and the region.

The National Museum of Oman displayed a video that highlighted the Omani-Indian relations across different eras and civilisations. The video reflected the rich cultural, historical and civilisational heritage shared by Oman and India throughout history, and its impact on the deep historical ties that continue to resonate at present.

Dr Adnan bin Rashid al Azri, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman for Continental Shelf and Maritime Affairs, spoke about joint projects between the two countries in the fields of marine science, the aquatic environment, and water management. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

HEAT REVIVES OMAN’S REPTILES



MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

AS SUMMER temperatures continue to climb across Oman, movement is slowly returning to some of the country’s quieter natural spaces, with reptiles emerging in valleys, on farms, and in shaded terrain in search of cooler ground, water, and shelter.

Beneath rocks, along farm edges

and in dense vegetation, wildlife activity is increasing as the heat reshapes natural rhythms across Oman.

Snakes and other reptiles, which are largely less active during cooler months, are becoming more visible on summer evenings and at night.

Environmental specialist Abdulrahman al Amri, from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, explained that

reptiles are cold-blooded creatures whose body temperature is directly influenced by their surroundings. With the onset of summer, they become more active across valleys, mountains, farms and open areas, particularly during cooler hours.

He noted that farms, gardens and vegetated zones are more likely to encounter areas during this period as reptiles move in search of shade, moisture and food.

As seasonal encounters increase, authorities and health experts are urging caution in rural and outdoor areas. Residents are advised to use lighting at night in valleys, check shoes and clothing left outdoors, and avoid placing hands into rocky crevices or dense vegetation without care.

Hassan al Balushi, emergency medicine specialist at Sohar Hospital, cautioned against

unsafe responses to snakebite incidents, stressing the importance of remaining calm and seeking immediate medical attention rather than attempting harmful first-aid measures. Al Amri added that the seasonal return of reptiles reflects the ecological balance of Oman’s landscapes, highlighting the importance of awareness and coexistence during the hotter months.

Photos by Abdulrahman al Amri

SHORTTAKES

MOL LAUNCHES NEW MEDICAL SCREENING FOR FILIPINO WORKERS

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MAY 16

The Ministry of Labour (MoL), in coordination with relevant authorities and Oman Post, has announced the implementation of a new medical examination system for workers arriving from the Philippines, effective May 18.

The new system, introduced as part of ongoing efforts to streamline and strengthen recruitment procedures for expatriate workers from the Philippines, aims to improve the efficiency, transparency and quality of services provided, the ministry said in a statement.

Under the revised procedures, all Filipino workers will be required to complete mandatory pre-arrival medical examinations through a designated electronic platform before entering Oman. The integrated system is designed to serve as a one-stop process for biometric fingerprinting, medical screening and employment contract processing, ensuring faster and more efficient documentation.

According to the ministry, the new mechanism is also intended to enhance labour protection and reinforce a zero-tolerance approach to labour exploitation.

“These updated regulations are expected to help standardise recruitment procedures and improve transparency for both employers and overseas Filipino workers,” a ministry spokesperson said.

The ministry stressed that recruitment agencies must strictly adhere to approved procedures when submitting applications for workers from the Philippines, including completing medical examination requirements through the designated digital platform prior to workers’ arrival in Oman. Relevant procedures will also be circulated to external recruitment agencies in coordination with the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines in Oman.

For further details and submission of medical examination applications, the ministry has directed agencies and stakeholders to the official portal: OVMC Oman Post Portal. Queries can also be directed via email at info.omanph@vfshelpline.com, while customer assistance is available through Oman Post (1001) and the Philippines helpline (+63285400842).

“We would like to keep recruitment agencies informed and appreciate their cooperation and commitment towards enhancing procedural efficiency and service quality,” the spokesperson added.

Oman is home to more than 50,000 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). In July 2025, Oman launched a visa and medical centre in Manila to facilitate biometric registration, medical screening and contract attestation under one roof. Oman also established the Association of Expatriate Worker Recruitment Offices in 2025 to standardise hiring practices, curb unlicensed recruitment activities and address labour-related disputes.

BOS hosts RAM delegation in UK

LONDON: The British Omani Society (BOS) hosted a dinner in London to honour a high-level delegation from the Royal Academy of Management (RAM), led by Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati, President of RAM, as the guest of honour.

Held as part of the Society’s 50th anniversary celebrations, the event brought together BOS trustees, senior UK government stakeholders, distinguished UK figures with close ties to Oman, and representatives from the Omani Embassy in London.

The visit focused on strengthening institutional effectiveness and enhancing public sector capabilities in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The visiting delegation included senior legislative and governance representatives, accompanied by top leadership from the RAM, reflecting the importance attached to strengthening institutional partnerships and strategic collaboration between Oman



The discussions explored opportunities for collaboration between UK institutions and the RAM.

and the United Kingdom.

The programme was facilitated by the Civil Service College, a leading UK institution that provides bespoke training for professionals in the public sector and civil service both in the UK and internationally.

Richard Stanford, Chairman, BOS, welcomed guests and reaffirmed the Society’s commitment to strengthening bilateral ties through education, leadership development and institutional exchange.

He highlighted the significance of senior-level engagement in deepening cooperation between the two countries, particularly amid regional tensions.

The dinner also served as a platform for senior stakeholders to exchange views on governance and public sector delivery. Discussions explored opportunities for future collaboration between UK institutions and the RAM, particularly in professional development, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building.

‘Empowering Rural Women’ expo on May 20

MUSCAT: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) Al Musannah, represented by the Department of Economics and Business Administration, in collaboration with the Directorate-General of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Batinah South Governorate, will organise the ‘Empowering Rural Women’ Exhibition on May 20, Wednesday at the university auditorium.

The event will bring together government and private entities, productive families and stakeholders involved in community empowerment initiatives.

It aims to highlight the role



The expo highlights rural women in supporting economic and social development.

of rural women in supporting economic and social development, while promoting local production and showcasing entrepreneurial ventures and traditional crafts that contribute to the national economy and preserve Omani identity.

The exhibition will feature a visual presentation of key initiatives and programmes supporting rural women, along with a traditional performance by students of Al Muladdah Basic Education School (1–8), celebrating aspects of Omani folk arts and cultural heritage.

It will also include dedicated sections for entrepreneurial projects, home-based businesses, handicrafts

and local products, offering participants a platform to present their experiences, enhance marketing opportunities and promote small-scale productive initiatives.

The organisers said the exhibition reflects UTAS’s commitment to empowering rural women and strengthening their contribution to economic, social and cultural development.

It also aligns with efforts to promote entrepreneurship, innovation and community engagement, while reinforcing partnerships with various institutions and linking academic learning with practical application.

UTAS showcases innovation at Smart Engineering Day

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, MAY 16

THE University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) Suhar has concluded its ‘Future Solutions Innovative Projects Competition’ as part of Smart Engineering Day activities, highlighting student-led innovations aligned with Omani identity and professional engineering standards.

Organised by the university’s Engineering Department, the event brought together student innovators, engineers and academics, and showcased projects focused on sustainability, smart technologies and practical solutions to societal challenges.

Three student projects were recognised for their originality, technical depth and social impact.

Speaking on the winning entries, Dr Mohammed Salah, Head of the Engineering Department at UTAS Suhar, said the first-place project in the High-Level Design category, ‘Berwaz,’ is an integrated digital platform for Omani art and literature.

The initiative provides a unified space for showcasing and marketing artworks and literary publications, while offering artists and writers a professional digital presence aimed at reaching wider local and international audiences.

He noted that the platform



Student-driven engineering innovations play a key role in developing intelligent solutions.

The contest highlighted student-led innovations aligned with Omani identity and professional engineering standards

addresses the lack of a unified professional channel for promoting Omani creative works and supports online sales of publications produced by literary forums and institutions. The project targets more than 1,000 visual artists, digital creators, photographers, writers and literature enthusiasts.

The second-place project, ‘Hydro-Entropy,’ focuses on developing advanced hydrogen storage materials using computational modelling and simulation via HEAPS software. The project designs high-entropy alloys composed of titanium, vanadium, zirconium, hafnium and niobium to study their efficiency and safety in hydrogen storage systems.

Dr Salah said the project supports

the emerging hydrogen economy in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and aligns with Oman Vision 2040’s sustainability and renewable energy goals.

The first-place winning project, ‘Wafra,’ is a smart energy management system using Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. It enables automated energy control, real-time monitoring, instant alerts and predictive analytics of consumption patterns.

He added that such student-driven engineering innovations play a key role in developing intelligent solutions for resource management, reducing waste and building stronger sustainability-focused engineering capabilities in Oman.

وزارة الصحة
Ministry of Health

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF KHOULA HOSPITAL

Auction Announcement

The Directorate General of Khoula Hospital invites you to the following Auction:-

Auction No.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Auction Document	Bid Submission Date	Eligibility	Tender Box	Auction Fee (Non-Refundable)
01/2026	Renting of Coffeeshop at Building No. 1 at Directorate General of Khoula Hospital	Sunday 07/June/2026 Before 01:00 PM	Wednesday 08/July/2026 Before 09:00 AM	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	Directorate General of Khoula Hospital (Building No. 4)	RO 25,000

- Companies & institutions willing to participate can purchase Auction Documents from the Financial Affairs Department (Purchase & Tender Section) between 8.30 am and 12.30 pm on working days till date of 07/June/2026, on payment of Auction fee mentioned above.
- Auction should be submitted in plain, sealed envelope, Enclosing A Chq issued by a Local bank for not less than (1%) of the value of the bid, addressed to the Directorate General of Khoula Hospital and it will be refunded if the bid is not awarded. Auction(s) Submitted without Chq will not be considered.
- Auction should be submitted in plain, sealed envelope with wax, on which the number and name of the auction should be written on the outside on the envelope, avoid writing the bidder name.
- Requested to Deposit their Auction Documents at the Directorate General of Khoula Hospital (Building No. 4), Before 09.00 AM on Wednesday, 08/July/2026, and bids submitted after this date shall not be considered, whatever the reasons for the delay.
- Copy of Commercial Registration Certificate & Chamber Certificate is to be attached along with the bid submitted.
- The Directorate General of Khoula Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offer.

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

PAKISTANI MINISTER ARRIVES IN TEHRAN

Pakistan's interior minister arrived in Tehran "to facilitate" the peace talks between Iran and the United States that have stalled despite a fragile ceasefire.

EUROPEANS IN TALKS OVER HORMUZ

Iranian state television said on Saturday that European countries had been in talks with Tehran over transit for ships through the Strait of Hormuz.

ISRAEL STRIKES LEBANON

Israel launched new air strikes in southern Lebanon, a day after the two countries agreed to extend a truce following talks in Washington.

IRAQ OIL DROP TO 10 MILLION

Iraq's oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz plunged to just 10 million barrels in April, compared to the usual 93 million.

PALESTINIAN KILLED IN JENIN

Palestinian health officials said Israeli forces killed a man on the outskirts of the Jenin refugee camp in the northern occupied West Bank.

ISRAEL, LEBANON EXTEND CEASEFIRE

Lebanon and Israel on Friday extended a ceasefire for 45 days, despite a new flare-up in violence, the US State Department said.

LEBANON SEES 'LASTING STABILITY'

Lebanon's delegation at the talks in Washington said that the truce extension and the establishment of a security track pave the way for "lasting stability".

LEBANON WANTS END TO WARS

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said his country has had enough "reckless" wars, calling for support in Beirut's negotiations with Israel.

STRIKE HITS BUILDING IN TYRE

An Israeli strike hit a building in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre after an evacuation warning by the Israeli army.

GLOBAL STOCKS SLIP, OIL RISES

Global stocks slumped as summit talks between the United States and China failed to deliver progress on reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

TRUMP STRESSES IRAN MUST OPEN STRAIT



A building destroyed by US-Israeli air strikes on the campus of Sharif University in Tehran. — NYT file photo

US President Donald Trump said Chinese President Xi Jinping had agreed Tehran must reopen the Strait of Hormuz, though China gave no indication it would weigh in. Flying back from Beijing after two days of talks with Xi, Trump said he was considering whether to lift US sanctions on Chinese oil companies buying Iranian oil. China is the biggest buyer of Iranian oil. "I'm not asking for any favours because when you ask for favours, you have to do favours in return," Trump said when asked by a reporter on Air Force One whether Xi had made a firm commitment to put pressure on the Iranians to reopen the strait. Xi did not comment on his discussions with Trump about Iran, although China's foreign ministry criticised the war, calling it a conflict "which should never have happened, has no reason to continue".

Trump, who told Fox News' "Hannity" programme in an interview aired that he was losing patience with Iran, said Tehran "should make a deal". Talks on ending the war have been on hold since last week when Iran and the US each rejected the other's most recent proposals.

OPEN THE STRAITS
Iran has effectively shut the strait, which carried one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supply before the US and Israel launched attacks on February 28. The disruption to shipping has caused the biggest oil supply crisis in history, pushing up oil prices. Ebrahim Azizi, who heads the Iranian parliament's national security committee, said on Saturday that Tehran had prepared a mechanism to manage traffic through the strait along a designated route that would be unveiled



President Donald Trump speaks to reporters aboard Air Force One. — NYT

soon. Azizi said only commercial vessels and parties cooperating with Iran would benefit, and that fees would be collected for specialised services provided under the mechanism.

Thousands of Iranians were killed in the US and Israeli air strikes. Thousands more have been killed in Lebanon in fighting between Israel and Hezbollah, though Israel and Lebanon agreed on Friday to a 45-day extension of a ceasefire that has tamped down the conflict there.

The US paused its attacks last month but began a port blockade. As of Saturday, 78 commercial ships had been redirected and four disabled to ensure compliance with the blockade, the US military said.

Tehran, which carried out strikes against Israel, US bases and Gulf states after the war began, has said it will not unblock the strait until the US ends its blockade. Trump has threatened to resume attacks if Iran does not agree to a deal. "We don't want them to have a

nuclear weapon, we want the straits open," Trump said in Beijing, alongside Xi.

Iran, which has long denied it intends to build a nuclear weapon, has refused to end nuclear research or relinquish its hidden stockpile of enriched uranium.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran had received messages from the US indicating Washington was willing to continue talks. Pakistan has been mediating between Washington and Tehran.

Iranian news agency Nournews said Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni had held "detailed" discussions with his visiting Pakistani counterpart on Iran-Pakistan relations and the prospects for resuming peace talks, but gave no details.

TRUMP LOSING PATIENCE

Trump, who told Fox News' "Hannity" programme in an interview aired that he was losing patience with Iran, said Tehran "should make a deal". Oil prices rose around 3 per cent to around \$109 a barrel on Friday on concerns about a lack of progress in resolving the conflict. Talks on ending the war, which has become a liability for Trump ahead of US congressional elections in November, have been on hold since last week when Iran and the US each rejected the other's most recent proposals.

Aragchi said on Friday that Iran would welcome Chinese input, adding that Tehran was trying to give diplomacy a chance but did not trust the US, which has curtailed previous rounds of talks by launching air strikes. — Reuters

EUROPEANS IN TALKS WITH TEHRAN FOR HORMUZ TRANSIT



The German share price index DAX graph is pictured at the stock exchange in Frankfurt. — Reuters

TEHRAN: Iranian state television said on Saturday that European countries were in talks with Tehran over transit for ships through the Strait of Hormuz. "Following the passage of ships from East Asian countries, notably China, Japan and Pakistan, we received information today indicating that Europeans have also begun negotiations with the Revolutionary Guards navy" to get permission to pass, state television reported, without specifying which countries. Iran has largely blocked shipping through the vital strait since the outbreak of war with the United States

and Israel on February 28. A fragile ceasefire has been in place since April 8. Its grip over the waterway has rattled global markets and given Tehran significant leverage, while the United States has imposed its own naval blockade on Iranian ports. In peacetime, the route accounts for roughly a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, along with other key commodities. Iran has in recent days allowed passage for dozens of ships including from China "after an agreement on Iran's strait management protocols," the Guards, the ideological arm of Iran's

military, said in a statement. Since the war broke out, Iran has repeatedly said that maritime traffic through the strait would "not return to its pre-war status" and last month said it has received the first revenue from tolls it imposed on the waterway. On Saturday, Ebrahim Azizi, head of the Iranian parliament's national security commission, said Iran "has prepared a professional mechanism to manage traffic" through the strait, adding that it will be "unveiled soon". "In this process, only commercial vessels and parties cooperating with Iran will benefit from it". — AFP

DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS



Mohsin Naqvi

Pakistani minister in Tehran to 'facilitate' peace talks

TEHRAN: Pakistan's interior minister arrived in Tehran on Saturday "to facilitate" the peace talks between Iran and the United States that have stalled despite a fragile ceasefire, Iranian media reported. "Mohsin Naqvi arrived today in the Islamic Republic of Iran on an official two-day visit as part of Pakistan's ongoing efforts to facilitate talks and promote regional peace".

Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni received Naqvi, whose visit to Tehran comes days after that of Pakistan's influential army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir. Islamabad has been actively mediating in the peace talks between Iran and the US and last month hosted a high stakes meeting between delegations from both sides.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Tehran had received messages from Washington indicating that President Donald Trump's administration was willing to continue negotiations. Iran's chief negotiator and speaker of parliament, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said that Washington should accept Tehran's proposal for peace or face "failure" after Trump rejected an Iranian counteroffer and warned the ceasefire was on "life support". "There is no alternative but to accept the rights of the Iranian people as laid out in the 14-point proposal. — AFP

Israel strikes Lebanon day after truce extended

BEIRUT: Israel launched a series of air strikes on southern Lebanon on Saturday, despite the extension of the truce between the two countries. Israel says it is targeting Hezbollah but the strikes were preceded by an evacuation warning covering nine villages. And the continuing bombardment has only increased scepticism about the truce among the many thousands of Lebanese driven from their homes in the south.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported strikes on at least five villages on Saturday, including one more than 50 kilometres from the border. At the same time it reported a new exodus of residents towards the southern city of Sidon and the capital Beirut. On Friday, the two countries agreed to extend a ceasefire, which began on April 17 but has been marred by numerous violations, by another 45 days.

Since the start of the ceasefire, Israel has repeatedly issued evacuation warnings for south Lebanese villages ahead of strikes. Over this period their geographical scope has expanded to include areas north of the Litani River and further from the border.

The Israeli military also struck at least one town that was not included in the warning, near the southern city of Nabatieh. Despite the ceasefire, Israel continues to conduct strikes in Lebanon, and its forces are occupying territory near the border. Hezbollah, meanwhile, regularly claims attacks on northern Israel and against the Israeli military in southern Lebanon.

Israeli attacks since the start of



Smoke rises following Israeli bombardment on the village of Arnoun in southern Lebanon. — AFP

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the war have killed more than 2,900 people in Lebanon, including more than 400 since the truce took effect, according to Lebanese authorities. Israel has also reported the deaths of 19 soldiers in southern Lebanon since fighting with Hezbollah erupted. The latest strikes come after envoys from Israel and Lebanon held negotiations in Washington — following the first direct talks in decades last month between the two countries, which do not have diplomatic relations. They agreed to extend the ceasefire.

Hezbollah opposes the negotiations and claimed an attack against Israeli troops in the Lebanese town of Khiam on Saturday. The group justified their action by accusing Israel of ceasefire violations and "attacks that targeted

villages in southern Lebanon". On Friday an Israeli strike hit a centre of the Hezbollah-linked Islamic Health Committee in the southern town of Harouf, authorities said. Six people were killed, including three paramedics, according to the Lebanese health ministry.

Displaced residents from southern Lebanon say the truce is not being implemented. "This is not a truce as long as Israeli attacks continue against the south and its people, with deaths, injuries, and destruction," said Ali Salameh, 60, from a school in Beirut where he has been displaced since the start of the war on March 2. Others said they backed Hezbollah to keep fighting Israel in retaliation for its attacks. "What kind of truce is this when they have just threatened villages and people are being displaced? Where is the state? We stand only with the resistance," said Nawal Mezhir, also displaced from the south.

Lebanon's negotiating delegation in Washington nonetheless welcomed the truce's 45-day extension and the creation of a US-facilitated security track, saying they "provide critical breathing space for our citizens, reinforce state institutions, and advance a political pathway toward lasting stability".

Lebanon was dragged into the Middle East war on March 2 when Hezbollah fired rockets at Israel in retaliation for the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei. On Friday, Israel struck the southern city of Tyre. A correspondent saw significant destruction at the targeted site near the coastal city's ancient ruins. — AFP

DEADLY CLASHES

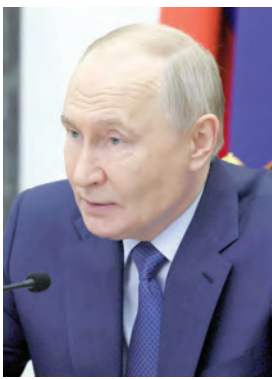
High fuel prices spark Comoros protests



Days of protests in Comoros over rising fuel prices, stemming from the US-Israeli conflict with Iran, turned deadly on Saturday when one person died following overnight clashes with police, officials said. A youth was apparently fatally shot at dawn when a group "tried to disarm" police officers clearing the streets in Mpage, a town on the island of Anjouan. The protests are against a hike in fuel prices announced a week ago by the government, including a 46-per cent rise in diesel. — AFP

POLITICAL EMPHASIS

Putin discusses Iran war with UAE president



Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed the Iran conflict with his United Arab Emirates counterpart, Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Kremlin said in the statement. "Both sides emphasised the importance of continuing the political and diplomatic process aimed at reaching compromise-based peace agreements," it said. Putin also thanked the UAE for support in humanitarian issues related to the conflict in Ukraine. Separately, Putin will visit China on May 19-20. — Reuters

CURRENCY PRESSURE

Sri Lanka raises tax as Mideast crisis bites



Sri Lanka slapped a 50 per cent surcharge on customs duties on vehicles on Saturday in a bid to discourage imports and ease currency pressure stemming from the Middle East conflict. "Given the current pressure on foreign exchange, we want people to delay their imports of vehicles by three months," Junior Finance Minister Anil Jayantha Fernando said. Sri Lanka has increased energy prices by more than a third since the start of the Middle East war. — AFP

Trump’s disrespect, Hegseth’s arrogance don’t help their cause



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

HAVING ADVOCATED the merits of hereditary, hierarchical leadership, compared to democracy, it’s uncanny how democracy keeps “shooting itself in the foot!”

One indicator of how far democracy has fallen is that ‘X’ now appears to be the official mouthpiece, or media outlet, for the United States presidency. Presidential address should be delivered with solemnity and emotional intellect, not reduced to a succession of soundbites.

I watched on ‘X,’ aghast at the level of English language, the absence of specifics, clear objectives, and a road map towards ending the conflict. But no! Worst of all, however, was his absolute failure to recognise and appreciate the civilian losses that have occurred, the compassion for those, young and old, who woke up one day with hopes and dreams, but will no more, and that must be laid at his feet. Not this time, the harsh, intractable, Iranian leadership and Republican Guard.

Epic Fury, he gloated, “is one of the largest, most complex, military operations the world has ever seen, nobody’s seen anything like it,” saying they had “hit hundreds of targets, nine ships, and the naval building,” and saying “you could hear the cheers of the Iranian people as

the death of Ayatollah Khameni and the entire military command, was announced,” during this “righteous mission.” What tosh! “I rebuilt the military in my first term, and there has never been a military like it, and nobody even close,” he explained, before calling upon Iran to “Lay down your arms, or face certain death. It won’t be pretty.” Rednecks may love this stuff, but surely not Middle America, and not now, when the wheels have fallen off!

And then, to top it all off, you have ‘Pistol Pete’ Hegseth, who has made an art form of not answering for his deeds. This former weather forecaster has a ‘rap sheet’ for toxic masculinity, having paid \$50,000 in an out-of-court settlement to an electoral group staffer to make an allegation ‘go away’, and building a nepotistic ‘family and friends’ network around him in his workplaces.

What he has achieved, to demand the arrogance he exudes, is beyond belief. Clearly, he has some ‘dirt’ on someone.

I’m no Iranian apologist, but surely the American brain trust looked carefully at the Iranians themselves, who have lived within a repressive environment for more than fifty years. They must surely have understood that among the oppressors, ‘you knock one down, another will take their place,’ and that ‘freedom’ is intangible to much of the oppressed, for, as comedian Shappi Korsandi

Presidential address should be delivered with solemnity and emotional intellect, not reduced to a succession of soundbites

says, “there is freedom of speech in Iran, but not after you’ve spoken.” Change, revolution... will take years, not days!

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, though, is typical of the dignity and respect in which hereditary leaders are held, having talks with the UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, regarding the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open, in early April.

He has undertaken direct talks with the Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, urging peaceful resolution and negotiations to avert further loss of life and suffering.

He has communicated widely, offering Oman as a proven negotiator, speaking with Japan’s Prime Minister Takaichi, Pakistan’s Shehbaz Ahmed, Algerian President Tebbboune, President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of Egypt, and has also met with Kuwaiti and Qatari delegations, re-emphasising his determination to achieve regional stability and peace.

Erasmus, in 1509, wrote, “The less talent they have, the more pride, vanity and arrogance they have. All these fools, however, find those who will applaud them.”

This current situation then, for America, is a sobering reality, and a difficult situation to extract themselves from, let alone with their dignity intact, which is probably what their ‘democratic’ leadership deserves.

MINES ‘DRAINING TÜRKIYE’S WATER SOURCES’, ECOLOGISTS WARN

BURCIN GERCEK

Guney was once a water-rich village fed by 50 springs in Türkiye’s western Usak province, but since a gold mine opened 20 years ago, they have all dried up.

“Before, you only had to drill 60 metres to find water,” said Ugur Sumer, environmental activist and resident of Guney, which is about 170 kilometres east of the resort city of Izmir.

“Today, even drilling 400 metres yields nothing. The mine has used all our water.”

With Türkiye hosting COP31 in November, its own environmental record is being scrutinised, and activists have warned about the growing number of water-intensive mining projects as resources dry up.

Since 2000, Türkiye has rapidly expanded the number of drilling and mining permits granted, notably for gold and coal. The number reached 410,000 last year after the procedures were streamlined by a new law adopted in July.

“I am convinced this law will speed up the arrival of foreign investment in Türkiye,” Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said in March while visiting Canada.

While there, he met officials from the Tuprag gold mine in Usak, which is owned by Vancouver-based Eldorado Gold.

Türkiye is hoping to hike its gold production from 28 tonnes to 100 tonnes per year “without compromising human health and the environment”, Bayraktar said. It also wants to be a major player in global rare earths.

But experts and environmentalists warn this explosion in mining permits is endangering water resources and the economies of rural areas.

Not only does the extraction of metals like gold involve large amounts of water, but it also uses cyanide and releases other pollutants, posing major environmental and health risks.

According to official data, in 2024, mining used 5.8 per cent of Türkiye’s 20.3 billion cubic metres of water consumption - four times the amount used in 2016. On the Aybasti plateau in the northeastern Ordu province, villagers turned out en masse earlier this month to protest plans to mine an area they use for farming.

“Our pastures have been closed off because of an exploratory drilling plan for a gold mine,” said Nuriye Dilek, a 48-year-old livestock farmer.

“What are we supposed to do if we can no longer raise livestock? Are we supposed to abandon our land and leave?”

Farming and animal husbandry are the main sources of income for locals in this region, known for its hazelnuts, which are exported across the world.

“Once the gold mine opens, we won’t be able to grow hazelnuts here anymore,” says Omer Aydin, a nut producer and exporter.

“What’s above ground here is more valuable than what’s underground. The real gold is the hazelnuts this country produces,” he said. — AFP

Trump returns from China with a stalemate

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP’S visit to Beijing last week may

have produced modest results by the standards of US-China summits but it highlighted a clear benefit for China: after the extremes of last year’s trade war, the countries have reverted to their familiar economic and strategic standoff.

Two days of talks between Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping underscored that even after Trump’s ‘Liberation Day’ tariffs and the ensuing trade detente the two sides reached late last year, Washington and Beijing are still locked in the contest that Trump inherited when he started his second term.

For the United States, that means that the most troubling aspects of the relationship - from what it considers Beijing’s mercantilist trade policies to its efforts to increase its military clout in the Indo-Pacific - remain largely unaddressed.

But for Xi it offers some breathing room and a return to a more predictable set of challenges.

He appeared to describe the change this week with a new framework for the countries’ relations he called “constructive strategic stability.”

China came out ahead, given the retreat from the Trump administration’s brash approach on trade from early 2025, said Scott Kennedy, a China expert at Washington’s Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“Compared to where we were a year ago, with 145 per cent tariffs and the US really trying to push China and the rest of the world to fundamentally change, we’ve had a counterrevolution and we’re back at stability,” Kennedy said.

Trump brought to the Thursday-Friday summit some of America’s most powerful executives, from Tesla’s Elon Musk to Nvidia’s Jensen Huang, but most had little to show for their time, aside from a lavish banquet.

The meeting also did not secure any public commitment from China to help the US end the war in Iran that has roiled global markets and dented Trump’s approval ratings.

“The summit projected stability



US President Donald Trump poses with China’s President Xi Jinping during a visit to Zhongnanhai Garden in Beijing. — AFP

Meetings between Xi and Trump were ‘candid, in-depth, constructive and strategic,’ adding that they ‘explored the right way for two major countries to get along with each other’

but it left the stalemate intact,” said Craig Singleton, a China expert at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies. It “produced modest, marketable and managed outcomes, which is about all the US-China relationship can bear right now.”

Asked for comment, a White House official said, “President Trump leveraged his positive relationship with President Xi of China in order to bring home deliverables for the American people,” citing the sale of Boeing aircraft and agricultural agreements to expand American exports.

A spokesperson with the Chinese Embassy in Washington called the meetings between Xi and Trump “candid, in-depth, constructive and strategic,” adding that they “explored the right way for two major countries to get along with each other.”

With last year’s trade war, Trump appears to have overestimated the power of tariffs to coerce China into unilateral concessions, analysts say. Beijing retaliated with its own tariff hikes and threatened to choke off supplies of critical minerals needed by US industries, forcing an uneasy standoff.

Since then, the White House has shown itself unwilling to bear the economic consequences that would come with applying the other forms of US financial and technological leverage, such as sanctions on

China’s major banks. Reflecting the change in tone, there was no public mention this week of many long-standing US demands, such as for China to address industrial overcapacity that its trade partners say unfairly floods their markets with low-cost goods.

China appears content with the fragile truce as it navigates a weak domestic economy and seeks to shore up technologies it hopes will turn the tide in long-term competition with the US.

Senior Trump administration officials had downplayed a desire for big outcomes even in the run-up to the meeting, saying there was no rush to extend a trade truce, expiring in five months, which the leaders reached after talks in South Korea in October.

A person familiar with the trade negotiations said China wanted a longer extension of the truce than the Trump administration was willing to give, as well as reassurances over pending US investigations likely to revive some tariffs on goods entering the US that were struck down by the Supreme Court this year.

Overall, neither side put much on the table for the summit, the source said, adding that some commercial deals could be saved for the fall, when Xi is expected to make a reciprocal visit to the White House. — Reuters

Theories, principles: Effectiveness of formative assessment



DR ZAINAB AL AJMI

The writer is with the Ministry of Education

MORE THAN half a century ago, Ausubel (1968) proposed that the most important determinant of learning is the learner’s prior knowledge, which should be identified by teachers and used to guide instruction. Although this proposition may appear straightforward, it challenges the assumption that students necessarily learn what they are taught. Even when instruction is carefully designed, effectively delivered, and engaging, learning outcomes often diverge from intended objectives. Indeed, even when learners begin instruction at a similar starting point, variations in understanding emerge rapidly, making divergence in learning outcomes almost inevitable. In this sense, assessment constitutes a central component of effective instruction. Through assessment, it becomes possible to determine whether a sequence of instructional activities has resulted in the desired learning outcomes. Traditionally, the term “assessment” has been associated primarily with the evaluation of instructional effectiveness after teaching sequences have been completed. Processes that support learning during instruction were not commonly conceptualised as assessment. In French-language literature, such processes were typically described in terms of the regulation of learning, whereas in

English-language scholarship they were often treated as an aspect of effective teaching rather than as assessment itself. Recently, there has been growing recognition that activities designed to guide learning during instruction should also be conceptualised as forms of assessment. This shift has contributed to the development of the concepts of “assessment for learning” and “formative assessment,” which seek to capture the role of assessment in shaping ongoing learning processes. Historically, educational practice was often grounded in the assumption that well-designed instruction would be sufficient for most learners, with those who failed either receiving remedial support or being attributed individual limitations. However, beginning in the 1960s, Bloom and colleagues at the University of Chicago challenged this perspective, arguing that the normal distribution of achievement was not an inevitable outcome of ability, but rather reflected instructional systems that failed to account for learner differences (Wiliam, 2011). Several studies provide strong evidence that innovations aimed at enhancing the frequency and quality of feedback students receive about their learning lead to significant improvements in academic achievement. These approaches consider students’ perceptions and emphasize their active role in self-assessment, alongside

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analyses of instructional strategies employed by teachers and formative practices embedded within systemic frameworks such as mastery learning. One of the outstanding features of studies of assessment in recent years has been the shift in focus toward greater interest in the interactions between assessment and classroom learning, and away from concentration on the properties of restricted forms of tests that are only weakly linked to the learning experiences of students. This shift has been coupled with many expressions of hope that improvement in classroom assessment will make a strong contribution to the improvement of learning. Yet, the term formative assessment does not have a tightly defined and widely accepted meaning; it is interpreted as encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers and/or by their students that provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (Black & Wiliam, 1998). To summarise, assessment has traditionally been closely associated with end-of-instruction examinations that are largely separated from the learning process itself. From this perspective, the primary function of assessment is summative: to determine whether learners have acquired sufficient knowledge and skills.

MINES ‘DRAINING TÜRKIYE’S WATER SOURCES’, ECOLOGISTS WARN

BURCIN GERCEK

Guney was once a water-rich village fed by 50 springs in Türkiye’s western Usak province, but since a gold mine opened 20 years ago, they have all dried up. “Before, you only had to drill 60 metres to find water,” said Ugur Sumer, environmental activist and resident of Guney, which is about 170 kilometres east of the resort city of Izmir. “Today, even drilling 400 metres yields nothing. The mine has used all our water.” With Türkiye hosting COP31 in November, its own environmental record is being scrutinised, and activists have warned about the growing number of water-intensive mining projects as resources dry up. Since 2000, Türkiye has rapidly expanded the number of drilling and mining permits granted, notably for gold and coal. The number reached 410,000 last year after the procedures were streamlined by a new law adopted in July. “I am convinced this law will speed up the arrival of foreign investment in Türkiye,” Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said in March while visiting Canada. While there, he met officials from the Tuprag gold mine in Usak, which is owned by Vancouver-based Eldorado Gold. Türkiye is hoping to hike its gold production from 28 tonnes to 100 tonnes per year “without compromising human health and the environment”, Bayraktar said. It also wants to be a major player in global rare earths. But experts and environmentalists warn this explosion in mining permits is endangering water resources and the economies of rural areas. Not only does the extraction of metals like gold involve large amounts of water, but it also uses cyanide and releases other pollutants, posing major environmental and health risks. According to official data, in 2024, mining used 5.8 per cent of Türkiye’s 20.3 billion cubic metres of water consumption - four times the amount used in 2016. On the Aybasti plateau in the northeastern Ordu province, villagers turned out en masse earlier this month to protest plans to mine an area they use for farming. “Our pastures have been closed off because of an exploratory drilling plan for a gold mine,” said Nuriye Dilek, a 48-year-old livestock farmer. “What are we supposed to do if we can no longer raise livestock? Are we supposed to abandon our land and leave?” Farming and animal husbandry are the main sources of income for locals in this region, known for its hazelnuts, which are exported across the world. “Once the gold mine opens, we won’t be able to grow hazelnuts here anymore,” says Omer Aydin, a nut producer and exporter. “What’s above ground here is more valuable than what’s underground. The real gold is the hazelnuts this country produces,” he said. — AFP

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PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP’S visit to Beijing last week may have produced modest results by the standards of US-China summits but it highlighted a clear benefit for China: after the extremes of last year’s trade war, the countries have reverted to their familiar economic and strategic standoff. Two days of talks between Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping underscored that even after Trump’s ‘Liberation Day’ tariffs and the ensuing trade detente the two sides reached late last year, Washington and Beijing are still locked in the contest that Trump inherited when he started his second term. For the United States, that means that the most troubling aspects of the relationship - from what it considers Beijing’s mercantilist trade policies to its efforts to increase its military clout in the Indo-Pacific - remain largely unaddressed. But for Xi it offers some breathing room and a return to a more predictable set of challenges. He appeared to describe the change this week with a new framework for the countries’ relations he called “constructive strategic stability.” China came out ahead, given the retreat from the Trump administration’s brash approach on trade from early 2025, said Scott Kennedy, a China expert at Washington’s Center for Strategic and International Studies. “Compared to where we were a year ago, with 145 per cent tariffs and the US really trying to push China and the rest of the world to fundamentally change, we’ve had a counterrevolution and we’re back at stability,” Kennedy said. Trump brought to the Thursday-Friday summit some of America’s most powerful executives, from Tesla’s Elon Musk to Nvidia’s Jensen Huang, but most had little to show for their time, aside from a lavish banquet. The meeting also did not secure any public commitment from China to help the US end the war in Iran that has roiled global markets and dented Trump’s approval ratings. “The summit projected stability



US President Donald Trump poses with China’s President Xi Jinping during a visit to Zhongnanhai Garden in Beijing. — AFP

Meetings between Xi and Trump were ‘candid, in-depth, constructive and strategic,’ adding that they ‘explored the right way for two major countries to get along with each other’

but it left the stalemate intact,” said Craig Singleton, a China expert at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies. It “produced modest, marketable and managed outcomes, which is about all the US-China relationship can bear right now.” Asked for comment, a White House official said, “President Trump leveraged his positive relationship with President Xi of China in order to bring home deliverables for the American people,” citing the sale of Boeing aircraft and agricultural agreements to expand American exports. A spokesperson with the Chinese Embassy in Washington called the meetings between Xi and Trump “candid, in-depth, constructive and strategic,” adding that they “explored the right way for two major countries to get along with each other.” With last year’s trade war, Trump appears to have overestimated the power of tariffs to coerce China into unilateral concessions, analysts say. Beijing retaliated with its own tariff hikes and threatened to choke off supplies of critical minerals needed by US industries, forcing an uneasy standoff. Since then, the White House has shown itself unwilling to bear the economic consequences that would come with applying the other forms of US financial and technological leverage, such as sanctions on

China’s major banks. Reflecting the change in tone, there was no public mention this week of many long-standing US demands, such as for China to address industrial overcapacity that its trade partners say unfairly floods their markets with low-cost goods. China appears content with the fragile truce as it navigates a weak domestic economy and seeks to shore up technologies it hopes will turn the tide in long-term competition with the US. Senior Trump administration officials had downplayed a desire for big outcomes even in the run-up to the meeting, saying there was no rush to extend a trade truce, expiring in five months, which the leaders reached after talks in South Korea in October. A person familiar with the trade negotiations said China wanted a longer extension of the truce than the Trump administration was willing to give, as well as reassurances over pending US investigations likely to revive some tariffs on goods entering the US that were struck down by the Supreme Court this year. Overall, neither side put much on the table for the summit, the source said, adding that some commercial deals could be saved for the fall, when Xi is expected to make a reciprocal visit to the White House. — Reuters

SPORTS

ITALIAN OPEN



Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates after winning the semifinal against Russia's Daniil Medvedev at the ATP Rome Open at Foro Italico in Rome. — AFP

SINNER COMPLETES MEDVEDEV WIN TO SET UP RUUD FINAL

ROME: Jannik Sinner will face Casper Ruud in the men's final of the Italian Open after finishing off Daniil Medvedev in Saturday's closing chapter of an enthralling last-four clash, which was paused overnight due to rain in Rome.

The world number one could claim a record-extending sixth Masters 1000 title on Sunday thanks to a 6-2, 5-7, 6-4 win which had almost everything over the course of its two-and-a-half hours. Sinner had to have treatment on his right thigh and even vomited during Friday night's leg of the semifinal as Medvedev gave the Italian by far his toughest test of the tournament.

But he looked in much better spirits before the restart as he joked and played football with his coaching team during his warm-up in the bowels of the centre court arena, just as warm spring sunshine started to shine after a few days of volatile weather. "It was a different challenge, a tough challenge to be honest," said Sinner.

"During the night usually I never struggle to sleep, but this night was not easy because when you're on the third set, you know I'm nearly nearly done but you still have to show up again, and you never know what's happening because it's basically a new start of a match. There are nerves."

The match was scheduled to restart at at 3 pm local time (1300GMT) but was again delayed by an hour both due to more rain and the men's doubles semifinal, won by Sinner's compatriots Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori.

A 4-2 lead in the third set for Sinner when play was stopped was too much for Medvedev to overcome, and the 24-year-old sealed his 33rd straight win in Masters 1000 tournaments.

Medvedev was at advantage in game seven of the third set, which he immediately won, but Sinner won the next game on his service to love and closed out the match in less than 20 minutes.

Ruud gets a chance for revenge for a brutal hammering against Sinner here last year after dismantling Luciano Darderi 6-1, 6-1 on Saturday, another match interrupted by heavy rain. The Norwegian has not won a single set in any of his four matches with Sinner and was destroyed 6-0, 6-1 in the 2025 last eight in one of the most one-sided matches ever seen at the Foro Italico. — AFP

Oman move to fourth with 20 medals at GCC Games

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 16

OMAN'S NATIONAL teams continued their fine showing at the fourth GCC Sports Games in Doha, doubling their medal haul and moving to fourth place in the overall standings with 20 medals.

The Sultanate of Oman added six new medals on the fifth day of competition, including one gold, two silver and three bronze medals, through athletics and shooting. The latest achievement reflects the strong technical level shown by Oman's athletes and the steady progress of the national teams across different sports, with hopes high for more podium finishes before the Games conclude on May 22.

The national athletics team once again delivered a strong performance, winning four medals on the second day of the athletics competition. Oman's men's 4x100m relay team, comprising Ali al Balushi, Mulham al Balushi, Rashid al Asmi and Mohammed al Saadi, clinched the gold medal after an impressive run.

The women's 4x100m relay team also produced a commendable display, with Azza al Yaarubi, Mazoon al Alawi, Hana al Qasmi and Alia al Mughairi securing the silver medal. Hana al Qasmi added another medal for Oman by winning bronze in the women's 400m, while Ahmed al Abdulsalam claimed bronze in the men's 400m.

Oman's shooting team opened its campaign with two medals on the first day of shooting events. Salim al Naabi won silver in the men's 10m air rifle event following a strong contest with leading Gulf shooters. The women's 10m air rifle team, represented by Safa al Jabri, Al Anood al Khalili and Amina al Tarshi, secured the bronze medal.

The latest medals added to Oman's earlier achievements in the Games. The athletics team had begun its campaign with four medals — three gold and one silver. Mazoon al Alawi won gold in the women's long jump, while Fatik Bait Jaboub claimed gold in the men's high jump. In the men's 100m, Ali al Balushi captured gold, while his team-mate Mulham al Balushi took silver.

Oman's fencing team also made a valuable contribution with five medals. Israa al Siyabi starred for the national team by winning two gold medals in the foil and épée events. The three bronze medals were won by Ali al Busaidy in foil, and Ahmed al Kaskas and Al Harith al Harthy in épée.

The taekwondo team added five medals



The men's 4x100m relay team being crowned with the gold medal.



The women's 4x100m relay team being crowned with the silver medal.

to Oman's tally, led by Fidaa al Barwani, who won gold in the 49 kg category. Bronze medals went to Nibras al Touqi in the 58 kg category, Omaima al Hinai in the 49 kg category, Mohammed al Hajri in the 80 kg category and Shabib al Sinani in the 68 kg category.

GOOD PROGRESS BY ATHLETES
National athletics coach Hamood al Dalhami said Oman's results at the Games were honourable and reflected the progress made by the athletes. He noted that the athletics team had opened its campaign with three gold medals and one silver before adding four more medals on the second day.

"These results give the athletes a strong motivation to continue performing well in the remaining competitions," he said, adding that the GCC Games represent the team's first international participation of the season.

Al Dalhami praised the level of competition, particularly in the 100m

race and high jump, where Gulf athletes produced strong performances. He highlighted Fatik Bait Jaboub's gold medal in the high jump, shared with Qatar's Olympic champion Mutaz Barshim, as a result that confirms the ability of Omani athletes to compete strongly at Gulf and international levels.

Fahad al Mashaikhi, national athletics coach, praised the organisation of the Games, describing it as excellent. He thanked the Oman Olympic Committee for allowing the Oman Athletics Association to take part in the event, saying the athletes had shown discipline, determination and a strong sense of responsibility.

Al Mashaikhi also said sprinter Ali al Balushi is following a long-term preparation plan aimed at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games. He added that Ali's previous qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympics was an important step, and the next target is to compete at a higher level and reach advanced stages.

POSITIVE START
Lt Col Musallam al Subhi, manager of Oman's national shooting team, said winning two medals on the opening day of the shooting competition was a positive start. He said the men's 10m air rifle event was highly competitive, and Oman came very close to gold.

Silver medallist Salim al Naabi expressed his delight with the achievement, saying the medal would motivate him to perform better in the remaining events. "We are happy with this silver medal, which came after continuous effort and preparation. Our ambition now is to fight for gold in the coming competitions," he said.

Seeb overpower Al Bashayer, Sohar SC edge Al Amerat

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 16

Seeb Club kept up the pressure at the top of the Athletes Preparation Centres Basketball League for the 2025-26 season after a commanding 73-34 victory over Al Bashayer Club, while Sohar Sports Complex pulled off a strong second-half comeback to beat Al Amerat Club 50-46 at the sub hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

In the opening match, Seeb imposed themselves from the outset with a dominant display at both ends of the court.

Their aggressive defensive pressure, quick transitions and effective zone defence left Al Bashayer struggling to find any rhythm, allowing Seeb to build a massive early advantage.

Seeb took complete control in the first quarter, racing to a 34-2 lead with a relentless attacking performance.

Although Al Bashayer improved in the second quarter and looked more settled offensively, Seeb maintained their grip on the contest and carried a comfortable 44-13 lead into half-time.

The third quarter followed a similar pattern, with Seeb once again asserting full control.

They added 19 points while restricting Al Bashayer to just 4, stretching the lead to 63-17. Al Bashayer showed greater attacking purpose in the final period and managed 17 points, but the gap was already too wide as Seeb closed out an emphatic 73-34 win.

Abdulrahman al Kamashki led Seeb with 18 points, while Al Farouq al Hassani contributed 15.



Action from the latest round of the Athletes Preparation Centres Basketball League in Bausher. — Ammar al Musafir

Saif al Mughairi added 8 points and Omar al Mahrouqi finished with 6. For Al Bashayer, Riyadh al Riyami was the standout performer with

22 points, while Aseel al Aghbari scored 4.

SOHAR FIGHT BACK
The second match delivered far more drama as Sohar Sports Complex came from behind to defeat Al Amerat 50-46 in a lively encounter.

Al Amerat were the better side in the first half, making good use of their scoring chances and playing with greater composure to take charge early.

They led the first quarter 16-11 and continued to hold the upper hand in the second, adding 15 points to Sohar's 12 to move into the break with a 31-23 advantage.

However, the momentum shifted after half-time as Sohar tightened up defensively and began to reduce the deficit.

They outscored Al Amerat 10-4

in the third quarter, leaving the latter with only a narrow 35-33 lead heading into the decisive final period.

Sohar then completed the turnaround in the fourth quarter with a strong attacking finish, scoring 17 points against 11 to seal a valuable four-point win.

Abdulrahman al Ruwaisi starred for Sohar with 17 points, while Faris al Maqbali added 12 and Mohammed al Shezawi scored 10.

For Al Amerat, Hamad al Kharousi finished with 16 points, Marwan al Bahlawani added 10, and Said al Wahaibi contributed 8.

The latest round kept Seeb firmly in the race near the top, while Sohar's comeback win added further intensity to the competition as the league continues to gather momentum.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 16

SPORTS COMMENTARY is one of the most influential elements in modern sport, serving as the voice that connects millions of fans to the excitement, drama and emotion of competition. Beyond simply describing events on the field, a successful sports commentator is expected to combine knowledge, passion, analysis and communication skills to create a memorable experience for viewers and listeners.

In the Sultanate of Oman, sports commentary has witnessed significant development over the years with the emergence of several talented voices across television, radio and digital platforms. As part of exploring the future of sports media in the country, Oman Observer met with several experienced Omani commentators to discuss the key qualities required to become a successful commentator and the challenges facing the profession today.

The Oman Sports TV commentator Rashid al Shaithani stressed that voice quality remains one of the essential pillars in sports commentary. “A commentator’s voice must be accepted by the audience. The commentator is similar to a singer in many ways, because the fans connect with the tone, delivery and style,” he explained.

He highlighted that sports knowledge and proper language are equally important. “Commentators must master pronunciation, understand technical aspects of the game and stay informed about clubs, players and refereeing matters,” he said.

“Preparation is extremely important, especially when commentating on international leagues. I remember one commentator who was assigned to cover a European league match for the first time. After 19 minutes, he became confused and mixed up the players from both teams. This shows why research and preparation are crucial before every match,” Al Shaithani added.

He added that commentators who work on European football competitions should also understand foreign languages and know how to correctly pronounce players’ names. “Knowing English is important, while additional languages such as Spanish or Italian can become a strong advantage,” he noted.

Speaking about performance style, Al Shaithani emphasised the importance of maintaining balance during commentary. “Some commentators rely only on excitement and loud reactions, but commentary also requires moments of calmness and control. Balanced enthusiasm is the key,” he said.

He also pointed out that Arab audiences are emotional by nature and often connect with memorable phrases and expressions delivered during major moments in matches. “These phrases can later become trends on social media and remain associated with the commentator’s identity,” he added.

On the issue of imitation, Al Shaithani encouraged young commentators to develop their own unique identity. “In the beginning, it is natural for young commentators to imitate famous voices to learn the basics. However, with time, every commentator must create his own style and personality,” he clarified.

PASSION AND TALENT

The AIPS executive board member and Oman Sports TV Commentator Ahmed al Kaabi agreed that passion and talent are the starting points for success in sports commentary. “The first requirement is having a hobby and talent. After that comes reading, following competitions, understanding regulations, learning club histories and practicing continuously,” he said.

Al Kaabi stressed that voice and performance cannot be separated from sports knowledge. “All elements are connected together. You cannot have a strong voice without knowledge, and you cannot have knowledge without proper delivery,” he explained.

He also highlighted the importance of controlling emotions during commentary. “The audience does not always appreciate excessive shouting. The commentator must know when to raise his voice and when to remain calm. The excitement should match the moment,” he said.

According to Al Kaabi, Oman currently has promising commentary talents emerging through competitions and opportunities provided by Oman Sports TV. “There are many young talents with good voices and potential. They only need continuous training, practice and experience,” he noted.

Ahmed also appreciated the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth’s yearly competition. “There is a yearly competition represented by Youth Creativity Clubs Competition. In this competition, there is a sports commentary competition category. The level of this competition is at three levels and here you can filter the potential commentators,” he ended.

SUITABLE VOICE

Meanwhile, veteran commentator Rashid al Mukhaini described sports commentary as a profession that requires a complete combination of culture, personality and professionalism. “The successful commentator must possess sports knowledge, a suitable voice and the ability to present the event without making the audience feel bored,” he said.

Al Mukhaini, who began his commentary career in 1991, recalled his participation in local, Gulf, Arab and Asian tournaments throughout his long journey in sports media. He also became the first Omani commentator to work with the major Arab Radio and Television (ART) network in 2007. Reflecting on the pressures commentators face, he explained that technical difficulties during major matches can create additional challenges. “Sometimes commentators work remotely from studios far away from the stadium. Delays in audio, technical issues or receiving team information late can make the task more difficult,” he said.

Al Mukhaini emphasised that developing commentators requires proper workshops, training courses and support from experienced experts. “There are many talented young voices in Oman, but discovering and developing them needs organised programmes and continuous mentoring,” he concluded.

Omani commentators believe that preparation, originality, strong sports culture and balanced performance remain the true foundations for building a successful and lasting career behind the microphone.



RASHID AL SHAITHANI
Oman Sports TV
commentator

BEHIND
THE
MICROPHONE
MAKING
OF A
SUCCESSFUL
SPORTS
COMMENTATOR



RASHID
AL MUKHAINI



KHALIL AL
BALUSHI



AHMED
AL KAABI

SPORTS

Al Attiyah storms to 18th Jordan victory, Abdullah second

NASSER SALEH al Attiyah and Candido Carrera cruised to a comfortable victory as Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi finished runners-up in the Jordan Rally on Saturday.

The Autotek Motorsport Škoda Fabia RS driver won each of the dozen special stages in the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley areas to repeat a clean sweep of stage wins that he last achieved in 2016. On that occasion, 19 speed test wins earned the 20-time FIA Middle East Rally Championship (Merc) victory by 18 minutes.

The winning margin this time on his record-breaking 18th victory in Jordan was 3min 53.7sec and it moved him into a slender championship lead. The Qatari now has 92 Merc career rally wins, with Carrera picking up win number seven in his second season with Al Attiyah. That puts the Spaniard on seven Merc wins, equal with rally organiser and former co-driver Khaled Zakaryia in the Merc's history books.

After breaking Abdullah al Rawahi's stage record for the Baptism stage on Friday, Al Attiyah beat his own record in Suwayma by three seconds on Saturday morning.

Following his dominant performance, he said: "Absolutely, it was a good weekend. I was really surprised. We did the same stages as last year and we were even faster. It means that our set-up is really good. We worked



Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi in action in Jordan.

very hard this weekend to get the maximum points. It's nice to win all 12 stages. There was pressure there but we need to enjoy this victory."

AL RAWAHI RUNNERS-UP
Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi and Ata al Hmoud were never troubled for the runner-up spot in their Oman Rally Team Škoda

Fabia RS. The decision to run medium compound tyres for the first three stages on Friday was a mistake and Al Rawahi did pick up a puncture on the first pass through Rawda on Saturday. Otherwise, he shadowed Al Attiyah from the start to pick up valuable points for second place.

Al Rawahi said: "Jordan is always a tough rally, especially because we are at the lowest point on earth. Let's not forget that. It's always hot. It's not always easy with long stages and a lot of corners when it is very slippery. We tried to push but I gained a lot of experience from this rally so we can come back and do better next time."

Saudi Arabia's Hamza Bakhshab is in the middle of a first full season of Merc rallies in a Toyota GR Yaris Rally2 supported by Jameel Motorsport. He and Irish co-driver Lorcan Moore overcame a five-minute time loss with a double puncture on stage nine to round off the podium places and remain firmly in contention for a title challenge.

The Omani duo of Zakariya al Aamri and Mohammed al Mazroui earned maximum Merc2 points for rounding off the top 10 in a Subaru Impreza.

Al Rawahi and Al Hmoud dominated the third round of the Jordan National Rally Championship, which was held across the day's six stages. They finished well clear of Shaikh Bader al Fayez and Abu Hamdan, who picked up points for second and third.





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Leotlela wins maiden Diamond League 100m



South Africa's Gift Leotlela (R) wins the men's 100m event during the Shanghai/Keqiao Diamond League athletics in Keqiao, Shaoxing in China's Zhejiang province. — AFP

LEOTLELA WINS 100M IN 9.97, EDGING OMANYALA AND BEDNAREK IN PHOTO FINISH	DUPLANTIS WINS POLE VAULT BUT FAILS TO BREAK WORLD RECORD, CLEARING 6.12 M	JACKSON, RUSSELL, KIPYEGON, SCHILDER AND ENGLISH ALSO CLAIM EVENT VICTORIES
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SHAOXING, China: South Africa's Gift Leotlela edged Ferdinand Omanyala and Kenny Bednarek to win the Shanghai Diamond League 100 metres on Saturday, as Mondo Duplantis fell short in his attempt to improve his pole vault world record yet again.

Leotlela surged late to victory in a photo finish with Kenya's Omanyala and American Bednarek, twice an Olympic 200m medallist. The South African finished in 9.97 seconds to clinch his first Diamond League win. "It means a lot... I had a decent start, not great. I just tried to keep my composure, stay in my rhythm and stay strong," said 28-year-old Leotlela, who finished fifth in last year's World Championships.

Jamaica's Shericka Jackson soared past Bahamian Shaunae Miller-Uibo, a two-time Olympic 400m champion, to win the women's 200, as Anavia Battle finished third ahead of fellow American Sha'Carri Richardson, who took silver in the 100m at the Paris Games.

American Olympic champion Masai Russell eased to victory in the women's 100m hurdles, clocking 12.25 seconds, the fastest time in the world this year. In the men's 110m hurdles, world champion Cordell Tinch lost out to fellow American Jamal Britt.

6.32 M RECORD BID FAILS
Duplantis easily won the men's pole vault as his closest competitor Kurtis Marschall bowed out after clearing 5.80m. The 26-year-old Swede easily cleared 6.12m before attempting 6.32 looking to improve on his 6.31m jump in March and set his 16th world record.

His feet knocked off the bar in his first two attempts, and he fell well short on the third.

"The attempt at the world record was okay, I wish I could improve the run-up, the approach, speed and energy and then it will be good," said Duplantis.

In the women's shot put, the Netherlands' Jessica Schilder impressed with a 21.09m throw to finish first ahead of twice world champion Chase Jackson.

Ireland's Mark English won the men's 800m in a scrambled finish as almost the entire pack closed in on the finish line together, edging out Kethobogile Haingura and Brandon Miller.

Kenya's Faith Kipyegon had little trouble winning her first outdoor 5000m race of 2026, clocking 14 minutes and 24.14 seconds, the best time of the year.

"I feel so good, it was a good race. A positive season opener," said Kipyegon, a three-time Olympic 1500m champion who also took silver in the 5,000m at the Paris Games.

"I'm going to continue to do both 1,500m and 5,000m... I just want to be the best version of myself and see how I perform," the Kenyan added. — Reuters

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



The Omani delegation was led by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Chairman of OPAZ.

OMAN HIGHLIGHTS FREE ZONE STRATEGY AT PANAMA FORUM

PANAMA CITY: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the 12th World Free Zones Organisation Conference in Panama under the theme “Free Zones in the New Global Operating Model: Challenges and Opportunities”.

The Omani delegation was led by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), who stressed during the ministerial roundtable that rapid geopolitical and economic shifts require a new operating model for economic and free zones based on flexibility, efficiency and resilient supply chains.

Al Yousef said Oman is developing its economic and free zones into integrated platforms capable of supporting trade, investment and industrial growth while adapting to fast-changing global conditions.

He noted that the Sultanate of Oman’s strategic location, advanced ports and infrastructure, as well as its network of economic, industrial and free zones, have strengthened its standing as a regional hub for logistics, trade and value-added industries.

He also highlighted the Authority’s commitment to expanding international partnerships and adopting global best practices to enhance the competitiveness of Oman’s special economic zones and free zones in support of economic diversification goals.

Oman additionally took part in the annual general assembly meetings of the World Free Zones Organisation, where members discussed the organisation’s priorities amidst changing global economic and geopolitical conditions. Several initiatives and programmes were adopted during the meetings.

The participation comes after the Authority officially joined the World Free Zones Organisation in July 2025, a step aimed at strengthening international economic cooperation and attracting high-quality investments to Oman’s special economic zones, industrial cities and free zones. — ONA

Sohar Titanium begins production at first furnace

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 16

SOHAR Titanium, the Sultanate of Oman’s first titanium slag production project, has officially entered the production phase with the operation of its first electric arc furnace at Sohar Freezone.

According to Yusuf bin Abdullah al Balushi, Acting CEO of Sohar Titanium, the company has started operating the first of three furnaces at the RO 63.5 million facility, marking a key milestone in Oman’s entry into the global titanium value chain.

“We have started operating the first of our three furnaces. The furnace that has been commissioned has a capacity of 50,000 tonnes and so far we are proceeding according to schedule”, Al Balushi said in remarks shared in a video update on the project.

He added that the remaining two furnaces are expected to be commissioned in phases, with the project targeted to reach its full production capacity of 150,000 tonnes annually by the end of 2026.

“By the end of 2026, we expect to have completed and operated all the furnaces and begin exports to overseas customers interested in titanium metal”, he said.

The project is being developed by Sohar Titanium (FZC) LLC, a joint venture involving

YUSUF BIN ABDULLAH AL BALUSHI
Acting CEO,
Sohar Titanium



The furnace that has been commissioned has a capacity of 50,000 tonnes.

Dubal Holding LLC, Minerals Development Oman (MDO) and TI International through Gulf Titanium DMCC.

Dubal Holding, the Dubai Government’s investment arm in commodities and industry, holds a 65 per cent stake in the venture, while MDO owns the remaining 35 per cent.

Titanium slag is produced by processing ilmenite ore in electric arc furnaces and is used mainly in the production of titanium dioxide (TiO2), a widely used white pigment found in paints, coatings, plastics, paper and consumer products.

The remaining titanium output is used to manufacture titanium sponge and titanium metal, which are valued for their strength, lightweight properties and resistance to corrosion.

Al Balushi described titanium as a “rare and highly specialised metal” used in aerospace industries, submarine manufacturing, military applications, medical technologies and space-related industries.

He noted that industrial customers from China, Japan, the United States and Europe have already expressed interest in sourcing titanium products from the Sohar facility.

The project is expected to support Oman Vision 2040 objectives by strengthening downstream mining industries, promoting industrial diversification and expanding the contribution of value-added mineral processing to the national economy.

OMAN INVESTMENT AUTHORITY TO UNVEIL 2025 RESULTS

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority will unveil its 2025 financial results and key performance indicators during its annual media briefing on Monday, May 18, alongside updates on the performance of its subsidiaries and major achievements recorded during the year.

The Authority will also launch its 2025 annual report during the



briefing, highlighting financial and institutional indicators as well as developments across its investment portfolios.

The presentation is expected to outline progress in asset

development, return optimisation and financial sustainability efforts in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The briefing will review the Authority’s contribution to implementing the national agenda through investment attraction, enhancement of local content and improved operational efficiency across its subsidiaries. — ONA

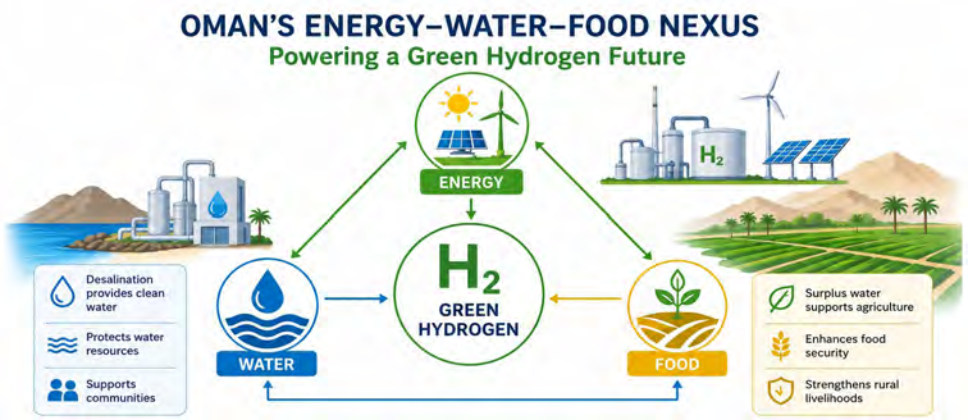
Oman embeds energy-water-food nexus in hydrogen strategy

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 16

A commentary published by the World Economic Forum argues that Oman’s emerging green hydrogen industry is being shaped not simply by abundant renewable energy resources, but by a sophisticated governance model that integrates energy, water and food security into a single national strategy.

Co-authored by Rumaitha al Busaidy, Vice President — Environment Society of Oman and Akram Azerbayev, Vice President of Business Development — OQ Alternative Energy, the analysis, titled ‘How Oman is preparing to lead on hydrogen exports’, says the Sultanate of Oman’s long experience in managing water scarcity is now becoming a strategic advantage as it positions itself among the world’s leading renewable hydrogen exporters.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Oman is projected to rank among the top six renewable hydrogen exporters globally by 2030. But the authors contend that the real differentiator



Oman’s early adoption of integrated resource governance may ultimately prove more valuable than its renewable energy potential alone.

is not export volume alone, but the governance architecture underpinning the country’s hydrogen ambitions.

Unlike many countries that treat water as a secondary input in hydrogen production, Oman approaches water as a sovereign resource with competing demands from agriculture, municipalities, industry and the emerging hydrogen sector. In a country where freshwater resources are extremely limited, desalination alone is not viewed as a sufficient solution.

The commentary notes that producing one kilogramme of hydrogen requires around 35 kilogrammes of purified water, making desalination indispensable in arid climates. However, large-scale desalination also raises concerns linked to energy consumption, marine ecosystem impacts from brine discharge and public concerns over water allocation.

To address these challenges, Oman has embedded what the

authors describe as an “energy-water-food nexus” into its hydrogen planning framework. This integrated approach is anchored in four core policy components.

The first is integrated resource planning across energy, water and agriculture ministries, replacing isolated sectoral decision-making with coordinated governance.

The second component is the incorporation of brine valorisation requirements into project design from the outset. Rather than treating brine solely as waste, Oman is exploring pathways to recover valuable minerals and minimise marine discharge impacts.

Third, the framework includes surplus water allocation mechanisms that direct excess desalinated water towards agriculture and community use, thereby strengthening food security and reducing pressure on declining groundwater reserves.

The fourth pillar involves legally enforceable community water commitments embedded into project approvals, ensuring that water access obligations

are contractual requirements rather than voluntary corporate commitments.

The authors argue that these measures are supported by Oman Vision 2040, which aligns economic diversification, water security and sustainability objectives under a unified national framework.

This coordinated policy approach, they point out, gives investors confidence that Oman’s hydrogen sector is being developed within a stable and well-integrated framework.

Notably, Oman’s strategy differs from many international hydrogen initiatives because desalinated water production is treated not as a by-product, but as a parallel economic and strategic benefit. Excess desalinated water generated for electrolysis can support agriculture and help reduce dependence on imported food.

The authors conclude that Oman’s early adoption of integrated resource governance may ultimately prove more valuable than its renewable energy potential alone.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The summit aims to foster dialogue on sustainability, ESG integration, corporate responsibility and innovative governance models.

Ominvest sponsors inaugural Sustainable Impact Summit 2026

MUSCAT: Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) has announced its sponsorship of the inaugural Sustainable Impact Summit 2026, to be held in the Sultanate of Oman from May 18-19, 2026.

The summit will bring together a distinguished group of regional and international experts, decision-makers and specialists in sustainability, governance and social responsibility.

Positioned as a strategic regional platform, the summit aims to foster dialogue on sustainability, ESG integration, corporate responsibility and innovative governance models that advance long-term societal impact and sustainable development.

The event will also explore the role of advanced technologies, data-driven solutions and cross-sector partnerships in transforming institutional commitments into measurable impact, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and global sustainable development priorities.

The summit will feature a series of panel discussions and specialised sessions addressing the latest developments in sustainability, ESG standards, institutional governance, social investment and sustainable economic growth.

Commenting on the launch of the summit, Sayyid Hamid al Busaidy, Chairman of the Conference, said: “The Sustainable Impact Summit was established from our strong belief in transforming responsibility into measurable and lasting impact that positively benefits society, the economy and people.

Through this inaugural edition and with Tatweer International, we aspire for this summit to serve as a strategic platform that brings together leaders, experts, decision-makers and institutions from across various sectors to exchange knowledge, strengthen partnerships and showcase innovative solutions and best practices that contribute to building a more sustainable and responsible future for the Sultanate of Oman, the region and the world”.

Commenting on Ominvest’s participation, Waleed bin Nasser al Yaarubi, Chief People, Corporate Communication and Sustainability Officer at Ominvest, said: “The Sustainable Impact Summit represents an important platform for fostering dialogue and exchanging expertise around sustainability, ESG standards and corporate responsibility.

Ominvest’s sponsorship of the summit reflects the Group’s continued commitment to embedding sustainability and responsible investment principles across its operations and portfolio companies, in alignment with national development priorities and global trends towards more sustainable and responsible business practices“.

OAB announces redemption of \$250 million perpetual tier 1 capital securities

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank SAOG (OAB) announced on May 11, 2026 the redemption of its \$250 million Perpetual Tier 1 Capital Securities on the First Call Date of June 4, 2026, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the securities.

The Capital Securities, originally issued in 2021 and listed on the London Stock Exchange’s International Securities Market (ISM), will be redeemed in full and subsequently delisted from the ISM. The announcement reflects the



Bank’s strong capital position, prudent liquidity management and continued financial resilience amidst heightened geopolitical tensions and volatile regional market conditions.

The transaction further underscores OAB’s ability to

continue executing strategic capital and funding actions while maintaining disciplined access to international capital markets despite a challenging external operating environment.

Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO, said: “The exercise of the call option on our Perpetual Tier 1 Capital Securities reflects the strength of Oman Arab Bank’s balance sheet, the resilience of our liquidity and funding profile; and our disciplined approach to capital management.”

Abraj Energy official sponsor of OPES 2026



Energy Services, Oman’s leading oil and gas services provider, is participating as an Official Sponsor at the

14th edition of the Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES 2026), taking place from May 18-20, 2026 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

This year’s participation carries special significance as Abraj celebrates 20 years of operational excellence and national contribution to Oman’s energy sector. Over the past two decades, the Company has played a pivotal role in supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s energy ambitions through high-performance operations, strategic partnerships, safety leadership and sustainable growth.

At OPES 2026, Abraj will showcase its integrated portfolio of drilling and well services, operational capabilities and growth journey, while highlighting its continued commitment to innovation, local content development and long-term sector sustainability.

The event also provides a strategic platform for engagement with industry leaders, decision-makers; and regional and international partners.

As part of the conference agenda, Abraj



This year’s participation carries special significance as Abraj celebrates 20 years of operational excellence.

will contribute to a series of high-level discussions focused on operational efficiency, sustainable growth, emissions reduction and the future of the energy industry.

The exhibition further supports the Company’s efforts to strengthen strategic partnerships, accelerate knowledge exchange and explore new opportunities that contribute to long-term value creation across the sector.

Commenting on the participation, Saif al

Hamhami, Chief Executive Officer of Abraj Energy Services, said: “Our participation as Official Sponsor at OPES 2026 reflects Abraj’s continued commitment to advancing Oman’s energy sector and strengthening our position as a trusted strategic partner. As we celebrate 20 years of operational excellence, we look forward to engaging with industry leaders and showcasing the capabilities, innovation and expertise that continue to drive our growth across Oman and regional markets”.

Grand Millennium Muscat welcomes new GM

MUSCAT: Grand Millennium Muscat is pleased to announce the appointment of Michael Kasch (pictured) as its new General Manager, marking an exciting new chapter for the hotel as it continues to strengthen its position as one of Muscat’s leading hospitality destinations.

Bringing more than three decades of international experience in hotel management, operations and strategic development, Michael joins the property with a results-driven approach and a



strong track record in building and leading high-performing teams. His career spans key markets across the Middle East, Europe and Asia, where he has consistently delivered operational excellence and

commercial success.

What makes this appointment particularly significant is Michael’s connection to Muscat. Having previously worked in the city, he brings valuable local market insight and a deep understanding of evolving guest expectations in the Sultanate of Oman, which are combined with a global perspective shaped by his international career.

Throughout his journey, Michael has held senior leadership roles with globally recognised brands including Rotana, Mövenpick, Marriott,

Taj Hotels, Accor and Radisson. Among his notable achievements is the successful pre-opening of The Kahala Hotel & Resort Yokohama in Japan, where he played a pivotal role in shaping the hotel’s operational framework and market positioning.

At Grand Millennium Muscat, Michael will focus on strengthening the hotel’s market position, elevating service standards and enhancing its food and beverage offerings – key elements that define the guest experience.

Bank Muscat & OTA partner for Down syndrome community

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to adopting community initiatives, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced its partnership with Oman Tourism Academy affiliated to the Oman Tourism College, to launch a specialised training and employment programme for individuals with Down syndrome, in the presence of officials from both entities.

The announcement was made during a signing ceremony held at Bank Muscat Head Office, attended by officials from both institutions.

The agreement was signed by Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager, Credit, Bank Muscat and Dr Ahmed bin Sulaiman al Mahrizi, Assistant Dean for the Academic Affairs of Oman Tourism College.

This programme serves as a qualitative initiative implemented between both institutions and a number of hotels across the Sultanate of Oman, which have expressed their



The pact was signed by Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager, Credit, Bank Muscat and Dr Ahmed bin Sulaiman al Mahrizi, Assistant Dean for the Academic Affairs of Oman Tourism College.

readiness to offer employment opportunities to participants upon successful completion of the training programme, in collaboration with

the Oman Down Syndrome Association.

The programme aims to qualify 20 beneficiaries through two training tracks: Hospitality Support Services and Housekeeping, enabling them to acquire professional skills that open doors to financial and social independence. The registration details will be revealed at a later date through the official channels.

Under the agreement, Oman Tourism Academy will design and deliver the training courses in line with international hospitality standards, while providing a supportive and integrated learning environment tailored to the needs of this group.

The courses will also include practical training placements within hotel establishments and facilitate employment opportunities for graduates in reputable institutions

. Bank Muscat, on the other hand, will provide support to contribute to the implementation of the programme, in addition

to collaborating on marketing and awareness campaigns highlighting the importance and positive impact of such initiatives on society.

Commenting on the occasion, Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager, Credit, Bank Muscat, stated that this initiative reflects the bank’s commitment to its role in social responsibility and serving all segments of society, noting that investing in empowering individuals with Down syndrome is an important step towards building a more inclusive and sustainable community.

He added: “Providing training and employment opportunities for this group will enhance their active participation in society and contribute to greater independence for them and their families”.

Dr Ahmed bin Sulaiman al Mahrizi, Assistant Dean for the Academic Affairs of Oman Tourism College, explained that the launch of this programme aligns with the academy’s efforts to develop national talent in the tourism and hospitality sector.

SHORTTAKES



The event reflects Oman's efforts to balance energy security, industrial growth, environmental protection and long-term sustainability objectives.

OPES and Oman Sustainability Week to open on Monday

MUSCAT: Oman Petroleum and Energy Show (OPES) 2026 and Oman Sustainability Week 2026 will open on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, bringing together government entities, international energy companies, investors, policymakers, innovators and sustainability experts for one of the region's largest integrated energy and sustainability gatherings. The three-day event reflects Oman's efforts to balance energy security, industrial growth, environmental protection and long-term sustainability objectives. Hosting both events at a single venue is expected to strengthen cooperation between the energy and sustainability sectors while reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's position as a regional hub for dialogue, innovation and investment in future-focused industries.

This year's Oman Sustainability Week is being held under the theme "Sustainability in Action: Innovation, Investment, Impact", highlighting the importance of converting sustainability ambitions into measurable outcomes through technology, collaboration and strategic investment. Meanwhile, the Oman Petroleum and Energy Show is taking place under the theme "Success Through Collaboration: Achieving a Sustainable Energy Future", focusing on the role of partnerships, innovation and integrated industrial efforts in addressing global energy sector transformations. The event programme includes conferences, certified professional development sessions, technical workshops, roundtable discussions, investor networking forums and field visits aimed at encouraging knowledge exchange, strategic cooperation and new business opportunities at regional and international levels. Conference sessions will cover a wide range of topics, including energy security, carbon emissions reduction, liquefied natural gas, artificial intelligence, digital transformation, environmental, social and governance (ESG) standards, circular economy strategies, biodiversity, climate resilience and future mobility solutions.

Senior executives and industry leaders will also participate in strategic discussions on production growth, carbon competitiveness, cost optimisation, green investment and the commercialisation of clean technologies. A major feature of Oman Sustainability Week 2026 is the International Resources and Technology for Sustainability Conference, which will focus on renewable energy, hydrogen, water security, biodiversity conservation and sustainable investment pathways. The Society of Petroleum Engineers conference, held alongside the exhibition, will showcase the latest developments in upstream technologies, enhanced oil recovery, carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS), digital transformation and integrated energy systems. The event will additionally spotlight sustainable mobility through exhibitions of electric vehicles and future transport technologies, as well as site visits offering participants direct exposure to renewable energy projects, circular economy initiatives and smart infrastructure developments across Oman.

ENERGY DISRUPTION

Iraq oil exports decline sharply



Iraq exported only 10 million barrels of oil through the Strait of Hormuz in April, sharply lower than the pre-war monthly average of about 93 million barrels, Oil Minister Basim Mohammed said. Iraq currently produces 1.4 million barrels daily and plans to increase shipments through Türkiye's Ceyhan port from 200,000 to 500,000 barrels per day. — Reuters

AVIATION TRADE

China agrees Boeing jet deal



China has agreed to purchase 200 Boeing aircraft, with the potential order rising to as many as 750 jets, according to US President Donald Trump. The agreement would mark Boeing's first major Chinese order in nearly a decade after prolonged trade tensions between Washington and Beijing. Trump said the aircraft would be equipped with engines supplied by GE Aerospace. — Reuters

IPO MARKET

SpaceX targets Nasdaq debut



SpaceX is reportedly targeting a Nasdaq listing as early as June 12 in what could become one of the year's biggest initial public offerings. The company is expected to trade under the ticker "SPCX" and may release its prospectus next week ahead of a planned roadshow. The listing comes amidst renewed momentum in the IPO market following a prolonged period of geopolitical volatility. — Reuters

Oman insurance revenues surpass ₪500 million

OMAN'S insurance sector recorded strong growth in 2025, with total insurance revenues exceeding RO 500 million, supported by higher investment returns, expanding insurance activity and increased adoption of digital services, according to the Financial Services Authority. Audited financial data showed that insurance revenues rose to RO 501.6 million in 2025, compared with RO 483 million in 2024, representing growth of 3.86 per cent. National insurance companies generated RO 404.2 million in revenues, up from RO 389.5 million a year earlier, while foreign insurance companies recorded revenues of RO 97.4 million, reflecting continued competitiveness and growing demand for insurance services in the Omani market. The sector's total assets increased by 6.9 per cent to RO 1.31 billion by the end



The sector's total assets increased by 6.9% to RO 1.31 billion by the end of 2025.

of 2025. Investment returns surged by 42.6 per cent to RO 49 million, compared with RO 34.3 million in 2024, highlighting stronger portfolio management and improved investment performance. Net profits of insurance companies climbed by 36 per cent to RO 34.3 million, supported by higher investment income and improved

operational efficiency. Direct insurance premiums increased by 8.9 per cent to RO 551.8 million, driven by a 42 per cent rise in life and savings insurance as well as a six per cent increase in health insurance activity. At the same time, claims paid declined by 4.1 per cent to RO 267.8 million in 2025 from RO 279.4 million in the previous

year, contributing to improved loss ratios among both national and foreign insurers. The Authority said the sector also witnessed significant growth in digital insurance channels, with digitally collected premiums increasing by 35.5 per cent and premiums collected through banks rising by 38.1 per cent. Meanwhile, Takaful insurance companies maintained stable performance, with revenues increasing by 1.04 per cent to RO 75.35 million. Takaful operations accounted for around 15 per cent of total insurance sector revenues during 2025. The Financial Services Authority said the results reflected the insurance sector's growing role in supporting the national economy, strengthening financial protection services and advancing digital transformation in line with Oman's sustainable economic development objectives. — ONA

Inma Fund financing reaches ₪ 215 million

MUSCAT: Total financing provided by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (Inma) since its establishment reached around RO 215 million by the end of April 2026, supporting 2,061 small and medium enterprise (SME) projects across the Sultanate of Oman. Salah bin Hilal al Maawali, Chief Executive Officer of the Inma Fund, said the fund was established to strengthen the contribution of SMEs to a diversified and sustainable economy through financing support, professional training and partnerships that improve the



The fund was established to strengthen the contribution of SMEs to a diversified, sustainable economy.

sustainability and growth potential of enterprises. He said the fund's main branch

received financing applications worth nearly RO 10 million during the first four months of 2026, with applications currently under review to ensure compliance with financing requirements. The Suhar branch received eight applications valued at RO 8 million, while the Salalah branch financed eight projects worth a combined RO 500,000. Al Maawali added that the fund launched an auto financing product for individuals in late 2025 as part of its expansion strategy to provide more flexible financing solutions for individuals and businesses. The

fund also offers Islamic financing products to meet the preferences of different beneficiaries. He noted that repayment periods for some financing products extend to eight years. Financing solutions include project financing, asset financing, invoice discounting and working capital financing. Project financing begins at RO 50,000 and can exceed RO 3 million depending on project feasibility and financial assessment. Al Maawali said the fund has supported a large number of successful national projects since its establishment. — ONA

Jindal to build ₪150 million steel plant in Suhar

MUSCAT: Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has signed an investment agreement with Jindal Steel Company to establish an integrated iron and steel plant at Suhar Industrial City with an investment of RO 150 million. The project will be developed over an area exceeding 583,000 square metres in phase 7 of Suhar Industrial City, reinforcing Oman's position as a regional hub for heavy industries and advanced manufacturing. The integrated facility is expected to support the domestic supply of iron and steel products, strengthen export activity and create



The project will be developed over an area exceeding 583,000 square metres in phase 7 of Suhar Industrial City.

employment opportunities for Omani nationals.

The project also aligns with Oman's efforts to expand

industrial diversification and attract value-added investments into strategic sectors. The agreement follows the acquisition of Al Qamar Steel Company by Jindal Group, reflecting growing international investor confidence in Oman's industrial sector and business environment. The move also underlines the group's expansion plans in the regional steel industry. The new project is anticipated to contribute to the growth of downstream industries linked to construction, infrastructure and manufacturing, while enhancing Suhar's role as a key industrial and logistics centre in the region. — ONA

OPINION

Bait Al Haitham: A new milestone in Oman’s energy future



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

IN an innovative example of what the future of Oman's energy sector can look like, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has unveiled “Bait Al Haitham”, a strategic initiative that underlines a new era of transformation, innovation and sustainability for PDO.

More than a project of a physical or organisational nature, Bait Al Haitham is a site that will strengthen future-oriented collaborations, nurture innovations and sustain Oman's diverse and sustainable energy aspirations.

PDO has been the backbone for Oman's economic development for decades. As Oman's premier oil and gas company, PDO has provided energy security and sustained economic growth through the establishment of energy infrastructure, development of human resources and dedication to social responsibilities.

Today, with the changing dynamics of the global energy environment, PDO is positioning itself as a leader through the launching of Bait Al Haitham.

The name has its own level of importance. Bait Al Haitham reflects PDO's commitment to the convergence of ideas and healthy technologies to enable the energy sector of the future. Bait Al Haitham will be a centre for innovations and an incubator for strategies to solve the energy challenges of the future.

The initiative will enhance PDO's contribution to the implementation of Oman Vision 2040 by focusing on the principles of sustainability, innovation, economic

diversification and development of human capital. With Bait Al Haitham, PDO is taking on the role of an enabler of progress by championing a cleaner energy transition, digital transformation and deploying advanced technologies to optimise operations and address the negative environmental impact.

The initiative addresses the understanding of PDO of the impact of the global energy sector, in spite of the continuing relevance of oil and gas to the global economy. The industry is shifting focus to be more responsible for the energy it consumes within the available resources.

With Bait Al Haitham, PDO is promoting the collaboration and research necessary to address renewable energy, carbon management, energy resources and the efficient use of energy resources.

Bait Al Haitham goes beyond the focus on innovation and technology. PDO recognises that the single most valuable resource of any country is its people and more specifically, its Omanis.

The initiative enhances the advanced skills of Oman's workforce through knowledge, professional and leadership development resources, along with enabling Omani youth to assume the role of engineers, inventors and other important professions. PDO's further enhancement of its resources is an invaluable contribution to the country's socio-economic growth and development.

Collaboration is a vital component of Bait Al Haitham. The initiative aims to strengthen collaboration between PDO and academic

As Oman’s premier oil and gas company, PDO has provided energy security and sustained economic growth through the establishment of energy infrastructure, development of human resources and dedication to social responsibilities.

institutions, tech companies and industry players, as well as startups. In a world defined by collaboration, especially given the combined challenges in the field of energy, coupled expertise and solution integration is key. Through a dialogue and collaboration platform, PDO is facilitating the design of a flexible and responsive energy system.

Bait Al Haitham acts in addition to all of the aforementioned initiatives, as it strengthens PDO's corporate social responsibility and community involvement initiatives.

As energy companies play a wider social role, PDO continues to pioneer by synergising business goals with a desire to protect the environment and create social value. It shows a unified framework where the achievement of business goals is aligned with the challenge of balancing sustainability and the wellbeing of the people.

The launch of Bait Al Haitham goes beyond just being a milestone for PDO. It is a testament to the people of Oman and their confidence in the country's ability to not just keep pace with, but lead the world in the dynamic energy industry. PDO is setting the stage for a new era of growth and transformation.

As Oman moves steadily towards a more diversified and sustainable economy, Bait Al Haitham stands as a powerful symbol of ambition, collaboration and progress. It represents not only the next chapter in PDO's remarkable journey, but also a meaningful contribution to the future of the energy sector in Oman and beyond.

Türkiye’s offshore wind move offers lessons for Oman’s clean-energy future

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

Türkiye’s decision to identify four candidate offshore wind zones marks an important step in the region’s renewable energy transition. It also offers a useful signal for coastal economies such as Oman, where maritime geography, ports and industrial zones could play a greater role in future clean-energy planning.

Recent reports said Türkiye has designated four offshore wind zones as candidate Renewable Energy Resource Areas, known as YEKA.

The areas are located near Bozcaada, Edremit, Gökçeada and Saros, with the first offshore wind tender expected after permitting processes are completed. Türkiye is targeting 5 GW of offshore wind capacity by 2035.

For Türkiye, the move reflects efforts to diversify renewable energy sources and reduce dependence on imported energy. For the wider region, it carries a broader message: coastlines are becoming strategic clean-energy assets.

Offshore wind is no longer limited to established European markets. It is gradually moving into new geographies where governments see value in linking renewable energy, port infrastructure, industrial development and energy security.

This is where the story becomes relevant for Oman. The Sultanate of Oman has a long coastline, established ports, industrial zones and growing ambitions in renewable energy and green hydrogen.

While Oman’s clean-energy pathway is currently centred on solar, onshore wind and hydrogen-linked projects, Türkiye’s offshore wind plans show how maritime energy resources could become part of future planning for countries with strong coastal identities.

Oman Vision 2040 places emphasis on renewable energy, diversified energy sources and sustainable development. The country has also set ambitious targets to increase the share of renewables in its electricity mix, including around 30 per cent by 2030.

Offshore wind should not be seen as an immediate replacement for Oman’s existing renewable priorities. Solar will remain central because of the country’s strong solar resources, while onshore wind continues to hold potential in areas such as Dhofar and Al Wusta Governorates.

However, Türkiye’s example raises an important planning question: should coastal energy potential be studied more systematically as part of Oman’s long-term renewable energy mix?

The answer would depend on wind speeds, water depth, seabed conditions, grid connection costs, port readiness and environmental sensitivities.

Oman’s next shift may start with electricity

FOR decades, Gulf economies followed a familiar formula: produce energy, export it abroad and build growth around the revenues that came back.Oil left by tanker. Gas moved through pipelines.

Economic value was largely created once energy reached foreign markets. But the next phase of global competition may look very different. The countries that succeed in the future may not necessarily be the ones exporting the most energy. They may be the ones using energy to attract industry, technology and investment at home.

Quietly, Oman seems to be moving in that direction. At first glance, the Sultanate of Oman's latest electricity projects appear straightforward enough — new power plants, transmission upgrades and grid interconnections designed to support future demand. But beneath the technical details lies a bigger economic story.

Oman may be starting to shift from exporting energy to building industries around it.

That matters because electricity itself is changing. Around the world, it is becoming more than just a utility service. It is increasingly turning into a competitive economic advantage.

Artificial intelligence, data centres, desalination, advanced manufacturing and low-carbon heavy industries are all expected to drive a major increase in electricity demand over the coming years.

At the same time, companies are paying closer attention to where they can secure stable, affordable and lower-carbon power for the long term. In many ways, electricity is becoming industrial policy.

This is where Oman’s current investments start to take on greater significance.

Projects such as the 1,700-megawatt Misfah plant, the 877-megawatt Duqm project and the north-south electricity interconnection are not simply



Projects such as the 1,700-megawatt Misfah plant, the 877-megawatt Duqm project and the north-south electricity interconnection are not simply infrastructure upgrades.



QASIM
AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics department at Oman Observer

infrastructure upgrades. Together, they point to the early foundations of a more electricity-intensive industrial economy.

The hydrogen-ready technology planned for future generation projects is particularly revealing. While hydrogen is often discussed mainly as an export opportunity, its deeper value may lie in giving Oman more flexibility as the global energy system evolves.

The transition away from traditional energy systems is unlikely to happen in a straight line. Gas, renewables, hydrogen and industrial-scale electricity demand are likely to coexist for years. Countries that manage that transition efficiently could gain a long-term advantage.

Oman appears to understand this. The north-south electricity interconnection may prove especially important. Officially, it is a transmission project linking different parts of the national grid.

In practice, it could reshape the country’s industrial geography.

A stronger and more integrated grid improves the long-term attractiveness of places such as Al Duqm and Dhofar for manufacturing, minerals processing, logistics and energy-intensive industries.

Future investors may increasingly look not only at ports and taxes, but also at grid reliability, electricity costs and carbon intensity.

This could become one of Oman's biggest opportunities. The Sultanate of Oman already has several important advantages: strategic ports, industrial zones, renewable energy potential and established gas infrastructure.

But these strengths become far more valuable if they are connected through a resilient and future-ready electricity system.

Still, building infrastructure alone is not enough. The real challenge is whether Oman can create enough economic activity to absorb this growing electricity capacity.

Who will use this power? If the country succeeds in attracting large-scale manufacturing, digital infrastructure, green industrial projects and advanced processing industries, today's electricity investments could become one of the foundations of Oman's post-oil economy.

But if industrial growth and private investment fail to keep pace, some of the new infrastructure risks becoming underutilised and financially costly over time. That is why electricity planning cannot be separated from industrial strategy.

The real value of Oman's evolving energy system may not ultimately come from exporting more energy abroad.

It may come from using that energy more intelligently at home to create industries, jobs and long-term economic resilience.

For decades, Oman's economy benefitted from moving energy outwards. The next chapter may depend on what the country can build around that energy at home.

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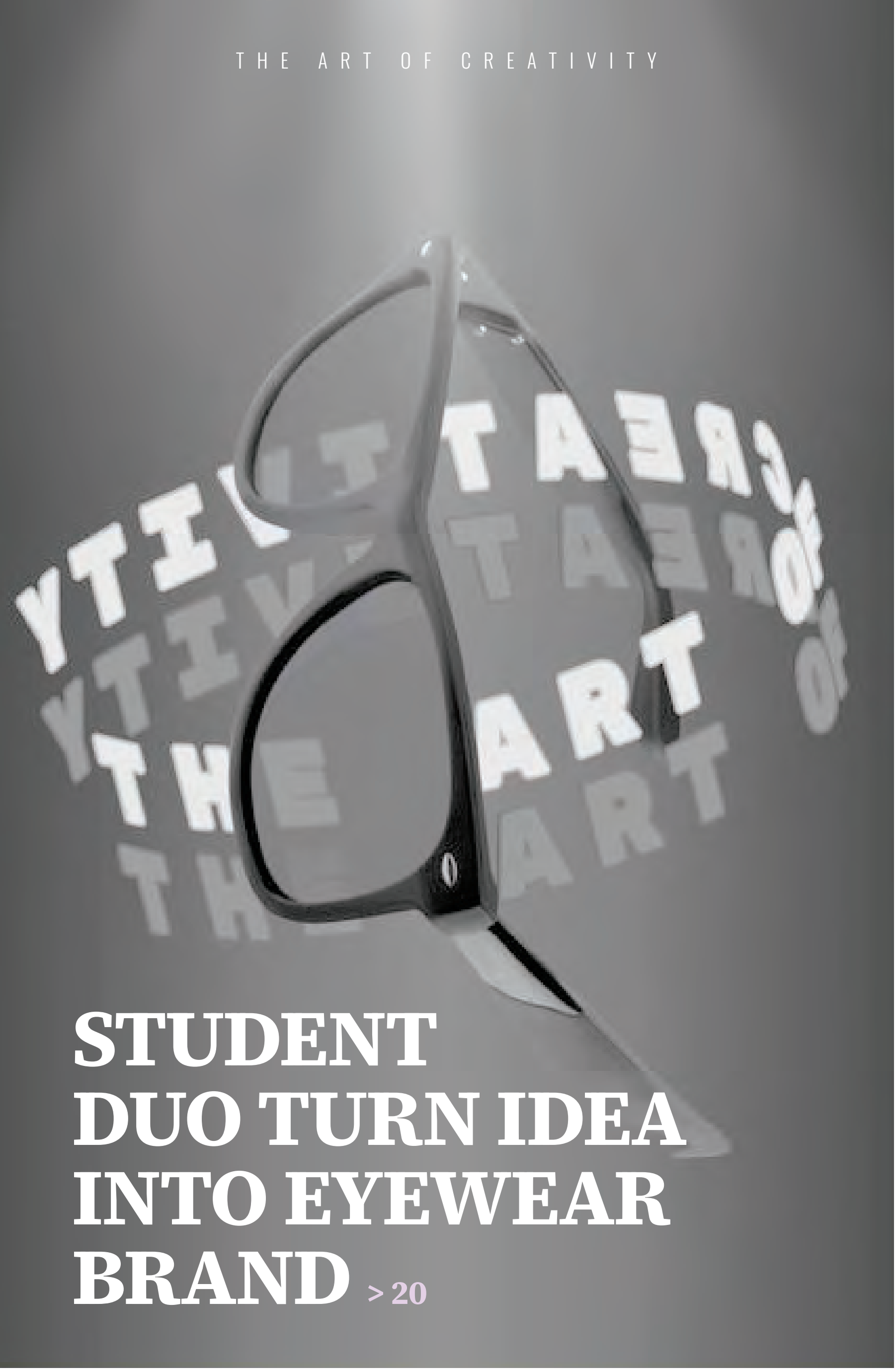
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FILMFESTIVAL

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The Cannes Film Festival opened on the French Riviera last week with a star-studded red carpet led by celebrities including Demi Moore and Elijah Wood, as the event turned attention to the future of filmmaking, artificial intelligence and the continued absence of major Hollywood studio premieres.

The opening ceremony was declared underway by Jane Fonda and Gong Li, with actors Isaach De Bankolé and James Franco among guests on the red carpet. The evening highlighted cinema’s global reach and the festival’s role as one of the most important gatherings in international film.

Actor Elijah Wood, known for *The Lord of the Rings*, reunited with director Peter Jackson during the ceremony, where Jackson received an honorary award recognising his career and contributions to global cinema. Jackson described the honour as a surprise and thanked the audience for their support. The main competition features 22 films competing for the Palme d’Or prize, with entries from acclaimed directors including Pedro Almodóvar, Hirokazu Kore-eda and Cristian Mungiu. The lineup includes historical dramas and contemporary stories reflecting a wide range of global perspectives.

Discussions around the festival have also focused on the impact of artificial intelligence on film production, including concerns about jobs in editing, writing and visual effects. Organisers emphasised support for creative professionals while highlighting new technology partnerships shaping the industry.

The festival also announced a partnership with Meta, which is involved in an upcoming documentary by director Steven Soderbergh. The film explores archival material and uses AI-assisted techniques to recreate historical interviews with musicians John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

Hollywood studios were notably absent from the lineup this year, continuing a trend seen across several major international festivals. Organisers expressed hope that major productions will return in future editions, reinforcing the festival’s role as a global showcase for cinema.

Guests filled the Grand Théâtre Lumière as photographers captured arrivals, with film professionals, critics and guests gathering for the traditional opening night screening. The festival continues over the coming days with premieres, press conferences and industry events across the city. Beyond the red carpet, Cannes remains a key marketplace for global film distribution, where deals are often negotiated between studios, streaming platforms and independent producers. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

US actor Jeff Goldblum attends the Dior 2027 Cruise collection fashion show at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in Los Angeles. — AFP



CULTURE

Men dressed in traditional attire ride horses and fire their rifles during a Tbourida, or Fantasia, equestrian performance in the city of Bouznika. — AFP



COMPETITION

Swiss singer Veronica Fusaro, representing Switzerland with the song ‘Alice’, performs during a dress rehearsal for the second semi-final of the Eurovision Song Contest 2026. — AFP

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‘Fast and Furious’ stars reunite in Cannes



THE CANNES FILM FESTIVAL celebrated the 25th anniversary of “The Fast and the Furious” on Wednesday night with a special midnight screening attended by franchise stars Vin Diesel, Jordana Brewster and Michelle Rodriguez.

Fans lined the red carpet for hours ahead of the event, cheering as Diesel stopped to take selfies and greet the crowd. The actor wore a black jacket featuring a racecar design and the words “Fast Forever” in sequins on the back, referencing the franchise’s upcoming sequel planned for release in 2028.

Released in 2001, “The Fast and the Furious” began as a film centred on street racing culture in Los Angeles before growing into one of Hollywood’s most successful action franchises. Produced by Universal Pictures, the series has since expanded to include nine sequels and the spin-off “Hobbs & Shaw”, earning

more than \$7 billion worldwide at the box office.

The Cannes screening also served as a tribute to actor Paul Walker, Diesel’s longtime co-star, who died in a car crash in Southern California in 2013. Walker’s daughter, Meadow Walker, attended the event and previously appeared in a cameo role in “Fast X”.

Before the screening at Cannes’ Grand Theatre Lumiere, Diesel addressed the audience and reflected on the recognition the film received from festival director Thierry Fremaux.

“To come with a film that you, the head of the most prestigious film festival in the world, are calling a classic — how profound is that?” Diesel said.

The next installment, titled “Fast Forever”, is expected to reunite the original cast along with Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson and Jason Statham.

— Reuters



A man wearing a Lord of the Rings movie costume looks on in front of the Palais des Festivals during the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes. — AFP

Peter Jackson returns to Tintin universe after 15-year wait

PETER JACKSON revealed that he is taking on another cult classic — “Tintin”. The Oscar-winning “The Lord of the Rings” director said he has been working on a script for a new film about the boy reporter created by Belgian cartoonist Hergé nearly a century ago.

Jackson said the film would serve as a sequel to Steven Spielberg’s 2011 animated feature The Adventures of Tintin, which he co-produced.

“The deal was that Steven directs one and I direct another”, Jackson said at the Cannes Film Festival, where he received an honorary Palme d’Or lifetime achievement award on Tuesday.

“So Steven did his film, then for 15 years I haven’t made mine. I feel very awkward about that”, he said.

Jackson added that he had been using his time in Cannes to continue work on the screenplay alongside his partner, Fran Walsh.

“I’m in the hotel room down the road writing the script and sending pages to New Zealand”, he said.

Although he declined to reveal which Tintin albums inspired the project, Jackson hinted that the story would begin where Spielberg’s film ended, with Red Rackham’s Treasure.

“It’s not the way that it carries on, but it begins exactly where the last film ends”, he said.

Jackson said he makes “films that I really want to see myself”, adding that the Tintin sequel would be no exception.



Taking on Tintin: director Peter Jackson. — AFP

“When we get a draft done we will send it to Steven”, he said. “He might say that he doesn’t like it and maybe we should do it with different books. But I don’t think he will.” The director, who transformed The Lord of the Rings into one of cinema’s biggest box office franchises, said he has long loved Tintin adventures such as Tintin in Tibet and The Blue Lotus, which have remained popular with readers for generations.

Jackson, who owns visual effects company Weta FX, also addressed the debate surrounding artificial

intelligence in filmmaking. The company has worked on major productions including Avatar and “The Lord of the Rings”.

While joking that AI is “going to destroy the world”, he said he did not oppose its use in cinema.

“To me, it’s just a special effect. It’s no different from other special effects”, he said.

However, Jackson added that legal and copyright restrictions would likely limit AI’s role in major feature films, saying the technology was more suited to short online videos

than large studio productions.

The 64-year-old filmmaker also reflected on his early days in Cannes, recalling how he was removed from the Palais des Festivals for wearing shorts during the premiere of his 1987 debut film Bad Taste.

“I’m now an old fat rebel”, he joked.

Jackson also said he still hopes to make a film inspired by Britain’s famous Dambusters raid on German dams during World War II “if I live long enough”. — AFP



The co-founders during a recent event



STUDENT DUO TURN IDEA INTO EYEWEAR BRAND

HIBBA AL KINDI

WHAT STARTED as a simple problem for university student Aus al Ghassani has now turned into a growing Omani eyewear brand aiming to carve out its place in the local fashion market. “My problem was simple. I didn’t have sunglasses”, Al Ghassani said with a laugh. “So I created a sunglasses brand”.

Founded in 2025 by Al Ghassani alongside co-founder Tariq al Bariki, Shu’aa began as an idea between two university students before evolving into what the founders describe as a locally built sunglasses brand focused on individuality, exclusivity and modern design.

Operating primarily online through Instagram, Shu’aa offers stylish, durable and protective sunglasses inspired by modern fashion trends. The brand focuses on exclusivity and individuality, with limited-edition models that are not restocked once sold out.

“We were students entering a market we never actually worked in before”, Al Ghassani said. “It was a big jump for us, from being regular students to suddenly becoming businessmen”.

The pair spent nearly six months planning the project before officially launching the brand online.

“We started by building curiosity”, he explained. “For around two months, we kept hinting that something new was coming to the market, but we didn’t actually show people what Shu’aa was”.

According to Al Ghassani, the mystery-driven marketing campaign helped generate early interest among university students, friends and social circles before the launch of the first collection.

“We honestly did not expect the demand”, he said. “Our expectations were very low, but the reality was completely different. We were shocked by how many people ordered”.

The brand currently offers sunglasses with UV400 protection, alongside polarised and non-polarised options. Al Ghassani stressed that Shu’aa manufactures its products rather than reselling existing designs.

“All our products are made by us as a company”, he said. “We do not resell”.

Design inspiration, meanwhile, comes from a combination of fashion trends, customer feedback and the founders’ own perspectives.

“We follow trends and ask people what they like and what they don’t like”, he said. “At the same time, we add our own point of view into every collection”.

Despite operating primarily online, the



Aus al Ghassani and Tariq al Bariki launched the student-led eyewear brand Shu’aa in 2025.



founders say building a distinctly Omani identity was always central to the business.

“Everything about Shu’aa is Omani”, Al Ghassani said. “The planning, the execution, the marketing, everything started from scratch here”.

The name itself was inspired by sunlight and

global eyewear brands such as Ray-Ban.

“I looked at the idea of rays and searched for Arabic alternatives until I found the word Shu’aa”, he explained. “It just felt right”.

Al Ghassani also credited local businesses such as The Random Shop and Dozy for inspiring his entrepreneurial journey.

“I learned a lot from local brands”, he said. “Seeing Omanis create their own businesses made me feel like I could do it too”.

Balancing business ownership with university life has been one of the biggest challenges so far.

“Time management was the hardest part”, he said. “But at the same time, it became one of the biggest benefits because it taught me discipline and helped me grow as a person”.

Looking ahead, the founders say they hope to position Shu’aa alongside international eyewear names such as Oakley and Ray-Ban, while continuing to expand the brand beyond social media sales.

Moreover, the co-founder shared that the brand is preparing to launch its official website soon, allowing customers to order sunglasses and prescription eyewear directly online.

“When people see the website, they’ll feel like there’s nothing they can’t do on it”, Al Ghassani said. “We want to make ordering easier for everyone, whether inside Oman, the GCC or internationally”.

The founders also revealed plans to expand into prescription and clear glasses in the near future as Shu’aa continues scaling its presence both locally and internationally.

To find out more, Shu’aa can be found on Instagram at [@shuaaa.om](#).