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HM, Botswana President hold talks

L E A D E R S G R A C E S I G N I N G O F S E V E R A L A G R E E M E N T S

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SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC
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- ENERGY DEALS
TO ACHIEVE
SELF-SUFFICIENCY
- JOINT DEVELOPMENT
OF A PRODUCING MINE



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received at Al Barakah Palace on Monday President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana.

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK received at Al Barakah Palace on Monday President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana, on the occasion of his working visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the President and his accompanying delegation, wishing them a pleasant stay and a fruitful visit. On his turn, the President expressed his profound delight over this visit.

Then, a session of official talks was held, chaired by His Majesty the Sultan and the President of Botswana. During the talks, the two sides explored avenues of cooperation between the two countries across various fields, with a view to achieving their mutual interests.

The session was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi,

Head of Private Office of His Majesty the Sultan, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Mulhim bin Bashir al Jaraf, Deputy Chairman of Oman Investment Authority for Investment, and Muneer bin Ali al Muneeri, Deputy Chairman of Oman Investment Authority for Operation.

Meanwhile, it was attended from the Botswana side by the Head of Military Intelligence Adviser to the President on Military Affairs, the Minister of Presidential Investments, the Special Representative of the President and a number of officials.

It is worth mentioning that the President of the Republic of Botswana arrived in the Sultanate of Oman last night. He was received upon arrival at the VIP hall of Muscat International Airport by the Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, along with several officials.

AGREEMENTS SIGNED

Later, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Duma Gideon Boko graced the signing of several cooperation agreements between the two countries at Al Barakah Palace. The signing ceremony took place within the framework of the working visit of the President of Botswana to the Sultanate of Oman.

The agreements covered the fields of mineral exploration, the development and operation of two petroleum product storage facilities, and the development, construction, and financing of a solar photovoltaic power plant.

Al Murshidi said that these new agreements with the Botswana side embody Oman's economic diplomacy, for which the Oman Investment Authority serves as an executive arm. He noted that their success opens the door to strengthening strategic relations with nations and establishing qualitative partnerships for the Authority and its companies

abroad, while simultaneously contributing to attracting foreign investments into local sectors.

He added that the relationship with Botswana represents a model of mutual trust between the two parties, having evolved at a rapid pace from initial meetings in July 2025 and the subsequent establishment of diplomatic relations to mutual visits that have been translated into investment agreements and projects.

He further said that the groundbreaking for these projects will take place immediately following the signing of these agreements, which are part of a long list of other projects to be considered successively, particularly in clean energy sectors such as wind and solar power, fuels and hydrocarbons, as well as mining, logistics, food and financial services. This, he noted, opens opportunities for Omani companies operating in these sectors to export their products and services abroad. **TURN TO P3**

US begins blockade of Iran’s ports, Tehran threatens to retaliate

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump warned on Monday that any Iranian attack boats that approach the naval blockade he has ordered around the country’s ports will be destroyed, despite international calls for a ceasefire to be respected and negotiations to resume.

The US military said the blockade would begin at 14:00 GMT and apply to all ships leaving or seeking to dock at Iranian harbours, but as

the deadline passed, there was no announcement that the measure had come into effect, nor any sign of any interceptions.

In a social media post, Trump said the bulk of Iran's navy had already been destroyed during the war, but that if any of what he said were Tehran's few remaining “fast attack ships” approach the blockade, “they will be immediately **ELIMINATED**”.

Trump announced the blockade



on Sunday after a delegation led by Vice-President J D Vance returned from a meeting with Iranian officials in Pakistan without having secured a deal to end the war launched on February 28 with deadly US and Israeli strikes on Tehran.

The head of the International Maritime Organization, Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez, said no country could “prohibit the right of innocent passage or the freedom

of navigation through international straits that are used for international transit”.

Qatari Foreign Minister and Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani urged both sides to guarantee freedom of navigation and refrain from using maritime routes “as a tool for pressure”, encouraging Tehran and Washington to remain in touch with mediators. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

OMAN AND BOTSWANA EXPLORE AVENUES OF COOPERATION



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received at Al Barakah Palace on Monday President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana, on the occasion of his working visit to the Sultanate of Oman. During the talks, the two sides explored avenues of cooperation between the two countries across various fields, with a view to achieving their mutual interests. — ONA

EMBASSY IN MUSCAT TO OPEN BY YEAR-END

MUSCAT: President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana said that he discussed with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik ways of fostering relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Botswana, particularly in the fields of mining, energy, green energy production and fuel.

The president said that his country is making concerted efforts to open an embassy in Muscat, and these efforts have reached an advanced stage and the embassy is expected to open by the end of this year.

He noted that this step will be followed by other initiatives, including launching a direct flight route between Muscat and the capital, Gaborone, with the aim of supporting economic relations and bolstering cooperation between the two friendly peoples.

The president of Botswana noted that the two friendly countries are moving forward to conclude more agreements and establish partnerships in several sectors, such as health, academic exchange, and cultural exchange. — ONA



Presidential visit to strengthen Oman-Botswana relations

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

The bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Botswana are all set to receive a shot in the arm with the visit of President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana to the Sultanate of Oman and the signing of MoUs focusing on enhancing economic and strategic ties between the two.

Oman and Botswana officially established diplomatic relations on October 14, 2025, aimed at strengthening bilateral cooperation and friendship. During a visit by Botswana's President to Oman in October 2025, it was announced that Botswana had plans

to open an embassy in Muscat to deepen bilateral ties, particularly in energy, mining and food security. The partnership also focuses on economic diversification, including investments in mining, energy, food security and tourism. Major initiatives involve potential investment from Oman in Botswana's diamond industry and increased trade.

"We are glad that there are some substantial moves to solidify the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Botswana which will give a major boost to the bilateral trade and tourism ties that will reflect on the domestic scenario back home. Exploration of Botswana's natural resources, finding



The President of the Republic of Botswana visited the National Museum and viewed a number of artefacts that embody features of Omani identity and the rich history of the Sultanate of Oman.

global markets for the same, are some of the key priorities, besides enhancing mutual tourism and travel ties," said Kgomotso, a Motswana living in Oman.

"A major fillip was received

in the bilateral relations with Botswana's diplomatic presence in Oman, with an embassy to be opened soon in Muscat, which handles consular matters and advocacy for Botswana

nationals in Oman from 2025. The constant efforts to boost the bilateral ties will see a new dimension with recent high-level visits which are aimed at increasing cooperation, and may lead to an increase in the number of nationals moving between the two," another Motswana working in the education sector of the Sultanate of Oman, said.

Botswana is known for its vast natural mineral deposits which are mostly untapped. It is also known for lush animal habitat during the seasonal floods which is home to numerous animals, including giraffes, cheetahs, hyenas and wild dogs.

The wide areas of possible bilateral ties span around investments and trade as

Botswana aims to increase its stake in De Beers, a leading global diamond company specialising in the exploration, mining, and marketing of natural diamonds, with potential collaboration from the Oman sovereign wealth fund. MoUs also included a project to develop, build and finance a 500-megawatt photovoltaic solar power plant with battery storage in Maun, Botswana.

Furthermore, discussions are ongoing regarding the import of red meat from Botswana and the export of Omani seafood. These relations are marked by a mutual goal to enhance regional stability and create new investment avenues between the Gulf and Southern Africa.

HM, Botswana President hold talks

FROM P1

The signing by OQ, the global integrated energy group, and Botswana Oil of an agreement to evaluate strategic cooperation prospects aims to enhance fuel security and support the development of an integrated supply and storage infrastructure in Botswana and its surrounding region.

This follows the investment cooperation agreement concluded on November 25, 2025, as it establishes a structured framework for cooperation in technical, commercial, and regulatory fields. Under this agreement, both parties will work to develop identified opportunities to reach an economic feasibility study and formulate an agreed-upon commercial structure, including the evaluation of refined product supply arrangements.

OQ and Botswana Oil will assess the feasibility of creating an integrated platform combining coastal import and storage solutions with inland strategic stocks — a model intended to solidify security of supply and improve supply chain efficiency to meet Botswana's long-term fuel needs.

This cooperation is based on OQ's extensive capabilities across the energy sector value chain, from trading and logistics to infrastructure development and product supply, to support the structuring of potential projects and



ensure their economic feasibility, including the development of storage and distribution facilities that enhance the economic sustainability of the projects.

The initial phase of work will focus on verifying technical and commercial assumptions, determining strategic stock requirements, and evaluating alternative supply models, in parallel with establishing the necessary commercial and regulatory foundations to move forward with these opportunities.

This will be done with strict adherence to health, safety, and environmental standards, and the definition of governance frameworks, tariff principles, volume obligations, and risk distribution.

Ashraf bin Hamad al Maamari,

CEO of OQ Group, stated that the signing of the agreement with Botswana Oil reflects OQ's partnership-based approach to developing the energy sector. He pointed out that as a leading global group in energy investments, OQ harnesses its comprehensive expertise in the integrated energy value chain to serve this cooperation. For his part, Latelang Chakalisa, Acting CEO of Botswana Oil, said that fuel security is a priority for the Republic of Botswana, and this cooperation with OQ allows for the utilisation of its international expertise to evaluate integrated supply and storage solutions while formulating commercial and regulatory frameworks. The signing by O-Green, a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority, of a Power Purchase

Agreement (PPA) with the Botswana Power Corporation (BPC) aims to develop a 500 MW solar photovoltaic plant, supported by integrated battery energy storage systems (BESS) of 500 MW in the city of Maun, Republic of Botswana.

The 'Maun' project is the first initiative to enter final commercial implementation within the 3,000 MW expanded energy cooperation framework established between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Botswana in November 2025, embodying a fundamental shift from the strategic planning phase to the actual execution of projects on the ground.

This project represents one of the largest investments in the history of renewable energy in Botswana and a decisive step in the country's efforts to secure 50 per cent of its electricity

needs via sustainable sources by 2030. In this context, President Duma Gideon Boko emphasised that the energy agreements signed with the Sultanate of Oman carry major strategic significance, as they will enable Botswana to achieve self-sufficiency and transition from a power-importing nation to an exporter.

Mustafa bin Mohammed al Hinai, CEO of O-Green, said that this project practically embodies Botswana's desire to achieve self-sufficiency and transform into an energy-exporting nation through an advanced and reliable clean energy infrastructure.

Once operational, the plant will contribute to doubling Botswana's current effective generating capacity, while the integration of battery energy storage technologies will enhance the reliability of the national grid and support demand management during peak times, ensuring the provision of renewable and sustainable energy supplies around the clock.

Furthermore, the cooperation agreement between Minerals Development Oman (MDO) and the Exploration Investment Company Botswana (EICB) in the field of mining exploration aims to enhance the strategic partnership in the areas of exploration and geological evaluation of mineral wealth in the Republic of Botswana, leading to the joint development of a producing mine. — ONA

Financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2025



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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (the Authority), which comprise the statement of financial position as at 31 December 2025, and the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Authority as at 31 December 2025, and its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with IFRS Accounting Standards.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). Our responsibilities under these standards are further described in the 'Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements' section of our report. We are independent of the Authority in accordance with the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including International Independence Standards) (IESBA Code), together with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the Sultanate of Oman, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with those requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of management and those charged with governance for the financial statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with IFRS Accounting Standards, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Authority or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Authority's financial reporting process.

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY (continued)

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Authority's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Authority's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Authority to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY (continued)

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements (continued)

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

CROWE MAK GHAZALI LLC

Karl Jackson
Engagement Partner

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
12 March 2026

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Note	2025 R02	2024 R02
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property and equipment	4	8,508,818	8,022,315
Intangible assets	1	1,896,746	224,487
		9,405,564	8,246,802
Current assets			
Trade receivables	6	3,652,815	2,956,611
Advances, prepayments and other receivables	7	9,946,373	9,753,147
Fixed deposit	8	12,492,144	10,610,989
Cash and bank balance	9	21,368,227	25,479,942
		47,411,759	46,772,698
Total assets		56,817,323	54,919,411
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Equity			
Retained surplus	10	26,385,225	24,697,913
Liabilities			
Non-current liabilities			
Deferred government contribution	11	3,174,632	3,697,362
Employer's end of service benefits	12	3,042,871	2,847,288
		6,217,503	6,544,650
Current liabilities			
Current liabilities	13	13,195,649	12,865,722
Trade and other payables	14	16,747,689	10,667,896
Deferred government contribution	11	432,758	432,758
		30,376,196	23,966,376
Total liabilities		36,593,729	30,611,028
Total equity and liabilities		56,817,323	54,919,411

These financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors for issue on 15/3/2026 and signed on this behalf by:

CHAIRMAN

The notes on pages 8 to 25 form part of these financial statements.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY AUTHORITY

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Note	2025 R02	2024 R02
Income			
Radio spectrum income	15	21,617,173	19,896,892
Annual licence fee	16	6,751,897	6,180,223
Income from issuing numbers		1,536,482	1,112,653
Postal service income		887,265	997,432
Telecom equipment type approval income	17	498,895	546,229
Domain name income		94,477	69,801
Other telecom income fee		75,588	140,615
		31,352,779	28,943,389
Operating expenses			
Salaries and employee related costs	18	(8,614,913)	(9,467,371)
Central and administrative expenses	19	(3,596,711)	(2,319,381)
Depreciation on property and equipment	4	(1,046,180)	(1,025,402)
Operational projects		(495,625)	(700,146)
Amortisation on intangible assets	3	(122,968)	(113,470)
Donation to charitable institutions	20	(586,080)	(580,050)
Allowance for expected credit losses-net	6	(46,994)	(38,096)
Remuneration to board of Directors	23	(14,689)	(14,000)
Workforce Development		(183,828)	(136,899)
		(12,874,271)	(12,055,184)
Net income from operations		18,478,508	16,888,205
Non-operating income			
Interest income	21	989,619	(216,921)
Amortisation of deferred government contribution	11	432,758	432,758
Other income	22	364,814	382,756
		1,787,191	608,593
Surplus and total comprehensive income for the year		20,265,699	17,499,494

The notes on pages 8 to 25 form part of these financial statements.

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MOVING FORWARD

NEW AGREEMENTS WITH THE BOTSWANA EMBODY OMAN'S ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

PROJECTS WILL TAKE PLACE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SIGNING OF AGREEMENTS

AGREEMENT OF OQ AND BOTSWANA OIL TO EVALUATE STRATEGIC COOPERATION PROSPECTS

MINERALS AGREEMENT AIMS TO ENHANCE THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN THE AREAS OF GEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

THE 'MAUN' PROJECT IS THE FIRST INITIATIVE TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN THE 3,000 MW EXPANDED ENERGY COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The event includes exhibitions, competitions and the review of student initiatives.

DHOFAR UNIVERSITY SUSTAINABILITY WEEK TO PROMOTE INNOVATION

SALALAH: Dhofar University in the Wilayat of Salalah is organising a ‘Sustainability Week’ under the theme ‘Linking culture with innovation; Empowering youth to achieve sustainability.’ More than 27 schools and colleges are taking part in the event.

Dr Mawih Kareem Al Ani, Dean of the College of Commerce and Administrative Sciences at Dhofar University, said that ‘Sustainability Week 2026’ constitutes a platform to raise awareness about innovation in the field of sustainability.

Dr Mawih pointed out that the event brings together academics, students and interested parties to discuss various issues, including leadership in the field of environment, sustainable development and the role of higher education in building a more sustainable future.

The event includes panel discussions, exhibitions, competitions and the review of student initiatives. The event seeks to enable young people to contribute to shaping a more sustainable future in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

Housing sector boosts services and investment

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

THE Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has unveiled a series of key indicators highlighting a significant transformation in Oman’s housing and urban development sector, driven by a strategic vision aligned with Oman Vision 2040. Speaking during a media tour at its headquarters, the ministry said the ongoing shift goes beyond service enhancement to a comprehensive redesign of systems.

Efforts include simplifying procedures, accelerating digital transformation, and expanding housing options — all aimed at improving efficiency and placing beneficiaries at the centre of services.

Between 2021 and 2025, more than 90,000 beneficiaries were able to select land or housing units through advanced digital platforms, reflecting a major shift towards transparent and user-friendly allocation mechanisms.

The real estate registry sector has also recorded notable progress, with over 95,000 property ownership verification applications processed during the same period.

The expansion of digital title deeds and integrated electronic services



The ministry highlighted investments in human capital through specialised training programmes.

Until 2025, over 90,000 beneficiaries were able to select land or housing units through advanced digital platforms

has significantly boosted efficiency and strengthened confidence in the system. Among major developments, Sultan Haitham City has emerged as a flagship national project, attracting investments exceeding RO 3 billion. The project continues to make steady progress in infrastructure and key facilities, underlining growing investor confidence in Oman’s real estate sector.

The ministry is also advancing several large-scale urban projects, including Al Thuraya City and the High Mountain project, as part of its strategy to develop integrated urban centres that combine residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, enhancing competitiveness at regional and global levels.

Progress has also been recorded

under the ‘Sorouh’ initiative, which focuses on creating fully serviced residential neighbourhoods designed to improve quality of life and foster balanced urban communities.

On the social front, the ministry confirmed that more than 8,000 families have benefited from social housing programmes between 2025 and 2026, reinforcing its commitment to supporting eligible families and promoting stability.

Infrastructure development remains a key priority, with integrated projects underway across several residential areas. The ministry has also ensured rapid response mechanisms to support those affected by weather events through compensation and emergency housing assistance.

To strengthen the investment climate, flexible models such as the usufruct system have been introduced, enabling the use of government land for development without ownership. This has encouraged private sector participation and supported small and medium enterprises.

The launch of digital platforms such as ‘Aqari’ and ‘Tatweer’ has further streamlined procedures, enhanced transparency, and enabled faster processing of transactions within a modern regulatory framework.

Pact signed for cleft lip patients

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health on Monday signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with Oman Dental College (ODC) to provide specialised care for patients with cleft lip, as part of efforts to enhance partnership and integration between health and educational institutions in Oman. The agreement aims to provide non-surgical treatment and orthodontic care for at least 50 patients annually over a five-year period for cases involving cleft lip or cleft palate.

These services will be provided free of charge and include dental examinations, preventive care, restorative treatment and simple tooth extractions, in addition to orthodontic evaluation and treatment.

The cost of treatment for a single patient is estimated at approximately RO 5,000 over



50 patients will benefit from the agreement for non-surgical treatment and orthodontic care.

the programme’s duration, with a total estimated cost of approximately RO 1,250,000 over the five years.

The memorandum seeks to utilise the academic and clinical capabilities of Oman Dental College, the first specialised dental education institution in Oman.

The college contributes to qualifying professional medical cadres in oral and dental medicine and provides advanced specialised services in oral and maxillofacial

surgery for complex cases, including congenital deformities such as cleft lip and palate.

Furthermore, the memorandum intends to support the delivery of non-surgical treatment for cleft lip patients by offering orthodontic services and preventive and therapeutic care, while enhancing coordination with Khoula Hospital for cases requiring surgical intervention or advanced medical care. — ONA

MoH launches PSFHI in hospitals

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Quality Assurance Centre, on Monday launched the Patient Safety Friendly Hospitals Initiative (PSFHI) at the Mercure Muscat Hotel, targeting several local hospitals. The Initiative was launched by Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation, with the participation of several hospital directors and members of the facilitating committees.

The initiative included the hospitals of Dibba, Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, Masirah, Al Mazyouna, Taqah, Izki and



The initiative programme featured training sessions.

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, as part of an effort to strengthen the safety and quality system in healthcare institutions across the governorates of Oman.

The initiative programme featured a series of training sessions and introductory workshops targeting focal points and facilitating

committees concerned with patient safety in the participating hospitals.

These sessions focused on reviewing the initiative framework standards and mechanisms for their practical and systematic implementation, ensuring the highest levels of institutional readiness.

The launch also included specialised scientific and practical content delivered by a group of MoH experts. The approved standards were explained, and implementation requirements clarified, contributing to enhancing the readiness of healthcare institutions to adopt the initiative and improve patient safety and the quality of healthcare services provided.

هيئة الوثائق والمحفوظات الوطنية
National Records & Archives Authority

Announcement

International Conference on Audiovisual Archives
“Audiovisual Archives: A National Memory”
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman 26–28 October 2026

The National Records and Archives Authority announces the organization of the International Conference on Audiovisual Archives under the title “Audiovisual Archives: A National Memory,” in accordance with the following details:

Conference Themes					
The role of audiovisual archives in strengthening national and cultural identity	International and regional experiences	Sustainability of audiovisual materials	Legislation	Modern technologies and artificial intelligence	Digital media

Participation Conditions

For detailed participation guidelines, please visit the official website of the National Records and Archives Authority: www.nraa.gov.om

Deadlines for Abstracts and Papers

- 1 June 2026: Submission of participation forms via email: conference@nraa.gov.om or nraaconference@gmail.com.
- 1 July 2026: Notification of initial acceptance.
- 7 September 2026: Submission of full research papers to the Scientific Committee.
- 17 September 2026: Final acceptance and official invitation to participate.

Contact Details

For further inquiries and information about the conference, please contact us via:
Email: conference@nraa.gov.om or nraaconference@gmail.com
Phone: (+968) 24130334 / (+968) 24130340 / (+968) 24130350

@nraaoman | www.nraa.gov.om

SHORT TAKES



The project was completed at a cost of RO 540,191.

ENDOWMENT BUILDING OPENED FOR ATAA SAHAM CHARITABLE TEAM

SAHAM: An endowment building for the Ataa Saham Charitable Team, operating under the Social Development Committee in the Wilayat of Saham, was inaugurated in the Al Batinah North Governorate. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The three-story building features a ground floor dedicated to an exhibition area and commercial shops, while the first and second floors are allocated for residential apartments. Spanning a total area of 3,013 square metres, the project was completed at a total cost of RO 540,191.

In his speech, Shaikh Dr Sultan bin Abdullah al Battashi, Wali of Saham and Chairman of the Social Development Committee in the wilayat, stated that the building enhances financial sustainability and bolsters the charitable activities carried out by the Ataa Saham Charitable Team.

He emphasised that the project serves as a permanent endowment, established on the principle of the importance of charitable endowments as sustainable investment arms for philanthropic work.

He highlighted the integrated approach adopted by the Social Development Committee in cooperation with various community institutions. This synergy aims to achieve projects with a lasting impact on charitable work, fostering social movement and solidarity among individuals and institutions. He noted that the endowment building stands as a model for sustainable investment.

The inauguration featured a visual presentation detailing the construction phases of the endowment building, which was implemented over a 24-month period.

This was followed by a tour of the facility to review its components. The project is expected to generate an annual revenue of RO 42,720. — ONA

DAKHILIYAH MUNICIPAL COUNCIL DISCUSSES HOUSING, PLANNING PROJECTS



NIZWA: The Municipal Council of Al Dakhiliyah Governorate on Monday held a meeting during which it discussed public service and urban planning aimed to meet the needs of the governorate's wilayats.

It also looked into projects for boosting infrastructure projects and followed up efforts undertaken by government departments to address the impacts of recent weather conditions, housing issues and other matters of common interest. — ONA

Govt presents road map for Oman’s aviation sector

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

ENG SAID BIN HAMOUD AL MAAWALI, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, presented on Monday the road map for the country’s major aviation sector stakeholders, which include the airlines (Oman Air, SalamAir), Oman Airports, and the ground handling company Transom.

He said Oman has succeeded in playing a positive role due to the effects of the geopolitical situation by ensuring the continuity of supply chains across the region and facilitating air travel for passengers, and added that the current crisis will not impact both airlines due to factors like jet fuel prices and booking cancellations.

Speaking to the media, the minister said, “Three years ago, we started talking mainly about Oman Air, and then we started talking about Oman Airports as well, because the focus is on the entire aviation sector. Now, Oman Airports has started exporting services to the new



Oman Airports achieved growth in passenger traffic, reaching approximately 15.2 million passengers.

markets, including Tanzania, Iraq and Rwanda.” With regards to Oman Air, the minister said, “The restructure of the company is going in the right direction. Actually, we are 12 months ahead of schedule. Last year, 2025, Oman achieved a positive EBITDA. This has not happened since 2009. We’re focusing on staying ahead of schedule and making sure that challenges in the region do not affect the balance sheet.

The minister said that SalamAir, after its acquisition by the government, will complement Oman Air, and both airlines will provide two distinct services as two distinct brands. SalamAir will focus on the low cost and give options to the travellers who want the

lowest possible prices. The other one focuses on the full service, basically luxury travel.” Better coordination between both airlines will expand the national air connectivity network and increase the number of destinations.

The minister said the Maintenance, Repair and Operations (MRO) workshop will be operational this year, in addition to the launch of new regional aviation services, targeting tourist destinations. He said the oil field airports of Marmul, Mukhaizna and Fahud should be available for normal civilians.

The Muscat Airport City project is aimed at Oman's transformation into a regional air logistics hub to expand

the economic scope of the aviation sector beyond flights and passengers to provide an integrated environment that combines logistics, commercial and tourism services in a single, interconnected system.

Oman Airports achieved growth in passenger traffic, reaching approximately 15.2 million passengers through the airports of the Sultanate of Oman, and a 4-per cent increase in air cargo traffic, reflecting growing demand and improved operational efficiency.

Oman Air reported an EBITDA of RO 3.2 million for 2025, positive for the first time in 15 years. The airline also achieved a RO 27 million reduction in bank loans, marking the first year the airline has decreased its level of debt since 2009.

These achievements sit alongside a 6% reduction in CASK – or “Cost Per Seat”, reflecting the ongoing impact of its transformation initiatives. In 2025, Oman Air carried 5.8 million passengers, an 8% increase over 2024, while achieving an 82% load factor, the result of its network optimisation and fleet utilisation strategy.

وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

Announcement of an Internal Tender

Tender No.	44/2026/MHT/HQ-7	Tender Name	Consultancy Services for Preparation of Comprehensive Detailed Masterplan & Detailed Engineering Design for The Ultimate Slope Park in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)	87.500 O.R		
Tender Document Sales End Date	27/4/2026		
Last Date for Bid Submission	18/5/2026		
Grade	First		
E-Tendering Portal	https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om		

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents.

The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid.

All companies submitting bids for this tender are required to attach a valid and recently issued Omanization Compliance Certificate from the Ministry of Labour, provided that the certificate is not older than 30 days from the date of issuance.

This certificate is considered a mandatory document, and failure to submit it — for any reason — shall result in the outright disqualification of the bid, without being evaluated technically or financially.

The certificate must also demonstrate the company's compliance with the Omanization percentage required by the Ministry of Labour. If the required percentage is not met, the bid shall be automatically disqualified.

The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids.

The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries

For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om or 24402200

For further information

Email : solic@mht.gov.om

Phones : 22088348 - 22088085

MORE THAN 350 EDUCATIONAL OUTSTANDING PERFORMERS FETED

Those honoured included outstanding students, winners in educational activities competitions held in Oman and abroad.

SALALAH: The Directorate-General of Education in Dhofar Governorate held a ceremony on Monday to honour outstanding performers who excelled in educational activities during 2025.

The ceremony was held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah under the auspices of Dr Intisar bint Abdullah Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Supporting Educational Programmes.

Those honoured included outstanding students, winners in educational activities competitions held in Oman and abroad, members of adjudicating committees and supervisors.

The areas of competition include choral chanting, musical performance, drama and theatrical shows, poetry, writing short stories, oratory, classical Arabic, reading competitions, visual presentations, drawing and fine arts. — ONA

mcd

مستطط للمقاصطة و الراءع
Muscat Clearing & Depository

TENDER NOTICE

Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (S.A.O.G) would like to invite qualified businesses to participate in the tender below:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Eligibility	Tender Fee	Tender Documents Sale Dates	Tender Submission Closing Date
MCD-2026-001	Consultancy Services for the Feasibility Study and Implementation Roadmap for a Central Counterparty (CCP) in Oman	Vendors specialized in this field	500 OMR	14 – 21 April 2026	05 May 2026, 12:00 PM (Muscat Time)

Tender Documents (RFP) shall be obtained from Procurements & Services Department (email: procurements@mcd.om), Muscat Clearing & Depository, First Floor, MBD, RUWI, Sultanate of Oman (Tel.: +968-24822212) during office hours after paying the participation charges mentioned above, to be paid into MCD Bank account details provided below.

All Vendors who are bidding must provide a bank guarantee from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of MUSCAT CLEARING & DEPOSITORY COMPANY, valid for (90) days from the date of submission of the proposal in response to the RFP.

Riyada card holders from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) must attach a valid copy of the card in order to be exempted from tender fees and submission of bid bond.

MCD 's Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract Agreement shall be applicable.

MCD is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Tender.

MCD Bank Account details:-

Bank Name & Branch

: Bank Dhofar, MBD Branch

Bank Account Name

: Muscat Clearing & Depository Company

Bank Account Number

: 01010010875001

SWIFT/BIC Code

: BDOFOMRXXX

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the Observer classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.

DEADLINE PASSES FOR US BLOCKADE OF HORMUZ

1

IRAN BLAMES ISRAEL
Iran's military said Israel was behind a recent strike on Kuwait's desalination plant.

2

TRUMP DEADLINE PASSES
The deadline set by US President Donald Trump for a naval blockade of Iranian ports has passed.

3

PAKISTAN: TRUCE 'HOLDING'
Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the ceasefire was "holding" and that efforts were underway to reach an agreement after weekend talks failed to do so.

4

QATAR STRESSES MEDIATION
Qatar's foreign minister told his Iranian counterpart that Iran and the United States should engage positively with mediation efforts.

5

HORMUZ BLOCKADE QUESTIONED
The head of the UN maritime agency said no country had a legal right to block shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.

6

RUSSIA PULLS ATOMIC STAFF
Russia has withdrawn almost all its staff from Iran's sole nuclear power plant, built and operated with help from Moscow.

7

FRENCH-UK CONFERENCE
France and Britain will co-host a conference this week involving more than 40 nations to discuss a multinational mission to restore shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

THE DEADLINE passed on Monday for the start of a US military blockade of ships leaving Iran's ports, and Tehran threatened to retaliate against ports of its Gulf neighbours after weekend talks on ending the war broke down. Oil prices surged, with no sign of a swift reopening of the Strait of Hormuz to ease the biggest ever disruption in supplies. Since the war started on February 28, Iran has effectively shut the strait to all vessels except its own, saying passage would be permitted only under Iranian control and subject to a fee. US President Donald Trump said Washington would block Iranian vessels and any ships that paid such tolls and that any Iranian "fast-attack" ships that went near the blockade would be eliminated. US Central Command said the measure would take effect from 10 am ET (14:00 GMT). Nato allies including Britain and France said they would not be drawn into the conflict by taking part in the blockade, stressing instead the need to reopen the waterway, through which about one-fifth of the world's oil normally passes. A ceasefire that halted six weeks of US and Israeli air strikes looked in jeopardy, with only a week left to run. Washington said Tehran rejected its demands at weekend talks in Islamabad, the highest-level discussions since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

BLOCKADE COMES INTO FORCE
The US military's regional Central Command said the blockade would be "enforced impartially against vessels of all nations" entering or leaving Iranian ports in the Gulf. "The blockade will not impede neutral transit passage through the Strait of Hormuz to or from non-Iranian destinations," Central Command said in a note to seafarers. Two Iranian-linked tankers, the Aurora and New Future, laden with oil products, left the strait on Monday before the deadline, according to LSEG data. An Iranian military spokesperson called any US restrictions on international shipping "piracy," warning that if Iranian ports were threatened, no port in the Gulf would be secure. Any military vessels approaching the strait would violate the ceasefire, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said. On Sunday, Trump had posted on social media that ships paying Iran an "illegal toll" would not be granted safe passage, adding, "Any Iranian who fires at us, or at peaceful vessels, will be BLOWN TO HELL!" Trump has also lashed out at US-born Pope Leo, denouncing him as "terrible" in a rare direct attack on the pontiff who has spoken out against the war. With the war unpopular at home and rising energy prices causing political blowback, Trump paused the US-Israeli bombing campaign last week after threatening to destroy Iran's "whole civilisation" unless it reopened the strait.

PEACE TALKS
Iran has ignored the demand to open the strait, while bringing new demands to the talks, including recognition of its control of the waterway, lifting of sanctions and the withdrawal of forces from US military bases across the Middle East. Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said efforts were still on to resolve the conflict after the direct talks between the US and Iran in Islamabad at the weekend. Trump has declared victory, despite failing to achieve the objectives he set



Shoppers walk through Grand Bazaar in Tehran, Iran. — Reuters

out at the start of the war: to eliminate Iran's ability to strike its neighbours, end its nuclear programme and make it easier for Iranians to topple their government. Iran retains missiles and drones that can hit Gulf neighbours, and a stockpile of uranium enriched to near bomb-making levels. Tehran's

leadership, which faced a popular uprising at the start of the year, has withstood the US onslaught with no sign of organised opposition. Emboldened Iranian officials say they will make a deal only if the US makes further concessions. Iran had "encountered maximalism, shifting goalposts, and blockade" from the United States

at the talks, said Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi. "Zero-lessons learned," he added. "Good will begets good will. Enmity begets enmity." Benchmark oil prices, which had eased last week after the ceasefire was announced, surged by around 7 per cent on Monday, back above \$100 a barrel. Traders say the main

benchmarks - used to set prices for trillions of dollars' worth of commodities worldwide - actually understate the severity of a disruption with no precedent in modern times. Trump has long said a bump in US gasoline prices would be short-lived. But he told Fox News' "Sunday Briefing" that they could stay high

through November's midterm elections. Iran's chief negotiator, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, posted a map of Washington-area gasoline prices on social media with the comment: "Enjoy the current pump figures. With the so-called 'blockade'. Soon you'll be nostalgic for \$4-\$5 gas." — Reuters



Damaged Lebanese Red Cross vehicles after a drone strike, in Tyre. — Reuters

fired at Israeli positions in support of its patron Iran. Israel has since escalated its air and ground campaign in the country where its operations have killed more than 2,000 people, displaced more than one million, and triggered a warning that hospitals could run out of life-saving supplies. Israeli troops launched an attack to seize a key south Lebanon town from Hezbollah fighters holed up inside on Monday, pressing the war on the Iran-backed group on the eve of historic talks between Israeli and Lebanese government envoys. With the Lebanese and Israeli ambassadors to the

United States set to meet on Tuesday in Washington, Lebanon's foreign minister said Beirut would use face-to-face negotiations to press for a ceasefire in the war that has complicated wider diplomacy to halt the conflict in the Middle East. But the outlook for the meeting — a rare, face-to-face encounter between countries formally in a state of war — has been overshadowed, with Israel saying it won't discuss a ceasefire while Hezbollah has objected to negotiations with Israel, reflecting sharply worsening political tensions in Lebanon. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES



A man carries a tank containing cooking fuel in Mandaluyong, Metro Manila. — Reuters

ASEAN urges US, Iran to push for permanent resolution

MANILA: ASEAN foreign ministers called on Monday for the United States and Iran to continue negotiating a permanent end to their conflict, and to implement the ceasefire fully and effectively. The ministers, who met virtually to discuss the war in the Middle East, also called for the restoration of safe, unimpeded and continuous passage of vessels and aircraft in the Strait of Hormuz. Beyond immediate security concerns, ASEAN highlighted the broader implications of the conflict on regional stability, especially on energy and food supplies. The ministers of the 11-member bloc stressed the need to prioritise energy access for member states during crises. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening a regional mechanism linking member states with China, Japan, and South Korea to prevent and respond to food shortages, price shocks, and supply disruptions. Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Ma. Theresa Lazaro said at a press conference that the ministers also discussed joint approaches to securing fertiliser and other critical agriculture inputs. — Reuters



Türkiye's servicemen stand at attention on a Turkish submarine in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, in Antalya. — AFP

Israel seeks to declare Türkiye 'new enemy'

ISTANBUL: Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on Monday that Israel "cannot live without an enemy" and its government was now trying to portray Türkiye as one. Tensions between Türkiye and Israel have steadily escalated since the Gaza war erupted following Hamas's October 7, 2023, cross border attack in Israel. The dispute entered a new phase over the weekend after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned US counterpart Donald Trump of "possible provocations and sabotage" that could jeopardise an initial ceasefire arrangement in the US-Israeli war on Iran. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed on Saturday that Israel would continue to confront Tehran and its regional allies. "After Iran, Israel cannot live without an enemy," Fidan said in a televised interview with the state run Anadolu news agency. "We see that not only Netanyahu's administration but also some figures in the opposition — though not all — are seeking to declare Türkiye the new enemy," he said. "This is a new development in Israel... turning into a state strategy," he added. Türkiye and Israel have frequently been at loggerheads in the past, including over the Israeli military operation in Gaza and over the future of Syria. A 2010 raid by Israeli forces against a flotilla of civilian ships trying to break Israel's navy blockade of Gaza caused lasting bitterness between the two regional powers. — AFP

Red Cross calls consecutive strikes in Lebanon 'gravely concerning'

GENEVA: The International Committee of the Red Cross said it was deeply concerned by attacks on medical workers in Lebanon after a deadly strike on a Red Cross centre in the country on Monday and the death of a volunteer a day earlier. Lebanon's state news agency reported that Monday's strike, which it said was carried out by Israel, killed one person and damaged Lebanese Red Cross vehicles. The ICRC said the Lebanese Red Cross centre in the district of Tyre, a city on Lebanon's coast,

was hit by the strike. It did not comment on who was responsible or give details of the victim. The Israeli army did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Monday's incident. On Sunday, the Lebanese Red Cross said one of its volunteers, Hassan Badawi, had died from his injuries after a strike by an Israeli drone in the district of Bint Jbeil in southern Lebanon. Israel's military said it had struck Hezbollah in the area and that the incident was under review after it received reports of injury

to a Red Cross team. Agnes Dhur, head of the ICRC delegation in Lebanon, said in a statement on Monday: "The loss of those who dedicate their lives to saving others is gravely concerning, given the impact on the civilians who depend on their help." "Humanitarian and medical personnel must be protected. They must be allowed to reach and help the wounded, and return unharmed," she added. The latest war in Lebanon began on March 2, when Lebanese armed group Hezbollah

OPINION

Development is prime focus of Oman-Botswana relations



TWO STATES separated by geography but aligned in long-term vision choose to convert dialogue into deliverables, the outcome is worth noting.

The recent deepening of relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Botswana offers exactly that: a shift from diplomatic formality to measurable economic cooperation, defined in megawatts, minerals and mutual returns rather than in communiqués.

The foundation was laid when the two countries formally established diplomatic relations late last year. That step, taken in a multilateral setting, quickly proved to be more than symbolic.

Within weeks, high-level visits in both capitals moved the agenda from principle to practice. A memorandum of understanding began implementation across priority sectors, and a subsequent exchange led to the signing of strategic agreements covering energy, mining and finance.

And on Monday, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received President Duma Gideon Boko of the Republic of Botswana at Al Barakah Palace, during his working visit to the Sultanate of Oman. Both leaders graced the signing of several cooperation agreements.

The signing ceremony took place within the framework of the President of Botswana’s visit to Oman. The agreements covered mineral exploration, the development and operation of two petroleum product storage facilities, and the development, construction and financing of a solar photovoltaic power plant.Both governments have described the package as the first step toward a long-term investment partnership, and the pace of progress suggests the label is warranted. For Botswana, the implications are structural. The agreed projects are designed to move the country from electricity importer to exporter, a transition with profound consequences for its balance of payments, industrial competitiveness, and regional influence.

The centrepiece is a major solar photovoltaic development, supported by new fuel-storage infrastructure, expanded petroleum supply and trading arrangements and inland storage facilities that strengthen energy security.

For Oman, the cooperation demonstrates the growing regional role of its energy sector and supports a national transition toward a more sustainable, globally competitive economy. Joint work on studies, storage solutions, capacity-building and technical standards underpins the energy track and exports expertise as well as capital.

A shift from diplomatic formality to measurable economic cooperation, defined in megawatts, minerals, and mutual returns rather than in communiqués

The signing by OQ, the global integrated energy group, and Botswana Oil of an agreement to evaluate strategic cooperation prospects aims to enhance fuel security and support the development of an integrated supply and storage infrastructure in Botswana and its surrounding region. This follows the investment cooperation agreement concluded on November 25, 2025, as it establishes a structured framework for cooperation in technical, commercial and regulatory fields.

Discussions have also touched on food security, including two-way trade in meat and seafood, reflecting the complementarity of a large livestock producer and a state with advanced fisheries and logistics. Steps to ease travel for business and tourism, alongside plans for a resident diplomatic mission in Muscat, point to institutional permanence rather than transactional exchange. These are the connective tissues that turn agreements into ecosystems. What distinguishes this engagement is the stated model: shared value, long-term strategy, and sustainable development rather than short-term extraction.

The partnership maps directly onto both countries’ national visions for 2036 and 2040, which emphasise diversification, energy security and sovereign wealth capacity.

How could Hungary PM Orban’s elecion ouster unblock EU?

MAX DELANY

After years of holdups and bitter horse trading, EU leaders breathed a resounding sigh of relief at Viktor Orban’s crushing defeat in Hungary’s elections. From support for Ukraine to sanctions on Russia, the bete noire from Budapest repeatedly stalled some of the EU’s key initiatives. Now, as his vanquisher Peter Magyar gears up to take power vowing to reset ties, the question is how quickly could these dossiers get unlocked? Here are five areas to watch:

90 BILLION EUROS FOR UKRAINE?
Most pressing is a desperately needed 90-billion-euro loan for Ukraine that Orban took hostage as he made opposition to helping Kyiv a key campaign plank.
Orban’s veto — which he tied to a row with Ukraine over a damaged pipeline pumping Russian oil — enraged his EU counterparts as it came after he gave his initial green light.

SANCTIONS ON MOSCOW
In a similar vein, Magyar could also signal a shift in Budapest’s approach to Russia by backing a stalled package of sanctions on Moscow over the Ukraine war. Orban — who maintained good ties with Russia’s Vladimir Putin despite the attack — was slammed by critics as acting like a trojan horse for the Kremlin inside EU summits.

UKRAINE’S EU MEMBERSHIP?
A longer term test will be over Ukraine’s EU membership push. Now he is on his way out, Magyar could show willing by greenlighting the opening of so-called negotiating “clusters” that EU officials insist Kyiv has long been ready for. But Magyar, who has vowed a referendum on Ukraine’s membership, is no pushover and there are still plenty of steps down the road for the push to be held up.

FROZEN FUNDS FOR HUNGARY
It’s not just a one-way street for Magyar: he will be desperate to show that his promise to reset ties with Brussels can bring fast benefits to Hungary and its flagging economy. The EU has frozen some 18 billion euros in funds earmarked for Budapest over Orban’s democratic backsliding and tackling graft.

NEW MOOD?
While they’d learned to live with his grandstanding, Orban’s hardening stance towards the end — and proximity to Moscow — had seriously strained trust between leaders. — AFP

Seeing Earth through Artemis II shifts outlook

AS THE world feels increasingly unstable, especially in the Arabian Gulf, I did not expect to find a moment of clarity through something as distant as Artemis II. What caught my attention was not the mission itself at first, but my nieces’ unexpected and intense engagement with it. I had always known that they were interested in physics, but I had underestimated how serious that interest was. They were not casually following the mission — they had structured their daily routines around it. They timed their naps, schoolwork, and even their sleep schedules so they would not miss NASA’s live coverage. It was a level of commitment that surprised me and, to some extent, made me reconsider how young people engage with science today.

What really drew me in, however, was an image they sent me. It was a photograph taken from behind the Moon, showing the Earth not as a dominant presence, but as a thin sliver in the distance. I quickly realised that it was a widely shared photo on X, with people pointing out a simple but powerful idea: Everyone on Earth is in that image — except the astronauts on Artemis.

That realisation had a strong effect on me. It shifted my perspective in a way that felt immediate and concrete. From that angle, Earth is no longer the centre of everything. It becomes one object among many. The Moon, in that frame, appears just as significant, if not more so. It challenges the way we usually think about importance and centrality.

This shift in perspective reminded me of a concept often discussed in institutions like the CIA: the importance of seeing situations from another point of view. In negotiation and analysis, understanding the other side’s perspective gives you a



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

The idea that a space mission could serve as a reminder of shared human experience aligns closely with values that are important in Oman — particularly the emphasis on peace and coexistence



A view of Earth passing behind the Moon as photographed through the Orion spacecraft window during the Artemis II crew’s flyby. — Reuters

clearer picture of the situation and allows for better decision-making. Applying this idea more broadly, the image from Artemis becomes more than just a photograph — it becomes a way of rethinking how we position ourselves in the world.

From that distant viewpoint, many of the conflicts that dominate our attention begin to look different. The tensions and instability in our region, which often feel overwhelming, seem less central when placed against a much larger backdrop. This does not mean they are unimportant, but it does change how we interpret their scale and urgency.

At the same time, my nieces were engaging with Artemis in a completely different way. For them, it was not about perspective in a philosophical sense, but about excitement, curiosity, and possibility. They were following the mission closely and even asked me if I would take them to Florida in two years to watch a future launch that might send humans back to the Moon. What struck me was not just the

request, but how serious they were about it. I found myself considering it.

The crew of Artemis II also spoke about carrying a message of love and unity. While such statements can sometimes sound generic, in this context, they felt more grounded. The idea that a space mission could serve as a reminder of shared human experience aligns closely with values that are important in Oman — particularly the emphasis on peace and coexistence. In the end, what stayed with me was not just the mission itself, but the combination of perspectives it brought together. My nieces’ enthusiasm, the image of Earth from a distance, and the broader message of the mission all contributed to a shift in how I was thinking at that moment.

The experience was not dramatic, but it was meaningful. It showed me that sometimes a simple change in viewpoint — whether through an image or through the perspective of younger generations — can alter how we understand regional and global events and our place within them.

Problem and solution — two sides of the same coin?



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

FROM ONE week to another, we drift, or are we living a life of purpose? Are we just floating with the daily schedules and meetings, or do we manage to think of the world as a universe and enjoy the perception of us as a soul amongst billions of other souls and stars?

As my friend said, the first time we spot a grey strand of hair, we skip a heartbeat. We try our best to hide it. Then comes the second and third, and soon we are not hassled about it.

The first time we face a problem, we think the sky is going to collapse on us. Another friend said, “In life, there have to be problems. But the reality is that problems come with solutions.”

Maybe they are sides of the same coin — one side has the problem and the other the solution.

My friend pointed out that in most situations, we are stuck complaining about the problem.

Today I am sitting in a building with windows facing the garden. The birds are having a marvellous time. We have all been complaining about the flies. They are thriving because of the mango season. There is a man walking around with an electric fly swatter. He is quite successful.

But out in the courtyard, the birds are in short flight mode as they sweep the flies away from their resting points. What we see as a problem seems to be a joy for the

birds as they continue to feast on flies. The birds showcased their skills; one moment it was perched on a tree branch, and the next second it spotted a fly and darted out to scoop it up and returned to the spot.

I had not even noticed the insects. Birds, of course, would reply, ‘It’s our business.’

Naturally, birds see things faster than humans. When something is in motion, it is usually a blur for us. Can you imagine? Science explains that birds like flycatchers can note individual wingbeats of a fly, and that is how they can track erratic movements in real-time.

They also have something called “anticipatory tracking skill.” They do not just fly directly to the insect; certain birds calculate intercept courses. We often see this skill displayed in sports while passing a ball.

The birds who were content continued and left, while others flew in for their turn. At times the birds competed with each other too.

Now it is time to look at the scenario from the flies’ perspective.

I remember an animal-friendly person asking, ‘Why kill them when they only live for a few days? Just shoo them away.’

Could the fly be thinking the same? With the birds zooming by, the flies must be tired of dodging and wondering, ‘Why me?’

The flycatchers can perceive individual wingbeats of a fly, but the fly is not a weakling.

Flies have compound eyes, and they are made of thousands of individual lenses. This is how they can have 360 degrees of vision.

The birds who were content continued and left, while others flew in for their turn. At times the birds competed with each other too. Now it is time to look at the scenario from the flies’ perspective

Can you imagine our state of mind if we had this sense?

How would we ever stay focused?

This is why by the time you attempt to swat the fly and take a swing, he moves away even to the ceiling within 50 milliseconds.

Their vision and time are different from us. They even have taste receptors on their feet, which help them to identify nutrients and bacteria. They are much more equipped than we can ever think of. Have you ever wondered if flies can cause stress in humans?

Flies are actually known to cause significant stress in humans, ranging from mild annoyance to serious psychological distress.

It is the season of the flies, and I constantly happen to overhear conversations between people inquiring if they have a fly problem in their homes.

The stress caused by flies often stems from a combination of biological, emotional, and social factors, according to the experts.

Persistent flies can make one feel helpless and frustrated and often feel responsible. The experts reflect that the constant sound of buzzing or the anticipation of a fly landing on food can trigger a state of being defensive or hypervigilance, keeping a person constantly on edge.

You hear the buzzing and immediately you want to chase it out. One little fly can ruin your afternoon nap. Now we all know lack of sleep can cause irritability and impaired cognitive function, which further compounds stress levels.

GREECE’S ANCIENT SITES GET CLIMATE CHANGE CHECKUP

JOHN HADOULIS

Worsening wildfires, soaring heatwaves and rising water levels have prompted Greek officials to take a closer look at protecting priceless archaeological sites that draw hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The monuments, scattered across the country, earn Greece millions of dollars in tourism revenue.

But many of the sites are in rural areas and officials believe better planning is needed in case large crowds of tourists need to be evacuated in an emergency.

After a three-year study by some of the country’s leading scientific institutions, the Greek culture ministry has earmarked 19 monuments that most urgently need protection against natural threats, with several more to be bolstered by 2030.

The ministry says it is the first time a nationwide evaluation of this scope has been attempted.

The sites under scrutiny include Olympia, habitually threatened by forest fires, the ancient theatre of Delphi, where rockslides are a concern, and the sanctuary of Dion which is prone to flooding.

Olympia Mayor Aristides Panagiotopoulos said that protecting the birthplace of the Olympics, which houses the ancient stadium, a sprawling sanctuary and two museums, requires “constant vigilance”.

“Our concern remains acute, as the area of Ancient Olympia is extensive, with a large expanse of greenery and dense, often unregulated, spontaneous vegetation,” Panagiotopoulos said in an email.

“Despite the significant interventions that have been carried out, it is clear that they are not sufficient on their own to cover all needs.”

In 2007, wildfires in Olympia decimated the natural environment around the archaeological site and left over 40 dead in the broader region of Elis.

Panagiotis Lattas, the head forester for the region of Elis, said that more recently, major fires have broken out in the area in 2021, 2022 and 2024. Lattas noted that significant rainfall this year generated additional vegetation that must be cleared in both urban and agricultural areas before wildfire season.

“This year, after a very large amount of rainfall- about 40 per cent above the annual average- and with the hot and dry conditions expected during the dry season, vegetation will be particularly abundant,” he said.

Greece has already reduced visiting hours at its most popular archaeological site, the Acropolis in Athens, to shield visitors from heatwaves during the warmest hours of the day. But the increasing frequency of extreme events calls for something more extensive. — AFP

Pope’s African tour begins in shadow of Trump’s ire

POPE LEO XIV began a landmark visit to Algeria on Monday in the first trip to the Muslim-majority country by a pontiff that risked being overshadowed by criticism from US President Donald Trump.

Shortly before leaving Rome, the US-born pope became the target of public criticism from Trump, who railed against Leo’s comments calling for an end to violence in the Iran war.

The pope told reporters aboard the papal plane that he had “no intention to debate with” Trump, adding that he was “not a politician”.

Trump had said he was “not a big fan of Pope Leo”, and accused him of “toying with a country (Iran) that wants a nuclear weapon”.

Leo landed in the capital Algiers shortly before 09:00 GMT and later called for “forgiveness” in a speech paying tribute to victims of the country’s war of independence from France (1954-1962).

The remark, his first since arriving in the North African country, comes amid heightened tensions between Algeria and France, and follows a meeting days ago with French President Emmanuel Macron in the Vatican.

Leo’s two-day visit to Algeria, which Archbishop of Algiers Jean-Paul Vesco said aimed to “build bridges between the Christian and Muslim worlds”, also kicked off the pontiff’s African tour.

The visit was infused with personal significance for the pope as Algeria was the home of Saint Augustine (354-430), whose spiritual legacy permeates Leo’s pontificate.

The influential Christian theologian laid the foundations for the 13th century Augustinian order to which Leo belongs, one based on communal living and service.

In his very first speech as pope, Leo presented himself as a “son” of Augustine, whose writings he often quotes.

The pope called his trip to Algeria “a very precious opportunity” to



Pope Leo XIV meets with Algeria’s President Abdelmadjid Tebboune at the Presidential Palace on Monday. — AFP



CLÉMENT MELKI

The writer is an AFP Correspondent based in Vatican

promote “peace and reconciliation with respect and consideration for all peoples”.

He has also criticised as “unacceptable” Trump’s threats against civilians in Iran, although he did not name the US president, and he has also previously criticised the Trump administration’s “inhuman” treatment of migrants.

Trump has called the pontiff “WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy”, suggesting that cardinals only elected Leo pope in May 2025 because he was American, and a potential bridge to Washington.

The papal visit to Africa takes in Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea, and covers more than 18,000 km between April 13 and 23.

Far-right Italian Prime Minister Gorgia Meloni issued a statement on Monday wishing the pope a successful trip to the four African nations.

In Algiers ahead of the historic visit, the atmosphere of an

imminent celebration pervaded the air, with walls repainted, roads repaved and green spaces adorned with plants and flowerpots.

On his first stop in Algiers, the pope met President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and was also set to address diplomats.

Monday’s itinerary also includes a visit to the Great Mosque of Algiers - with the world’s highest minaret - and the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa, overlooking the Bay of Algiers.

On Tuesday, Leo will visit the northeastern city of Annaba - formerly the ancient Roman city of Hippo - the one-time home of the saint whose autobiographical “Confessions” is a seminal work within the Christian tradition.

Leo plans to pray privately in the chapel dedicated to 19 priests and nuns murdered during Algeria’s 1992-2002 civil war.

The pope will not, however, visit the Tibhirine monastery, whose monks were kidnapped and murdered in 1996 in an event still shrouded in mystery.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



File photo for Women's Handball League.

WOMEN HANDBALL LEAGUE TO BEGIN ON APRIL 23

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

The Women's Handball League will mark the conclusion of the Oman Handball Association's 2025/2026 sports season, set to begin on April 23 with the participation of five clubs: Salalah, Masirah, Al Amerat, Al Ittihad and Sohar.

The Association's Competitions Committee has officially announced the match schedule and tournament regulations, as the league marks the final event of a busy season that began last August. The season featured a variety of competitions, including youth and junior leagues, First and Second Division leagues, the Super Cup, the 15th Ministry Shield, and the Beach Handball Youth League.

The organisation of the women's league reflects the Association's commitment to promoting women's handball, supporting talent development across age groups and strengthening the national talent pool ahead of future international competitions.

The opening round will take place on Thursday, April 23, with two matches at the main hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Al Ittihad will face Masirah, followed by a match between Al Amerat and Sohar.

The second round will be held on Friday, April 24, featuring four matches split between morning and evening sessions. In the morning, Sohar will take on Masirah, followed by Salalah against Al Ittihad. Evening matches will see Al Ittihad face Al Amerat, while Masirah meets Salalah.

The third round is scheduled for Saturday, April 25. Morning matches will be held at the secondary hall, where Salalah will face Al Amerat, followed by Sohar against Al Ittihad. Evening fixtures will return to the main hall, with Al Amerat playing Masirah and Salalah taking on Sohar.

The competition will conclude on Sunday, April 26, with the semifinals taking place in the morning, followed by the final and the third-place playoff in the evening.

The league will follow a single round-robin format, with teams collecting points before advancing to the semifinals, where the first-placed team faces the fourth-placed team, and the second-placed team meets the third.

Winners will compete for the title, while the losing sides will contest third place.

Each team is allowed to include two substitute players, with one eligible to participate on the court, including the possibility of playing as a goalkeeper.

The champions will receive a trophy, 24 gold medals, and a cash prize of RO 1,000. The runners-up will be awarded 24 silver medals and RO 700, while the third-placed team will receive 24 bronze medals along with RO 500.

Sur defeat Dhofar; Oman Club overcome Sohar in JL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

ROUND 20 of the Jindal League concluded with two important results, as Sur claimed a valuable 1-0 win over Dhofar, while Oman Club defeated Sohar 2-1 in a closely contested encounter at Seeb Stadium.

At Sur Sports Complex, Sur secured all three points thanks to a 55th-minute goal by Axel May. The home side looked the more threatening team for much of the match and nearly went ahead in the 16th minute when Axel May's header struck the crossbar. Dhofar's best first-half chance came in the 21st minute, but Sur goalkeeper Bilal al Balushi produced a fine save to deny Hamoud al Saadi. Sur continued to press and eventually found the breakthrough early in the second half when Axel May finished from a through ball by Loko. Dhofar tried to respond in the closing stages, but Sur remained compact and held on for a valuable victory. The result lifted Sur to 19 points in 10th place, while Dhofar remained eighth on 21 points.

OMAN CLUB EDGE SOHAR
At Seeb Stadium, Oman Club beat Sohar 2-1 to gain revenge for their defeat by the same scoreline in the reverse fixture.

The hosts enjoyed a slight edge from the opening stages and showed greater attacking intent, although the first half offered only limited clear chances. Oman Club eventually broke the deadlock in the 42nd minute when Waleed al Musalmi finished powerfully after a precise pass from Yazid al Rawahi.

Sohar looked for a response after the break, with Abdullah al Balushi making an impact following his introduction and posing a real threat to Oman Club goalkeeper Faris al Ghaithi. One of his best chances came in the 56th minute, but the keeper reacted well to deny him.

Oman Club also had opportunities to extend their lead, and the contest became more dramatic in the closing stages after Omar al Hasani was sent off, forcing the home side to play the final part of the match with 10 men. Sohar tried to take advantage of the numerical superiority and pushed forward in search of an equaliser, but Oman Club remained



Oman Club defeated Sohar 2-1 at Seeb Stadium



Sur claimed a valuable 1-0 win over Dhofar at Sur Sports Complex

resilient at the back.

The home side then struck a crucial second goal in the 89th minute when substitute Al Harith al Mukhaini capitalised on a defensive mistake and finished from a one-on-one situation. Sohar responded quickly, reducing the deficit in the 91st minute through Abdullah al Balushi, setting up a tense finish.

The visitors pressed hard in stoppage time in search of an equaliser, but Oman Club defended well under pressure and held on for the win.

The victory moved Oman Club to 31 points in seventh place, extending their positive run to a third successive round, while Sohar stayed on 32 points and slipped temporarily to fifth.

First Omani elected member of global sports press board

MUSCAT: The Oman Journalists Association (OJA) achieved a new international milestone with the election of Ahmed bin Saif al Kaabi to the Executive Committee of the International Sports Press Association (AIPS). The election took place during the AIPS General Assembly held recently in Lausanne, Switzerland, with the participation of representatives from 120 countries.

Al Kaabi's victory marks a historic first, making him the first Omani to secure a position on the AIPS Executive Committee since the establishment of the association. The General Assembly also witnessed the election of the president, vice presidents, executive committee members, and the secretary-general, bringing the total number of elected officials to 20. The OJA faced strong competition for this prestigious position, which



AHMED AL KAABI

represents a significant step in strengthening Oman's presence on the global sports media stage.

The role also enhances engagement with AIPS programmes and activities, offering valuable opportunities for training, development and international collaboration aligned with the association's objectives.

Alongside al Kaabi, three Arab candidates were elected to the Executive Committee: Adil al Zahrani from Saudi Arabia, Mourad al Mutawakel from Morocco, and Dr Mohamed Ould Al Hassan from Mauritania.

ELECTION RESULTS
Gianni Merlo of Italy was re-elected as President with 83 votes. Kenya's Evelyn Watta secured 99 votes to become First Vice President.

The Vice Presidents elected were Gao Chao of China (92 votes), Ernesto Ortiz of Uruguay (76 votes), Milos Dusek of the Czech Republic (71 votes), and Marja Pärb of Estonia (71 votes). Portugal's Manuel Queirós was elected Treasurer by acclamation.

The elected Executive Committee members are: Hiroki Shoda (Japan) with 83 votes, Adil al Zahrani (Saudi Arabia) with 82, Mourad al Mutawakel (Morocco) with 80, Rudi Nuyens (Belgium) with 75, Predrag Mijinkovic (Serbia) with 74, Jura Ozmec (Croatia) with 73, Jože Zidar (Slovenia) with 70, Ahmed al Kaabi (Oman) with 68, Saba Nayakan (India) with 65, Catalina Tibellin (Romania) with 63, Fernando Zambarana (Bolivia) with 60, Josef Langer (Austria)

with 55, and Dr. Mohamed Ould Al Hassan (Mauritania) with 49 votes.

The election of four Arab candidates represents a significant and influential presence in shaping the future of sports journalism.

This achievement reflects the early and coordinated efforts made over recent months. The elections also marked the exit of several long-serving figures who had played key roles in recent years.

In his closing remarks, AIPS President Gianni Merlo praised Oman's capabilities in hosting international conferences, highlighting his experience at the 2022 AIPS Congress in Muscat.

He commended the Oman Journalists Association for delivering an outstanding event, noting the Sultanate of Oman's high organisational standards and capacity to successfully host major global gatherings.

SHORT TAKES



Al Shabab players during the training sessions.

AL SHABAB IN BISHKEK AHEAD OF AFC CHALLENGE LEAGUE

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

Oman's Al Shabab arrived in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as they will gear up for a crucial phase in their continental campaign at the AFC Challenge League 2025–26 knockout stage. The team departed on Monday in preparation for the single-leg quarterfinals and semifinals which is scheduled to take place from April 19 to 22.

Under the leadership of Dutch coach Eelco Schattorie, Al Shabab opted to arrive early in Bishkek to ensure optimal preparation ahead of their quarterfinal clash against Kuwait SC on Sunday at the Dolen Omurzakov Stadium. On the same day, Al Ansar FC will face FC Muras United, with the winners of both matches advancing to the West Asia semifinal set for April 22.

The coaching staff is utilising the lead-up period to help players adapt to the local weather conditions and familiarise themselves with the match venue at the Dolen Omurzakov Stadium, ensuring readiness for the high-stakes fixtures. Schattorie is expected to rely on key players including Maleko Kenyan, Yassine Saindou, Hatim al Rousdhi, Ahmed al Riyami, Yassin al Shiyadi and Yousef al Shabibi as the team will target progression to the next round.

Al Shabab head into the tournament in strong form and high spirits following a commanding 7-0 victory over Samayil in the previous round of the domestic Jindal League. The Barka and Wadi Al Maawil-based side currently placed in third place in the standings with 44 points.

Despite their bid to host matches in Muscat not being accepted by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Al Shabab remain determined to make their mark on the continental stage and revive Oman's recent success in Asian competitions, inspired by the triumph of Seeb Club, who lifted the AFC Cup title in 2022.

Schattorie emphasised previously in a statement to Oman Observer that he is focused on match-by-match approach. "At this level, every game is tough and unpredictable. Our priority is to prepare the players both physically and tactically to compete at the highest level. Despite some injuries, we are working hard to ensure the squad is fully ready. The players are committed and will fight for victory," he said.



Beach Football team

OOC to take part in Asian Beach Games in China

OMAN OLYMPIC Committee (OOC) will participate in the 6th Asian Beach Games (Sanya 2026), scheduled to take place in the People's Republic of China from April 22 to 30, with representation in five sports: beach football, beach volleyball, beach handball, beach athletics, and modern triathlon (aquathlon).

OOC has completed all arrangements related to the participation, including the registration of athletic, administrative, and technical delegations, approval of final team rosters, and logistical coordination for travel, accommodation, and technical preparations, ensuring an effective and honourable participation that reflects the progress of Omani sport and its growing presence in continental competitions.

The official Sultanate of Oman delegation will be headed by Taha bin Suleiman al Kishry as Head of Delegation, accompanied by Khalifa bin Hamad al Jabri, OOC Board Member; Ishaq bin Abdullah al Balushi, Chef de Mission; Salim bin Mohammed al Rawahi, Delegation Administrator; Dr Sameh Naguib Ibrahim, Team Doctor; Samir bin Abdullah al Hamdani, Physiotherapist.

The competitions for Oman's national beach soccer team will take place from April 22 to 30 at Yuhai Road Beach. The delegation consists of seven technical and administrative staff members and 12 players.

Oman's national beach handball team includes five technical and administrative staff members and 10 players. Their competitions will be held from April 21 to 30 at the western gate of the Tianya Haijiao Tourist Area.

As for the national beach volleyball team, competitions will be held from April 23 to 29 at Haihong Square in Sanya Bay. The delegation comprises two players, one coach



Beach handball team

and one administrator.

The modern triathlon (aquathlon) events will take place along the Sanya Bay waterfront from April 23 to 25, with Oman represented by one athlete and one coach.

Meanwhile, Oman's national beach athletics team includes five male athletes and two female athletes competing in the 60-meter sprint, high jump, long jump, and 4x60-metre relay, in addition to three technical and administrative staff members. Their competitions will be held at Phoenix Island Arena from April 23 to 26.

This participation reflects OOC commitment to maintaining a continuous presence in various continental sporting events in order to enhance the readiness of national teams, raise the level of technical exposure for athletes, and strengthen Oman's sporting presence in international arenas, in line with efforts to develop the sports sector and achieve positive results in Asian competitions.

The 6th edition of the Asian Beach Games is considered one of the most prominent sporting events organised by the Olympic Council of Asia. Hosted by the Chinese city of Sanya from April 22 to 30, the opening ceremony is scheduled to be held at Yasha Park Theatre on April 22, while the closing ceremony will take place on April 30.

This edition will see the participation of 45 National Olympic Committees from across Asia. The Games program includes 14 sports and 15 different disciplines, comprising a total of 61 events, reflecting the diversity and development of beach sports across the continent.

The Games aim to promote the growth of beach sports, provide a competitive platform for athletes in an open-air environment, support cultural exchange among participating nations, and reinforce Olympic values of excellence, friendship, and respect, all within the distinctive sporting and tourism atmosphere offered by the host city.

Al Hosni, Al Kindi to compete in Semaine Olympique Francaise

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

Two representatives of the Oman national sailing team, Ahmed al Hosni and Waleed al Kindi, are competing in the 57th edition of Semaine Olympique Francaise 2026, taking place in Hyeres, France, from April 20 to 25, as part of the prestigious Sailing Grand Slam series.

The regatta is considered one of the leading international events in the sailing calendar, bringing together elite competitors from around the world across Olympic classes. It serves as a key platform for preparation ahead of major competitions, including the Olympic Games.



Races will be held in Hyeres Bay, one of the world's most renowned sailing venues. The competition will begin with qualification races from April 20 to 23, followed by medal races and finals on April 25, concluding with the official closing ceremony.

The Omani sailors will compete against a strong international field, gaining valuable experience at one of the sport's top international events. The team is supported by Coach Jacek Novak, who brings international experience in sailing coaching and has contributed to athlete development programs and preparations for major competitions, enhancing the team's technical readiness. Head coach Hashim al Rashdi confirmed that the team is

well prepared for the event. "The sailors are in good physical and technical condition. We have focused on improving tactical performance, mental readiness, and the ability to adapt to different racing conditions," he said. "Competing in an event of this calibre provides a valuable opportunity to race against world class sailors, which plays a key role in enhancing performance and gaining experience."

Al Rashdi noted that this participation is part of a long-term strategy to train athletes for upcoming competitions. Ahmed al Hosni and Waleed al Kindi will be aiming to deliver strong performances and continue showcasing the progress of Omani sailing on the global stage.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Oman vs HKN

OMAN ADVANCES TO SECOND ROUND AT AVC SAMILA OPEN

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

Oman’s duo Hood al Jalboubi and Mazin al Hashmi advanced to the second round of the men’s competition at the AVC Beach Tour – 25th Samila Open 2026, being held at Samila Beach in Songkhla, Thailand, from April 12 to 15, after a solid showing in the group stage against a field of 27 teams.

The Omani team entered the tournament ranked 18th among the participating teams with 240 Asian ranking points, with Al Jalboubi and Al Hashmi representing the Sultanate in another appearance that reflected Oman’s continued presence on the Asian beach volleyball stage.

The draw placed Oman in Pool B alongside Qatar’s duo Cherif Younousse/Ahmed Tijan and Hong Kong’s L F Lee/C H Lee. The Omani pair opened their campaign with a tough match against the top-seeded Qatari team and produced a competitive display before going down 2-1. Oman took the opening set 21-16, but Qatar responded to win the second 21-18 and then claimed the decider 15-8, in a match that underlined the Omani duo’s ability to challenge one of the tournament’s strongest teams. In their second match, the Omani pair secured a clear 2-0 victory over Hong Kong after controlling the contest from the outset, taking the two sets 21-9 and 21-11 to strengthen their qualification hopes and confirm their readiness to continue their campaign in the tournament.

The Omani duo finished the group stage in second place in Pool B with five points, behind Qatar, who topped the group with a perfect record, to seal their place in the next round of the tournament.

The competition is being played with the group stage over the first two days, before moving into the knockout rounds, which include the round of 16 and quarterfinals on April 14, while the tournament will conclude on April 15 with the semifinals and finals.

Oman’s performance in the opening stage reflected a positive showing, particularly with the strong display against a powerful Qatari side, followed by a deserved win over Hong Kong, giving the team an important morale boost in one of the most prominent stops of this season’s Asian Beach Tour.



Northern Ireland’s Rory McIlroy celebrates with his green jacket and the trophy after winning The Masters. — Reuters

Rory makes history with consecutive Masters titles

RORY MCILROY overcame early stumbles and a late scare to win the Masters on Sunday, capturing his sixth major title to become only the fourth back-to-back champion at Augusta National.

The world number two from Northern Ireland made a double bogey at the fourth and a bogey at the sixth, but responded with four birdies in the next seven holes and hung on after woeful late tee shots to win a second green jacket and a record top prize of \$4.5 million.

McIlroy joined Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus and Nick Faldo as the only back-to-back winners in Masters history, firing a final round one-under-par 71 to finish on 12-under-par 276 and defeat top-ranked Scottie Scheffler by one stroke.

A year after winning his first Masters to complete a career Grand Slam and snap a 10-year major win drought, McIlroy pulled off a wire-to-wire triumph.

“I just can’t believe I waited 17 years to get one green jacket and you know I get two in a row. It’s just sort of the way,” McIlroy said.

“I think all of my perseverance at this golf tournament over the years has really started to pay off.”

Augusta National chairman Fred Ridley placed the green jacket on McIlroy, a role usually reserved for the prior year’s Masters winner. McIlroy seized a 36-hole Masters record six-stroke lead only to play the weekend at level par.

“It was a tough weekend. I did the bulk of my work on Thursday and Friday,” McIlroy said. “But just so, so happy to hang in there and get the job done.”

McIlroy, third-from last in driving



Northern Ireland’s Rory McIlroy celebrates with his caddie Harry Diamond on the green on the 18th hole after winning The Masters. — Reuters

accuracy for the week, saved par at 15 from the trees but sent his tee shot at the 18th over trees on the right to a spot near the adjacent 10th fairway.

With a victory at risk, McIlroy curled a dramatic approach around the pines and into a green-side bunker, then blasted onto the green to 12 feet and two-putted for bogey to secure the triumph.

“It’s nice to have that two-shot cushion instead of the one like I had last year,” said McIlroy, who needed a playoff to win in 2025.

McIlroy, 36, yelled with joy and lifted his arms into the air after the triumph. He hugged daughter Poppy and wife Erica after walking off the 18th green where he embraced his parents.

‘GOOD FIGHT’

Scheffler, a four-time major winner seeking his third Masters victory in five seasons, was on 277 after shooting a 68 to complete a bogey-free weekend.

“Over the weekend I put up a good fight, did a lot of good stuff in order to give myself a chance and ultimately came up a couple shots short,” Scheffler said.

England’s Tyrrell Hatton and 45-year old Justin Rose and Americans Russell Henley and Cameron Young shared third on 278.

Rose, the 2013 US Open champion, settled for another near miss after three runner-up Masters finishes.

“I felt like there was an opportunity to do better, so obviously that’s frustrating for sure,” Rose said.

Rose birdied four of the last five holes on the front nine and led on 12-under but bogeys at 11 and 12 moved McIlroy into the lead to stay.

McIlroy sank a seven-foot birdie putt at the par-three 12th after an impressive tee shot, then added an 11-foot birdie putt at the par-five 13th to seize a three-stroke lead.

“I think the tee shot on 12 and then the tee shot on 13, just to give me the option to go for the green in two,” were the day’s key shots.

“I made a really good committed swing off the 13th tee, and that enabled me to go for the green in two and to make a birdie there, following the birdie on 12. That was massive,” he said.

Four pars and the closing bogey followed to produce McIlroy’s sixth major victory — and the champion said there could be more to come. “I’m not putting a number on it, but I certainly don’t want to stop here,” he said.

— AFP

Omani and Indian football teams to participate in Soccer Carnival 3

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

As many as 16 football teams comprising both Omani and expatriate teams will join the third Soccer Carnival Season, a celebration of the national game, at the Bausher Club Stadium on April 16 and 17.

Touted as the Sultanate of Oman’s largest Sevens Football Tournament, held in collaboration with the Kerala Muscat Football Association (KMFA), this Soccer Carnival is also the tournament offering the highest prize money in Oman.

Besides Omani players, former ISL player Sushanth Mathew, Rashid Kottakkal and actors Lukman Avaran, and Diana Hameed are

expected to attend the two-day football extravaganza in Oman as guests of honour. Entry is free for the event, which combines football matches with a variety of food stalls and cultural programmes, according to the organisers.

Organised by ‘Me Friend’ with an intention to bring nights of excitement to football fans in Oman, the Soccer Carnival Season 3 is designed to be more than just a football tournament; it is envisioned as an event that families and friends can enjoy together.

“The intense competition featuring 16 of Oman’s top sevens football teams will kick off with matches up to the quarterfinals on Thursday, April 16, at 10 pm.



As many as 16 football teams comprising both Omani and expatriate teams will join the third Soccer Carnival Season.

The semi-finals and the grand finale will take place on the second day, Friday, April 17,” said Afzal Ahammed, Resident Manager, Madhyaham, and Anjab Ameer,

Convenor of the Soccer Carnival.

“A plethora of entertainment programmes and competitions will take place at the stadium starting from 3pm.

They include games for women and children, quizzes, face painting, and shootout competitions and winners of spot contests will also receive exciting prizes on Friday,” Shaiju Salahudeen, Marketing Manager, Gulf Madhyamam, Mobin K Shaji, Media and Marketing Manager, Nesto Hyper Market Oman, and Mohamed Usman Fazil Operations Manager, Foodlands Restaurant, who are event supporters of the two day football extravaganza said.

Organisers further said that a major highlight of the carnival is the

extensive food court being set up at the stadium. Spectators will have the chance to enjoy a wide variety of flavours, ranging from traditional local dishes to diverse international cuisines.

“Around 20 stalls will be featured, including live counters by leading restaurants in the Sultanate of Oman. Adding to the festive spirit, there will be food stalls led by women’s collectives from Muscat, as well as stalls for chocolates, fancy items, and mehendi.

These two days and nights, blending sporting passion, music and food, promise to be a grand celebration for the both Omani nationals and expatriate communities in the Sultanate of Oman.” they added.

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
8,212.041

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$105.83
BRENT \$101.95
LIGHT \$104.02



SHORTTAKES



First production from the Hasirah Reservoir is anticipated in Q4 2026.

MASAR PETROLEUM ANNOUNCES MAJOR DISCOVERY IN BLOCK 7

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

Masar Petroleum SAOC, a leading Omani oil and gas exploration and production company, has announced a landmark discovery in the Hasirah Ridge in Block 7 onshore Oman, marking a defining milestone in the company's growth trajectory.

Masar Petroleum first made history in 2017 as the inaugural operator to successfully appraise and produce from the Hasirah reservoir in Block 7.

Building on this experience, Masar Petroleum has now successfully drilled a new exploration well south of its existing discoveries, validating the concept of the Hasirah Ridge — a geological trend 5 km wide and 30 km long mapped across Block 7 using 2D seismic data. This discovery represents the critical first step towards unlocking the Ridge's prospective resource base of 100 to 380 million barrels.

Following from this discovery, a planned 3D seismic survey and exploration and appraisal programme is expected to advance the development of the new resources by year end 2028.

First production from this field is expected to come on stream during the last quarter of the year. With its sights firmly set on accelerated growth, Masar Petroleum plans to rapidly advance appraisal and development opportunities across Block 7.

"Masar is a proud Omani E&P company that has delivered significant value through a continuous and focused effort on unlocking our potential", said Abdulsattar al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Masar Petroleum.

Oman Airports profit up 45% to ~~£~~21.8 million

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

OMAN Airports delivered a strong financial and operational performance in 2025, underpinned by steady passenger growth, improved cost discipline and expanding international connectivity. During the joint media briefing held on Monday, the company outlined a year marked by higher revenues, rising profitability and a broadened global footprint.

Passenger traffic reached 15.2 million in 2025, reflecting a 2.7 per cent increase compared to 2024, according to figures presented in the company's annual media gathering. The growth was supported by improved operational efficiency and increased point-to-point travel demand.

Revenues climbed to RO 151 million, up 6 per cent year-on-year, while operating expenses declined by more than 6 per cent to RO 92.5 million, signalling tighter cost management. This translated into a sharp rise in operating profit, which surged 44 per cent to RO 49.6 million, while net profit grew by over 45 per cent to RO 21.8 million.

Saud al Hubaishi, Chief Operating Officer at Oman Airports, said the results reflect a disciplined execution of strategy and a focus on operational resilience. "We have strengthened the pillars of operational sustainability and achieved qualitative progress that fuels our aspirations for excellence", he said.

He added that Oman Airports continues to play a central role in linking the Sultanate of Oman to global markets. "We have solidified our pivotal role in connecting Oman to the world, bolstering the national economy and delivering an integrated travel experience aligned with global



Saud al Hubaishi, Chief Operating Officer at Oman Airports, speaks about the company's achievements and plans during the joint media summit.



We have solidified our pivotal role in connecting Oman to the world, bolstering the national economy and delivering an integrated travel experience aligned with global standards.

SAUD AL HUBAISHI
Chief Operating Officer at Oman Airports

standards".

Operationally, Oman Airports expanded its connectivity network to 51 airlines serving 141 destinations, reinforcing its position on the global aviation map. New routes launched during the year included Amsterdam, Rome and Beijing, contributing to traffic growth and tourism inflows.

Air cargo volumes also rose by more than 4 per cent to over 162,000 tonnes, reflecting stronger logistics activity and the growing role of Oman's airports in regional supply chains. The company also received multiple international accolades, including recognition under the Airports Council International (ACI) Airport Service Quality (ASQ) programme.

Beyond core airport operations, Oman Airports accelerated the expansion of its aviation services arm, Transom. The subsidiary recorded notable improvements across its segments, including ground handling, cargo and catering.

Transom Handling reported revenues of RO 37.3 million, up 11 per cent and returned to profitability with a net profit of RO 200,000, reversing a loss in 2024.

On-time performance exceeded 99 per cent, despite a sharp increase in flight and passenger volumes.

Meanwhile, Transom Cargo handled more than 162,000 tonnes, generating net profits of RO 4.2 million, while Transom Catering served over 6.4 million meals, with revenues reaching RO 16 million and operating profit growth of more than 16 per cent.

Al Hubaishi highlighted the company's international expansion as a key milestone. "2025 was a strategic year in our growth and transformation journey, as we expanded our global network and strengthened our presence beyond the Sultanate of Oman", he said.

Oman Airports also entered new markets through consultancy services in Iraq and operational expansion in Tanzania via Transom, covering cargo, ground handling and hospitality services. In parallel, the company strengthened its commercial portfolio through the acquisition of duty-free operations previously held by Oman Air.

Looking ahead, the company has outlined a strategy centred on four pillars: human capital development, operational excellence, commercial revenue diversification and stimulating travel demand. These are supported by digital innovation, governance enhancements and an improved passenger experience framework.

"We are moving forward with a clear roadmap towards 2030, guided by agility and a well-defined strategic vision", the COO said. "Our ambition is to position Oman as a leading regional aviation hub while delivering sustainable long-term value".

The company's forward outlook aligns with broader national objectives, including Oman Vision 2040, with a focus on strengthening global connectivity and building a diversified aviation ecosystem capable of supporting economic growth.

Invest Oman reshapes investment promotion landscape

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), represented by Invest Oman, has, since its launch three years ago, successfully reshaped the investment promotion landscape in the Sultanate of Oman. This has been achieved by transitioning from a traditional promotional model to a unified institutional framework that efficiently manages the investor journey and enhances Oman's attractiveness for high-quality investments, in line with the objectives of the 10th Five-Year Plan and Oman Vision 2040.

These transformations come within the context of a rapidly evolving economic landscape, supported by high-level directives focusing on improving the business environment, simplifying procedures, strengthening the role of the private sector and developing legislative



Over 55 projects benefitted from the fast-track pathway and services were provided to over 3,500 international investors.

and regulatory frameworks to reinforce Oman's position as a stable and attractive investment destination.

Investment has undergone a qualitative shift from a fragmented, multi-entity approach to a unified national model under Invest Oman at the MoCIIP. It now serves as an integrated government gateway for strategic investments, bringing together public and private entities within a single ecosystem that manages the investor journey from initial inquiry, through evaluation and negotiation, to implementation and expansion.

This has helped unify communication channels with regional and international investors.

Economic indicators confirm that foreign direct investment (FDI) stock in the Sultanate of Oman reached approximately \$78.78 billion by Q2 2025, clearly reflecting a more mature phase in the national investment attraction cycle. This phase is based on deepening value-added, strengthening investments linked to supply chains and future industries; and reflects growing confidence in the investment environment.

Since its inception, Invest Oman has focused on strengthening key investment enablers, particularly improving the business environment, streamlining procedures, reducing administrative complexities and enhancing transparency. These efforts are supported by a fully integrated digital ecosystem, including a multilingual website and a digital platform

that allows investors to track procedures clearly, alongside aftercare services to ensure the sustainability of projects.

Invest Oman has also worked on structuring ready investment opportunities based on comprehensive studies and aligning them with market needs. Since its launch, the investment map has included 75 opportunities, of which 30 were introduced in 2025. The platform currently features 51 ready-to-invest opportunities across multiple sectors, including manufacturing, renewable energy, the digital economy, tourism, logistics, mining and healthcare.

On the implementation side, institutional integration involving more than 20 public and private entities has contributed to creating a unified working environment that enables investors to complete their procedures through a single point of contact. This has reduced the need to move between entities, accelerated processes and improved efficiency.

BUSINESS FEATURE

To enhance food security, the Sultanate of Oman is working to build a strategic reserve of essential commodities, including rice, wheat, sugar, lentils, powdered milk, cooking oil and tea, to ensure their availability in emergencies and mitigate the impact of global price volatility.

COMMODITIES REMAIN BELOW THE REQUIRED SELF-SUFFICIENCY LEVEL



WHEAT — 2%



POTATOES — 9%



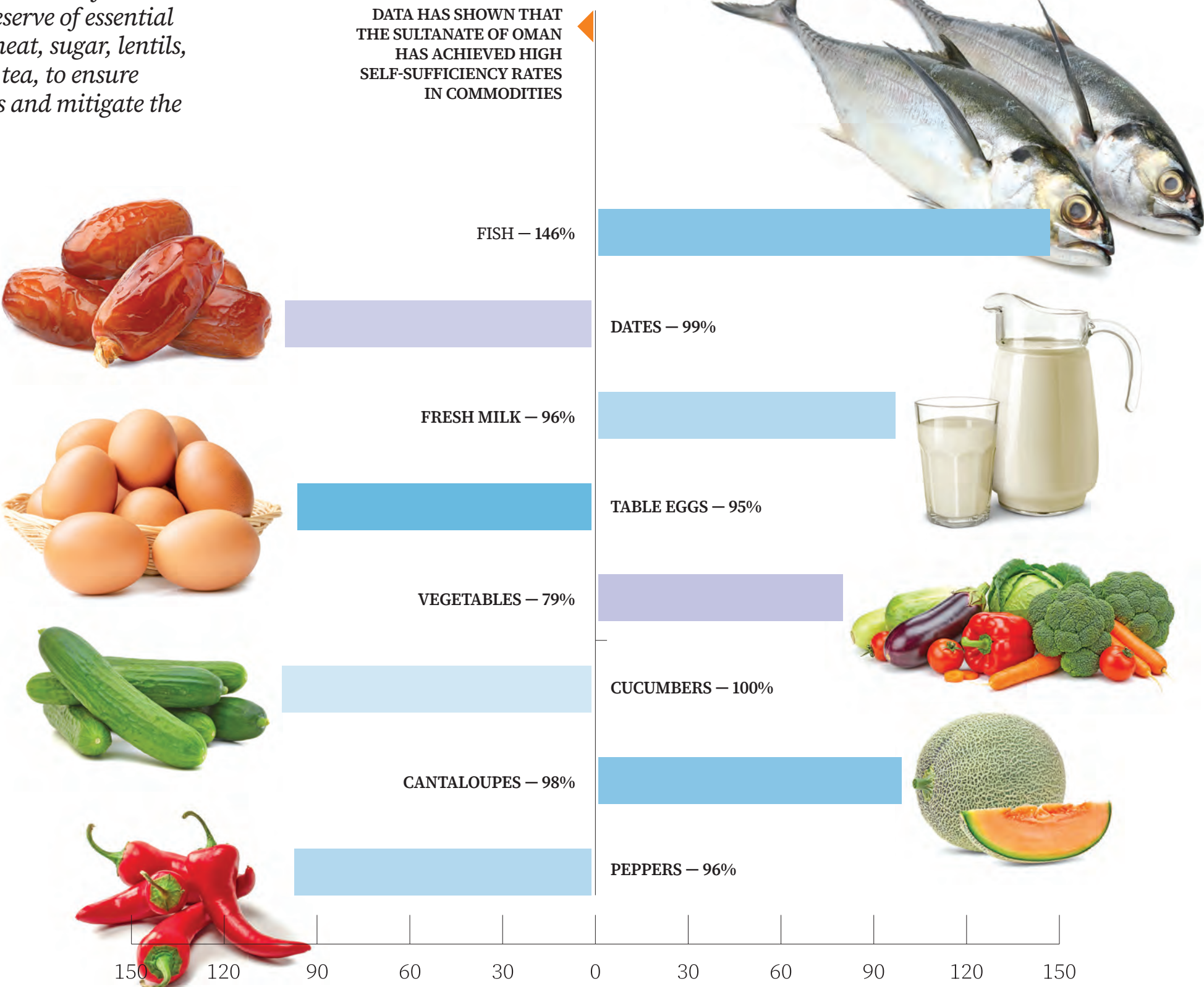
ONIONS — 16%



RED MEAT — 45%



POULTRY — 62%



OMAN SCALES UP FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN continues to solidify its position as a leading nation in food security by implementing a comprehensive strategic vision aimed at achieving sustainability and boosting local production, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030).

The Sultanate of Oman's food policy is based on two main tracks. The first focuses on commodities where self-sufficiency rates have exceeded 75 per cent, with efforts underway to expand their processing and export.

The second track targets commodities with lower self-sufficiency levels by increasing local production and reducing reliance on imports.

Data has shown that the Sultanate of Oman has achieved high self-sufficiency rates in several commodities, most notably fish — 146%, dates — 99%, fresh milk — 96%, table eggs — 95% and vegetables — 79%. Some agricultural products have also recorded remarkable performance, such as cucumbers — 100%, cantaloupes — 98% and

peppers — 96%. Conversely, some commodities remain below the required self-sufficiency level, such as wheat — 2%, potatoes — 9%, onions — 16%, red meat — 45% and poultry — 62%, prompting relevant authorities to intensify efforts to increase their production in the coming period.

As part of efforts to support the food security system, the value of new investments implemented up to the end of March 2026 reached approximately RO 29 million, representing a completion rate of 4.3%.

The livestock sector received the largest share of these investments at RO 21.33 million, followed by the plant sector at RO 5.82 million and then the aquaculture sector at RO 1.89 million.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, regarding investment opportunities, Al Buraimi Governorate led with a completion rate of 70 per cent, followed by Al Batinah South Governorate at 62 per cent, with the remaining percentages distributed among the various governorates. The agriculture sector also accounted for the largest number of opportunities, with 56, compared to 23 opportunities in the livestock sector.

The government offers a package of incentives to attract investors, including tax exemptions, subsidised electricity rates and low-interest loans, in addition to designating agricultural zones and sites specifically for aquaculture projects.

As part of its 2026 targets, the Ministry aims to achieve balanced growth by increasing private investment by 10 per cent annually, boosting food exports by 6 per cent to 7 per cent and developing the added value of the agricultural and fisheries sectors by 5 per cent.

It also aims to raise the self-sufficiency rate to approximately 67 per cent, while improving water resource efficiency and reducing emissions.

To enhance food security, the Sultanate of Oman is working to build a strategic reserve of essential commodities, including rice, wheat, sugar, lentils, powdered milk, cooking oil and tea, to ensure their availability in emergencies and mitigate the impact of global price volatility.

In a remarkable achievement, the Sultanate of Oman ranked fourth globally and first in the Arab world in food self-sufficiency indicators, according to a recent study. This reflects the success of the policies

implemented to enhance local production and diversify food sources.

The Sultanate of Oman recorded significant progress in several sectors, most notably fisheries, which saw a 158 per cent increase, in addition to milk, dates and vegetables. This underscores the effectiveness of investments and modern agricultural technologies in boosting productivity.

In a strategic move, the Sultanate of Oman signed a Country Programme Framework Agreement with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) for the period 2026-2030. This agreement aims to support food security and solidify the principles of sustainability through the development of the agricultural, fisheries and water sectors.

Oman is steadily progressing towards building a sustainable food system based on a combination of local production, investment, modern technology and strategic reserves.

This approach reflects the Sultanate of Oman's ability to address global challenges and ensure its long-term food security, while strengthening the role of the private sector as a key partner in achieving economic development.

SHORTTAKES



The initiative will see students work on defined assignments inside host organisations.

SEZAD — SQU summer international programme launched

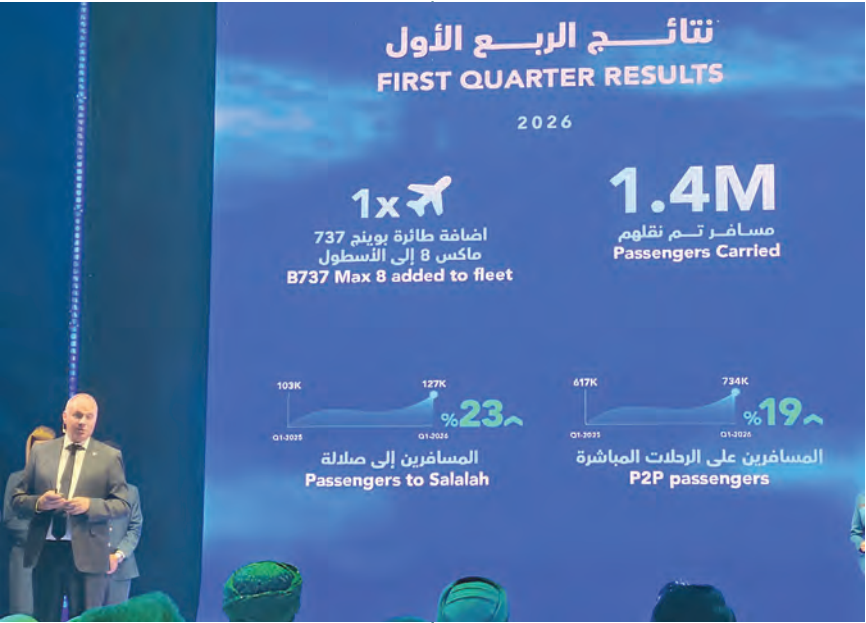
BUSINESS REPORTER
AL DUQM, APRIL 13

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) will run a summer internship initiative in Al Duqm from June 7 to 18, placing students with seven companies operating across the zone’s industrial and services base. Participating businesses include OQ8, ASYAD Drydock, Oman Tank Terminal Company, SIMAK, Port of Duqm, ASYAD Container Terminal and Crowne Plaza Duqm. Designed to bring academic talent closer to the operating realities of Duqm, the initiative will see students work on defined assignments inside host organizations, supported by company mentors and SQU supervisors. Final presentations will be held at the close of the internship. Representatives from SEZAD, SQU and the participating companies met at the SEZAD Head Office recently to review the structure of the pilot ahead of the June launch. The initiative gives SEZAD tenants additional support on live projects and an early look at emerging talent. Students, meanwhile, gain first-hand exposure to workplace practices, day-to-day operations and the realities of professional life while helping bring higher education and industry into closer alignment. Eng Ahmed Akaak, CEO, SEZAD, said: “Duqm’s long-term success depends as much on the strength of its human capital as on the quality of its infrastructure. Internships help students understand the realities of professional life while giving our tenants a practical role in preparing the next generation for Al Duqm’s future needs”.

Oman Air posts positive EBITDA after 15 years

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

OMAN’S national carrier, Oman Air, has reported a significant turnaround in its financial and operational performance, carrying 5.8 million passengers in 2025 and achieving positive EBITDA for the first time in over 15 years. The results underscore the airline’s restructuring drive aimed at restoring financial sustainability and supporting Oman’s broader economic diversification goals. At the joint media briefing held on Monday, the national carrier outlined a strategy focused on cost discipline, network optimisation and enhanced passenger experience. According to the presentation, the airline recorded a 34 per cent year-on-year increase in point-to-point traffic, with such passengers accounting for 64 per cent of total volumes. Load factor also improved to 82 per cent, reflecting stronger demand and more efficient capacity deployment. Con Korfiatis, Oman Air Chief Executive Officer, said the airline’s turnaround is gaining traction after a period of sustained losses. “We have taken decisive steps to restore financial viability while repositioning Oman Air as a strategic enabler of tourism and economic diversification”, he said. “The positive EBITDA of RO 3.2 million marks a critical milestone in our recovery



Con Korfiatis, Oman Air CEO, said the airline’s turnaround is gaining traction.

journey”. The airline’s operating loss narrowed significantly to RO 52.2 million in 2025, compared with RO 72 million in 2024 and RO 103 million in 2023, indicating steady progress in cost management. Unit cost (CASK) improved by 6 per cent year-on-year to -RO 25.6 million, while total bank debt declined for the first time since 2009, reaching RO 27 million. Korfiatis emphasised that cost reduction and fleet optimisation remain central to the strategy. “Our focus is on disciplined growth — improving efficiency, optimising our fleet and ensuring that every route contributes to profitability”, he said. “We are not pursuing expansion for its own sake, but for sustainable value creation”. Network expansion, however, remains a key pillar. The airline has announced new destinations

including Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Baghdad in 2025, followed by Sochi, Taif, Singapore and Tashkent in 2026, alongside increased frequencies on key routes such as Dubai and Salalah. The planned entry into the oneworld alliance is expected to further strengthen global connectivity and feed traffic into Oman. Passenger growth has also been supported by improved service offerings. Initiatives include a revamped Oman Air Holidays platform, expanded ancillary services and a new digital servicing system and call centre. The airline has also introduced a Net Promoter Score (NPS) programme to track customer satisfaction. “We are raising the bar for guest experience while maintaining affordability”, Korfiatis added. “Our investments in digital platforms

and service quality are already translating into higher customer satisfaction and repeat business”. On the domestic front, Oman Air has prioritised accessibility, maintaining fixed fares for Omani nationals on the Muscat–Salalah route during the Khareef Dhofar Season and throughout the year. Capacity and passenger volumes to Salalah have posted strong double-digit growth since 2022. The airlines also demonstrated resilience amidst regional disruptions in early 2026, maintaining uninterrupted operations across 80 per cent of its network while adding 1,378 extra flights and carrying over 393,000 passengers during the period. Cargo capacity surged by 490 per cent to support the flow of essential goods. Looking ahead, Oman Air plans to deepen its transformation through digitalisation, fleet modernisation and network expansion, while continuing to enhance in-country value and develop local talent. Oomanisation levels have reached 80 per cent, supported by training and leadership succession programmes. “Our ambition is clear”, the CEO said. “We are building a financially sustainable airline that delivers long-term value to Oman’s economy while offering world-class connectivity and service”. The performance signals a pivotal shift for Oman Air as it seeks to balance growth with financial discipline, aligning closely with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Meranti eyes downstream steel investments beyond Duqm HBI project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 13

Beyond a prospective expansion of its planned low-carbon iron production project at Duqm into a second phase, Meranti Green Steel (MGS) also has in its sights potential investments further downstream in steel products over the longer term. According to CEO Dr Sebastian Langendorf, a future downstream component could include the manufacture of semi-finished products, such as slabs, or even flat steels. However, this will depend on a range of factors — including geopolitics, tariffs and quotas; and the trajectory of the Chinese steel market. The comments come as Meranti advances plans for the first phase of its landmark investment in Oman — a 2.5 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) hot briquetted iron (HBI) plant to be established in the Duqm



‘We do see strong potential for a second phase’: Meranti CEO

Special Economic Zone. A Final Investment Decision (FID) is anticipated in Q3 of this year, with commercial operations slated for early 2030. In remarks to the Observer, Dr Langendorf said a downstream component forms part of Meranti’s long-term priorities,

although these plans will be shaped by several factors. “When assessing downstream development in Oman, we consider infrastructure, particularly the availability of stable electricity, as well as domestic and export market opportunities. We also need to determine the most suitable product mix. At this stage, it is too early to be definitive, but we see potential in semi-finished products like slabs and possibly flat steels. These remain part of our long-term considerations”, he stated. The CEO noted that a range of downstream options is under consideration, given that steelmaking typically retains a strong local dimension. However, products such as HBI are globally traded and are becoming increasingly critical for electric arc furnace (EAF) production, which relies on a mix of scrap and HBI to meet quality

requirements. Domestic markets remain important, as purely export-oriented steel strategies are increasingly exposed to risks from tariffs and quotas, particularly in the current geopolitical climate, he stressed, citing protectionist measures in the United States and tighter import restrictions in Europe. “We are therefore closely monitoring how the global steel industry evolves. China remains a key factor — it has been exporting large volumes, putting pressure on prices, but ongoing consolidation in China’s steel sector may reduce surplus output over time. That could create more opportunities for companies like us”, he remarked. Looking further ahead — 10 to 15 years — Meranti also sees strong growth potential in East Africa, driven by a young and expanding population. While economic linkages with the Gulf

could help accelerate that growth, India is also a rapidly expanding market, offering additional regional demand opportunities, he noted. Commenting on the next phase of the Duqm project’s expansion, Dr Langendorf said: “In the current environment, nothing is ever fully certain. However, we do see strong potential for a second phase. There are infrastructure advantages that support scale and we are already developing market channels with offtakers that can be expanded”. Phase Two, he said, will be a logical continuation of Phase One, although he declined to assign a specific timeline. “It will depend on local conditions. For example, our current gas allocation is only secured for Phase One, so we need to work with local partners to deliver that successfully first, build trust and then move to the next phase”.

EXPORT SURGE

Korea exports jump on chip demand



South Korea’s exports rose 36.7 per cent in the first ten days of April, driven by strong semiconductor demand. Shipments reached \$25.2 billion, up from \$18.4 billion a year earlier. Imports increased 12.7 per cent to \$22.1 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of \$3.1 billion, underscoring continued strength in external trade performance. — ONA

CURRENCY STRENGTH

Dollar hits one-week high



The US dollar climbed to its highest level in a week, supported by broad gains against major currencies in early Asian trading. The dollar index rose to 99.187. The euro, pound, Australian dollar and New Zealand dollar all declined, reflecting renewed demand for the US currency amidst shifting market sentiment and economic uncertainty. — Reuters

MARKET DECLINE

Japanese stocks fall in morning trade



Japanese stocks declined in morning trading on Monday on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, with the Nikkei 225 index falling 1 per cent to 56,357 points. The Topix index also dropped 0.48 per cent to 3,721 points. The losses reflect cautious investor sentiment amidst ongoing global market volatility and economic uncertainty. — Reuters

OPINION

How to pass the hiring robot



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is strategic adviser, businessman and motivational speaker

received a lot of interesting messages after my last week’s article about robots (powered by AI) reviewing and sometimes rejecting CVs. Students, graduates and even experienced professionals have all asked me the same question: “So what do we actually do now?”. My article this week will focus on sharing techniques that one can follow in order to pass the hiring robot.

The reality I shared last week has hit many people hard, ie, your CV is no longer written for a human first. It is scanned, filtered and often rejected by a machine/robot before anyone ever sees your name. And this is not a theory, but a reality followed by many organisations that want to promote being an AI-ready organisation.

Today, many organisations rely on Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to manage the overwhelming number of applications, using algorithms to scan for keywords and relevance before passing anything to a recruiter. In fact, your CV can be evaluated in seconds by software designed to decide whether you are worth human attention.

Therefore, the rejection that many receive is in a matter of minutes, if not hours, after applying for a job.

So the question is no longer “How do I impress a recruiter or a company per se?”

The real question is, “How do I get past the robot in question?” The first thing you need to understand is how to speak the language of the machine/robot. AI systems do not read

your CV like a human. They scan for patterns, keywords and structure. This means your CV must reflect the exact language used in the job description. If the role asks for “project management” and your CV says “managed projects”, you might think it’s the same, but the system may not. Precision matters more than creativity at this stage. Therefore, ensure you match the content of your CV to the job description advertised.

The second step is the structure. Many try to stand out with creative CV designs, from graphics, columns, fancy layouts, etc.

Though it may look impressive to humans and yet confusing to robots. AI systems prefer clean, simple and well-organised formats with clear headings like “Experience”, “Skills” and “Education”. A well-structured CV is not boring yet strategic. It increases your chances of being correctly understood and ranked and thus short-listed (passed) too.

Third, focus on measurable impact. Instead of saying or using statements like “worked on marketing campaigns”, say “managed 3 marketing campaigns that increased engagement by 25%”. Numbers matter because they are easier for both machines/robots and humans to interpret. They make your experience tangible and searchable.

Fourth, build your digital presence. Many hiring systems today do not rely only on your CV. They cross-reference platforms like LinkedIn to validate your experience and activity. A strong, updated profile can

Today, many organisations rely on Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to manage the overwhelming number of applications, using algorithms to scan for keywords and relevance before passing anything to a recruiter.

reinforce your credibility and even increase your visibility in search results used by recruiters and AI tools.

Fifth, do not underestimate the power of networking. Remember the statement, “It’s who you know and not necessarily what you know”. Networking, referrals and personal connections remain one of the most powerful ways to bypass automated filters. A recommendation from someone inside an organisation can move your CV directly to a human, skipping the robots and algorithm they used entirely.

Lastly, you must shift your mindset, understand how the system works and position yourself effectively within it. The goal is not to remove your personality but to ensure your personality is actually seen. A brilliant CV that no one reads is useless.

Many CVs are not rejected because candidates are unqualified but rather rejected because they are not understood by the system reviewing them. AI in hiring is not going away. If anything, it will become more advanced, more accurate and more influential in shaping careers. But that does not mean you are powerless. It simply means you need to be more intentional.

So before you send your next application, ask yourself one question: Is your CV written for a human, or is it optimised to survive the robot first? Until we catch up again next week, stay vigilant and beat the robots at their own game!

WAR-FUELLED DEBT SPIRAL WILL SHAPE GLOBAL POWER

HUGO DIXON

The United Kingdom cut debt after the Napoleonic wars so it had the fiscal firepower to fight subsequent battles. But today’s superpower struggle between the United States and China; and the conflicts in Iran and Ukraine, are occurring when government borrowing across the world is already high.

Governments are spending more on defence and cutting their reliance on rivals in response to global threats. That is pushing up debt relative to GDP, limiting their ability to project power. Borrowing costs have also shot up. The yield on 10-year US government bonds has almost trebled to 4.3% over the past five years.

Few countries are immune to this spiral. The United States, China, France, the United Kingdom and Japan already have gross government debt equivalent to more than a year’s worth of economic output. Russia has run down its National Wealth Fund to finance its war in Ukraine, while foreign governments have frozen around \$300 billion of Moscow’s sovereign assets.

Gulf Arab countries will also now have to dig deeper to defend themselves against Iran.

There is an old joke that the IMF stands for “it’s mostly fiscal”. When the International Monetary Fund and World Bank hold their annual meetings this week in Washington, the interaction between government borrowing and geopolitical tension will be high on the agenda.

Part of the problem is rising defence costs. President Donald Trump wants to increase US spending by \$500 billion to \$1.5 trillion next year.

Meanwhile, European members of Nato last year committed to increasing their outlay to 5% of output in 2035 from the previous goal of 2%.

Governments are also increasingly alive to the risk of blackmail. Iran’s control of the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world’s daily oil output previously passed, is the latest example.

China’s domination of rare earths and Europe’s reliance on Russian gas before its war in Ukraine are others. Meanwhile, many countries are heavily dependent on US defence, technology and finance — which gives Washington the ability to bully them.

The sensible response is for countries to cut their exposure to potential enemies. But that is costly as it interferes with the free movement of goods, services and capital. Governments either have to subsidise the process or put in controls that limit economic growth. — Reuters

Oman’s quiet advantage

THE World Bank’s April 2026 Economic Update for the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan and Pakistan arrives at a moment of acute uncertainty.

A conflict centred around the Gulf has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz — through which roughly a fifth of global oil once flowed — sending Brent crude past \$112 a barrel and forcing sharp downward revisions to regional growth forecasts.

Amidst this turbulence, Oman offers a compelling case study: not of immunity to shocks, but of how measured economic strategy can build resilience over time.

WHERE OMAN STANDS

The World Bank projects Oman’s real GDP growth at 2.4 per cent for 2026, down from 2.6 per cent in 2025. Its current account is expected to swing into a surplus of 3.4 per cent of GDP, partly reflecting elevated oil prices. Inflation, however, is forecast to jump from 0.9 to 4.1 per cent as higher energy and food costs filter through.

One reason Oman has absorbed the shock comparatively well is geography. Unlike economies whose exports are entirely routed through the Strait of Hormuz, Oman can partially divert oil shipments through ports on the Arabian Sea.

The strategic investment in Al Duqm — a port and special economic zone positioned outside the Gulf on the Indian Ocean coast — now looks particularly far-sighted. The World Bank’s own analysis finds that special economic zones in the region are associated with measurably higher economic activity in surrounding areas, with spillover effects strongest within 40 kilometres.

THE CHALLENGES TO CONFRONT

Yet Oman faces structural headwinds that predate the current crisis. Diversification remains incomplete: oil and gas rents still accounted for roughly 20 per cent of GDP in 2021. While that figure has fallen over the decades, the report underlines a broader point — when oil revenues can be disrupted overnight, even partial dependence constitutes systemic risk.

The labour market is a persistent concern. Firm-level data suggest



Oman offers a compelling case study: not of immunity to shocks, but of how measured economic strategy can build resilience over time.



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The writer is founder and CEO, Smart Investment Gateway, economist, board adviser & business transformation mentor

One reason Oman has absorbed the shock comparatively well is geography. Unlike economies whose exports are entirely routed through the Strait of Hormuz, Oman can partially divert oil shipments through ports on the Arabian Sea.

that productivity dispersion within sectors is high, pointing to possible resource misallocation and weak competition.

An inadequately educated workforce is cited as a major constraint by a significant share of firms. Bridging the gap between what the education system produces and what the private sector needs remains a central task.

Foreign direct investment, while growing across the Gulf in recent years, is vulnerable to shifts in risk perception that conflicts bring.

The report notes that even after a ceasefire, investor confidence can take years to rebuild. Maintaining Oman’s attractiveness as an investment destination during heightened regional uncertainty is a real challenge.

FIVE IDEAS FOR THE NEXT LEVEL

The report’s analytical framework points towards a practical growth agenda built on what Oman already does well. First, double down on the non-Gulf coast corridor. Duqm, Salalah and surrounding logistics networks should be treated as a genuine second economic axis. Expanding port capacity, refining infrastructure and trade connectivity along the Arabian Sea would reduce concentration risk and position Oman as a gateway between Asia, the Gulf and East Africa.

Second, sharpen the FDI proposition. Oman should focus on sectors where it has natural advantages — petrochemical downstream processing, green

hydrogen, logistics and sustainable tourism — and offer investors not just fiscal incentives but a genuinely streamlined regulatory environment. Speed of licensing, transparency of rules and enforceability of contracts matter more to long-horizon investors than tax holidays.

Third, fix the skills pipeline through industry partnership.

The report highlights Morocco’s public-private training centres for its automotive sector as a model. In Oman, equivalent partnerships between government, vocational institutions and employers in logistics, energy and hospitality could help close the employment gap. Egypt trained nearly 43,000 tourism workers in 2024 through such collaborations.

Oman’s tourism ambitions along Dhofar and the Musandam coast demand similar investment in human capital. Fourth, build evaluation into every policy. The report is emphatic: industrial policy works best with clear objectives, measurable targets and sunset clauses that are enforced.

Many economies in the region have historically introduced industrial policies without specified end dates. Oman should make time-bound, evidence-based policymaking a distinguishing feature of its approach.

Fifth, invest in trade diversification beyond hydrocarbons. Countries that target products with higher complexity and opportunity gain tend to build more durable competitive advantages.

Oman’s nascent investments in minerals processing, fisheries value addition and renewable energy components follow this logic. Scaling them requires patient capital, skilled workers and institutions capable of learning from both success and failure.

A FOUNDATION TO BUILD ON

The report ends with a sobering finding: seven years after the onset of conflict, per capita incomes in affected countries are roughly 45 per cent lower than they would have been otherwise — equivalent to losing 35 years of development.

Oman has long understood the value of stability and steady progress.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

SALES professional with 5 yrs Experience in Medical sector. Graduate, Available in Muscat. akhilmanu777@gmail.com Contact: 76323324

BUSINESS development & project management professional with 20+ years of experience in Oil & Gas trading, operational systemization, tendering, ISO QMS, planning and procurement. Please contact 91799438

INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. 90789282

SALES Executive required For working in oil and gas / building materials industry Vehicle Driving license preferred Email: kirit@bustaninternational.com Mobile: 95544641

ACCOUNTS/ SALES Indian male (b com) having 2+ years of experience in India accounts sales looking for suitable placement, join immediately. Contact: 76324360

15+ experience in building material, project sales & Trade market, deal with corporate project customers, looking for a suitable job. Contact 78384283

INDIAN male MBA Graduate with 15yrs experience in Oman seek suitable senior position in finance office admin., sales DTC. Contact: 94158080

LOOKING for SUPPLY CHAIN / SALES jobs Indian male 24 years. Commerce graduate, Experience in logistics, procurement and sales in reputed company in Oman.Valid Oman D/L. Contact +96891121694, issacantony2002@gmail.com

OPERATIONS Support / Tendering / Contract Management / Procurement professional with 18+ years' Oil & Gas experience. NOC & driving license available. 96227272, jijilmathew@gmail.com

LOGISTICS Documentation Executive. Indian male, 25 years, BBA, PG Diploma in Logistics & SCM and have 2 years of experience in this field. Seeking a position in Logistics field Mob: +968 7506 9882 Mail: shafazhussain18@gmail.com

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

INDIAN male civil engineer with more than 30 years experience in different ministers, seek immediate suitable position. CONTACT: 94158080

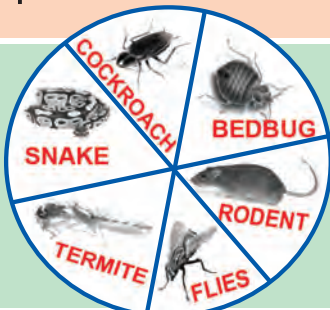
LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499



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Tel: 24787606, 24787503 Direct Line: 24786077 GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

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

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3. Cook — 2 for Porotta, Biryani & Chinese dishes.
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ART/LIFE



TREASUREHOUSE

LOST FILM OF FRENCH CINEMA PIONEER RETRIEVED FROM US ATTIC



Experts made a remarkable discovery: hidden within one of the 10 reels found in retired teacher Bill McFarland's attic was a long-lost 45-second film from 1897 titled "Gugusse and the Automaton," created by pioneering filmmaker Georges Méliès.

A battered wooden trunk had been passed down through one family for over a century, moving from attic to barn to garage, with no one realising it contained a cinematic treasure. For the past 20 years, retired teacher Bill McFarland, 76, had been its keeper. The trunk originally belonged to his great-grandfather, who travelled rural Pennsylvania in the early 1900s showing silent films. McFarland always felt the films were too valuable to discard but had no idea what they were or how to view them. Attempts to donate or sell them failed, especially after he learned the old nitrate reels were highly flammable.

Last summer, McFarland drove from Michigan to the Library of Congress' National Audio-Visual Conservation Centre in Virginia. There, experts made a remarkable discovery: hidden within one of the 10 reels was a long-lost 45-second film from 1897 titled "Gugusse and the Automaton", created by pioneering filmmaker Georges Méliès. Made just two years after the first public film screening, the short features Méliès as a magician battling a growing automaton, using early special effects and precise jump cuts that still impress today.

Méliès, once a leading innovator in cinematic storytelling, later fell into obscurity as filmmaking shifted to the United States. Many of his original works were lost — some even destroyed or repurposed during World War I. Ironically, piracy helped preserve parts of his legacy and the rediscovered reel is believed to be a later-generation copy.

The find also shed light on McFarland's great-grandfather, William DeLyle Frisbee, born in 1860. A farmer, beekeeper and teacher, Frisbee travelled by horse and buggy, presenting shows with an Edison phonograph, lantern slides and eventually motion pictures. His diaries describe modest earnings and lively, sometimes rough audiences.

At the Library of Congress, archivists quickly secured the fragile nitrate reels in a temperature-controlled vault to prevent fire risks. McFarland realised he had unknowingly been transporting dangerous material. Specialists spent a week carefully restoring and digitising the film, which, despite its age and storage conditions, was in surprisingly good shape.

Today, the once-forgotten reel is preserved as a piece of early cinema history and is available for public viewing online, turning a family heirloom into a globally significant discovery. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



AWARD SHOW

Australian actress Cate Blanchett attends The Olivier Awards at the Royal Albert Hall in central London. — AFP



BIRTHDAY

Gorilla lady Fatou celebrates her 69th birthday at the Zoologischer Garten zoo in Berlin. — AFP



CULTURE

Dancers perform the traditional Chotis, Madrid's folk dance, in Madrid, Spain. — Reuters

INSTA PICKS



Rose harvesting season in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar



Nightwatcher — Arabian scops owl

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IMAGINE DRAGONS
FRONTMAN CHASES
CHILDHOOD VIDEO GAME
DREAM

A childhood dream of making video games is becoming a reality this week for Imagine Dragons’ singer Dan Reynolds, as his company’s debut title “Last Flag” is released on Tuesday.

Games had been a passion of Reynolds and his brother and band manager Mac long before the group became a global name.

Now the pair have used some time away from music to build a team-based shooter inspired by the games of Capture the Flag they played in the woods as young Boy Scouts.

“Last Flag” is “not a passion project, (we’ve) been working on it now for five-plus years”, Reynolds told journalists during a virtual news conference.

Their roughly 30-strong studio, Night Street Games, has been working on “Last Flag” since its 2020 founding.

The game sorts players into two teams of five who can battle online, competing to hide their own flag and snatch the opposing team’s banner.

“I grew up in a family of eight boys and one girl; and we were all nerdy kids”, 38-year-old Dan Reynolds remembered.

Creating their own game had been “this dream that we talked about all the time” as they learned skills such as programming and 3D modelling.

But when Imagine Dragons “just blew up” while they were at university, Dan, a fan of “Starcraft” and “League of Legends”, went with the flow,



enlisting Mac along the way as manager.

Tracks such as “Believer”, “Thunder” and “Radioactive” have made the band one of the most popular pop rock groups worldwide.

It has sold 74 million albums and racked up 160 billion streams, according to record label Warner Music Group.

The band’s ride has been “just incredible”, Dan said.

“But we talked all the time during that about ‘what if?’” the brothers had gone through with their gaming dream, he added.

When the time finally came, they devised a brightly coloured world filled with seventies stylings.

“Last Flag” bears visual similarities to the genre juggernaut “Fortnite”, but the Reynolds say their title stands out from the pack with a focus on playing the objective — not simply eliminating opponents.

— AFP



Jack Holden won best actor for true-crime thriller play “Kenrex”.
Paapa Essiedu won the best supporting actor award for “All My Sons”



Rachel Zegler won best actress in a musical for her portrayal of Argentine first lady Eva Peron in “Evita”
Rosamund Pike won best actress for legal drama “Inter Alia”

Paddington’
musical
triumphs
at London’s
theatrical
Olivier
Awards



PADDINGTON Bear was the big winner at the Olivier Awards in London on Sunday, with a stage adaptation of the beloved children’s books picking up seven prizes at Britain’s top theatre honours.

“Paddington The Musical”, based on author Michael Bond’s books and the 2014 film adaptation, brings to life the marmalade-sandwich-loving bear, a refugee from Peru who is named after the London train station where he is found.

The show, with music and lyrics by musician Tom Fletcher, won prizes including best new musical, best director and best actor in a musical for the duo who portray the title character together.

“With everything that is happening in this world there will be further displaced people, please be welcoming, accepting and helpful to those people and treat them as you would if you were Paddington himself”, James Hameed, who voices Paddington off-stage in the show while co-

winner Arti Shah plays the bear on stage, said in their joint acceptance speech.

“Paddington reminds us to be welcoming, inquisitive and most importantly kind”.

It had led nominations alongside “Into the Woods”, a production of Stephen Sondheim’s musical featuring Brothers Grimm characters that won best musical revival, with 11 nods each.

“Punch”, based on a real-life story of one man’s fatal punch, won best new play.

“Snow White” star Rachel Zegler won best actress in a musical for her portrayal of Argentine first lady Eva Peron in “Evita”, which saw her performing the show’s big number “Don’t Cry For Me Argentina” live from a balcony outside the theatre.

“Thank you so much to the city of London for making me feel so welcome here. I never could have imagined it”, Zegler said. “It was the honour of a lifetime singing to the people of Argyll Street eight times a week. I can’t believe I got so lucky”.

“Gone Girl” star Rosamund Pike won best actress for legal drama “Inter Alia”, while Jack Holden beat the likes of “Loki” actor Tom Hiddleston and “Breaking Bad” star Bryan Cranston to win best actor for true-crime thriller play “Kenrex”.

A new production of Arthur Miller’s “All My Sons” won best revival and best supporting actor for Paapa Essiedu, who plays Professor Snape in the upcoming “Harry Potter” television series.

Named after actor Laurence Olivier and first handed out in 1976, the awards are Britain’s most prestigious theatrical honours.

As well as celebrating their 50th anniversary, the awards marked other major theatre milestones: 40 years of “Phantom of the Opera” and 20 years of “Wicked”, with special performances for both.

Sunday’s ceremony at the Royal Albert Hall also saw veteran stage actor Elaine Paige receive a special award in recognition of her “defining contribution to musical theatre”. — Reuters

FEATURES



SCENT OF OMANI WELCOME



ARWA AL HASHIMI

In Oman, roses hold a special place not only as a symbol of natural beauty but also as a key element in the hospitality traditions that define Omani society. Over generations, hospitality practices in homes and majlis have evolved, making the use of roses and their derivatives an integral part of welcoming guests. Visiting an Omani home is therefore a full sensory experience, reflecting both the warmth of Omani generosity and the depth of its traditions.

Certain regions of Oman, particularly Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, are renowned for cultivating Damask roses, known for their rich fragrance and dense petals. The rose season typically begins in late March and continues until mid-May, during which the flowers bloom across terraced fields in a breathtaking display of fragrance and pink hues. During this period, petals are harvested early in the morning to preserve their essential oils and are later used to produce traditional products such as distilled rose water, prepared through steam distillation to obtain a clear, aromatic liquid that retains its scent for an extended period.

One of the most prominent uses of roses in Omani hospitality is their addition to Arabic coffee. In Oman, coffee is more than a drink; it is a social ritual through which

respect is expressed, with cups served one after another to guests as a gesture of welcome and friendship. Some hosts add a few drops of distilled rose water or rose petals during preparation or at the moment of serving, imparting a delicate fragrance that complements the coffee without overpowering it. This aromatic touch engages the senses and enhances the guest's immersion in the local culture.

Roses are not limited to coffee alone; they are also used in traditional Omani sweets, which play a central role in hospitality during special occasions or family gatherings. Desserts such as halwa and various pastries are carefully prepared, often incorporating rose water to enhance flavour and add a subtle, pleasing aroma. Rose syrup or rose jam is sometimes used as a filling, giving the sweets a delicate balance of taste and fragrance, making the tasting experience more distinctive and memorable.

Another cherished Omani custom is offering distilled rose water after meals, not merely as a culinary ingredient but as a ritual for refreshment and perfuming. In many majlis, rose water is presented for guests to sprinkle on their hands after enjoying coffee and sweets, providing a sense of freshness and cleanliness while expressing respect and appreciation. Some households use traditional tools such as a marash to lightly spray rose water on the hands, while others provide small vessels that guests can use according to their preference.

Beyond its symbolic and aesthetic value, Omani roses and rose water are also appreciated for their soothing properties. The natural fragrance can calm the senses after a rich meal of coffee and sweets, offering a general sense of comfort. Consequently, rose water in Oman is not only used for culinary purposes but also for personal care, such as skincare and revitalisation after sitting in the majlis for extended periods.

What distinguishes Omani culture is the balance between preserving heritage and creatively using natural resources. In Oman, roses are not merely admired for their beauty; they are woven into daily life, becoming a defining element of the hospitality experience.



ON STAGE

OMAN CELEBRATES WORLD THEATRE DAY



HIBBA AL KINDI

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Film Society, recently celebrated World Theatre Day, highlighting the growing theatre industry in the country.

Held at the College of Banking and Financial Studies last Tuesday, April 7, under the auspices of Governor of Al Batinah North Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, the event brought together performers, playwrights and theatre enthusiasts.

The celebration began with the staging of “Substitute Teacher”, a solo theatrical monologue performed by Omani actor Mohammed al Raqadi. The piece, adapted from the work of Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, was presented through an Omani interpretation that blended humour with introspection.

Performed as a one man show, the play follows a teacher tasked with delivering a lecture on the dangers of smoking. As the monologue unfolds, the character gradually drifts away from the subject, revealing fragments of his personal life, inner conflicts and the pressures that have shaped his experiences, ultimately leading him to smoking.

Following the performance, Chairman of the Oman Film Society, Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, delivered a speech highlighting the significance of theatre.

“On World Theatre Day, we stand to celebrate the world when it transforms into life and the stage when it becomes a mirror reflecting humanity”. He added, quoting William Shakespeare, “All the world’s a stage and all the men and women merely players”, he said

He added, “In Oman, we believe that theatre is not merely an art form, but a message, an awareness and the voice of society. We take pride in the fact that over the past three years, the Oman Film Society has steadily advanced towards empowering young people and opening opportunities for their participation in regional and international platforms, until Omani theatre has become present and influential”.

Concluding, he said, “May theatre continue to flourish every year and may you always remain the makers of hope”. The evening then moved to the announcement of the results of the second edition of the Oman Film Society Playwriting Competition. According to organisers, the competition attracted 48 theatrical scripts, reflecting a diversity of ideas and themes among emerging playwrights.

Securing first place, playwright Israa bint Ahmed al Hinai won for her script “Dancing on the Edge of a Circle”.

She explained that the winning text explores the idea of guilt shaped by social perception. She said, “The script talks about a person who feels that he is guilty even when he is not. He feels guilty simply for being human, while in reality he has done nothing wrong. But society sees him as a guilty person and labels him that way”.

Speaking about her journey, the 25 year old playwright said her passion for theatre began through playwriting competitions. She said, “I actually discovered my interest in theatre through competitions like this. That is where I realised my love for writing plays and from there I began writing theatrical scripts.”

In second place, Mohammed bin Khalfan al Hamadani won with his script “Half Minds for Sale”, while Fares bin Ahmed al Balushi secured third place for “Birth After Death”.

The competition featured a shortlist of ten theatrical texts, including works by Omani playwrights Abdulrazzaq al Rabeei, Yasser al Balushi, Abdullah al Battashi, Ahmed al Oufi, Mohammed al Maamari, Munther al Saeedi and Abdullah al Rawahi, reflecting the breadth of voices contributing to the country’s theatre scene.

Organisers allocated cash prizes of RO 3,000 for first place, RO 2,000 for second and RO 1,000 for third. The winning scripts will also be published in a dedicated volume alongside other shortlisted works. Observed globally on March 27 each year, World Theatre Day celebrates the cultural importance of theatre and its power to connect communities through storytelling.