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20

FIRST
ROBOT WITH
AN OMANI
IDENTITY



HM INAUGURATES ‘BAIT AL HAITHAM’

HIS MAJESTY VISITS PDO, REVIEWS KEY PROJECTS

HM REVIEWS
DEVELOPMENTS
IN THE ENERGY
SECTOR

INAUGURATES
THE
INTEGRATED
OPERATIONS
CENTRE

VISUAL
PRESENTATION
HIGHLIGHTS
PDO’S
PRINCIPAL
STAGES

SHOWCASES
EFFORTS TO
ENHANCE WORK
ENVIRONMENT

FOREMOST
COMMAND,
CONTROL HUB
FOR ENERGY
SECTOR

DEDICATED
TO REAL-TIME
MONITORING OF
ALL PROCESSES

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik visited the Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in the Governorate of Muscat on Tuesday morning to review the key projects and developments within the energy sector.

Upon His Majesty’s arrival at the company’s headquarters, His Majesty was received by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals; Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of the PDO Board of Directors; and Dr Aflah bin Said al Hadhrami, PDO Managing Director.

Thereafter, the managing director had the honour of delivering a welcoming address on the occasion of the Royal visit of His Majesty the Sultan. Following this, His Majesty graciously viewed a visual presentation highlighting the principal stages of the company’s evolution and the achievements it has realised in the oil and gas sector, showcasing its efforts to enhance the working environment and elevate performance levels, alongside its future vision and projects anchored in modern technologies.

His Majesty then graciously unveiled the commemorative plaque, heralding the official inauguration of the Integrated Operations Centre ‘Bait Al Haitham.’ This centre stands as the foremost command and control hub for the energy sector in

the Sultanate of Oman, having been conceived as an advanced digital landmark dedicated to the real-time monitoring of all operational processes within the oil and gas sector under a unified operating system. It is regarded as one of the nation’s most vital projects and a pioneering endeavour on a global scale, established in fulfilment of the wise and enlightened vision of His Majesty the Sultan in the era of the Renewed Renaissance. The centre will directly contribute to the enduring sustainability of the national economy.

His Majesty the Sultan also viewed the wall exhibition documenting the most significant historical milestones of the PDO, its journey of institutional transformation, increased production, future strategic plans, and its initiatives in the realms of sustainability, digital transformation and the cultivation of national competencies.

At the conclusion of this visit, His Majesty the Sultan graciously penned an entry in the distinguished visitors’ book, expressing his delight on this felicitous occasion and supplicating for the success of all personnel in this sector and the realisation of further accomplishments. Thereafter, a commemorative photograph was taken of His Majesty the Sultan with a number of the company’s employees, in lasting testament to this Royal visit. — ONA

SEE ALSO P2 & 3

FOR OMAN



سَـكـَـرَـةَ تَطـَـوِيعِةَ عَمـَـانَ
Petroleum Development Oman

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) extends its sincere gratitude and profound appreciation to

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

for honouring the Company with his esteemed visit and gracious inauguration of the Integrated Operations Centre, ‘Bait Al Haitham’.



HIS MAJESTY INAUGURATES PDO'S INTEGRATED OPERATIONS CENTRE



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Accompanying His Majesty the Sultan during the visit were 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 Afi, Head of the Private Office of His Majesty the Sultan; Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority; and Anwar bin Hilal al Jabri, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

— ONA



OMAN

HM RECEIVES MESSAGE FROM AZERBAIJAN



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from President Ilham Aliyev of the Republic of Azerbaijan, pertaining to the bilateral relations between the two countries. The message was handed over to Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister when he received on Tuesday Rashad Ismayilov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

HIS MAJESTY CONDOLES PRESIDENT OF BOTSWANA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Duma Gideon Boko, President of the Republic of Botswana, on the death of former President of Botswana, Festus Mogae. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy to President Duma, the family of the deceased and the people of Botswana. — **ONA**

UMC CONDUCTS FIRST THERAPY WITH LOCAL IMMUNE CELLS



MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the National Haematology and Bone Marrow Transplant Centre at the University Medical City (UMC) on Tuesday performed the first therapy with CAR-T cells that were fully assembled and engineered within national laboratories in the Sultanate of Oman. The therapy was a major medical accomplishment that reflects the rapid development in haematology and cancer treatment services in Oman. CAR-T cells therapy emerges as one of the latest advanced treatments for blood cancers. It involves modifying the patients' own immune T-cells genetically to enable the cells to recognise and precisely target cancer cells. — **ONA**



Recall

TOYOTA & LEXUS

LANDCRUISER 300 & LX

RECALL DATE: 13/05/2026

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production*	#Number of Affected Commodities
Toyota LandCruiser300, Lexus LX	2024-2025	4504

Recall consequence

The subject vehicles are equipped with a 10-speed automatic transmission that contains linear solenoids to control the shifting of gears. If a solenoid failure occurs under certain driving conditions, the Transmission Electronic Control Unit (T-ECU) and the Engine ECU may not communicate the failure, resulting in the transmission over-revving in certain gears. This could result in damage to the transmission and a loss of motive power while driving at higher speeds. If certain damage occurs to the transmission housing, there is also the possibility for transmission fluid to leak from the housing. These conditions can lead to an increased risk of a crash, or a fire in the presence of an ignition source.

Recall Action

To reprogram the transmission ECU

To check the serial number of the affected items, please visit the website and scan the QR code.

سعود الرحمان

Contact details: Toll free - 80073000

Working days: Sunday - Thursday

Working Time: 8:00 - 17:00 hrs

Consumer Protection Authority

80079009 • 80077997

خط المستهلك

التاريخ : 13/05/2026

الصدار : 04

الرمز: 509-093-SOP

HONOURABLE LADY INAUGURATES TRANIM AL AMAL BAND

Under the auspices of Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, the Ministry of Social Development inaugurated the Tranim Al Amal (Melodies of Hope) Band. The event was held at the theatre of the Royal Guard of Oman Command. This humanitarian and artistic initiative embodies the generous commitment to empowering persons with disabilities and special needs. It aims to open broader horizons for them to express their talents and abilities. Furthermore, it seeks to showcase their passion and refine their creative energies through music and the arts. — **ONA**

Royal Office Minister receives British military official

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office and Head of the Office of the Supreme Commander, received today Lt Gen Nick Perry, Chief of Joint Operations in the United Kingdom (UK), and his accompanying delegation. The guest's official visit to the Sultanate of Oman is aimed at strengthening the existing

The two sides discussed several topics of mutual interest. — **ONA**

cooperation relations between the two countries. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several topics of mutual interest. They also reviewed areas of cooperation and ways to enhance them to serve common interests. The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

NURSES DAY RECOGNISES DEDICATION IN SERVING PATIENTS

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman joined the countries of the world today in marking International Nurses Day, observed annually on May 12. The occasion honours the humanitarian and professional roles performed by male and female nurses in strengthening the health system and elevating the quality of therapeutic and preventive services, as they represent a fundamental pillar of comprehensive healthcare. This year's celebration underscores the importance of investing in nursing cadres, qualifying them, and empowering them to keep pace with modern medical and technical developments. Such efforts contribute to enhancing the efficiency of health services and achieving sustainable health development targets. Statistics from the Ministry

The nursing sector in the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed significant development. — **ONA**

of Health (MoH) indicate that the number of nurses working in the health sector in the Sultanate of Oman exceeded 24,000 by the end of December 2025. These professionals operate across various government and private health institutions, performing pivotal roles in providing healthcare at all levels, in addition to their contributions to health awareness programmes, community care and emergency response. The nursing sector in

the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed significant development in the fields of academic qualification, professional training, and specialised sub-specialties. This progress is supported by educational and training programmes implemented by health and academic institutions, which enhance the readiness of national competencies and their ability to handle various health challenges in accordance with international best practices. The nursing workforce remains a primary partner in the journey of developing the health sector, given their continuous efforts in patient care, improving quality of life, and promoting the safety of the healthy community. This role embodies the noble humanitarian values and the exalted mission of the nursing profession. — **ONA**

SHORT TAKES



The rules stipulate that non-Omani vendors should carry a valid work permit.

Muscat Municipality issues requirements for Eid Habta

MUSCAT: Muscat Municipality has issued several requirements for the Eid Al Adha traditional market (Habta market), including the provision of a blue canopy and a ban on selling on the ground without one.

According to the requirements, vendors should prepare their stalls five days prior to the start of the Habta market. The rules stipulate that non-Omani vendors should carry a valid work permit.

The municipality has banned the entry of mobile vendors' cars into the marketplace. Livestock owners are required to adhere to their designated areas within the market and are not allowed to display their livestock outside the market or on roadsides. The municipality clarified that the call for sale is limited to local sheep, cattle and camels.

'FORBIDDEN FLOWERS' WINS AWARD



RABAT: The Omani film 'Forbidden Flowers' won the best director award during the fourth edition of the Atlas International Film Festival in Morocco. Dalila bint Ali al Durei, the film's director, said the win reflects the work's distinction and the human message it carries, which succeeded in reaching both audiences and jury committees. The film tells the story of two sisters living in a simple rural village who face repeated mistreatment from some members of their community. — ONA

Omani Women's Academy wins UNESCO award



SHARJAH: The Omani Women's Academy has won the second edition of the "Sustainable Education Award" granted by the Sharjah-based Regional Centre for Educational

Planning (RCEP) in Sharjah, affiliated to the Unesco.

The academy won the award in the category of Outstanding Project for its project named "Pioneers Incubator". The project was a leading national initiative launched by the Omani Women's Academy to empower women in the field of entrepreneurship by furnishing an integrated, innovative environment that supports the conversion of ideas into tangible, sustainable projects.

The "Pioneers Incubator" project constitutes an integrated digital model in the field of sustainable vocational education. It provides a comprehensive digital vocational education experience that contributes to achieving the 4th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), notably in developing vocational skills, ensuring equal educational opportunities and promoting education for sustainable development. The initiative also enhances women's contribution to the national economy in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The incubator benefits families that operate their own business projects, job-seekers and women with disabilities who wish to embark on successful entrepreneurial experiences. It provides women with an integrated system of modern skills, in addition to guidance and mentoring programmes run by a select group of experts. — ONA

Forum reviews Omani experience in preserving heritage

TUNIS: The Literary Forum reviewed the Omani experience in documenting and preserving intangible cultural heritage during the International Conference on Regions and Intangible Cultural Heritage, held in Tunisia. The event featured a selection of researchers, experts and cultural institutions from various countries around the world.

During the conference, Fahd bin Mahmoud al Rahbi, Head of the Oral History Department at the Literary Forum of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and



The event featured a selection of researchers, experts and cultural institutions from various countries around the world. — ONA

Youth, presented a working paper addressing the Omani experience in protecting oral memory and safeguarding national identity. He reviewed the methodology

followed by the Sultanate of Oman in documenting oral history and transforming it into a sustainable cognitive and cultural asset. Al Rahbi noted that Omani

'Arab Cultural Excellence Medal' award received

AT THE behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Dr Hilal bin Abdullah al Sinani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Tunisia, received on Tuesday the 'Arab Cultural Excellence Medal' (Supreme Class). The medal was awarded by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) to His Majesty, during an official ceremony held at the Organization's headquarters in the Tunisian capital.

The high-level medal, the first of its kind awarded by ALECSO since its founding in 1970, reflects Arab recognition of the distinguished cultural and civilisational standing of the Sultanate of Oman. It also acknowledges His Majesty's pioneering role in fostering culture and knowledge, and in advancing intellectual and cognitive development across the Arab world.

In his address, the Director-General of ALECSO stated that awarding the "ALECSO Arab Cultural Excellence Medal" to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik represents a moment of Arab gratitude to a leader who has made culture a national project and knowledge a civilisational vision. He praised the civilisational model achieved by the Sultanate of Oman under His Majesty's wise leadership – a model that balances authenticity and modernity, and strengthens culture as a soft power for development and a tool for embedding the values of peace, tolerance and dialogue.

Dr Hilal bin Abdullah al Sinani,



The high-level medal reflects Arab recognition of the distinguished cultural and civilisational standing of the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Oman Vision 2040 has prioritised the Omani people and their cultural identity, while embedding the values of tolerance and civilisational dialogue.

Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Tunisia, affirmed in his address that awarding the Supreme Arab Cultural Excellence Medal to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik reflects ALECSO's recognition of His Majesty's leading role in championing culture and strengthening its position as a pillar of sustainable development and scientific progress.

He noted that Oman Vision 2040 has prioritised the Omani people and their cultural identity, while embedding the values of tolerance and civilisational dialogue. He confirmed that this honour reflects the alignment of the Sultanate of Oman's cultural vision with the Organization's goals of protecting Arab identity, supporting knowledge

and innovation, preserving heritage, and promoting the Arabic language.

During the ceremony, a film was screened, featuring the intellectual and cultural vision of His Majesty the Sultan along with the achievements and rich tangible and intangible historical heritage realised in the Sultanate of Oman, deeply rooted in human history.

Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, stated that ALECSO's awarding of the Arab Cultural Excellence Medal (Supreme Class) to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik reflects His Majesty's high vision of establishing culture as a central pillar of comprehensive development and as a tributary to the values of dialogue, tolerance and coexistence. It also recognises His Majesty's ongoing commitment to supporting intellectual activity, thereby contributing to human understanding and regional and international stability, he added.

The minister affirmed that this honour acknowledges the civilisational standing the Sultanate of Oman has established in supporting culture and knowledge and enhancing their role in human development, as well as in building bridges of civilisational rapprochement among nations.

The Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth pointed out that the Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, continues to actively contribute to joint Arab cultural action and to strengthen intellectual partnerships. — ONA

MoE-UNICEF child-friendly evaluation report launched

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, MAY 12

The Ministry of Education (MoE), in collaboration with UNICEF, unveiled the evaluation report of the Child-Friendly Education Initiative at an event held at Grand Millennium Muscat. This marks a new phase aimed at enhancing inclusive and child-centered learning environments in schools throughout the Sultanate of Oman.

The event, under the patronage of Hamad al Sarhani, Adviser to the Minister of Education for Educational Administration Affairs, included a joint workshop to develop a five-year implementation plan aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and the School Education Law of 2023.

The initiative, which was initially launched in 2012 as a pilot programme in nine schools across three governorates, expanded nationwide in 2022, focusing on prioritising children in the educational process and promoting inclusivity, participation, and safe learning environments.

During the event, Al Sarhani emphasised that the initiative is a crucial step towards creating a more inclusive and compassionate education system. It places Omani children



The goal was to assess the effectiveness of child-friendly education approaches across Oman's school system.

at the core of the learning process and helps build a supportive and motivating educational environment that fosters quality education, creativity, and future skills.

He highlighted the importance of translating the evaluation findings and recommendations into sustainable programs and practical implementation plans to enhance the education system and invest in human capital in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. Shinuna al Habsi, the Sultanate of Oman's representative on UNICEF's Executive Board and Chairperson of the Child-Friendly Education Main Committee, stated that child-

friendly schools are no longer a choice but a national necessity. She emphasized the need for safe, inclusive, and supportive educational environments for all children.

UNICEF consultant Waddah Abdul Salam explained that since its inception in 2012, the initiative has focused on safeguarding children, promoting inclusivity, and placing children at the center of the educational process. The evaluation findings have shown positive impacts on school environments, academic achievement, and student behaviour.

Mouza al Abri, family medicine consultant and Head of the Early Childhood Care Department at the Ministry of Health, underscored the significance of health and psychological aspects in child-friendly education. She noted that safe and supportive school environments contribute to improved academic performance and address issues like bullying, poor nutrition, and student absenteeism.

The evaluation, concluded in 2025, involved field visits and consultations with students, including those with disabilities, parents, teachers, and school administrators. The goal was to assess the effectiveness of child-friendly education approaches across Oman's school system.

US MUST ACCEPT
DEAL: IRAN

Iran's chief negotiator said on Tuesday Washington must accept Tehran's latest peace plan or face failure.

IRAN HOLDS
MILITARY DRILLS

Iran held military exercises in capital Tehran to prepare for any confrontation as Trump warned a ceasefire was on the brink of collapse.

OIL PRICES CLIMB
OVER HORMUZ

Oil prices climbed over the impasse in US-Iran talks that has left the vital Strait of Hormuz mostly closed to oil tanker traffic.

HORMUZ NOT
'BLACKMAIL' TACTIC

Qatar's prime minister said that Iran should not use the Strait of Hormuz, which it has blocked since the start of the Middle East war, to "blackmail" Gulf states.

US WAR COST NEARING
\$29 BILLION

The Pentagon said that the cost of the war with Iran had climbed to nearly \$29 billion, as President Donald Trump faced mounting scrutiny.

ISRAEL POUNDS
LEBANON

Lebanon urged the US ambassador to Beirut to pressure Israel to halt its attacks, after it pounded the country with air strikes.

HEZBOLLAH-ISRAEL
TALKS

Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem said on Tuesday his group's weapons were not part of forthcoming ceasefire negotiations.

UAE GAS PROCESSING
WOES

The United Arab Emirates' main gas processing complex, one of the world's largest, will not resume full capacity until next year.

KUWAIT DETAINS
IRAN'S GUARDS

Kuwait said that four people arrested this month as they attempted to enter the country by sea have confessed to belonging to Iran's Guards.

ISRAEL KILLS TWO
CIVIL DEFENCE
PERSONNEL

Lebanon's civil defence agency said two of its personnel were killed in an Israeli strike while they were on duty in the country's south.

NO HOPES FOR BREAKTHROUGH IN MIDEAST WAR

HOPES FOR a peace deal on Iran faded on Tuesday after Donald Trump said a ceasefire with Iran was "on life support" as Tehran rejected a US proposal to end the conflict and stuck to a list of demands the US president described as "garbage". Iran has called for an end to the war on all fronts, including Lebanon, where US ally Israel is fighting Hezbollah. Tehran also emphasised its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, demanded compensation for war damage, and an end to the US naval blockade, among other conditions.

Trump said Iran's response threatened the status of a ceasefire announced on April 7. "I would call it the weakest right now, after reading that piece of garbage they sent us. I didn't even finish reading it," Trump, who has repeatedly threatened to end the ceasefire, told reporters. The US had proposed an end to fighting before starting talks on more contentious issues, including Iran's nuclear programme.

Brent crude oil futures extended gains on Tuesday, climbing to almost \$108 a barrel, as the deadlock left the Strait of Hormuz largely closed. Before the war began on February 28, the narrow waterway carried a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas shipments, and has since become a central pressure point in the conflict.

Disruption caused by the near-closure of the strait has forced oil producers to cut exports, and Opec oil output dropped further in April to the lowest in more than two decades, a Reuters survey showed on Monday. Kuwait said on Tuesday it had arrested four infiltrators affiliated with Iran's Revolutionary Guards after they attempted to enter the Gulf state by sea, according to the state news agency KUNA, citing the interior ministry. There was no immediate reaction from Iran to the report.

Iranian officials meanwhile issued statements signalling continued resolve in the face of US pressure. A Fars news agency report cited Mohammad Akbarzadeh, deputy political director of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy, as saying Iran had expanded its definition of the Strait of Hormuz into a "vast operational area" under a new plan.

There was no immediate reply from Iranian authorities to a request for comment on Akbarzadeh's remarks, which defined the waterway as a zone stretching from the coast of the city of Jask in the east to Siri Island in the west. In a post on X, parliamentary national security and foreign policy commission spokesperson Ebrahim Rezaei said Iran could enrich uranium up



A woman walks near a billboard featuring an image of the late Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in Tehran. — Reuters

to 90% purity, a level considered weapons-grade, if the country is attacked once more.

The US on Monday imposed new sanctions on individuals and companies it said were helping Iran ship oil to China, part of efforts to cut off funding for Tehran's military and nuclear programmes, while also warning banks about attempts

to evade existing curbs. Trump is expected to arrive in Beijing on Wednesday, where Iran is set to be among the topics discussed with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Traffic through the Strait of Hormuz is at a trickle compared with before the war. Shipping data on Kpler and LSEG showed that three tankers laden with crude

exited the waterway last week, with trackers switched off to avoid an Iranian attack. In the US, surveys show the war is unpopular with US voters who are paying more for fuel less than six months before nationwide elections that will determine whether Trump's Republican Party retains control of Congress. — Reuters

as a weapon to pressure or to blackmail the Gulf countries," the Qatari minister said.

Gulf countries have borne the brunt of Iran's attacks during the war, with Tehran targeting US assets but also civilian infrastructure, airports and energy facilities. Its blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas usually passes, has also halted crucial maritime exports for the energy-rich Gulf, straining their economies. — AFP

SAYYID BADR
DISCUSSES
REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENTS
WITH ESTONIAN,
DUTCH
COUNTERPARTS



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Tuesday received a telephone call from Margus Tsahkna, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia.

During the telephonic conversation, the two ministers discussed bilateral relations and ways to enhance cooperation between Oman and Estonia.

Sayyid Badr and his Estonian counterpart also exchanged views about current regional and international issues. They stressed

the need to continue coordination, consultation and support for political initiatives aimed at containing crises and resolving them through dialogue in a manner that consolidates pillars of security, stability and peace.

Sayyid Badr also conferred, in a phone call, with Tom Berendsen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. During the telephonic conversation, Sayyid Badr and the Dutch minister discussed relations between the two friendly countries, as well as opportunities for developing bilateral cooperation,

notably in the fields of transport and logistics.

Sayyid Badr and the Dutch minister also exchanged views about current conditions in the region. They discussed efforts being made to address the challenges that emanate from the disruption of maritime navigation. They underlined the importance of devising consensual solutions that meet the legitimate aspirations of all parties and contribute to the resumption of supply chains and the backing of the global economy. — ONA

ISRAEL CONDUCTS RAID ALONG SOUTH LEBANON'S LITANI RIVER

BEIRUT: The Israeli military said on Tuesday its troops had conducted a days-long raid in the area of the Litani river in south Lebanon, where exchanges of fire with Hezbollah persist despite a ceasefire. In a statement, the military said that soldiers had been operating south of the Israeli-declared "yellow line" that runs around 10 kilometres north of the border and where Israeli forces continue to be stationed.

Israeli media reported that troops had gone beyond the Litani river and operated on the outskirts of the town of Zawtar Al Sharqiyah. When asked, the Israeli military said it was unable to confirm whether troops had crossed the Litani, but it published photos from the operation showing soldiers walking along a bridge traversing a river. Other photos published by the military showed tanks and soldiers operating along the riverbank.

Israeli strikes on Lebanon have killed 380 people since a ceasefire in the Israel-Hezbollah war began on April 17, Lebanon's Health Minister Rakan Nassereddine told a press conference on Tuesday. Lebanon's civil defence agency said two of its personnel were killed in an Israeli strike on Tuesday while they were on duty in the country's south. The personnel were killed in "an Israeli air strike that targeted them while they were carrying out a rescue mission" after a previous strike in the city of Nabatieh, a civil defence statement said.

The overall toll in Israeli strikes since the war erupted between Israel and Hezbollah on March 2 has reached 2,882 people including 279 women and 200 children, he added. Since the ceasefire, "380 people have been killed and 1,122 wounded,"



An explosion erupts in the area of Al Housh following Israeli bombardment as seen from Tyre in Lebanon. — AFP

Lebanon's civil defence agency said two of its personnel were killed in an Israeli strike on Tuesday while they were on duty in the country's south. The overall toll in Israeli strikes since the war erupted has reached 2,882 people including 279 women and 200 children

Nassereddine said. A ministry official said that the toll includes 39 women and 22 children.

Under the terms of the truce released by Washington, Israel reserves the right to act against "planned, imminent or ongoing attacks". Some 108 emergency and health workers are among the overall death toll while 249 others have been wounded and "16 hospitals have been damaged" since the start of the conflict, Nassereddine said. "It's a massacre... there are no armed men or fighters in these (ambulance) vehicles, just medical equipment and wounded, contrary to what Israel says," he added.

Lebanon's civil defence agency

said two of its personnel were killed in an Israeli strike on Tuesday while they were on duty in the country's south. Qassem called for a "withdrawal from the direct negotiations, which are pure gains for Israel and free concessions by the Lebanese authorities". "We are facing an Israeli-American aggression that wants to subjugate our country of Lebanon," Qassem said in the statement. "We will not surrender and we will continue to defend Lebanon and its people, however long it takes and however great the sacrifices," he said.

The Lebanese Hezbollah says its fighters are included in the government tolls. — AFP

SHORT TAKE



US WAR WITH IRAN HAS COST \$29 BILLION SO FAR

WASHINGTON: The United States' war in Iran has cost \$29 billion so far, a senior Pentagon official said on Tuesday, an increase of \$4 billion from an estimate provided late last month. With just six months before midterm elections in which President Donald Trump's Republicans may face an uphill battle to keep their House majority, Democrats are riding high in public opinion polls as they attempt to link the war with cost of living issues.

On April 29, the Pentagon said the war at that point had cost \$25 billion.

Jules Hurst, who is performing the duties of the comptroller, told lawmakers on Tuesday that the new cost included updated repair and replacement of equipment and operational costs. "The joint staff team and the comptroller team are constantly looking at that estimate," Hurst said. He was speaking alongside Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine.

It is unclear how the Pentagon arrived at the \$29 billion figure. A source said in March that Trump's administration estimated the first six days of the war had cost at least \$11.3 billion. — Reuters

OPERATIONS BUDGET

Australia spends on air defence over war



Australia spent Aus\$6.7 million providing defence systems to the United Arab Emirates to defend itself from Iranian attacks throughout the Middle East war. Defence spending risks listed in Australian budget documents released on Tuesday included "the cost of major operations of the Australian Defence Force in 2026-27 in the Middle East and European regions". A defence official said that no government decision had been made to send military forces to the Strait of Hormuz. — AFP

ENTERING ISLAND

Kuwait foils infiltration by Iran's Guards



Kuwait said that four people arrested earlier this month as they attempted to enter the country by sea have confessed to belonging to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. The four men — two navy colonels, a captain, and a lieutenant commander — admitted they had been tasked by Iran's ideological army with "infiltrating" Bubiyan Island, Kuwait's interior ministry said in a statement published by Kuna. The island is Kuwait's largest and is located near the Iranian coast. — AFP

WAR TIME PROFITS

France summons TotalEnergies chief



Patrick Pouyanné, head of the energy giant TotalEnergies, will face a grilling next month over his group's massive profits during the Middle East war from the French parliament's finance committee, the committee's head said. "With Total's tax situation back in the news, I have decided to call Mr Patrick Pouyanné to appear before the Finance Committee. This hearing will take place on 17 June at 10:00 am," the commission's president, Eric Coquerel said. — AFP

Why we repeat what hurts and how to stop



HYESHA BARRETT
The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

THERE is a quiet pattern many people begin to notice at some point in their lives. Different situations, different people, different environments, yet the emotional outcome feels strangely familiar. The same frustrations return, the same disappointments surface, and the same internal responses arise, almost as if life is repeating itself in different forms.

This repetition is rarely random. It is patterned. What we experience on the outside often reflects something unresolved on the inside. Not because we are choosing pain consciously, but because the mind and body are wired to return to what is familiar, even when that familiarity is uncomfortable.

The nervous system does not distinguish between what is healthy and what is harmful. It recognises that it is known.

Early experiences, especially those formed in childhood, create internal templates for how relationships, safety, and self-worth are understood. These templates shape the choices we make, the dynamics we enter, and the way we respond to challenges, often without our conscious awareness.

What hurts us is often tied to something that once felt normal. A lack of emotional presence may feel familiar rather than concerning. Inconsistency may feel expected

rather than destabilising. Being overlooked may feel uncomfortable, yet aligned with an internal belief about worth. Without awareness, the system will continue to recreate these dynamics, not to harm us, but to confirm what it already believed to be true.

There is also an unconscious attempt to resolve the past within the present. The mind seeks completion. It recreates familiar emotional experiences, hoping for a different ending. This is why someone may find themselves drawn to similar relationships or situations, even when they logically know those patterns are not supportive. Beneath this is often a quiet hope that this time, the story will change.

Awareness is where the pattern begins to shift. Noticing the repetition without judgement creates distance from it. Instead of asking, ‘Why does this keep happening to me?’, a more powerful question emerges. ‘What part of me is still expecting this, and why?’ This question turns attention inwards, where the deeper work begins.

Breaking these patterns requires more than understanding. It asks for a willingness to feel what has been avoided. Old emotions, unmet needs, and unprocessed experiences often sit beneath repeated cycles. When they are acknowledged and allowed to move, the need to recreate them externally begins to soften.

Early experiences, especially those formed in childhood, create internal templates for how relationships, safety, and self-worth are understood

The body also holds these patterns. Familiar dynamics come with familiar sensations. A tightening in the chest, a drop in energy, a sense of urgency or anxiety. Learning to recognise these signals in real time creates a moment to pause. That pause becomes powerful. It interrupts the automatic response and opens space for something different.

Choosing differently may feel uncomfortable at first. Moving away from what is familiar can feel unsettling, even when it is healthier. The mind may question it. The body may resist it. This discomfort is not a sign that something is wrong. It is often a signal that something is changing, and that you are stepping beyond what you have known.

Over time, something begins to shift. The same situations may still arise, yet the response is different. The emotional charge softens.

The pull towards what once felt inevitable begins to loosen. What once felt like a fixed cycle becomes a conscious choice.

The patterns we repeat are not indications of failure. They are invitations. Invitations to understand, to feel and to choose differently. The moment you become aware of the pattern is not the end of it, but it is the beginning of your freedom.

HEAT INSURANCE OFFERS RELIEF FOR WORKERS IN INDIA

UZMI ATHAR & AISHWARYA KUMAR

Clothes seller Lata Solanki used to face a devastating choice when India’s summer heat hit dangerous levels: risk her health going door-to-door for sales, or lose her income?

But now the 42-year-old is part of an insurance scheme that pays out when temperatures hit a threshold, so she can stay home without jeopardising her finances.

The “parametric” model pays out automatically when specific triggers are breached, in Solanki’s case after two consecutive days at 43.72 degrees Celsius. The payout is modest, but it helps, she said in Ahmedabad, one of India’s hottest cities.

“At least we feel there is some support,” she said. “Because of the heat, the fan runs day and night. The bill goes up.”

In 2023, the year before she joined the scheme, Solanki kept working during a heatwave and ended up sick at home for 20 days, losing at least Rs 2,000 in income. The following year, she received 750 rupees from the scheme, small but more than the cost of the premium, and a relief in a country where the average monthly rural household income is Rs 10,000.

India lost an estimated 247 billion hours of labour to extreme heat in 2024, equivalent to nearly \$194 billion in economic losses, according to the Lancet Countdown research group.

Agriculture and construction bore the brunt, and climate change is accelerating the number of days of extreme heat India sees. Parametric insurance is seen as a way to protect the most vulnerable from climate impacts like heat, but also heavy rain. In India’s northeastern state of Nagaland, the government has insured its entire population against economic losses due to heavy rainfall under a parametric model since 2024.

The federal government is examining how to extend the schemes more widely to “supplement insurance mechanisms and reinforce protection to the people”.

Unlike traditional insurance, parametric policies do not require individual damage assessments. Instead, payouts are triggered automatically by heavy rain, high heat or even air pollution. The scheme helping Solanki is a collaboration between the non-profit Mahila Housing Trust (MHT) and global insurer Go Digit, supported by the Climate Resilience for All initiative. MHT programme manager Nital Rahul Patel said the idea emerged after surveys and discussions with women workers in Ahmedabad, where temperatures sometimes hit 45C. — AFP

Greater Muscat Plan redefines urban living

URBAN PLANNING has become one of the defining tools of sustainable development. As cities continue to expand at unprecedented rates, planning is no longer confined to roads, infrastructure and public services.

It has evolved into a transformative process capable of reshaping lifestyles, strengthening economic productivity and improving the quality of life.

Modern urban planning seeks to balance social, environmental and economic priorities while preparing cities to adapt to future challenges.

Cities today function as engines of economic and social development. Their success depends largely on the efficiency of urban planning and the extent to which it responds to human needs while remaining flexible enough to absorb technological and demographic change.

Modern cities are increasingly evaluated not only by the quality of their infrastructure, but also by their resilience, sustainability and ability to create inclusive and livable environments.

In this context, Oman’s National Urban Development Strategy 2040 represents a major step toward reshaping the country’s urban future. The strategy provides a comprehensive framework to guide urban growth over the coming decades while balancing environmental sustainability, economic development and social wellbeing.

It aims to establish smart cities and vibrant communities capable of supporting innovation, improving quality of life and strengthening long-term resilience.

Regional urban strategies have since emerged from this



AISHA AL DARMAKI

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Greater Muscat reflects this approach through investments in sustainable transportation, renewable energy, digital governance systems and integrated smart services

broader national framework, each tailored to the characteristics and developmental priorities of individual governorates.

Within this vision, the Muscat Regional Urban Strategy, launched in 2020, positioned the capital as a future regional hub for knowledge, innovation, finance, trade and tourism. One of the central pillars of this vision is the ‘Greater Muscat’ project, conceived as an integrated urban expansion capable of accommodating population growth while attracting major investment in infrastructure and services.

The recent launch of the Greater Muscat structural plan under the slogan ‘A Lasting Legacy and a Renewed Vision’ reflects this ambition.

The project is designed around several interconnected objectives, including creating a greener Muscat, a more connected Muscat, a productive Muscat, a vibrant Muscat, and a resilient and secure Muscat. Together, these goals outline a model for future urban development in Oman.

What distinguishes the project is its broader developmental philosophy. Greater Muscat is not simply an infrastructure initiative; it is an attempt to redefine urban living itself. The plan seeks to establish a smart and sustainable city capable of integrating technology, innovation and environmental responsibility into everyday life.

It focuses on improving transportation systems, expanding green spaces, enhancing public facilities and promoting healthier lifestyles, while also strengthening economic competitiveness.

The project also aligns closely with other major initiatives linked to Oman Vision 2040, including Sultan Haitham City and

emerging artificial intelligence and technology zones. Collectively, these developments aim to position Muscat among the leading smart and sustainable cities of the region.

Equally important is the project’s emphasis on resilience. Modern urban planning increasingly requires cities to prepare for economic fluctuations, environmental pressures and rapid technological transformation.

Greater Muscat reflects this approach through investments in sustainable transportation, renewable energy, digital governance systems and integrated smart services. The objective is not merely urban expansion, but the creation of a city capable of adapting to future change while maintaining social and economic stability.

Yet infrastructure alone cannot guarantee success. Technological transformation must be accompanied by human development. Training, education and public awareness programmes will be essential if society is to benefit fully from the opportunities created by advanced infrastructure, digital systems and artificial intelligence. Sustainable urban growth ultimately depends on empowering people to adapt, innovate and participate in shaping their environment.

In this sense, Greater Muscat represents more than a planning project. It reflects a broader vision for the future of urban life in Oman — one that seeks to combine cultural identity, technological advancement and sustainable development within a resilient and human-centred city model.

(Translated by Badr al Dhafari. The original version of this article was published in the print edition of Oman Arabic newspaper on May 10)

Continuing the legacy of the lamp lit by Florence Nightingale



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

EVERY YEAR on May 12, the world pauses to celebrate International Nurses Day, which coincides with the birthday of Florence Nightingale, widely regarded as the founder of modern nursing. This day is not only an opportunity to honour the nursing profession but also to acknowledge the profound and enduring impact nurses have on healing.

The day was officially established by the International Council of Nurses in 1974, although its origins can be traced back to 1953, when the initial proposal to recognise nurses was presented to the US Department of Health.

In healthcare facilities worldwide, nurses demonstrate remarkable leadership every day. They do much more than provide bedside care; they are present during moments of anxiety and recovery, times of uncertainty and hope. Nurses support patients through some of life's most vulnerable experiences while offering reassurance to families seeking strength and comfort.

They provide dignity, patience, and emotional resilience in situations where individuals often feel most vulnerable. In short, behind every recovery, every diagnosis, and every moment of reassurance in a hospital room, there is a nurse. They are the first face a patient sees and the last voice of comfort before sleep.

During the highly contagious period of Covid-19, nurses made up the majority of the

medical workforce. They faced the highest frontline exposure in overstretched hospitals, often without adequate protective equipment during the early waves and without structured mental health support afterward.

They were actively involved in the evaluation and monitoring of the community. They demonstrated great courage, flexibility, and creativity on the front lines of this fight!

As I reflect on the extraordinary period of the pandemic that gripped our planet, I am amazed by how much healthcare professionals have given and endured to keep us all alive and healthy. Their impact is both lasting and immeasurable.

I am a beneficiary of the profound care, dedication, selflessness, and compassion of the nurses when I was bedridden in a hospital in Muscat after being infected with the dreaded coronavirus. I came close to death, and I am very fortunate to be alive today thanks to the incredible care and commitment of the doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff.

Nurses contribute immensely to our lives and the lives of those we love. As they help bring new life into the world, we should celebrate them not only for the extensive range of services they provide but also for the hard work and dedication they invest to make it all possible.

According to the World Health Organisation, there are approximately 29.8 million nurses worldwide, making nursing the largest healthcare workforce. However, reports indicate a global shortage of about 5.8

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million nurses, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

These figures highlight that the future of healthcare will depend not only on innovation and infrastructure but also on the effectiveness of societal investments in nursing education, workforce wellness, leadership, and professional development. It is fitting that we have a day dedicated to honouring nurses and recognising all their efforts.

At the same time, greater emphasis should be placed on the well-being of nurses through mental health support, job safety, and opportunities for continuing education. Nursing leadership must have increased representation in healthcare policy and organisational decision-making, especially as patient care becomes more multidisciplinary and technology-dependent.

Contemporary nursing increasingly intertwines with digital health, genetics, preventive care, and advanced treatments. However, despite these challenges and changes, the core of nursing remains profoundly human. This enduring spirit of nursing deserves our deepest gratitude, respect, and support every single day.

So, let us move beyond formal words of gratitude. Genuine appreciation will be demonstrated through meaningful improvements in the lives of nurses. The lamp ignited by Florence Nightingale continues to shine brightly in the hands of countless nurses today. Let us celebrate that light.

WHAT IF WE KILLED ALL MOSQUITOES?

DANIEL LAWLER

The deadliest animals are not lions, spiders or snakes, but the tiny mosquitoes that suck our blood, make us itchy and infect us with disease. Mosquitoes kill around 760,000 people every year, according to research site Our World in Data, with humans ourselves coming a distant second.

This is because mosquitoes account for 17 per cent of all infectious diseases, including malaria, dengue, yellow fever, chikungunya and Zika. And as the world warms due to human-driven climate change, mosquitoes are roaming to new areas during longer summers, raising fears they could propel future health crises.

So how can humanity fight back against our greatest foe? Is there a safe way we could eradicate these killer mosquitoes - and how bad would that be for the environment?

First, we would not need to vanquish all mosquitoes. Out of roughly 3,500 mosquito species, only around 100 bite humans.

And just five species are responsible for roughly 95 per cent of human infections, Hilary Ranson, a vector biologist at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, said.

On balance, Ranson felt that losing five mosquito species “could be tolerated given the huge devastation” they inflict on the world, from mass death to crippling economic fallout.

Dan Peach, a mosquito entomologist at the University of Georgia, broadly agreed, but emphasised that more information was needed to compare eradication with the alternatives.

The five disease-spreading mosquitoes “have evolved to be very closely associated to humans,” including feeding on and breeding near us, Ranson explained. This means eradicating them would not have a major impact on the broader ecosystem - and other, genetically similar but less deadly mosquitoes would likely quickly “fill that ecological niche”, she added.

Peach was not convinced we know enough “about the ecology of most mosquito species to be confident one way or the other, but I also think that it is OK to acknowledge this and still proceed.”

Mosquitoes do “transfer nutrients from their aquatic larval habitats” to other areas, and serve as food for insects, fish and other animals, he said.

They also pollinate plants, but this “isn’t well understood and may vary by species”, Peach added. Ranson acknowledged there is a valid debate over the ethics of humans committing “specicide”, while pointing out that we are currently unintentionally wiping out a huge number of species. One of the most prominent new technological options is called gene-drive, which involves genetically modifying animals so that they pass down a particular trait to their offspring.

When scientists tweaked females of malaria-carrying Anopheles gambiae mosquitoes to make them infertile, it wiped out a population in the lab over just a few generations. — AFP

Why hantavirus outbreak is causing global anxiety

THE ARRIVAL of the hantavirus stricken cruise ship MV Hondius in the Canary Islands has reignited a fear many people hoped they would never experience again: the fear of another global outbreak spiralling out of control. After years of living through the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns, overwhelmed hospitals, economic collapse and social isolation, even the possibility of another dangerous virus is enough to trigger public anxiety. And with several deaths already linked to the outbreak aboard the ship, concern is understandable.

Hantavirus is not a new disease. It was first identified in the 1950s during the Korean War, when soldiers became infected with what was later understood to be a virus from rodents. Different strains have since appeared in parts of Asia and the Americas. The virus is usually spread through contact with infected rodent droppings, urine, or saliva, although some strains, such as the Andes strain involved in the current cruise ship outbreak, have shown limited human-to-human transmission. Symptoms often begin like the flu before progressing into severe respiratory distress, and in serious cases, the mortality rate can be extremely high.

The outbreak aboard the MV Hondius has already caused at least three deaths and several confirmed infections. The ship eventually docked in Tenerife in Spain’s Canary Islands after being denied entry elsewhere, with passengers evacuated under strict quarantine measures. Health authorities have repeatedly stressed that hantavirus is less contagious than Covid-19 and that the risk to the general public remains low.

Still, public fear has spread rapidly online. Social media users are drawing comparisons to early 2020, when governments and health authorities initially attempted to reassure the public about Covid before the situation escalated into a global catastrophe.



A passenger evacuated from the Dutch flagged hantavirus-stricken cruise ship MV Hondius waves aboard a military bus after being transferred to the industrial port of Granadilla de Abona on the island of Tenerife in Spain's Canary Islands. — AFP



OMAN AL YAHYAI

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That collective memory remains fresh. The idea of another virus spreading internationally, even if unlikely, immediately evokes fears of lockdowns, quarantines, travel bans and economic collapse.

So far, available projections suggest the likelihood of a global crisis remains relatively low. Kalshi prediction market data currently estimates only around a 21 per cent chance that the hantavirus outbreak will become a major concern this year. These figures reflect a broader consensus among health experts that this virus is unlikely to spread with the same speed or efficiency as Covid-19. However, the fear is not irrational. If the virus were somehow to mutate or spread more aggressively, the consequences could be severe. Hospitals could once again face pressure from rising admissions. Governments could impose restrictions on movement. Supply chains, already weakened by inflation and geopolitical instability, could break down further. Financial markets, highly sensitive to uncertainty, could react violently.

And unlike in 2020, the global economy is entering this potential health crisis from a position of weakness rather than stability.

The ongoing war involving the United States, Israel and Iran has already destabilised global markets. Oil prices have surged due to fears surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world’s most important energy shipping routes. Fuel prices have increased internationally, raising transportation and manufacturing costs. Electricity bills are climbing in many countries, while inflation continues to affect food and housing prices. Airlines are also facing higher operational costs due to rising fuel prices, meaning travel is becoming increasingly expensive. In a world already struggling with the cost of living crisis, another major shock could push economies into recession.

Pandemics and wars together create a particularly dangerous combination. Wars drain national budgets, increase public debt and destabilise trade routes. Health crises place additional pressure on healthcare systems and labour markets. When these pressures happen simultaneously, ordinary people suffer the most. If another large-scale outbreak were to occur, governments might once again struggle to fund healthcare responses while also managing economic decline. Businesses could close. Workers could lose jobs. Families already living paycheck to paycheck might face eviction, debt or food insecurity.

Many people also underestimate how deeply interconnected modern economies are. Oil and gas are not only used for transport, they are central to the production of everyday household items. Plastic water bottles, food packaging, heating systems, fertilisers, dryers, stoves and even some medicines rely on petroleum-based materials or energy-intensive manufacturing. Rising energy costs, therefore, increase the price of almost everything.

SPORTS

PRACTICAL SKILLS



Representatives of sports clubs, committees and associations take part in the three-day training course.

SPORTS EVENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME OPENS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 12

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), represented by the Leadership Development Centre, launched a three-day training programme titled ‘Management and Organisation of Sports Events’ at Radisson Hotel Muscat Panorama in Bausher on Tuesday.

The programme, which runs from May 12 to 14, has attracted wide participation from sports bodies, including clubs, committees and associations. It forms part of the ministry’s efforts to develop national competencies working in the sports sector and equip them with the essential knowledge and practical skills required to plan, organise and evaluate sports events.

The opening day focused on strategic planning and institutional organisation, highlighting the importance of preparing effective plans that support the successful delivery of events and help achieve their objectives. Participants were also introduced to practical models designed to strengthen their ability to deal with different organisational challenges.

The programme will continue over the coming days with specialised sessions covering financial management, sports marketing, corporate communication, legal aspects, risk management, event evaluation and impact measurement. These areas are expected to contribute to raising the efficiency of sports administration and supporting long-term sustainability in the sector.

Dr Sulaiman bin Ali al Balushi, lecturer of the programme, said the course targets officials responsible for delivering sports events at different levels. Sports events vary in size, nature, format and target audience. Therefore, the programme discusses the core concepts of sports events, planning mechanisms according to the scale of each event, marketing and communication tools, risk management, evaluation and the process of building working teams and committees from the beginning until the end of the event, he said.

He added that the closing part of the programme will focus on assessing events and identifying ways to improve future editions.

Dr Sulaiman praised the level of the participants, noting that many of them already have solid experience in organising sports activities through clubs, committees, federations and the Oman Olympic Committee.

“This creates a challenge for the lecturer, but it also enriches the programme. We are keen to encourage the exchange of experience among participants, while adding new knowledge and developing their existing skills,” he added.

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

Saud al Qanoubi, representing the Oman Camel Racing Federation, said the programme would help improve performance in the workplace and support better administrative planning.

He added that the course is important for understanding objectives, vision and organisational planning, especially in relation to camel racing events. We benefited from the discussions on setting goals and aligning them with practical work in the sports environment.

Abdulhussain al Shaibani, member of the Oman Billiards and Snooker Committee, said the programme is important for sports bodies organising local and international events, as it covers event management, risk handling, promotion and investment.

He added that such specialised courses support the committee’s efforts to host major competitions and improve organisational standards.

Ruqaiya al Lawati, representing Seeb Club, said the course will help clubs improve the way they plan and organise sports activities.

Oman begins campaign at 4th GCC Games in Doha

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
[@riyadhbaluch](#)

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN has officially launched its participation in the fourth GCC Games, hosted by Qatar from May 11 to 22, with more than 1,074 athletes from Gulf nations competing across 17 sports.

Oman is represented in 11 sports, aiming to achieve positive results and reflect the continued progress of Omani sport at the regional level.

The Omani delegation is headed by HH Azzan bin Qais al Said, Chairman of the Oman Olympic Committee and Head of Mission, overseeing Oman’s participation in one of the Gulf region’s major multi-sport events.

Oman marked its official presence through the opening ceremony, held at Al Shaqab in Doha, where Nibras bin Mohammed al Touqi, a national taekwondo athlete, and Shams Al Dhuha bint Khalil al Khinji carried the Sultanate of Oman’s flag during the parade of nations in a ceremony celebrating Gulf unity and sporting spirit.

Competition for Omani teams begins with taekwondo, as Nibras al Touqi competes in the 58 kg category, alongside Omar bin Mahmood al Sinani in the 80 kg division, while Omaima bint Harib al Hinai represents Oman in the women’s 49 kg category at the Aspire Dome.

In table tennis, Oman’s men’s team starts its campaign through Ahmed bin Salim al Riyami and Muhannad bin Khalifa al Balushi, seeking a positive opening performance.

Meanwhile, the Oman women’s basketball team begins its participation in the 3x3 competition at Al Gharafa Hall, facing Qatar in its opening match before taking on Kuwait, with hopes of advancing to the knockout rounds.

The team entered the competition following an extensive preparation programme that included domestic camps and an overseas training camp in Cyprus, where players gained valuable match experience.

In bowling, Oman will be represented by Hassan bin Ali al Kharousi and Juma bin Saleh al Habsi in the individual competition, consisting of six rounds under the supervision of national



Oman’s Nibras bin Mohammed al Touqi holds the national flag along with Shams al Dhuha bint Khalil al Khinji during the march past at the opening ceremony.



The Oman athletics team.

coach Ismail al Zadjali. Oman’s aquatic sports team will also begin competition, with Hamad bin Suleiman al Hasani participating in the 800m freestyle, Mishal bin Salim al Kulaibi in the 50m freestyle and Mohammed bin Khamis al Wahaibi in the 100m backstroke.

Alongside the Games, Oman’s Under-23 football team played a friendly match against Qatar on Monday, May 11, as part of its preparations. The Qatari side claimed a 2-1 victory in a match aimed at improving match fitness and evaluating players ahead of future competitions.

Meanwhile, Oman’s athletics team has arrived in Doha as one of the latest national teams to join the delegation. The squad includes 14 male and female athletes who will compete in various track and field events with ambitions of securing medals.

Oman’s national teams are targeting a strong showing throughout the tournament, hoping to achieve results that reflect the country’s growing sporting ambitions as Gulf athletes continue competition in Doha until May 22.

Coach confident as Oman fencers eye medals

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 12

The Sultanate of Oman will be represented by nine fencers at the GCC Games Doha 2026 which is underway until May 22 in Doha. The national fencing team is aiming to deliver strong performances and compete for medals across different categories at one of the region’s most prestigious multi-sport events. The national fencing squad will include five male and four female athletes who will compete across foil and épée disciplines reflecting the continued growth and development of the sport in the Sultanate of Oman.

In the men’s competitions, Ali al Busaidy will compete in the foil event, while Ahmed Anwar Kaskas, Said bin Khalid al Shuaibi, Ammar bin Mohammed al Azizi and Al Harith bin Salim al Harthy will participate in the épée competitions. On the women’s side, Israa bint Saif al Siyabi



Oman fencing team during training.

will feature in the foil event, while Jana bint Mohammed al Sharji and Salma bint Said al Dughaishi will compete in the épée category.

The national team completed an intensive domestic training camp during the past month as part of preparations for the Gulf event. The camp concluded recently before the team’s departure to Doha on Tuesday, with the technical staff focusing on improving tactical discipline, technical execution and physical readiness ahead of the competitions which will begin

on Wednesday and continue until Friday. National team head coach Hisham Karshood expressed confidence in the squad’s readiness and ability to compete strongly against some of the Gulf region’s top fencers. “The training camp focused on refining technical skills, improving tactical awareness and enhancing physical fitness to meet the demands of high-level competition,” Karshood told *Oman Observer*.

“The players worked very hard and showed excellent commitment throughout the

preparation period. We are confident that the fencers have reached a good level of readiness ahead of the competition,” he added.

TOUGH COMPETITION

Karshood acknowledged that the level of competition at the GCC Games is expected to be highly competitive, especially with several participating nations fielding experienced senior-level athletes. “We are aware that the competition will be tough, particularly as some of our fencers are transitioning from youth to senior level,” he explained. “Despite this, I believe the players are capable of producing strong performances and win medals.”

Oman’s participation at the Games extends beyond fencing, with the Sultanate of Oman represented in 11 sports, including athletics, volleyball, taekwondo, karate, basketball, bowling, shooting, snooker and billiards, table tennis and aquatics.

COACHINGSKILLS



The course aims to develop the coaches’ level and enhance their technical and training skills.

OKC TO ORGANISE KARATE COACHES QUALIFICATION COURSE ON MAY 15, 16

MUSCAT: The Oman Karate Committee (OKC) will organise a Coaches Qualification Course on May 15 and 16, 2026 at the sports hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, with the participation of coaches from clubs, academies and private karate centres representing various governorates.

The course aims to develop the coaches’ level and enhance their technical and training skills, contributing to the advancement of karate in the Sultanate of Oman through specialised training programmes and lectures that combine both theoretical and practical aspects.

The course will focus on karate fundamentals (Kihon), in addition to training on the basic kata series (Heian), with the objective of strengthening the technical and skill-based abilities of participating coaches. It will also include practical training sessions on kumite fundamentals (free sparring), focusing on basic techniques and movement strategies inside the competition area.

In addition, the course will feature a specialised session on kumite strategies, covering technical and tactical aspects and methods of applying them during competitions, contributing to the development of the participants’ coaching mindset.

On the kata side, a special advanced kata training session will be conducted, highlighting several advanced technical and movement aspects in accordance with modern and internationally recognised karate methods.

An official certificate accredited by the Oman Karate Committee will be awarded to coaches participating in the course.

This course comes as part of the Oman Karate Committee’s continuous efforts to qualify national technical cadres and strengthen technical development programmes, positively reflecting on the level of coaches and athletes and contributing to the advancement of karate in Oman at both the local and international levels.



The course will focus on karate fundamentals (Kihon), in addition to training on the basic kata series (Heian).



Oman U17 players during a training session at their recent internal camp in Muscat.

Qatar edge Oman U17s in Doha friendly match

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 12

OMAN'S NATIONAL U17 football team suffered a 2-1 defeat against Qatar in their opening friendly match during the squad's external training camp in Doha, as preparations continue for a busy run of regional and continental assignments later this year.

The friendly, played on Monday evening at one of Doha's football academies, formed part of Oman's build-up programme under national coach Ahmed bin Salim Bait Said. Qatar used home advantage to take edge in the contest, while Rakan al Jabri scored Oman's lone goal in a match that gave the technical staff an important opportunity to assess the squad's progress.

Oman will have another chance to test itself against the same opponent when they meet Qatar in a second friendly on May 13, before concluding the short camp on May 14. The two matches are expected to provide valuable competitive minutes for the players and help the coaching team measure the side's readiness against strong regional opposition.

The camp in Qatar comes shortly after the team completed a domestic gathering in Muscat from May 6 to 9. Bait Said has largely retained the same group of players from that internal camp, allowing the coaching staff to continue working on tactical understanding,



Oman U17 squad members go through drills during the internal training camp in Muscat ahead of their friendly matches against Qatar in Doha.



physical readiness and team cohesion. The current phase of preparation is particularly important for the Junior Red Warriors, who are scheduled to compete in the Arab Cup in Libya in August, before

turning their focus to the West Asian Championship in Iraq in September. Their main continental target will be the AFC U17 Asian Cup Qualifiers, scheduled for November.

24-PLAYER SQUAD
Bait Said selected a 24-player squad for the Qatar camp, including Abdullah al Zaabi, Nahed Bait Jameel, Mohammed al Hinai, Mohammed al Kazrouni, Ahmed al Mukhaini, Said Bait Rajab, Bashar al Shamsi, Mohammed al Balushi, Hassan al Balushi, Nayer Bait Ardheen, Saif al Jabri, Jassim al Dawood, Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Jihad al Shukaili, Sultan al Balushi, Al Mulham al Sulaimi, Abdulrahman al Hashmi, Abdullah Bait Ali, Nader al Nubi, Rakan al Jabri, Abdulrahim al Tuwairshi, Mohammed al Amrani, Al Hussein al Ajmi and Mohammed al Maqbali.

Despite the opening defeat, the match served its wider purpose by giving Oman valuable exposure and helping the coaching staff identify areas that require further work before the team enters official competitions.

The OFA has placed the U17 squad on a structured preparation path aimed at raising the players' competitive level and building a side capable of delivering stronger performances in the coming months. The technical staff will continue to focus on improving tactical discipline, individual skills and the overall balance of the team as Oman look to shape a promising generation for future national duty.

Seeb Stars retain title in Oman Cricket Veterans League 2026

MUSCAT: The Oman Cricket Veterans League 2026 concluded on a dramatic note at the Oman Cricket Academy Grounds following two weeks of spirited competition that celebrated the enduring passion for the game among veteran cricketers across the Sultanate of Oman.

The tournament featured six teams — Dromedary CC, Sur Strikers, Seeb Stars, Salalah Challengers, Muscat Capitals and newly inducted side Sohar Titans. The league brought together 99 players aged 45 and above, all of whom are no longer active in the domestic circuit, rekindling old rivalries and

friendships through the spirit of cricket.

This year's edition once again showcased that cricket transcends generations, providing a platform for former players to reconnect with the sport while inspiring the wider cricketing community with their continued enthusiasm and commitment.

In a fitting repeat of last year's final, Seeb Stars and Muscat Capitals locked horns in a thrilling championship clash that ultimately required a super over to separate the two sides. Seeb Stars successfully defended their title to emerge champions for



Champions Seeb Stars pose with their trophy.

the second consecutive year. Batting first, Seeb Stars posted a competitive 146/6 in their 20 overs. Muscat

Capitals found themselves in deep trouble early in the chase after losing five wickets within the first 10

overs. However, Hemal Mehta produced a remarkable counter-attacking innings, smashing 72 runs off just 39 deliveries, including five towering sixes. In a sensational finish, three of those maximums came in the final over to level the scores and force the match into a super over.

Muscat Capitals managed 11 runs in the super over, once again aided by a crucial six from Hemal Mehta. However, Seeb Stars responded confidently as Prashanth Chandran struck a six off the very first ball of the super over bowled by Mehta, setting the tone that

sealed the title.

The Oman Cricket Veterans League 2026 stood as a celebration of both compassion and competition — highlighting not only the competitive edge that still burns within these players, but also the camaraderie, respect, and lifelong friendships that cricket continues to foster.

Oman Cricket extends its gratitude to all participating teams, players, officials, volunteers, and supporters for making the tournament a memorable success and reinforcing the inclusive and community-driven spirit of cricket in Oman.

SPORTS

SECOND SWEEP



LA Lakers’ Luke Kennard (10) and Rui Hachimura (28) in action against Oklahoma City Thunder’s Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2). — **Imagn Images**

LEBRON’S LAKERS ELIMINATED FROM NBA PLAYOFFS AS THUNDER SWEEP

LOS ANGELES: The Oklahoma City Thunder swept the Los Angeles Lakers out of the NBA playoffs on Monday, winning 115-110 to wrap up a 4-0 series victory in what could turn out to be the final game of LeBron James’ career. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points as the defending champion Thunder advanced to the Western Conference finals after sealing their second sweep of the postseason following a 4-0 first-round defeat of Phoenix. Lakers star James, 41, is out of contract after this season and has not yet indicated whether he plans to return for a 24th campaign next term. Oklahoma City will face either the San Antonio Spurs or Minnesota Timberwolves for a place in the NBA finals.

The Spurs and Timberwolves are tied at 2-2 in their best-of-seven semifinal series. Monday’s defeat marked the end of Lakers icon James’ latest bid for a fifth NBA championship, sealing a disappointing end to his record 23rd season. A star-studded Hollywood crowd including Leonardo DiCaprio, Sean Penn and Eddie Murphy flocked to courtside at the Crypto.com Arena to see if James could help the Lakers stave off elimination. But James’ 24 points and 12 rebounds were in vain as the Thunder kept their nerve to hold off a spirited second-half fightback by the Lakers. All eyes are now on James to see whether the four-time NBA Most Valuable Player and 22-time NBA All-Star will decide whether to prolong his glittering career. James, who joined the Lakers in 2018 from Cleveland, will enter the offseason as an unrestricted free agent and can listen to offers if he decides to keep playing. Speculation has swirled over what James — who has repeatedly said he wants to play on a team capable of challenging for championships — will decide to do. Some reports have indicated he is ready to extend with the Lakers, while others have suggested that he may consider heading elsewhere or decide to retire from the sport altogether. The Lakers had looked in position to mount a serious title run during the final weeks of the regular season, going 15-2 in March after a string of superb performances from Luka Doncic, Austin Reaves and James. However, a long-term injury in early April suffered by Doncic — who has not played at all during the postseason — and an injury to Reaves left the Lakers short on firepower for much of the playoffs. James produced a vintage display to lead the Lakers to a surprise 4-2 series win over the Houston Rockets in the first round, but even with Reaves back in the line-up, the 17-time NBA champions were convincingly beaten by Oklahoma City. — **AFP**



Italy’s Jannik Sinner celebrates after winning against Italy’s Andrea Pellegrino during the ATP Rome Open tournament at Foro Italico in Rome. — **AFP**

Sinner beat Pellegrino to enter Italian Open last 8

JANNIK SINNER’S charge towards a first Italian Open title continued on Tuesday after the world number one calmly dispatched countryman Andrea Pellegrino 6-2, 6-3. As expected, the top seed outclassed qualifier Pellegrino on centre court in a match which was in truth never much of a contest. The 24-year-old Sinner has now won 31 straight matches in Masters 1000 events to equal Novak Djokovic’s record run. Pellegrino’s arrival in the last 16 of his home tournament is by far his best result in a Masters 1000 event. The 29-year-old is set to move up to a career-best world ranking of 123rd after not just making the main draw of a top-ranked ATP tournament for the first time but also getting to face his country’s biggest sporting star in front of over 10,000 fans. Pellegrino received warm cheers as he put in a creditable performance against the dominant force in tennis, and he also showed some deft technique when given room to breathe by Sinner. But Sinner was never in top gear and still comfortably dealt with Pellegrino to set up a clash with either 12th seed Andrey Rublev or another qualifier in Georgia’s Nikoloz Basilashvili. Should Sinner win a record-extending sixth straight Masters 1000 title, he will be the first Italian to win at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago.



Romania’s Sorana Cirstea celebrates after winning against Latvia’s Jelena Ostapenko in Rome. — **AFP**

With great rival Carlos Alcaraz out injured and Djokovic eliminated early, Sinner is red-hot favourite for victory as he builds towards completing the career Grand Slam at Roland Garros. **RUUD DOWNS INJURED MUSETTI** Casper Ruud strolled into the last eight after easily beating another Italian, Lorenzo Musetti, 6-3, 6-1. Clay court specialist Ruud is yet to drop a set in Rome and he looked in fine form on a windy centre court, in stark contrast to eighth seed Musetti who has clearly been struggling physically. Musetti was in tears at the end of his third-round win over Francisco Cerundolo and had to take a medical time-out for a problem

with his left thigh during the second set against Ruud. The Italian will drop out of the top 10 of the men’s world rankings ahead of the French Open next week, and he later told reporters that he is unsure of whether he will participate in Paris. “I don’t know, in the next couple of days we’ll do some closer tests, something I’ve not been able to do given that I’m constantly playing,” said Musetti. Norwegian Ruud is on the other side of the draw from Sinner and will face Karen Khachanov in the last eight after exploiting Musetti’s struggles with fitness. “I realised that... we try to make him run as much as possible. It’s cruel and it’s brutal, but that’s sport,” Ruud told reporters. Khachanov, seeded 13th, ended Dino Prizmic’s bid to reach his first Masters 1000 quarterfinal, seeing off the spirited Croatian qualifier 6-1, 7-6 (7/2). Prizmic had announced himself on the big stage this week by knocking out Novak Djokovic in the second round. Veteran Sorana Cirstea, who knocked out world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the third round, reached the semifinals of the women’s tournament after beating Jelena Ostapenko 6-1, 7-6 (7/0) Romania Cirstea is set to retire at the end of the season and will face either Coco Gauff or Mirra Andreeva, on court centre court after Sinner, for a place in the Saturday’s final. — **AFP**

Rana shines as Bangladesh down Pakistan in first Test thriller

DHAKA: Pace bowler Nahid Rana claimed five wickets as Bangladesh trumped Pakistan by 104 runs in a rain-hit first Test on Tuesday after a thrilling fifth day of batting collapses. Chasing 268 for victory in Dhaka, Pakistan were 119-3 before they fell to 163 all out in the final session with debutant Abdullah Fazal scoring a valiant 66. Bangladesh now hold a 1-0 lead in the two-match home series. The Test win was Bangladesh’s first against Pakistan on home soil and their third overall. The 23-year-old Fazal put on 51 runs with Salman Agha, who made 26, to raise Pakistan’s hopes of victory before Rana rattled the opposition with career-best figures of 5-40. Rana, 23, made an impact with his pace and reverse swing and his final

spell of 4.5 overs got him four wickets for just 10 runs to turn the match on its head. “Very happy — proud of all the guys, the way we played,” Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said. “We have been working hard the last few months and slowly we are getting better at Test cricket —that’s one thing we have always wanted to do.” The victory also saw Shanto equal Mushfiquir Rahim’s record of seven Test wins as Bangladesh captain, achieving the milestone in just 17 matches compared to Mushfiquir’s 34. Bangladesh came into the final day with a lead of 179 runs at 152-3 but a clutch of wickets made them falter despite Shanto’s 87. Bangladesh declared their second innings on



Bangladesh’s Nahid Rana acknowledges the crowd after taking a five-wicket haul after his team’s win at the end of the first Test against Pakistan at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. — **AFP**

240-9 to hand Pakistan a competitive target and a chance for their bowlers to make use of the deteriorating pitch. Taskin Ahmed took down opener Imam-ul-Haq for two and Mehidy Hasan Miraz bowled debutant and first-innings centurion Azan Awaiz for 15. Rana removed Pakistan captain Shan Masood for two before Fazal and Agha counter-attacked in their fourth-wicket partnership, but Bangladesh bowlers proved their mettle on home turf to secure victory in the final session of the day. Rana delivered the decisive blows. He had Saud Shakeel caught behind before producing the ball of the match — a thunderous 147 kmph (91.3 mph) in-swinging yorker that bowled Mohammad Rizwan for 15.

Rana was on a roll as he trapped Noman Ali lbw and then bounced out Shaheen Shah Afridi, with Mahmudul Hasan Joy taking a simple catch to complete a famous victory. Pakistan captain Masood offered no excuses for his side’s failure to seize the key moments in the match. “In the first innings, with bat and ball, we needed to do better,” he said. “When you have the game in your hands you have to push the opposition away, but we failed to do that.” Shanto stood out for his batting brilliance as he made 101 in the first innings to guide Bangladesh to 413. Pakistan responded with 386 in their first innings but conceded a slender lead after off-spinner Mehidy returned figures of 5-102. — **AFP**

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
8,285.221

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$104.74
BRENT \$106.21
LIGHT \$100.38



SHORT TAKES



Discussions focused on the legal and framework governing economic concentration applications.

MOCIIP WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS MERGER COMPLIANCE RULES

MUSCAT: The Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre at Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) organised a specialised workshop in Muscat on mechanisms for submitting economic concentration applications, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen compliance with competition regulations and enhance transparency in the market.

The workshop brought together representatives from law firms handling economic concentration applications on behalf of companies, particularly in relation to mergers and acquisitions.

Discussions focused on the legal and procedural framework governing economic concentration applications, including cases requiring prior approval, application procedures, required documentation and the criteria used by ministry specialists to assess and review submissions.

Participants also took part in a discussion session addressing key challenges faced by companies and legal representatives in complying with economic concentration regulations, as well as mechanisms for improving procedures in line with applicable laws and regulations.

Ghalib bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, said the workshop reflects the ministry’s commitment to raising awareness about economic concentration procedures and promoting compliance with competition laws.

He noted that strengthening understanding of application mechanisms contributes to regulating economic activity, reinforcing market principles and ensuring price freedom without restricting fair competition.

Sultan bin Saif al Maawali, Head of the Economic Concentration Applications Oversight Section at the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre, said the workshop aimed to enhance awareness of legal procedures and requirements related to economic concentration activities, including mergers and acquisitions. — ONA

HM visit signals strong support for energy sector

HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s visit to Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) on Tuesday underscored the Sultanate of Oman’s continued commitment to strengthening the energy sector through digital transformation, operational excellence and advanced technologies aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

During the visit, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik inaugurated the Integrated Operations Centre at Bait Al Haitham, a major strategic facility designed to unify the remote monitoring and management of PDO’s oil, gas and energy assets within a single integrated operational environment.

The inauguration marks a key milestone in PDO’s corporate transformation journey and reflects the national drive to adopt Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies across critical sectors of the economy.

The world-class centre enables real-time operational coordination, integrated decision-making and enhanced efficiency across PDO’s extensive production network. It also supports remote operations and improves operational reliability and safety through continuous monitoring and collaboration across the company’s assets.

The facility remotely oversees 227 producing oil fields, 39 producing gas fields, 29 key production facilities and 15 power generation plants with a combined capacity of 1,400 megawatts. More than 13,000 active wells are connected through an integrated network of pipelines and transportation systems managed through the centre.

PDO said the project supports its long-term strategy to enhance operational resilience, improve resource management and reinforce Oman’s position as a



The Integrated Operations Centre at Bait Al Haitham is designed to unify the remote monitoring and management of PDO’s oil, gas and energy assets within a single integrated operational environment.



The inauguration of Bait Al Haitham reflects the continued support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the energy sector and highlights the growing role of innovation, digital transformation and operational excellence in driving sustainable economic development.

DR AFLAH BIN SAID AL HADHRAMI
Managing Director, PDO

leading regional energy producer.

Dr Aflah bin Said al Hadhrami, Managing Director of PDO, described the Royal visit as an exceptional national occasion and a defining moment in the company’s transformation journey under the theme “For Oman”.

He said the inauguration of Bait Al Haitham reflects the continued support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the energy sector and highlights the growing role of innovation, digital transformation and operational excellence in driving sustainable economic development.

Al Hadhrami added that the visit represents a source of pride and motivation for PDO employees, particularly Omani professionals who continue to play a leading role in shaping the company’s future.

He noted that the visit also reflects the confidence placed in PDO as a strategic national institution that contributes significantly to economic growth, energy security and long-term sustainability.

The centre further demonstrates PDO’s focus on

developing national talent and strengthening localisation within the energy sector. The facility currently employs 279 staff members and has achieved an Omanisation rate of 95 per cent.

PDO also reported strong operational performance in 2025, recording its highest oil production levels since 2002 while maintaining an overall Omanisation rate of 92.7 per cent.

As part of its workforce development strategy, the company launched the “Ruwwad” leadership programme in partnership with London Business School to prepare the next generation of company leaders.

The company also highlighted notable progress in occupational and operational safety. PDO completed 10 years without lost-time injuries in exploration operations, while lost-time injuries across operations declined by 15 per cent in 2025 compared to the previous year.

Vehicle accidents fell by 40 per cent, while Level 1 and Level 2 operational incidents declined by 85 per cent compared to 2020 levels. — ONA

Oman must accelerate AI economy shift: World Bank

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 12

Oman has built one of the Gulf’s strongest digital and cybersecurity foundations, but it now faces a more difficult challenge: turning that infrastructure into a competitive artificial intelligence (AI) economy capable of generating jobs, attracting investment and reducing long-term dependence on hydrocarbons.

That was the central message delivered last Thursday by Zaki Badie Khoury, Senior Digital Specialist at the World Bank Group, during a presentation in Muscat examining digital transformation trends across the GCC and Oman’s readiness for the AI era.

Khoury said Oman had made major advances over the past decade in broadband connectivity, digital government services, regulation and cybersecurity, placing the country among the stronger performers regionally in institutional digital readiness.

“The picture is extremely positive when it comes to the foundation”,



Health, education and energy sectors can support AI development, innovation and investment if made more accessible to the private sector: WB

Khoury said. “We do have all the foundational elements that we can build on”.

The presentation showed Oman achieving near-universal 4G coverage and high levels of 5G deployment, while government digital services and cybersecurity capabilities have advanced significantly in recent years.

Khoury described Oman as one of the GCC’s more advanced countries in terms of regulatory and institutional frameworks supporting digital transformation.

“Oman is one of the most prominent when it comes to

cybersecurity capabilities”, he said, describing it as an important safeguard for accelerating digital economic activity.

Yet despite that progress, the World Bank specialist warned that the next phase of economic competition in the Gulf would depend less on basic digital infrastructure and more on artificial intelligence capabilities, advanced skills, private-sector innovation and large-scale investment.

“Oman is still on the emerging side compared to the rest of the GCC when it comes to preparing

the public sector and government to fully take advantage of AI”, Khoury said.

The presentation highlighted widening investment gaps between Oman and regional competitors such as the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which are aggressively expanding AI ecosystems, data centres and advanced digital industries as part of broader economic diversification strategies.

Khoury said Oman’s challenge now is not simply digitalisation, but converting digital infrastructure into measurable economic growth and employment.

“It’s time really to capitalise on this in order to transform them into more growth and jobs”, he said.

According to the presentation, Oman’s digital economy currently contributes between 2.4 and 2.8 per cent of GDP, well below Oman Vision 2040’s target of 10 per cent by the end of the strategy period.

The presentation argued that stronger AI adoption and digital investment could help Oman generate new non-oil

growth sectors at a time when Gulf economies are seeking to reduce long-term hydrocarbon dependence.

Khoury noted that neighbouring countries are investing at significantly higher levels in AI and digital technologies, while Oman still has substantial room to increase investment and attract foreign direct investment into advanced technology sectors.

The presentation also identified Oman’s young population as one of its strongest long-term competitive advantages.

Around 64 per cent of the population is under the age of 30, creating what Khoury described as significant potential for developing advanced digital and AI skills if linked to education reform and specialised training.

The World Bank specialist said progress had already been made through digital education initiatives, e-government reforms and early AI adoption efforts within some sectors.

However, he stressed that future success would depend heavily on execution speed and private-sector participation.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The visit reflects Vodafone Oman's role as a strategic gateway, enabling Omani government entities to access global best practices.

VODAFONE OMAN LEADS INNOVATION VISIT TO LUXEMBOURG

MUSCAT: Leveraging its global reach and strategic partnerships, Vodafone Oman led and coordinated a high-level visit to Luxembourg for a delegation from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada) and the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), aimed at exploring international technology, procurement and innovation models that support SME growth and economic development.

The visit reflects Vodafone Oman's role as a strategic gateway, enabling Omani government entities to access global best practices, future-ready ecosystems and applied models that support national development priorities.

Eng Bader al Zidi, CEO of Vodafone Oman said, "SME growth today requires more than access to funding or markets. It requires exposure to systems that help businesses scale, compete and integrate into wider value chains.

Through Vodafone's global network, we are able to support that by opening direct channels to models and expertise that are already being applied internationally. Our focus is not to replicate another market, but to understand what is relevant and how it can support Oman's own priorities".

Vodafone Oman facilitated visits to a number of leading technology and innovation platforms, focusing on areas such as procurement, artificial intelligence and SME growth.

These included Vodafone Procure & Connect that brings together world-class procurement and global voice and roaming to simplify how you buy, connect and operate; Tomorrow Street, a joint venture between Vodafone and Technoport supporting the growth of scaleups; and the House of Startups, an initiative by the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce that brings together government, private sector and innovators within one environment.

The programme provided insight into how centralised procurement is managed at scale, how high-potential companies are integrated into global ecosystems and how structured environments support collaboration and commercial growth.

The visit builds on Vodafone Oman's wider focus on supporting Oman's digital development through connectivity, enterprise solutions, cybersecurity, digital platforms and partnerships that create practical value for businesses and communities across the Sultanate of Oman.

In 2025, Vodafone Oman recorded strong growth in its enterprise segment, reflecting increasing demand from organisations for reliable connectivity, secure digital platforms and responsive support that can evolve with their operational needs.

Denza B8: Standard for flagship hybrid luxury

THE Denza B8 continues to set the benchmark for luxury hybrid SUVs in Oman, offering a sophisticated blend of high-end technology and powerful performance.

Designed for those who demand excellence in every detail, this seven-seat flagship provides a seamless experience, whether navigating the bustling streets or venturing across diverse landscapes.

PERFORMANCE AND PRECISION ENGINEERING

The Denza B8 is built on a foundation of remarkable mechanical capability. Its dual-motor all-wheel-drive system, combined with a 2.0-litre turbo petrol engine, produces a formidable 603 hp and 760 Nm of torque.

This translates to a 0–100 km/h acceleration time of just 4.8 seconds, providing the responsiveness of a sports car within a full-size SUV frame. Beyond pure speed, the B8 offers a combined range of up to 825 km, ensuring long-distance travel across the Sultanate of Oman is both efficient and uninterrupted.

The exterior of the B8 reflects a purposeful design philosophy. Its upright grille and signature matrix LED headlamps create a distinctive face, while the 2920 mm wheelbase and 20-inch alloy wheels provide a grounded, stable stance.

The vehicle is designed to be adventure-ready, featuring a rear-mounted spare tyre



The Denza B8 is built on a foundation of remarkable mechanical capability.

and geometric bumpers that highlight its off-road character. With specialised terrain modes for mud, sand and snow, the B8 is as capable on rugged terrain as it is refined on the streets of Muscat.

The cabin of the Denza B8 is a curated space of comfort and high-end technology. Available in elegant dark black or wheat yellow, the interior features three rows of seating designed to accommodate seven passengers in total serenity.

The driver and passengers are treated to a 17.3-inch infotainment display and a 16-speaker Devialet sound system that

delivers a world-class acoustic experience.

Details such as ventilated, 8-way power-adjustable seats and dedicated driver headrest speakers ensure that the environment remains personal and relaxing, even on the longest journeys.

Safety in the B8 is managed by a comprehensive suite of intelligent systems designed to assist the driver at every turn. The vehicle features an advanced array of braking technologies, including hydraulic brake assist and a parking brake deceleration system, alongside stability tools like rollover mitigation and hill descent control.

Meethaq launches exclusive Haj offers for customers

MUSCAT: In celebration of this year's Haj season, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, has launched a range of Sharia-compliant banking offers designed to support pilgrims performing Haj and ease their journey, while delivering added value to its esteemed customers.

Meethaq's exclusive Haj season offers include a competitive rate on travel finance, 50% cashback on credit card purchases made within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, capped at RO 20, as well as first-year annual fee waiver on new credit cards for pilgrims.

These offers reflect Meethaq's commitment at providing banking solutions tailored to customers' needs across different occasions and seasons. Meethaq's Travel Finance product features financing of up to 100%, a convenient payment plan, competitive pricing, nominal processing fees and partnerships with leading travel operators and service providers



These offers reflect Meethaq's commitment at providing banking solutions tailored to customers' needs across different occasions and seasons.

in the Sultanate of Oman.

The product has been developed under the principle of Sharia compliant Service Ijarah, ensuring full alignment with Islamic finance practices.

Meethaq Islamic Banking also offers a diverse portfolio of credit cards, including the Meethaq LuLu Credit Card, Meethaq Visa Gold Credit Card, Meethaq Platinum Credit Card

and the Hafawa Visa Signature Credit Card.

These cards provide a wide range of benefits to suit customer's varying needs, including travel benefits, airport lounge access, cashback rewards, easy payment plans, supplementary cards for family members and secure online shopping. Meethaq credit cards are accepted worldwide, giving customers access to an extensive range of offers and many more benefits.

Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager, Personal Banking, Meethaq Islamic Banking, said: "We are delighted to mark this year's Haj season by offering our valued customers a comprehensive suite of banking solutions specially tailored to ease their Haj pilgrimage. Meethaq's participation in such occasions reflects our enduring commitment to meeting customers' needs and delivering a distinguished banking experience."

Sohar International partners with MoTCIT to build local IT talent

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to nurturing national talent, Sohar International has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) to launch a paid, training programme in the field of Information Technology.

The MoU comes within the framework of the "National Initiative for Digital Competencies – Makeen", aligning with Oman's evolving digital economy and aiming to strengthen pathways for building technical capabilities among Omani talent.

Sohar International continues to renew its partnerships with the public sector, aligning efforts to achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises labour market development and employment generation as key national priorities.

The MoU was signed on behalf of Sohar International by its Chief People Officer, Mahira al Raisi, representing the bank's Chief



The MoU comes within the framework of "Makeen", aligning with Oman's evolving digital economy and aiming to strengthen pathways for building technical capabilities.

Executive Officer, alongside Dr Seema Saady Nasser al Kaabi, Director General – Sector Stimulation & Future Skills, representing the Ministry, in the presence of a distinguished group of senior officials from both entities.

Commenting on the agreement, Mahira al Raisi said, "At Sohar International, we view talent development as a strategic priority that enables us to innovate and remain competitive in an increasingly digital financial landscape.

As banking evolves at the intersection of finance and technology, building a strong, future-ready talent pipeline is central to our institutional strategy.

This initiative is designed to identify and prepare individuals for meaningful roles by providing early exposure to the standards and pace of a modern banking environment. By investing in talent at this stage, we are laying the foundation for professionals who can grow with the organisation over time.

We will work hand in hand with the government sector to achieve the objectives of

Oman Vision 2040, which aims to increase the proportion of the national workforce to 40% of total newly created jobs in the private sector by 2040".

Dr Seema Saady Nasser al Kaabi, Director General – Sector Stimulation & Future Skills from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology added, "This cooperation reflects a broader national priority to align talent development initiatives with the evolving needs of the labour market, particularly in high-impact sectors such as Information Technology.

It also reinforces the importance of integrating private sector participation into national efforts to ensure that skill development remains relevant, targeted and responsive to real industry requirements. Through collaborations of this nature, we aim to enhance the overall quality and readiness of the national workforce, support employability and contribute to building a knowledge-based and digitally enabled economy".

SHORTTAKES

BANK NIZWA
APPOINTS NEW CEO

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of Bank Nizwa has recently announced the appointment of Tariq Atiq as Chief Executive Officer of the bank. This appointment underscores the bank’s continued commitment to empowering Omani talent, reinforcing leadership continuity and driving long-term strategic growth. It also reflects Bank Nizwa’s vision of building a future-ready leadership team capable of sustaining innovation and strengthening the bank’s position within the Islamic banking sector.



TARIQ ATIQ
CEO, Bank Nizwa

Having served as Acting CEO during the previous period, Tariq brings over 25 years of extensive banking experience across retail, corporate, SME and digital banking. He is widely recognised for leading transformative initiatives and pioneering digital projects that have enhanced operational efficiency and elevated customer experience. Throughout his career, he has spearheaded several landmark initiatives, including the development of Oman’s first e-commerce gateway, in addition to contributing to the implementation of advanced digital banking solutions that supported business growth and sector-wide innovation. Tariq holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the United States and an Executive MBA in Digital Transformation Leadership from HEC — Paris. He has also completed executive education programmes at globally renowned institutions, including Harvard Business School in the US and INSEAD in France, in addition to earning several internationally recognised professional certifications that further strengthened his strategic and leadership expertise. Through this appointment, Bank Nizwa continues to empower local talent to advance its vision of delivering innovative Islamic banking solutions driven by excellence, sustainability and customer-centricity, while contributing to the ongoing development of Oman’s banking and financial sector.

be’ah unveils industrial investment opportunities

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 12

Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) has announced a new package of industrial investment opportunities aimed at strengthening Oman’s manufacturing base, reducing import dependency and enhancing local supply chain resilience as part of wider economic diversification and industrial localisation efforts. The initiative, launched under the broader national drive spearheaded by Oman Investment Authority, focuses on attracting local and international investors into specialised manufacturing segments linked to environmental services, healthcare and infrastructure development. be’ah said the opportunities align with the country’s push to establish a robust industrial ecosystem while increasing In-Country Value (ICV) and supporting sustainable economic growth. Among the key opportunities announced is the establishment of a manufacturing facility for geosynthetic materials in Oman.



The initiative focuses on attracting local and international investors into specialised manufacturing segments. (Image for illustration only).

These engineered polymer-based materials are widely used in landfill engineering, environmental protection, transportation infrastructure, mining, water management and oil and gas projects. According to the investment brief, Oman currently imports a significant portion of its

geosynthetic material requirements from overseas suppliers, exposing projects to supply chain disruptions, pricing volatility and longer procurement timelines. The proposed local manufacturing facility is expected to reduce reliance on imports while improving project delivery reliability and supporting major

public and private infrastructure programmes. The planned facility will manufacture products including geotextiles, HDPE geomembranes, geonets and geogrids in compliance with international standards. These products are essential for landfill liner systems, road and railway construction, coastal protection and environmental containment applications. be’ah noted that the project offers strong investment fundamentals due to rising domestic demand from infrastructure and environmental projects, limited local manufacturing capability and growing export potential to GCC, Indian and East African markets. In a parallel opportunity, be’ah is also seeking investors to establish a specialised facility for manufacturing healthcare waste disposal containers within Oman. The project targets the production of disposable healthcare waste (HCW) bins of varying capacities used for the safe handling and segregation of hazardous medical waste, including sharps, infectious materials and pharmaceutical waste.

The company stated that the healthcare waste management segment is witnessing growing demand amidst the expansion of healthcare services and stricter safety regulations. The proposed plant will manufacture sharp containers as well as 60-litre, 80-litre and 120-litre bins in accordance with international standards such as WHO guidelines, UN3291 and ISO 23907. The project is expected to support Oman’s healthcare and environmental objectives by strengthening domestic production capabilities, improving supply security and reducing dependence on imported products. be’ah added that the initiative also aligns with the objectives of Rawabt and Oman’s ICV framework. The announcement reflects increasing momentum behind Oman’s industrial localisation agenda as the country accelerates efforts to develop strategic manufacturing capabilities linked to sustainability, environmental management and infrastructure development.

CURRENCY MARKETS

US and Japan back stable yen



The United States and Japan agreed that excessive currency market volatility is undesirable, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said following talks with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi. Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda’s ability to steer monetary policy effectively while addressing inflation pressures in the Japanese economy. — ONA

SUPPLY CONCERNS

Oil prices climb on Iran fears



Oil prices rose around 2 per cent on Tuesday as hopes for a quick end to the US-Israeli-Iran conflict, reviving concerns over global supply disruptions. Brent crude climbed to \$106.21 a barrel, while US crude reached \$100.38. Markets remained focused on tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz after Iran reiterated its sovereignty over the strategic waterway used for oil shipments. — Reuters

PRECIOUS METALS

Gold steadies before data



Gold prices were little changed on Tuesday as investors monitored Middle East developments and awaited key US inflation data for clues on future interest rate policy. Spot gold traded at \$4,732.89 per ounce, while US gold futures for June delivery gained 0.3 per cent to \$4,742.40. Markets are also watching US President Donald Trump ahead of his planned visit to China. — ONA

Carbon recycling study
launched for Duqm steel

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 12

UK-BASED

industrial decarbonisation technology firm PeroCycle has announced that it has been commissioned by Jindal Steel Oman to assess the feasibility of deploying its carbon recycling technology at the company’s low-carbon integrated DRI complex currently under construction at the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The initiative aims to transform carbon emissions into a valuable industrial resource, potentially paving the way for a new global benchmark in low-emission steel production in the Sultanate of Oman. Phase 1 of Jindal Steel Duqm’s 5 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) low-carbon steel complex is currently advancing at SEZAD. The project comprises two Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) plants, each with a capacity of 2.5 MTPA, based on Energinon technology — a gas-based process that converts iron ore pellets or lump ore into high-purity metallic iron, known as DRI or hot-briquetted iron (HBI). As part of the feasibility assessment, PeroCycle plans to deploy its proprietary



The feasibility assessment aims to transform carbon emissions into a valuable industrial resource. (Picture for illustration).

technology to capture carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions generated during steel production and convert them back into carbon monoxide (CO), enabling the gas to be reused within the steelmaking process itself. Unlike many decarbonisation solutions that require entirely new steel plants or extensive infrastructure modifications, PeroCycle says its technology can be integrated into existing blast furnace and DRI-based operations. Using a proprietary thermochemical reactor and advanced perovskite-based

materials, the system creates a circular carbon loop that could potentially reduce emissions from integrated steel mills by up to 90 per cent. “We are honoured to be working alongside Jindal Steel Oman, a company that is clearly at the forefront of the global decarbonisation transition”, said Grant Budge, CEO of PeroCycle. “This feasibility assessment is more than just a study; it could serve as a blueprint for the future of the industry. By combining PeroCycle’s ability to recycle CO₂ with Jindal’s operational excellence, we aim to demonstrate that

decarbonisation and industrial growth can go hand in hand”. Harssha Shetty, CEO of Jindal Steel Oman, commented: “Exploring innovative technologies such as PeroCycle’s reflects our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint while maintaining our competitive edge in the global steel market. We look forward to evaluating the technical and economic outcomes of this study as we continue to lead the way in sustainable steelmaking”. Phase 1 of the Duqm project is scheduled for commissioning in early 2027.

OPINION

Rising bank credit signals confidence in Oman’s industrial sector



ENG JASIM SAIF AL JADEEDI

The writer is the Director of the Technical Office of the Under-Secretary of Commerce and Industry, MoCIIP

OMAN’S industrial sector is witnessing an advanced stage of growth and expansion, supported by a notable increase in bank credit directed towards industrial activities.

This comes at a time when financing provided by the Development Bank recorded a decline during 2025, reflecting structural shifts in industrial financing sources and a growing tendency among investors towards larger-scale commercial and banking finance.

According to data from the 2026 Statistical Yearbook, bank credit extended to the industrial sector rose from approximately RO 2.504 billion in 2024 to around RO 2.918 billion by the end of 2025, registering a growth of about 16.5% compared to 2024.

This represents one of the highest growth rates among economic activities. This increase reflects the growing confidence of the banking sector in Oman’s industrial base, particularly with the expansion of investments in the manufacturing of renewable energy technologies, metals, food processing and pharmaceuticals, in addition to major industrial projects in Suhar, Al Duqm and Salalah.

It also reflects the success of government policies linked to the “Oman Industrial Strategy 2040”, which aims to increase the industrial sector’s contribution to GDP, boost

non-oil exports, strengthen local content and attract high-quality investments.

In contrast, data on loan distribution from the Development Bank show a decline in financing to the industrial sector, from approximately RO 91.4 million in 2024 to around RO 71 million in 2025, a decrease of nearly 22%. The number of industrial loans also fell from 1,317 to 1,256 during the same period.

Despite this decline, the industrial sector remains the leading sector financed by the bank, accounting for 33.2% of its total financing portfolio in 2025, compared to 38.9% in 2024. This indicates that the industrial sector continues to hold strategic importance, although changes have occurred in financing volumes and the nature of funded projects.

This decline may be attributed to several factors, most notably the shift of a number of medium and large industrial companies towards direct commercial financing from conventional and Islamic banks, benefitting from improved investment conditions, greater access to flexible credit facilities and lower interest rates.

It may also reflect a strategic shift by the bank towards restructuring its financing priorities, with increased focus on small and medium-sized enterprises and other productive sectors such as mining, tourism and professional services, some of which

The industrial sector rose from approximately RO 2.504 billion in 2024 to around RO 2.918 billion by the end of 2025, registering a growth of about 16.5% compared to 2024.

recorded growth in financing during 2025.

At the same time, the rise in industrial bank credit confirms that the industrial sector has become more attractive and profitable for financial institutions, particularly with the expansion of export-oriented industries, clean energy projects and industrial value chains, thereby strengthening economic diversification efforts.

However, it remains important to maintain complementary roles between commercial banks and the Development Bank, particularly in financing emerging industries and SMEs that may face challenges in accessing traditional commercial financing.

There is also a growing need to develop more diversified industrial financing instruments, including long-term financing, industrial venture capital and technology-focused industrial funds, to support Oman’s transition towards advanced industries and a green economy.

Overall, current indicators suggest that industrial sector continues to strengthen its position as one of the key drivers of economic growth and diversification, supported by increasing banking confidence and expanding industrial investments. This enhances the prospects of achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 in building a competitive economy based on production, exports and innovation.

OMANI STUDENTS AS TRACK 2 DIPLOMATS?

AZIZA AL MUGHAIRY

During the formative years of the Omani education system, the Sultanate of Oman, like many Gulf states, relied heavily on transnational higher education. Students were sent abroad to study while national curricula and institutions were still being developed.

In parallel, Oman invested in building its own HEIs, creating the infrastructure necessary to educate future generations domestically. Despite this evolution, one question remains constant: why do we pursue higher education? The answers are often multifaceted, but the underlying objective is consistent: to acquire knowledge, develop skills and expand intellectual capacity.

Yet, some of the most significant outputs of this process remain largely underutilised: the dissertations and theses. For most students, writing a dissertation is a prerequisite for obtaining a degree, be it undergraduate or postgraduate. However, once submitted, it is rarely, if ever revisited. This is particularly significant for Oman, which continues to have a large number of students studying abroad. Each year, a substantial body of research is produced by Omani students across global institutions.

In many developed nations, states leverage such output through scientific attachés to promote their research ecosystems and attract talent. In the Omani context, however, this research often remains disconnected from national priorities.

This raises a simple but important question: could Oman benefit from encouraging students to conduct research on topics relevant to the Sultanate of Oman? Such an approach would yield two immediate advantages.

First, it would create a large, centralised digital repository of knowledge, like a pool of research that could be drawn upon by students, policymakers, institutions and academics for knowledge creation.

Second, it would foster the concept of “knowledge economy”, as in a research-oriented mindset among younger generations, embedding a culture of inquiry and national relevance within academic work, which is key to the achievement of Oman Vision 2040.

This is particularly important in the context of Oman’s ambition to transition towards a knowledge-based economy.

High-quality student research, in fields including but not limited to economics, politics, engineering, water management and environmental studies, could serve as a valuable data source for national development. While not all disciplines lend themselves to an Omani-specific focus, those that do present a clear opportunity,

Rethinking second languages in schools

EGYPT’S recent decision to introduce Japanese as a second foreign language in preparatory schools starting from the 2026/2027 academic year may appear to be a simple educational reform.

In reality, it reflects a much larger global trend: countries are increasingly using language policy as part of long-term economic and technological strategy.

Today, governments no longer choose foreign languages only for cultural or academic reasons.

Languages are becoming connected to investment flows, industrial development, future jobs, artificial intelligence and global competitiveness. In many ways, the language taught in classrooms is becoming a signal of the economic future a country wants to build.

For decades, English dominated education systems because it became the global language of business, finance, science, aviation, software and international trade.

It still dominates AI research, software development and global financial systems. But the global economy is changing rapidly and many countries are now adding languages linked to emerging industrial powers and future technologies.

Egypt’s choice of Japanese is especially significant because Japan represents much more than a language. Japan remains one of the world’s leading economies in robotics, automotive manufacturing, precision engineering, electronics and industrial automation.

Japanese companies continue to play major roles in global manufacturing and infrastructure projects, while Japan remains among the world’s largest investors in industrial development worldwide.

This means the decision is not simply about teaching students how to speak Japanese. It is also about preparing future generations to work with Japanese industries, technologies, management systems and investment networks.



Students practice English with an AI-enabled device in the southern city of Bengaluru, India. For illustration only. — Reuters



DR ZIAD ALZAIDI

The writer is a strategic management & organisational transformation consultant

Languages are becoming connected to investment flows, industrial development, future jobs, artificial intelligence and global competitiveness. In many ways, the language taught in classrooms is becoming a signal of the economic future a country wants to build.

Over recent years, Egypt has already expanded cooperation with Japan through Japanese schools, technical education partnerships and the Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST). The language initiative appears to be another step towards building a deeper long-term economic relationship.

From an economic perspective, language reduces barriers between markets. Companies invest more comfortably, where communication becomes easier. Technology transfer improves when engineers, technicians and managers understand not only the language itself, but also the professional culture and operational mindset behind it.

This is why many countries are increasingly linking language education directly to labour-market planning. A student learning Japanese today may become an engineer, robotics technician, logistics specialist, researcher, or factory manager ten years from now.

Educational systems are increasingly being used to prepare workforces for future economic structures rather than only current market needs. This matters greatly as countries compete to attract high-value sectors such as semiconductors, advanced manufacturing, logistics, renewable energy and AI-related industries.

Even classroom values are

becoming economically relevant. Reports surrounding the Egyptian initiative mention Japanese educational approaches that emphasise discipline, teamwork, responsibility, practical learning and collective problem solving.

These are not simply social values. They are productivity skills directly connected to industrial performance and workplace efficiency.

Similar patterns are appearing across the world. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have expanded Mandarin-language programmes, as China became one of their largest trade and investment partners through energy, logistics, infrastructure and digital projects.

Singapore also used multilingual education to build a workforce capable of operating efficiently between Asian and Western markets, helping transform the country into a global hub for trade, finance, logistics and technology.

The rise of artificial intelligence is making this discussion even more important. Some argue that AI-powered translation tools will eventually reduce the importance of learning foreign languages. However, this assumption oversimplifies how modern economies actually function.

Artificial intelligence can translate words quickly, yet it still struggles to fully understand workplace culture, negotiation behaviour, management systems and industrial standards.

In advanced industries and international partnerships, human understanding still matters greatly. In fact, AI may increase the strategic importance of language policy rather than reduce it.

Countries are now competing to position themselves inside future technological ecosystems. Japanese increasingly connects to robotics and precision manufacturing.

Mandarin connects to the world’s largest industrial ecosystem and growing AI capabilities. Korean is increasingly linked to semiconductors and electronics, while English continues to dominate AI research and software development.

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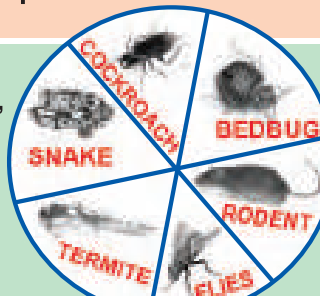
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ART/LIFE



OMAN’S FIRST ROBOT WITH AN OMANI IDENTITY > 20

ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

ART NEVER REALLY DISAPPEARS DURING WAR



Yeru Ebuén
The writer is a luxury media strategist and a creative director

As someone who genuinely loves art, I’ve always found it strange that the extreme heat of April and May never really bothers me. While most people complain about the start of summer, I quietly look forward to it because, for me, this has become the season of art.

Over the last three years before this one, I’ve spent this period following and celebrating Omani and Oman-based artists presenting their work at Art Dubai.

Many of them drew inspiration from Oman itself: its mountains, villages, landscapes, traditions and even its environmental fragility and brought those stories onto an international stage.

I’ve seen installations that made people emotional.

I’ve seen artworks that tackled climate change, identity, migration and politics. Some pieces were deeply personal. Others reflected the anxieties of the world around us. But what stayed with me most was how Oman’s neighbouring powerhouse managed to build a cultural meeting point where artists from places like Oman could enter global conversations without losing their own identity in the process.

But this year feels different. The fair’s 20th anniversary arrives at a difficult time for the region.

Wars, political tensions and instability across parts of the Middle East forced organisers to rethink parts of the event. And yet, despite everything, the fair still continued.

Maybe smaller. Maybe quieter. More restrained. But alive. And there’s something deeply human about that.

Lately, whether I’m thinking about Venice, Dubai or even smaller art spaces in Oman, I keep coming back to one

uncomfortable truth: art never really disappears during war. If anything, it becomes more important. History has shown this repeatedly. During World War II, artists continued painting while cities burned around them. Palestinian artists turned embroidery, murals and poetry into forms of resistance and cultural survival.

Lebanese artists continued creating through years of civil war. In the middle of all this geopolitical uncertainty, I’ve come to realise that the region needs artists now more than ever, not necessarily to shout louder, but to speak more honestly.

I hope there will still be many exhibitions this year because when visitors walk through these spaces, I hope they understand that something deeper is happening beneath the gallery walls. What they are really seeing is a region refusing to let instability define it completely.

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



THEATRE

Mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard as Frida Kahlo performs on stage during a dress rehearsal of “El Ultimo Sueno de Frida y Diego” at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

— AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

French actor Lucas Bravo arrives at the Grand Hyatt Cannes Hotel Martinez, on the eve of the opening ceremony of the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival. — AFP



TOURISM

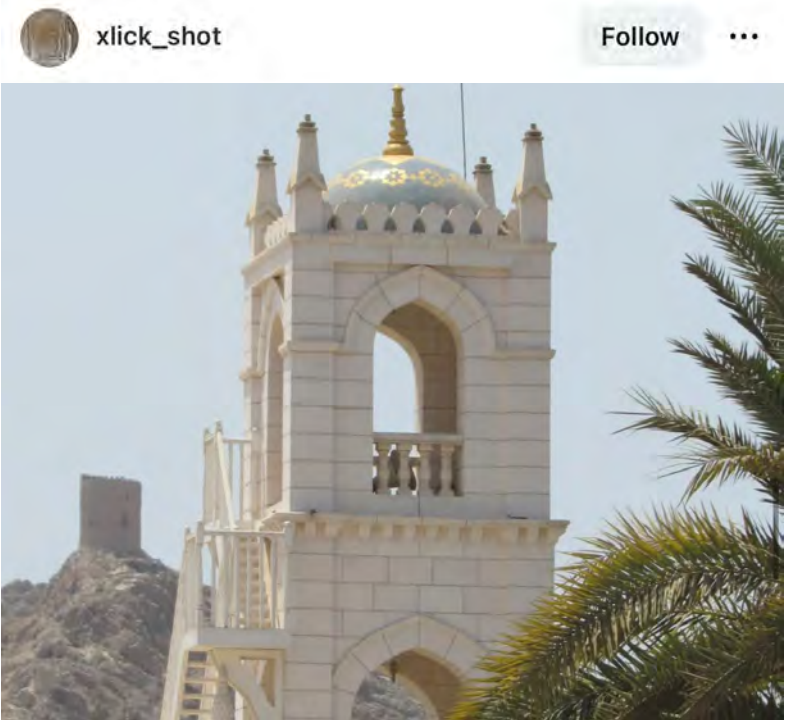
A woman sits alone in solitude along the Boulevard de la Croisette, admiring the crystal-blue waters and lovely clouds in Cannes, southern France.

— AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



A dazzling Squacco Heron

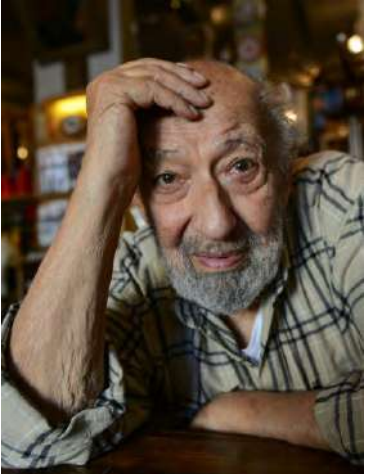


Oman's fine-detailed architecture

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TÜRKIYE SHOW DISPLAYS PHOTO MASTER ARA GÜLER'S CANNES SHOTS



One photograph shows Sophia Loren raising a champagne glass beneath the admiring gaze of fans. Another captures Brigitte Bardot relaxing in the countryside in a T-shirt and jeans. These timeless moments are part of a new Istanbul exhibition featuring previously unseen photographs by Türkiye's legendary Magnum photographer Ara Güler from the Cannes Film Festival.

Known as the "Eye of Istanbul", Güler became famous for black-and-white images that captured the soul of the city. Between 1957 and 1967, he also documented the glamour and humanity of the Cannes Film Festival on the French Riviera.

"Beyond the award ceremonies and red carpets, Ara Güler also captured what unfolded behind the scenes", said Cagla Sarac, art advisor for Dogus Group, which founded the Ara Güler Museum.

His photographs reveal lavish parties, intimate gatherings and even a luncheon held in Sophia Loren's honour.

"The result is a remarkably complete portrait of the festival, revealing not just its glamour, but the full human story



surrounding it", she said.

The exhibition runs until October 11 at the Ara Güler Museum in Istanbul, which opened in 2018 shortly before Güler's death on his 90th birthday. Nearby, experts continue preserving his vast archive.

Güler's passion for cinema began early. Archive researcher Temel Yilmaz said his teenage diaries often repeated the line: "I didn't go to school today", because he had gone to the cinema instead.

During his career, Güler photographed figures including Salvador Dali, Alfred Hitchcock and Winston Churchill.

Born into an Armenian family in Istanbul, he started at the newspaper Yeni Istanbul before gaining international recognition in 1958 when Time-Life opened a Türkiye office. He later joined Magnum after meeting renowned photographers Marc Riboud and Henri Cartier-Bresson.

Film critic Alin Tasciyan said Güler always sought authenticity over spectacle. "He really photographed the spirit of the time, the spirit of the place", she said. — AFP



SELFIES GALORE AS EUROVISION KICKS OFF IN VIENNA



EUROVISION began in Vienna on Sunday, with thousands of fans arriving in the Austrian capital ahead of next weekend's grand final, while renewed calls emerged to boycott the contest over Israel's participation.

Vienna is hosting the 70th edition of the world's most-watched music competition, with numerous concerts, screenings and fan events scheduled before the May 16 finale.

On Sunday, Eurovision's traditional turquoise carpet welcomed delegations from the 35 participating countries during a colourful opening ceremony.

"There is a lot of positive energy, people are smiling, they're very warm", France's representative Monroe said as fans gathered for photos and celebrations.

The city has transformed parts of central Vienna into Eurovision fan zones, including a large square in front of the neo-Gothic city hall where classic moments from the contest's seven-decade history are being screened.

Eurovision attracts more than 170 million viewers worldwide and generates billions of views online each year.

Finland is widely considered this year's favourite, with singer Pete Parkkonen and violinist Linda



Lampenius tipped for success. According to Finnish media, organisers made a rare exception allowing Lampenius to perform live violin on stage, despite Eurovision usually relying on pre-recorded instruments.

The event, however, has also been overshadowed by political controversy surrounding Israel's participation. Spain, Ireland, Iceland, the Netherlands and Slovenia are among countries boycotting this year's edition in protest over Israel's military campaign in Gaza following Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack.

More than 1,000 artists and groups, including Peter Gabriel and Massive Attack, have also called for a boycott. On Saturday, pro-Palestinian demonstrators gathered in central Vienna to protest Israel's inclusion in the competition.

Several hundred police officers were deployed to oversee security during the demonstration and throughout Eurovision events.

Germany, France, Italy and Britain automatically qualify for the final as the largest financial contributors to the European Broadcasting Union.

Host nation Austria also secured a place after local artist JJ won last year's contest, although this year's Austrian contestant, Cosmo, is not considered a leading favourite.

— AFP

OMAN’S FIRST ROBOT WITH AN OMANI IDENTITY



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

At first glance, he looks almost familiar. Dressed in traditional Omani attire, greeting visitors with warmth and humor, “Saeed” does not immediately resemble the cold metallic image often associated with robots. Children gather around him curiously. Adults stop to film him. Some laugh in surprise when he responds in Arabic with expressions and gestures that feel distinctly local. But behind the smiling digital face is a larger story, one about how technology can wear the colours of culture instead of replacing them. The idea for Saeed Bot began with a simple but ambitious question posed by Omani entrepreneur Khalid al Qassabi: why should



interactive robots remain culturally neutral when they could instead reflect the people around them? “We wanted to create a different experience”, Al Qassabi explains. “Something that combines technology and entertainment in a way that feels close to people. We asked ourselves: why not create a robot with an Omani spirit and identity?” The robot itself was originally imported from China, but according to Al Qassabi, the machine was only the starting point. The real challenge lay in transforming it from a device into a personality. The team carefully reshaped every detail of Saeed’s character. His name, clothing, language, greetings and even sense of humour were designed to mirror the rhythms of Omani society. The goal was not simply to display advanced technology, but to make people feel that the technology belonged to them. “We did not want him to be just a robot performing a show”, Al Qassabi says. “We wanted people to feel that Saeed represents them and reflects their culture in a modern and innovative way”. That balancing act between modernity and heritage was not without hesitation. In a society deeply connected to tradition, blending artificial intelligence with symbols of national identity, such as the Omani dishdasha and kuma, initially raised eyebrows. “There was some surprise at first because the idea was new and unusual”, Al Qassabi admits. “But over time people understood that the purpose was to present Omani identity in a positive and respectful modern way”. Today, Saeed appears at exhibitions, schools and public events across the Sultanate of Oman, where he serves not only as entertainment but also as an unlikely cultural ambassador. He introduces children to robotics and innovation while simultaneously reinforcing local customs, values and language. For Al Qassabi, this educational dimension is central to the project. He believes young people absorb messages more naturally when they are delivered through interaction and play rather than formal lectures. “We believe technology is not only for entertainment”, he says. “It can also become a powerful educational tool”. Perhaps the clearest sign of Saeed’s success can be found online. On his very own Instagram page, @saeedbot.om, followers interact with the robot almost as



Khalid al Qassabi is an Omani entrepreneur and the creative mind behind the ambitious concept of Saeed bot.

if he were human, commenting on his personality, waiting for his appearances and responding to him emotionally rather than mechanically. That reaction, Al Qassabi says, revealed something important: people connect more deeply with technology when it speaks their language, understands their environment and reflects their identity. In Saeed Bot, Omanis are not merely seeing the future arrive. They are seeing it dressed in their own image.

