

OMAN

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12 **HAALAND SHINES AS MAN CITY REACH FA CUP SEMIS**

INBRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO
SENEGAL PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Bassirou Diomaye of the Republic of Senegal, on the occasion of his country’s National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the president and continued prosperity and progress for the friendly people of Senegal.

CANDIDACY FOR
MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
ELECTIONS OPENS

The Ministry of Interior said that applications for candidacy in the fourth term of the Municipal Council elections will open on Sunday and continue until April 23 (Thursday). The ministry called on candidates who meet the eligibility requirements to submit their applications through the elections app or the elections website (elections.om), after filling in the online form and attaching the required documents. According to Article (10) of the Municipal Councils Law, the candidate must be an Omani national of at least 30 years of age, known for good character and conduct, and he/she must not have been finally convicted of a felony or a crime affecting morality or dishonesty, unless he/she has been rehabilitated.

GOING GREEN IN DHOFAR



A strategic reforestation has been going on in the Sultanate of Oman for five years, and the ‘Al Masarat’ weather system created an ideal condition for the tree planting campaign, as the soil is ready, and there is humidity in the air. This is the sixth year in the rewilding effort, and until April 9, the Environment Authority in Dhofar Governorate will be implementing a campaign to scatter seeds of local trees in the mountains of Dhofar. **DETAILS ON P4**

MAKE DEAL OR FACE ‘HELL’

TRUMP SAYS IRAN HAS 48 HOURS LEFT TO STRIKE A DEAL

IRANIAN

AND US forces were searching for a missing American pilot on Saturday from one of two warplanes downed over Iran and the Gulf, while President Donald Trump warned Tehran time was running out on his latest deadline for a deal to end the war.

The prospect of a US service member alive and on the run in Iran raised the stakes for Washington as the conflict entered its sixth week with scant prospect of peace talks in sight and polls showing low public support. With Iran’s leadership defiant since the start of the war, its foreign minister left the door open in principle for peace talks with the US via mediation from Pakistan, but gave no sign of Tehran’s willingness to bow to Trump’s demands.

“We are deeply grateful to Pakistan for its efforts and have never refused to go to Islamabad. What we care about are the terms of a conclusive and lasting END to the illegal war that is imposed on us,” Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said on X.

Trump has sent mixed messages since the conflict began with a US-Israeli bombardment of Iran on February 28, switching between hinting at diplomatic progress and making threats to bomb the Islamic Republic “back to the Stone Ages”.

On Saturday, he repeated his threats to intensify attacks on Iran if it failed to reach a deal or open the key Strait of Hormuz waterway. “Remember when I gave Iran ten days to MAKE A DEAL or OPEN UP THE HORMUZ STRAIT. Time is running out - 48 hours before all Hell will reign down on them. Glory be to GOD!” he said in a post on Truth Social.

The war has killed thousands, sparked an energy crisis and threatened lasting damage to the world economy. Iran has virtually shut the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries about a fifth of the world’s oil and liquefied natural gas. Iran



A girl looks on during a demonstration in solidarity with Iran and denouncing the US-Israeli war against it, in Iraq’s southern city of Basra, on Saturday. — AFP

attacked an Israel-affiliated vessel with a drone in the strait, setting the ship on fire, Iran’s state media said on Saturday, citing the commander of the Revolutionary Guards’ navy.

The downing of two US warplanes shows the risks still facing US and Israeli aircraft, despite assertions by Trump and his Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth that US forces had total control of the skies

over Iran. Iranian fire brought down a two-seat US F-15E jet, officials in both countries said on Friday, and a US official said search-and-rescue efforts had recovered one of the crew. Two Black Hawk helicopters engaged in the search for the missing crew member were hit by Iranian fire but made it out of Iranian airspace, the two US officials said. Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said

it was combing a southwestern area near where the pilot’s plane came down, while the regional governor promised a commendation for anyone who captured or killed “forces of the hostile enemy.”

In a separate incident, an A-10 Warthog fighter aircraft was hit and crashed over Kuwait, with the pilot ejecting, the US officials said.

SEE ALSO P6 & 7

Artemis 2 astronauts more than halfway to Moon

HOUSTON: The Artemis 2 astronauts have passed the halfway point between Earth and the Moon on Saturday as they sped towards a planned lunar flyby, with Nasa releasing initial images of Earth taken from inside the Orion spacecraft.

Astronaut Christina Koch said the crew had a collective “expression of joy” upon being told of the milestone, which was hit around two days, five hours and 24 minutes after the spacecraft blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

“We can see the Moon out of the

docking hatch right now, it is a beautiful sight,” Koch said around 11 pm (0400 GMT) on Friday, according to the space agency’s official live broadcast. Nasa’s online dashboard showed early on Saturday that the Orion spacecraft carrying the astronauts was more than 229,000 km from Earth. The space agency earlier released images from Orion that included a full portrait of Earth, featuring its deep blue oceans and billowing clouds.

After a flurry of high-stakes activity including a dramatic blast-off and an engine firing that

A view of Earth taken by Nasa astronaut and Artemis II Commander Reid Wiseman from one of the Orion spacecraft’s window after completing the translunar injection burn. — Reuters

catapulted them on their historic trajectory to circle the Moon, the four astronauts aboard were able to catch their breath, even as they continued to perform a variety of equipment checks and tests.

“There has been a tremendous amount of disbelief for me, it’s just so extraordinary,” said Canadian Jeremy Hansen during a Q&A session with press late last Thursday.

“I really like it up here,” said Hansen, on his first-ever journey to space. “The views are extraordinary.”

“It’s really fun to be floating

around” in zero gravity, he added. “It just makes me feel like a little kid.”

Hansen is on the crew with Americans Koch, Victor Glover and Reid Wiseman. They are due to loop around the Moon early this week - a feat not accomplished in more than 50 years.

Nasa official Lakiesha Hawkins praised the photographs taken by commander Wiseman, calling them “amazing” during a briefing on Friday. “We continue to learn all about our spacecraft as we operate it in deep space with crew for the first time,” Hawkins said. — AFP

OMAN

SHORTTAKES



The three-day virtual conference called for the development of precise scientific tools for quality of translations. — ONA

‘TRANSLATING THE MEANINGS OF THE HOLY QURAN’

MUSCAT: An international conference titled “Translating the Meanings of the Holy Quran: Methods, Challenges and the Role of Technology” concluded on Saturday.

The conference came up with a recommendation to establish a specialised centre for translating the meanings of the Holy Quran under the supervision of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. The centre would serve as a national platform dedicated to developing translation, supporting scientific research and enhancing training and collaboration among translators and researchers.

The three-day virtual conference, organised by Al Zahra College for Women in cooperation with the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, called for the development of precise scientific tools and standards for evaluating the quality of translations, analysing the stylistic features of the Holy Quranic text, and documenting the historical development of Quranic translation.

The conference recommended revising old translations in light of modern linguistic and cultural developments to ensure accuracy of meaning and to establish specialised databases and research laboratories to support digital Quranic studies and develop scientific research tools. — ONA

CYBERSECURITY WEEK PROMOTES DIGITAL AWARENESS

Al RUSTAQ: The Directorate-General of Education in Al Batinah South Governorate organised Cybersecurity Week under the theme ‘Sustainable Cyber Culture... Digitally Empowered Generations,’ aimed at strengthening the preparedness of educational institutions and keeping pace with evolving technological challenges.

The programme featured visual presentations, specialised working papers, and the ‘Digital Fortress’ exhibition, which showcased simulations of cyber threats alongside student-led cybersecurity projects. Sultan bin Hamad al Hashimi, Director of the Information and Communications Technology Department at the Directorate, said the initiative seeks to promote the safe use of modern technologies and raise awareness of digital risks through a range of programmes, lectures and competitions. — ONA

Restoring the splendour of Izki old neighbourhoods

YUSEF AL HABSI
IZKI, APRIL 4

The Wilayat of Izki is enhancing its position as one of the most important historical centres in the Sultanate of Oman, relying on a rich architectural heritage embodied in its old quarters, most notably the Al Yaman and Al Nizar quarters, which represent a living example of the Omani life throughout the ages, said Sayyid Ashraf bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Wali of Izki.

Al Busaidy added that the old neighbourhoods are not merely traditional buildings, but rather living testaments to Omani history and a source of inspiration for future generations. He noted that the Wilayat of Ibri is working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and other relevant authorities to preserve this heritage asset.

He noted that heritage preservation efforts included



The project to develop old quarters aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which seeks to diversify income sources and enhance the tourism sector. — Photos by Abdulwahid al Hamdani

surveying and documenting historical buildings, preparing technical and engineering studies to assess their condition, and adding a number of these sites to protection lists, while also raising community awareness of the importance of preserving architectural heritage. Initial phases of restoration have

also commenced, as part of a phased plan aimed at revitalising the old quarters.

He added that they are striving to engage the local community in these efforts and that owners of old houses are encouraged to contribute to the restoration work by streamlining procedures and opening avenues



for partnerships with investors, while preserving the traditional architecture that distinguishes these quarters.

He added that the Wilayat of Izki seeks to transform the old quarters into integrated tourist destinations based on the concept of a ‘living heritage village’. These destinations

will include heritage guesthouses, traditional cafes, craft projects, and tourist tracks, in addition to organising cultural events that enhance the visitor experience and link them to local heritage.

He noted that the government offers a package of incentives for investors, especially young Omanis, including financial support, streamlined licensing procedures, and technical consultations. He added that revitalising the old quarters will contribute to stimulating economic activity in the wilayat.

He added that the challenges facing this project include multiple property ownerships, the need to develop infrastructure, and the high costs of restoration. Despite these challenges, work continues in coordination with relevant authorities to find practical and sustainable solutions based on partnership and phased implementation.

OVER 1.8 MILLION VEHICLES REGISTERED IN OMAN

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The total number of vehicles registered in the Sultanate of Oman reached 1,865,499 by the end of February 2026, a 5.5 per cent increase compared to the figure of 1,851,469 registered in the corresponding period of 2025.

Data published in the monthly statistical bulletin issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that private vehicles accounted for the largest share of registered vehicles with 1,477,368, representing 79.2 per cent of the total vehicle number followed by commercial vehicles at



Private vehicles accounted for the largest share of registered vehicles with 1,477,368.

275,834, rental vehicles at 44,847 and taxis at 28,691.

Motorcycles accounted for 8,914 compared to 8,712 in the same

period last year, a 13.5 per cent increase. Government vehicles were 11,780, political entities 958, tractors 1,234, driving school

vehicles 4,975, and temporary vehicles 10,989.

Regarding vehicle colours, white vehicles were of the highest number at 786,973, followed by silver (239,670 vehicles), grey (195,654 vehicles), blue (103,437 vehicles), black (100,798 vehicles), red (76,081 vehicles,) green (38,659 vehicles) and yellow at 37,789.

Based on engine capacity, vehicles with engine capacities between 1500 and 3000 cc were the most with 1,015,734, followed by vehicles with engine capacities between 3000 and 4500 cc with 411,513 vehicles, and vehicles with engine capacities exceeding 4500 cc numbered 230,634.

Early warning centre helps in mitigating risks

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

THE ADVANCED and timely warnings from the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre helped people and authorities take precautionary measures. This included announcing remote classes for school and college students, as well as allowing private and public sector employees to work from home. Despite these efforts, a few lives were still lost as some individuals ignored the dangers posed by flowing wadis, flash floods, and rough seas.

The National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre, established in 2015 to monitor weather and climatic conditions, uses stations and 351 weather monitoring balloons, along with satellites and AI technology, to enhance the accuracy of their predictions. The centre is able to track tropical systems such as air troughs, depressions, cyclones, and the likelihood of flooding due to rain. Operating 24/7, they issue immediate warnings through websites, mobile applications, broadcasting systems and interactive maps.

Abdullah bin Rashid al Khadouri, Director-General of Meteorology at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), recently stated, “CAA has made significant progress in strengthening the meteorological and early warning system in 2025.”



Sources at the Oman Meteorology department have noted an increase in weather conditions and cyclones in the Arabian Sea compared to the Bay of Bengal over the last 15 years.

This progress was achieved through the implementation of strategic projects aimed at enhancing public safety and supporting decision-makers. One key project is the Flood Modeling Index, which provides real-time forecasts of flood-prone areas due to heavy rainfall.

These forecasts help relevant authorities prepare and mitigate potential risks.

In 2025, the centre issued a total of 2,850 special weather bulletins, 356 general bulletins, 3,905 governorate bulletins, 360 city forecasts, 36 climate bulletins, 10,950 airport forecasts, 1,460 aviation weather charts, 82 airspace warnings, 423 runway warnings, 730 marine bulletins, and 365

marine charts. Sources at the Oman Meteorology department have noted an increase in weather conditions and cyclones in the Arabian Sea compared to the Bay of Bengal over the last 15 years.

This increase is attributed to rising temperatures and thermal heating of the water surface.

The Arabian Sea has experienced a one-degree Celsius rise in temperature, leading to an 8 to 12-degree Celsius increase in water vapour and humidity in the atmosphere. This increase in moisture availability has prompted the Sultanate of Oman to study the impact of weather conditions, prepare for them, and minimise losses in collaboration with all relevant parties.

SHORTTAKES



Emergency medical care was provided immediately on-site.

TWO PEOPLE
RESCUED AFTER
FALLING INTO WELL

MUSCAT: Rescue teams from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDA) in Al Batinah North Governorate responded to an incident involving two individuals who fell into a well in the Wilayat of Saham.

In a statement, CDA said the teams acted promptly at the scene, managing to safely extract the two individuals from the well. 'Emergency medical care was provided immediately on-site to stabilise their condition before they were transported to hospital for further treatment, the statement said. CDA has been at the forefront with its capabilities in handling emergency incidents and ensuring the safety and well-being of the public.

TWO ARRESTED IN AL
SUWAIQ FOR DRUG
POSSESSION



The suspects were found in possession of quantities of crystal meth, marijuana, hashish and tablets classified as psychotropic substances.

MUSCAT: The Directorate of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Control, operating under the Al Batinah North Governorate Police, apprehended two individuals of Asian nationality in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq. In a statement, ROP confirmed that the suspects were found in possession of quantities of crystal meth, marijuana, hashish, and tablets classified as psychotropic substances. Initial investigations indicate that the seized drugs were intended for both trafficking and personal consumption. Legal procedures against the accused are currently being completed.

RIA’S MAGAZINE HIGHLIGHTS SIMPLIFYING RESEARCH

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The Research and Innovation Authority (RIA) has released the 50th issue of its quarterly magazine Scientific Insights, marking a milestone edition that reflects the publication’s growing role as a leading knowledge platform dedicated to promoting research and innovation in the Sultanate of Oman. The jubilee issue places a strong focus on science communication and its role in simplifying knowledge and amplifying research and innovation impact. It explores how research outputs can be translated into accessible content that enhances public understanding, strengthens



The magazine documents a range of recent research and innovation developments.

scientific awareness, and supports the national priorities outlined in Oman Vision 2040. In its editorial, the magazine highlights the evolving role of media in an era defined by rapid knowledge production and increasingly complex challenges. It notes that media has moved beyond simply reporting news or showcasing achievements to becoming an active contributor to shaping impact and influencing decision-making. A key theme explored in the issue is the concept of science simplification as a strategic tool for narrowing the gap between laboratory outputs and practical implementation. On the national front, the magazine documents a range of

recent research and innovation developments. These include the eighth edition of the Upgrade programme, which aims to transform student graduation projects into startups, as well as the announcement of the region’s first genomic study of the wild rabbit. It also highlights ongoing efforts to establish an advanced research and development centre at the Innovation Park Muscat, focusing on artificial intelligence and quantum computing technologies. Additionally, the issue sheds light on the Maqadat platform, which facilitates researchers’ access to advanced scientific equipment, enhancing research productivity across Oman.

Oman’s travel and tourism
sector to grow sustainably

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

GLOBAL AIR travel is expected to more than double by 2050, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA). This announcement was made in the Long Term Demand Projections (LTDP) report, which has been well-received by airlines and tourism destination management companies. Investment in aviation infrastructure and regulatory frameworks in developing regions is crucial, as identified by the LTDP report. The forecast for 2050 presents an opportunity for Oman’s travel and tourism sector to grow sustainably and become a key player in the global aviation industry. “The outlook for air travel is positive. People want to travel and, under all our modelled scenarios, the demand for flying is expected to more than double by mid-century. This is good news for global economic and social development because aviation growth will create opportunities, including jobs, around the world. Our Long-Term Demand report provides a strong foundation for long-term planning for governments, industry, and energy suppliers. It emphasises the need for policy frameworks that support key success factors such as efficient infrastructure development, market access facilitation, regulatory harmonisation, and an effective transition to clean energy,” said Willie Walsh, IATA’s Director-General. Under the mid-range scenario, demand is forecasted to reach 20.8 trillion revenue passenger kilometres (RPKs) by 2050, based



The outlook for air travel is positive and people want to travel under all scenarios.

on a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.1 per cent from the 9 trillion RPKs recorded in 2024. Ahmed al Hinai, a travel and tourism expert, believes that the projections are realistic and beneficial for long-term planning. He stated that Middle East carriers are well-positioned to benefit from this prediction. The report suggests that Asia Pacific and Africa will be the fastest-growing regions from 2024 to 2050, with compound annual growth rates of 3.8 per cent and 3.6 per cent, respectively. The pace of growth will vary across regions due to differences in demographics, market maturity, economic development and connectivity potential. The different scenarios presented in the report are based

on alternative models of long-term economic growth, populations, aviation fuel price trends, the global energy transition and air transport capacity development. Sudeep Joseph, an airline expert representing Al Maha, emphasised that the prediction of air travel doubling by 2050 confirms a shift in global aviation towards the East and South. He believes that the GCC must evolve to meet the demands of this changing landscape. The LTDP report highlights the growth potential of all regions through 2050, with Asia Pacific, Africa, and the Middle East expected to be the main engines of growth. Asia Pacific is projected to have the strongest growth across all scenarios.

Student research challenges assumptions about grip strength

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

A seemingly minor anatomical variation has opened the door to an intriguing scientific question: why do some people lack a muscle that others possess, and does its absence matter? New research conducted at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences explores this very puzzle, focusing on the palmaris longus muscle, a slender structure that runs from the elbow to the wrist along the forearm. The palmaris longus has long puzzled scientists. It is absent in a notable proportion of the population, sometimes missing

in one hand but present in the other, or absent entirely. Despite decades of observation, there remains no definitive scientific explanation for this variation. Driven by this curiosity, medical student Abdulmalik bin Abdulaziz al Raisi undertook a research project under the supervision of Dr Srijit Das. To achieve this, the researcher assembled a sample of 480 male and female students aged between 18 and 25. Grip strength was measured using a digital CAMRY dynamometer, ensuring consistency and accuracy across participants. The findings revealed that approximately 8 per cent of those



Participants who lacked the muscle recorded an average grip strength of 35 kg, compared to 30 kg among those in whom the muscle was present.

tested did not have the palmaris longus muscle. The absence was more common among females than males and was observed more

frequently in the left hand than the right. One of the study’s most striking observations concerns grip strength itself. Participants who lacked the muscle recorded an average grip strength of 35 kg, compared to 30 kg among those in whom the muscle was present. At first glance, this might suggest a functional advantage. However, the overall analysis indicates that the absence of the palmaris longus does not play a significant role in determining grip strength. In other words, the presence or absence of this muscle is not a reliable indicator of how strong a person’s grip will be.

The findings point instead towards broader genetic or evolutionary influences that may determine whether the muscle develops at all. The palmaris longus is widely regarded as a vestigial structure, meaning it may have had a more important function in ancestral forms but has since diminished in significance as human anatomy evolved. Beyond academic interest, the muscle holds notable clinical value. From a surgical perspective, the palmaris longus is often considered ideal for grafting in reconstructive and cosmetic procedures.

SPOTLIGHT

GOING GREEN

A diverse range of indigenous species has been specifically chosen for their resilience and ecological value. By timing the dispersal with Al Masarat rains, they ensure the seeds have the best chance to take root before the intense summer heat



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

A STRATEGIC reforestation has been going on in Oman for five years, and the Al Masarat weather system created an ideal condition for the tree planting campaign, as the soil is ready, and there is humidity in the air.

This is the sixth year in the rewilding effort, and until April 9, the Environment Authority in Dhofar Governorate will be implementing a campaign to scatter seeds of local trees in the mountains of Dhofar.

A diverse range of indigenous species has been specifically chosen for their resilience and ecological value. By timing the dispersal with Al Masarat rains, they ensure the seeds have the best chance to take root before the intense summer heat.

The campaign targets the mountainous areas of the wilayats of Mirbat, Taqah, Salalah, Rakhyout, and Dhalkout to enhance the plant cover, combat desertification, and preserve biodiversity.

According to the EA officials, this initiative seeks to capitalise on the current weather patterns affecting the region. By synchronising the campaign with active rainfall and high humidity levels, the Authority aims to create the ideal environment for natural germination, ensuring the long-term sustainability of vegetation within the rugged mountain terrain. The campaign focuses specifically on indigenous tree species, which serve as the primary pillars of Dhofar’s unique biological diversity.

Hatem Kalshat, director of the Department of Vegetation Cover Development, commented on the continuity and impact of the approach. “Reaching our sixth year of these campaigns is driven by the tangible positive results we have monitored in the field. We have witnessed a successful, gradual return of



vegetation in sites previously affected by desertification, alongside a significant increase in the germination rates of local perennial trees,” Kalshat said, adding that the current weather conditions will maximise natural germination efficiency.

“We rely on the success of past experiences to ensure the restoration of authentic ecosystems and to strengthen the resilience of Dhofar’s mountains against changing climatic challenges,” he said.

Abdulrahman al Amri, from EA, stated that one of the important trees being planted is the Al Misht tree, known scientifically as *Anogeissus dhofarica* or locally as Saghut. It is a rare plant species found in Dhofar and is considered part of the unique, native, and sometimes endangered flora of the region, which has been the focus of conservation efforts

by the Environment Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The Directorate-General of the Environment Authority in Dhofar has called upon all participants and environmental enthusiasts to support this ongoing national initiative. The Directorate emphasised that this consistent, multi-year effort is the true guarantee for protecting the unique biodiversity of the Sultanate of Oman, ensuring a green legacy for future generations.

“Another tree that is being planted is the wild fig tree, scientifically known as *Ficus sycomorus*, and locally it is known as Taiq (or Taeq),” explained Yasir bin Mohammed Rafeet, media supervisor.

According to the experts, one can spot ancient specimens in areas like Wadi Darbat and the mountains of Taqah. People have

described the initiative as ‘A smart investment in nature that enhances the plant cover and preserves biodiversity so that Dhofar remains green as we have always known it.’ Meanwhile, the Environment Authority in Dhofar implemented a campaign to plant more than 1.3 million seedlings of Samar, Ghaf, and Qart trees across various sites in the governorate, taking advantage of the rainy season and the flow of wadis, to enhance vegetative cover and combat desertification. The Environment Authority in Al Batinah North Governorate has carried out a campaign to plant more than 1.2 million seedlings of Samar and Sidr trees across various sites in the Wilayat of Suhar, taking advantage of the rainy season. The three popular hardwood trees are Sidr, Samar, and Ghaf, which also hold heritage value in Oman.

SHORT TAKES



The visit included meetings with citizens in the affected areas.

AL DHAHIRAH GOVERNOR INSPECTS DAMAGE FROM ‘AL MASARAT’

IBRI: Tahir bin Mabkhout al Junaibi, Governor of Al Dhahirah, conducted a field visit to inspect sites affected by the recent weather system, the ‘Al Masarat Depression,’ which impacted several wilayats in the governorate.

The Governor was accompanied by a number of senior officials, including governors of the wilayats, undersecretaries from the Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (Water Resources), Housing and Urban Planning (Urban Planning), and Transport, Communications and Information Technology (Transport), as well as the Chairman of the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, along with other concerned officials.

The visit included meetings with citizens in the affected areas, where their concerns and suggestions were heard. Officials also assessed the extent of damage firsthand, particularly to infrastructure such as roads and water facilities.

During the tour, the Governor reviewed the efforts of field teams working to restore essential services, including electricity, water and telecommunications, in the affected areas.

Discussions also focused on developing sustainable, long-term solutions for managing wadi flows and water drainage to prevent future damage. Plans were reviewed for rehabilitating affected roads in the wilayats of Ibri, Yanqul and Dhank, with emphasis on ensuring smooth traffic movement. Specialists provided detailed briefings on the nature of the damage and outlined timelines for urgent maintenance and repair works. The Governor stressed the importance of coordinated efforts among all government entities to ensure a swift response and provide necessary support to affected citizens and residents.

Al Dhahirah Governorate experienced heavy rainfall during the ‘Al Masarat Depression,’ resulting in flash floods and the filling of several dams, prompting extensive efforts to safeguard lives and property. — ONA

LIWA CENTRE MARKS WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY



The event included educational games, art workshops and musical sessions.

LIWA: The Liwa Center for the Rehabilitation of Children with Disabilities organised a programme to mark World Autism Awareness Day, observed annually on April 2.

The event focused on raising awareness, promoting acceptance, and supporting the integration of individuals with autism into society.

The programme featured an awareness lecture for the local community, covering the concept of autism, its causes, treatment methods, and early intervention strategies.

The lecture was delivered by Rosa bint Fayez al Saleh, an autism specialist at the Al Wafa Center for the Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities in Liwa, with participation from Nibr Health Center and Al Mumina Secondary School for Girls.

It aimed to dispel misconceptions and provide scientific and practical guidance to parents, teachers, and healthcare workers.

The day also included an interactive programme for children designed to enhance social and motor skills. Activities ranged from educational games and art workshops to musical sessions, creating a supportive and encouraging environment for children and their families. — ONA

WATER LEVELS RISE AT FALAJ DARIS AFTER RAINS

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, APRIL 4

FOLLOWING RECENT rainfall in the Wilayat of Nizwa, Falaj Daris has witnessed a notable rise in water levels, bringing renewed vitality to one of Oman’s most iconic aflaj and drawing residents and visitors to Marefa Daris Park.

Located about 150 kilometres from Muscat — roughly a one-and-a-half to two-hour drive — the falaj extends close to Nizwa Souq, one of the Sultanate’s most prominent heritage markets. This proximity makes the site part of an integrated tourism experience that seamlessly blends nature with history.

Recognised as one of the largest and oldest aflaj in Oman, Falaj Daris is listed as a Unesco World Heritage site, reflecting its historical and engineering significance as a sustainable irrigation system that has endured for centuries.

In the days following the rainfall, water flow in the falaj has increased significantly, with stronger currents and visibly higher levels along its channels. The surrounding landscape has also turned greener, enhancing the site’s natural appeal.

Within Marefa Daris Park, the atmosphere has transformed into a vibrant public space. Families gather in shaded areas, children run



Visitors are advised to exercise caution and avoid getting too close to the channels, particularly in areas with fast-flowing water

alongside the flowing water, while some swim in its fresh streams. Visitors enjoy the cool air left behind by the rains, adding to the overall charm of the setting.

Visitors have expressed admiration for the falaj’s condition following the rainfall.

“I came to Nizwa after the rains, and the scene at Falaj Daris exceeded expectations. The place feels alive,” said Khalid bin Nasser al Harthy, a visitor from Muscat.

Shaikha bint Mohammed al

Rawahi noted, “The combination of flowing water, greenery and calm surroundings creates a truly relaxing atmosphere.”

Salim bin Hamad al Kindi, a resident of Nizwa, added: “After every rainfall, I bring my children here to swim — it’s a common practice among most residents.”

Highlighting the falaj’s long-standing governance system, Masoud bin Said al Kindi, one of its supervisors (arifs), said: “Falaj Daris follows long-established traditions in water distribution that have remained in place despite changes over time.”

These traditional systems regulate water allocation through precise, time-based mechanisms, demonstrating a sustainable model of resource management passed down through generations.

During periods of rainfall, water levels in the falaj rise, creating stronger currents. Visitors are advised to exercise caution and avoid getting too close to the channels, particularly in areas with fast-flowing water. It is recommended to wait until conditions stabilise before swimming.

The importance of Falaj Daris lies not only in its scale — being among the largest in the region — but also in its enduring role as a symbol of vitality and generosity in the Wilayat of Nizwa.



Water flow in the falaj has increased significantly, with stronger currents and visibly higher levels along its channels. — Photos by SAMI AL HINAI

Marwan blends heritage, modernity through art

MUSCAT: Jordanian artist Marwan al Tawaha brings together heritage and contemporary expression in a distinctive artistic journey that highlights the beauty of Arabic calligraphy and Islamic ornamentation through ceramics. His work has earned him a strong presence across Arab art exhibitions and competitions.

Al Tawaha is among the artists who have contributed to reviving traditional fine arts through innovative approaches. His academic background in fine arts played a key role in shaping his artistic vision. He obtained a master’s degree in ceramics from Yarmouk University in 2014 and later served at the university’s Faculty of Fine Arts as a ceramics laboratory supervisor, where he trained students in the techniques of the craft.

His artistic style is marked by a seamless blend of authenticity and modernity. Drawing inspiration from Arab and Islamic heritage — including Arabic calligraphy, geometric patterns and historical architecture — he reinterprets these elements through contemporary forms, using both ceramic and sculptural techniques.

A defining feature of his work is the use of Arabic letters as visual elements that add both aesthetic and spiritual dimensions. Through three-dimensional compositions, the letters and surrounding decorative



Jordanian artist Marwan al Tawaha with his work

motifs evolve into sculptural forms, giving his pieces depth and presence.

Among his notable works is “Let Us Contemplate,” a circular ceramic sculpture enriched with calligraphic motifs and

geometric patterns inspired by Islamic design. While rooted in tradition, the piece reflects a contemporary sensibility. The circular form, with neither beginning nor end, symbolises continuity and permanence — a concept central to the artist’s philosophy of connecting the past with the present.

In addition to ceramics as a primary medium, Al Tawaha employs diverse techniques in shaping, firing and treating clay. Notably, he uses coloured clay without glazing, creating a natural texture that enhances the intricate details of his compositions.

Committed to bringing Jordanian ceramic art to a wider audience, Al Tawaha has participated in exhibitions and competitions across several countries, including Germany, Azerbaijan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq. His achievements include winning the Best Artwork Award from Philadelphia University in 2019 for “Let Us Contemplate.” The same year, he received an international ceramics award in Italy.

His work “And Rely on the Living One Who Does Not Die” secured second place at the international “Art Without Borders” competition in Russia, where he demonstrated the expressive power of Arabic letters by transforming them into structural elements intertwined with architectural forms, reflecting the relationship between language and space.

1

IRAN SITES HIT

US-Israeli strikes on Iran targeted a nuclear plant, a petrochemical hub, a trade terminal and a cement factory.

2

SHIPS THROUGH HORMUZ

An Indian-flagged LPG tanker transited through the Strait of Hormuz—the latest of several vessels to make it through.

3

ISRAEL TELLS LEBANESE TO EVACUATE

Israel issued an “urgent warning” for residents in parts of the Lebanese city of Tyre and nearby areas to evacuate.

4

ITALY PM TALKS ENERGY

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, on a visit to the Gulf, spoke with leader of gas-rich Qatar about energy issues.

5

IRAQI FIGHTER KILLED

An attack killed a fighter in the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) in Iraq, near the Syria border.

6

FOUR INJURED IN BAHRAIN

Shrapnel from intercepted drones injured four people in Bahrain, authorities said.

7

PEACEKEEPERS WOUNDED

Indonesia slammed as “unacceptable” an explosion that wounded three of its UN peacekeepers in Lebanon.

8

MISSILES FIRED AT ISRAEL

The Israeli army said its air defences responded to missiles fired from Iran, which medics reported wounded one person.

9

IRAN SAYS SECOND US PLANE DOWNED

Iran’s military says it has downed a second US military jet in the Gulf. There was no immediate US confirmation or denial.

10

SEVERAL INJURED IN ISRAEL

Israeli emergency services said that it treated five people who were injured after Iran fired several rounds of missiles toward Israel.

ERDOGAN SAYS WAR HAS CAUSED ‘GEOSTRATEGIC IMPASSE’

ANKARA: Türkiye’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the war in the Middle East had led to a “geostrategic impasse”, during a telephone conversation with Nato chief Mark Rutte, his office said on Saturday. “President Erdogan said the process started by the intervention against Iran had led to a geostrategic impasse and that the international community had to redouble its efforts to bring an end to this war,” said the statement. Türkiye has attempted to mediate an end to the hostilities, notably through



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

negotiations conducted with Pakistan and Egypt. Erdogan said his country was also continuing efforts “to reach a peaceful outcome” to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrived in Istanbul Saturday for talks with Erdogan. The Turkish presidency said on X that the talks would focus “efforts towards a ceasefire and a lasting solution.” Separately, a second Turkish-flagged ship has crossed the war-torn Strait of Hormuz, Türkiye’s Transport Minister

Abdulkadir Uraloglu said Saturday. Uraloglu said that on February 28 there were 15 ships belonging to Turkish shipowners waiting to go through the strategic strait. “Two of these 15 made the crossing,” he told the private CNN Turk channel. “This is explained by our initiatives and also by the fact that they were using Iranian ports or carrying goods coming from or bound for Iran”. “Four of them have not requested to leave. Two of them are power-generation vessels and are stationed on site. — AFP

INDIA-FLAGGED LPG TANKER CROSSES HORMUZ



Jag Vasant, an Indian-flagged tanker carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) that transited through the Strait of Hormuz, in Mumbai. — AFP



Media representatives gather around the damaged building of the Shahid Beheshti University following a strike, in Tehran. — AFP

STRIKE HITS NEAR IRANIAN NUCLEAR PLANT



A coffin of Indonesian soldier killed while serving with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) arrive at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport. — AFP

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi warned that continued attacks on the plant on Iran’s southern coast could eventually lead to radioactive fallout that would “end life in GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) capitals, not Tehran”

US Fighter Hunt Iranian and American forces, meanwhile, were in a race to recover a crew member from the first US fighter jet to go down inside Iran since the start of the war. Tehran said on Friday it had shot down the F-15 warplane and US media reported United States special forces had rescued one of its two crew members, with the other still missing. Strikes by all sides have increasingly targeted economic and industrial sites, raising fears of wider disruption to global energy supplies. US-Israeli strikes on Saturday hit a petrochemicals hub, a cement plant and a trade terminal on the Iran-Iraq border, where one person was reported killed. — AFP

The UN Security Council is now expected to vote next week on a resolution to protect commercial shipping in and around the Strait of Hormuz, diplomats said, but veto-wielding China has made clear its opposition to authorising any use of force. A meeting of the Council’s 15 members was initially set for Friday, then rescheduled for Saturday. Several diplomats said it had now been postponed until next week, with no new date yet announced. Bahrain’s UN mission did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the reason for the delay. The resolution has faced resistance from China, Russia and others and has been toned down from its original form. Oil prices have surged since the US and Israel struck Iran at the end of February, unleashing a conflict that has run for more than a month and largely closed the shipping artery. Bahrain, the current chair of the Security Council, finalised a draft on Thursday that would authorise “all defensive means necessary” to protect

A fourth draft of the resolution was put under a so-called silence procedure for approval until Thursday at noon. Diplomats said the silence had been broken, by China, France and Russia, but a text was subsequently finalised, or “put in blue” in UN parlance, meaning a vote can take place.



China’s UN envoy Fu Cong opposed authorizing force.

commercial shipping. Bahrain’s Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani had told the council on Thursday that a vote would be held on Friday, “God willing,” and added that Bahrain looked forward to a “unified position from this esteemed council.” Bahrain, backed in its efforts

to secure a resolution by other Gulf Arab states and Washington, had previously dropped an explicit reference to binding enforcement in a bid to overcome objections from other nations, particularly Russia and China. A fourth draft of the resolution was put under a

so-called silence procedure for approval until Thursday at noon. Diplomats said the silence had been broken, by China, France and Russia, but a text was subsequently finalised, or “put in blue” in UN parlance, meaning a vote can take place. The finalised draft authorises the measures “for a period of at least six months ... and until such time as the council decides otherwise.” However, in remarks to the Security Council on Thursday morning, China’s UN envoy Fu Cong opposed authorising force. Meanwhile, Iran has authorised the passage of vessels carrying essential goods to its ports through the Strait of Hormuz, according to a letter cited by Iran’s Tasnim news agency on Saturday. The letter indicates that ships heading to Iranian ports must coordinate with authorities and comply with established protocols to transit the strait. Iran has effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation for US-Israeli attacks. — Reuters

BRUTAL INVASION

Israel issues evacuation warnings for Tyre



Israel’s military issued an evacuation warning for several neighbourhoods in and around Tyre in south Lebanon, after the health ministry reported a hospital damaged in strikes on nearby buildings. Saturday’s warning on follows strikes that wounded at least 11 people. The director of the Lebanese Italian Hospital told the state-run National News Agency (NNA) that it would “remain open to provide the necessary medical care” despite the damage. — AFP

HALTED BORDER

Iraq shuts key Shalamcheh crossing with Iran



Iraq closed the Shalamcheh border crossing with Iran after air strikes on the Iranian side killed an Iraqi citizen, security sources said on Saturday, shutting off a vital supply artery. The crossing serves as one of the main routes for imports to Iraq of vegetables and other food supplies from Iran, traders and border officials say. The sources said at least five Iraqis were seriously wounded in the strikes, which hit a passenger reception area. — Reuters

TACKLING ISSUES

Italian PM in Qatar after Saudi visit



Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni met with Qatari leader Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to discuss the energy crisis sparked by the ongoing war in the Middle East. Meloni arrived in Qatar after a visit to Saudi Arabia, where she had talks with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. According to a statement from her office, Meloni and the Qatari emir “tackled energy issues... and discussed possible measures to mitigate the shocks suffered”. — AFP

OPINION

The psychological impacts of performance evaluation systems



DR HAMED AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

AFEW weeks ago, a colleague shared a photograph on social media of him holding a piece of paper informing his patients that his recent performance evaluation had rated him as ‘Good,’ and that anyone seeking an ‘Excellent’ doctor may wish to consult elsewhere. While the statement carried a hint of humour and sarcasm, it revealed a deeper sense of disappointment. The reactions that followed, along with similar posts by others, suggested that this was not an isolated sentiment but a shared emotional experience.

Around this time each year, employees across different sectors await their performance evaluation reports. While this evaluation was designed to standardise appraisal, enhance accountability and improve performance, its psychological impact on employees deserves closer attention.

From a psychological perspective, performance evaluations are rarely experienced as neutral administrative exercises. Instead, they are often internalised as judgments of competence, effort and personal worth. For many employees, particularly those who are deeply invested in their work, receiving a lower-than-expected rating can trigger frustration, self-doubt and a sense of being undervalued.

This reaction is closely tied to professional identity. In healthcare, education and public service, individuals often derive meaning and self-worth from the quality of service they provide. When years of dedication, long hours and emotional labour are condensed into a numerical or categorical score, the experience can feel reductive. The implicit message is sometimes interpreted not as ‘your performance this year was assessed,’ but as ‘your contribution has been ranked.’

Evidence shows that performance evaluation systems can have positive psychological effects when they are transparent, developmental and perceived as fair. A study published in Harvard Business Review reported that organisations using more sophisticated and transparent performance evaluation tools experienced a 20-per cent increase in employee output compared to those relying on outdated methods. Interestingly, this improvement was not attributed to the software itself but to clearer expectations, meaningful feedback, and a sense of psychological upliftment among employees who felt recognised and supported.

The challenge arises when systems are perceived as rigid, opaque, or disconnected from real working conditions. When criteria are not sufficiently sensitive to workload

Performance evaluations are seldom seen as neutral administrative exercises; they are often internalised as judgments on competence and personal worth

intensity, role complexity, or systemic constraints, employees may feel that effort and context are ignored. This perception of unfairness is a powerful psychological stressor and has been strongly linked to burnout. Another concern is the impact on motivation. When ratings become the primary focus, intrinsic motivation, working out of purpose, professionalism, or commitment may be replaced by a narrow focus on scoring well. In some cases, this leads to risk-avoidant behaviour, emotional withdrawal, or quiet disengagement. The unspoken question becomes, ‘If my best effort still results in an average score, why invest more?’

None of this suggests that performance evaluation systems should be abandoned. Feedback and accountability are essential for growth and improvement. However, evaluations must be accompanied by meaningful dialogue, clear justification and developmental guidance. Without this, the system risks damaging morale rather than enhancing performance.

As evaluation season approaches, the key issue may not be how accurately we measure performance, but whether our systems preserve dignity, motivation, and psychological well-being while still holding individuals and institutions to high standards.

AI TO FINE-TUNE AIR RAID ALERT SYSTEM

YAELE IFRAH

During the war in the Gaza Strip and two wars with Iran in the space of a year, Israel has used artificial intelligence to fine-tune its missile early warning system. In last year’s 12-day conflict with Iran, incoming missiles would spark city-wide air raid alerts, and Israelis would have to rush for cover, often several times a day.

But now the systems that warn of an impending attack have become increasingly more sophisticated and localised.

Sarah Chemla is a 32-year-old mother whose second child was born in a delivery room set up in an underground hospital bunker in Tel Aviv during the 2025 war with Iran.

Back then, every alert that sounded applied to the whole city, she said, but now the system has become more precise. “We spend less time in shelters, even if the stress is still there,” Chemla said. As the new war with Iran rages, Chemla said the refined warning systems are making lives easier. She no longer has to shake her children awake whenever a siren sounds, and some nights they even manage to sleep through.

“Before, alarms would sound across all of Tel Aviv whenever a missile targeted the area,” she said. “Now alerts are ultra-localised. If a projectile is heading for the south of the city, I only get a pre-alert and no longer have to wake my children.”

Between the wars with Iran and during the Gaza conflict, Israeli civil defence has significantly upgraded its public warning system to make daily life more manageable under the constant threat of missile fire. Behind the shift lies the growing use of artificial intelligence, AI, to predict where incoming projectiles are likely to hit.

Since the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas that triggered the Gaza war, “more than 60,000 missiles, rockets, drones and aerial threats have been fired at Israel”, former air defence commander Ran Kochav said. “Each launch has been the subject of a full analysis ... incorporating all its characteristics: trajectory, timing, weather, launch angle, radar signature.”

This data is “processed... with the help of AI”, added Kochav, now an associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute think tank in Britain. Israel’s defence firm Elbit Systems has also deployed its “SkyEye” system to analyse launches, media reports say. “The system has the capability to continuously monitor vast areas, intercept events and maintain multiple regions of interest (ROI) under constant surveillance with high spatial resolution,” Elbit Systems says on its website. — AFP

War and morality: A call to stand against violence

THE title of this article is taken from Edwin Starr’s song ‘War’ recorded in 1970. The lyrics continue by answering this question with ‘absolutely nothing, stand up and shout it.’

The unprovoked and illegal war against Iran by the Zionists, killing 160 schoolgirls and their teachers, was a war crime and an act of terrorism.

All of us with a voice should ‘stand up and shout it’ if we are to have a world which is not run by bullies and terrorists. The Oxford English Dictionary defines terrorism as ‘the unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims.’

When states engage in warfare that deliberately targets civilians, spreads fear, or uses disproportionate force to achieve political goals, such action aligns with this definition.

In these cases, the distinction between warfare and terrorism isn’t blurred and raises serious ethical concerns about whether all modern warfare should be regarded as large-scale acts of terrorism.

Throughout the history of philosophy, many influential thinkers have condemned war as morally unjustifiable. Although their arguments arise from different traditions — religious, ethical and political — they share a common belief that war violates fundamental principles of morality.

Leo Tolstoy argued from a Christian perspective that war contradicts the command to love one’s enemies, making all violence morally wrong.

This view is reflected in his novel ‘War and Peace’, which I read many years ago, where the character



A demonstrator looks at a sign with pictures of students killed in a strike on a girls’ primary school in Minab in southern Iran, on the day of a ‘No Kings’ protest against US President Donald Trump’s administration policies, in Boston, Massachusetts. — Reuters



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

Pierre comes to see war as senseless and deeply inhumane, recognising the suffering it causes and rejecting the idea that it can be justified by glory or political ambition.

The English philosopher Bertrand Russell criticised war on both rational and humanitarian grounds, pointing to the immense destruction caused by modern weapons and arguing that war doesn’t resolve conflicts.

He supported diplomacy and international cooperation, as does Oman.

The 19th-century American philosopher Henry Thoreau argued that individuals have a moral duty not to participate in unjust wars, maintaining that involvement in violence is wrong. Immanuel Kant, a German philosopher, strongly criticised war as a violation of moral law. He argued that war treats human beings as means to political ends.

He envisioned a future of

‘perpetual peace’ based on international law and cooperation. Despite their differences, these thinkers share key objections to war.

They emphasise the sanctity of human life, the damage caused by violence, and the importance of peaceful alternatives.

A similar view can be found within Islamic teachings, which place strict limits on the use of violence. In Islam, harming innocent people is forbidden, and violence is only permitted in specific circumstances such as self-defence.

The Quran states: “Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors.” (Surah Al Baqarah 2:190).

Another verse reinforces the sanctity of human life: “Whoever kills a soul... it is as if he had slain mankind entirely.” (Surah Al Maidah 5:32). Together, these teachings emphasise restraint and the protection of innocent life. Judaism similarly upholds the principle that innocent life must be protected.

The Torah commands, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13), establishing a clear prohibition against the unjust taking of life. While Judaism recognises the right to self-defence, it maintains that force must be morally justified and limited, reinforcing the importance of safeguarding non-combatants. People of the Jewish Faith who follow Judaism rightly condemn the unprovoked Zionist war against Iran and the genocide in Gaza.

Opposition to war is a recurring theme across both philosophical and religious traditions. Whether grounded in reason or faith, the central message remains consistent: violence against innocent people is unjustifiable.

The one man whose ‘lucrative presidency’ is not enough



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

DONALD TRUMP was born to Fred and Mary Anne Trump in 1946, in the wealthy Jamaica Estates, in the borough of Queens, New York. A “rebellious and braggadocious personality,” in his youth, little, it seems, has changed.

Trump was privately educated and attended the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where he learned, “First, they taught you all the rules and regulations. Then they taught you that they are really meant to be broken.” He worked initially in Trump Real Estate, for his father, but soon gained prominence, sometimes notoriety, within real estate circles and has, throughout his career, been on a roller-coaster ride of million-dollar deals, bankruptcies, television and gossip columns.

Trump has been a compulsive litigant, more than 4,000 times, including filing for Chapter 11, business bankruptcy, on several occasions, allowing them to continue functioning while the banks restructured debt and ‘wrote down’ Trump’s shareholdings.

He is unapologetic concerning his ‘frequent’ use of the legal process saying he had, “brilliantly used the laws of this country... doing a great job for my company,

for myself, for my employees, and my family.”

Interestingly, prior to assuming the presidency in 2024, Donald Trump’s wealth was assessed by Forbes Magazine as having a net worth of \$4 billion, but now has an accumulated wealth of \$6.2 billion due mainly to what Forbes termed his “presiding over the most lucrative presidency in American history.”

President Trump has had an equally turbulent private life, being three times wed, first to Ivana Selnickova in 1977, to Marla Maples in 1993, and to his current wife Melania Knauss in 2005, ensuring that Trump was never far from the headlines. He is currently embroiled in the sordid Jeffrey Epstein investigations, with allegations of him in the ‘Epstein Files’ being more ‘indelicate,’ than he would wish us to believe. Presidentially, he has, without justification, and in the most arrogant, dismissive manner, alienated Ukraine, Mexico, Venezuela, Greenland, Canada, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Nato, and the Paris Climate Accord (COP21), kidnapped an elected leader (Nicholas Maduro), imposed global trade tariffs, rolled back environmental standards, sacked 30,000 plus federal employees, and created ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, who make the KKK look like boy scouts, and that’s just the tip of the confrontational iceberg that is Trump’s

Presidentially, he has, without justification, alienated Ukraine, Mexico, Venezuela, Greenland, Canada, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Nato, and the Paris Climate Accord

presidential style.

This then, is the man who, on the flimsiest of pretexts, with, it appears, little consideration for friend and foe alike, on February 28, 2026, authorised the bombing of Iran, seeking to end the reign of the Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and thoughtlessly creating a global crisis in energy, air travel, and finance, that was clear and obvious to most commentators and media.

He has left friendly nations of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait out in the cold, their citizens and infrastructures exposed to Iran’s missile attacks, inflicting ‘proxy warfare’.

America is not protected by its millions of people, its wealth, or its military might, but by its distance. It ‘fights,’ inflicts, a safe distance from the anguish that all of Europe, most of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific have known, of invasion or attack, of bombs, bullets, death, and destruction. For them, war is easy!

America, you gave power to a man you knew lacked respect, for whom only wealth and power matter, to whom the truth is a stranger, and for whom the world would never be enough! America, you did this, you elected this caricature, knowing him. Did you really think he would change... or what were you thinking?

AUSTRALIA PLAYS A HARDBALL ON SOCIAL MEDIA BAN

BYRON KAYE

Since Australia banned children from using social media in December, lawmakers from Spain to Malaysia have expressed interest in following suit, while US courts have found tech firms negligent towards young users.

This global spotlight on the first such ban on people under 16 using popular apps appears to have encouraged Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s government to ramp up enforcement this week of what it was touting as successful cooperation with industry two months ago, tech policy experts say.

In getting more aggressive with apps such as Instagram and TikTok, Albanese’s centre-left government is pleased with the overseas interest - at least eight countries have said they want similar curbs - but keen to counter the news that many teens are still scrolling on their phones, experts say.

“The whole world’s watching Australia in this experiment, and therefore it looks like a weak government to back down or pretend that the failures in reasonable efforts aren’t happening,” said Jeannie Paterson, co-founder of the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Ethics, who regularly advises government on tech policy.

A spokesperson for Communications Minister Anika Wells said she had not toughened her stance due to global attention, declining to comment further.

A month after the ban took effect, the government reported in mid-January that social media platforms had deactivated 4.7 million suspected underage accounts, prompting industry participants to expect a grace period of up to a year on enforcement of the ban.

The British and Canadian governments and some US lawmakers have sounded out the Australian authorities on the social media ban - a policy overwhelmingly backed by parents but opposed by the multi-trillion-dollar industry that must comply with it.

Those signs of progress, however, have been undermined by a series of headlines about minors staying on social media.

On Tuesday, the government said it was investigating Meta’s Instagram and Facebook, TikTok, Alphabet’s YouTube and Snapchat for possible breaches of the law, gathering evidence for possible legal action. The eSafety regulator had previously said it would only take enforcement action in cases of systemic noncompliance.

In its first comprehensive compliance report, the regulator said nearly one-third of parents reported their under-16 child still had at least one social media account. Among those, two-thirds said the platform had not asked for the child’s age.

Angela Flannery, a former general counsel for the government’s Communications Department who now advises the private sector, said, “The government is quite heartened generally by the number of other jurisdictions that are looking at imposing restrictions on the under-16s globally.”

— Reuters

Iran war supercharges marine drone revolution

INSIDE A hangar on an industrial estate near a motorway and a port, sleek glass fibre hulls shaped like oversized canoes spray-painted naval grey await the fitting of nearby packaged engines and other high-tech systems. From Ukraine, similar unmanned attack boats - most initially built by Ukraine’s special forces and security services specifically for that task - have largely driven the Russian Black Sea Fleet out of nearby waters.

If war widens in the Middle East from the current face-off between Israel and the US on one hand and Iran on the other, some of these newer British boats might go into action. Such craft are increasingly seen as the future of naval warfare, alongside a host of other “dirty, dull and dangerous” offshore roles such as search and rescue.

The manufacturing facility in a discreet location belongs to the fast-growing British defence firm Kraken, which this year signed a deal to supply a first tranche of 20 small attack boats for Britain’s Royal Navy as well as further deals for US Special Operations Command and the wider US Navy.

Fuelled by venture capital, similar firms are springing up around the world, delivering not just autonomous attack craft like winning any Nato fight with Russia in the Baltic - but also a host of other uncrewed systems. The Kraken team, like others across the sector, says that recent headlines about the success of drone attacks in the Gulf help provide a sense of mission - a feeling that Western democracies must both be prepared to fight and find ways to minimise their casualties if they are to stop wars from happening.

Kraken now offers a range of drones, with the 8.5-metre Scout Medium currently arguably the most popular and easiest to mass-produce - but it will not say if any of its craft have so far seen action in the Middle East or the Black Sea.

The US military says it has deployed similar vessels, including, specifically, the Global Autonomous Reconnaissance Craft (GARC) from



A US Navy Global Autonomous Reconnaissance Craft, assigned to Naval Information Warfare Centre Atlantic, manoeuvres during Exercise Southern Lightning in Charleston, US. — Reuters

the Maryland firm Black Sea, in recent operations near the Gulf.

US Central Command, which oversees US Middle East operations, has been trialling such unmanned vessels for much of the current decade. European nations have honed their own technology and skills with Nato’s Task Force X-Baltic, not least in tracking Russian and other vessels they suspect might interfere with underwater cables and other infrastructure.

Whether operated entirely autonomously or by a helmsman based elsewhere connected via Starlink or similar satellite communication system, such vessels can carry a range of weapons and other payloads, including surveillance cameras, machineguns or enough on-board explosive to sink a large ship. Iran appears to have used at least two such vessels in its attacks on commercial vessels, a sign of just how fast naval warfare is now changing.

Heavy jamming in both Ukraine and the Gulf has led to a constant battle to keep remote human-piloted systems operational - and put the focus on building autonomous ones that can dispense with a communication link.

But this is a substantially more challenging task; Reuters and other media outlets reported several

problems in tests last year with efforts to make such craft operate without human control - although insiders say this is hardly a surprise, particularly in contested waters like the Black Sea or the Baltic.

At the time of writing, UK media reported that the British Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel Lyme Bay, an amphibious supply ship, was due to load a cargo of drones for potential mine clearance in the Gulf - but only once the conflict concludes and the environment for such craft becomes less hostile. If that mission goes ahead, it will be seen as a sign both of how few working warships remain in Britain’s cash-strapped navy and of how technology is changing. For now, no one expects vessels such as those built by Kraken to replace traditional warships entirely; Trump’s “armada,” including aircraft carriers and marine assault vessels, has been a reminder of the potent combat power of such a force, even if US commanders have kept such vessels far from the battle zone to minimise their risk.

The speed with which a firm like Kraken can turn out newer, cheaper vessels, however, is dramatic, as is the scale of its ambition. Kraken says it can deliver as many as 500 remote-controlled vessels in the current year and twice that in 2027, in part through deals with shipyards in places including Germany and the Pacific rim. Speaking from his office full of models from his previous lives in Formula One racing and high-performance offshore powerboats, Kraken founder Mal Crease outlines how he has used his experience to build what he hopes will be a dominant maritime offshore systems manufacturer.

Learning lessons from Ukraine has been part of that process, as has been working out how to mass-produce such boats in a much less conflict-ridden setting. “Obviously, there are challenges to delivering and building a quality, scalable product in a conflict zone,” he said.

What the Kraken team are able to do now, he says, is build a growing range of vessels from increasingly mass-producible modular components.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Seeb registering an important 72-47 win over Al Amerat. — Mousa al Balushi

RACE FOR THE U18 BASKETBALL LEAGUE CONCLUDES TODAY

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The Oman Youth Basketball League (Under-18) for the 2025-2026 season will conclude Today with the final round of matches set to decide the overall standings and crown the top teams.

Al Amerat will face Nizwa at 5 pm, while Seeb will take on Salalah at 7 pm at the sub-hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The top three teams will be honoured after the matches as the league reaches its decisive stage amid strong competition among the four participating clubs.

The closing ceremony will be held under the auspices of Sayyid Idris bin Mansour bin Nasser al Busaidy, Director-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in the presence of members of the OBA board and representatives of the participating clubs.

The second round of the finals produced two notable results, with Nizwa defeating Salalah 72-66 and Seeb registering an important 72-47 win over Al Amerat.

Following those results, Seeb moved to the top of the standings with 9 points, ahead of Salalah in second place on 8 points, while Nizwa sits third with 7 points and Al Amerat is fourth with 6 points.

In the first match of the round, Nizwa claimed a valuable 72-66 victory over Salalah in a competitive contest in which it managed to assert its edge across most periods. Adam al Hinai led Nizwa's scoring with 26 points, followed by Akram al Rashdi with 12 and Al Waleed al Maawali with 11. For Salalah, Qaisar al Balushi scored 19 points, Mohab al Hambasi added 16 and Mishal Kafkaf contributed 9.

Nizwa narrowly took the first quarter 16-15 before extending its lead in the second period, scoring 16 points against Salalah's 12 to take a 32-27 advantage into halftime. The third quarter ended level at 17 points each, allowing Nizwa to remain in front at 49-44. Both teams continued to trade points in the final quarter, but Nizwa held on to secure the win after scoring 23 points against Salalah's 22.

SEEB THRASH SALALAH 72-47

In the second match, Seeb controlled proceedings against Al Amerat and won all four quarters through disciplined play and strong focus. Ahmed al Bahlani led Seeb with 29 points, while Abdulrahman al Maamari and Azzan al Ajmi added 12 points each. Mazin al Owaisi was the standout player for Al Amerat with 21 points.

Seeb led the first quarter 20-16 and widened the gap in the second after scoring 19 points compared with 13 for Al Amerat to take a 39-29 half-time lead. It continued to dominate in the third quarter, adding 19 points while limiting Al Amerat to just 7, to move ahead 58-36. Seeb maintained its superiority in the fourth quarter, scoring 14 points against 11, to complete a convincing 72-47 victory.

Oman secure 2nd straight win over Thailand

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

OMAN'S NATIONAL hockey team continued its strong start to the 2026 Asian Games Qualifier with an important 2-1 win over Thailand in their Group A match at the Royal Thai Air Force Hockey Field in Bangkok. The result marked Oman's second successive victory in the tournament. Further, it strengthened its position in the race for qualification after a closely contested match that remained intense until the closing stages.

Oman entered the match with clear focus and turned its positive start into an opening goal in the first quarter through Aseel al Maaini in the 12th minute. The period also saw Faisal Alloun Ambork receive a green card at 13:05, while Oman had earned an early penalty corner at 1:06. The Red Warriors finished the opening quarter 1-0 ahead after producing the better structure and showing a relative edge in general play.

The second quarter was played at a higher tempo as Thailand pushed for a response and found the equaliser through Juntakian Tanakit in the 24th minute, capitalising on a penalty corner awarded just moments earlier. Oman, however, responded quickly and effectively, with Rashad al Fazari restoring the lead in the 29th minute to give the national team a 2-1 advantage by half-time. Al Fazari delivered one of the standout performances of the match and was deservedly named Player of the Match.

The third quarter was defined by physical battles and sustained Thai pressure as the hosts searched for another equaliser, while Oman maintained its defensive balance and tactical discipline. Hazaa al Balushi received a green card at 36:20, and Thailand was awarded penalty corners at 37:51 and 38:05, but Oman's defence stood firm to preserve the lead heading into the final period.

In the final quarter, Oman held a narrow one-goal lead as Thailand pushed hard for an equaliser with home support behind them. The pace increased as the hosts applied attacking pressure, while the Red Warriors stayed defensively disciplined and closed down the spaces effectively. Oman remained composed in the closing



A tightly contested duel for the ball during Oman's victory over Thailand in the Asian qualifier.



Oman players close down their Thai opponent during a competitive Group A encounter.

minutes, handled the growing pressure well and held on for a valuable win that underlined its technical and mental readiness for the rest of the qualifier.

The victory gives Oman another strong boost ahead of its next match against Hong Kong China on Monday, April 6,

at 11 am Muscat time. That fixture will represent another important test for the Red Warriors as they aim to maintain their positive momentum in Group A and move a step closer to the decisive rounds and one of the four available qualification places for the 2026 Asian Games.

Al Fayrouz re-elected as president of ITPF through 2030

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@RIYADHBALUCH

The General Assembly of the International Tent Pegging Federation (ITPF) has re-elected Mohammed bin Issa al Fayrouz as President for the 2026–2030 term, reaffirming confidence in his leadership during the federation's annual meeting held in Muscat. The session brought together representatives from 38 member nations, attending both in person and online.

Elections for the Board of Directors witnessed strong competition, with 15 candidates contesting eight available seats. The process was marked by transparency and the use of an advanced electronic voting system, ensuring full participation of member federations regardless of location.

The newly elected board includes representatives from several countries, including Oman, Qatar, Egypt, South



(ITPF) has re-elected Mohammed bin Issa al Fayrouz as President for the 2026–2030 term. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

Africa and Russia. Following the vote, the board appointed Anis bin Mohammed al Maamari as Vice-President for Executive Affairs and Haitham bin Mohammed al Lawati as Secretary-General.

In his address, Al Fayrouz expressed appreciation to the Government of Oman for its continued financial and

logistical support in hosting the federation's headquarters, highlighting the country's role in advancing the sport at the international level.

The assembly also approved the federation's administrative and financial reports for 2025 and outlined the international calendar for the 2026–2027 period. The schedule includes

major events such as the Junior, Women's, Military, and University Championships, as well as the Beach Tent Pegging Championship.

One of the key highlights of the meeting was a progress report on the 2026 ITPF World Cup, which will be hosted by Jordan. Officials confirmed that preparations are progressing as planned, while Oman and Russia were announced as hosts for the qualification rounds later this year.

The federation also highlighted key achievements in 2025, including the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Arab Equestrian Federation to include tent pegging in the Arab Games, along with new partnerships with the Saudi Equestrian Federation and the International Horseback Archery Alliance.

These steps mark a new phase of global expansion for the sport.



Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, delivers the award to the winning UAE team.

Photos by Faisal al Balushi

OMAN HOSTS SUCCESSFUL THIRD STAGE OF “ARABIANS TOUR”

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

MARVELLOUS IN MUSCAT

The Sultanate of Oman once again confirmed its growing reputation as a premier destination for international sporting events after successfully hosting a spectacular stage of the Global Champions Arabians Tour at the St Regis Muscat in Al Mouj from March 31 to April 2, 2026.

The Muscat leg, the third stage of the prestigious global series, delivered a remarkable showcase of the elegance, beauty and heritage of Arabian horses, attracting elite participants and enthusiasts from around the world. The event highlighted Oman's deep-rooted connection with Arabian horses, which remain a proud symbol of the nation's history and equestrian tradition.

Despite a brief postponement, the competitions proceeded smoothly and at a high technical level, featuring strong participation across multiple categories, including yearlings, juniors and senior championships. The Muscat stage lived up to expectations, offering intense competition among some of the finest Arabian horses globally. The success of the event reflects Oman's continued commitment to hosting world-class sporting competitions. Since its debut in Muscat in 2024, the tour has grown steadily, with the 2026 edition marking the third consecutive year of hosting.



From the competitions of the Global Champions Arabians Tour.



During the competitions of Global Champions Arabians Tour in Muscat.

PLATFORM FOR EXCELLENCE
Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, praised the successful organisation of the event and its wider impact.

“Hosting the Global Champions Arabians Tour in Muscat carried an important economic and tourism objectives. We thanked the organisers including: Oman Equestrian & Racing Federation and all sponsors for their efforts, and we look forward to hosting more international events in the future.” he said.

Mohammed bin Issa al Fayrouz, President of the International Tent Pegging Federation (ITPF), described the tour as one of the leading global equestrian competitions.

“The Muscat stage was very attractive and well organised. Arabian horses have a special place worldwide and such events help promote their heritage and value.” he noted.

Meanwhile, Abdulrazaq al Shahwarzi, Vice-Chairman of the Oman Equestrian & Racing Federation, highlighted the importance of the event in developing local participation.

“This is one of the most beautiful Arabian horse shows. The level of competition was very high, and although Omani participation is still developing, we are confident of better results in the coming years.” he said.

STRONG INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION
The event witnessed strong dominance from horses representing the UAE and Qatar, with top performances across various categories. Notable winners included AJ Fayed in the Yearling Colts Championship, while Al Aryam Harbah secured gold in the Junior Fillies category. In the senior divisions, D Najlaa claimed gold in the mares category, while D Shahrar topped the stallions category, underlining the high standards of breeding and competition on display.

Abdulaziz al Marzouqi, Executive Director of Dubai Stud, expressed satisfaction with his team's performance. “Our results reflect the quality and progress of our breeding programme. Winning two gold medals and one silver is a strong achievement at this level.” he said.

COMPLETE EXPERIENCE
Beyond the competitions, the event also featured a vibrant shopping village and family entertainment activities, offering a complete cultural and sporting experience for visitors and reinforcing Oman's appeal as a tourism destination.

The Muscat stage is considered a key stop in the 2026 GCAT calendar, combining elite competition with cultural celebration. Following Oman, the tour will continue in Kuwait later this month, before heading to Europe with stages in the Netherlands, Monaco, Poland and Italy.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Thiago Tirante

TIRANTE DOWNS SHELTON TO REACH HOUSTON SEMIS

HOUSTON:Thiago Tirante stunned top-seeded Ben Shelton 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 6-4 on Friday to book a semifinal showdown with friend and fellow Argentine Roman Burruchaga at the ATP clay court tournament in Houston, Texas.

Tirante, ranked 83rd in the world, notched his second career win over a top-10 player as he sent the ninth-ranked Shelton packing to reach the second ATP semifinal of his career.

"I knew that Ben was a very difficult player, a great player, so I had to take more risks at some times of the match," said Tirante, who fended off a break point early in the third set and broke Shelton for a 5-4 lead before serving it out with a comfortable hold.

"I did sometimes good, I did sometimes bad, but that's the key. (I had to stay) mentally strong all the time and try to break the serve -- he serves amazing."

Burruchaga, ranked 77th, upset third-seeded American Learner Tien, ranked 22nd in the world, 7-5, 6-4 to reach his first career semifinal.

The son of former soccer player Jorge Burruchaga, who won the World Cup with Argentina in 1986, the 24-year-old had already knocked out another member of the world top 40 on Thursday, 33rd-ranked local favourite Brandon Nakashima.

Second-seeded American Frances Tiafoe saved a match point in the third set tie-breaker to reach the semifinals with a 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) victory over Australian Alexei Popyrin.

Tiafoe will face fourth-seeded Tommy Paul in an All-American semi after Paul beat Argentina's sixth-seeded Tomas Etcheverry 6-4, 6-2. — AFP



Thiago Tirante

Knicks crush Bulls with 40-point rout

NEW YORK: OG Anunoby shot 70 per cent from beyond the arc and had a game-high 31 points and Mitchell Robinson added 17 points and 11 rebounds as the host New York Knicks jumped out to a 20-1 lead and never looked back in a 136-96 victory over the Chicago Bulls on Thursday.

Jalen Brunson returned to the line-up and had 17 points and 10 assists for New York (50-28), which reached 50 wins for the third straight season. The Knicks shot 52.7 per cent (48 of 91) from the field, 89.2 per cent (25 of 28) from the free-throw line and scored 28 points off 16 Bulls turnovers.

Anunoby, who made 7 of 10 from beyond the arc, had two 3-pointers in both the first and third quarters and three in the second



New York Knicks guard Jalen Brunson (11) looks to drive past Chicago Bulls forward Matas Buzelis (14). — **Imagn Images**

as the Knicks were able to rest their starters for the duration of the fourth quarter. Anunoby also grabbed eight rebounds while Mikal Bridges scored 12 points.

Collin Sexton hit four 3-pointers in the first half and scored a team-high 19 points off the bench for Chicago (29-48), which has struggled on the road, losing seven straight

and eight of nine. The Bulls are just 11-27 away from home.

Sexton's three 3-pointers were about all Chicago could muster as it fell behind by 19 midway through the first quarter. The Knicks, who led wire-to- wire, used an 18-0 run to put the game away early.

Tre Jones led an abysmal performance by Chicago's starters with 13 points and eight assists. They were doubled up by New York's starters 84-42.

Robinson scored 15 of his 17 points in the first half as New York led by as much as 41 in the second quarter. Brunson, who sat out Wednesday's 130-119 triumph over Memphis due to right ankle soreness, had nine points in the first and another eight in the third.

The Knicks, who defeated a sub-500 team for the 11th straight time, dominated Chicago on the boards 54-36. The Bulls will miss the playoffs for the fourth straight season and eighth time in the past nine seasons.

Matas Buzelis had 11 points and six rebounds and Leonard Miller added 14 points and six boards for Chicago.

Jeremy Sochan had seven points and eight rebounds off the bench for New York, which has won seven of eight at home, including the last five. The Knicks improved to 28-9 at Madison Square Garden.

Chicago has lost six straight and eight of nine overall. Five of the six losses on this skid have come by at least 18 points. — **Reuters**

HAALAND SHINES AS MAN CITY REACH FA CUP SEMIS



Manchester City's Erling Haaland celebrates scoring their first goal. — **Reuters**

ERLING HAALAND hit a hat-trick as Manchester City thrashed Liverpool 4-0 on Saturday to reach the FA Cup semifinals and increase the pressure on Reds boss Arne Slot.

Haaland netted twice late in the first half of the quarterfinal at the Etihad Stadium and completed his treble after the interval following an Antoine Semenyo strike.

With Liverpool trailing by four, Mohamed Salah had a penalty saved by City goalkeeper James Trafford to compound a miserable afternoon for the under-fire Slot.

Liverpool's tame surrender was a bitter blow to Slot, who had to endure chants of "you're getting sacked in the morning" from gloating City fans.

They head to Paris Saint-Germain for the Champions League quarterfinal first leg on Wednesday with Slot desperately needing a victory over the holders to keep the critics at bay.

Slot's team, who have just two wins in their last seven matches in all competitions, are fifth in the Premier League and far from certain to qualify for next season's Champions League.

It is a remarkable decline for Slot, who just 12 months ago was on the brink of leading Liverpool to their record-equalling 20th English title.

City's ruthless performance took them into the FA Cup semifinals for an eighth successive season.

After beating Liverpool twice in the Premier League this term, City have enjoyed three successive victories over the Reds for the first time since 1937.

City have also won 18 consecutive home FA Cup matches, setting a new record in the competition.

Guardiola's men have found a rich vein of form at just the right time to salvage their season.

Trailing Premier League leaders Arsenal by nine points and knocked out of the Champions League by Real Madrid, City bounced back to beat the Gunners 2-0 in the League Cup final just before the international break.

Now they can set their sights on winning the FA Cup for the first time since 2023 while retaining an outside chance of catching Arsenal in the title race.

HAALAND HOT STREAK

Liverpool made a bright start but Hugo Ekitike fired just wide from the edge of the area before Salah wasted a golden opportunity in the 14th minute, dragging his shot wide from just six yards out.

Ekitike lashed wastefully wide with a snap-shot from 10 yards as Liverpool paid the price for failing to make the pressure count.

Fresh from scoring twice in the League Cup final, Nico O'Reilly was key to City's 39th-minute opener.

Matheus Nunes picked out O'Reilly in the Liverpool area and as he twisted away from Virgil van Dijk, the defender's clumsy trip

conceded a penalty that Haaland converted in clinical fashion.

Haaland had scored just once in his previous six games in all competitions.

But the prolific Norway striker is never far from a hot streak and he doubled City's advantage on the stroke of half-time.

Rayan Cherki found Semenyo's run and he lofted a pin-point cross towards Haaland, who made a perfectly-timed run in front of Ibrahima Konate to glance a superb header past Giorgi Mamardashvili.

Liverpool were in disarray and Semenyo landed the knockout blow five minutes after the interval.

Cherki's pass sent Semenyo sprinting in behind the flat-footed Van Dijk to clip a deft finish over Mamardashvili.

Haaland completed the 28th treble of his career in the 57th minute, drilling home via the underside of the bar after O'Reilly teed him up 12 yards from goal.

On a prolonged farewell tour after announcing he will leave Liverpool at the end of the season, Salah produced the latest in a long line of lacklustre performances.

The Egyptian's struggles were encapsulated by his second-half penalty miss after Nunes fouled Ekitike.

Later on Saturday, Chelsea host third tier strugglers Port Vale and Premier League leaders Arsenal visit Championship side Southampton.

West Ham meet Leeds at the London Stadium in the last quarterfinal on Sunday. — **AFP**

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



Total merchandise exports top RO 1.831 billion.

TRADE SURPLUS IN OMAN REACHES 256 MILLION

MUSCAT: Oman’s trade balance recorded a surplus of RO 256 million at the end of January 2026, down from RO 528 million during the same period in 2025, according to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Total merchandise exports declined by 6.1 per cent to RO 1.831 billion, compared with RO 1.949 billion a year earlier, while imports rose by 10.9 per cent to RO 1.575 billion from RO 1.421 billion.

The drop in exports was largely driven by a 15.9 per cent fall in oil and gas exports, which stood at RO 1.109 billion, down from RO 1.318 billion in January 2025.

In contrast, non-oil exports increased by 15.3 per cent to RO 613 million, up from RO 531 million, while re-exports grew by 9.7 per cent to RO 109 million.

The United Arab Emirates remained the leading destination for Oman’s non-oil exports at RO 141 million, followed by Saudi Arabia at RO 92 million and South Korea at RO 77 million.

The UAE also topped re-export destinations at RO 43 million, ahead of Saudi Arabia and Iran.

On the import side, China ranked among the leading trade partners with imports valued at RO 213 million, followed by India at RO 113 million.

— ONA

AVIATION SECTOR SETS MEDIA REVIEW

MUSCAT: Oman’s aviation sector entities will convene a joint annual media meeting on April 13 to review recent performance and outline future growth strategies, as part of efforts to strengthen the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a regional aviation hub.

The meeting will bring together Oman Airports, Oman Air, SalamAir and Oman Ground Handling Company (Transom), under the auspices of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 4

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has pledged to provide the Sultanate of Oman with technical and policy support as it embarks on a strategy to develop energy storage capacity in line with its national energy transition goals.

The Abu Dhabi-headquartered intergovernmental organisation announced, to this end, that it is hosting a key workshop in collaboration with Oman’s Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

Scheduled to take place on April 14, 2026, the workshop will explore the growing role of energy storage systems in supporting the integration of renewable energy and enhancing power system flexibility.

The move comes as Oman positions energy storage as a critical enabler of its broader renewable energy transition. Just last week, the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) identified battery energy



Oman is positioning energy storage as enabler of its broader renewable energy transition.

storage systems (BESS) as one of three strategic initiatives, alongside continuous renewable energy production and demand response management, among its priorities for advancement in 2026.

BESS, along with other storage technologies, is key to balancing intermittency and optimising dispatch.

Highlighting the significance of its collaboration with Oman on energy storage, IRENA said: “As solar and wind generation

expand globally, energy storage is becoming a key enabler of reliable, resilient and flexible electricity systems.

Storage technologies help address the variability of renewable energy by balancing supply and demand in real time, storing excess electricity when generation exceeds demand and releasing it when needed.

This capability allows power systems to integrate higher shares of variable renewable energy

MoE unveils five-year strategic programmes

THE Ministry of Economy (MoE) has issued a comprehensive strategic programmes folder for the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026–2030), providing a detailed roadmap for the implementation of national priorities under Oman Vision 2040.

The release follows Royal Decree No 1/2026 approving the plan and outlines 190 strategic programmes spanning 12 national priorities across four key pillars: People and Society, Economy and Development, Sustainable Environment; and Governance and Institutional Performance.

The document serves as a central reference for government entities and stakeholders, detailing programme objectives, implementation mechanisms, timelines and the roles of executing and supporting entities.

It aims to enhance planning efficiency, strengthen coordination and ensure clarity in delivering development outcomes through well-defined pathways and measurable targets.

The strategic programmes were developed using a rigorous scientific methodology aligned with international best practices. Advanced analytical tools were employed to assess the current economic and social landscape, identify challenges and opportunities; and design targeted interventions.

Each programme is linked to specific performance indicators to enable effective monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement, ensuring alignment with national goals.

Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, said the programmes represent a practical translation of Oman Vision 2040 during its second implementation phase.

He noted that the plan comes at a critical stage, aiming to address existing challenges



The plan comes at a critical stage, aiming to address existing challenges while capitalising on emerging opportunities to strengthen sustainable development and enhance the competitiveness of the national economy.

DR NASSER BIN RASHID AL MAAWALI
Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy



The release follows Royal Decree No 1/2026 approving the plan and outlines 190 strategic programmes spanning 12 national priorities across four key pillars.

while capitalising on emerging opportunities to strengthen sustainable development and enhance the competitiveness of the national economy.

He added that the plan was developed through a broad participatory approach involving government institutions, private sector stakeholders and civil society organisations.

This inclusive process has contributed to more comprehensive and realistic outcomes, while supporting the development of legislative and institutional frameworks and maintaining a balance between fiscal and monetary policies.

The plan prioritises directing investments towards high-impact sectors with strong growth and employment potential, particularly manufacturing, tourism and the digital economy. It also supports enabling sectors such as mining, food security, renewable energy, transport and logistics, education and healthcare, reflecting a holistic approach to economic diversification.

A key feature of the plan is the integration of the spatial dimension, ensuring balanced development across all governorates. By leveraging the comparative advantages of each region, the strategy aims to

enhance competitiveness within a unified national framework while supporting decentralisation and empowering local communities to play a more active role in shaping their economic and social priorities.

The planning framework is structured around two main tracks. The economic track focuses on achieving diversification, strengthening competitiveness, fostering innovation and ensuring fiscal sustainability to reduce reliance on oil revenues.

The developmental track emphasises infrastructure completion and the advancement of social and environmental outcomes to support inclusive growth.

Implementation of the plan will take place through three phases. The first phase, covering 2026–2027, includes 118 strategic programmes, followed by 72 programmes in the second phase from 2028 to 2029.

The final year, 2030, is designated as a complementary phase to prepare for the subsequent five-year plan.

In terms of distribution, 52 programmes fall under the People and Society pillar, focusing on building a knowledge-based society, enhancing education and healthcare systems; and preserving national identity.

IRENA to advance Oman’s energy storage goals

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The campaign remains active until April 12, 2026.

MHD AUTOMOBILES’ SEASONAL OFFERS RECEIVE STRONG CUSTOMER RESPONSE

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles is pleased to announce the strong response to its seasonal campaign, which has generated increased showroom engagement across its premium brands, including Jeep, RAM and Alfa Romeo.

The campaign, which spans a two-month period covering Ramadhan and the post-Ramadhan season, remains active until April 12, 2026, offering customers a final opportunity to take advantage of exclusive ownership packages across select models. With competitive pricing and availability limited on certain models, interested customers are encouraged to visit soon to secure these exceptional offers.

EXCLUSIVE BENEFITS ACROSS POPULAR MODELS

The campaign provides a range of customer-focused benefits across all participating models:

- Jeep Wrangler & Grand Cherokee Range: 4 years complimentary service, 4 years warranty, first-year registration free and competitive pricing tailored to deliver excellent ownership value.
- Jeep Commander: 3 years/60,000 km complimentary service, 5 years/100,000 km warranty, first-year registration free and attractive pricing options.
- RAM 1500 Range: 4 years complimentary service, 4 years warranty, first-year registration free, with pricing designed for maximum value.
- Alfa Romeo Range: 4 years complimentary service, 4 years warranty, first-year registration free, 50% trade-in value after 3 years (as per terms and conditions) and competitive pricing for the season.

Customers who complete a test drive during the promotional period will also have the chance to enter a raffle draw to win an iPhone 17, with the winner to be announced on April 22, 2026, adding an extra element of excitement to the showroom experience.

Commenting on the campaign, Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said: “The response to our seasonal campaign has been very encouraging. Customers are focusing not only on the vehicles themselves but also on the overall ownership value. With just a few days left, select models in limited availability and competitive pricing across the range, this is the perfect opportunity to enjoy a comprehensive package that enhances both convenience and long-term peace of mind”.

With the campaign concluding on April 12, 2026, MHD Automobiles encourages customers to visit the showroom and take advantage of these exclusive ownership benefits, competitive pricing and carefully curated packages while select models remain available.

Toyota Camry redefines value with benefits

FOR those who have been considering the legendary Toyota Camry, there is no better time to drive home this world-class sedan than during this festive season. Saud Bahwan Automotive has announced that the Camry is now available with an exceptional suite of benefits as part of the “Toyota’s Biggest Excitement” campaign.

This limited-time window offers prospective buyers the perfect combination of the Camry’s renowned reliability and the year’s most significant savings and rewards. (Terms & Conditions Apply).

Owning a Camry is now more rewarding than ever, with every purchase backed by a comprehensive 5-year/50,000 km service package to ensure total peace of mind for years to come.

Adding even more value, customers also receive one year of free insurance, one year of registration and RO 50 worth of Thiqah Loyalty Points.

Adding a final layer of excitement to the purchase, every Camry buyer gains entry into the season’s biggest raffles. This includes a chance to win the iconic Toyota Supra GR in the Grand Raffle, as well as the Weekly Raffle where five lucky winners will receive a brand-new Toyota Urban Cruiser GL.

The Camry itself continues to set the benchmark for mid-size sedans, blending a sleek “Hammer Head” exterior design with a refined, driver-centric interior.

Built on the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA-K) platform, it provides



Every Camry buyer gains entry into the season's biggest raffles.

a superior driving experience characterised by a low centre of gravity and excellent body rigidity. Whether choosing the efficient 2.5-litre four-cylinder VVTi-e engine or the advanced 226 hp electrified hybrid powertrain, drivers are guaranteed a smooth and powerful journey.

The cabin is equally impressive, featuring a 12.3-inch touchscreen, wireless smartphone integration and high-quality finishes that provide a premium feel for every passenger.

Safety remains a hallmark of the Camry experience. Equipped with the advanced

Toyota Safety Sense suite, the vehicle offers features like a Pre-Collision System, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control and Lane Tracing Alert. For added convenience, the Camry also includes a Panoramic View Monitor and Safe Exit Assist to help prevent accidents before they happen. This blend of cutting-edge technology and protective features ensures that families can travel with total confidence.

With the campaign running till April 8, 2026, now is truly the ultimate time to visit a Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom and experience the Toyota Camry.

NBO and Ooredoo sign strategic partnership

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Ooredoo Fintech have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), to establish a strategic partnership focused on digital financial services and payment solutions in Oman.

The signing ceremony took place at NBO’s Head Office in Muscat on Tuesday, March 31, 2026. This partnership marks the start of a joint effort to develop a digital wallet ecosystem and aligns with Oman Vision 2040 by supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s digital transformation and fostering innovation in a diversified, technology-driven financial sector.

The MoU sets a framework for both parties to explore collaboration across key areas. These include digital wallet ecosystem development, payment services and settlement arrangements, banking and financial infrastructure support, joint initiatives in digital financial



The MoU marks the start of a joint effort to develop a digital wallet ecosystem.

services and other mutually agreed financial technology initiatives.

Commenting on the partnership, Mohammed bin Yahya al Jabri, Assistant General Manager and Head of Global

Transaction Banking at NBO, said, “This MoU reflects our continued focus on advancing innovation in Oman’s financial services sector. Through our collaboration with Ooredoo Fintech, we aim to explore

solutions that support the growth of digital payments and strengthen the infrastructure needed to deliver efficient financial services”.

Noor al Lawati, Country Head at Ooredoo Fintech Oman, added: “Collaborating with NBO reflects a shared ambition to push the boundaries of what digital financial services can offer in Oman. Together, we are combining NBO’s proven banking strength with walletii’s agile platform to deliver an experience that is greater than the sum of its parts”.

The MoU outlines a high-level understanding between the two parties to cooperate as strategic partners and identify mutually beneficial opportunities. Specific terms and initiatives will be defined in separate agreements.

Through this agreement, NBO and Ooredoo Fintech aim to support the growth of financial technology and digital payments in the Sultanate of Oman.

Sohar International empowers Omani women entrepreneurs

MUSCAT: Sohar International, in collaboration with Visa and in partnership with Lahunna, successfully hosted the finale event of the “She’s Next” programme in Oman, awarding a total prize pool of RO 38,000 to support the growth of women-owned businesses.

The initiative forms part of the Bank’s ongoing commitment to empowering Omani women entrepreneurs and supporting national efforts to build a more diversified and resilient economy aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

The programme’s total prize pool of RO 38,000 was awarded across three categories, including a main prize of RO 21,000, a runner-up prize of RO 11,500; and a people’s favourite prize of RO 5,500, reflecting both



The initiative forms part of the Bank's ongoing commitment to empowering Omani women entrepreneurs.

expert evaluation and audience engagement.

The winner of the main prize was Baladi Baby, owned by Ahlam al Khabouri. The winner of the runner-up prize was Luvashk, owned by Laila Fadhil; and the winner of the People’s Favourite Prize was Ypyap Param owned by Ahoud al Shibli.

Held at the Waterfront building, the event brought together key stakeholders from the entrepreneurial ecosystem, where five shortlisted finalists presented their business concepts and growth strategies to a distinguished judging panel comprising senior representatives from Sohar International and programme mentor Dr Siham bint Ahmed al Harthy.

The programme provides an integrated platform combining financial support, mentorship and capability-building, enabling women-led businesses to strengthen their competitiveness and scale sustainably.

Commenting on the initiative, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: “Empowering Omani women entrepreneurs represents a strategic investment in the future of our national economy.

The Omani woman has consistently demonstrated her ability to lead, innovate and contribute meaningfully to sustainable development across sectors.”

SHORTTAKES



All electricity lines located in wadis have been assessed and are now in the design phase.

POWER GRID
SHIFTED FROM WADIS

MUSCAT: The relocation of electricity networks situated within wadi beds has emerged as a priority, with the Authority for Public Services Regulation directing a comprehensive review and redesign of affected infrastructure to strengthen safety and service reliability.

Engineer Alaa bin Hassan bin Mousa, Chief Executive Officer of Nama Electricity Distribution Company, said all electricity lines located in wadis have been assessed and are now in the design phase, paving the way for reconstruction to higher technical standards.

The upgrades are expected to improve efficiency, durability and resilience against extreme weather conditions.

Among the key projects under implementation is the development of the electricity network in Wadi Fida in Al Dhahirah Governorate. The initiative addresses challenges arising from concrete poles positioned within the wadi's course, which, despite their structural strength, remain exposed to flash flood risks.

The project involves replacing these poles with steel structures installed alongside the wadi, reducing vulnerability to heavy rainfall and ensuring uninterrupted power supply to affected areas.

More than RO 30 million has been allocated for these efforts, covering pole relocation, network reinforcement and the construction of new substations.

At a strategic level, the sector is advancing towards energy diversification, with a strong focus on renewable sources, particularly wind power. Planned projects are expected to deliver between 5,500 and 6,500 megawatts, accounting for over 50 per cent of the Sultanate of Oman's current generation capacity.

These initiatives support Oman Vision 2040 targets to raise renewable energy contribution to around 30 per cent by 2030.

Total investments across electricity, gas transmission, water and wastewater sectors are projected to exceed RO 8 billion in the coming phase. — ONA

Mahas Industrial City
investments top **₹45m**

MAHAS Industrial City has reinforced its position as a key investment hub in Musandam Governorate, with cumulative investments surpassing RO 45.7 million by the end of 2025, alongside continued expansion across multiple industrial sectors.

Mubarak bin Salim al Ghailani, Acting Director General of Mahas Industrial City, said around 20 projects and contracts have been signed to date, generating approximately 247 jobs.

New investments in 2025 alone exceeded RO 4.18 million, covering sectors such as packaging, beverages and construction industries across a total area of 109,910 square metres.

As part of its 2026–2030 development plan, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has commenced several projects, including the Madayn Pioneer Industrial Complex.

The facility will comprise 10 ready-built factories spanning 12,000 square metres at a cost of RO 1.5 million, aimed at supporting entrepreneurship and SMEs.

Infrastructure development continues in parallel, with



As part of its 2026–2030 plan, Madayn has commenced several projects, including the Madayn Pioneer Industrial Complex.

work under way on security surveillance systems and landscaping at key entry and exit points.

Expansion plans are also progressing in coordination with relevant authorities to provide additional industrial, logistics and service spaces.

In 2025, the industrial city completed a major infrastructure and flood protection project covering one million square metres at a cost

of RO 5 million. The project included road networks, an 80-metre bridge, water and wastewater facilities, drainage systems, lighting infrastructure and utility networks, all built to international standards.

Mahas has also supported SMEs through tenders exceeding RO 250,000 awarded to Riyadh-certified enterprises, while implementing flood mitigation measures and operational upgrades.

Strategically located overlooking the Strait of Hormuz, the industrial city benefits from proximity to Khasab Port and Airport, enhancing its appeal for industrial, logistics and tourism investments.

The development aligns with Oman Vision 2040 goals to drive regional growth, strengthen industrial output and create employment opportunities.

— ONA

GCC
ACCELERATES
CLEAN ENERGY
GROWTH

MUSCAT: The GCC has recorded significant progress in renewable energy and climate resilience, according to the Statistical Centre for the Cooperation Council for the Arab Countries of the Gulf's 2024 climate report, which highlights notable shifts in weather patterns and sustainability efforts across the region.

Rainfall levels rose by 49.4 per cent in 2024 compared with the long-term average for 1980–2010,

indicating measurable changes in regional climate trends.

Despite this, temperature data from 23 approved monitoring stations showed stability, with maximum temperatures remaining below 49°C between 2012 and 2024.

The report underscores rapid expansion in solar energy, with installed capacity growing at an annual rate of 88.1 per cent between 2013 and 2024. Electricity generation from solar sources surged

from 0.13 thousand gigawatt-hours in 2013 to 23.5 thousand gigawatt-hours in 2023.

Wind energy also advanced, with capacity increasing from 4.8 megawatts in 2015 to 567 megawatts in 2024.

All GCC countries have deployed advanced mobile-based early warning systems using cellular broadcasting technology, enhancing preparedness for extreme weather events. — ONA

OCCI rolls out five training programmes

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has launched five specialised training programmes aimed at strengthening private sector capabilities and enhancing performance across key economic sectors.

The initiatives, which commence on Sunday, target industry, tourism, agriculture, logistics and mining; and form part of the Chamber's strategy to improve the business environment, expand economic diversification and support development across the governorates in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The programmes include Industrial Excellence and



Export, Sustainable National Tourism Leadership, Model Farm Management, Logistics and Supply Chain Management; and Efficient

and Sustainable Mining Project Management.

They are designed to equip business owners with practical and theoretical knowledge through structured training, field visits and applied project work to boost competitiveness and institutional performance.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said the initiative reflects the Chamber's role in empowering the private sector as a central partner in sustainable economic development, emphasising that investment in human capital remains critical to improving competitiveness and

operational efficiency.

Zakaria bin Abdullah al Saadi, Chief Executive Officer of OCCI, said the programmes aim to enhance the capabilities of business owners and employees by delivering high-quality training that supports national development goals and prepares enterprises for future challenges.

Each programme targets specific sectors and regions. The industrial track focuses on improving production efficiency, technology adoption and export strategies, while the tourism programme promotes sustainable and heritage-based initiatives alongside digital marketing skills.

The agriculture programme supports resource efficiency and sustainable farming practices; and the logistics track aims to optimise supply chain performance and reduce operational costs.

The mining programme, meanwhile, focuses on project management, operational efficiency and adherence to environmental and safety standards, reinforcing sustainable practices within the sector.

The rollout underscores OCCI's continued efforts to build a more competitive private sector, capable of driving economic diversification and supporting long-term growth.

— ONA

POLICY RESPONSE

Windfall tax push gains momentum



Five EU finance ministers have urged a windfall tax on energy firms as fuel prices surge following the Iran war.

In a joint letter, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Austria said the levy would signal unity and ensure companies benefitting from crisis-driven gains help ease public burdens.

The proposal follows sharp oil and gas price spikes reminiscent of Europe's 2022 energy crisis. — Reuters

MONETARY OUTLOOK

IMF backs gradual BoJ rate hikes



The IMF has urged the Bank of Japan (BoJ) to continue raising interest rates despite risks from the Iran war. Higher oil prices and a weak yen are fuelling inflation, while wage growth supports consumption.

The IMF said Japan's economy remains resilient, with inflation likely to reach the 2 per cent target by 2027, backing a gradual, flexible and data-driven tightening path. — Reuters

SUPPLY SHIFT

India resumes Iranian oil imports



India has resumed importing Iranian oil for the first time in seven years, citing supply disruptions from the Middle East conflict. The move follows a temporary easing of US sanctions and aims to secure energy needs amidst volatility in Hormuz transit routes.

Authorities said refiners face no payment issues and have ensured crude supplies through diversified sourcing strategies. — Reuters

OPINION

Renewables near 50%: A turning point for global energy



NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master's graduate.

THE global energy transition has crossed a symbolic threshold. In 2025, renewable energy capacity reached 5,149 gigawatts, accounting for 49.4 per cent of total installed electricity capacity worldwide. For the first time in modern energy history, clean power stands on the brink of matching fossil fuels in scale, signalling what many are calling a tipping point in the global energy system. The growth behind this milestone has been both rapid and concentrated. Solar energy alone added more than 500 gigawatts in a single year, bringing total installed capacity close to 2,400 gigawatts. Alongside wind, it now dominates the expansion of new power infrastructure, with renewables accounting for over 90 per cent of all new capacity additions globally. In parallel, renewables have begun to overtake coal in actual electricity generation, marking a structural shift not just in capacity, but in real-world output. Yet the significance of this moment lies as much in its limitations as in its scale. Despite record growth of 15.5 per cent in 2025, the pace still falls short of what is required to meet global 2030 climate targets, which demand annual growth closer to 16.6 per cent. The transition, while accelerating,

remains uneven and constrained by factors beyond generation itself. Increasingly, the bottleneck is no longer how to produce clean energy, but how to deliver it. Grid infrastructure, long overlooked, is now emerging as the critical constraint. In many regions, renewable projects are facing delays not due to technology or financing, but due to insufficient transmission capacity and outdated grid systems unable to handle variable energy flows. As electricity demand surges, driven by electrification, artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure, the pressure on grids is intensifying. At the same time, energy storage is reshaping the dynamics of the transition. The cost of battery storage has fallen dramatically over the past decade, unlocking the potential for solar and wind to provide more consistent, round the clock power. This shift is redefining renewables from intermittent contributors to reliable baseload alternatives, particularly as hybrid systems combining generation and storage gain traction. Perhaps most striking is the economic dimension of this transition. Around 90 per cent of new renewable projects are now

For the first time in modern energy history, clean power stands on the brink of matching fossil fuels in scale, signalling what many are calling a tipping point in the global energy system.

cheaper than fossil fuel alternatives, with solar and wind significantly undercutting conventional power on cost alone. What was once framed as an environmental imperative has evolved into a clear economic advantage, reshaping investment patterns and national energy strategies. For Oman, these global shifts carry both urgency and opportunity. As the Sultanate of Oman advances its Oman Vision 2040 agenda, renewable energy is emerging not only as a pathway to sustainability, but as a strategic pillar for economic diversification. Large scale solar developments, green hydrogen ambitions and ongoing investments in infrastructure position Oman to participate in and potentially lead the next phase of the energy transition in the region. The question, then, is not whether the transition is underway. It clearly is. Nor is it whether renewables can compete with fossil fuels, as on many fronts they already do. The more pressing question is whether the systems surrounding renewable energy, including grids, storage, policy frameworks and supply chains, can evolve quickly enough to sustain this momentum. Reaching 50 per cent capacity is not the end of the transition. It is the moment the real challenge begins.

IMPACT OF WEATHER CHANGES ON LOCAL ECONOMIES



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

Weather patterns have always influenced human behaviour. Changes in weather in recent years are impacting local economies worldwide. Weather affects several sectors, including agriculture, tourism, construction, infrastructure and small businesses. Agriculture is one of the sectors most affected. Farmers depend on predictable weather

cycles, which make it easier to plan planting and harvesting seasons. However, this predictability is disrupted by irregular rainfall and storms. These disruptions can lead to droughts or flooding, both of which can cause crops to fail. As a result, agricultural output declines, leading to higher food prices in local markets. In regions where livelihoods depend primarily on agriculture, food security is jeopardised and the broader economy is affected. Another industry highly impacted by weather is tourism. Irregular weather patterns can discourage visits to tourist destinations, especially when conditions are excessively hot, cold, or rainy. This can reduce income for businesses that rely on tourism. Conversely, some regions may experience a temporary increase in tourism if weather conditions become more favourable than usual — for example, warmer temperatures in typically cold destinations. However, such gains are often short-lived and dependent on continued favourable conditions. In recent years, extreme weather events have increasingly affected infrastructure and economic activity. Heavy rainfall and flooding can damage roads, bridges and buildings, leading to costly repairs and placing a financial burden on governments. This, in turn, can limit funding available for other development projects. The risk of extreme weather can also deter investment, as it disrupts economic stability. Coastal areas are particularly vulnerable, with erosion and rising sea levels posing risks to homes and businesses. Disruptions to utilities and transportation further reduce economic productivity. Extreme weather presents both challenges and opportunities. It can drive innovation and improve resilience across sectors. Enhanced weather forecasting, emergency preparedness and early warning systems can help reduce economic losses. Investments in resilient infrastructure, improved drainage systems and buildings designed to withstand extreme conditions are also essential. In agriculture, adopting drought-resistant crops, improving irrigation practices and expanding the use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind can strengthen resilience.

Oman can be the Gulf’s East Africa gateway

EAST Africa is one of the closest growth markets to the Gulf and demand there for food, consumer goods, construction materials, machinery and spare parts is set to grow further. Gulf traders and manufacturers will continue targeting those markets with or without Oman. The real question for Muscat is whether Oman wants to sit on the route — or capture the business built around it. A transit point earns from movement. A gateway earns from what happens before goods leave: consolidation, packaging, compliance, light processing, distribution and after-sales support. That is where value is retained inside the economy. That is where margins improve, jobs become more skilled and trade relationships become more durable. Oman has the geography, the ports and the strategic position. Salalah sits close to East African trade lanes. Suhar links logistics with industrial activity and Gulf markets . Al Duqm offers longer-term room for storage, processing and expansion. The issue is no longer whether Oman has the physical assets. It is whether the country can turn those assets into a trade model that captures value rather than simply moves cargo. That means shifting the focus away from volume alone. More containers may look impressive, but volume by itself does not transform an economy. A serious strategy asks a tougher question: how much of that trade is actually generating income, services, investment and jobs inside Oman? The first priority should be consolidation. East Africa-bound cargo from the Gulf is often fragmented, with smaller shipments coming from multiple suppliers on uneven schedules. If Oman becomes the place where those flows are gathered, combined and dispatched efficiently, it creates steady demand for warehousing, inventory management, cold-chain handling and distribution planning. These functions may not attract headlines, but they are the foundation of a real trade economy.



Oman has the geography, the ports and the strategic position to capture value from trade between the Gulf and East Africa.



QASIM AL MAASHANI

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

More containers may look impressive, but volume alone does not transform an economy.

The second priority is value-added activity before export. Oman does not need to start with heavy industry to make this work. The quicker gains are often found in simpler but commercially important steps: packaging, labelling, kitting, light assembly, quality checks and adaptation to market requirements. These activities improve margins, reduce friction and make exporters more reliable in the eyes of buyers. They also create practical jobs that fit a logistics- and services-led growth model. The third priority is after-sales support and spare parts. East Africa's growing infrastructure, industrial base and retail activity will increase demand for maintenance, repairs and dependable parts supply. Companies selling equipment into those markets do not just need a port. They need a trusted service base. If Oman can provide that, it moves from being a shipping point to becoming part of the wider commercial relationship itself. The fourth priority is trade services. This is where Oman can move up the value chain fastest. Modern trade depends on documentation, certification, insurance, finance and compliance. Traders do not choose locations only because they are close. They choose them because they are

efficient, predictable and trusted. If Oman can offer faster clearance, stronger standards support and practical trade-finance facilitation, it can build repeat business rather than one-off cargo flows. If Oman is serious about becoming the Gulf's East Africa gateway, it should stop measuring success mainly by throughput. The better indicators are more demanding and more meaningful: how many firms are using Oman for re-export and light processing; how much cargo is being consolidated or adapted locally; how quickly goods are cleared; how large trade-services revenues become; and how many skilled jobs are created across the supply chain. Standards and compliance also matter. Much of the friction in regional trade does not come from distance. It comes from inconsistent paperwork, weak labelling, delays in certification and avoidable approval problems. A true gateway removes that friction. It does not add to it. Trade finance and insurance must also be part of the offer. Africa-bound trade can tie up working capital and is still seen by some firms as higher-risk. If Oman wants traders to base activity through its ports and zones, it must reduce uncertainty in practical ways linked to real transactions. Most importantly, the private sector must be treated as the main commercial driver. Gateways are not built by brochures or conference language. They are built by operators who know exactly where time is wasted, costs rise and deals fall through. Government can enable, regulate and remove barriers. But business must shape the operating model. East Africa is not a distant opportunity. It is a nearby market that will matter more to Gulf trade strategy with each passing year. Oman has a genuine opening to serve it. But geography alone is never enough. Oman can remain a place goods pass through. Or it can become a place where trade is consolidated, improved, financed, serviced and exported with value captured at every stage. The difference will not be geography.

CLASSIFIEDS

■ SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

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

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

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

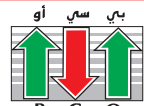
OPERATIONS Support / Tendering / Contract Management / Procurement professional with 18+ years' Oil & Gas experience. NOC & driving license available. 96227272, jijilmathew@gmail.com

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

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

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

NAME:Dr.Priyanga Qualification:MBBS Nationality:Indian Experience:5 &1/2 Years as a medical officer in india Category:General practitioner Completed pearson omsb exam and Dataflow psv Preference:government/private hospital Location:almabilla Mobile:71839054/96949502

INDIAN Female, 25y/o, With a BSC & MSC Degree (Biotechnology) and 2 yrs work experience looking for an office admin/ coordinator job. PH: +968 92131343 Email: fathimasofficial@gmail.com

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

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

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Experience: 5 - 7 yrs Location: Mahout, Al Wusta Relevant Bachelor's degree or Diploma, Internationally recognized HSE qualification, experience in dealing with EA, MoL & CDAA, proven experience.

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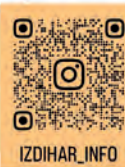
I, Veeresh (holder of Indian Passport No. U0098638) son of Mahadev Saddalag, having permanent residence near Kasem Temple, 1006, Raghat Peth, Ilkal - 587 125 Hunagund District, Bagalkote, Karnataka. Presently residing in Azaiba, Al Sahwa Tower 1, Plot No: 815/2 Complex 242, Way No 244., intend to change my name from Veeresh (old name) to Veeresh Veerabasappa (new name) for all practical purpose. Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic Quarters, Al Khuwair, PO Box No. 1727, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

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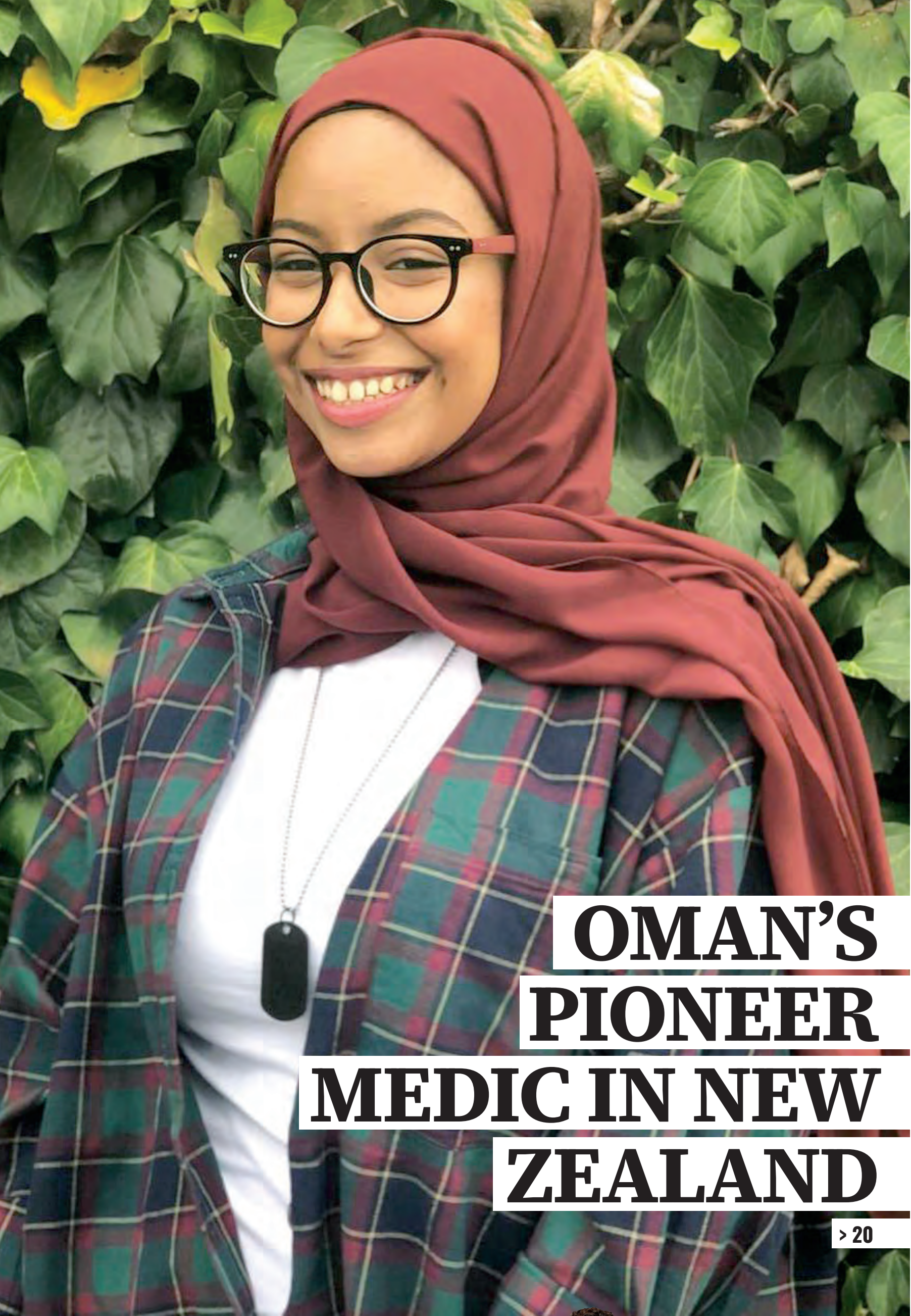
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OMAN’S PIONEER MEDIC IN NEW ZEALAND

> 20

WILDFIRE **HERO**

‘HERO’ AUSTRALIAN DOG WHO SAVED 100 KOALAS RETIRES



An Australian dog credited with saving over 100 koalas from bushfires is retiring after a decade of service.

Bear, an 11-year-old Australian Koolie, was one of the first dogs in the country to be trained on the scent of koala fur.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare called using dogs to detect koalas a “novel” approach.

“No one knew if it could be done”, IFAW head of programmes Josey Sharrad wrote in a statement about Bear on Monday.

As a pup, the four-legged hero’s boundless energy made it tough to stay indoors, but he found his true potential in the bush.

“He literally went from chewing the walls of a Gold Coast apartment to roaming through the Aussie bush on a mission to save our most iconic species”, Sharrad said.

Bear’s skills saved over 100 koalas as the Black Summer bushfires raged across Australia’s eastern seaboard from late 2019 to early 2020, razing millions of hectares, destroying thousands of homes and blanketing cities in noxious smoke.

The tail-wagging detective with a “joyful and goofy” personality retires with an extensive list of accolades — including an Animal of the Year award and Puppy Tales Photos Australian Dog of the Year award.

He also features in a “dogumentary” called “Bear: Koala Hero” and in a book, “Bear to the Rescue”.

Bear will embark on a slower-paced chapter on the Sunshine Coast with one of his former handlers, getting belly rubs and playing his favourite game, fetch.

One of his former handlers, Romane Cristescu, said Bear had been a “tireless ambassador for koalas for a decade”.

“He melted hearts all around the world and opened many doors so we could have critical and difficult conversations about climate change and its impacts on the threatened koalas, as well as so many other species”. — AFP



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



CULTURE

Geisha and maiko (apprentice geisha) take part in a rehearsal for the annual “Miyako Odori” — which means “capital city dance”. — AFP



BOLLYWOOD

Bollywood actor Ishaan Khatter poses during the Grazia Fashion Awards 2026 ceremony in Mumbai. — AFP



NATURE

Visitors walk in a field of “Tulipani Italiani” tulips at the “Agriturismo Cascina DUC” farm, in Grugliasco, near Turin. — AFP

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Ghost of the grasslands, Harrier bird in Salalah

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58 TORTILLAS, FIVE HOT SAUCES AND ONE TOILET



This screen grab from a Nasa live broadcast video shows (L-R) astronauts during a press call as they travel to the Moon in the Orion spacecraft on Friday. — AFP

MOISÉS ÁVILA

They're sipping smoothies, snapping phone pics, dealing with crashed email and fixing broken toilets: astronauts, they're just like us.

The four crew members zipping through space towards the Moon are carrying out a mission unlike any before it, but they're also still muddling on through life's mundanities — all while they float around together in a square footage equivalent to two minivans.

Mission specialist Christina Koch, the first woman to venture into deep space, said preparing for the 10-day journey was akin to planning for a camping trip. "It represents togetherness and something a little out of the ordinary", she said in a video released by Nasa.

Orion wares include 58 tortillas, 43 cups of coffee, barbecued beef brisket and five

types of hot sauce. And one toilet... which had a problem.

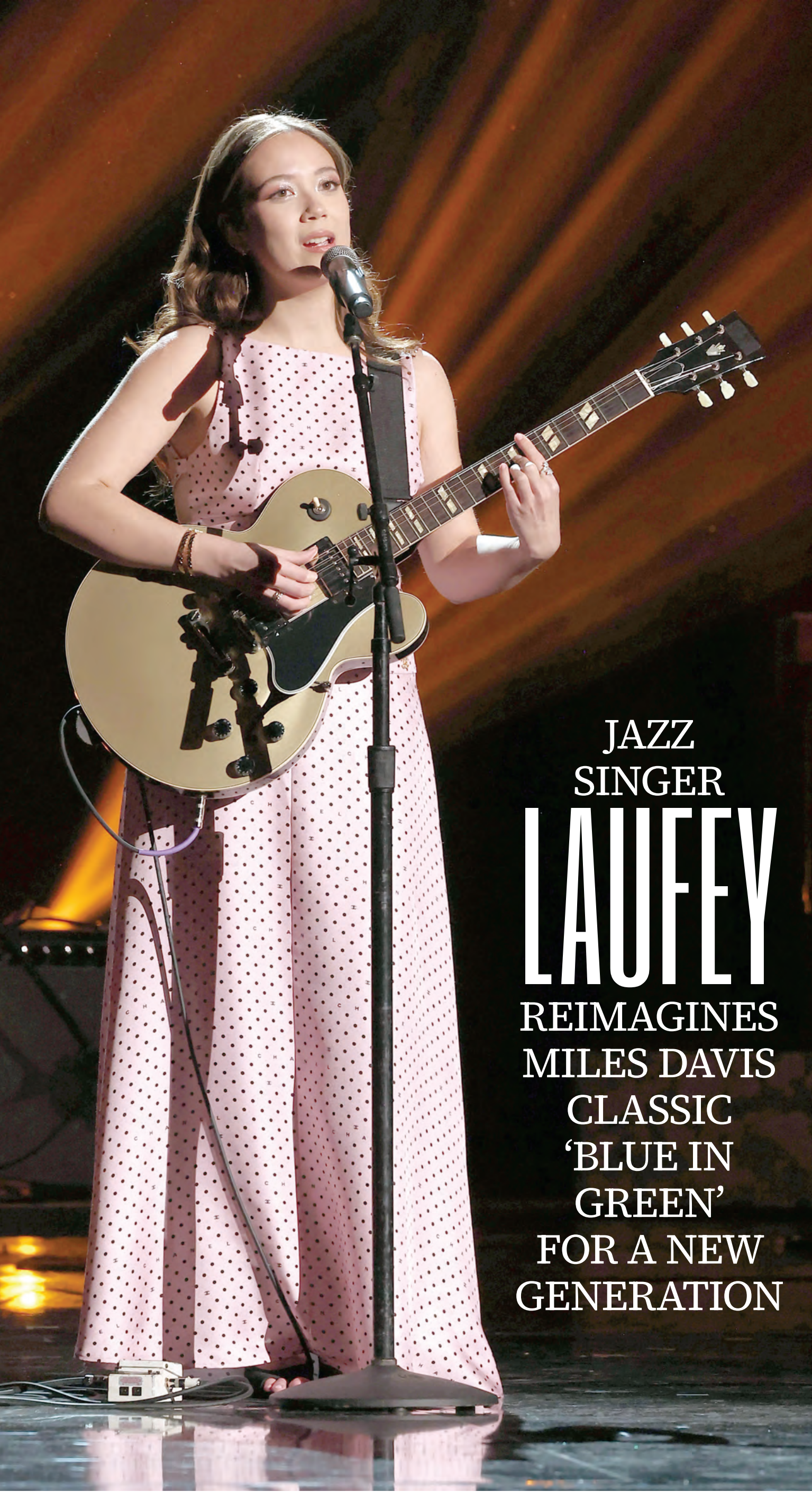
It's the first time astronauts venturing into deep space have had a real toilet onboard: the Apollo missions of the 1960s and 70s provided crew members with waste collection bags that were ultimately left on the lunar surface.

Much to the astronauts' relief, Koch remedied the issue with the toilet aboard Orion — "I'm proud to call myself the space plumber", she said during a Q&A session late on Thursday with US media.

"I like to say that it is probably the most important piece of equipment on board", she said. "So we were all breathing a sigh of relief when it turned out to be just fine".

The toilet is in a small cubicle that's quite loud; the astronauts need to wear ear protection when they use it.

— AFP



JAZZ SINGER
LAUFEBY
REIMAGINES
MILES DAVIS
CLASSIC
'BLUE IN GREEN'
FOR A NEW
GENERATION

ICELANDIC-CHINESE jazz singer-songwriter Laufey says her mission is simple: get young people to fall in love with jazz.

"It's literally all I care about as an artist — having people my age or even younger care about jazz music and classical music", the 25-year-old said.

That passion led Laufey to reimagine "Blue in Green", the iconic composition by jazz legend Miles Davis, as part of celebrations marking the centennial of the trumpeter and composer, who was born in May 1926 and died in 1991. Laufey debuted her version live during a Twitch stream event in Manhattan Beach, California, last week. Widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in jazz history, Black American

musician Miles Davis spent nearly five decades at the forefront of the genre's major stylistic transformations.

Debuting on Miles Davis' 1959 album "Kind of Blue", "Blue in Green" endures as a jazz staple.

"When I was a kid, I would listen to Miles Davis and felt like no one around me understood it or cared", Laufey said ahead of the performance. "Then I realised they just hadn't been exposed to it — or exposed to it in a way that felt like it was theirs".

For Laufey, reworking "Blue in Green" became a way to bridge that gap. She added lyrics to the instrumental track, a process she compared to solving a puzzle.

After wrestling with the idea for some time, inspiration struck

quickly. "When it all clicked, it felt like the clouds clearing and the sun coming out", she said, adding that the lyrics came together in about 20 minutes.

Already a classically trained cellist, Laufey — whose full name is Laufey Lín Bing Jónsdóttir — began building an audience during the Covid-19 lockdown by posting TikTok videos that introduced jazz music to younger listeners. The approach helped propel her career beyond social media.

Since then, she has released three albums and won two Grammy Awards for best traditional pop vocal album, in 2024 and 2026. In 2025, she brought jazz to the Coachella stage, performing alongside the Los Angeles Philharmonic. — Reuters

OMAN’S PIONEER MEDIC IN NEW ZEALAND



FIRST ON THE FRONTLINES

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

FROM The quiet certainty of a high school classroom in Oman to the urgent, flashing lights of an ambulance in New Zealand, Tasneem al Maskari’s journey into medicine did not follow a lifelong script. It began, instead, with a moment of curiosity.

In her final year of school, Tasneem had her future mapped out, she would become a forensic scientist. But while exploring scholarship options through the Ministry of Higher Education, she came across a field she had never heard of before: paramedicine. A quick search was enough to change everything.

What she found was not just a profession, but a calling.

Soon after, she was on a plane to New Zealand, carrying with her a scholarship, a sense of purpose and the quiet determination to build a life far from home. Studying abroad opened doors, but it also demanded resilience. After completing her degree, Tasneem navigated the uncertainty many graduates face, taking on jobs outside her field just to stay afloat.

Then came the breakthrough, an opportunity with Wellington Free Ambulance. It meant leaving Auckland for Wellington, starting over once again in a new city, with a new role that would test her limits in ways she had never imagined.

As the first Omani female medic to work in New Zealand, Tasneem’s challenges were layered. Professionally, she stepped into the demanding rhythm of emergency care, long shifts stretching across days and nights, constant exposure to high-pressure situations and the emotional weight of being responsible for lives. Doubt crept in, as it does for many new paramedics.

But support found her too, in colleagues who guided her and in structured training that eased her transition from student to medic.

Personally, the challenges ran deeper. Distance from family in Oman and the life she had built in Auckland left her navigating a sense of displacement. At times, she felt the need to represent more than just herself, carrying the burden of challenging misconceptions about Arabs and Muslims.

Yet, in that unfamiliar space, she found growth.

Working within New Zealand’s healthcare system revealed a different scale of preparedness and reach. Ambulance stations were woven into nearly every community, responding to calls both minor and critical with advanced equipment and coordinated care. It was a level of accessibility that surprised her and one she hopes to see replicated back home.

Amidst the intensity of the job, one moment stands apart.

In the confined space of an ambulance, Tasneem helped deliver a baby, a rare and profound shift from the life-and-death situations she often encounters. Accustomed to fighting to sustain life, she found herself ushering a new one into the world.

“It felt magical”, she recalls, a moment of joy that cut through the pressure and stayed with her.

Living and working across cultures has reshaped her, both as a medic and as a person. It has deepened her empathy, widened her perspective and pushed her beyond the boundaries of familiarity.

Now, as she looks ahead, her vision turns back to Oman.

Tasneem hopes to return home, bringing with her the experience, knowledge and perspective she gained abroad. Her goal is clear, to contribute to the development of out-of-hospital emergency care and to be part of a system that serves communities across the country.

And perhaps, just as importantly, her journey stands as a quiet but powerful message to other young Omani women, that the path into medicine, even across continents, is not only possible, but waiting.

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