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SPURS, WEST HAM WIN IN BATTLE FOR PREMIER LEAGUE SURVIVAL



INBRIEF

OMAN AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO COMBAT MALARIA

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, alongside other world countries, marked World Malaria Day which falls on April 25 each year, under the theme 'Driven to End Malaria: Now We Can. Now We Must'. This underscores the importance of concerted efforts to combat malaria, raise awareness of prevention methods as well as support health programmes aimed at eradicating it and protecting lives. — DETAILS ON P2

PALESTINIANS VOTE IN FIRST ELECTIONS SINCE GAZA WAR



RAMALLAH: Palestinians in the West Bank and central Gaza voted on Saturday in municipal elections, the first since the war in Gaza erupted, with low early turnout and a limited political field. Nearly 1.5 million people are registered to vote in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, as well as 70,000 people in Gaza's Deir el Balah area, according to the Ramallah-based Central Elections Commission. Early AFP footage from Al-Bireh in the West Bank and Deir el-Balah showed voters trickling into the polling stations. By late morning, voter turnout was strikingly low at 15 per cent, rising to 24.53 per cent by 1 pm (1000 GMT), the election commission said. Speaking to reporters, Election Commission chief Rami Hamdallah urged all voters to head to the ballot boxes, "given how important this is for our Palestinian people". — AFP

TRUMP CANCELS ENVOYS' TRIP TO IRAN TALKS IN PAKISTAN

Hopes for peace deal fade

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP said on Saturday he had ordered his envoys not to travel to Pakistan to continue talks with Iranian officials on ending the war. Trump made the announcement in individual phone calls with reporters, and later in a post on social media, shortly after Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi departed Islamabad. Trump told the digital news outlet Axios that cancelling the proposed trip of his top advisers — his son-in-law Jared Kushner and special envoy Steve Witkoff — did not mean the United States would resume fighting with Iran that began on February 28. "Besides which, there is tremendous infighting and confusion within their 'leadership.' Nobody knows who is in charge, including them," he continued. However, Trump left the door open to further negotiations, saying if the Iranians "want to talk, all they have to do is call!!!". Witkoff and Kushner had been scheduled to leave for Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, on Saturday for a second round of peace talks with Iran. Asked by Axios whether the cancellation meant he would resume the war, Trump said: "No. It doesn't mean that. We haven't thought about it yet." US envoys were expected in the Pakistani capital on Saturday to kickstart a new round of peace negotiations with Iran, although Iranian state media said Tehran's representatives had no



Iranian street musician Sadaf performs along a street in Tehran. — AFP

immediate plans to hold face-to-face talks. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met Field Marshal Asim Munir, Pakistan's army chief and a key figure in the country's mediation efforts, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Aragchi, according to a statement from the foreign ministry, thanked Pakistan for its efforts to establish the ceasefire but also "explained our country's principled positions regarding the latest developments related to the ceasefire and the

complete end of the imposed war against Iran". White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt had earlier said Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner would leave for Pakistan on Saturday "to engage in talks... with representatives from the Iranian delegation". "The Iranians reached out, as the president called on them to do, and asked for this in-person conversation," Leavitt said, adding that the talks would "hopefully move the ball forward towards a deal". Iranian state television said that Araghchi had no plans to meet with the Americans, and that Islamabad would serve as a bridge to "convey" Iranian proposals. Pakistan's foreign ministry said Araghchi had arrived in Islamabad to discuss "ongoing efforts for regional peace and stability" with Pakistani officials, without directly referencing talks with Witkoff and Kushner. An Iranian spokesman said Araghchi would later visit Oman and Russia to discuss efforts to end the war. Meanwhile, Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli strikes on Saturday in the country's south killed four people, despite a ceasefire that was extended this week in the war between Israel and militant group Hezbollah. "Two Israeli enemy strikes, on a truck and a motorbike, in the town of Yohmor al-Shaqeef in the Nabatieh district killed four people," a ministry statement said. The deaths came after Israeli strikes killed six people in south Lebanon's Wadi al-Hujair, Toulaine, Srifa and Yater on Friday, according to the ministry. — AFP

Eid Al Adha most likely on May 27

SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

Eid Al Adha in Oman is expected to be celebrated on May 27 (Wednesday) according to astronomical calculations by Abdulwahab al Busaidy, a Board Member of the Oman Space and Astronomical Society. This joyous occasion marks the end of the Haj season, and Omanis and residents are looking forward to at least a five-day holiday to enjoy festivities and quality time with loved ones. In remarks to the Observer, Al Busaidy stated, "On Sunday, May 17, corresponding to the 29th of Dhul Qa'ada, 1447, the moon will set in Muscat at 7.38 pm, while the sun will set at 6.43 pm. The lunar illumination will be 1.1 per cent, and the moon will be elevated 10 degrees above the horizon, remaining visible for approximately 55 minutes." "Based on this, we will be able to easily observe the moon, and



The holiday season will allow everyone to come together and celebrate Eid Al Adha.

therefore, Monday, May 18, will mark the first day of Dhul Qa'ada. Consequently, May 27 will be the 10th of Dhul Hijjah, which will be observed as Eid Al Adha across the entire Muslim world. Thus, all Muslims globally will observe Eid Al Adha on May 27," he added. Many in Oman are

looking forward to at least a five-day holiday that includes the weekend. Holidays are expected to begin from Tuesday (May 26) onwards. The holiday season will see government offices, schools, and most businesses closed, allowing everyone to come together and celebrate Eid

Al Adha. Oman's Council of Ministers approved a policy in December 2025 to announce national and religious holidays at the start of each Gregorian year. However, Eid Al Fitr and Eid Al Adha remain exceptions. Their dates will be announced 'in accordance with the declarations of the Main Committee for the Sighting of the Hijri Month Crescents'. The expected timing is already influencing travel and logistics plans. With the holiday projected to start mid-week, many are planning trips to interior governorates for family gatherings and sacrificial rites. For international travel, travel agencies recommend booking early but keeping itineraries flexible. "We always advise clients to allow for a one-day buffer," said a travel agent based in Muscat. He added that technology gets us 99 per cent of the way there, and the crescent moon does the rest.

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OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy meets Abdulsalam Abdi Ali, his Somali counterpart.

OMANI, SOMALI FMs DISCUSS REGIONAL SECURITY, TIES

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received Abdulsalam Abdi Ali, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the sisterly Federal Republic of Somalia, at the ministry’s headquarters, on Saturday.

They discussed bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to foster them in various fields, in order to strengthen the existing partnership and support common interests.

They also discussed the latest developments in the region and the Horn of Africa, emphasising the importance of supporting regional and international efforts aimed at consolidating security and stability and promoting development.

Sayyid Badr affirmed the Sultanate of Oman’s unwavering support for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia. The foreign minister of Somalia expressed his country’s appreciation for the constructive diplomatic role played by the Sultanate of Oman and its continuous efforts to support security and stability, promote unity and rapprochement by strengthening opportunities for dialogue among all parties. — ONA

SEMINAR TO DISCUSS AL MASARRAT DEPRESSION RESPONSE ON MONDAY

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDA) will hold a symposium entitled ‘Al Masarrat Depression: Response and Impact’ on Monday to discuss the effects of the weather condition and review the efforts made and lessons learned. The symposium will be held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information.

A number of officials and specialists from governmental, military, and security agencies will participate in the symposium.

The symposium will discuss several topics, most notably a review of Al Masarrat depression, an analysis of its effects on various governorates, response of the relevant authorities and the mechanisms for improving preparedness and enhancing institutional coordination to deal with similar future events.

The seminar aims to raise public awareness of the importance of adhering to guidelines issued by

relevant authorities, familiarise participants with legal materials and procedures and explain their role in facing adverse weather conditions.

The symposium will explore the religious dimension of preserving life as one of the teachings of Islamic. It emphasizes the importance of taking precautions and adhering to preventative guidelines to protect oneself and others, in accordance with religious teachings. — ONA

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madayn

Investment Opportunity

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates “Madayn” is pleased to announce the following investment opportunity in Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City:

Project Name	Dealing with Abandoned Vehicles in Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City
Deadline for Documents Purchase	3/5/2026
Field Visit Date	5/5/2026
Proposal Submission Deadline	3/6/2026
Fees	﷼ 20

• Bidding Documents can be obtained from Support Department at Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City (Tel: 24749807/24749809) during official working hours, against non-refundable fee as mentioned above.

• Bids must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed with red wax. The bidding number and name shall be written on the top of the envelope containing the offer. Nothing should be written on the exterior of the envelope to display the identity of the tenderer.

• Offers should be addressed to: The Head of Investment Committee, PO BOX 400, Postal Code 615.

• Completed offer document must be deposited in the Bids Box at Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City.

• Madayn is not bound to accept the highest or any other offer.

• Madayn reserves the right to cancel this bidding, and the tenderers have no right to submit any claim against Madayn.

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Sur dual carriageway project at 75%

SUR: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has achieved 75 per cent completion of the dual carriageway project linking the Gas Roundabout to Bilad Sur in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

The project forms a key link between the Qurayat–Sur Road and Sultan Turki bin Said Road (formerly Al Sharqiyah Expressway), and is part of broader efforts to dualise the Qurayat–Sur route from the Gas Roundabout to Bilad Sur Roundabout.

With a total cost exceeding RO 6 million, the project aims to enhance road capacity, improve traffic flow and boost road safety along this vital corridor.

All works on the first section, spanning 11.4 kilometres, have been completed, including the installation of street lighting and metal safety barriers. — ONA

Oman reaffirms commitment in fight against malaria

THE SULTANATE of Oman, alongside other world countries, marked World Malaria Day which falls on April 25 each year, under the theme ‘Driven to End Malaria: Now We Can. Now We Must’.

This underscores the importance of concerted efforts to combat malaria, raise awareness of prevention methods as well as support health programmes aimed at eradicating it and protecting lives.

The Ministry of Health in Oman continues its advanced and integrated efforts to combat malaria, in alignment with the goals and strategies of the World Health Organization (WHO), particularly the Global technical strategy for malaria 2016-2030, which focuses on eliminating disease transmission, reducing mortality, and strengthening surveillance and response systems.

Health data indicates that Oman is currently in the final stages of fulfilling the requirements for malaria eradication certification according to the World Health Organization.

The Sultanate of Oman succeeded in halting local malaria transmission in 2015, a significant health achievement that reflects the effectiveness of the health system and its ability to control the disease, as no local cases have been recorded since then.

The Ministry of Health is implementing an updated national strategy known as ‘National Strategy for Preventing the Re-emergence of Malaria Transmission’.

The strategy focuses on enhancing epidemiological surveillance, classifying

Oman is currently in the final stages of fulfilling the requirements for malaria eradication certification.

cases, and tracing the source of infection.

It also focuses on early detection and immediate, effective treatment to break the chain of transmission, providing free treatment to all nationalities. In addition, it enhances preparedness and rapid response to outbreaks and continues vector control through continuous entomological

surveillance.

Statistics indicate that all cases recorded in Oman are imported, with 380 imported cases in 2024 and 261 in 2025. Most of these cases originate from countries where the disease is endemic. They are managed according to precise national protocols that ensure early diagnosis, immediate treatment, and the prevention of any potential local transmission.

The Ministry of Health also implements a range of preventative programmes, including strengthening surveillance and early detection systems, providing immediate treatment according to the approved national protocol, and making medication available free of charge to all cases. Additionally, it provides preventative medication to travellers to endemic countries, along with programmes to control disease vectors and reduce mosquito breeding sites.

Oman adopts updated treatment protocols that are consistent with WHO’s guidelines and are regularly updated to ensure the highest levels of effectiveness in diagnosis, treatment, and disease control.

The Ministry of Health emphasises that maintaining the achievement of eliminating local transmission of the disease requires community awareness, as the possibility of its resurgence remains due to the presence of the disease vectors and the causative parasite. This underscores the importance of community adherence to preventive measures and support for disease control efforts. — ONA

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SHORT TAKES



The project develops integrated urban destinations that combine recreation with investment potential.

NIZWA PUBLIC PARK OPENS ON TRIAL BASIS

NIZWA: Al Dakhiliyah Governorate welcomed visitors to the Nizwa Public Park during its trial opening, marking the launch of a landmark project spanning 150,000 square metres. The development features 24 investment opportunities and achieves 50 per cent local content, supporting economic activity and enhancing quality of life.

The project reflects the governorate’s vision of developing integrated urban destinations that combine recreation with investment potential.

As part of efforts to strengthen local content and empower SMEs, contracts worth approximately RO 800,000 were awarded to SMEs during the implementation phase.

Shaikh Mahmoud bin Rashid al Saadi, Acting Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, said the park represents a significant addition to the governorate’s urban infrastructure, providing a comprehensive community space that enhances quality of life. He noted that the project has been designed in line with modern sustainability standards while reflecting local identity. He added that the park includes over 25,000 square metres of green spaces, more than 530 trees, and an artificial lake covering 4,542 square metres, creating an appealing natural setting for visitors. — ONA

CALL FOR GREATER AWARENESS ON ORGAN DONATION

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

There are over 2,700 kidney patients awaiting donors against more than 20,000 registered organ donors. Ideally, this should ensure sufficient availability, but the reality remains a significant gap between donors and those in need.

Despite efforts by the Ministry of Health to strengthen organ donation programmes and reduce waiting lists, there is an urgent

need for more effective awareness and education initiatives, according to Dr Nasser bin Majid al Salmi, Head of the Department of Adult Health and Critical Care at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). “There is a huge gap between patients in need and available donors, and targeted awareness initiatives are essential.

Several regional studies highlight the importance of improving public perceptions about organ donation. Today’s

youth are tomorrow’s leaders, and students, in particular, can drive positive societal change,” he said while addressing students at SQU.

With this in mind, the Department of Adult Health and Critical Care at the College of Nursing, in collaboration with the Omani Centre for Organ Transplantation, is organising the ‘Life After Life’ workshop and exhibition on Thursday to promote organ donation awareness.

Seeb panel explores social support and investment

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

AS PART of ongoing efforts to advance social development and strengthen community initiatives in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, the Social Development Committee convened its second meeting of 2026 under the chairmanship of Ahmed bin Ali al Shuhi, with members in attendance.

The committee reviewed a number of humanitarian cases involving financially distressed families, underscoring the need for practical and sustainable solutions to improve living conditions.

It also examined data on students from low-income households, with a focus on extending appropriate support and fostering a more conducive learning environment to enhance academic performance.

During the session, members assessed the financial reports of the Seeb Volunteer Team,



The panel highlighted the positive outcomes of the ‘Tarabut’ marriage awareness campaign.

reviewing key indicators and operational aspects. The committee also highlighted the positive outcomes of the ‘Tarabut’ marriage awareness campaign, noting its role in raising community awareness and promoting family stability.

In line with its development agenda, the committee discussed initiatives aimed at empowering productive families by encouraging their participation in economic activities, thereby improving income

opportunities and ensuring long-term sustainability. The meeting also reviewed a proposal to organise traditional Eid markets — including ‘Habta’ and ‘Ayood’ — at a new location adjacent to Muscat Municipality in Al Seeb. The move is expected to enhance the organisation of community events and provide a more suitable environment for such seasonal activities.

On the investment front, the committee examined proposals submitted by companies and individuals seeking to invest in a plot of land allocated to the Seeb Volunteer Team.

The meeting concluded with a call to strengthen partnerships with the municipal council and civil society institutions to support integrated development efforts.

The Committee plays a vital role in implementing initiatives aligned with local priorities, while also organising volunteer work within a structured framework.

AL DAKHILIAH HONOURS 298 EDUCATORS

NIZWA: The Directorate-General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate honoured 298 educational and administrative staff members as part of Teacher’s Day celebrations, held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The ceremony underscored the pivotal role of educators and administrative professionals as key partners in nation-building and in advancing sustainable development, while reinforcing a culture of appreciation for contributions that have enhanced educational quality and improved school and institutional performance.

In his address, Ali bin Abdullah al Harthy, Director-



Teacher’s Day celebration was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali Al Sabti

General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said the recognition reflects an institutional commitment to valuing the efforts of teaching and administrative staff and

celebrating their achievements.

He emphasised that the integration of roles among teachers, school administrations and educational supervisors remains a cornerstone in strengthening the education system and driving meaningful progress in the sector. The ceremony featured an operetta titled ‘Sails of Glory’, portraying the vital role of teachers and education professionals in development and nation-building. The programme also included a speech on behalf of the honourees, followed by the recognition of outstanding teachers, school principals, supervisors and administrators for the 2025–2026 academic year. — ONA

Oman marks World Book, Copyright Day

MUSCAT: Oman joined global celebration of World Book and Copyright Day on April 23 — an annual observance established by Unesco to promote reading, protect intellectual property and honour literary icons such as William Shakespeare and Miguel de Cervantes.

This year’s observance comes at a time of rapid technological change, raising questions about the future of reading, publishing and authorship in the age of artificial intelligence.

In Oman, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth is pursuing a dual strategy that balances preservation of the printed book with the expansion of digital publishing.

Abdullah bin Mohammed al Harthy, Director-General of Knowledge and Cultural Development at the ministry, emphasised that printed books remain the most reliable repository of knowledge and cultural memory, even as digital formats expand access and reach. He noted ongoing



This year’s observance comes at a time of rapid tech change in the age of AI.

efforts to digitise national cultural content and develop secure platforms to host Omani publications.

The ministry is also strengthening mechanisms to protect intellectual property, working in coordination with relevant authorities and aligning with international frameworks, including agreements under the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Strict compliance measures are enforced at book fairs, with legal

action taken against violations.

Industry voices underline a shifting landscape.

Nasra bint Ali al Maamariyah, founder of Hadaig Al Fikr Publishing House, described publishers today as ‘guardians of quality’ amid a surge of AI-assisted and rapid publishing tools.

She stressed the importance of prioritising originality, intellectual value and cultural responsibility when selecting content. — ONA



TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) hereby announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Description of Project	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Distribution of Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/2770176/2026	New AL-Somhan Pump Station Suction Pipe Replacement in Barka / South AL-Batinah	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority specialized in the works mentioned	R.O 250/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	05/05/2026	25/05/2026
T/2775175/2026	Replacement of AC pipe to DI pipe size 500 mm in Barka, South AL-Batinah	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tender and Local Content Authority and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	05/05/2026	25/05/2026
Refloat T/2742173-2/2026	Call off Contract for Supply and Delivery of Ductile Iron Pipe Fittings for Three Years to Main Warehouse	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tender and Local Content Authority and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 250/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	05/05/2026	25/05/2026
T/2776179/2026	Supply and Installation of CCTV System	Local Companies registered with Projects, Tender and Local Content Authority and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	05/05/2026	25/05/2026
T/2776180/2026	Call Off Maintenance Contract of Security System for Two Years	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	RO. 50/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	05/05/2026	25/05/2026
T/2777183/2026	Supply and Delivery of Emergency Mobile Diesel Generators with Step-Up Transformers and All Required Accessories for Various Pump Stations.	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	05/05/2026	25/05/2026

The tender documents can be obtained from the e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from this announcement date. The applicants shall pay the tender fee by logging into their (I-supplier Page).

Applicants who are not registered shall register through the following link: <https://nws.nama.om/en-us/Supplier-Hub/Vendors-Management/Vendor-Registration> in order to receive the login credentials of the Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login https://portal.nws.nama.om:4443/OA_HTML/AppsLocalLogin.jsp All participating companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope. Bid Bonds must be obtained from a local Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman addressed to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 2:00 pm on the bid submission date.

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 2:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website <https://nws.nama.om> & in case of general queries you may contact us through the email ID of tender@owwsc.nama.om



SPOTLIGHT

What begins as aspiration can gradually turn into obligation, pushing individuals beyond their true needs or financial capacities

While progress brings opportunities, it can also raise the baseline for comparison, making satisfaction harder to achieve

What was once considered a gradual journey has now become a race with no clear finish line. Many fear being left behind

People are exposed to carefully curated versions of others' lives — success stories, celebrations and picture-perfect moments



BALQEES AL ORAIMI

IN TODAY’S fast-moving world, the pressure to keep up has quietly become one of the most defining social challenges. It is no longer limited to career ambitions or financial success; it extends into nearly every aspect of daily living — lifestyle, appearances, achievements, and even personal milestones. For many, life is no longer measured by individual progress, but by constant comparison.

At the heart of this pressure lies a simple yet powerful force: visibility. With the rise of digital platforms, people are exposed to carefully curated versions of others' lives — success stories, celebrations, and picture-perfect moments. While these glimpses may inspire some, they often create unrealistic benchmarks for others. The result is a subtle but persistent feeling of falling behind.

For young people in particular, this pressure can be overwhelming. The expectation to succeed early, earn more, look better, and achieve faster has reshaped how success itself is defined. What was once considered a gradual journey has

now become a race with no clear finish line. Many find themselves chasing goals not out of personal desire, but out of fear of being left behind.

Ahmed al Lawati, a recent graduate, describes this experience candidly: “Sometimes it feels like everyone else is moving ahead faster. You see friends getting jobs, buying cars, travelling, and you start questioning your own progress—even if you’re doing fine. It creates pressure that is hard to ignore.”

This sense of comparison is not always rooted in reality. Social narratives often highlight outcomes while overlooking the effort, struggles, and setbacks behind them. Yet, the human tendency to compare remains strong, particularly in environments where success is constantly displayed and rarely contextualised.

The pressure to keep up is not limited to youth alone. Families, too, find themselves drawn into a cycle of comparison — whether in housing, education, social events, or lifestyle standards. What begins as aspiration can gradually turn into obligation, pushing individuals to make decisions that may not align with their true needs or financial

“The pressure to keep up is largely driven by perceived social expectations rather than actual necessity. When individuals base their self-worth on external comparisons, it can lead to stress, anxiety, and a diminished sense of contentment. Building awareness around this is essential for maintaining social well-being.”

MARIAM ABDULLA
Social worker

capacities. Noura al Balushi, a working mother, reflects on this shift: “There is this constant feeling that you need to match what others are doing — whether it’s enrolling children in certain activities or maintaining a certain lifestyle. It becomes exhausting, and sometimes you lose sight of what actually matters for your own family.”

Experts suggest that this phenomenon is closely linked to evolving social norms and economic expectations. As societies develop and living standards rise, the definition of what is considered “normal” also shifts — often upward. While progress brings opportunities, it can also raise the baseline for comparison, making satisfaction harder to achieve.

Mariam Abdulla, a social worker, explains: “The pressure to keep up is largely driven by perceived social expectations rather than actual necessity. When individuals base their self-worth on external comparisons, it can lead to stress, anxiety, and a diminished sense of contentment. Building awareness around this is essential for maintaining social well-being.”

This growing pressure has broader implications. It affects mental health, influences spending

behaviour, and shapes how people engage with their communities. In some cases, it may even discourage individuals from pursuing paths that are meaningful but less socially visible or immediately rewarding.

Yet, amid these challenges, there is a gradual shift in perspective. Conversations around authenticity, balance, and mental well-being are gaining ground. More individuals are beginning to question the need for constant comparison and are redefining success on their own terms — placing greater value on stability, purpose, and personal fulfilment.

Addressing the pressure to keep up does not require rejecting ambition or progress. Rather, it calls for a more grounded understanding of success — one that allows room for different journeys, timelines, and priorities. It also requires a collective effort to normalise diverse life choices and reduce the stigma around moving at one’s own pace.

Ultimately, the question is not whether people can keep up, but whether they need to. In a world that constantly accelerates, perhaps the real measure of stability lies in knowing when to move forward — and when to simply stand still.

SHORT TAKES



OMAN AT TUNIS INTL BOOK FAIR

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is reinforcing its cultural presence on the global stage with participation in the 40th edition of the Tunis International Book Fair, while also marking World Book and Copyright Day with a renewed focus on the enduring relevance of the written word.

At the Tunis fair, inaugurated under the auspices of President of Tunisia, Kais Saied, Oman's pavilion drew attention for its rich display of publications reflecting the depth of Omani literature, science and culture. The President toured the pavilion in the presence of Ambassador Dr Hilal bin Abdullah al Sinani, reviewing a range of works that highlight Oman's intellectual and creative output. The fair, now in its 40th edition, brings together participants from 37 countries and 394 publishing houses, showcasing more than 148,000 titles, making it one of the region's leading cultural gatherings. — ONA

National Addressing Project launched, roads renamed

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

A UNIFIED system for naming streets and numbering buildings will be in place soon as part of the National Addressing Project, which aims to establish a unique identity for the roads and buildings in the capital area covering various villages and residential neighbourhoods, according to specific standards that consider the unique characteristics of each area.

This system is aimed at facilitating access to locations, improving the efficiency of logistics services, enabling rapid response to emergencies, supporting urban planning, and providing accurate data to benefit various government and private entities.

Oman began to officially name several key national and main roads across the country after the rich national history and its visionary leaders in a move to honour, as per Royal directives. These roads, which are integral to the country's infrastructure, will now bear the names of prominent figures from Oman's past, connecting the nation's



The meeting was held as part of efforts to implement the National Addressing Project.

modern development with its rich cultural and historical heritage.

Accordingly, the road linking the governorates of Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi is named as Sultan Thuwaini bin Said Road, as per the Royal directives. This 388-km road stretches from the Burj Al Sahwa roundabout in Muscat to the Hafeet border crossing in Al Buraimi. Another key road, the 250-km Al Sharqiyah Expressway from Bidbid to Sur Souq, will be named Sultan Turki bin Said Road.

Additionally, the Khasab-Lima-Dibba

road in Musandam has been renamed Sultan Faisal bin Turki Road, and the Batinah coastal road will be named Sultan Taimour bin Faisal Road.

The Nizwa-Salalah road, the vital 857-km stretch, will be named Sultan Said bin Taimour Road, while the Muscat-Batinah Road will be named Sultan Qaboos Road.

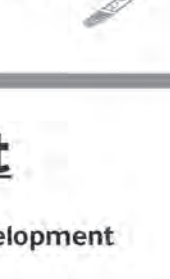
In view of the renaming of roads and buildings, the Addressing Team in Muscat held a meeting chaired by Ali bin Said al Saeedi, Wali of Muscat, and discussed suggested street names where numerous proposed names were outlined and discussed to ensure selecting names that reflect the cultural and civilisational identity of Muscat. While additional suggestions that acknowledge the historical significance were introduced.

The meeting is part of continuous efforts to implement the National Addressing Project, which contributes to advancing the addressing system and its efficiency, and supporting inclusive development.

This project is a vital initiative being implemented in integrated stages.



وزارة التنمية الاجتماعية
Ministry of Social Development



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
182/2026	Supply and installation of interactive display screens equipped with a video conferencing system as part of the electronic control initiative	Companies specialized in the field of Supplying maintenance of information programs and system, Information data installation registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with excellent or first or second or third or fourth class.	Sunday 10-05-2026 02:00 PM	Monday 25-05-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
184/2026	Providing cleaning and landscaping services for the buildings of the Al-Wafa Centers for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in Salalah, Marbat, Taqa, Rakhiyat, Sadah, Al-Muzaynah, Shalim, and the Al-Halaniyat Islands, as well as the Autism Unit building in Salalah.	Companies specialized in the field of Cleaning, Laundry, and Pest Control Services Installation registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with excellent or first or second or third or fourth class.	Sunday 10-05-2026 02:00 PM	Monday 25-05-2026 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) , On **Sunday 26/04/2026**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. **(24402200)**.

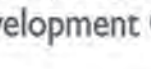
“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”

www.mosd.gov.om

WOMEN TRAINED IN CPR

SALALAH: *The Women's Wing of the Indian Overseas Congress (IOC) organised a CPR training programme exclusively for women, aimed at equipping participants with essential life-saving skills for emergency situations. The session saw strong participation and active engagement.*

The CPR training session was led by Dr Nadeeja Salam, Senior Family Physician at DGMS, Salalah, who provided hands-on demonstrations and addressed participants' queries. The programme began with an introductory speech by Women's Wing Secretary Nishana Niyas.



Al Najd Agriculture
Development Company



شركة النجد
للتنمية الزراعية

INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS

Al Najd Agriculture Development Company SAOC invites sealed proposals from qualified and experienced valuation firms for the valuation of all company assets.

Scope of Work:

The assignment includes comprehensive valuation of all tangible and intangible assets of the company, including but not limited to agricultural land, plantations, crops, machinery, equipment, electrical lines, buildings, vehicles, inventory, and any other related assets.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Licensed and registered valuation firms with relevant professional accreditation
- Proven experience in valuation of agricultural and industrial assets
- Strong track record with corporate clients

Submission Details:

Interested firms are requested to submit their technical and financial proposals, along with company profile and relevant experience, no later than [31 May 2026] at our Muscat office in Ghala (contact 98048123).

Contact for Queries:

Administrative Affairs
[info@alnajd.com.om]
[+968-99439108]

Only shortlisted firms will be contacted for further evaluation.

Al Najd Agriculture Development Company SAOC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals without assigning any reason.

TENDER NOTICE

وزارة الزراعة والسمكية وموارد المياه
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources



The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following tender:-

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
216/2026/ MAFWR/ HQ-18	First Implementation phase to enhance agricultural business opportunities in saline-affected lands in the Governorates of South and North Al Batinah to improve farmers' income	Thursday 16/4/2026	Tuesday 5/5/2026	Sunday 24/5/2026	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First, Second, Third and Fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies ----- (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.

- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.

- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.

- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402244** or etenderhd@ptlc.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMOTTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

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

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

IRAN FM LEAVES ISLAMABAD Iran FM and the delegation leave Islamabad after talks with Pakistani officials in regard of peace efforts with the US.	FOUR KILLED IN LEBANON Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli strikes killed four people in the country's south, despite a ceasefire that was extended this week.	GERMAN MINESWEEPER Germany will soon send a minesweeper to the Mediterranean for a possible mission in the Strait of Hormuz after the end of war.	IRAN WARNS US 'QUAGMIRE' The United States "is looking for a face-saving way to escape the war quagmire it has become trapped in", a spokesman for Iran's defence ministry said.	PAKISTAN TALKS US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner were headed to Pakistan with the White House saying the two sides would have "talks".	US FREEZES CRYPTO The United States has frozen \$344 million in cryptocurrency assets over ties to Iran, as Washington seeks to raise pressure on Tehran.	IRAN SAYS NOT DIRECT TALKS Iran refuses to participate in direct talks as long as a US naval blockade on its ports remained in place.	UK VOWS TO BAN IRAN GUARDS British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has pledged to propose legislation within weeks to proscribe Iran's Revolutionary Guards.	TANKER ARRIVES AT IRAQ'S PORTS An oil tanker arrived at Iraq's oil terminals in the southern province of Basra, the second such announcement since disruption of Hormuz.	IRAN REJECTS 'MAXIMALIST DEMANDS' Iranian FM Abbas Aragchi laid out Iran's demands and its reservations about US positions as Islamabad hosted a new push to end a war.
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MACRON REAFFIRMS EFFORTS TO REOPEN STRAIT OF HORMUZ



French President Emmanuel Macron gestures during a press conference in Athens, Greece. — Reuters

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron reiterated on Saturday that he was focused on efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a day after the head of TotalEnergies warned of global energy shortages if the Iran war continues for months. Macron, speaking at a news conference in Athens alongside Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, said panic caused by geopolitical uncertainty can in itself lead to shortages. "Our goal is to achieve a full reopening in the coming days and weeks, in accordance with international law, guaranteeing freedom of navigation without tolls on the Strait of Hormuz. Then things can gradually return to normal," Macron said.

TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanné pressed on Friday for the reopening of the strait, through which about a fifth of the globe's oil and gas supply normally flows.

Movement through the strait, which is also a key transport route for goods including fertilisers and pharmaceuticals, has been choked due to the US-Israeli war with Iran, as Iran has seized container ships and the United States has mounted a blockade on Iranian ports.

"If it lasts two, three months more, we are entering a world of scarcity of energy, which Asian countries have already suffered," Pouyanné told the World Policy Conference in Chantilly, outside Paris. "You cannot have 20% of the oil and gas of the planet being stranded and not accessible without major consequences." — Reuters

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi laid out Iran's demands and its reservations about US positions on Saturday as Pakistan made a new push to end a war that has killed thousands and shaken global energy markets. After holding talks with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other top officials, Aragchi and his delegation flew out of Pakistan's capital Islamabad with a military jet escort, government sources said. Details of the talks were scant. The White House had earlier said President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner would travel to Islamabad on Saturday.

It was not immediately clear if or when Aragchi would return to Pakistan. Iran has previously ruled out a new round of direct talks with the United States. Washington and Tehran are at an impasse as Iran has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries one-fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments, while the US blocks Iran's oil exports.

IRAN 'PRINCIPLED POSITIONS' The conflict, in which a ceasefire is now in force, began with US-Israeli air strikes on Iran on February 28. Iran has since carried out strikes against Israel, US bases and Gulf states, and the war has pushed up energy prices to multi-year highs, stoking inflation and darkening global growth prospects.

Aragchi "explained our country's principled positions regarding the latest developments related to the ceasefire and the complete end of the imposed war against Iran", said a statement on the minister's official Telegram account. Asked about Tehran's reservations about US positions in the talks, an Iranian



Pakistan's PM Shehbaz Sharif meets with Iranian FM Abbas Aragchi in Islamabad. — Reuters

diplomatic source in Islamabad told Reuters: "Principally, Iranian side will not accept maximalist demands." US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had earlier told reporters that Iran had a chance to make a "good deal". "Iran knows that they still have an open window to choose wisely," he said. "All they have to do is abandon a nuclear weapon in meaningful and verifiable ways."

Aragchi arrived in Islamabad on Friday. But an Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson posted on X that Iranian officials did not plan to meet US representatives and that Tehran's concerns would be conveyed to mediator Pakistan. Trump said on Friday that Iran planned to make an offer aimed at satisfying US demands but that he did not know what the offer entailed. He declined to say who Washington was negotiating with, "but we're dealing with the people that are in charge now". White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said the US had seen some progress from the Iranian side in recent days and hoped more would come this weekend, while Vice President JD Vance was ready to travel to Pakistan as well.

FEW SHIPS CROSSING HORMUZ Days after Trump extended the ceasefire, international flights resumed from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport on Saturday, Iranian media said. The first passengers had departed for Medina, in Saudi Arabia, Muscat and Istanbul, with operations expected to accelerate in the coming days. "Well, it's a good feeling. When flights resume, trade is done, and people can do their jobs. It's a good feeling," said one passenger at the airport, where passengers were queuing at check-in desks. — Reuters

UN warns Israeli strikes in Lebanon may breach international law

GENEVA: The UN human rights office said it has documented patterns of attacks on civilians in populated areas and residential buildings in Lebanon and Israel that may amount to serious violations of international humanitarian law. The report covers the first three weeks of the latest escalation, which began after Hezbollah launched attacks on Israel on March 2, prompting Israel to respond with a large-scale military offensive.

Since then, nearly 2,500 people have been killed in Lebanon, according to Lebanese authorities, amid widespread displacement and heavy damage to civilian infrastructure. US President Donald Trump on Thursday announced a three-week extension to a ceasefire. The Israeli military and Hezbollah did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment about the report.

RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS STRUCK The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights documented several cases in which Israeli strikes hit, and in some instances destroyed, multi-storey residential buildings, killing entire families in Lebanon, which may constitute serious



Smoke rises in Lebanon after an explosion, as seen from the Israeli side of border. — Reuters

violations of international humanitarian law, OHCHR spokesperson Thameen Al-Kheetan said. The report cited the example of an Israeli strike on March 8 that hit a multi-storey residential building in the town of Sir el-Gharbiyeh, in the Nabatiyeh governorate. The strike killed at least 13 civilians inside the building, including five women, five men, two boys and a girl.

The office said incidents such as this raised concerns about compliance with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack under international humanitarian law. The report also said the OHCHR had found Hezbollah was firing unguided rockets that lacked the precision required to strike specific military targets, and damaged buildings and other civilian infrastructure in Israel, which likely violated international humanitarian law.

While the office noted that notifications, including blanket evacuation warnings, had been issued by Israeli forces before some strikes in Lebanon, it identified cases in which warnings were either not given, were ineffective, or prevented many civilians from evacuating safely.

JOURNALIST KILLED Meanwhile, the OHCHR also said on Friday that attacks on journalists could amount to war crimes if they were deliberate. An Israeli strike on Wednesday killed Lebanese journalist Amal Khalil and injured photographer Zeinab Faraj, who was accompanying her in southern Lebanon.

Rescue teams, including the Lebanese Red Cross, faced obstruction by the Israeli military when trying to reach them, Lebanon's health ministry said. "This included the use of a sound grenade and live fire targeting an ambulance, delaying access to the site," Al-Kheetan added.

Meanwhile, Four people were killed on Saturday in Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon, Lebanon's state news agency reported, while the Israeli military said Hezbollah had fired rockets at Israel, the latest challenges to a tenuous, recently extended ceasefire.

The ceasefire agreed between Israel and Lebanon has led to a significant reduction in hostilities, but Israel and Lebanese group Hezbollah have continued to clash in southern Lebanon, where Israel has kept soldiers in the self-declared buffer zone. — Reuters

PREVENTING WEAPONS

Crunch nuclear proliferation meeting at UN



Signatories of the landmark nuclear non-proliferation treaty will meet at the UN from Monday as hopes fade that they can reach an agreement and tensions soar between the atomic powers. "I think there is a shared, if you will, sense of crisis by all states parties," said Izumi Nakamitsu, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. "We don't have any bilateral arms control agreements between the two largest nuclear weapon states," she said. The ongoing war in Ukraine, Iran's nuclear programme and the war there, non-nuclear states' fears over proliferation and developing arsenal could all be deal-breakers. — AFP

BLOCKING ASSETS

US imposes fresh sanctions on Chinese oil refinery



The Trump administration said it had imposed sanctions on an independent refinery in China for buying billions of dollars' worth of Iranian oil, as Washington and Tehran head into another round of peace talks over the weekend. The Treasury Department targeted Hengli Petrochemical (Dalian) Refinery, which it said is one of Iran's largest customers of crude oil and petroleum products. China has said it opposes "illegal" unilateral sanctions. Its embassy in Washington said normal trade should not be harmed and called on Washington to stop "abusing" sanctions to target Chinese companies. — Reuters

Powering Dhofar شركة ظفار لتوليد الكهرباء ذ.م.ش. Dhofar Generating Company SAOG PO Box: 1571, P.O. 211, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman: www.dgcoman.com	
BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT	
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2026	
	31-Mar-2631-Mar-25
ASSETS	
Non-current assets	
Property, plant and equipment	129,096,5231,360,743,905
Right of use assets	1,568,2011,568,482
Prepaid lease receivable	27,233,13928,164,572
Trade and other receivables	2,642,5102,550,068
Prepayments	1,027,697968,600
Derivative financial instruments	505,231381,581
Total non-current assets	162,078,201163,665,597
Current assets	
Inventory	5,390,3525,481,538
Finance lease receivable	3,540,7753,487,758
Trade and other receivables	6,923,0056,446,806
Advances and prepayments	531,560379,352
Derivative financial instruments	142,529101,988
Cash and cash equivalents	550,640439,619
Total current assets	16,878,88230,202,009
TOTAL ASSETS	178,957,083193,867,605
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	
EQUITY	
Share capital	22,224,00022,224,000
Legal reserve	1,260,3531,260,353
Retained earnings	27,905,43030,132,483
Equity before hedging reserve	51,389,78353,616,836
Hedging reserve	550,642384,033
Total equity	51,940,46554,000,869
Non-current liabilities	
Term loans	89,190,67992,632,051
Leases liabilities	1,946,7241,919,003
Deferred tax liabilities	12,587,88212,525,621
Provisions for decommissioning costs	5,339,6615,238,798
Fund of service liabilities	87,80991,643
Total non-current liabilities	109,153,769112,201,504
Current liabilities	
Term loans	8,547,7668,883,896
Lease liabilities	22,25922,259
Trade and other payables	9,286,1259,251,487
Total current liabilities	17,861,14917,959,622
Total non-current liabilities	127,020,918129,877,726
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	178,957,083193,867,605
Net assets per share (RO)	0.2340.243
STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME For the period ended 31 March 2026	
	31-Mar-2631-Mar-25
Revenue	
Revenue	16,415,43016,896,093
Operating costs	(14,925,576)
Gross (loss) / profit	(209,740)
General and administrative expenses	(283,741)
(Loss) before interest and tax	(793,481)
Finance income	48,120
Finance costs	(16,867,846)
(Loss) before tax	(2,192,443)
Income tax expense	(84,617)
(Loss) for the period	(2,277,063)
Other comprehensive income	
Items that may or may not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss	
Fair value of cash flow hedge adjustments - gross	273,940
Reclassification to profit or loss - gross	(89,647)
Deferred tax on change in fair value of cash flow hedge	(27,444)
Other comprehensive income / (loss) for the period - net of tax	156,649
Total comprehensive (loss) for the period	(2,070,414)
Basic and Diluted Earnings per share (RO)	(0.016)(0.007)
The financial statements were approved and authorized for issuance in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors on 23 rd March 2026	

Recall	
KIA Carnival (KA4), Sorento (MQ4) Tasman (TK)	
RECALL DATE: 26-04-2026	
Brand of Commodity	Year of Production* #Number of Affected Commodities
KIA Carnival (KA4),	July 18, 2025 - Sept 29, 20255
Sorento (MQ4),	July 18, 2025 - Sept 05, 202510
Tasman (TK)	Aug 29, 2025 - Sept 29, 20252
*Not all vehicles in this production period are affected. #Subject to revision, based on the information received from the manufacturer, from time to time.	
Recall consequence	Due to an electrical fault in the instrument panel that causes it to stop working temporarily while driving, and the screen will not display information such as the speedometer, tire pressure monitoring system indicators, and other indicators.
Recall Action	Verify affected vehicles as per the VIN list and upgrade software of cluster as per KMC recommendation. All affected vehicles will be inspected and repaired at no expense to the vehicle owner
To further the total number of the affected items, please visit the Recall and Warranty website by scanning the QR code.	
Contact details: Toll free: 800222222 Working days: Sunday - Thursday Working Time: 8:30 - 17:30 hrs	
Consumer Protection Authority السلطة الوطنية لحماية المستهلك SOP-093-03 الرقم	

OPINION

The myth of ‘Dark Psychology’



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

MANY PEOPLE are interested in psychology, and books in the field are often among the bestsellers. Some believe reading about psychology would give them power to analyse and influence human behaviour. Yet many of these assumptions lack scientific evidence. In short, reading a book or two is unlikely to turn you into an expert in human behaviour. I have recently come across a social media post about what influencers like to call ‘dark psychology.’ The post promised secret tricks on how to control conversations, extract confessions, and dominate others. Such a post reinforces the assumption that psychologists possess hidden knowledge that grants power over human minds and ordinary people are not ‘supposed’ to know it. This assumption is both misleading and ethically wrong, as many of these so-called dark techniques are neither secret nor sinister. In fact, the majority comes straight from well-established principles in psychology, psychotherapy, and communication science. Techniques such as reflective listening (‘That sounds tough’), naming emotions (‘You seem frustrated’), strategic pauses, or asking open-ended questions are foundational skills taught to therapists, mediators, and healthcare professionals. Their purpose is not control, but

understanding. When used ethically, they reduce defensiveness and strengthen human connection. So why call them ‘dark’? The answer lies not in the technique itself but in intent. Psychology becomes ‘dark’ when it shifts from helping people to deliberately exploiting their vulnerabilities. Silence, for example, can be a tool that allows reflection but can also be used to cause discomfort and force disclosure. Asking for help can foster cooperation and mutual respect, or it can be used cynically to manufacture loyalty. The behaviour may look identical; the moral difference is profound. Some social media posts use language that often includes terms like ‘control,’ ‘force,’ ‘ensure compliance,’ and ‘trigger shame,’ revealing a worldview in which relationships are arenas of power rather than spaces of trust. This is not psychology; it is manipulation dressed in scientific vocabulary. Even more concerning is how confidently these posts claim certainty by using sentences like ‘Always speak first in negotiations,’ ‘People who brag are insecure,’ ‘Controlled vulnerability gives you power.’ These statements are not only simplistic but often false. Human behaviour is context-dependent. What works in one situation may fail completely in another, highlighting the importance of considering the specific

Psychology becomes dark the moment it shifts from helping people feel seen to deliberately exploiting their vulnerabilities

context and individual differences when applying psychological principles. Good psychology embraces nuance; pop psychology thrives on absolutes. As a psychiatrist, I can understand the popularity of ‘dark psychology,’ especially since we live in an era of uncertainty, competition, and social anxiety. People want certainty and protection from being manipulated themselves. Ironically, the solution offered often encourages the very behaviours people fear in others. Learning about psychology does not make us more manipulative but more accountable for our actions. Understanding human behaviour should increase empathy, not erode it. In therapy, leadership, education, and healthcare, psychological skills are governed by ethical frameworks precisely because influence is powerful and easily abused. In my opinion, there is no dark psychology, only dark intentions. The same tools that can build trust can also destroy it. The difference lies in whether the goal is mutual understanding or unilateral advantage. In a world already struggling with mistrust, we should be wary of narratives that portray relationships as games to be won. Psychology, at its best, is not about control. It is about connection, and connection cannot be engineered through tricks.

GAZA CHILDREN FIND JOY THROUGH SUPPORT ANIMALS

Light-hearted chatter ripples through a tent in the central Gaza Strip as a boy in a wheelchair gently strokes a white rabbit and another stands entranced by a bright green bird. For a moment, this group of young children who have lived through the devastation wrought by two years of gruelling war are captivated by the joy provided by the animals around them. “The natural presence of animals and birds, with their vibrant colours, absorbs negative energy,” said Rashid Anbar, who runs animal-assisted psychological support sessions in Al Zawayda camp. “Interacting with them fosters an atmosphere of happiness and positive energy,” he added, saying the children’s reactions left him feeling “encouraged” too. The devastation is acutely felt by the youngest in society. Sima Alami, adolescent and youth programme officer at the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), said in March that more than one million children in Gaza needed mental health and psychological support services. “Sadly, 96 per cent of these children feel that death is imminent, reflecting the depth of the fear and trauma they experience daily,” she added, describing a “widespread mental health emergency” across the Palestinian territories. Colourful paintings hang from the plastic tent walls of a makeshift art studio in Zawayda, where more than a dozen children sit in a circle clapping and giggling as Anbar conducts his session. One young girl beams as several small birds sit on her arms, shoulders and head, with a particularly inquisitive one nibbling one of her earrings. Along with the rabbit and birds, the children are able to pet a small tortoise, a hedgehog and a fluffy white dog. “The purpose is to enhance therapy and learning through playing with animals. It is about fostering a culture of kindness towards animals and cultivating a generation with a sense of compassion for them,” Anbar said. “It aims to help children overcome their fear barriers by engaging in play with animals, touching them, and acquiring knowledge about them, including the specific species to which they belong, what covers their bodies, such as feathers or fur, and whether they give birth or lay eggs.” Anbar said he had found many domestic animals abandoned on the streets during the war. — AFP

Why a two-state solution remains elusive

ISRAEL’S POLITICS are driven above all by security. It is the yardstick by which most voters judge competing parties. For most Israelis, the case for a two-state solution is not a moral argument; it is a practical one: the most realistic route to lasting security and a stable future. Yet even among those who favour partition, there are many political shades, ranging from cautious pragmatists to those who prefer a faster and fairer settlement with the Palestinians. That fragmentation dilutes their challenge to Netanyahu’s extremist regime. While many Israelis may be dissatisfied with Netanyahu, the pro-two-state camp does not present a single, disciplined alternative. Its supporters remain divided over how best to move forward, what concessions are acceptable and how security should be guaranteed. In Israeli politics, where security anxiety weighs so heavily, the party or bloc that appears most capable of providing security usually gains the upper hand. Moral arguments exist, but in practice, they are subordinated to the question of who can best guarantee safety. It is this lack of an organised, united opposition that allows Netanyahu’s extremist far-right government to remain strong, even as doubts grow about its policy of perpetual war. The central problem is not that there is no support for partition, but that the support is scattered across voters with different priorities. Perhaps the most defining landmark in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process remains the Rabin-Arafat handshake on September 13, 1993, at the White House, in front of



A Palestinian re-plants an olive tree uprooted by Israeli soldiers in the occupied West Bank village Al Lubban ash Sharqiya, south of Nablus. — AFP



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

president Bill Clinton. It became the defining image of the Oslo era, symbolising a moment when a negotiated settlement appeared within reach. That promise was shattered when Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in Tel Aviv on November 4, 1995, by a Israeli extremist opposed to the peace process, a killing that removed a leader who had given the peace agreement political weight and credibility. The loss of Rabin was not simply the loss of one man; it was the loss of a political resolution that might have carried the peace process further than any of his successors had. There have been many peace talks since, each with high expectations and each ultimately undone by Israeli diplomatic bad faith, settlement expansion and

settler violence. The process began well before Oslo, with Camp David in 1978 and the Egypt-Israel peace treaty in 1979, and continued through Madrid in 1991, Oslo in 1993 and 1995, Hebron in 1997, Wye River in 1998, Sharm el Sheikh in 1999, Camp David in 2000, Taba in 2001, the Road Map in 2003, Annapolis in 2007 and the Kerry initiative in 2013-14. Each round raised hopes that were ultimately disappointed. Settlement growth has eroded Palestinian confidence in diplomacy, while repeated theft of their homes has made compromise even harder to sustain. Over time, diplomacy itself looks less like a path to resolution but a cover for Israeli war crimes. The lesson is clear. Peace efforts have repeatedly faltered, not because there were too few declarations in favour of peace, but because the political will to make peace durable was never present. Negotiations were not backed by sustained Israeli restraint when using force to achieve its expansionist aims. That is why the Oslo handshake still resonates three decades later. It remains the image of a door that briefly opened and then abruptly closed. Rabin’s assassination turned that closing into a historical tragedy, and the decades since have shown how difficult it has been to reopen the process on a credible basis. A two-state settlement remains the only viable way to reconcile security with national self-determination, but that prospect will remain out of reach unless the opposition to Netanyahu’s Israeli anti-partition politics becomes more coherent, more disciplined and better organised.

Don't envy the rich; they have no need of character



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

HAVE YOU ever thought about being rich? Here we are, most of us, just trying to ‘get by,’ and there are always those who seem to make us feel, well, comparatively worthless. We, the ordinary folk, the 99 per cent, may be happy with our ‘lot,’ which is conversely not a lot, but we do have 50 per cent of the world’s wealth. The more sobering thought, or knowledge, however, is that the other 1 per cent possess the other half, so they do have a lot. There are 62 million millionaires, 2,838 billionaires, and of them all, Elon Musk reigns with a personal wealth of around \$300 billion. But, as Christina Stead tellingly wrote, “If the rich divided up all their money, there wouldn’t be enough to go round.” Ironically, given their communist backgrounds, DataPulse Analytics advises that of 143 Russian and 539 Chinese billionaires, 97 per cent are self-made, reflecting how commercialism is now the political theme. North America boasts 1,071 billionaires, Europe 714, Asia 519, South and Central America 92, the Middle East 77, and the African continent a surprisingly miserable 11. We despise without even knowing them. We can rarely feel at ease with the wealthy, but maybe if we do know a little more about them, we will be less intimidated by them. Forbes Magazine, the ‘bible of the rich,’ tells us that of the 2,838 current billionaires, surprisingly only a third, or 33 per cent, have dynastic wealth, having

inherited, or been born into wealth and are considered as ‘old money,’ while the other 67 per cent are those who have worked for, or grasped opportunities, in accumulating ‘new’ wealth. Traditional familial wealth has emerged as contemptuous of the new generations of prosperity, who they see as “vulgar, with their gaudy mansions, loud Porsches, and Gucci bags, just vulgar!” according to one long-established, old money matriarch. The affluent display Machiavellian tendencies, in which you see power through wealth, and corruptibility through power, and if we understand that, according to Faisal Baluch (2018), we can understand a little more of the erratic behaviour of the Trump’s of this world. It is the same entitlement to corruptibility that saw Bernie Madoff’s Ponzi scheme siphon \$50 million, ‘Big Tobacco’ conceal research on the harmful effects of smoking, Enron manipulate their share price, and Goldman Sachs sell worthless assets long after the 2008 financial crash.

Those who have little or nothing are challenged by their circumstances, but what of the wealthy? Well, it is no surprise that according to research by Catherine Ettman et al (2002), “modifies the relationship between wealth and depression,” so having money makes you feel better. Davidson, Kitzinger and Hunt (2006) confirmed that “rich people are healthier,” and finally, adding insult to injury, Hamermesh and Leigh (2022) found that the wealthy are better looking! Well, no

From an unwealthy perspective, let’s be charitable, and have the perspective of the ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus that, “Wealth is not about possessions, but having few wants,”

surprises there, huh? If it makes you feel any better, a current major investment platform has revealed that immensely rich people are apprehensive that they fear loss, but fear losing all their wealth, but that’s just nuts, as Berkshire Hathaway’s wealth fund manager, Warren Buffet says, “put 90 per cent in low-cost stocks and 10 per cent in short-term government bonds,” as the variety applies greater opportunity for long-term growth potential thanks to its broad stock market exposure, while having significantly more volatility than most investors favour, of a more conservative 60/40 split.

Andrew Carnegie erred on the side of conservatism when he famously said, “Ninety per cent of all millionaires become so through owning real estate.” Carnegie was to sell his business, including large swaths of urban New York, to the J P Morgan Banking Group in 1901, and, turning to philanthropy, his legacy was found in public libraries and parks, bearing his name, before his passing in 1919. Today, thirteen surviving members of his family are believed to live modestly but well, on Carnegie’s legacy fund.

From an unwealthy perspective, let’s be charitable, and have the perspective of the ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus that, “Wealth is not about possessions, but having few wants,” or not, because around every corner there will be a millionaire stepping over us, without a shred of care, concern, or indeed, character.

MACRON LEAVES OPTIONS OPEN AS END NEARS

VALERIE LEROUX

With just one year left in his second five-year term, French President Emmanuel Macron has said he will quit politics in 2027 - leaving observers and supporters guessing about his next moves.

“I wasn’t in politics before, and I’m not going to be after,” Macron said on Thursday during a visit to a high school in Cyprus.

He added that at this late stage in office, the “hardest thing” was to strike a balance between defending his record and acknowledging what “didn’t work out”.

France’s political and media world is already abuzz as the race for 2027 has “already begun”, said Philippe Moreau-Chevrolet, a communications expert at Sciences Po university.

Gabriel Attal, one of Macron’s string of former prime ministers, has offered personal revelations in a book as he shores up his bid to lead the centrist camp into the 2027 vote.

“Now is a good time for the president- who in any case won’t be in charge of much any more - to announce and lay the groundwork for his departure,” Moreau-Chevrolet said.

“He needs to tell an alternative story while leaving what’s next up to speculation.”

Macron has sought in recent weeks to spruce up public perceptions of his legacy - even as would-be successors in his own ranks try to distance themselves from a historically unpopular leader.

The 48-year-old may be hoping to mimic the trajectory of Jacques Chirac, president in the late 1990s and 2000s.

Once out of the cut and thrust of daily politics and with his various scandals fading, conservative Chirac’s public image recovered and many now look back on his era with nostalgia.

“At some point, there’ll be a change in perspective, because he won’t be a political personality any longer,” a person close to Macron said. “There’ll be a re-emergence of some of the key elements and consistency” in his policy, the person added, such as his push for “industrial and European independence in the face of crises.”

Macron remains highly visible outside France, standing up to US President Donald Trump over his threats to annex Greenland and criticising the war against Iran.

His long-vaunted White House relationship has cooled in recent months as Trump becomes a liability even for his supposed political allies in Europe’s far right.

“I didn’t speak to him in the last few hours because I didn’t see a need for it,” Macron said.

The president’s “true role has been on the international stage,” said Moreau-Chevrolet.

In January, Macron energised the World Economic Forum in Davos with a “defence of European democracies and Gaullist position” of technological and military emancipation from the United States. — AFP

How President Trump can save Lebanon

If you are looking for two pictures that summarise where Israel’s geopolitical strategy under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has taken the country, you could not do better than a couple of snapshots featured over the weekend in the Israeli press.

The first is a photograph of an Israeli soldier using a sledgehammer to smash a statue of Jesus in Debel, a Maronite Christian village in south Lebanon, a few miles north of the Israeli border.

The picture, the Times of Israel diplomatic reporter Lazar Berman wrote, “so perfectly encapsulated some of the worst tropes about Israel and Jews that many instinctively assumed it was an AI-generated product meant to slander the Jewish state. Friends of Israel who thought the photograph might be real prayed it wasn’t, so damaging was the picture. Their prayers went unanswered. An IDF soldier had indeed taken a hammer to the face of a statue depicting Jesus.”

He added, “There was no AI, no manipulation, no getting around an image that points to a deep moral morass” in the military and Israeli society.

The second is a picture in Haaretz of a group of beaming right-wing Israeli ministers as they opened a newly re-established settlement, Sa-Nur, in the northern West Bank. It is one of four isolated Israeli settlements plunked down in the region that lies under the Palestinian civilian and security authority. The idea behind these settlements is to make it impossible for a contiguous Palestinian state to ever be established. As Haaretz noted, Bibi’s defence minister, Israel Katz, boasted at the ceremony of the government’s expected legalisation of around 140 West Bank farm outposts — to foil any “Palestinian attempts to establish a presence in the area.”

Just another day of the Netanyahu government playing President Donald Trump for a fool. This is the Trump who declared in September 2025: “I will not allow Israel to annex the West Bank.”



Israeli tanks in Lebanon, as seen from the Israeli side of the Israel-Lebanon border, in northern Israel. — Reuters



THOMAS L FRIEDMAN

The author is a reporter and NYT columnist

Why are these two pictures so revealing? They are the perfect representations of Netanyahu’s strategy today, if one can call it a strategy: Meet every threat around you by smashing it with a sledgehammer, no matter how many enemies of Israel it makes, and offer no creative ideas for translating military achievements into lasting strategic gains.

That is because for Israel to consolidate any strategic gains, it needs to at least try to produce a two-state solution with the Palestinian Authority. That is what would sustainably isolate Iran across the region.

That is what would make it so much easier — and less dangerous — for the Lebanese and Syrian governments to make a formal peace with the Jewish state. And that is something Netanyahu refuses to even attempt and constantly works to undermine.

What would some fresh strategic thinking about Israel and Lebanon look like? Well, let’s start with the fact that Israel, by my count, has mounted at least seven long-term invasions or extensive military operations in south Lebanon,

against either the PLO or Hezbollah, since I first came to Beirut as a reporter in 1979.

Let me be clear: No Israeli prime minister would or should allow Hezbollah to render northern Israel uninhabitable by the threat of rocket attacks. But at some point, the dictum that “insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results” really has to apply.

It is time for a third way. I am happy to call it the Trump Plan to Save Lebanon. Push Israel to pull entirely out of south Lebanon and have heavily armed Nato troops help take over the area in partnership with, and under the symbolic authority of, the Lebanese army.

Israel can trust Nato. Hezbollah and Iran will not dare take them on — or if they do, they will be smashed, and a vast majority of Lebanese will applaud, because Israel will be entirely out of Lebanon and Hezbollah will lose its justification for attacking Israel.

Sure, it may not be a perfect solution, but it is better than Israel invading Lebanon over and over, let alone a Lebanese civil war. It’s worth a try.

SPORTS

RECORDCHASE



Punjab Kings’ Prabhsimran Singh celebrates with Priyansh Arya after reaching his half century in New Delhi. — Reuters

MAMMOTH RAHUL KNOCK TO NO AVAIL AS PUNJAB BEAT DELHI IN IPL

NEW DELHI: A monumental unbeaten 152 by KL Rahul, the highest T20 score by an Indian, went in vain as Punjab Kings mounted the largest successful chase in IPL history to extend their lead at the top of the table on a run-soaked Saturday with a six-wicket win over Delhi Capitals.

Rahul’s masterpiece, which came off 67 deliveries with 16 fours and nine sixes, and his 220-run second-wicket stand with Nitish Rana powered Delhi to a mammoth 264-2 at the Arun Jaitley Stadium. Punjab replied in kind through openers Priyansh Arya and Prabhsimran Singh, who put on 126 in just 42 deliveries.

Prabhsimran dazzled with a 26-ball 76 and when Punjab lost three wickets in quick succession, skipper Shreyas Iyer rode his luck to steer his team home with seven deliveries to spare.

Delhi, already hampered by the absence of lead pacer Lungi Ngidi, reprieved Shreyas on 28 and 35 with substitute fielder Karun Nair the guilty party on both occasions.

South African Ngidi was stretchered off the field and driven in an ambulance to the hospital after landing heavily and hitting the back of his head on the turf while unsuccessfully attempting a catch off Arya.

Shreyas made the most of his good fortune with his fourth fifty in five innings as Punjab maintained their unbeaten start to the tournament.

Between them, Prabhsimran and Arya smashed five sixes apiece in the first four overs and Shreyas provided the finishing touches with an electric unbeaten 71 which ultimately relegated Rahul’s heroics to a footnote.

Rahul had been shelled twice in the afternoon after Axar Patel chose to set a target, dropped by Shashank Singh on 12 and by paceman Vijaykumar Vyshak when on 51.

Those two blemishes apart, it was a magnificent knock marked by classical driving through the straight field and crunchy pulls whenever the bowlers pitched it short.

“I was very pleased at the end of the first 20 overs. There was a time when the T20 game was slightly different, and I, as an opener, could take my time,” said 34-year-old Rahul, who is no longer a part of the Indian 20-over set-up.

“But today’s demand is that the first six overs are the most important. I stuck to being true to my game.”

Rana (91) was an almost equal partner as the second-wicket pair rained carnage. The No 3 smashed Australian pacer Xavier Bartlett for two sixes and four fours in one over to keep pace with Rahul, who brought up his sixth IPL century off 47 deliveries.

Rahul’s second hundred for Delhi made him the first batter to score multiple tons for three different franchises in the IPL and he seemed to have secured the two points for his team.

But Punjab had other designs, bettering their own previous highest successful chase of 262 against Kolkata Knight Riders in 2024 in grand style. — AFP

Oman set for Indonesia, Kuwait friendlies in June

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

OMAN NATIONAL FOOTBALL team will return to action during the upcoming Fifa international break in June with two friendly matches against Indonesia and Kuwait, as part of the team’s early preparations under new head coach Tarik Sektioui.

According to the programme announced by Oman Football Association, the Red Warriors will take on Indonesia on Friday, June 5 in Jakarta, before facing Kuwait on Tuesday, June 9, in Bangkok, Thailand.

The two fixtures come at an important stage for Sektioui, who recently completed his first internal camp with the national team in Muscat. The short gathering, held from April 18 to 23, gave the Moroccan coach an initial opportunity to assess the available players, introduce his technical approach and build direct communication with the squad.

The camp concluded with an extended internal practice match, during which Sektioui and his technical staff closely monitored several tactical and technical aspects. The session allowed the coach to assess the players’ response to his ideas, their physical readiness, tactical discipline, movement between the lines and ability to adapt to different match situations.

The recent camp mainly featured locally based players, with several overseas professionals absent due to their commitments with their clubs. That gave the coaching staff a wider chance to evaluate players from the domestic competitions and form an early picture of the options available before the June list is finalised.

NEW CHAPTER

Sektioui’s first gathering marked the beginning of a new technical chapter for the Red Warriors following his appointment as national team head coach. The June friendlies are expected to provide a clearer test of the squad’s progress, particularly as the team moves from internal sessions to



Oman head coach Tarik Sektioui during a training session.

competitive international matches.

The match against Indonesia in Jakarta will offer Oman a useful challenge against a developing Asian side playing at home, while the Kuwait friendly in Bangkok will carry a different competitive flavour, given the familiar Gulf rivalry between the two teams.

The technical staff is expected to continue monitoring players in the domestic league, alongside Omani professionals abroad, before announcing the squad for the June window. Some overseas-based players could return to the team depending on their club schedules and readiness.

The two friendly matches form part

of Oman’s broader preparation plan for upcoming regional and continental assignments, including the West Asia Championship, which Oman will host in November, and the long-term build-up towards the AFC Asian Cup 2027 in Saudi Arabia.

For Sektioui, the coming period will be crucial in shaping the team’s identity, testing different combinations and building a squad capable of responding to the demands of the next stage. The June camp will also provide an important opportunity to strengthen team cohesion and translate the ideas introduced during the first internal gathering into match situations.

School Sports League draw held as finals begin in Muscat

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

The draw ceremony for the School Sports League for team games was held on Friday at City Seasons Hotel in Al Khuwair, marking the official build-up to the final rounds organised by the Oman School Sports Association (OSSA).

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Manal al Kiyumi, member of the Omani Women’s Sports Committee at the Oman Olympic Committee, in the presence of Safa al Salmi, Secretary-General of the OSSA, members of the Association board, secretaries of school sports committees in the educational directorates, coaches and supervisors of the participating teams.

The league features three competitions: girls’ volleyball for players born between 2008 and 2010, girls’ 3x3 basketball for players born in 2011 and 2012, and boys’ 3x3 basketball for the same age category.

A total of 188 students from 11 educational directorates are taking part, under the supervision of 53 male and female teachers.

The ceremony opened with a welcome address, followed by a visual presentation highlighting



The boys’ 3x3 basketball competition, staged at the Middle East College sports hall, features 44 students.

the statistics of the qualification rounds held across schools in the educational directorates. The technical meeting then explained the competition system, qualification mechanism and group distribution for the three events.

Abdul Salam bin Said al Qasabi, board member of the OSSA and head of the Training and Qualification Committee, said the league reflects the association’s efforts to promote sport as a daily practice among students. He added that schools remain the first platform for discovering talented athletes and preparing promising players who can later support

national teams in different sports.

OPENING STAGE

In the girls’ volleyball competition, the qualification stage involved 163 schools, 1,726 students and 177 female teachers. The finalists were divided into three groups. Group A includes Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Batinah South and Musandam, while Group B features Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta and Dhofar. Group C includes Al Batinah North, Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South. The top two teams from each group will advance to the second round, before the qualifiers are split into two groups, with the group winners meeting in the final. The girls’ volleyball matches began on Saturday at the main hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, with 100 students competing. Muscat opened their campaign with a commanding 2-0 win over Al Dakhiliyah, taking the first set 25-9 before sealing the second 25-0. Al Batinah South also started strongly, defeating Musandam 2-0 in a closer contest, winning 25-23 and 25-20.

In girls’ 3x3 basketball, the qualification stage featured 203 schools, 786 students and more

than 208 female teachers from all 11 educational directorates. The finals will be held on Monday and Tuesday, with 44 students taking part.

The boys’ 3x3 basketball competition, staged at the Middle East College sports hall, features 44 students. Its qualification stage included 556 students and more than 150 teachers and technical staff. Group A comprises Muscat, Al Batinah North, Al Batinah South, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi, while Group B includes Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South, Dhofar, Al Wusta and Musandam.

The opening rounds produced several notable results. Muscat defeated Al Batinah South 18-0, Al Dhahirah beat Al Buraimi 4-2, Dhofar overcame Al Sharqiyah North 7-3, and Al Wusta edged Al Sharqiyah South 4-3. Muscat then continued their strong run with a 5-2 win over Al Batinah North, before beating Al Buraimi 14-2 in the third round. Other results included Al Dakhiliyah’s 9-2 win over Al Dhahirah, Al Batinah North’s 10-3 victory over Al Dhahirah, and Dhofar’s 10-1 win over Al Wusta.

‘TAZEEZ’ RE-SHAPING FUTURE OF AMATEUR TEAMS IN OMAN

THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS AND YOUTH HAD LAUNCHED IN LAST JANUARY THE ‘TAZEEZ’ PROGRAMME, AIMING TO EMPOWER AMATEUR TEAMS ACROSS FINANCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS. THE INITIATIVE IS DESIGNED TO HELP TEAMS TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL, VOLUNTEER-BASED MODELS INTO MORE STRUCTURED AND SUSTAINABLE ENTITIES.



Itihad Daghamar team won the amateur teams football competition.

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

AMATEUR teams across the Sultanate of Oman are looking towards the newly launched ‘Tazeez’ programme as a key step to overcome long-standing challenges and strengthen their role within local communities. Representatives of amateur teams underlined a range of difficulties and obstacles that continue to affect their daily activities and long-term sustainability. These challenges include limited financial resources, weak sports infrastructure, shortage of qualified administrative and technical personnel and the absence of structured organisational systems. In addition, many teams struggle to attract and retain young participants due to limited incentives and increasing competition from other forms of entertainment. In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth had launched in last January the ‘Tazeez’ programme, aiming to empower amateur teams across financial, administrative, and organisational aspects. The initiative is designed to help teams transition from traditional, volunteer-based models into more structured and sustainable entities.

BROADER VISION
Speaking to *Oman Observer*, Sultan

al Harrasi, media ambassador of the programme, affirmed that the programme carries a broader vision that goes beyond sports performance. “Amateur teams are not only about football and competition. They represent a social, cultural and educational platform within the community. These teams bring together individuals from different age groups and backgrounds and they contribute to social cohesion through various activities, including cultural events, volunteer work, and even educational support initiatives,” he said. Al Harrasi explained that the programme begins with a registration phase. “The teams representative need to apply to join in the programme and then the applications will be evaluated based on their current capabilities and readiness. Following this, selected teams participate in specialised camps that introduce them to the programme’s framework, requirements, and development pathways,” he clarified. “During these camps, teams are guided to design and implement initiatives that can be economic, social, cultural, or volunteer-based. These initiatives are then evaluated, and based on performance, teams can receive financial support from the programme’s strategic partner, OQ Exploration and Production, with funding that exceeds RO 7,000 for each group,” he added.



Team management must be based on collective decision-making, proper distribution of responsibilities, and the ability to handle challenges calmly and professionally. Communication with players, supporters, and stakeholders is also essential.

HAMDAN AL
MANDHARI



Financial constraints remain the biggest issue. Most teams rely on limited donations or individual contributions, which are not enough to cover operational costs, maintain facilities, or provide necessary equipment.

MOHAMMED AL
SUBHI



Amateur teams are not only about football and competition. They represent a social, cultural and educational platform within the community. These teams bring together individuals from different age groups and backgrounds and they contribute to social cohesion through various activities.

SULTAN AL
HARRASI



The teams normally suffer a lot from the electricity expenses which have placed additional pressure on teams. I recommend financial support, reduced utility costs and simplified investment procedures to help teams sustain their activities.

ABDULLAH AL
MAJZI



Spectators cheer during an amateur football competition.

He further highlighted that partnerships form a cornerstone of the programme’s philosophy. By connecting amateur teams with government institutions, private sector entities, and other stakeholders, ‘Tazeez’ aims to create a collaborative environment that supports long-term growth and sustainability. “There will be workshops that delivered by specialists from various sectors, including finance, urban planning, and sports administration, are also part of the programme. These sessions aim to enhance the knowledge of team officials, improve their administrative capabilities, and help them better understand regulatory procedures and funding opportunities,” he said. From the teams’ perspective, Mohammed al Subhi, Vice-Chairman of Al Abyadh amateur team, described the challenges as both real and recurring across most amateur clubs. “Financial constraints remain the biggest issue. Most teams rely on limited donations or individual contributions, which are not enough to cover operational costs, maintain facilities, or provide necessary equipment. This affects the continuity and quality of the activities we offer,” he said. He added that infrastructure remains another major concern, with many teams lacking proper playing fields or dedicated headquarters. “Without suitable facilities, it becomes difficult to organise consistent programmes or attract participants,” he noted. Al Subhi also pointed to the reliance on volunteer work as both a strength and a limitation. “Volunteers are the backbone of amateur teams, but without proper training and development, it is difficult to achieve a professional level of management and organisation,” he explained. He concluded that the ‘Tazeez’ programme could address these gaps by providing structured financial support, improving infrastructure, and offering training programmes that enhance the skills of both administrative and technical staff.

STRONG LEADERSHIP
Similarly, Hamdan al Mandhari Chairman of As-Sulayf amateur team, highlighted the importance of strong leadership within amateur teams. He stressed that success begins with clear vision, transparency in financial matters, and effective teamwork. “Team management must be based on collective decision-making, proper distribution of responsibilities, and the ability to handle challenges calmly and professionally. Communication with players, supporters, and stakeholders is also essential to build trust and long-term relationships,” he said. Al Mundhiri also underlined the importance of adopting an investment mindset. “I encourage teams to explore revenue sources such as sponsorships, events and youth academies. The private sector involvement is crucial, whether through financial sponsorship, infrastructure development, or support for talented players,” he ended.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
Meanwhile, Abdullah al Majzi from Majiz team affirmed that the broader community role of amateur teams. “These teams are a key environment for youth development after home and school. They help the youth to make positive use of their time and stay engaged in healthy activities,” he said. However, he pointed out that rising operational costs. “The teams normally suffer a lot from the electricity expenses which have placed additional pressure on teams. I recommend for a practical solutions including: financial support, reduced utility costs and simplified investment procedures to help teams sustain their activities,” he added. The stakeholders agree that the ‘Tazeez’ programme represents a significant opportunity to reshape the future of amateur sports in Oman. By addressing financial, technical and organisational challenges in a comprehensive manner, the programme is expected to enable teams to operate more professionally and sustainably.

SPORTS

ATHLETESCENTRES LEAGUE



Nizwa Club edged Seeb Club 40-35 in a closely fought contest. — **Ammar al Musafir**

NIZWA, AL AMERAT AND SOHAR START LEAGUE WITH VICTORIES

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT APRIL 25

The opening matches of the Athletes Preparation Centres Basketball League for the 2025–26 season produced three wins as Nizwa Club, Al Amerat Club and Sohar Sports Complex made strong starts at the sub hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. In the headline opening clash, Nizwa Club edged Seeb Club 40-35 in a closely fought contest that remained alive until the closing stages. Nizwa built the foundation of their win in the first half, taking the opening quarter 12-5 through disciplined defending and quick transitions. They stretched their lead further in the second quarter, adding 20 points to 12, to move into the break with a commanding 32-17 advantage.

Seeb responded well after the interval and showed greater attacking intent in the third quarter, cutting the gap with 9 points against Nizwa's 3 to reduce the deficit to 35-26. The pressure continued in the final quarter as Seeb added another 9 points, but Nizwa held firm and closed out a deserved five-point win. Al Muthanna al Rashdi starred for Nizwa with 17 points, while Wael al Busaidy contributed 9 and Hamza al Sabari added 6. For Seeb, Abdulrahman al Kamashki scored 10 points and Al Fariq al Hassani added 6.

AL AMERATE DOMINATE AL BASHAYER
In the second match, Al Amerat Club delivered the day's biggest win with an emphatic 63-16 victory over Al Bashayer Club. Al Amerat imposed themselves from the outset with high defensive pressure, fast breaks and efficient finishing. They dominated the first quarter 26-3 and maintained control in the second period, adding 10 points to 5 for a 36-8halftime lead. The pattern continued after the break as Al Amerat outscored Al Bashayer 16-2 in the third quarter to extend the margin to 52-10. They completed the job in the final period with another 10 points against 6, wrapping up a comprehensive opening-round success.

SOHAR SPORTS COMPLEX WIN
The third match saw Sohar Sports Complex Centre defeat Salalah Club 43-33 in a competitive encounter that was settled in the final quarter. Sohar made the brighter start and took the opening quarter 16-11, before adding 12 points to 10 in the second to lead 25-21 at half-time. The third quarter was evenly balanced, with both sides scoring 12 points, leaving Sohar ahead 37-32. Sohar then finished strongly in the last quarter, scoring 6 unanswered points while keeping Salalah scoreless to secure the win.



West Ham United's Callum Wilson celebrates scoring their second goal against Everton at the London Stadium. — **Reuters**

Spurs, West Ham win in battle for EPL survival

WEST HAM scored a late winner on Saturday to stay two points clear of Tottenham in the battle to avoid Premier League relegation on a day of breathless drama. Spurs looked set to escape the bottom three with just minutes remaining after they took the lead against Wolves and West Ham conceded an equaliser against Everton. But substitute Callum Wilson scored a winner in the 92nd minute at the London Stadium to restore West Ham's two-point cushion, with just four games to go. Roberto De Zerbi's Tottenham travelled to already-relegated Wolves without a Premier League win since December but were blunt in attack. But Joao Palhinha's late goal secured a 1-0 win and travelling Spurs fans celebrated wildly when they learned that Everton had levelled in the 88th minute. At that stage Spurs were out of the bottom three. But West Ham were not finished, with Wilson adding a remarkable postscript. Wolves and Burnley are already down but the race to avoid the final relegation spot has effectively become a two-horse race between Tottenham and West Ham. Nottingham Forest hammered Sunderland 5-0 on Friday to pull well clear of the drop zone. Liverpool beat Crystal Palace 3-1, getting the better of their opponents for the first time in four meetings this season to climb



Tottenham Hotspur's Joao Palhinha and Rodrigo Bentancur celebrate after the match against Wolverhampton Wanderers. — **Reuters**

into fourth place above Aston Villa, who earlier lost 1-0 at Fulham. Liverpool lost the season-opening Community Shield against Palace on penalties before defeats in the Premier League and League Cup. Alexander Isak, who has recently returned to action after fracturing his fibula, scored his first goal for Liverpool since December. Andy Robertson doubled Liverpool's lead after a slick counter-attacking move. Daniel Munoz halved the deficit in the second half but Florian Wirtz scored a last-gasp third to restore the home side's two-goal cushion. Arne Slot's men are now near-certainties to qualify for next season's Champions League, which would be some consolation after a miserable title defence.

They are level on 58 points with Villa and Manchester United — with all three teams eight points clear of Brighton. **FULHAM BEAT VILLA**
In the early kick-off on Saturday, Fulham beat Aston Villa to keep their hopes of qualification for Europe alive. Ryan Sessegnon scored the only goal of the game shortly before half-time after Morgan Rogers and Ollie Watkins had gone close for Villa. Fulham are now 10th, level on 48 points with neighbours Chelsea and just two behind sixth-placed Brighton in the scrap for places in the Champions League, Europa League and Uefa Conference League. Arsenal aim to retake top spot from Manchester City when they host Newcastle in the evening kick-off. The Gunners have seen their nine-point lead vanish in the past two weeks and they are now behind Pep Guardiola's men on goals scored, with both sides level on goal difference. — **AFP**

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS ON SATURDAY:
Fulham 1 (Sessegnon 43) Aston Villa 0
Liverpool 3 (Isak 35, Robertson 40, Wirtz 90+6) Crystal Palace 1 (Munoz 71)
West Ham 2 (Soucek 51, Wilson 90+2) Everton 1 (Dewsbury-Hall 88)
Wolves 0 Tottenham 1 (Palhinha 82)
PLAYED FRIDAY
Sunderland 0 Nottingham Forest 5 (Hume 17-og, Wood 31, Gibbs-White 34, Jesus 37, 90+5)

Sinner overcomes Bonzi in record hunt at Madrid Open

MADRID: Jannik Sinner took a first step towards a potential record fifth consecutive Masters 1000 title with a 6-7 (6/8), 6-1, 6-4 victory over Benjamin Bonzi in the Madrid Open second round on Friday. The Italian world number one is looking to beat the record of four consecutive triumphs held by all-time greats Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal this week in the Spanish capital. Sinner dropped only one set on the way to trophies in Paris, Indian Wells, Miami and Monte Carlo, but Bonzi battled brilliantly to claim the first at the Manolo Santana stadium. The Frenchman survived five break points to reach a tie-break, where he also saved set point before edging ahead. However Sinner

stepped up a gear in the second set, securing breaks in the fourth and sixth games, and another in the third on his way to the third round. “It was a tough match, I had some chances early on and I couldn’t use them, but this is tennis,” said four-time Grand Slam winner Sinner. “It’s not bad to start the tournament like this, two and a half hours on court, it gives me good feedback where we need to improve for the next round. “Of course, we need to improve, but I’m also happy, when you’re not playing your best tennis and win, it’s still a good result.” With Sinner’s biggest rival Carlos Alcaraz injured and unable to compete either this week or in the upcoming French Open, the Italian



Italy's Jannik Sinner plays a return to France's Benjamin Bonzi during the Madrid Open second round match. — **AFP**

is overwhelming favourite for every competition he enters in the weeks ahead. Earlier, Croatian qualifier Dino Prizmic sent world number six Ben Shelton crashing out with a 6-4, 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/5) victory. Shelton's compatriot Tommy Paul also suffered a surprise early exit, falling 7-5, 6-4 against Argentine Thiago Tirante. Spaniard Rafael Jodar, 19, who impressed with a run to the Barcelona Open semifinals last week, dumped out world number eight Alex de Minaur 6-3, 6-1. “Everything went very well,” said Jodar. “De Minaur is a very tough opponent, and I knew what I had to do from the very beginning.”

Women's number two Elena Rybakina scraped into the Madrid Open third round with a 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 win over Gabriela Ruse. Rybakina will meet Zheng Qinwen, who produced a similarly battling performance to overcome Sofia Kenin, in the third round. Last year's runner-up and the third seed Coco Gauff made light work of Leolia Jeanjean with a 6-3, 6-0 victory at the Arantxa Sanchez stadium. Gauff will take on Romanian Sorana Cirstea in the third round, after she defeated Tyra Caterina Grant in straight sets. Fifth seed Jessica Pegula defeated Briton Katie Boulter 6-4, 6-4 in the late match on the main court to close out the day's action. — **AFP**

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



The participation attracted strong interest from international buyers, distributors and investors.

OMANI FIRMS SEAL 30 MILLION SEAFOOD DEALS IN BARCELONA

MUSCAT: Omani companies secured deals worth more than RO 30 million at the 2026 International Seafood Fair in Barcelona, reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's growing footprint in global seafood markets.

The participation, coordinated by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), attracted strong interest from international buyers, distributors and investors, resulting in new commercial partnerships across markets in Africa, Europe and Asia.

Khaled bin Sulaiman al Salehi, Director General of Marketing and Commercial Affairs at Madayn, said the outcome highlights the value of international exhibitions in expanding export channels and strengthening confidence in Omani products.

He noted that the event also served as a platform to promote investment opportunities in Oman's fisheries and industrial sectors, including projects focused on seafood processing, aquaculture and specialised retail. Madayn has developed preliminary feasibility studies for a number of high-potential investments in collaboration with relevant authorities and specialised consultants.

Dr Masoud bin Sulaiman al Azri, representing the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said the fisheries sector remains a key pillar of economic diversification. Oman's fish production exceeded 900,000 tonnes in 2025, with exports reaching 84 countries, supported by growth in value-added processing, aquaculture and cold chain infrastructure.

He added that participation in global exhibitions provides a strategic opportunity to exchange expertise, access new technologies and strengthen the sector's production and marketing capabilities.

Officials also highlighted rising investor interest in Oman's industrial cities and special economic zones, driven by competitive incentives and an integrated business environment tailored to the fisheries industry. — ONA

Tourism output in Oman reaches 2.2 billion

OMAN'S tourism sector maintained steady growth momentum in 2025, with total output exceeding RO 2.2 billion, underscoring the sector's expanding contribution to the national economy.

According to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the sector's direct contribution to GDP at current prices reached approximately RO 1.135 billion by the end of December 2025, marking a 3.7 per cent increase from RO 1.095 billion recorded a year earlier.

The total direct value added also rose by 4 per cent to RO 1.107 billion.

Overall tourism output grew more strongly, climbing 7.8 per cent year-on-year to RO 2.284 billion, compared with RO 2.119 billion in 2024.

Tourism consumption recorded the highest growth rate, rising by 11.6 per cent to approximately RO 1.177 billion, reflecting increased visitor spending and stronger domestic tourism activity.

Quarterly data, however, indicated a broadly stable performance. In the fourth quarter of 2025, tourism's direct contribution to GDP stood at around RO 330 million, slightly below the RO 331 million

Accommodation services recorded the strongest expansion, rising by 17 per cent to RO 252.1 million, while other tourism-related services increased by 18 per cent to RO 197.9 million.



Tourism consumption recorded the highest growth rate, rising by 11.6 per cent to approximately RO 1.177 billion.

recorded in the same period of 2024, accounting for 3 per cent of total GDP. Sectoral breakdowns highlighted mixed trends across tourism-related activities.

Accommodation services recorded the strongest expansion, rising by 17 per cent to RO 252.1 million, while other tourism-related services increased by 18 per cent to RO 197.9 million.

Restaurant activity grew by 3.5 per cent to RO 198.9 million and transport services edged up by 1.1 per cent to RO 196.5 million.

In contrast, travel agencies and booking services declined by 12.2 per cent to RO 242.7 million, indicating shifting consumer behaviour and increased reliance

on digital platforms.

At constant prices, which provide a clearer measure of real growth, the sector performed more robustly.

Direct tourism GDP rose by 5.7 per cent to RO 1.155 billion, while total direct value added increased by 6.5 per cent to RO 1.095 billion.

Total tourism output reached RO 2.174 billion, up 5.5 per cent, while consumption rose by 4.4 per cent to RO 1.079 billion.

The data points to continued resilience in Oman's tourism sector, supported by expanding infrastructure, diversified offerings and sustained policy focus on tourism as a key pillar of economic diversification. — ONA

SEZAD ADVANCES AL DUQM ROAD NETWORK

AL DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm has made significant progress in expanding its road infrastructure, with major projects nearing completion and new developments underway to enhance connectivity and investment readiness.

Phase I of the dualisation of Sultan Said bin Taimur Road (National Road No 32 North) has reached 92.8 per cent completion, while Phase II stands at 64 per cent as of March. Construction has also commenced on internal roads in



ENG AHMED BIN ALI AKAAK
CEO, SEZAD

of SEZAD, said the projects are designed to strengthen Al Duqm's

Block 52, alongside a new coastal road linking key tourism and industrial assets.

Eng Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, CEO

appeal as an investment destination by improving mobility and integrating various economic zones through a modern road network.

The dualisation project spans approximately 50 kilometres, including 26 kilometres of main carriageway and over 22 kilometres of service roads.

It connects Al Duqm city centre with strategic assets such as the Duqm Refinery, medium and heavy industrial zones and key access routes including the Sinaw–Mahout–Duqm corridor. — ONA

Nama Water Services boosts water network efficiency

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

Nama Water Services has accelerated efforts to enhance water network efficiency and reduce losses through a nationwide rehabilitation programme, reinforcing service reliability and long-term water security.

The company has completed the rehabilitation of approximately 1,200 kilometres of water networks across multiple governorates, alongside the replacement of more than 45,000 household connections.

Implemented over 20 months at a total cost of RO 44 million, the projects form part of a broader strategy to modernise infrastructure and meet rising demand for water services.

Water infrastructure is increasingly viewed as a critical enabler of sustainable urban development, extending beyond its traditional engineering function to support public health,



The company has completed the rehabilitation of approximately 1,200 kilometres of water networks across multiple governorates.

environmental protection and overall quality of life.

Within this framework, Nama's initiatives aim to deliver more efficient and resilient distribution systems.

Eng Abdullah bin Mohammed al Nuaimi, Chief Executive Officer of Operations and Maintenance, said the programme reflects a shift towards integrated and

technology-driven network management.

"Network rehabilitation and maintenance are central to improving system performance. We are adopting an integrated approach that combines infrastructure upgrades with advanced technologies, including proactive maintenance and digital solutions", he said.



ENG ABDULLAH BIN MOHAMMED AL NUAIMI
CEO, Operations and Maintenance

The rehabilitation works covered a wide geographic area, including Muscat Governorate (300 km), Al Batinah North Governorate (202 km), Al Batinah South Governorate (194 km), Al Dakhiliyah Governorate (152 km), Al Sharqiyah South Governorate (over 136 km), Al Dhahirah Governorate (95 km), Al Buraimi Governorate (73 km), Musandam Governorate (34 km) and Al Sharqiyah North Governorate (over 6 km).

In parallel, the company upgraded more than 45,000 household connections linking customer meters to the main network, contributing to improved flow efficiency and service

consistency.

Al Nuaimi noted that the projects play a direct role in reducing both technical and commercial water losses, while strengthening resource management and supporting the sustainable expansion of water and wastewater services.

"These initiatives are designed to deliver tangible improvements in daily service reliability, while supporting broader water security objectives", he said.

Nama is also advancing the deployment of digital meters and smart technologies to enhance monitoring capabilities, improve data accuracy and support more informed operational decision-making. The projects are being implemented in phases, guided by data analysis to ensure maximum impact.

The utility continues to align its operations with international best practices, with a focus on delivering efficient, reliable and sustainable water services across the Sultanate of Oman.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The initiative forms part of the bank’s broader approach to human capital development.

Sohar International, Sharakah launch 2nd edition of Women SME Development Programme

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to broadening economic participation and strengthening Oman’s entrepreneurial landscape, Sohar International has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Youth Projects Development Fund (Sharakah) to launch the second edition of the Sohar International Women SME Development Programme.

The agreement, signed by Dr Mazin al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer at Sohar International and Ali Muqaibal, Chief Executive Officer of Sharakah, builds on the success and key learnings of the previous edition, positioning the programme as a structured platform to accelerate the growth of women-led small and medium enterprises and help them embrace technology and digitise their businesses.

The initiative forms part of the bank’s broader approach to human capital development and aligns with national priorities aimed at advancing a more diversified and inclusive economy.

Commenting on the partnership, Dr Mazin al Raisi stated, “The decision to advance this programme into a second edition is grounded in both its demonstrated impact and the evolving needs of Oman’s SME ecosystem.

As the landscape continues to mature, there is a growing emphasis on strengthening digital capability, adaptability and access to the right support systems. Through our collaboration with Sharakah, we are extending a development model that integrates practical skill-building with direct exposure to industry expertise and institutional perspectives”.

Structured as an eight-month programme, the second edition retains its core focus on digitalisation, mentorship, business planning and capacity development, while incorporating refinements shaped by participant-driven insights and Sharakah’s implementation experience from the initial rollout.

These elements collectively reflect a continued focus on equipping Omani women entrepreneurs with the practical tools, applied knowledge and professional networks required to operate and grow within an increasingly digital and competitive business environment.

The programme will bring together a select cohort of 10 women-led SMEs that have been active for at least 18 months, with a more defined emphasis on enterprises operating within the manufacturing sector, recognising its potential within the country’s diversification agenda.

Further enhancements introduced in this edition are designed to deepen engagement and strengthen real-world application. These include a series of webinars led by industry experts that cover digital transformation, entrepreneurship trends and practical case studies.

H World International appoints new hotel manager for IntercityHotel Bawshar

MUSCAT: H World International is pleased to announce the promotion of Waheed (pictured) to the position of Hotel Manager at IntercityHotel Bawshar. A dedicated hospitality professional, Waheed brings extensive experience in hotel operations, leadership and guest service excellence.

Throughout his career, he has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing guest satisfaction, improving operational efficiency and building high-



performing teams.

During his tenure, Waheed has delivered notable achievements, including significant improvements

in guest satisfaction scores, the successful streamlining of operational processes and the effective leadership of teams through key projects and transitions. His results-driven approach and strong leadership capabilities have been instrumental in his advancement to this role.

As Hotel Manager, Waheed will focus on elevating the overall guest experience, strengthening operational excellence and fostering team engagement.

Chery Arrizo 6 PRO: Redefining excellence

THE Chery Arrizo 6 PRO continues to set a high benchmark in the sedan segment, offering a harmonious blend of elegant design and sophisticated engineering. Built for those who prioritise a refined lifestyle, this vehicle stands as a testament to Chery’s commitment to quality, delivering a driving experience that is as practical as it is luxurious.

The Arrizo 6 PRO makes an immediate statement with its dynamic and contemporary exterior. Its design is characterised by a bold front grille and sleek LED headlamps that flow into an aerodynamic silhouette. This sporty yet sophisticated aesthetic ensures the sedan stands out, whether navigating busy city streets or cruising the open highway in Oman.



The Arrizo 6 PRO makes an immediate statement with its dynamic and contemporary exterior.

LUXURIOUS INTERIORS & SEAMLESS CONNECTIVITY

Step inside the cabin to find an environment where luxury and comfort meet. The interior utilises high-quality materials and premium leather seating to create a spacious sanctuary for both the driver and passengers.

At the heart of the dashboard sits a 10.25-inch infotainment touchscreen that serves as a digital hub, featuring full integration with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. This ensures that connectivity and entertainment

are always within reach, while ambient lighting adds a final touch of sophistication to the atmosphere.

UNMATCHED PERFORMANCE AND SMOOTH HANDLING

Performance in the Arrizo 6 PRO is driven by an advanced turbocharged engine that offers a perfect mix of power and fuel efficiency. The integration of a dual clutch transmission (DCT) allows for effortless acceleration and a remarkably smooth ride. To cater to different driving preferences, the sedan includes multiple driving modes and electric power

steering, allowing the driver to customise the vehicle’s responsiveness whether they are navigating tight city corners or long highway stretches.

INTELLIGENT SAFETY

Safety is a fundamental pillar of the Arrizo 6 PRO experience, featuring a suite of intelligent systems designed to provide total peace of mind. The vehicle is equipped with a 360-degree camera system for maximum visibility, alongside active features like blind-spot monitoring and lane departure warning.

Abraj Energy hosts PDO leadership safety forum

MUSCAT: Abraj Energy Services, Oman’s leading oil and gas services provider, hosted the Well Engineering Leadership Safety Forum (LSF). The event reaffirmed the leadership team role as a strategic partner in advancing safety excellence and fostering a unified “Goal Zero” culture across the energy sector.

The forum forms part of PDO’s ongoing engagement with key partners, bringing together senior leadership and decision makers to strengthen accountability, encourage open dialogue and reinforce the shared commitment to ensuring no harm to people, assets, or the environment.

During the proceedings, Abraj demonstrated its HSE leadership by showcasing the integration of operational



best practices with advanced digital solutions. The company highlighted how its centralised monitoring systems and data-driven protocols enable proactive risk mitigation across its diversified operations.

Eng Saif al Hamhami, Chief Executive Officer of Abraj, said: “Hosting the PDO

Leadership Safety Forum underscores our strategic partnership and shared responsibility to elevate safety performance industry-wide.

Abraj remains committed to embedding safety through innovation, digitalisation and disciplined execution, ensuring that ‘Goal Zero’ translates into a measurable operational outcome”.

The PDO Leadership Safety Forum underscores the importance of leadership alignment, knowledge sharing and continuous improvement in strengthening a resilient safety culture, thereby supporting Oman’s broader ambitions for operational excellence and sustainable energy development as outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds posts best-ever Akshaya Tritiya sales

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally and a brand synonymous with responsibility and trust has delivered its strongest-ever Akshaya Tritiya performance, driven by robust consumer demand, superior customer engagement and the company’s integrated manufacturing strengths.

The company recorded 53% year-on-year growth globally during Akshaya Tritiya, with overall sales reaching \$282 million, including 71% growth in India and 22% growth across other international markets, reflecting sustained momentum across geographies.

Commenting on the performance,



The company recorded 53% year-on-year growth globally during Akshaya Tritiya, with overall sales reaching \$282 million.

M P Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, said, “Akshaya Tritiya continues to be a significant occasion for our customers and this year’s performance reflects both the strength of demand and the depth of customer engagement.

What stands out is not just the strong growth of approximately 53% year-on-year globally across India & other International Markets, but the quality of that growth. At the core of this growth is the trust customers place in us as a responsible jeweller.

Our commitment to transparent pricing, ethically sourced gold and diamonds, stringent quality standards and a customer first approach continues to resonate

strongly. It is this focus that enabled us to build deeper relationships with customers and drive sustained preference across markets”.

The company engaged with over 125,000+ customers walking in on Akshaya Tritiya across markets, supported by a healthy mix of wedding purchases and increasing participation from young and first-time buyers. Notably, the studded jewellery category recorded 45% growth, highlighting a clear shift towards design-led and value-added products.

Performance remained strong across India and international markets, making this the company’s best-ever Akshaya Tritiya.

SHORTTAKES



The ministry reported that 27,288 commercial registrations were reviewed during this phase.

CRACKDOWN ON HIDDEN TRADE INTENSIFIES IN OMAN

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has completed the second phase of implementing its decision to combat hidden trade, targeting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) holding the ‘Riyada’ card, as part of broader efforts to strengthen market regulation and promote fair competition.

The ministry reported that 27,288 commercial registrations were reviewed during this phase. Enforcement measures included the issuance of 409 administrative commitments against non-compliant entities and the temporary suspension of 45 registrations pending corrective action.

A total of 696 establishments regularised their status in line with regulatory requirements, achieving full completion of the phase’s targets.

The second phase builds on earlier efforts focused on raising awareness and improving compliance, alongside enhancing coordination among regulatory authorities.

This integrated approach has contributed to a more effective oversight framework and enabled more precise enforcement.

Central to these efforts is the National Team for Combating Illicit Trade, which brings together multiple government entities to coordinate roles, align legislative and regulatory actions; and facilitate data-sharing. The collaboration has strengthened the detection of illicit practices and supported timely legal action against violators.

Nasra bint Sultan al Habsi, Director General of Trade at the ministry and head of the national team, said the results reflect the effectiveness of the regulatory measures adopted.

She noted that the initiative has enhanced transparency, strengthened compliance and reinforced investor confidence in the market.

— ONA

Oman marks World Intellectual Property Day

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

THE Sultanate of Oman joins countries around the world in celebrating World Intellectual Property Day (WIPD), which falls on April 16 each year.

The day was designated by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) to coincide with the date of the adoption of the Convention establishing the Organisation in 1970, with the aim of raising awareness and shedding light on the importance of intellectual property rights and its various fields, such as trademarks, patents, industrial designs, copyright and geographical indications.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) will preside over WIPD on Monday, April 27, 2026, attended by several officials and innovators in the sports sector, to highlight achievements made in recent years and the measures taken by the Sultanate of Oman to encourage innovators, protect sports innovation, enhance economic and cultural development; and stimulate investment in this vital sector.

Oman’s marking of this day comes as part of its efforts to support innovative minds and encourage scientific research in the field of intellectual property, in order to build a network of national scientific expertise in this area and to exchange knowledge and expertise on intellectual property topics across various fields.

Ghalib bin Said al Maamari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, said that this year’s celebration comes under the theme ‘Intellectual Property and Sports: Get Ready, Set, Innovate’, aiming to highlight the pivotal role of intellectual property rights in protecting sports innovation, enhancing economic and cultural development; and stimulating investment in this vital sector.

He affirmed that intellectual property represents an essential partner in the



GHALIB BIN SAID AL MAAMARI
Under-Secretary for Commerce and Industry, MoCIIP



NASRA AL HABSI
Director General of Commerce



ENG KHALID BIN HAMOUD AL HINAI
Director of the National Intellectual Property Office

development of modern sport, noting that investing in its protection is an investment in creativity, the economy and people.

He added that every sports innovation, every successful brand, every original creative content and every technology that contributes to improving performance, expanding participation, or enhancing the sporting experience deserves to be protected, supported and celebrated.

The Under-Secretary further stated that the celebration of this day serves as a practical call to continue working towards a more innovative sports ecosystem, a more efficient intellectual property environment and a future in which sport, knowledge, creativity and development are fully integrated.

QUALITATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

Al Maamari noted that the Sultanate of Oman achieved qualitative milestones in 2025 that strengthened its position in the Global Innovation Index, advancing to 69th globally and rising to 55th in innovation inputs.

He stated that these results reflect the success of the institutional approach in

building an integrated national ecosystem.

He also pointed out that among the most notable achievements was the adoption of the National Intellectual Property Strategy, in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), in addition to the international registration of Omani frankincense as a geographical indication, making the Sultanate of Oman the first GCC country to achieve this, thereby contributing to the protection of national rights and supporting a knowledge-based economy.

SUPPORTING SPORTS CREATIVITY

Meanwhile, Nasra al Habsi, Director General of Commerce, said that this year’s theme represents an opportunity to establish a national environment that supports sports creativity based on awareness and empowerment, affirming the strong interconnection between the intellectual property protection system and the sports sector, which has become increasingly linked with technology, design and investment.

She added that the protection of intellectual property rights, including sports products and trademarks, contributes to enhancing market integrity and attracting high-quality investments, stressing the importance of spreading this culture within sports clubs and educational institutions.

This, she said, helps build early awareness among youth of the importance of respecting intellectual property rights and using them to launch innovative sports projects that serve the national economy.

NATIONAL INNOVATIONS

Meanwhile, Eng Khalid bin Hamoud al Hinai, Director of the National Intellectual Property Office, explained that last year witnessed practical steps to strengthen the position of Omani products and national innovations. He noted that innovation activity in the Sultanate of Oman recorded significant growth in 2025, with 879 patent applications filed, reflecting a rising level of societal awareness of the importance of protecting research outputs.

Sembcorp’s energy portfolio in Oman climbs to 1.1 GW

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 25

Singaporean state-owned energy and urban development company Sembcorp Industries has consolidated its presence in Oman’s utility services sector, notably by securing a new 10-year Power and Water Purchase Agreement for the Salalah Independent Water and Power Plant (IWPP), starting from April 2027.

The renewed contract, awarded recently by Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP) — the sole national offtaker of power and water output — ensures the continued supply of 465 MW of electricity and 15 million imperial gallons of water per day from the integrated, gas-fired complex in Salalah beyond the expiry of the current agreement.

“The renewal reinforces our strong partnership with Nama



Sembcorp’s Dhofar II Wind Project is slated for commercial launch in Q3 2027.

Power and Water Procurement Company and supports the long-term sustainability of our energy portfolio in the country”, the developer said in a statement.

First brought into commercial operation in 2009, Salalah IWPP is currently the largest integrated power and water project in Salalah, providing baseload power and desalinated water to Dhofar Governorate.

The year 2025 also represents a high point in Sembcorp’s investment

journey in Oman’s transition from a predominantly gas-powered power generation sector into a renewables-based sector.

The company, in partnership with Jinko Power of China, brought into operation the 588 MWp Manah II Solar Independent Power Project — one of the largest utility-scale solar developments in the Sultanate of Oman.

The facility, located in the Wilayat of Manah in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, is among Sembcorp’s largest solar assets globally.

Later that year, the partnership of Sembcorp and OQ Alternative Energy was awarded the mandate to implement the 125 MW Dhofar II Wind Power Project under a 20-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Nama PWP.

Slated for launch in the third quarter of 2027, the project heralds Sembcorp’s maiden foray into the wind energy sector in the Middle

East.

Taken together, Sembcorp’s energy portfolio in the Sultanate of Oman has expanded to around 1.1 gigawatts of capacity, positioning the company as a key partner in the country’s lower-carbon energy transition.

Oman, along with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), represents a strategically important market for the Singaporean firm. Its portfolio in the Middle East comprises renewable energy, gas-fired power and water infrastructure assets, underpinned by long-term contracts that provide stable cash flows and support national energy transition objectives.

Sembcorp operates a diversified 28.5 GW global energy portfolio, which includes a sizable renewables component of 20.4 GW, supported by long-term contracted assets across core markets, including India and the Middle East.

ENERGY SECURITY

Japan to release more oil reserves



Japan will release additional crude from strategic reserves starting May 1 to stabilise supply after regional shipping disruptions.

The release additional crude reserve follows an earlier 30-day release, with a further 20 days’ supply planned. Around 5.8 million kilolitres will be sold to major refiners, reinforcing domestic fuel availability amidst ongoing geopolitical tensions. — ONA

CONSUMER OUTLOOK

US sentiment hits record low



US consumer sentiment fell to a record low in April, reflecting persistent inflation concerns despite a ceasefire with Iran.

The University of Michigan index dropped to 49.8, down from 53.3 in March. Higher fuel and commodity costs linked to disrupted shipping routes have weighed on households, with declines recorded across income groups and political affiliations. — Reuters

CENTRAL BANK

Turkish reserves rebound on gold gains



Türkiye saw central bank reserves rise to \$174.5 billion in the week to April 17, driven by a sharp increase in gold holdings.

While foreign currency reserves declined, total reserves recovered from earlier lows after interventions to support the lira. The central bank says the rebound reflects stabilisation efforts amidst ongoing market volatility and regional pressures. — ONA

OPINION

The role of endowments in supporting the Omani economy



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

THE waqf endowment system has historically played a role in developing the socio-economic activities of the Muslim world. It still plays an important role in the development of the economy and in socio-economic and community activities in Oman. The institutions of waqf were developed as a form of charity, where people give public assets such as land, buildings, or financial assets. Initially, the waqf assets are conserved in such a way that income from these assets is used to fund social institutions such as hospitals and schools. This system of waqf institutions and charity is also deep-rooted in Omani culture because Islam encourages charity and the concept of charity is that the benefits continue to accrue to society, ie, charity that is perpetual. The strongest economic characteristic of endowments in Oman is sustainable financing. Waqf assets are structured to generate income in perpetuity. This is different from usual donations, which in most cases are one-time. For instance, as part of a charitable endowment, donated properties could be rented out and the income used to fund community activities. This creates an avenue for funding that is predictable and supports community project sustenance, fulfils social funding roles in the economy and helps diversify the economic support of the community. Endowments also play a critical role in

maintaining the socio-economic foundation of the economy. In Oman, waqf funds have been used to construct mosques and provide for their operation, to teach and support the religious education of the poor and have more recently been extended to fund schools, healthcare and scholarships. This means that they are sustaining and building the socio-economic foundation and capacity of the community and the economy through education and health. The promotion of social equality and financial inclusion is an important aspect of endowments. The institution of waqf usually focuses on vulnerable populations by helping them access what is usually the formal financial system. This can take the form of helping to create small business ventures, as well as providing social services. Decreasing inequality in society and improving the economic conditions of individuals subsequently creates more balanced and integrated economies. In the new economic system in Oman, the inclusion of endowments in national development plans is becoming more significant. The government has been proactive in reforming and modernising the waqf sector to enhance transparency, efficiency and alignment with national development. This has included the digitisation of waqf documentation, the enhancement of waqf asset management and the promotion of waqf investments in the economy. This type of structural reform increases the economic

The institutions of waqf were developed as a form of charity, where people give public assets such as land, buildings, or financial assets. Initially, the waqf assets are conserved in such a way that income from these assets is used to fund social institutions such as hospitals and schools.

impact of endowments while preserving the tradition of waqf. Endowments can also play a role in the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation. The allocation of an endowment to support a business start-up or vocational entrepreneurship training is one of the means by which waqf institutions can contribute to economic diversification. This is particularly important for Oman due to the shift from an oil-based economy. This shift is reflected in the national development vision — Oman Vision 2040. The emphasis is on developing a sustainable economy with a dominant role for the private sector. There is clear potential for endowments to contribute in these areas. Endowments do face some challenges and obstacles. There are still some waqf assets that are underutilised or poorly managed. Addressing these issues requires strong governance, professional management and public awareness. Ensuring that individuals are encouraged to establish new endowments, as well as the effective utilisation of existing ones, will be crucial. In summary, waqf endowments are crucial because they have the potential to create an ongoing source of economic support for Oman. In addition to providing a perennial source of funding for social services, waqf institutions help promote equity and support economic diversification and as such, they have material benefits for the economy and society.

WHEN CLEAN POWER BECOMES TOO CHEAP TO IGNORE

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The global energy transition has entered an unexpected phase. The challenge is no longer convincing markets to adopt renewable energy, but figuring out what to do when there is more of it than the system can absorb. As solar and wind capacity expand at record pace, electricity markets are beginning to experience something that would have seemed improbable a decade ago. Power is not just getting cleaner, it is at times becoming almost too cheap. In several advanced energy systems, periods of excess renewable generation are now driving electricity prices sharply down, occasionally into negative territory. This is not a failure of the transition. It is a signal that the structure of energy markets is lagging behind the speed of technological change. Grids that were designed for predictable, fossil fuel based supply are now being pushed to accommodate variable, weather driven generation that can surge within hours. At the centre of this shift is solar power. Its rapid cost decline has made it the fastest growing source of electricity globally, with installations accelerating across both developed and emerging markets. Wind energy continues to complement this growth, particularly in regions with strong seasonal or offshore resources. Together, they are redefining the economics of electricity, placing downward pressure on wholesale prices and reshaping investment decisions across the sector. Yet abundance comes with complications. When supply exceeds demand, grids must either curtail production or find ways to store and redistribute the excess energy. This is where the next phase of innovation is taking shape. Battery storage is scaling rapidly, evolving from a supporting technology into a central pillar of energy systems. At the same time, industries are beginning to adapt their operations to align with renewable availability, from data centres to manufacturing processes that can shift consumption to periods of peak generation. This transition is also forcing a rethink of consumer behaviour. Electricity is gradually moving away from being a constant, always-on commodity towards a more dynamic resource. Time of use pricing, smart appliances and automated energy management systems are encouraging users to consume power when it is most abundant.

The Gulf no longer profits from tension: it pays for it

THE idea that the Gulf benefits from regional tension is no longer economically accurate. It survives as a legacy assumption from an earlier era — when oil dominated the region's economic model and price spikes could offset instability. That era has passed. Today, the Gulf's growth depends less on volatility in crude markets and more on something far less visible, but far more valuable: stability. This shift is not theoretical. It is structural. Across the region — and particularly in Oman — the economic model has expanded beyond hydrocarbons into logistics, ports, aviation, trade corridors, industrial zones and capital markets. These sectors do not thrive on disruption. They depend on predictability, continuity and confidence. When tension rises, their costs rise with it. That is the part often missed in international analysis. For Oman, the implications are direct. The country has spent years building a logistics-led growth model anchored in its ports and transport infrastructure. Cargo volumes, container throughput and shipping traffic have all expanded as part of a deliberate strategy under Oman Vision 2040. This is not an oil story. It is a connectivity story. And connectivity has a simple requirement: reliability. In a volatile region, that requirement becomes a competitive advantage — or a vulnerability. The real economic question during periods of tension is no longer who produces the most oil. It is who can keep trade moving and at what cost. That shifts attention away from the commodity itself and towards the systems that carry it: shipping capacity, freight routes and marine insurance. These systems are not neutral. Global shipping is highly concentrated. A small group of major carriers — including Mediterranean Shipping Company,



Ports such as Salalah, Sohar and Duqm are not just infrastructure assets. They are economic propositions built on the promise of continuity.



QASIM
AL MAASHANI

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

Across the region — and particularly in Oman — the economic model has expanded beyond hydrocarbons into logistics, ports, aviation, trade corridors, industrial zones and capital markets

Maersk, CMA CGM and COSCO Shipping — controls a significant share of global capacity. In times of disruption, they do not simply react to events. They reshape them commercially. They reroute vessels, tighten supply and reprice freight. Insurance adds a second layer of influence. The centre of gravity remains in London, particularly through Lloyd's of London and the International Group of P&I Clubs. When risk rises, they translate geopolitical tension into measurable cost: higher war-risk premiums, stricter coverage conditions and more cautious underwriting. This is where the economics of crisis become clear. The first gains from instability do not necessarily go to oil producers. They go to those who can price movement through risk: shipping operators managing scarce capacity, insurers recalibrating premiums and traders exploiting volatility. These are not strategic winners. They are tactical beneficiaries of uncertainty. For the Gulf, the balance is different. Higher oil prices may bring short-term revenue gains, but they do not compensate for the broader economic drag created by instability. Supply chains become more expensive. Shipping routes become less efficient. Insurance costs rise. Travel confidence weakens. Investment decisions slow. The cumulative effect is not growth,

but friction. This is particularly relevant for economies like Oman that are positioning themselves as regional connectors. Ports such as Salalah, Sohar and Duqm are not just infrastructure assets. They are economic propositions built on the promise of continuity. Their value increases when trade flows smoothly — not when it is disrupted. In that sense, the Gulf's real premium has changed. It is no longer the ability to earn more when oil prices spike. It is the ability to remain functional when the environment becomes unstable. That is what investors, traders and global partners ultimately price. The distinction matters, because it reshapes the answer to a simple but often misunderstood question: who benefits from tension? The answer is no longer the Gulf. Not in any sustained or strategic sense. The region has evolved beyond a single-commodity model. Its economic future depends on integration with global systems — systems that reward reliability and penalise disruption. In that framework, instability is not an opportunity. It is a cost. That is the new reality. And it leads to a conclusion that would have sounded counterintuitive a decade ago, but is increasingly difficult to dispute today: The Gulf does not profit from tension anymore. It pays for it.

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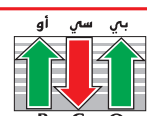
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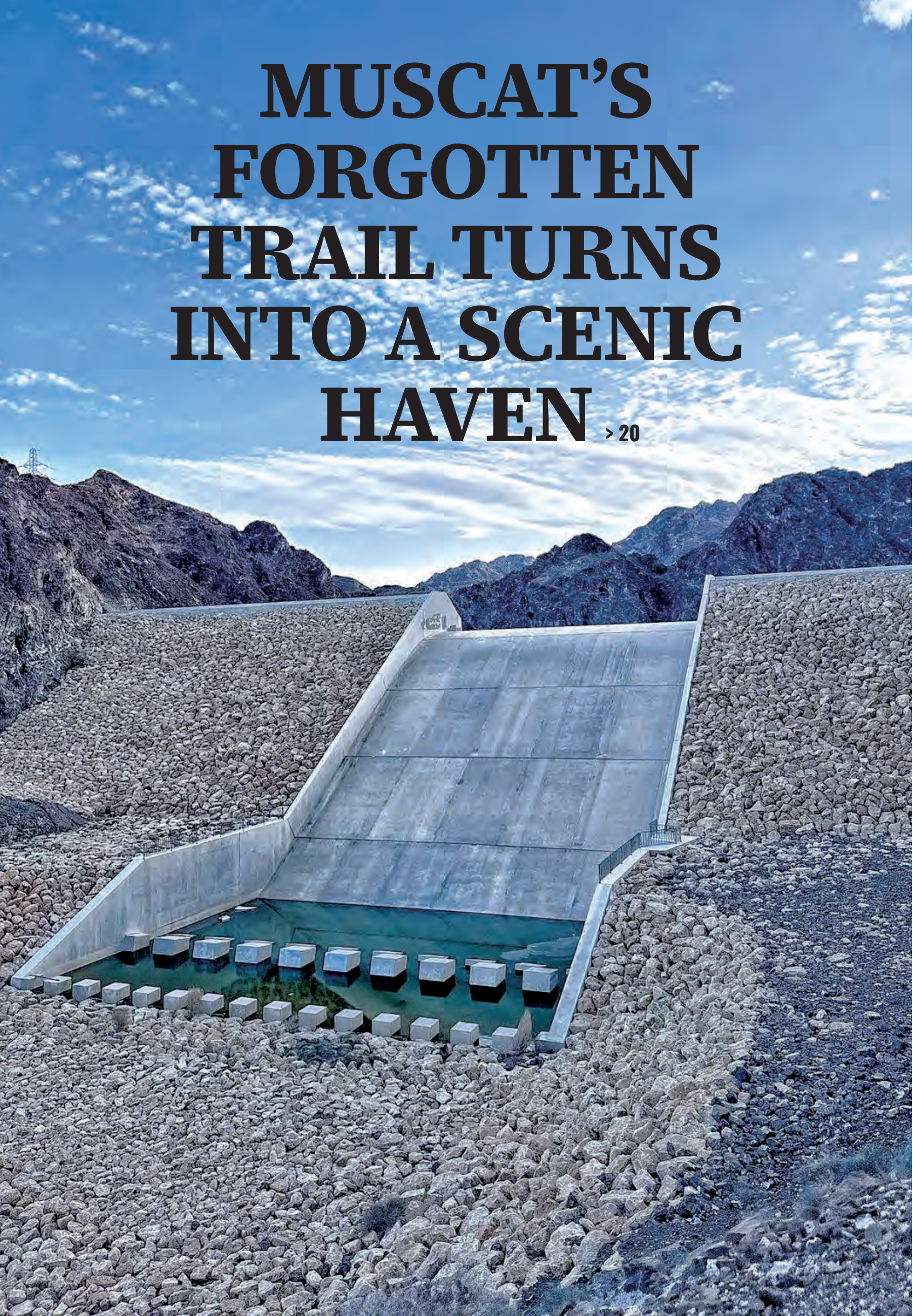
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ART/LIFE



R A I N R E V I V E S W A D I A L T U Y A N



MUSCAT’S FORGOTTEN TRAIL TURNS INTO A SCENIC HAVEN > 20

HOLLYWOODBONANZA

CINEMAS EXPECT BLOCKBUSTER SUMMER



Christopher Miller, Phil Lord, Bob Persichetti and Justin K Thompson, promoting ‘Spider-Man: Beyond the Spider-Verse’, pose before a Sony presentation at CinemaCon. — Reuters

A new Spider-Man adventure, a Steven Spielberg UFO movie and Baby Yoda’s big-screen debut are set to light up cinemas this summer, raising hopes for the strongest season since theatres reopened after pandemic shutdowns. The lineup reflects renewed confidence among studios and exhibitors after several years of disruption and uncertainty across the global film industry and marketplace conditions.

At this week’s CinemaCon in Las Vegas, theatre owners cheered previews of upcoming releases including “Spider-Man: Brand New Day”, “Toy Story 5” and Christopher Nolan’s “The Odyssey”. The annual gathering gives studios a platform to present their biggest productions and build anticipation among theatre operators ahead of the busy summer period and critical global release calendar.

Hollywood’s summer season, which typically generates about 40% of annual box office revenue, begins in early May with “The Devil Wears Prada 2”. Other major titles include “The Mandalorian and Grogu”, featuring Baby Yoda and Spielberg’s alien film “Disclosure Day”, both expected to draw strong international audiences and boost ticket sales across major cinema markets worldwide.

“Front to back, this is going to be one of the best summers for movie theatres ever”, said Paul Dergarabedian of Comscore.

The industry has struggled to regain pre-pandemic momentum. After reopening from Covid-19 closures, film production was disrupted again by Hollywood labour strikes in 2023, creating an uneven release schedule that is only now stabilising and returning to more consistent levels across major studios and production pipelines globally. “I think the narrative on our sector is going to change very significantly after this summer”, said Tim Richards, CEO of Vue Entertainment. “If this is not the biggest summer in history, it’s going to be very close”.

The summer box office record remains 2013, when “Iron Man 3” helped push receipts to \$4.8 billion, setting a benchmark the industry continues to aim for more than a decade later.

So far this year, hits such as “Project Hail Mary” and “The Super Mario Galaxy Movie” have lifted ticket sales 19% to \$2.3 billion, according to Comscore. However, that figure is still 18% below 2019 levels, showing the recovery remains incomplete and uneven across regions.

Executives are also wary that a proposed merger involving Paramount and Warner Bros Discovery could reduce the number of films released in future years. For now, optimism is growing. “We’re working our way back”, said Greg Marcus, CEO of The Marcus Corporation. Industry leaders say consistent releases and strong audience turnout will be key to sustaining momentum beyond the summer season globally. — Reuters

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



CULTURE

Devotees wearing traditional outfits dance during the Rato Machindranath Jatra festival in Lalitpur. — AFP



SCULPTURES

A couple look at a giant sand sculpture of the Super Mario Bros at the entrance to the Australian Sand Sculpting Championships in Melbourne. — AFP



MARKET

Vendors selling clothes wait for customers at a market in Rawalpindi. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Arabian fox basking in the sun



Bull fighting tradition

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‘THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA 2’ STARS REUNITE



US actress Meryl Streep, British actress Emily Blunt, US actor Stanley Tucci and US actress Anne Hathaway reprised their beloved roles for the sequel ‘The Devil Wears Prada 2’. — AFP

Two decades after *The Devil Wears Prada* became a modern US classic, its stars reunited in New York on Monday for the long-awaited sequel’s world premiere.

Meryl Streep, who returns as the tyrannical magazine editor Miranda Priestly, was joined on the red carpet by fellow A-listers Anne Hathaway, Emily Blunt and Stanley Tucci.

“It was like, why did it take so long?” Streep said when asked about stepping back into her fearsome character’s shoes.

Tucci agreed: “Yes, exactly. It was like riding a bicycle”.

The *Devil Wears Prada 2* sees a now well-established Andy Sachs (Hathaway) back at *Runway Magazine*, where Miranda Priestly (Streep) is navigating the decline of print media.

The veteran editor is forced to go head-to-head with her former, frantic assistant Emily Charlton (Blunt) — now a high-powered executive who controls

the advertising revenue that Priestly needs.

Kenneth Branagh joins the cast as Miranda’s newest husband, along with newcomers like Simone Ashley and Lucy Liu.

Naturally, fashion was front and centre at Monday’s premiere, where three-time Oscar winner Streep wore a red Givenchy outfit.

She said in an interview that all the clothes, jewelry, bags and shoes featured in “*The Devil Wears Prada 2*” are to be auctioned for the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Co-stars Hathaway and Blunt, who wore Louis Vuitton and Schiaparelli, respectively, credited fans for making the sequel happen.

“We’re literally here because of you, because you took us into your hearts and kept us there for 20 years and said, ‘we want more’. That’s why this whole dream has continued for us”, Hathaway said. — AFP

ARTISANS WEAVE MAGIC FOR ROYAL OPERA HOUSE



The royal cypher of Britain’s King Charles is pictured on one of two parts of the new London Royal Opera House stage curtains at the Gerriets workshop in Volgelsheim. — Reuters

INSIDE a studio at Hampton Court Palace, hand embroiderer Marg Dier works with quiet precision, stitching intricate fabric foliage around the cypher of King Charles III. The gleaming gold insignia she is crafting will soon adorn a new set of stage curtains at Royal Opera House, opening and closing performances in one of the world’s most prestigious cultural institutions.

Each stitch must be small, strong and exact. The curtains will be raised and lowered repeatedly, making durability as important as beauty. Dier, a senior embroiderer at the Royal School of Needlework, approaches the task with meticulous care. The school is renowned for its craftsmanship, with clients ranging from royal households to leading fashion houses.

The new curtains were commissioned by the Royal Ballet and Opera to replace the current set, which bears the cypher of Queen Elizabeth II. Those curtains have hung in the central London venue for 27 years, introducing more than 10,000 performances and becoming part of the theatre’s visual identity.

This latest project is once again a collaboration between the Royal School of Needlework and German stage engineering company Gerriets. While Gerriets is responsible for producing the deep red curtains themselves, the embroidery team is tasked with creating the ornate corner decorations. These feature Charles’ cypher — the letters “C” and “R”, his regnal number in Roman numerals and the Tudor crown.

Although parts of the design are completed using digital machine embroidery, much of the detail is finished by hand. The crown, in particular, receives elaborate embellishment, including carefully



Senior studio embroiderer Helen Stevens and Marg Dier hand-stitch the royal cypher of Britain’s King Charles for the new Royal Opera House stage curtains. — Reuters



stitched jewels, ermine detailing and a ruched red velvet cap that adds texture and depth.

Once completed, the embroidered panels are transported to Gerriets’ workshop in Volgelsheim, on the French-German border. There, seamstresses attach the cyphers to the curtains, which are made of mohair velour. Each curtain is constructed in two sections, measuring 9.75 metres wide with a drop of 10.8 metres. Designed as a swag opening curtain, the structure includes four layers, three of which serve as lining.

The finished curtains will be unveiled during the Spring Gala on May 14, marking the beginning of a new chapter for the historic venue. For those involved, the project represents both tradition and collaboration — a blend of heritage craftsmanship and modern engineering on a distinctly European scale. — Reuters

FEATURES



IDRIS AL BALUSHI & MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

AFTER the recent low-pressure system, Masarrat, brought generous rainfall to Muscat, a quiet valley behind the old Muscat Dam transformed into something extraordinary.

Wadi al Tuyan, a hiking trail tucked within the historic landscapes of Muscat's old city, suddenly became one of the most talked-about natural escapes in the Sultanate.

Once a familiar yet understated route in the Sidab area, the trail came alive with rushing waters that spilled from mountain springs, carving their way through winding rocks and rugged cliffs. The dam, which grew full to the brink, fed a revived wadi that flowed like a living canal through the valley, forming shimmering pools, scattered waterfalls, and a breathtaking cascade high in the mountains.

What makes the experience even more remarkable is its proximity to the city itself. Just minutes away from Muscat's urban core, the trail offers a rare escape where nature feels distant, yet is surprisingly close, making it an accessible retreat for spontaneous hikes and weekend explorations.

For many, the beauty came as a surprise.

Omani adventurer and content creator Dawood al Qurtoubi shared a video of the trail that quickly went viral, reaching nearly 150,000 views and sparking over 500 comments. Many viewers, including residents of Muttrah and Muscat, expressed disbelief at having never known such a place existed so close to

After the Masarrat rains, Wadi al Tuyan behind Muscat Dam has transformed into a vibrant natural escape, with flowing streams and cascading waterfalls. Just minutes from the city, it offers a rare blend of accessibility and wilderness, perfect for spontaneous hikes

MUSCAT'S FORGOTTEN TRAIL TURNS INTO A SCENIC HAVEN



home. The trail was soon featured across social media by hikers and creators eager to capture its unexpected beauty.

Hiking enthusiast Muhanad al Shabibi described it as a rare encounter with nature. "What struck me most about this particular trail is that you become completely surrounded by mountains in every direction, like a 360-degree embrace," he said. "There is a sense of calm and freedom. The trail is so enjoyable that you don't feel tired at all. When you reach the source of the wadi and hear the water flowing, you don't want to leave." Another visitor, Khattab al Battashi, echoed the sentiment after exploring the trail with friends.

"I never expected to find a hiking route this beautiful in the heart of Old Muscat. It felt like discovering a hidden side of a city that can be over-stimulating and fast at times. The mix of water, greenery, and quiet pools made it unforgettable." Even international hikers have joined the growing admiration. Adventurer Alka Apte Dhavale from India described it as one of Muttrah's best trails, praising the post-rain transformation and the abundance of waterfalls and natural pools along the 5-kilometre route.

What makes Wadi al Tuyan truly remarkable is its accessibility. The trail is suitable for beginners and families, offering an easy yet immersive experience where children and adults alike can walk between mountains, water, and stone.

Today, Wadi al Tuyan is no longer just a hidden path behind a dam. It has become a living reminder that even in the heart of a familiar city, nature still holds surprises waiting to be rediscovered.