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SAKA ENDS ARSENAL'S 20-YEAR WAIT TO REACH CL FINAL

AT THE BEHEST OF HM

SAYYID BILARAB TO LAUNCH GREATER MUSCAT PLAN



At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, will grace the launch ceremony of the Greater Muscat Structure Plan on Thursday. The event will take place at the Experience Centre Building in Sultan Haitham City, Wilayat of Al Seeb, Muscat Governorate. The plan stands as one of the most significant outputs of the national spatial strategy, serving as a primary driver of urban development at the national level and an enabler for achieving the targets set forth in Oman Vision 2040.

OMAN, NORWAY REVIEW BILATERAL RELATIONS



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the friendly Kingdom of Norway, on Wednesday. They reviewed cooperation relations between the two friendly countries and ways to foster and develop them in various fields to serve common interests. They also discussed a number of current regional and international developments, exchanging views on the importance of creating suitable conditions for de-escalation, intensifying efforts to reduce tensions, and supporting political and diplomatic solutions to preserve the region's security and stability, in accordance with international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. They also reviewed developments related to maritime security.

HM, Egypt President discuss regional developments



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt on Wednesday discussed ongoing regional developments and their political and economic ramifications. During a telephone conversation, the two leaders stressed the importance of intensifying political and diplomatic efforts to steer US-Iranian negotiations towards a resolution of the crisis, achieve de-escalation and ensure the security of maritime navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. This, they affirmed, would support the consolidation of international peace and security in accordance with the principles of international law. — ONA



Trump sees ‘very good chance’ of Iran deal

Iran says American plan and proposal are still under review

US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday he believed there was “a very good chance” of sealing a peace deal with Iran, but threatened to resume his bombardment of the country if negotiations fell apart. Despite the US leader’s optimism, Iran has yet to respond to a new US proposal, with its chief negotiator warning that Washington was seeking to force the Islamic republic’s “surrender”. Positive signs that the foes could return to the table after weeks of deadlock grew after Trump halted a short-lived military operation to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, citing hopes for a deal. Trump said on social media on Wednesday that if “Iran agrees to give what has been agreed to”, the war would be over, but if not, the bombing would resume “at a much higher level and intensity”. “I think it’s got a very good chance of ending, and if it doesn’t end, we have to go back to bombing the hell out



Women walk past a large banner depicting Iran's current supreme leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei and his predecessor and late father Ali Khamenei along a street in Tehran on Wednesday. — AFP

of them,” he later told the US broadcaster PBS. Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei told local media that the “US plan and proposal are still under review,” and that Tehran would convey its position to mediator Pakistan “after finalising its views”. Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran’s parliament speaker who has taken the lead in negotiations with the US, warned on Wednesday that Washington “is seeking, through a naval blockade, economic pressure and media manipulation, to destroy the country’s cohesion in order to force us to surrender”. Trump had said the day before that the US blockade of Iranian ports would remain in place as Tehran kept up its own chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz. But citing progress towards a deal, he said a new effort to reopen the vital trade route “will be paused for a short period of time to see whether or not the Agreement can be finalised”. SEE ALSO P6 & 7

14,000 pilgrims from Oman ready to perform Haj this year

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MAY 6

Over 42,000 Haj applications were submitted for the 1447 AH season, of which 14,000 were accepted based on approved eligibility standards. All accepted applicants have completed their travel requirements to the holy sites at a rate of 100 per cent, including 13,560 Omani pilgrims and 440 resident expatriates. The overall satisfaction rate for

the previous Haj season stood at 97 per cent, with the mission aspiring to improve upon this figure during the current season. This was stated by AAhmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and Head of the Omani Haj Mission for 1447 AH, during a media briefing on Wednesday. He said that the ministry’s approach in managing the Haj sector is grounded in a philosophy centred on enabling pilgrims to perform



All accepted applicants have completed their travel requirements to the holy sites.

this sacred rite in accordance with Prophetic tradition, thereby fulfilling the Sharia objectives of facilitation and the removal of hardship. He emphasised that the pilgrim remains the foremost priority across all services, with the highest standards of governance, quality, efficiency, and transparency upheld in full coordination with local and international partners. Regarding the development of air transport services, Haj mission

representatives said that an ‘Aviation Initiative’ is implemented which contributes to reducing airfares by approximately RO 40 compared to the previous season. This initiative also added Taif Airport as a destination for Omani pilgrims and made departures via Suhar Airport possible for interested companies. Al Rashdi said that updates had been made to the organisation of land transportation for pilgrims in accordance with the new regulations issued by Saudi Arabia.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

MEDIA EXCELLENCE
COMPETITION
FOSTERS
CREATIVITY



IBRAHIM BIN
SALIM AL SALMI

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information has affirmed that the Media Excellence Competition serves to enhance creative capabilities within the media sector and reinforces the role of national media as an active partner in

achieving Oman Vision 2040. The ministry began accepting applications for participation in the competition. The submission period continues until May 31.

Ibrahim bin Salim al Salmi, spokesperson for the Ministry of Information, stated in a press remark that the competition aims to highlight and empower national media talents, recognise their achievements, and establish a positive, competitive environment that stimulates creativity and encourages the production of high-quality media content aligned with the rapid developments taking place in the field.

He explained that the ministry has been committed to realising the competition's vision since its launch in 2004, focusing on identifying areas of success and showcasing content quality across the fields of print journalism, radio and television broadcasting, and digital media.

Al Salmi noted that a specialised committee will review all entries in accordance with the announced competition criteria, and that submitted works will be evaluated using rigorous media standards.

It is worth noting that the terms and conditions for the 2026 Media Excellence Competition, along with registration procedures, are available on the official media portal at the following link: <https://www.omaninfo.om/moi/mec-registration-form.php>

SEMINAR LOOKS
AT ENHANCING
NATIONAL IDENTITY



MUSCAT: Represented by Ghala Air Base and Sultan Qaboos Air Academy, the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) on Wednesday organised a seminar on the role of future-oriented skills in enhancing national identity.

The seminar, which took the theme 'Building capabilities with a solid Omani national identity', was held under the auspices of Brig Hamaad bin Saleh al Yahmadi, Director-General of Internal Audit at the Ministry of Defence.

The seminar saw the participation of academics, experts and specialists who elaborated on means of consolidating the national identity in the age of digital globalisation and in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. — ONA



STATE COUNCIL OFFICE DISCUSSES PROPOSALS

MUSCAT: The State Council Office held its fourth meeting of the third annual session of the 8th term on Wednesday, chaired by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council. During the meeting, the Office discussed the proposed draft of the 'Internal Regulations of the State Council' and the Legal Committee's opinion on the matter. The meeting also hosted the council's member Ahmed bin Saif al Rawahi to discuss the submitted proposal titled 'Towards More Comprehensive Evaluation Indicators for Economic Development in Light of Oman Vision 2040'.

Furthermore, the Office reviewed several reports submitted by the Council members regarding their participation in regional and international meetings and forums. — ONA

Oman showcases experience
in real estate development

THE SULTANATE of Oman showcased its experience in real estate development during its participation in the 5th edition of 'The Investor' conference held in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt.

'Oman-Egypt... Land of Opportunities' conference laid a milestone in the track of economic cooperation between the two countries. Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the Arab League, said, "The Omani experience in real estate development is based on the pillars of sustainability, quality of life and urban planning. This opens up channels for investment partnerships with Egyptian real estate developers." Al Rahbi pointed out that the real estate sector in the Sultanate of Oman serves as one of the most important drivers of growth due to its association with

The Omani experience in real estate development is based on the pillars of sustainability, quality of life and urban planning.



'The Investor' conference was in pursuance of the success story of a conference titled 'Oman-Egypt...Land of Opportunities'. - ONA

many economic sectors.

He explained that, in recent years, the real estate sector in Oman saw remarkable growth spearheaded by major strategic projects like Sultan Haitham City and waterfront projects. In addition, the real estate sector underwent an updating of

regulations and a streamlining of procedures, said Al Rahbi, noting that this enhanced the Omani market's attractiveness to investors.

Al Rahbi said that the second edition of the 'Oman-Egypt... Land of Opportunities' conference will be held in Muscat.

ECONOMY MINISTRY, WORLD BANK DISCUSS COOPERATION

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Economy held a meeting with a delegation from the World Bank, led by Wendy Werner, Country Manager of the World Bank Group for the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting, held at the ministry's headquarters, was attended by Sayyid Dr Munthir bin Hilal al Busaidy, Head of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit at the Ministry of Economy, to discuss ways of enhancing technical cooperation in several areas. The meeting discussed several topics of mutual interest,



The meeting discussed several topics of mutual interest, primarily exploring areas of cooperation. — ONA

primarily exploring areas of cooperation between the two sides, economic diversification efforts, and labour market

developments in the Sultanate of Oman.

The session also touched upon discussing mechanisms

for aligning initiatives to contribute to achieving mutual added value, alongside reviewing economic performance indicators achieved within the Tenth Five-Year Plan and the progress made in implementing programmes related to Oman Vision 2040.

At the conclusion of the meeting, both parties emphasised the importance of continuing technical coordination between them, agreeing to hold subsequent meetings to discuss operational aspects and develop frameworks for joint cooperation. — ONA

Meeting seeks to enhance integration of govt communication ecosystem

MUSCAT: The Government Communication Centre on Wednesday held its 31st meeting under the title 'From Monitoring to Decision-Making: How Monitoring and Analysis Enhance the Effectiveness of Government Communication', at a time when data streaming from digital platforms has become a critical element in shaping decisions and creating impact. The meeting was attended by representatives of the communication and media departments in government entities.

The meeting aimed to enhance the integration of efforts and establish more effective practices within the government communication ecosystem, with a focus on monitoring and analysis as a strategic tool that begins with identifying initial indicators and ends only when accurate



This meeting is part of the ongoing efforts to strengthen partnership among communication and media departments in government entities. — ONA

information reaches the decision-maker, thereby transforming insights into more informed decisions and more impactful messages.

Dr Yousef bin Salim al Hinai, Head of the Government Communication

and Performance Development Unit at the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers, affirmed that public opinion has today become an active element in shaping the landscape. What circulates on platforms and in the media is no

longer mere transient interaction, but rather genuine indicators that require systematic reading and in-depth analysis to support government decision-making, he affirmed.

He added that today's challenge no longer lies in the availability of data, but in the ability to understand it, analyse it, extract its implications and deploy it in a timely manner. This is where the transformation lies — moving from descriptive monitoring to interpretive analysis, to preemptive decision-making.

The meeting included a visual presentation on the 'Monitoring and Analysis Ecosystem', which focused on its role in enabling entities to rapidly verify information and counter rumours and misinformation by providing accurate facts in a timely manner, thereby enhancing societal

awareness and ensuring the delivery of reliable content that contributes to forming a correct public understanding.

The meeting also showcased successful government experiences in monitoring and analysis. Both the Ministry of Social Development and Oman Investment Authority presented their respective experiences, including the mechanisms they employ to address societal issues and leverage monitoring results to improve services and enhance communication with beneficiaries.

This reflects the importance of partnership among government institutions in exchanging expertise and enhancing integration, which contributes to benefiting from these experiences as inspiring models for developing the government work system and improving its efficiency.

SHORT TAKES



The meeting was chaired by Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information. — ONA

MEDIA COMMITTEE FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS HOLDS MEETING

MUSCAT: The Media Committee for the fourth term of the Municipal Council elections held its first meeting on Wednesday, chaired by Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Chairman of the Committee.

The meeting discussed several agenda items related to the Committee’s tasks, as well as the media plan to cover and highlight the elections in a manner that reflects their significance. Discussions also covered media readiness programmes across all platforms, including print, radio, television and digital media. — ONA

‘EASTERN MOUNTAIN OASIS’ PROJECT 50% COMPLETE



AL HAMRA: The completion rate of a project codenamed ‘Eastern Mountain Oasis’ in the Wilayat of Al Hamra, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, has reached approximately 50 per cent. Spanning an area of nearly 10,000 square metres, the project features various tourism and service facilities, including a 300-square-metre investment restaurant, an outdoor theatre and 13 sitting gazebos, in addition to prayer rooms, pedestrian walkways and open spaces.

The governorate is continuing urban development works in the Al Jabal Al Sharqi (Eastern Mountain) area of Al Hamra as part of its efforts to develop infrastructure and enhance service facilities. These efforts aim to keep pace with the growing tourism movement, which reaches its peak during the summer season. The mountain is considered one of the most promising natural destinations in the governorate due to its environmental and geographical features that attract visitors and tourism enthusiasts. — ONA

OMANI FARMER TURNS GUAVA CULTIVATION INTO SUCCESS STORY

NIZWA: A young entrepreneur from the Wilayat of Nizwa is proving that agricultural ambition can drive both economic contribution and food security. By converting local resources into a productive agribusiness, he is helping meet market demand while advancing self-sufficiency. Hamoud bin Thabit al Nabhani has transformed his deep interest in farming into a thriving guava production venture, now supplying local markets with high-quality fruit. According to Al Nabhani, the project began with a genuine



HAMOUD BIN THABIT AL NABHANI

passion for the land and a clear vision: not merely to experiment, but to build a sustainable source of income by making the most of the region’s favourable growing

conditions. The farm currently houses around 400 guava trees across two main varieties — Thai guava and dwarf Indian guava — chosen to diversify output and enhance fruit quality. Irrigation relies on the traditional ‘Al Haqqi’ falaj system, using flood irrigation methods that align with the land’s natural characteristics and ensure a consistent water supply. These efforts now yield up to 100 kilogrammes of guavas per day during the harvest season, a rapid return that underscores the viability

of investing in local agriculture. Al Nabhani credits the Directorate-General of Agriculture and Water Resources in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate for its continuing support, particularly in providing pest control solutions that have helped boost productivity and protect crops. He notes that the farm follows environmentally responsible practices, relying entirely on organic bio-fertilisers. This approach preserves the fruit’s natural flavour and high quality while strengthening its competitiveness in local markets. — ONA

Vocational education seeks to meet labour market needs

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 6

THE SULTANATE of Oman continues to strengthen its approach towards developing technical and vocational education as a key pillar in preparing national talent capable of keeping pace with rapid economic and technological transformations, while equipping the labour market with skills aligned with future demands and the requirements of emerging sectors. This direction reflects the country’s broader vision of building a knowledge-based and innovation-driven economy, as the technical and vocational education sector has witnessed notable expansion in recent years in terms of programmes, specialisations, and partnerships with both public and private sector institutions. Efforts have also focused on modernising curricula and linking education with practical applications and advanced technologies. Dr Khalifa bin Mohammed al Fatahi, Head of the Planning Department at the Ministry of Education, said there is a growing direction towards expanding technical and vocational education in line with labour market needs. He explained that specialists in technical and vocational education, in cooperation with the Implementation Support Unit at the Ministry of Economy, have developed targeted plans extending to 2030, with continued strategies through 2040, aimed at setting objectives that keep pace with future labour market developments and evolving economic demands. According to Dr Al Fatahi, the initiative reflects increasing awareness of the importance of equipping students with practical and technical skills that have become essential across many sectors, particularly amid the ongoing digital transformation and the expansion of industries related to artificial intelligence,



Technical and vocational education is increasingly viewed as one of the key drivers for achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and logistics services. Through these plans, Oman seeks to establish a more flexible and responsive education system capable of adapting to changing economic realities. Educational institutions are steadily updating academic programmes and introducing new specialisations aligned with the needs of promising industries, contributing to improved employment opportunities and enhancing the competencies of Omani graduates. Technical and vocational education is increasingly viewed as one of the key drivers for achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which places strong emphasis on human capital development and strengthening the competitiveness of the national economy. The sector also plays an important role in promoting the culture of vocational and technical work while encouraging young people to acquire

practical skills that enable them to enter the labour market directly or launch their own entrepreneurial ventures. Specialists believe that the accelerating global transformation of jobs requires greater focus on technical expertise and professional adaptability, particularly as some traditional jobs continue to disappear while new technology-driven professions emerge. This highlights the importance of investing early in technical and vocational education to ensure Omani youth remain competitive in both local and regional labour markets. Observers further note that the success of Oman’s expansion plans in technical and vocational education depends on sustained collaboration between educational institutions and the private sector to ensure programmes remain aligned with actual market demands, alongside raising public awareness of the importance of vocational pathways and reshaping outdated perceptions surrounding technical careers.

Science, innovation centre to benefit over 18,000 students

AL BURAIMI: Al Buraimi Science and Innovation Centre was inaugurated on Wednesday in Al Buraimi Governorate to the tune of RO 618,000, funded by OQ Refineries and Petroleum Industries. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education. The project spans an area exceeding 61,000 square metres and features an integrated system of educational and technical facilities. These include innovation and robotics laboratories, a planetarium, a mini-science museum, and an educational cinema, alongside specialised halls for scientific modelling and applied technology. The centre is expected to serve 54 public and private schools, as well as universities and colleges in Al Buraimi Governorate. It aims to benefit more than 18,000 students from public and private schools, colleges, and universities, in



Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibani, Minister of Education, graced the opening of the Al Buraimi Science and Innovation Centre. — ONA

addition to teaching, administrative, and technical staff, thereby fostering a learning environment that stimulates innovation. Furthermore, the centre offers advanced educational programmes, including scientific laboratories, innovation workshops and digital learning environments, while supporting student projects and implementing specialised scientific programmes and competitions to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The benefits of the centre extend

to supporting SMEs and stimulating the development of practical, innovative solutions, which contribute to providing quality job opportunities and enhancing economic diversification. The centre serves as a supportive platform for preparing national cadres capable of contributing to the knowledge economy, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Saif bin Hamad al Abdali, Director-General of Education in Al Buraimi Governorate, explained that the Al Buraimi Science and Innovation Centre is a qualitative addition to the educational system in the governorate. He noted that it provides an interactive learning environment that supports the development of student skills in science, technology, and innovation, helps link theoretical knowledge with practice, fosters a culture of research and exploration among youth, and builds future skills to support the

knowledge-based economy. Omar bin Mohammed al Abri, Director-General of Corporate Affairs at OQ Refineries and Petroleum Industries, emphasised the significance of the project, stating that the establishment of the Al Buraimi Science and Innovation Centre embodies the company’s commitment to supporting innovation and enhancing the educational process. He added that it represents a practical extension of OQ Group’s social investment strategy aimed at empowering education and youth, and building capacities in the fields of science, technology, and entrepreneurship. He further noted that the centre focuses on providing a stimulating educational and applied environment that contributes to transforming ideas into value-added initiatives and projects for society, reinforcing the transition towards an economy based on knowledge and innovation. — ONA

THE HEAT IS ON

In terms of economic and productivity impacts, heat stress has direct repercussions on the economy and the labour market. More than 2.4 billion workers worldwide are affected, particularly in manual labour sectors.

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 6

WITH the increasing severity of climate change and rising global temperatures, heat stress has become one of the most prominent challenges facing workers' health and productivity, especially in sectors that require work in an open environment, such as construction and agriculture.

The implementation of midday work bans is a preventative measure to reduce these risks and protect the workforce. The Ministry of Labour has imposed a ban on outdoor work during the months of June, July, and August, from 12.30pm to 3.30pm, requiring establishments to obtain the

necessary permits to avoid violations. Fines for non-compliance can reach RO 1,000, as part of efforts to enhance occupational safety.

Recent studies indicate that heat stress poses a significant health risk, causing more than half a million deaths annually due to heat and dehydration, potentially exposing nearly one billion people to dangerous heat levels in the future, and leading to almost one death every minute globally due to high temperatures.

The health effects of heatstroke and heat stress include severe dehydration, kidney dysfunction, and chronic neurological problems. These effects are more severe for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, workers with low physical fitness, and those with

chronic illnesses.

In terms of economic and productivity impacts, heat stress has direct repercussions on the economy and the labour market. More than 2.4 billion workers worldwide are affected, particularly in manual labour sectors. Climate change indicators suggest that 2025 will be among the hottest years on record. The average global temperature has risen by 1.42°C compared to pre-industrial levels, and temperatures exceeding 40–50°C are becoming more common in many regions.

Workers in outdoor environments are among the most vulnerable, along with the elderly, children, low-income individuals, and those with chronic illnesses. To mitigate the risks of heat stress, international and local organisations recommend: developing occupational health policies tailored to the nature of the work and the climate, and strictly enforcing bans on work during peak heat hours. Recent reports confirm that heat stress is no longer a passing condition, but a genuine occupational hazard that can lead to serious complications, including heatstroke, dehydration, kidney dysfunction, and in some cases, even death. Data also indicates that new workers and those unaccustomed to high temperatures are the most vulnerable, especially during their first few days on the job.

Heat stress results from a combination of factors, including high temperatures

and humidity, intense physical exertion, direct sun exposure, poor ventilation, and insufficient fluid intake.

This negatively impacts not only physical health but also mental performance, leading to decreased concentration and an increased risk of workplace accidents.

In this context, relevant authorities have emphasised the importance of adhering to preventive measures, most notably enforcing the midday work ban in open areas, as one of the most crucial steps to protect workers from the dangers of extreme heat. They have also stressed the need to provide a safe working environment that includes adequate rest periods, drinking water, and educating workers on how to recognise and manage the symptoms of heat stress.

Heat stress poses a growing health and economic challenge in the context of climate change, and is no longer confined to specific regions but has become a global phenomenon.

Adhering to preventive measures, most importantly banning work during the midday hours, is essential to protecting workers' health and ensuring continued productivity.

Mitigating the effects of heat stress requires collaborative efforts between governments, employers, and workers, along with the urgent need to implement preventive policies to guarantee a safe and healthy working environment during summer months.

The Ministry of Labour has imposed a ban on outdoor work during the months of June, July, and August, from 12.30pm to 3.30pm.

FINES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE CAN REACH

1,000

SHORT TAKES



Pasture project to support environmental sustainability

RAKHYOUT: The Directorate-General of Environment in Dhofar Governorate held an introductory meeting on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Rakhyout to present a new initiative aimed at strengthening natural resource and ecosystem management under the 'Pasture Restoration Project'. The effort is part of broader moves to support environmental sustainability and advance long-term development goals.

The gathering brought together the walis of Rakhyout and Dhalkout, members of both the Majlis Ash'shura and the Municipal Council, as well as shaikhs and community figures from the two wilayats. An international team from the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) also participated. The meeting falls under ongoing collaboration between the Environment Authority and GGGI to improve ecosystem and natural resource management. — ONA

Khoula Hospital introduces advanced cochlear implant surgery

GHALIA AL DHUKRI
MUSCAT, MAY 6

The Day Care Unit at Khoula Hospital has commenced cochlear implant surgeries in accordance with the latest international medical practices.

Cochlear implantation is an advanced medical procedure for treating severe to profound hearing loss.

The technology relies on a precise electronic device that is surgically implanted to directly stimulate the auditory nerve, enabling the patient to regain auditory.

The introduction of cochlear implant surgery is part of the hospital's ongoing development of its healthcare infrastructure and enhanced capacity to provide precise surgical interventions without the need for extended hospitalisation, with patients discharged



The introduction of cochlear implant surgery comes as part of the hospital's development of its healthcare infrastructure.

on the same day and receiving comprehensive post-operative auditory rehabilitation and follow-up programmes.

Mohammed bin Abdullah al Rahbi, Senior Consultant in Ear, Nose and Throat Surgery, said that the ear surgery team of the Ear, Nose and Throat Department

at Al Nahdha Hospital has been performing ear surgeries in the day clinic section at Khoula Hospital over the past few months. Approximately 70 surgeries were performed during the past two months, including tympanoplasty, stapes replacement and correction of the ossicles.

A cochlear implant surgery was also performed for a child suffering from severe hearing loss in both ears. The operation took about an hour and a half, during which the device was also examined, and the necessary X-rays were taken to ensure that it was positioned correctly.

Dhamani advances digital health insurance with 11.2m transactions

MUSCAT: Dhamani, Oman's national health insurance platform, has become a key driver of digital transformation in the financial services sector, reshaping the health insurance ecosystem through a fully integrated model that enhances efficiency and improves service quality. Since its launch in January 2025, the platform has delivered strong results, processing over 11.2 million digital transactions and over 3.3 million insurance claims. The platform has also processed payments exceeding RO 59 million, reflecting faster processes and a clear shift away from paper-based transactions.

Dhamani functions as a comprehensive national platform that connects all stakeholders within the health insurance ecosystem. It supports the delivery of high-quality healthcare services, reduces pricing inconsistencies and strengthens transparency across procedures. The platform also accelerates transaction processing and improves the overall beneficiary experience. In addition, it contributes to building a unified medical record for insured individuals, supporting more effective medical and insurance decision-making.

It has reinforced governance and regulatory oversight across the sector

by reducing fraud and misuse while providing accurate data that enables regulators to monitor performance. It has also helped lower operational costs for insurance companies and healthcare providers and has encouraged innovation by enabling local technology firms to develop solutions that support the platform.

This digital change has contributed to positive growth across the health insurance sector. Total premiums reached approximately RO 119.7 million, while claims paid exceeded RO 95 million, shedding light on the sector's growing role in financing healthcare.

SQU ADVANCES STUDENT CENTRED DEVELOPMENT

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, MAY 6

SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY (SQU) reaffirmed its commitment to advancing its infrastructure and enhancing the educational environment through a series of completed, ongoing, and future development projects aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, recently stated that the university made significant progress in 2025 by completing and equipping a virtual reality laboratory, alongside the development of active learning classrooms across six colleges.

An active learning laboratory equipped with thirty-three 3D computers was also established, in addition to a food innovation laboratory and the upgrade of the animal laboratory.

Sayyid Dr Fahd said that SQU also developed meeting and study spaces within the main library, upgraded sports facilities and established business incubators,



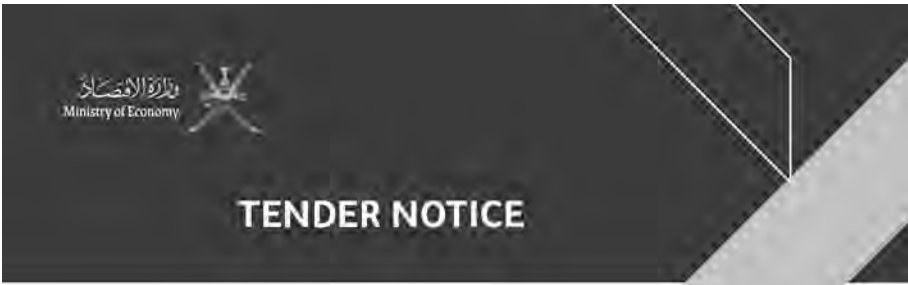
Sayyid Dr Fahd said that SQU also developed meeting and study spaces within the main library.

all aimed at fostering an interactive and innovation-driven academic environment. Several halls and facilities were also renovated to further support productivity and institutional excellence.

In terms of ongoing projects, the university is currently implementing a number of initiatives that address various academic and operational needs. These include the construction of a new College of Law building, the establishment of a ground station for receiving satellite imagery for

research purposes, new laboratories and facilities for the College of Engineering, particularly in the field of drones, and the expansion of the College of Nursing. Additional efforts include the renovation of female student housing facilities and the construction of a new administrative building for staff.

Looking ahead, SQU is pursuing a range of strategic projects designed to elevate the quality of campus life and academic delivery. These include the development of a student residential city for male students in partnership with the private sector, as well as a new housing complex for female students with a capacity exceeding 700 residents. The university's future vision also encompasses the establishment of an Emerging Technologies Unit, a research centre complex, a veterinary clinic, and new facilities for the earthquake monitoring centre. Dr Nasser bin Musabab al Zaidi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Administrative and Financial Affairs, highlighted that the male student residential city project is designed to accommodate up to 6,000 students upon completion, with the first phase expected to house 2,000 students.



The Ministry of Economy
Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees In Omani Riyals	Last Date For Tender Submission
1/2026	Cloud Computing Services for Ministry of Economy	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	15/6/2026

- First** All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the project, Tender and Local Content Authority from the following website: www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
- The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.
- Second** Bidding companies must be certified by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in the field of cloud services and hosting.
- Third** Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.
- Fourth** For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phon

etenderhd@mtc.gov.om
96824402200

وزارة الصحة
Ministry of Health

Announcement

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tender:-

Tender Ref:	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 02:00 pm Thursday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
17/2/2026/ MOH/ NIZH-14	Rectification & Strengthening Works of Tunnel Roof Slab at Nizwa Hospital	27/May/2026	18/June/2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25,000 Per set R.O 10,000 for SME

- Tenders should be submitted on line on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200, Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

IRAN SEEKS CHINA'S SUPPORT <i>Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said that Tehran was looking forward to China's support for a "new post-war" regional framework.</i>	US PAUSES HORMUZ ESCORTS <i>President Donald Trump said that he was halting the US military operation to escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz</i>	RUBIO, LAVROV TALK IRAN, UKRAINE <i>US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke by telephone with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov about the Middle East war and the Ukraine conflict.</i>
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MIDDLE EAST
SPIRALLING
COURSE OF
EVENTS

US PROPOSAL
'UNDER REVIEW'

Iran foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaet said on Wednesday that a US proposal to end the war is still "under review" by Tehran.

TRUMP ISSUES
ULTIMATUM

President Donald Trump issued an ultimatum on Wednesday for Iran to accept a deal to end the war or face intense renewed US bombing.

OIL PRICES
SLIDE

Oil prices fell on Wednesday, with West Texas Intermediate briefly dipping below \$100 a barrel, extending losses from Tuesday.

ISRAEL ISSUES
WARNING

Israel's military issued an evacuation warning for a dozen villages in south Lebanon ahead of expected strikes, despite a truce with Lebanon.

US DEMANDS
ACTION FROM
IRAQ PM

The United States is looking for "concrete actions" by Iraq's next prime minister to distance the state from pro-Iran armed groups.

POPE REPEATS
OPPOSITION TO
NUKES

Pope Leo XIV has reiterated his rejection: "For years, the Church has spoken out against all nuclear weapons, so there is no doubt on that point".

EVACUATION
WARNING IN
LEBANON

The Israeli military issued an urgent warning to residents of 12 towns and villages in southern Lebanon, including some north of the Litani River.



People walk on a street in Tehran, Iran. — Reuters

US President Donald Trump threatened Iran on Wednesday with renewed bombing if it did not agree to a peace deal, piling on pressure after he abandoned an effort to reopen the Strait of Hormuz citing hopes for a breakthrough. Positive signs that the foes could return to negotiations after weeks of deadlock grew after Trump halted his so-called "Project Freedom" in the strait, with key mediator Pakistan expressing optimism for talks leading to an agreement.

"Assuming Iran agrees to give what has been agreed to... the already legendary Epic Fury will be at an end, and the highly effective Blockade will allow the Hormuz Strait to be OPEN TO ALL, including

TRUMP PRESSURES IRAN FOR PEACE DEAL

POSITIVE SIGNS THAT THE FOES COULD RETURN TO NEGOTIATIONS AFTER WEEKS OF DEADLOCK GREW AFTER TRUMP HALTED HIS SO-CALLED "PROJECT FREEDOM" IN THE STRAIT, WITH KEY MEDIATOR PAKISTAN EXPRESSING OPTIMISM FOR TALKS LEADING TO AN AGREEMENT

Iran," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform, using the name for the US campaign against the Islamic republic. But he said that if a deal was not sealed, US strikes would resume "at a much higher level and intensity than it was before." Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaet told local media that the "US plan and proposal are still under review," and that Tehran would convey its position to Pakistan "after finalising its views."

The US leader issued the warning after earlier posting that "Great Progress has been made toward a Complete and Final Agreement" with Tehran, without providing further details. "Project Freedom... will be paused for a short period of time to see whether or not the Agreement can be finalised and signed," he added. He said the US blockade of Iranian ports, however, would remain in place as Tehran kept up its own closure of the vital trade route in response to the US-Israeli campaign that began on February 28, rattling markets and spiking fuel prices.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, a key figure in initial talks held in Islamabad last month, was optimistic that Trump's "courageous leadership and timely announcement" could foster a deal. "We are very hopeful that the current momentum will lead to a lasting agreement that secures durable peace and stability for the region and beyond," he said on X. Washington is now confident that it is close to reaching a deal with Iran to reopen the crucial waterway and halt the conflict, US news outlet Axios reported on Wednesday, citing two US officials. It said both sides were close to agreeing on a "one-page memorandum of understanding to end the war."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio had called on Beijing to put pressure on Araghchi to end the blockade of the crucial waterway. Trump's more conciliatory tone came hours after Rubio said the US had completed its offensive operations against Iran. Investors welcomed those remarks and the decision to pause the US effort to guide ships through the strait, with international oil benchmark Brent and West Texas Intermediate both tumbling below \$100 a barrel as stock markets rallied.

But in Tehran one resident told Paris-based journalists that the prospect of any deal with the current government was "terrifying". "We've gone through so much hardship and suffering, and no achievements for people," said translator Azadeh, 43. "I honestly just hope they finish this regime."

Meanwhile, with the situation still in flux, "the psychological pressure is intense," she added.

Despite Rubio's announcement of the end of "Operation Epic Fury", the standoff in the vital waterway has led to claims of attacks by both sides. Iran fired missiles and drones at US forces and UAE territory on Monday, while Washington said it struck six Iranian boats it accused of threatening commercial shipping. It was the sharpest escalation since a truce took effect on April 8.

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth said Washington was "not looking for a fight" over the waterway, while warning that any more attacks would be met with a "devastating response." Washington and Gulf countries have drafted a UN Security Council resolution demanding Tehran halt attacks, disclose mine locations and end efforts to charge tolls, Rubio said, with a vote expected in the coming days. — AFP

TRANSITING CHALLENGE

French shipping firm says vessel attacked



French shipping company CMA CGM said one of its vessels had been hit by an attack in the Strait of Hormuz. "The CMA CGM San Antonio was the target of an attack while transiting the Strait of Hormuz, resulting in injuries among crew members and damage to the vessel," the shipping firm said, adding those injured had been evacuated for treatment. President Emmanuel Macron said France was "in no way the target", according to government spokeswoman Maud Bregeon. The Maltese-flagged vessel was not sailing under a French flag and was manned by a Philippine crew. — AFP

BOOSTING CAPABILITIES

UAE to develop defence industrial free zone



The United Arab Emirates will develop a defence industrial Free Zone in Al Salmiyah in Abu Dhabi, UAE Tawazun Council for Defence Enablement and AD Ports Group announced on Wednesday, according to the state news agency. The zone aims to attract major global equipment manufacturers to support defence manufacturing localisation and boost the UAE's long-term defence readiness. Tawazun will develop regulatory frameworks, grant licenses and oversee industrial compliance for the project. AD Ports will lead master planning, land use design and infrastructure development as strategic partner. — Reuters

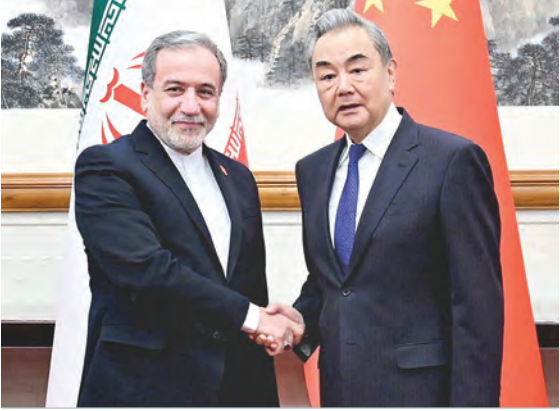
AVIATION DISRUPTION

German Lufthansa warns of hefty fuel cost hit



German airline giant Lufthansa said its 2026 fuel bill would be 1.7 billion euros higher than previously thought due to the Iran war, and it was preparing for potential shortages. The warning is the latest sign of the fallout for global aviation from the conflict, which has sent jet fuel costs surging due to the near total closure of the Strait of Hormuz. This was "driven almost entirely by the price escalation since the start of the war in Iran, and this clearly makes fuel the single most relevant cost headwind for the remainder of the year," said Lufthansa finance chief Till Streichert. — AFP

CHINA WOULD PLAY 'GREATER ROLE' IN ENDING FIGHTING



BEIJING: China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Beijing would play a "greater role" in ending hostilities in the Middle East during talks with his Iranian counterpart on Wednesday, a week before US President Donald Trump is due to meet Xi Jinping. China is a key customer for Iranian oil, defying sanctions imposed by the United States, and is directly affected by the blockage of the Strait of Hormuz bordered by Iran. Beijing has quietly engaged in efforts to resolve the weeks-long crisis and its diplomacy is credited with playing an important role in the fragile ceasefire agreed between Washington and Tehran.

China "will work harder to ease tensions and end the fighting, continue to support the launch of peace talks, and play a greater role in restoring peace and tranquility to the Middle East", Wang told Iran's Abbas Araghchi in Beijing. "China considers that a complete cessation of fighting must be achieved without delay, that it is even more unacceptable to restart hostilities, and that continuing to negotiate remains essential," Wang said, according to a statement from his ministry after the talks.

The Wang-Araghchi talks came as Trump said the US would pause escorting commercial ships through the Hormuz Strait — which drew Iranian attacks — barely a day after it began doing so. Trump cited a desire to reach a peace deal with Iran. — Reuters

FRANCE CARRIER PRE-POSITIONS FOR POSSIBLE HORMUZ MISSION



PARIS: France's aircraft carrier the Charles de Gaulle was on Wednesday heading towards the southern Red Sea to pre-position for a possible mission to restore navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, the presidency and defence ministry said. President Emmanuel Macron's office said the move was intended to send "a signal that not only are we ready to secure the Strait of Hormuz but that we are also capable of doing so". The flagship of the French Navy and its escorts was transiting the Suez Canal en route to the southern Red Sea. The decision was intended "to reduce the time needed to implement this initiative as soon as circumstances allow". — AFP

Israeli strikes on Lebanon kill 4 despite ceasefire



BEIRUT: An Israeli strike in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa valley killed four people on Wednesday, while the Israeli army said it struck Hezbollah targets in the south, after warning residents of a dozen towns to evacuate. Israel and Hezbollah have been trading accusations of violating the ceasefire agreement in force since April 17. Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for several operations targeting Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, as well as attacks on northern Israel.

An Israeli air strike on the town of Zellaaya, in the West Bekaa region, left at least four people dead, including two women and an elderly man, the Lebanese health ministry said. Lebanese state media said the attack struck the house of the town's mayor, killing him and three members of his family. The town was hit shortly before the Israeli army issued an evacuation warning that included Zellaaya, along with 11 towns and villages in southern Lebanon, most of them north of the Litani River and outside the area occupied by Israeli soldiers.

The Israeli army later announced in a brief statement that it had "begun striking Hezbollah infrastructure sites in several areas in Lebanon" and renewed its evacuation warning. Israel carried out air strikes and artillery bombardment on a number of towns, including several whose residents had been warned to evacuate. One of the strikes hit the town of Yohmor al-Shaqeef in the Nabatieh district.

Photos showed a cloud of smoke rising behind the town's historic Beaufort Castle, which Israeli forces used as a base during their two-decade occupation of southern Lebanon ending in 2000. State media reported a series of air strikes in the south, including a targeted strike on a car and "significant damage" to homes and infrastructure. Hezbollah, for its part, announced in a series of statements that it had targeted Israeli forces and vehicles

Israeli warplanes launched a strike" in Kfar Tibnit, one of the locations included in the warning, the state-run National News Agency said, adding that there were reports of casualties. Under the terms of the ceasefire, Israel reserves the right to act against "planned, imminent or ongoing attacks"

in a number of border towns in southern Lebanon. It said the attacks were in response to "the Israeli enemy's violation of the ceasefire".

Separately, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Tuesday that peace between Israel and Lebanon was achievable but that Hezbollah was a problem. "By and large, I think a peace deal between Lebanon and Israel is imminently achievable, and should be," Rubio told reporters at the White House. "The problem with Israel and Lebanon is not Israel or Lebanon, it's Hezbollah," he added.

Lebanon's government wants a permanent deal with US ally Israel that would end a repeated cycle of Israeli invasions and strikes, while

stopping short of saying it wants a peace agreement. Israel says any deal must permanently disarm Hezbollah. "What has to happen in Lebanon, what everybody wants to see, is that you have a Lebanese government with the capability to go after Hezbollah and take Hezbollah apart," Rubio said.

Israel intensified air attacks on Lebanon after Hezbollah fired missiles at Israel on March 2, three days into the US-Israeli war on Iran. Israel, thereafter, widened a ground invasion into Lebanon's south. Israeli strikes in Lebanon have killed more than 2,700 people since March 2, including dozens since the April 17 ceasefire brokered by Washington. — Agencies

Beyond the false choice of climate and growth



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

FOR the third time in 50 years, an energy crisis in the Gulf is being used as evidence for opposite arguments. One side says the war proves we cannot afford the transition. The other side says it proves we cannot afford anything else. I spent this week in Milan watching a generation of young diplomats decide which side was correct, in real time.

Somewhere between the forum halls, a cappuccino, and preparing for my flight back to Muscat, I read the latest news from IRENA. Round the clock renewables, meaning solar and wind paired with battery storage, are increasingly able to compete with new coal and gas in many regions. The finding felt less like a surprise than a confirmation of what markets, tenders, and power systems have been signalling for some time. The old debate asked whether renewables could be reliable. The new debate is whether institutions can redesign themselves around the fact that, increasingly, they can.

The mistake is that we keep speaking about the energy transition as one story moving at one speed, when it is two structural shifts happening at once. One has already crossed into delivery, with cheaper renewable power, storage, electrification, and changing industrial economics. The other remains

harder, especially for the parts of industry, transport, and storage that still need policy, finance, demand, infrastructure, and patience.

The sharper question is what this means for the Global South. For too long, climate action has been framed as something added after growth, or as a constraint placed on countries still building roads, industries, housing, schools and jobs. In many places, this framing is collapsing. Projects are now being funded for cheaper power, increasing competitiveness and growth, climate resilience, energy security, and employment at once.

Take the example of Morocco where solar is the cheapest way to generate power and support industrial growth where this is now the development pathway. Oman is signing some of the world's lowest solar tariffs while building the wider conditions for renewable energy and future industries. The same pattern is visible in Vietnam, Brazil, India, and parts of Africa, where the transition is gaining traction because it can deliver growth, jobs, investment, and resilience together. The old question asked whether development should come before climate. The evidence is increasingly showing that the strongest development pathways are already climate pathways.

For too long, climate action has been framed as something added after growth, or as a constraint placed on countries still building roads, industries, housing, schools and jobs

This is where nexus thinking becomes essential. In the water, energy, and food conversation, the logic is already clear. Energy cannot be planned without water. Water cannot be moved without energy. Food cannot be grown without both. A decision that strengthens one system while weakening the others simply prepares the next crisis in advance.

The same discipline now needs to shape how we speak about climate, development, and security, especially when we discuss a just energy transition. A transition can lower emissions and still fail people if it does not protect jobs, water, food systems, affordability and stability. Every project, funding mechanism, strategy, and partnership should be tested against all three from the start. Does it reduce climate risk? Does it protect development gains? Does it lower exposure to fragility or conflict?

This is the work institutions globally have been too slow to do. They have built climate, development, and security as separate files, while the energy transition is proving that the future will be shaped by their convergence. Until institutions are designed to see the integration from the start, we will keep responding to the same crisis three times, late, in three different rooms.

WHAT IS HANTAVIRUS THAT KILLED THREE CRUISE SHIP PASSENGERS?

JENNIFER RIGBY

Three people have died in an outbreak of hantavirus on a luxury cruise ship, with another five confirmed or suspected cases.

What exactly is hantavirus, and what are the implications of its spread for global public health?

Hantaviruses are rodent-borne viruses that can infect people and cause illness. The World Health Organization estimates there are 10,000 to 100,000 human cases globally each year, with severity varying by strain.

Hantavirus spreads primarily through rodents, infecting people via contact with rats or mice, or their urine, droppings, or saliva - often when the virus becomes airborne during cleaning of infested areas. Less commonly, it spreads through contaminated surfaces.

The Andes strain of hantavirus, found largely in Argentina and Chile, is the only known variant that can spread through close, prolonged human-to-human contact. The WHO confirmed on Wednesday that the outbreak on the cruise ship is the Andes hantavirus.

Hantaviruses common in different parts of the world cause different symptoms or diseases - and some cause none at all.

Symptoms typically begin one to eight weeks after exposure and may include fever, muscle aches and gastrointestinal issues, according to the WHO.

In Europe and Asia, hantaviruses have been known to cause haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome, which mainly affects the kidneys and blood vessels.

In the Americas, infection can cause hantavirus cardiopulmonary syndrome, which progresses quickly and leads to fluid buildup in the lungs along with heart complications.

Fatality rates from hantavirus cardiopulmonary syndrome are up to 50 per cent, the WHO says, compared to 1-15 per cent from the infections common in Asia and Europe.

There is no specific treatment for infection from hantavirus, so current therapy focuses on supportive care, including rest and fluids. Patients may need breathing support such as a ventilator.

Prevention focuses on limiting contact with rodents through measures like keeping areas and surfaces clean.

During outbreaks, contact tracing can give others potentially exposed to the virus earlier access to hospital care, improving outcomes and preventing further spread. — Reuters

Just say no to escalation of conflict, America

WHEN kings joke, they are rarely just joking. History shows that royal humour often carries a signal, sometimes subtle, sometimes sharp, meant for those paying attention.

During a recent exchange in the United States, King Charles III joked, “If it wasn’t for us, you’d be speaking French,” responding to remarks by Donald Trump suggesting that without American intervention in World War II, Europe would be speaking German. Beyond the laughter, the exchange reflects a deeper unease in transatlantic relations: A growing perception that historical alliances are being reframed in ways that diminish shared sacrifice. Against this backdrop, the King’s remark can be read less as humour and more as a reminder: Alliances are sustained by respect, not revisionism.

A similar tone emerged in the rare US media appearance of Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, who emphasised that “a deal is within our reach” in ongoing regional diplomacy, in a Face the Nation interview on CBS News. Oman has long positioned itself as a mediator, particularly in US-Iran negotiations hosted in Muscat. His message was measured but clear, escalation is avoidable, and diplomacy remains viable.

Yet the question remains: How are such signals received in Washington DC? The challenge is not a lack of information. It is a political environment shaped by polarisation, where foreign policy is increasingly influenced by domestic narratives. According to the Pew Research Center, American public opinion on foreign conflicts has become sharply divided along partisan lines. At the same time, US military commitments remain



King Charles III and President Donald Trump at the State Dinner at the White House in Washington DC. — Reuters file photo



KHALID
AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

extensive, with over 750 military bases in more than 80 countries, reflecting a global posture that is both powerful and costly.

Economically, the stakes are equally high. The United States allocates trillions of dollars annually to defence directly and indirectly, the largest military budget in the world. Meanwhile, global instability, from Ukraine to Gaza to tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, continues to disrupt energy markets and trade flows. The World Bank estimates that every 10 per cent increase in oil prices can raise global inflation by up to 0.4 percentage points, disproportionately affecting import-dependent regions.

In this context, calls for restraint are not ideological, they are pragmatic. The analogy often drawn is one of addiction: Not to substances, but to compounding the constant escalation of the racist Apartheid Zionism, led by convicted extortionist war criminals. Nations, like individuals, can become accustomed to cycles of confrontation, mistaking short-term dominance for long-term security. Breaking that cycle requires

something politically difficult, strategic intervention from those who care and restraint, similar to the campaign during Raegan Administration “Just Say No” to drugs. History offers lessons. The United States has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for self-correction. Its constitutional system of checks and balances, refined over nearly 250 years, has weathered civil war, economic depression, and global conflict. The question today is whether that system can once again recalibrate in the face of mounting global tensions. From a personal perspective, this is not an abstract question. Based on living in the most beautiful Mountain State with wonderful friends and colleagues as a political science student, working for some of the brightest minds in the State Department as an analyst, then learning about how checks and balances actually worked on the Congress floor as a Legislative Fellow for a Manhattan Congressman, I still pray that there are reasonable cooler heads in the US who will choose to fight for deescalation the right to a decent life for us and for future generations.

Oman’s own history offers a useful perspective. For over 5,000 years, Oman has navigated complex geopolitical landscapes, trading with ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, engaging with Persian empires, resisting a number of Umayyad, Abbasid and Ilkhanid Governors, expelling fanatic colonial powers such as the Portuguese, and later building pragmatic alliances, including with Britain. This legacy is not one of isolation, but of calibrated engagement, knowing when to align, when to resist, and when to mediate. So, no extortionate intimidation or Divide & Conquer games will affect Oman’s resilience. Just say no to escalation.

Ted Turner, an outspoken founder of CNN, dies at 87



BILL TROTT

The writer is editor at Thomson Reuters, Americas Desk, and obituary specialist

TED TURNER, the brash sportsman and entrepreneur whose ambition and instincts led to a media empire that included the groundbreaking news network CNN, has died, CNN reported on Wednesday, citing a press release from Turner Enterprises. He was 87.

No cause of death was given. In September 2018, Turner revealed that he had Lewy body dementia, a degenerative nerve disease.

One nickname was not enough for a personality as roguish and bold as Turner’s. He was known variously as the “Mouth of the South,” “Captain Outrageous,” and “Terrible Ted.”

He became a billionaire by taking over his father’s billboard business, buying a television station in 1970, and parlaying that into what would become a vast, ground-breaking television group.

Turner became one of the most powerful figures in US media and entertainment, his networks specialising in news, sports, re-runs, and old movies. But he did not stop there. He added the MGM/UA movie studio to his portfolio before making an even bigger move - merging his Turner Broadcasting System with Time Warner in 1996.

Turner headed the new company’s cable networks division and was its leading shareholder, but he had trouble fitting into a corporate system after decades of free-wheeling as his own boss. He eventually lost control of his networks.

Turner also became one of the world’s leading environmentalists, one of the largest

landowners in the United States, and a major philanthropist, giving \$1 billion to the United Nations.

With a slender moustache, gap-toothed grin, dimpled chin and mischievous glint in his eye, Turner pursued a range of passions. In the 1970s, he owned the Atlanta Braves baseball team and the Atlanta Hawks of the National Basketball Association and skipped his yacht, the Courageous, to the America’s Cup.

In 1986, he started the Goodwill Games, an Olympic-like competition, and two years later bought a wrestling organisation that provided more TV content. His concerns about nuclear war led him to co-found the Nuclear Threat Initiative in 2001.

Forbes estimates Turner’s fortune at \$2.8 billion.

“If I only had a little humility, I’d be perfect,” he once said.

Robert Edward Turner III was born in Cincinnati on November 19, 1938, moving to the South with his family when he was 9. He was sent to military schools where he became a champion debater and yachtsman.

He enrolled at Brown University in Rhode Island and angered his father by studying the classics rather than business.

He joined his family’s advertising company in Savannah, Georgia, selling space on billboards.

The business was sold to pay debts but after a family debate in which Turner was victorious, he repurchased the firm and made it successful. In 1970, against the counsel of

Turner became one of the most powerful figures in US media and entertainment, his networks specialising in news, sports, re-runs, and old movies

advisers, he bought a failing Atlanta UHF television station, now called WTBS, for \$2.5 million.

After a rocky start, Turner eventually made the station profitable with low-cost 24-hour programming. The station’s fortunes rose in 1976 after a federal ruling that cable television systems could use satellite signals for programming. By being a satellite pioneer, Turner helped WTBS become the first “superstation,” with programming picked up by local cable systems across the country.

In 1980, he started CNN in Atlanta, which he said would counter “sleazy” coverage by the major networks CBS, NBC and ABC. Offering low pay but the lure of adventure, Turner signed up journalists and technical crew who endured ridicule that the “Chicken Noodle Network” would fail. Instead, as the first 24-hour news outlet, it set a template for worldwide news coverage of wars, trials, revolutions and manmade and natural disasters.

“Barring satellite problems, we won’t be signing off until the world ends,” Turner said in a 2013 CNN interview. In 2018, in the middle of President Donald Trump’s stormy first term, Turner said in an interview that he rarely watched the network he had founded any more, saying that it focused too much on politics. As a “televisionary,” Turner was named Man of the Year in 1991 by Time magazine for “influencing the dynamic of events and turning viewers in 150 countries into instant witnesses of history.”

RUBIO RISING? DUEL WITH VANCE FOR 2028 HEATS UP

DANNY KEMP

It was the perfect split-screen for the race to succeed Donald Trump - so long as your name is Marco Rubio and not J D Vance.

In a packed White House briefing room, journalists shouted over each other in a bid to get a question from the US secretary of state.

At the same time, Vice-President Vance - Rubio’s most likely rival for the 2028 Republican presidential nomination - was hundreds of miles away from the action at a political fundraiser in Oklahoma. “Guys, this is chaos,” said Rubio as reporters desperately waved their hands at him.

The 54-year-old appeared to be enjoying his time standing in for Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, who is on maternity leave.

He fielded a series of questions on Iran, Cuba and China with a relaxed style and dashes of humour - and little of the invective that Trump often unleashes in his briefing room appearances.

“Rubio just wrapped up his FIRST White House Press Briefing, and he absolutely knocked it out of the park,” conservative influencer Nick Sortor said on X. “This man is a SERIOUS contender for 2028.”

Could it mark the moment when Rubio’s star definitively rose in the race to lead a post-Trump Republican party in two and a half years?

Polling has suggested that Vance, 41, has a large lead among Republican voters.

Neither man has officially declared his intention to run - and Rubio himself has publicly said that the “veep” is a friend and insisted that he would not run in 2028 if Vance is a candidate.

Nor has Trump yet anointed an heir to the throne of his Make America Great Again (MAGA) movement. But in Washington there has been growing speculation that Trump increasingly favours Rubio. Vance’s odds on prediction markets have collapsed in recent weeks.

While Vance’s life story - growing up in poverty in an Appalachian community beset by opioid addiction — is tailor-made to appeal to Trump’s base, he has sometimes struggled to connect with voters.

Yet Vance was not as far from the action as he may have seemed on Tuesday.

Notably, his travels took him to Iowa, the crucial midwestern state where Republicans will cast their first votes for the 2028 Republican nominee - and which first propelled Trump towards the White House in 2016.

The Oklahoma fundraiser meanwhile reflects Vance’s overlooked role as Republican National Committee finance chief - which could help build his grip on a party that has never quite seemed to warm to him.

And he stopped in Ohio to vote in a primary in the state where he was formerly a senator - and his son Vivek was able to cast a kids’ vote in a contest between two mythical figures. — AFP

King’s speech as kings’ speeches...

WATCHING

King Charles III’s speeches at the White House and before Congress, I was reminded of The King’s Speech. The parallel is not exact, but it is revealing. In the film, George VI’s wartime address is shadowed by the struggle of a king trying to master his own voice with the help of Lionel Logue, a commoner and speech therapist whose professional skill enables the sovereign to speak to a nation at war. In Charles’s case, the challenge was different: not a stammer, but timing, context, alliance politics, war in Europe, conflict in the Middle East, and the delicate controversy surrounding the visit itself.

Yet both moments reveal an important truth about monarchy: the royal voice is never purely royal. It is shaped, steadied and sometimes synthesised by non-royal hands. In one case, the commoner was the instructor who helped the King speak. In the other, the commoner was not a therapist but the elected Prime Minister and the government machinery through which a constitutional monarch’s public words must pass. Behind each royal speech stood not only a monarch, but also the disciplined labour of those outside the throne who make the throne speak.

Some speeches merely mark occasions. Others attempt to repair history without appearing to do so. King Charles III’s two American speeches belonged to the second category. Delivered during the 250th anniversary year of the Declaration of Independence, they were not only diplomatic courtesies. They were performances of memory, hierarchy, humility, humour, warning and alliance management.

The White House speech was almost conversational. It carried the tone of a toast: gracious, amused, personal and lightly theatrical. The speech before Congress was constitutional and civilisational. It carried the tone of a sermon addressed not only to legislators, but



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

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The Congress speech was more serious. Its central message was not nostalgia, but discipline. Charles spoke of democracy, independent courts, shared sacrifice, Ukraine, Nato, AUKUS, trade, technology, nature and the temptation to turn inward

to the American idea itself. The first charmed the presidency. The second instructed the republic.

The irony was unavoidable. The British monarch, direct descendant of King George III, stood before the institutional heirs of rebellion to congratulate them on independence. A lesser speechwriter would have avoided the paradox. Charles embraced it. The United States, he suggested, was not simply born against Britain, but also from Britain: from common law, Magna Carta, the Declaration of Rights of 1689, parliamentary contestation, and the stubborn principle that taxation requires representation. In that framing, the American Revolution becomes not a clean severance from British history, but a quarrel inside it that produced a new constitutional form.

This was where the speeches became politically interesting. Charles did not lecture. He practised the older British art of correction through courtesy. The White House speech was full of polite roasting. Britain’s burning of Washington in 1814 became a “small attempt at real estate redevelopment”. The map of America, with its Carolinas, Virginias, Marylands, Georgetown and Williamsburg, became something resembling a British Christmas card list. The French were folded into the joke: if America helped save Europe from speaking German, Britain might claim to have saved America from speaking French. The humour softened the message, but did not erase it. America was being reminded that its greatness was never solitary.

The Congress speech was more serious. Its central message was not nostalgia, but discipline. Charles spoke of democracy, independent courts, shared sacrifice, Ukraine, Nato, AUKUS, trade, technology, nature and the temptation to turn inward. At a time when the Atlantic alliance is strained by war, populism, economic nationalism and fatigue with global responsibility, the King’s

language was carefully chosen. To warn against becoming “ever more inward-looking” is not ornamental phrasing. It is a constitutional monarch’s way of telling America that retreat would be a betrayal not only of allies, but of itself.

This is why the comparison with The King’s Speech is useful, though not exact. George VI’s famous wartime broadcast dramatised the struggle of a king whose voice had to reach the nation despite his stammer. His impediment was physical, audible and painfully human. Charles’s difficulty was different. His challenge was not speech, but gaze; not fluency, but embodiment. His eye contact, at least in the congressional address, appeared limited, perhaps because he was bound closely to a prepared text. Yet this too tells us something. A constitutional monarch cannot speak like a campaigner. He must carry the state’s message without appearing to campaign for it.

George VI had to overcome the body to become voice. Charles had to restrain the self to become institution.

Whether intended or not, the eagle symbolism sharpened the staging. In American civic language, the eagle represents republican authority, vigilance and sovereignty. In Christian lectern tradition, the eagle carries the Word, associated with St John and elevated vision. Thus, the image of a British king speaking from an American eagle-marked platform is dense with meaning: monarchy addressing republican power; old imperial history bowing to a successful rebellion; and yet, through that bow, quietly reminding the republic of the moral architecture it inherited.

The speeches therefore worked on several levels. They honoured America, reassured Trump, addressed Congress, remembered Queen Elizabeth II, invoked Churchill and Roosevelt, defended Ukraine, reaffirmed Nato and AUKUS, celebrated trade and science.

SPORTS

FUTURESTRATEGY



The Oman School Sports Association discussed its future strategy and development programmes.

OSSA MAPS OUT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

The Oman School Sports Association (OSSA) discussed its future strategy and development programmes during a Board of Directors meeting held at the Ministry of Education headquarters, chaired by Chairwoman Nadhira bint Ahmed al Harthy, in the presence of board members.

The meeting began with a welcome address by the chairwoman, who emphasised the importance of the upcoming phase in strengthening the role of school sports and expanding student participation. The board then reviewed several key topics related to enhancing the OSSA's operational framework.

During the session, the formation of four supporting committees was approved, namely the Technical Committee, Media and Public Relations Committee, Marketing and Support Committee, and the Care and Rehabilitation Committee. This step aims to improve organisational efficiency and clearly define roles within the OSSA. The Executive Council was also formed, and the body's financial status was reviewed, along with discussions on proposed amendments to the financial regulations.

The board also examined the OSSA's performance during the 2025-2026 academic year, evaluating implemented programmes and activities. In addition, members discussed proposed programmes and competitions for the 2026-27 academic year, aligning with the OSSA's vision to further develop school sports in Oman.

The meeting addressed incentive mechanisms for high-performing students, including rewards for individuals and teams achieving top positions in central competitions. Furthermore, discussions covered the association's participation in regional, Arab and international events, reflecting its active role within continental sports bodies.

In another key agenda item, the board reviewed plans to organise a forum for secretaries of school sports committees, aimed at enhancing administrative practices and exchanging expertise. The possibility of participating in sports activities at the scouting camp in Dhofar next August was also discussed.

Oman Club claim vital win over Samayil in JL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 6

OMAN CLUB signed off Round 23 of the Jindal League with a valuable 2-1 victory over Samayil at Seeb Stadium, climbing to sixth place and securing their place in next season's top flight, while Samayil were left looking anxiously over their shoulder with three rounds still to play.

The home side made the sharper start and struck early through Adnan al Ruqadi, whose powerful finish from inside the area in the sixth minute gave Oman Club an immediate advantage. The early goal injected urgency into the contest and set the tone for an open first half, with both teams pushing for control.

Samayil responded positively and began to settle through the midfield movement of Dawood al Jabri, Musaab al Lamki and Bashar al Mahrami, who tried to feed Hazza al Mushaifri and Sulaiman al Maamari in attack. Oman Club, however, remained compact at the back, with Majid al Balushi and Khalid al Alawi offering solid protection in front of goalkeeper Faris al Ghaithi.

At the other end, Oman Club continued to pose problems of their own, with Waleed al Musalmi and Abdulwahid al Hinai both threatening, only for Samayil goalkeeper Al Khadir al Balushi and his defence to keep the contest within reach.

The visitors eventually found their equaliser in the 29th minute through an excellent set-piece from Musaab al Lamki, who bent the ball over the wall and into the corner beyond the reach of Al Ghaithi to bring Samayil level. The goal restored balance to the match, and the sides went into the interval locked at 1-1 after an evenly fought opening half.

Oman Club regained the lead five minutes into the second half when Al Harith al Mukhaini found the decisive touch inside the box. The move developed through a crowded penalty area before the ball broke kindly for the forward, whose effort took a fortunate path past the goalkeeper and into the net.

TENSE FINISH

From there, the match became increasingly tense, with both teams fully aware of the importance of the points. Oman Club pushed for breathing space and were handed a late chance from the



Action from Oman Club's 2-1 win over Samayil in Round 23 of the Jindal League.

penalty spot, but Waleed al Musalmi failed to convert, keeping Samayil in the contest heading into the closing stages.

Both coaches turned to their benches in search of a final lift, and Samayil threw men forward during seven minutes of stoppage time in an effort to salvage a point. Oman Club, however, held firm

under pressure and protected their lead until the final whistle.

The win lifted Oman Club to 36 points in sixth and guaranteed survival in the Jindal League for next season. Samayil remained on 22 points in eighth, but they remain under pressure over relegation concerns, heading into the final three rounds.

Tunisian duo appointed to strengthen basketball talent centres

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 6

The Oman Basketball Association (OBA) has moved to strengthen the technical and physical development structure of its athlete preparation centres by appointing Tunisian coach Iskander bin Mohammed al Nabuli as general technical supervisor and Tunisian Mohammed Amin bin Munir al Zalfani as physical preparation supervisor.

The two-year agreements, which are renewable, are part of a wider effort by the OBA and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) to raise the standard of training across the basketball preparation centres operating at Seeb, Al Amerat, Nizwa, Al Bashayer, Salalah, Sohar Sports Complex and the girls' centre at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The contracts were signed at the OBA headquarters at the Oman Olympic Committee and Sports



The OBA appointed Tunisians Iskander al Nabuli as general technical supervisor and Mohammed Amin al Zalfani as physical preparation supervisor for its athlete preparation centres. — *Ammar al Musafir*

Associations building in Bausher by Eng Khalfan al Naabi, Chairman of the OBA, in the presence of Jaber al Shabibi, Director of the Sports Preparation System Development Project at the ministry, Abu Bakr al Jahwari, OBA Vice-Chairman, and Said al Habsi, Acting Secretary-General of the association.

The appointments mark a new phase in the development of the centres, which have become an important pathway for identifying and preparing young players for clubs and national teams.

Eng Khalfan al Naabi said the presence of specialised technical and physical preparation

supervisors represents a major step in improving the quality of player development. He thanked the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for its continued support, noting that the project has begun to show clear results through improved technical levels among players in the approved centres.

He added that the launch of the Athlete Preparation Centres League had helped reveal several promising talents capable of supporting Omani clubs with better-prepared players. Al Naabi also highlighted the progress made in girls' basketball, saying the centres had contributed players to national women's teams that achieved positive results in recent competitions. He pointed out that the girls' national team, which includes players from the Bausher centre, is preparing for the GCC Games in Qatar this month.

Jaber al Shabibi said the signing of the new supervisors comes within joint efforts between the ministry and the OBA to improve

the technical and administrative standards of the centres. He said the recent period had witnessed clear progress in player selection, coach development, daily training programmes and competitions.

Abu Bakr al Jahwari said the addition of a physical preparation specialist is an important qualitative step, stressing that modern player development requires a balanced approach covering technical, physical, psychological and personal aspects.

For his part, Iskander al Nabuli thanked the OBA for its confidence, saying he looked forward to working closely with the ministry, the association and national coaches to build a new generation of players capable of competing locally and internationally. He added that future plans include expanding the programme to younger age groups, helping build players from the grassroots and supporting the wider growth of basketball in Oman.

INTENSE TRAINING

OMAN U21
HANDBALL TEAM
GEARS UP FOR
ASIAN YOUTH
CHAMPIONSHIP



YAHYA
AL MAASHARI

On the preparation front, Oman's youth team continues its daily training sessions under national coach Yahya al Maashari, who is currently in charge on an interim basis until a new head coach is appointed. A preliminary squad of 22 players is currently in camp, as the technical staff evaluates the players ahead of the final squad selection.

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbhaluch

Oman's national youth handball team continues its intensive preparations at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher as it gears up for the 19th Asian Men's Youth Handball Championship, with attention turning to the upcoming draw that will determine the team's path in the continental competition.

The Asian Handball Federation has announced that the draw ceremony for both the Youth and Junior Asian Championships will take place on Wednesday, May 13, in Almaty, Kazakhstan, with the presence of representatives from participating nations and federation officials.

Oman are set to compete in the 19th Asian Youth Championship, which will be held in

Chuzhou, China, from July 15 to 26, 2026. The tournament serves as a qualification pathway to the 2027 IHF Men's Junior World Championship (U21), with the top four teams earning direct qualification.

Oman have been placed in Pot 2 alongside Saudi Arabia, Iran and Kuwait, while Pot 1 includes China, Japan, South Korea, and Bahrain, highlighting the high level of competition expected in the tournament.

Meanwhile, the 11th Asian Men's Youth (U19) Championship will take place in Andijan, Uzbekistan, from August 10 to 21, 2026.

This tournament will also serve as a qualifier for the Youth World Championship, with four teams advancing to the global stage.

On the preparation front, Oman's youth team continues its daily training sessions under national coach Yahya al Maashari, who is currently in charge on an interim basis until a new head coach is appointed. A preliminary squad of 22 players is currently in camp, as the technical staff evaluates the players ahead of the final squad selection.

Through this preparation phase, the team aims to enhance physical readiness, strengthen tactical cohesion, and improve overall performance, with the goal of delivering a strong showing that reflects the continued development of Omani handball on the Asian stage.



Tamim al Balushi and Saleh al Balushi during the Euro Cup Series Silver Fleet races at Lake Garda, Italy.

Oman Sail 29er team ranks
in top 10 at Euro Cup Series

OMAN SAIL'S High Performance 29er team of Tamim al Balushi and Saleh al Balushi finished in the top 10 of the Silver Fleet at the Euro Cup Series, which took place in Lake Garda, Italy, from May 1-3. The pair steadily improved as racing progressed, ending the round strongly in the Silver Fleet.

The team of Saud al Shaqsi and Firas al Nabhani also sailed in the Silver Fleet, finishing just outside the top 20 in 21st position and even winning the ninth race of the 10-race round.

These results placed Tamim al Balushi and Saleh al Balushi in 40th overall, and Saud al Shaqsi and Firas al Nabhani 51st overall out of a total of 74 international teams.

Fabrice Jaunet, Oman Sail's 29er coach, was pleased with the performance, saying, "The determination and concentration required to consistently improve and adapt to changing weather conditions is an important skill to have and will benefit our sailors moving forward. Both pairs performed very well in the conditions and showed they belong alongside the world's best 29er sailors in what was their first time competing at a regatta of this level. We have more events to come this season, and each one is a new opportunity."



ASSISTANT COACH
ZAKARIYA
AL WAHABI



Saud al Shaqsi and Firas al Nabhani during the races.

Assistant coach Zakariya al Wahabi added, "We knew the fleet would be of a very high standard, and our team is a new addition to Oman Sail's sailing programme, so to finish as high as 10th and within touching distance

of the top 20 in the Silver Fleet is a very good achievement for our sailors. They have seen the levels they have the potential to reach and have seen first-hand how they must perform to reach those levels. We are not far away from competing for medals and will be working towards this goal in the regattas to come."

KEY COMPONENT

The development of a new national team in the 29er discipline comes as a key component of Oman Sail's mission to rekindle the nation's maritime heritage by promoting Oman through sailing and creating long-term learning opportunities for the national youth. This addition makes sailing even more accessible and creates a new pathway to develop local talent in the sport and beyond.

The team now return to Oman to prepare for the upcoming Kiel Week in Germany from June 24-29 and the 2026 29er World Championship, also in Germany, from July 2-7. The team will also participate in a training camp in France alongside the French national team, from August 15-25.

Later in the year, the team is planning for competition at the 2026 Asian Games at Kaiyoh Yacht Harbour in Gamagori, Japan, running from September 19 until October 4.

Oman Esports body promotes gaming careers at school forum

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 6

The Oman Esports and Gaming Committee took part in the opening of the Iwan Oman Forum at Um Burda Al Ansariya School on Tuesday, as part of its wider efforts to raise awareness of esports and its growing role in youth development.

The committee's participation featured an awareness session titled 'Esports... the Sport of the Future', presented by Asma al Yahyai, member of the Oman Esports and Gaming Committee. The session targeted school students and focused on introducing esports as an emerging sector that combines competition, technology, discipline and future career opportunities.

The session highlighted the difference between electronic games and esports, explaining how competitive gaming has developed into a structured field with professional tournaments, training



The committee's participation featured an awareness session titled 'Esports... the Sport of the Future', presented by Asma al Yahyai, member of the Oman Esports and Gaming Committee.

systems, team management, specialised skills and expanding economic prospects. It also reviewed the main categories of games and esports, while underlining the sector's growing importance from educational, social and economic perspectives.

Al Yahyai also addressed the key steps that young people need to follow to enter the professional esports scene, including skills development, regular training, digital discipline, understanding competitive environments and maintaining balance between gaming, education and personal development.

A key part of the session was dedicated to presenting an inspiring Omani experience through Shahad al Qaidhi, who was highlighted as one of the first Omani female players to achieve regional success in esports.

Her journey was presented as a model for students, demonstrating

the potential for Omani girls to compete, excel and build their presence in a fast-growing global field.

The committee's participation in the forum reflects its ongoing commitment to spreading esports culture across educational institutions and encouraging young Omanis to engage positively with the sector.

It also comes at a time when esports continues to gain wider recognition internationally, creating new pathways in competition, content creation, event management, technology and digital entrepreneurship.

Through such initiatives, the Oman Esports and Gaming Committee seeks to strengthen awareness among students, support national talent and promote responsible engagement with a sector that is increasingly becoming part of the future sports and digital economy landscape.

SPORTS



Arsenal's English midfielder #07 Bukayo Saka scores the team's first goal during the Uefa Champions League secondleg semifinal match against Atletico Madrid at the Emirates Stadium in north London. — AFP

ARSENAL reached the Champions League final for the first time in 20 years as Bukayo Saka sealed a 1-0 win against Atletico Madrid on Tuesday.

Mikel Arteta's side settled the semifinal second leg with Saka's strike late in the first half at an ecstatic Emirates Stadium.

The Gunners, who drew 1-1 in the first leg in Madrid last week, held firm after Saka's goal to go through 2-1 on aggregate.

Arsenal will face Paris Saint-Germain or Bayern Munich in the final in Budapest on May 30.

Holders PSG, who beat Arsenal in the semifinals last year, have a 5-4 lead ahead of the second leg in Munich on Wednesday.

It was a cathartic night for Arsenal, who are back in the Champions League final for the first time since losing 2-1 to Barcelona in their only previous appearance in the showpiece in 2006.

Arsenal have never won the Champions League, with their two major European trophies coming in the 1994 Cup Winners' Cup and the 1970 Inter-Cities Fairs Cup.

Their last continental final ended in a 4-1 defeat against Chelsea in the 2019 Europa League.

It is shaping up to be Arsenal's greatest ever season as they chase a Premier League and Champions League double.

Even Arsene Wenger's 'Invincibles' — who won the club's last English title in an unbeaten top-flight campaign in 2004 — might have to bow to the current generation if they finish the job.

Fittingly, it was Saka — the homegrown symbol of the Arteta era — who proved Arsenal's match-winner.

Now just four games from immortality, Premier League leaders Arsenal were given a huge boost in the title race when second-placed Manchester City drew at Everton on Monday.

The Gunners will be crowned champions if they win their last three games against West Ham, Burnley and Crystal Palace.

Once the title is decided, Arsenal will head to Hungary with a maiden Champions League crown in their sights.

Arsenal endured jibes about their perceived lack of mental strength after a run of four defeats in six games in all competitions sparked painful memories of previous failures to end their six-year wait for silverware.

But the 'nearly-men' and 'serial choker' labels applied only weeks ago are on the verge of being banished forever.

JUBILANT ARTETA
Thousands of Arsenal supporters massed outside the stadium before kick-off to greet their team with flares and flags, a vociferous

SAKA

ENDS ARSENAL'S 20-YEAR WAIT TO REACH CL FINAL

It was the kind of evening in north London, when nothing was beyond the realm of possibility as Arsenal moved closer to casting off the shackles of two decades of underachievement.

display of affection underlining Arsenal's desperation to make history.

It was the kind of evening in north London, when nothing was beyond the realm of possibility as Arsenal moved closer to casting off the shackles of two decades of underachievement.

After some tense performances during the Premier League run-in, Saturday's 3-0 rout of Fulham had showed Arsenal at their flowing best in a riposte to the critics who claim they only win ugly.

This was a more prosaic display but no-one with an affinity to Arsenal was bothered in the slightest.

Arsenal were nearly caught on the counter in a frenetic start when Julian Alvarez shot just wide before Giuliano Simeone's close-range effort deflected past the post.

But Arsenal recovered from those anxious moments to deliver a dominant spell that brought their 44th

minute goal.

Viktor Gyokeres' clever run unhinged the Atletico defence and his cross reached Leandro Trossard inside the area.

Trossard wriggled into just enough space for a low drive that Jan Oblak weakly pushed out to Saka, who reacted quicker than his flat-footed markers to slot home from four yards.

Arteta jubilantly punched the air as all around him the Emirates erupted into a roiling red sea of celebration.

Atletico tried to ruin the party in the second half, but Gabriel Magalhaes made a last-ditch tackle on Simeone to avert a certain goal before David Raya repelled Antoine Griezmann's blast.

Arteta recently revealed he visualised Arsenal conquering the Champions League even in the difficult early days of his reign.

The Spaniard now is just one win away from seeing that daydream become a glorious reality. — AFP

WHO SAID WHAT

"It's an amazing night. To live these kind of moments with our people, our players, everybody at the club, it's just an incredible feeling. It makes sense, a lot of the things that we do and we go through, when you just see so many happy faces and so many people proud of what we are doing. It was unbelievable right from the beginning. The manner that our supporters waited for us at the stadium, the energy, the passion that they put in, it was just great to witness.

— Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta

"You're taking me away from the celebrations. It's so beautiful, you'll have to see what it means to us, what it means to the fans. You know, this game is a high-pressure game, it means a lot to both sides. We managed to manage it well and take ourselves to the final, so we're happy."

— Bukayo Saka

"I don't think you can underestimate what we've done in this competition up to this point. I think we had every right to celebrate that moment. It's such a big moment. Champions League final. The most prestigious tournament in club football. It's a proud moment for the boys, for the club. We're just trying to soak it all in."

— Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice

"It's been 20 years since Arsenal reached a final. When I arrived here, we started out in the Europa League. We have to keep going like this. We're very strong defensively. We've got the best defence in the league, in the Premier League. Today, we did the job. We managed to score that goal before half-time. We defended well throughout the match."

— Arsenal's William Saliba

"There's nothing to say. We're out! Congratulations to Arsenal because they compete well. I like their team and their coach. They work in a consistent way with their economic resources. Congratulations to them, we'll keep working hard and we won't get bogged down in a detail that was obvious."

— Atletico coach Diego Simeone

"Very hurt, totally gutted, but proud of my team and our fans. We gave everything. We could have scored goals, it just didn't want to go in -- the same thing happened in the first leg. Football is about clinical finishing, they were more clinical than us."

— Atletico captain Koke

"It all happened so quickly. What I felt was that at the moment I tried to shoot he knocked me off balance and I couldn't shoot properly. That's what I felt. The referee in some moments like that didn't go to the VAR, the same as for an incident with Antoine (Griezmann), and (the decisions) didn't go our way."

— Atletico's Giuliano Simeone

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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$103.25
BRENT \$103.17
LIGHT \$95.50



SHORT TAKES



The meetings reflect growing economic cooperation between Oman and the UAE.

OMAN AND UAE STRENGTHEN COOPERATION IN ECONOMIC ZONES

ABU DHABI: Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) Chairman Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef held talks with Mansour bin Zayed al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on strengthening economic and investment cooperation between Oman and the UAE.

The discussions focused on enhancing collaboration in economic zones, free zones and industrial cities, while exploring opportunities for greater integration between the two countries' economic hubs.

The two sides also reviewed investment prospects in industrial, logistics and advanced technology sectors as part of wider efforts to strengthen economic partnerships and attract high-quality investments.

During the visit, Al Yousef met with Abdullah bin Touq al Marri and Ahmed bin Saeed al Maktoum, alongside officials, investors and entrepreneurs from various economic sectors.

The meetings addressed opportunities to exchange expertise and knowledge in the development of economic and free zones, advanced industrial technologies and business-friendly ecosystems aimed at improving competitiveness and supporting regional supply chains.

The discussions also covered best practices in enhancing the investment environment and promoting sustainable economic growth through integrated industrial and logistics infrastructure.

Separately, Al Yousef held a meeting with the operator of the Al Rawdah Special Economic Zone to review project developments and discuss opportunities to strengthen local added value and support ongoing investments within the zone.

The meetings reflect growing economic cooperation between Oman and the UAE, particularly in sectors linked to industrial development, logistics, trade and technology-driven investments. — ONA

Labour market expands as job-seeker rate falls

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 6

OMAN'S labour market continued to improve in 2025, with total employment rising and the jobseeker rate declining, official data showed. Total employment increased by 1.5 per cent to about 2.7 million workers, reflecting sustained economic activity across key sectors.

The jobseeker rate eased to 3.1 per cent from 3.3 per cent a year earlier, pointing to gradual progress in absorbing labour market pressures.

Expatriates accounted for 67.1 per cent of the workforce, while Omanis represented 32.9 per cent.

The private sector remained the largest employer, accounting for 68.4 per cent of total jobs.

However, Omanis made up 21.8 per cent of workers in private and family-run businesses, compared with 90.2 per cent in government employment.

The figures suggest that Oman's economy is moving in a positive direction, supported by



Total employment increased by 1.5% to about 2.7 million workers.

The jobseeker rate eased to 3.1 per cent from 3.3 per cent a year earlier, pointing to gradual progress in absorbing labour market pressures.

investment, private-sector activity and labour policies aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

They also show that the next challenge is not only creating jobs, but ensuring that more Omanis move into productive, specialised and higher-value roles in the private sector. Skills remain central to that transition.

Around 54.9 per cent of workers held qualifications

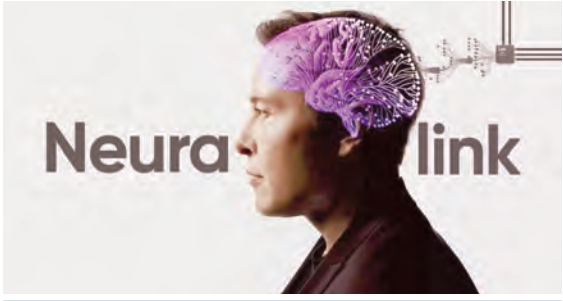
OIA invests in Neuralink healthcare technology

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has announced an investment in Neuralink, the US-based neurotechnology company specialising in brain-computer interfaces, as part of its strategy to expand investments in advanced and future-focused technologies.

The investment reflects OIA's broader efforts to diversify its international portfolio and strengthen its presence in innovative sectors with long-term growth potential, particularly in healthcare and deep technology.

Neuralink develops implantable microchips designed to enable direct communication between the human brain and digital devices.

The technology is aimed at supporting patients suffering from neurological disorders and mobility impairments, including stroke-related conditions and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). The company's neural implants allow brain signals to be translated into digital



The investment reflects OIA's broader efforts to diversify its international portfolio.

commands, enabling users to control devices or type using thought.

According to recent clinical trial results, the company's first human patient was able to operate a computer and type through brain activity alone, highlighting the potential of the

technology to improve independence and quality of life for patients.

Neuralink has received regulatory approvals in the United States to conduct human clinical trials using robotic surgical systems for implant procedures. Over the past two years, the company has implanted its devices in 21 patients, with a significant expansion in trials planned during 2025.

The company is also advancing its "Blind Vision" project, a neuro-optical system designed to restore sight by stimulating the brain's visual cortex using signals captured through digital cameras.

OIA said its global investment portfolio spans more than 52 countries, supporting the Sultanate of Oman's goals of economic diversification and financial sustainability through investments across strategic sectors and emerging technologies. — ONA

Aquaculture enhances investment appeal within blue economy trends

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 6

Aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 to diversify income and reduce reliance on hydrocarbons, Oman's aquaculture sector is rapidly emerging as a high-potential pillar of the non-oil economy.

Strong policy support, rising investor interest and a focus on food security have driven notable expansion, positioning the sector as an increasingly attractive destination for both local and international capital.

Performance indicators for 2025 underscore this momentum. Total aquaculture production rose sharply to 9,240 tonnes, up from 5,507 tonnes in 2024 — an increase of 67.7%. The sector's economic value also climbed significantly to RO 20.3 million, compared with RO 12.4 million the previous year, reflecting growth of 63.7%.

These gains highlight improved



Aquaculture forms a cornerstone of Oman's broader blue economy strategy.

operational efficiency and the scaling up of production capacity, reinforcing aquaculture's reputation as a stable, returns-driven investment segment.

This growth is underpinned by a pipeline of major projects aimed at expanding capacity and diversifying output. Four key investment packages have been

launched, including three large-scale shrimp farming projects in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate and Al Wusta Governorate.

Together, these projects account for a combined production capacity of around 13,000 tonnes annually, backed by investments totalling RO 51.1 million and contribute to balanced regional development while optimising the use of coastal resources.

Further diversification is being achieved through finfish farming initiatives, notably a project in the Wilayat of Qurayat, Muscat Governorate, with an annual capacity of 2,000 tonnes and an investment value of RO 3.8 million.

This development is expected to reduce import dependence, strengthen domestic value chains and support downstream fisheries-related industries.

In terms of production mix, white-legged shrimp and European cobia dominate due to strong market demand, followed

by tilapia, Omani abalone and rock oysters — demonstrating a broad and adaptable production base capable of serving diverse consumer markets.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the adoption of advanced aquaculture technologies — including smart water management, automated feeding systems and intensive farming techniques — is playing a central role in boosting productivity while maintaining environmental sustainability.

Beyond food production, aquaculture is contributing to the expansion of Oman's seafood exports, supported by a growing emphasis on quality standards and sustainability certifications that enhance global competitiveness.

At the same time, coordinated fisheries management — such as regulated fishing seasons — helps safeguard natural fish stocks and ensures long-term resource

sustainability. The sector forms a cornerstone of Oman's broader blue economy strategy, which targets raising its contribution to over 10% of GDP by 2040.

Aquaculture's dual role in driving economic growth and preserving marine ecosystems makes it a key enabler of this vision, while also generating employment opportunities, particularly in coastal communities.

In parallel, the sector is stimulating the development of related industries, including seafood processing, packaging and export logistics, thereby increasing in-country value addition.

Continued emphasis on clean technologies, efficient resource use and environmentally responsible practices — such as water quality management and reduced antibiotic reliance — further strengthens the sector's long-term sustainability.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The Heritage Edition is defined by focused exterior enhancements that elevate its visual presence.

NISSAN Z HERITAGE EDITION DEBUTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

MUSCAT: Nissan has announced the arrival of the new 2026 Nissan Z Heritage Edition in the Middle East, marking the regional debut of a special edition that celebrates the brand’s performance heritage.

Introduced as a distinctive addition to the Z line-up, the limited production Heritage Edition draws inspiration from Nissan’s high-performance legacy, including design cues linked to the iconic GT-R, offering enthusiasts in the region a model designed to resonate with a deep appreciation for performance heritage.

Based on the seventh-generation Nissan Z, the Heritage Edition is defined by focused exterior enhancements that elevate its visual presence while remaining true to the model’s design philosophy.

Finished in Midnight Purple, an iconic exterior colour first introduced on the legendary Nissan GT-R, the model is complemented by bronze 19-inch RAYS alloy wheels, reinforcing its motorsport-inspired character and exclusivity.

Speaking on the arrival of the new special edition, Thierry Sabbagh, Divisional Vice President and President, Middle East, KSA, CIS and India — Nissan and INFINITI, said: “The Middle East has long been home to one of the world’s most passionate communities of performance car enthusiasts. With the Nissan Z Heritage Edition, we are offering customers in the region a model that speaks directly to this passion, combining the legacy of the Z with design inspiration drawn from the legendary GT-R.

This special edition has been introduced for drivers who value heritage and driving excitement, reinforcing our commitment to delivering vehicles that resonate strongly with our customers in the Middle East”.

While the Midnight Purple exterior and bronze RAYS wheels establish a clear link to Nissan’s GT-R lineage, the overall design of the Z Heritage Edition continues to reflect the evolution of the Z nameplate.

Its long-hood, short-deck proportions and driver-focused stance pay homage to earlier generations, including visual cues inspired by the fourth-generation Z, the 300ZX (Z32).

Inside the cabin, the Z delivers a driver-centric cockpit that blends modern technology with classic Z-inspired details. A 12.3-inch customisable digital metre display, three analog pod gauges and intuitive control placement reinforce the strong human-machine bond that has defined the Z experience for more than five decades.

Power comes from a 3.0-litre V6 twin-turbo engine producing 400 horsepower at 6,400 rpm and 475 Nm of torque from 1,600 to 5,600 rpm, delivering responsive performance across a wide rev range.

Lexus RX350: Setting a new vision for luxury

LEXUS Oman continues to elevate the standards of the luxury SUV segment with the Lexus RX350, a vehicle designed to inspire confidence and sophistication. Built for those who seek perfection on every journey, the RX350 is not merely a mode of transport but a statement of intent, blending high-performance capabilities with a high-tech interior that makes it the ideal companion for families and enthusiasts across the Sultanate of Oman.

ATTRACTIVE SOPHISTICATION AND CAPTIVATING STYLE

The Lexus RX350 is designed to encourage drivers to never settle and to make their mark. It embodies a sophisticated design language that elevates the luxury experience through sharp, instantly recognisable styling. The vehicle makes an instant impression with its skillfully created character lines and sleek LED headlamps featuring the Adaptive High-beam System.

Its captivating presence is further enhanced by the sleek one-piece rear combination lights and a panoramic roof that adds a sense of openness to the bold exterior.

BOLDER PERFORMANCE AND PRECISION

Experience a power-packed driving feel that takes engagement to new heights. The RX350 is powered by a 2.4-litre turbocharged 4-cylinder engine that produces an impressive 274 HP and 430 Nm of torque.

This power is managed by a new 8-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission, offering a distinct combination of breathtaking power and steady handling.

Beyond the raw performance, the RX350 utilises a lightweight body and optimised



The Lexus RX350 is a vehicle designed to inspire confidence and sophistication.

aerodynamic performance to ensure an exhilarating drive and impressive fuel economy on every highway.

A SANCTUARY OF INNOVATION AND COMFORT

Inside, the Lexus RX350 welcomes passengers with stunning leather-coated premium interiors and a multi-colour ambient lighting system that sets the mood for any journey. The centre console is anchored by a massive 14-inch touch display, while the driver-focused head-up display and digital rear-view mirror ensure seamless engagement with the road.

Connectivity and convenience are prioritised through a wireless charging tray, the world-class Mark Levinson Premium Surround Sound System and a 3-zone independent temperature control system.

Additional touches like the integrated E-latch system, power-folding rear seats and

a power back door with a kick sensor ensure that every interaction with the vehicle is effortless.

ASSURING SAFETY FOR EVERY PASSENGER

Lexus prioritises peace of mind by offering state-of-the-art safety features that cater to the minute details of the driving environment. The RX350 is equipped with Lexus Safety Sense, featuring a Pre-Crash System, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Lane Tracing Assist and Emergency Steering Assist.

Visibility is maximised through a Panoramic View Monitor and headlamp cleaners for unstable weather conditions. Whether on the move or standing still, technologies like Intersection Assistance, Blind Spot Monitor and front and rear parking sensors work together to provide a remarkable feeling of security for the driver and all passengers.

NBO GCC Fund announces interim dividend of 5%

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) Gulf Cooperation Council’s (GCC) Fund has approved the distribution of an interim cash dividend of 5%, equivalent to RO 0.050 per unit, for the quarter ended March 31, 2026.

The dividend will be distributed in cash or reinvested units, at the investor’s preference. The record date for eligibility is May 11, 2026.

Investors who wish to invest in the fund before the record date can send a email to gccfund@nbo.om for further information. Existing Investors who wish to reinvest must submit a signed request to gccfund@nbo.co.om by May



The record date for eligibility is May 11, 2026.

21, 2026. Reinvestment will be processed in accordance with the Fund’s subscription process as guided by the prospectus, on the next valuation day, which falls on May 24, 2026.

The NBO GCC Fund is an open-ended fund that provides investors with exposure to GCC equity markets through an actively managed portfolio.

The Fund’s primary objective is to generate dividend income and capital growth from companies listed in GCC markets, with limited exposure to other equity and fixed-income opportunities in the region.

The Fund is designed to offer investors equity-market-type returns, along with an income

strategy over the medium term, supported by a disciplined investment process.

Through its regional focus, the NBO GCC Fund provides investors with a structured opportunity to participate in GCC market performance and income-generating investment opportunities.

The Fund is managed by the Investment Banking Division of National Bank of Oman SAOG. The bank has also introduced new capital market instruments and solutions.

It also continues to manage the NBO Money Market Fund, the NBO Global Fixed Income Fund and the NBO Global Equity Fund.

Meethaq Islamic Banking: Driving banking and sector growth

MUSCAT: Amidst the continued growth and transformation of Oman’s banking sector, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat stands out as a leading model contributing to the advancement of Islamic banking in the Sultanate of Oman.

This progress is driven by the delivery of innovative financial solutions that fully comply with Sharia principles. Meethaq continues to enhance its products and services to meet the evolving needs of diverse customer segments, with a strong focus on financial inclusion and sustainable economic development. Meethaq is committed to transparency,



Meethaq presented its leading role in advancing Islamic banking through a detailed overview of its services for individuals and corporates.

innovation, Sharia oversight and governance that further strengthen its position as a trusted and preferred banking partner. As part of

efforts to highlight recent developments, Meethaq Islamic Banking organised a media engagement session for journalists and

media representatives from various outlets. The event, held at the Grand Hormuz Hotel in Muscat, aimed to showcase the latest updates and introduce its comprehensive range of Islamic banking products and services. The session also provided a platform for open dialogue, enabling direct engagement between media representatives and Meethaq officials.

During the session, Meethaq presented its leading role in advancing Islamic banking through a detailed overview of its services for individuals and corporates. The presentation highlighted key financial solutions, investment funds managed by Meethaq and initiatives

supporting corporate social responsibility and community development.

Meethaq’s financial highlights underscore its strong market position, with total assets reaching RO 2.08 billion, net financing at RO 1.658 billion and customer deposits at RO 1.69 billion, up to December 2025.

These figures reflect its solid performance and growing role in the Islamic banking sector in Oman.

Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Corporate Banking, said: “We are pleased to host a distinguished group of journalists and media professionals, whom we consider key partners in our success. This engagement

reflects Meethaq’s commitment to transparency and open engagement with the media, while providing an opportunity to showcase our achievements in delivering innovative Islamic banking solutions. Since its inception, Meethaq has played a key role in shaping the Islamic banking landscape through products and services that create real value for customers.

We remain committed to strengthening trust by offering best-in-class financial solutions tailored to the needs of individuals and corporates. While continuing to reinforce our position through the adoption of best practices and ongoing development.”

SHORTTAKES



The project will feature 176 premium apartments with a total built-up area of around 39,000 sqm.

Al Mouj and Aurelian sign deal for premium marina project

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat has signed a sub-development agreement with Aurelian Development for a new premium residential project within the marina district of the integrated waterfront destination.

The project will feature 176 premium apartments with a total built-up area of around 39,000 square metres, further expanding Al Mouj Muscat’s upscale residential offering.

Designed around contemporary architecture and waterfront living, the development will provide residents with direct access to Al Mouj Muscat’s marina, PGA-standard championship golf course, hospitality and leisure facilities, retail outlets and landscaped public spaces.

The agreement forms part of Al Mouj Muscat’s broader strategy to strengthen its position as a leading lifestyle and investment destination in the Sultanate of Oman, while supporting demand for premium residential communities in Muscat.

For Aurelian Development, the partnership marks a key step in its regional growth plans and reinforces its commitment to the Omani market.

Ahmed al Massan, Acting CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said partnerships with like-minded developers continue to support the destination’s growth and long-term vision. “By working with developers who share our long-term vision for excellence and community building, we continue to strengthen the destination’s appeal as a leading lifestyle and investment hub not only in Oman, but across the region”, he said.

OQ advances studies on slate of Oman projects

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 6

HAVING invested in excess of \$20 billion in an array of strategically vital projects across Oman’s energy value chain, OQ — the Sultanate of Oman’s integrated energy group — is advancing the development of a new set of equally landmark initiatives designed to optimise value creation from the country’s hydrocarbon resources.

OQ Group CEO Ashraf bin Hamed al Maamari said the proposed projects represent “strategic priorities” to support the next phase of the wholly state-owned group’s growth.

“OQ’s strategic priorities focus on activating its growth strategy and delivering targeted financial returns through the development of new projects, expansion initiatives and the acquisition of new assets”, Al Maamari said.

“OQ is currently conducting detailed studies on several new projects in preparation for final investment decisions. Among the most prominent are the Oman Petrochemical Complex, the Natural Gas Liquids Extraction Project, the Nahada–Ras Markaz Oil Pipeline, as well as the Ras Markaz Crude Oil Storage Terminal”, he stated in an interview featured in the



OQ’s new portfolio of investments will have transformational benefits for the Omani economy.

latest edition of ‘Enjaz & Eejaz’, the quarterly newsletter of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

Earlier this year, OQ Group issued a FEED tender for the Saih Nihayda NGL extraction plant, a key component of an integrated value chain linking upstream gas extraction with processing, fractionation, storage and export infrastructure at Duqm.

The project includes a 230-km pipeline and a downstream fractionation complex to produce ethane, propane, butane and condensates for domestic and regional markets.

With a planned capacity of up to 48 million cubic metres

per day, the facility will supply critical feedstock — particularly ethane — for the proposed Oman Petrochemicals Complex, strengthening Oman’s gas value chain, supporting industrial growth and enhancing value realisation from natural gas resources.

Separately, OQ is studying a proposed pipeline to serve as a critical midstream link connecting Oman’s Main Oil Line at Nahada in central Oman to the Ras Markaz storage hub near Al Duqm.

Estimated at roughly 360–440 km in length, the pipeline would effectively create a second crude export route for Oman, bypassing traditional terminals

and enhancing flexibility in crude logistics.

It would also enable blending and direct delivery of crude to Ras Markaz for storage and export, reinforcing Duqm’s emergence as a strategic energy corridor.

The new portfolio of investments, alongside those planned in solar, wind and green hydrogen, will have transformational benefits for the national economy, the Group CEO noted.

“These projects are expected to accelerate economic growth through multiple pathways, most notably by creating direct and indirect employment opportunities, stimulating supply chains and supporting services; and enhancing the competitiveness of the national logistics ecosystem and related sectors such as ports and aviation.

They will also support the continued development of Duqm and its surrounding industrial zone”, he stated.

OQ’s portfolio features a range of major strategic assets, including the Liwa Plastics Industries Complex (now the OQ Polymer Complex), the Duqm Refinery, LPG and ammonia plants in Salalah, as well as infrastructure entities such as Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO) and Marafiq. Together, these developments represent investments exceeding RO 7.7 billion (around \$20 billion).

New hotel opening expands Muscat tourism landscape

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 6

A new hotel opening in Muscat is reflecting growing investor confidence in Oman’s tourism sector as the Sultanate of Oman continues to advance diversification goals under Oman Vision 2040.

Legacy Hotels Holding marked the launch of Golden Tulip Muscat The Village, its sixth property in Oman and fourth in the capital, reinforcing its long-term expansion plans in the local hospitality market.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism; and developed in collaboration with Bin Al Sheikh for Hotel and Resorts Management.

The project forms part of a broader masterplan aimed at blending hospitality, retail and cultural experiences along a coastal setting.

In an exclusive interview with the Observer, Fahad Abdulrahim Kazim, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Legacy Hotels Holding, underscored Oman’s strategic importance within the group’s



The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism.

regional growth plans.

The new 68-key, four-star property is located within The Village, a mixed-use development that reflects the evolving direction of Muscat’s tourism landscape towards integrated lifestyle destinations.

Positioned around ten minutes from Muscat International Airport,

the hotel is designed to cater to both business and leisure travellers, offering dining outlets, meeting space, a gym and an outdoor pool.

For Legacy Hotels Holding, the expansion signals continued confidence in Oman’s tourism fundamentals and policy direction.

Fahad highlighted the Sultanate of

Oman’s positioning as a key growth market within the group’s regional strategy. “Oman remains a very important market for us. We already have six hotels operating here and we are continuing to expand our footprint”, Fahad said.

“When we assess markets, we look first at the fundamentals and Oman offers strong unique selling points alongside strong government support, particularly through tourism as a key pillar of Oman Vision 2040”.

The company’s development pipeline further underscores this trajectory. Fahad revealed that between seven and eight additional properties are expected to open across Oman over the next 18 to 24 months, reflecting sustained investor confidence and rising demand.

“We see strong alignment between public and private sector efforts in Oman, which gives us confidence that the market will continue to grow”, he said. “This is a market where development is happening with clear direction”.

Legacy’s operating model in Oman remains asset-light, with a focus on management expertise and

operational delivery rather than direct capital investment.

The group continues to channel resources into building local teams and strengthening its presence on the ground. “We are a hotel management company, so our investments are primarily in manpower and expertise”, he said.

“We are building a strong team and establishing a more robust presence in Oman to ensure we deliver the highest standards across our properties”.

At the core of this strategy is a people-centric approach, which Fahad identified as a key differentiator in a competitive regional hospitality market.

“We are in the people business first and foremost. Relationships with our colleagues, guests and investors are central to how we operate”, he said. “Technology supports that, but it does not replace the human element”

Digitalisation is nonetheless playing an increasing role in operations. The group is investing in artificial intelligence and data-driven systems to streamline guest journeys and improve efficiency across functions.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

China services PMI rises in April



China’s services sector expanded at a faster pace in April, supported by stronger domestic demand and rising new business. The Caixin/S&P Global Services PMI climbed to 52.6 from 52.1 in March.

However, weak export demand and industrial output; and higher oil and shipping costs linked to Middle East tensions continued to pressure businesses and profit margins. — Reuters

MARKET TRENDS

Gold gains on dollar weakness



Gold prices rose more than 1 per cent on Wednesday, supported by a weaker US dollar and hopes of a peace agreement between Washington and Iran. Spot gold climbed to \$4,633.31 an ounce.

Lower oil prices eased inflation concerns, while expectations of reduced geopolitical tensions weakened the dollar, making gold cheaper for holders of other currencies. — Reuters

ENERGY MARKETS

Oil slides on Iran deal hopes



Oil prices dropped sharply on Wednesday after reports that the United States and Iran were nearing a framework agreement to end the conflict.

Brent crude fell 6.1 per cent to \$103.17 a barrel, while US crude declined 6.6 per cent to \$95.50. Traders expect easing supply disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz if negotiations progress further. — Reuters

OPINION

Profits and non-oil exports drive economic diversification



ENG JASIM SAIF AL JADEEDI

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

OMAN'S industrial sector continued to demonstrate strong momentum in the first quarter of 2026, supported by improved market conditions and rising demand across key sectors. Industrial companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded a notable growth of 28.5% compared to the same period in 2025, reflecting enhanced operational efficiency and sector resilience.

This growth was primarily driven by the strong performance of companies operating in the food manufacturing and cement industries. These sectors benefitted from increased demand, higher production volumes and improved cost management strategies, enabling firms to strengthen their financial results.

The positive performance also reflects the sector's ability to capitalise on ongoing infrastructure development and the gradual stabilisation of supply chains.

However, performance across the industrial landscape remained uneven. Some companies in the metal and mining industries — particularly those involved in ceramic and tile production — reported a slight decline. This was largely attributed to rising input costs, including energy and raw

materials, declining product prices in certain markets and intensifying competition from imported goods. This divergence highlights the need for continued efforts to enhance productivity and competitiveness in more vulnerable industrial segments.

On the external trade front, recent data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicates that Oman's non-oil exports maintained a positive growth trajectory. By the end of February 2026, non-oil exports increased by 11.4%, reaching approximately RO 1.129 billion, compared to RO 1.013 billion during the same period in 2025. This expansion reflects a significant improvement in external demand, particularly for high-value industrial products. Metal products emerged as a key growth driver, supported by robust demand in regional and international markets.

In addition, electrical machinery and equipment recorded remarkable growth, signalling the gradual shift of Oman's industrial base towards more technologically advanced and value-added activities.

In terms of key trading partners, the United Arab Emirates remained the largest destination for Omani exports, registering a strong growth rate of 37.5%. This underscores the depth of economic integration between the two countries and the strength of their

Industrial companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded a notable growth of 28.5% compared to the same period in 2025, reflecting enhanced operational efficiency and sector resilience. This growth was primarily driven by the strong performance of companies operating in the food manufacturing and cement industries.

interconnected supply chains, supported by efficient logistics and trade facilitation.

In addition, exports to Saudi Arabia increased by 9.3%, reflecting continued expansion of Omani products in the Saudi market. This growth aligns with ongoing bilateral efforts to enhance economic cooperation and unlock new trade and investment opportunities for the private sector.

Overall, these positive indicators highlight the growing strength and resilience of Oman's industrial sector, reinforcing its central role in advancing economic diversification. The sector continues to contribute to increasing the share of non-oil activities in GDP, boosting exports and creating sustainable employment opportunities.

Experts emphasise that sustaining this growth momentum will require accelerating the adoption of advanced manufacturing technologies, attracting investment into high-value industries, strengthening local supply chains and enhancing the global competitiveness of Omani products.

As Oman progresses towards its long-term economic goals, the industrial sector remains a key pillar in building a diversified, competitive and sustainable economy — positioning Oman as an emerging industrial and logistics hub in the region.

Taiwanese tourists represent a high-value travel segment

HAIDER AL LAWATI

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism continues to implement annual strategies aimed at attracting larger numbers of international visitors to Oman. These efforts focus on promoting the country's unique cultural heritage, natural beauty and tourism assets.

Oman regularly participates in major international tourism exhibitions and invites representatives of travel companies to inspect the country's tourism infrastructure. Such initiatives help strengthen Oman's image global travellers.

Among the promising tourism markets that deserve greater attention is Taiwan, one of Asia's most active outbound tourism economies. Taiwan has a high rate of international travel relative to its population.

In 2025, outbound trips by Taiwanese travellers reached around 18.9 million, while Taiwan's population is approximately 23 million. This reflects a strong travel culture and frequent overseas movement among Taiwanese citizens. Taiwanese tourists are also recognised for their good spending power. Average expenditure per trip reached about \$ 1,700.

Their average stay in foreign destinations usually ranges from four to seven nights. They often prefer direct flights, family or independent travel and are highly interested in natural scenery, local cultures, historical sites and food experiences. These preferences closely match Oman's tourism strengths.

More than 90 per cent of Taiwanese outbound travel remains concentrated within Asia. Japan is their most popular destination, followed by China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Macau, Vietnam and Thailand. These countries benefit from geographic proximity, convenient air connections, easy visa access and competitive travel costs. Some percentages of Taiwanese travellers visit Europe, the United States and other world regions, including some Arab destinations.

Although millions of Taiwanese travel abroad annually, Taiwan receives fewer foreign tourists, around 8.6 million per year, resulting in a significant tourism spending deficit.

It recently issued a decision to provide a free 14-day entry visa for holders of Omani passports, effective May 1, 2026. This indicates that Taiwanese travellers spend more overseas than international visitors spend inside Taiwan.

Such a trend creates an opportunity for countries seeking to attract high-value tourists, including Oman. Oman possesses many features that could strongly appeal to Taiwanese travellers.

These include dramatic mountains, deserts, wadis, beaches, historic villages, forts and authentic Arab cultural experiences. Taiwanese tourists are known for appreciating photography, outdoor experiences and heritage tourism, making Oman a suitable destination.

To capitalise on this opportunity, stronger cooperation is needed between Omani tourism institutions and Taiwanese travel companies.

Financial services rebound at fastest rate

BRITAIN'S financial services sector rebounded in the first three months of this year powered by the fastest single-quarter recovery since 1996, a closely watched survey found.

According to the CBI's (Confederation of British Industry) wide survey, sentiment among financial firms improved for the first time in nearly two years, as an uptick in profitability was aided by the uncertainty surrounding autumn's calamitous Budget period moving further into the rear-view mirror.

Bosses had reported a "rapid" fall in business activity at the industry body's previous survey as an uncertain policy outlook weighed on firms' profitability and investment intentions. Its weighted balance for business volumes dropped to 36 per cent in the final quarter, but rebounded to a score of +65 per cent over the start of 2026.

The shift in fortunes represents the fastest recovery in business volumes recorded by the CBI this century. Firms also expect business activity to continue to improve in the next three months, albeit at a slower pace.

Alpesh Paleja, the industry body's deputy chief economist, attributed the recovery to a rebound in sentiment, but warned that the ill effects of the war in the Middle East could knock the industry's recovery off course.

"The sector still appears to be digesting the implications of conflict in the Middle East", he said. "This is not surprising given that financial services firms are at the epicentre of volatile market moves and that the economic impact of the conflict is still crystallising".

In a sign that financial services' disintegrating jobs market has bottomed out, bosses said headcount had stayed flat at the start of the year, but expected it to rise marginally over the coming quarter.

Three years of restrictive monetary policy and the ascent of artificial intelligence have combined to spark a stark deceleration in the financial sector's labour market. Last September,



ANDY JALIL andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

According to the CBI's (Confederation of British Industry) wide survey, sentiment among financial firms improved for the first time in nearly two years, as an uptick in profitability was aided by the uncertainty surrounding autumn's calamitous Budget period moving further into the rear-view mirror.



A tourist shelters from the rain under a Union Jack umbrella near the Bank of England in the City of London financial district in London, Britain. — Reuters

it emerged Lloyds had told 3,000 staff their roles were at risk of redundancy and in January, embattled lender Metro Bank was forced to launch its third wave of job cuts in as many years.

Firms' investment intentions remain mixed, however, with most respondents citing an uncertain demand outlook as a reason why they felt reluctant to plough more cash into their staff or wider operations. Respondents said the increased cost of doing business was throttling their willingness to invest. Paleja urged ministers to speed up their flagship deregulation drive to encourage more investment.

He said: "Navigating through these uncertain times will require the government to double down on delivering the Financial Services Growth and Competitiveness Strategy".

Meanwhile, there has been a hitch in the UK's manufacturing sector. Costs have risen at the fastest pace in three and a half years, new data has indicated, as the energy price shock from the Iran war has hit businesses. S&P Global research has found that manufacturers suffered the highest increase in input prices since late 2022 when Russia's war in Ukraine sent gas prices spiralling. Survey data also showed that the rise in input inflation was the steepest since the sterling crisis in 1992.

Manufacturers told researchers that changes in oil and gas prices, which have risen by over 70 per cent since the war started, could also dampen demand among buyers over the coming months. Output had already suffered from a decline as momentum enjoyed in previous months "hit the buffers", economists have said.

Head of industrials at the accountancy RSM, Mike Thornton, said: "Demand is being squeezed. New orders have ticked down, leaving the sector feeling pinched. The increase in energy costs will be a persistent headwind, but worries relating to supply chain disruption are growing".

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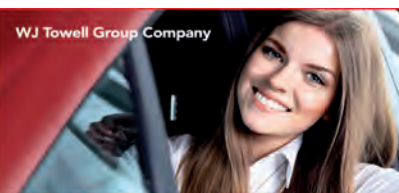
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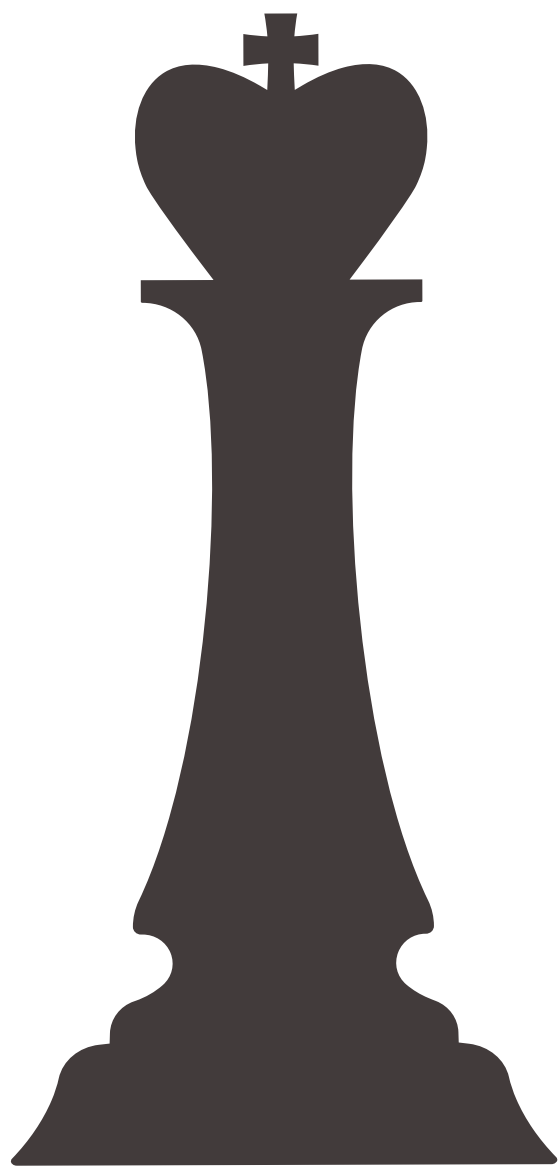
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**SHADDAD
AL MUSALMY**
*The writer is a
Senior Editor at
Oman Daily Observer*

Let's be honest. When May rolls into the Sultanate of Oman, the sun doesn't just rise, it clocks in for overtime. By 9 am, your car door handle is conducting science experiments. By noon, the pavement could fry an egg. But we are Omanis. We have been doing summer since before AC was invented. So if the heat is rising, here's some lighter, cooler wisdom to help you win.

In Oman, hydration isn't a tip. It's a lifestyle. Don't wait until you feel like a dried fig. Keep a bottle with you the way you keep your phone: charged and close. Add a slice of lemon or mint to your water bottle from the souq and suddenly you're not just surviving, you're at a spa. Just a very hot spa.

Black clothes are classic, but summer is when light colours and loose cottons become VIPs. Think whites, beiges, pastels. The goal is to reflect heat, not absorb it.

And gentlemen, if your dishdasha sticks to you by 10 am, it's time to size up. Ladies, that embroidered pashmina might be gorgeous, but if it feels like a blanket at noon, park it till October. Sunglasses aren't just fashion either. They stop you from squinting your way into three new wrinkles by August.

There's a reason our ancestors did things at dawn. 5 am to 9 am is golden hour. Walk the beach in Shatti, hit the gym, run errands, or water the plants. After that, the sun goes from warm hug to personal attack.

From 12 pm to 4 pm, unless you're a traffic light or absolutely have to, stay indoors. This is AC appreciation time. It's also when karak tastes best, coincidentally.

Close your curtains by 11 am, especially sun-facing windows, because heat loves a glass invitation. And please, give your AC a fighting chance. Clean the filter. It's been loyal since March. It deserves it.

Heavy shuwa at 1 pm? Your body will file a complaint. Summer is for light, water-rich foods. Watermelon, cucumber, laban, salads and grilled fish.

Save the machboos for sunset when the breeze shows up again. Also, spicy food makes you sweat, which actually cools you down. So that biryani isn't betrayal. It's science.

Siestas exist for a reason. In Spain, they call it tradition. In Oman, we call it survival. A 20-minute power nap after lunch isn't laziness. It's heat strategy. Your body is working overtime to cool itself. Let it.

Find water, any water. Wadi trips at dawn, a quick swim, or even just dipping your feet in a bucket on the balcony.

Look, the heat will rise. That's May to September in Oman. But we've got AC, humour and 5,000 years of practice.

So wear the shades, hug your water bottle and remember: summer is temporary. But bragging rights for "I survived Omani summer 2026" last forever. Stay cool. Or at least, cooler than your car seat at 2 pm.

QUICK FEATURES



ART

Carl Decaluwe, Queen Mathilde of Belgium and Brugge mayor Dirk De Fauw walk during a royal visit to the BRUSK arts centre in Bruges. — **AFP**



FASHION

US actress Sarah Paulson arrives for the 2026 Met Gala celebrating "Costume Art" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York. — **AFP**



CULTURE

A boy sits atop a narrow boat during the Canalway Cavalcade waterways three-day festival in Little Venice, London, Britain. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



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Muscat Quantab

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Golden hour and salt air



kochumon_mampalayil
Salalah, Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman

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Little watchers of the night

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NETFLIX TO LAUNCH GERWIG’S ‘NARNIA’ IN THEATRES

Netflix said it will release filmmaker Greta Gerwig’s *Narnia: The Magician’s Nephew* in theatres next year, marking a notable shift in its distribution strategy. The film will play exclusively in cinemas for more than 45 days before arriving on the platform, a first for the streaming service.

Written and directed by Gerwig, the movie adapts C S Lewis’ 1955 novel, which explores the origins of Narnia. It is scheduled to debut in theatres on February 12 before streaming on April 2, creating a clear theatrical window between releases.

The move departs from Netflix’s usual model of prioritising streaming releases, with only limited theatrical runs typically reserved for awards consideration. Films must screen in cinemas to qualify for the Academy Awards, making the decision strategically significant.

Netflix said the shift reflects the story’s broad, cross-generational appeal, positioning it as an event film. Theatre owners welcomed the move, arguing audiences would benefit from experiencing the film on the big screen first.

The company has recently shown greater openness to theatrical releases. It previously brought a sing-along version of its animated title *KPop Demon Hunters* to cinemas, while co-CEO Ted Sarandos has indicated continued support for



Greta Gerwig. — Reuters

traditional release windows in select cases.

Narnia was initially planned for a limited IMAX run over Thanksgiving, but the wider rollout expands its reach significantly. Gerwig said she looks forward to audiences seeing the film in both theatres and on Netflix.

Adam Aron, CEO of AMC Entertainment, said the chain would fully support the release, signaling strong backing from major exhibitors as Netflix tests a more traditional distribution approach.

Analysts say the decision could influence how other streaming platforms approach big-budget franchises, particularly those with established literary audiences.

— Reuters

STARS SHINE AT MET GALA, FASHION’S BIGGEST NIGHT



HOLLYWOOD, music, sports and fashion’s biggest names gathered at the Met Gala on Monday, led by Beyoncé, Madonna and Nicole Kidman, for the annual fundraiser at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The theme, “Fashion is Art”, tied to the Costume Institute’s “Costume Art” exhibition, exploring the relationship between clothing and fine art. The event, held each first Monday in May, once again delivered a star-heavy red carpet spectacle.

Beyoncé, a co-chair returning after a decade, arrived late but stole attention in a bejeweled skeleton gown topped with a dramatic feathered coat and headpiece. She was joined by Jay-Z in a tuxedo with tails and their daughter Blue Ivy Carter in a white strapless gown and sparkling heels. Fellow co-chairs Venus Williams and Nicole Kidman opened the night, with Kidman in a shimmering red Chanel column dress with feather cuffs and Williams in a black Swarovski crystal gown with an elaborate neck plate.

Rock and pop royalty followed, including Madonna, Cher and Stevie Nicks alongside newer stars Sabrina Carpenter, Doja Cat and Tyla. Rihanna and A\$AP Rocky made a typically late dramatic entrance. Bad Bunny wore prosthetics and a white wig to imagine himself as an older man, according to Vogue. Doja Cat appeared in a draped latex Saint Laurent gown with a high slit.

Designers Donatella Versace, Tom Ford, Stella McCartney, Anthony Vaccarello and Haider Ackermann attended,



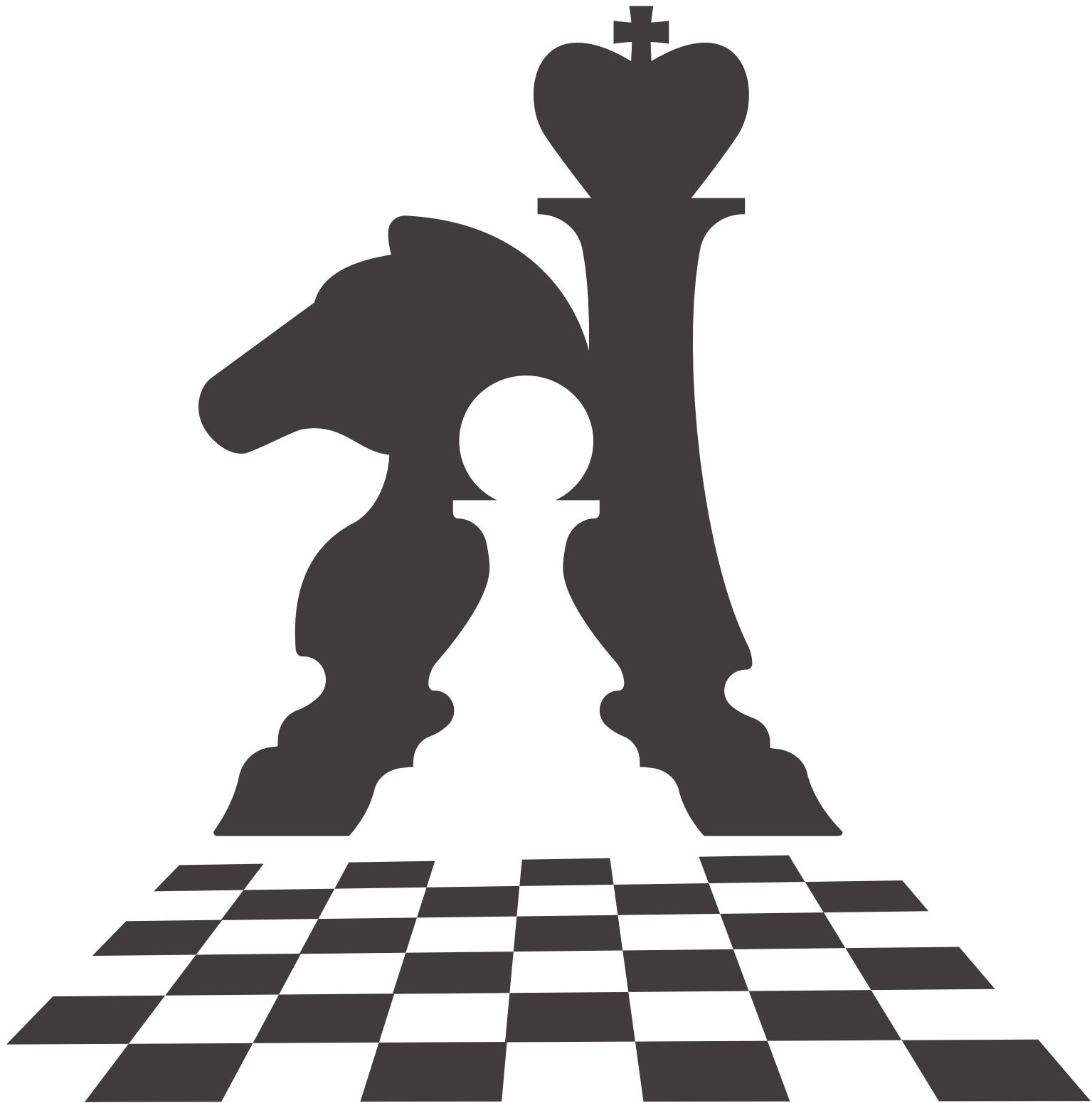
The gala raised a record \$42 million for the Met’s Costume Institute, surpassing \$31 million last year. This year drew controversy over Amazon boss Jeff Bezos and Lauren Sánchez Bezos as lead sponsors and honorary co-chairs

while athletes including Olympic skaters Alysa Liu and Eileen Gu — whose dress featured a built-in bubble maker — joined NFL star Russell Wilson and several basketball players on the carpet. Actress Blake Lively also made a surprise appearance shortly after settling a court case over her film “It Ends with Us”. The gala raised a record \$42 million for the

Met’s Costume Institute, surpassing \$31 million last year. This year drew controversy over Amazon boss Jeff Bezos and Lauren Sánchez Bezos as lead sponsors and honorary co-chairs, prompting boycott calls. One intruder was briefly stopped by security. Wintour defended their involvement, saying they “genuinely care about giving back”. — AFP

FEATURES

C H E S S I N O M A N



A TIMELESS GAME

INSPIRING A NEW GENERATION

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

AS strategic thinking and intellectual sports continue to gain ground across the Sultanate of Oman, chess is quietly experiencing a resurgence among young players and communities alike. Events such as the upcoming Chess Tournament — Season 6, organised by The Champ Sports & Arts in Al Khuwair on April 18, 2026, reflect a growing enthusiasm for a game that has shaped minds for centuries.

Chess, believed to have originated in India around the 6th century as *chaturanga*, made its way through Persia and the Islamic world before reaching Europe, where it evolved into the modern game known today. Its journey across cultures has cemented it not only as a form of entertainment but as a powerful intellectual discipline. Historically associated with rulers, scholars and military strategists, chess has long been regarded as a mirror of life itself — demanding foresight, patience and adaptability.

In Oman, chess has steadily carved out a space within schools, clubs and community



centres. While it may not yet rival football in popularity, its presence is increasingly visible through grassroots initiatives, local competitions and educational programmes aimed at younger audiences. Tournaments like the one hosted by The Champ Sports & Arts are helping to nurture early interest,

particularly among children aged 6 to 14, offering them a structured environment to develop their skills.

The benefits of chess are well documented. For young players, it enhances critical thinking, problem-solving abilities and concentration. Studies have shown that regular engagement



with chess can improve memory, boost academic performance and strengthen decision-making skills. Beyond cognitive development, the game also instils discipline and resilience, teaching players to plan ahead, learn from mistakes and remain composed under pressure.

In a rapidly evolving world

where digital distractions are ever-present, chess offers a refreshing alternative — one that encourages deep focus and meaningful interaction. Its accessibility is another key strength; requiring minimal equipment, it can be played almost anywhere, making it an ideal tool for educational and community development.

Oman's broader vision for youth empowerment and knowledge-based growth aligns closely with the values that chess promotes. As more organisations introduce competitions and training opportunities, the potential to build a strong national chess culture becomes increasingly tangible. Events such as the April tournament not only provide a platform for competition but also foster a sense of community, bringing together players, families and enthusiasts in a shared pursuit of excellence.

With continued support and visibility, chess in Oman could evolve from a niche pastime into a recognised pillar of intellectual sport. For now, each move on the board represents something greater — a step towards sharper minds, stronger communities and a future shaped by strategy and imagination.