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D A I L Y

Observer



12 KING KIMI, MAX MISERY, BEARMAN SMASH: JAPAN GP TALKING POINTS

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INBRIEF

PUBLIC SERVICES
SECTOR TO ATTRACT
RO 8.8 BILLION
INVESTMENTS

The Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) has announced the implementation of three new strategic projects: the continuous renewable energy production project, battery energy storage systems (BESS), and demand response management, alongside the introduction of improvements to service assurance standards during 2026. During its annual media briefing, the authority said that the volume of investments in regulated sectors reached approximately RO 3.4 billion during the years of the 10th Five-Year Plan (2021–2025) and is set to increase to RO 8.8 billion during the 11th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030). Meanwhile, the transition rate to smart metres reached 99 per cent in the water sector and 80 per cent in the electricity sector, with actual readings reaching 97 per cent for electricity and 97.71 per cent for water. **SEE ALSO P13**

UN WORRIED BY
ISRAELI THREATS
AGAINST LEBANON



Lebanese prepare bags of fruits and vegetables to be distributed among displaced people in Tyre, Lebanon, on Tuesday. — Reuters

The UN aid chief on Tuesday warned that southern Lebanon could become another occupied territory in the Middle East after renewed Israeli threats to seize the area following its war with Hezbollah. Tom Fletcher drew parallels to Gaza, the Palestinian territory facing a humanitarian crisis, as he told the Security Council that fighting in Lebanon has already displaced 1.1 million people. “Given the trajectory that some Israeli ministers have described and given what we have seen in plain sight in Gaza, how will you protect civilians?” he said.

Royal Decree on Oman Botanic Garden issued

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued Royal Decree No 44/2026 on amending some provisions of Royal Decree No 6/2006 on establishing Oman Botanic Garden.

Article (1) states that the texts of Article One and Article

Three of Royal Decree No 6/2006 shall be replaced with the following texts: Article One: The area whose boundaries are defined in the map attached to this decree shall be designated as a natural reserve under the name ‘Oman Botanic Garden,’ falling under the jurisdiction of

Muscat Governorate (Muscat Municipality).

Article Three: The Chairman of Muscat Municipality shall exercise all powers stipulated in the Law on Nature Reserves and Wildlife Conservation promulgated by Royal Decree No 6/2003 with respect to Oman Botanic Garden

Reserve. The Chairman shall also issue the implementing regulations and decisions of this decree in coordination with the relevant authorities.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

Next days in Iran
war will be ‘decisive’

TEHRAN SETS GIANT OIL TANKER ABLAZE AFTER TRUMP WARNINGS

PENTAGON CHIEF Pete Hegseth said on Tuesday that the next days of the Iran war will be ‘decisive’ while refusing to rule out US ground forces playing a role in the conflict.

Hegseth also revealed during a news conference — his first in nearly two weeks — that he had visited US troops in the Middle East over the weekend, and said that talks on ending the conflict were “gaining strength.”

“The upcoming days will be decisive. Iran knows that, and there’s almost nothing they can militarily do about it,” Hegseth said. Asked about concerns among some of President Donald Trump’s base about the possible use of ground troops in Iran, Hegseth declined to tip his hand. “You can’t fight and win a war if you tell your adversary what you are willing to do, or what you are not willing to do, to include boots on the ground,” he said.

“If we needed to, we could execute those options on behalf of the president of the United States and this department. Or maybe we don’t have to use them at all — maybe negotiations work,” Hegseth said.

The Pentagon chief said talks on ending the war were making progress even as the more than month-long US-Israeli military campaign against Iran continued.

“They are very real. They are ongoing, they are active, and I think, gaining strength,”



Damage to the Kuwait-flagged Al Salmi crude oil tanker, following a reported strike, on Tuesday. — Reuters

Hegseth said of the negotiations.

He also said he had made an unannounced trip to visit US troops taking part in operations against Iran.

TANKER HIT

Tehran attacked and set ablaze a fully loaded oil tanker off Dubai on Tuesday, and US President Donald Trump told countries that had not helped in the conflict to find “some delayed courage” to take the Strait of Hormuz and get their own oil.

Authorities in Dubai said the fire on the Kuwait-flagged Al Salmi had been brought under

control following a drone attack, with no oil leak and no injuries to the crew. Kuwait Petroleum Corp, the ship’s owner, said the vessel’s hull was damaged.

The attack was the latest on merchant vessels in the strait, a vital waterway for shipping oil, since the United States and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. LSEG Data showed the vessel was heading to Qingdao in China, and was carrying 1.2 million barrels of Saudi crude oil and 800,000 barrels of Kuwaiti crude, according to monitoring service TankerTrackers.com.

After earlier threatening to

obliterate Iran’s energy plants if it does not agree to a peace deal and open the Strait of Hormuz, Trump said in a social media post on Tuesday that countries running short of jet fuel needed to look after themselves, or buy from the US “...build up some delayed courage, go to the Strait, and just TAKE IT. You’ll have to start learning how to fight for yourself, the USA won’t be there to help you anymore, just like you weren’t there for us. Iran has been, essentially, decimated. The hard part is done. Go get your own oil!” he wrote.

SEE ALSO P6 & 7

Schools shift to e-learning as rains expected today

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education has announced the switch to distance education and the activation of e-learning platforms across all public and private schools, universities and colleges in the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South and Al Wusta, as well as in the wilayats of Al Amerat and Qurayat within Muscat Governorate. This measure will take effect on Wednesday, with regular in-person instruction scheduled to resume the following day (Thursday).

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the ministry clarified that this

decision was made in response to a notification from the National Emergency Management Centre regarding the impact of a trough associated with the ‘Al Furat’ low-pressure system on several governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The move underscores the ministry’s commitment to ensuring the safety of all students and staff across schools and higher education institutions.

The ministry has urged students and staff to exercise the highest degree of caution, adhere strictly to all guidance and alerts issued by the



The move underscores the ministry’s commitment to ensuring the safety of all students and staff.

competent authorities, and remain vigilant throughout the period.

Meanwhile, the centre has reported that the governorates of Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Sharqiyah South, Al Wusta, the southern parts of Muscat Governorate, and the mountainous areas of Al Batinah South Governorate will be affected by rainfall of varying intensity, occasionally accompanied by thunderstorms and active winds on Wednesday. The expected impact level is low to moderate.

The National Multi-Hazard

Early Warning Centre at the Civil Aviation Authority has issued an alert regarding rainfall of varying intensity that may lead to the flow of wadis, as well as active winds with speeds ranging between 18 and 35 knots, along with reduced horizontal visibility during rainfall.

Additionally, parts of the governorates of Muscat, Musandam, Al Buraimi, Al Batinah North and Dhofar are expected to be affected by scattered light to moderate rainfall, occasionally accompanied by thunderstorms, with a low (limited) impact level. — ONA

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SHORT TAKES



The meeting was chaired by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

DHOFAR MUNICIPAL COUNCIL REVIEWS DEVELOPMENT

SALALAH: The Municipal Council of Dhofar Governorate, during its session on Tuesday, reviewed a number of service and development topics, as well as ongoing efforts in these areas. The meeting was chaired by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar and Chairman of the Council. The session featured a visual presentation by Dhofar Municipality on the governorate’s park and garden projects, highlighting their distribution across various wilayats in alignment with urban expansion and in response to the needs of residents and visitors.

The presentation also addressed a proposal for the establishment and operation of an integrated service station for truck parking areas, aimed at providing a comprehensive service environment to meet the needs of the land transport and freight sector, while enhancing operational efficiency and regulating truck movement.

In line with the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to achieving environmental sustainability and reaching net-zero emissions by 2050, the Council hosted specialists from the Green Gulf Recycling Center. As the first and largest facility of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman for the recycling of electronic waste and batteries, the centre is located in Salalah. Its mission is to protect Oman’s environment and promote a sustainable circular economy through the safe and responsible disposal of all electrical and electronic equipment, as well as the recycling and management of a diverse range of e-waste. The centre operates in accordance with global protocols for data protection and environmental safety, coordinating with various entities in both the public and private sectors to minimise the negative impact of such waste. — ONA

BURAIMI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL REVIEWS WEATHER CONDITION



The meeting discussed the implications of the weather experienced by the wilayats. — ONA

AL BURAIMI: The Municipal Council of Al Buraimi Governorate held its third meeting of 2026 on Tuesday, chaired by Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi and Chairman of the Municipal Council.

The session addressed the repercussions of the weather condition associated with the “Al Masarat” depression and its effects on the governorate’s three wilayats, in addition to several service and development topics listed on the agenda.

The meeting discussed the implications of the weather experienced by the governorate’s wilayats, reviewing the most significant impacts and the accompanying field challenges that required concerted official and community efforts.

Al Busaidy lauded the rapid response of the competent authorities and their intensive efforts in handling emergencies and mitigating damage, noting the field visits conducted by several officials to assess the extent of the impact and emphasising the importance of enhancing readiness and improving response efficiency. — ONA

INCREASE IN OMANI WORKFORCE, A DROP IN EXPATS

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

There has been a gradual increase in the number of Omani workers and subsequently in the number of expatriates. According to the latest statistics from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the number of Omani workers increased from 890,030 in 2025 to 892,217 in January 2026 and to 893,707 in February 2026, while the number of expatriate workers declined from 1,816,185 in

2025 to 1,806,228 in January 2026 and to 1,794,101.

The number of Bangladeshis declined from 612,208 in 2025 to 609,259 in February 2026, Indians from 520,447 to 512,786, and Pakistanis from 296,459 to 292,792.

The decline in the number of Bangladeshi and Pakistani expatriate workers can be largely attributed to the restrictions on issuing job visas to these nationalities by the authorities over the last two years. Overall, the Sultanate of Oman had a

population of 5,368,297, including 2,321,416 expatriates at the end of February 2026, compared to 5,276,516 in 2025.

Of these, the capital Muscat has 937,463 expatriates compared to 597,379 Omanis, while Dhofar has 288,574 expatriates compared to 245,867 Omanis.

The majority of Omani workers are employed in clerical jobs (213,210), technical specialists (140,346), administration, directors and managers (136,643), and service occupations (89,590).

Kids immunisation key to preventive healthcare

KHOLOUD AL MAQBALI
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

THE Sultanate of Oman has identified strengthening the healthcare system as a top priority, with children’s immunisation being a cornerstone of preventative healthcare and the protection of future generations. The Ministry of Health has implemented a comprehensive national immunisation programme that offers essential vaccines for children free of charge, aiming to prevent communicable and non-communicable diseases and promote public health.

The immunisation programme in the Sultanate of Oman covers a wide range of vaccine-preventable diseases, including polio, measles, mumps, rubella and hepatitis B, within an efficient and sustainable healthcare system.

This is accomplished by increasing coverage rates and ensuring the highest levels of health protection for children.

Health authorities are dedicated to raising community awareness about the importance of following the approved immunisation schedule. This helps in creating a healthy and safe society and



The immunisation programme in the Sultanate of Oman covers a wide range of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Adherence to immunisation is a shared responsibility between health authorities and parents

supports the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals related to health and quality of life.

The benefits of immunisation go beyond protecting children to benefit the entire community. Higher immunisation rates can decrease the spread of infectious diseases and safeguard vulnerable groups, such as infants, the elderly, and individuals with chronic illnesses, through the concept of ‘herd immunity.’

While immunisation is generally safe and effective, some health

conditions may require temporarily postponing a vaccination dose in cases of high fever or acute illness, necessitating consultation with a doctor. Parents must disclose any relevant medical history or allergies to ensure their child’s safety.

Adherence to immunisation is a shared responsibility between health authorities and parents. The Ministry of Health emphasises the importance of following the immunisation schedule, not missing any doses, and raising community awareness about the significance of vaccines, all of which contribute to protecting future generations and establishing a healthy and sustainable society.

Article 19 of the Child Law stipulates that immunisation is a fundamental right of the child, given its role in promoting health and preventing diseases. This places the responsibility on parents to adhere to the approved immunisation schedule and ensure their children receive the doses on time.

Immunisation is not just a preventative measure; it represents a true investment in the future generations and a fundamental pillar for constructing a healthy and prosperous society within a comprehensive healthcare system focused on prevention and sustainability.

Domestic tourism in focus as geopolitics cast shadow

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

The focus of the upcoming season is domestic tourism, with corporations exploring insurance coverage to ensure the smooth operation of their businesses, according to expert panellists at the OER Business Summit 2026 held under the auspices of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura.

Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, stated that Oman’s tourism season typically runs from September. However, there have been cancellations extending into the first quarter of next year, particularly from large groups that bring thousands of people. Al Maamari emphasised the importance of these customers, as they often return with their families.



Experts stated that Oman’s tourism season begins in September.

The tourism sector has been affected by regional geopolitics, leading to the cancellation of a major event scheduled for November. Despite the challenges ahead, Al Maamari stressed the need for resilience and collaboration within the sector, with a primary focus on domestic tourism for the next season.

He highlighted how

staycations have become popular, with new products like farms being developed to attract visitors. Al Maamari defined domestic tourism not only as travellers within Oman but also from the region seeking safe and new experiences. He sees this as an opportunity to position Oman as a secure destination for travellers.

Meanwhile, Azzan al Asmy,

Group Managing Director, Hema Energy, noted the impact of geopolitical situations on their company’s operations, emphasising the need for more storage and hubs in the country to ensure smooth operations.

In times of uncertainty, effective risk management becomes crucial.

Sunil Kohli, CEO of Dhofar Insurance Company, explained that insurance companies play a vital role in risk management and transfer. They provide coverage for assets, helping industries recover quickly in the event of a claim.

Kohli mentioned an increase in companies seeking business interruption, political violence, and war risk coverage in recent days, highlighting the importance of insurance in maintaining business continuity and resilience.

SHORT TAKES



These efforts are part of broader initiatives to mitigate flood risks and safeguard agricultural lands. — ONA

Construction of new flood protection walls complete

YANQUL: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has completed the construction works for the protection wall project in the Al Buwayridah area of the Wilayat of Yanqul in Al Dhabirah Governorate. Meanwhile, work continues on the protection wall project in Al Bilad—Al Madam area, where progress has reached 30 per cent. These efforts are part of broader initiatives to mitigate flood risks and safeguard agricultural lands. The implementation of these two projects falls within a community partnership framework, in which local residents contributed 80 per cent of the total cost, while the ministry covered the remaining 20 per cent. The aim is to secure agricultural holdings against soil erosion and the impacts of wadi flow. — ONA

TWO HONOURED FOR LIFE-SAVING



MUSCAT: The International Human Rights Movement (IHRM) lauded two individuals for life-saving and rescue operations during the recent adverse weather conditions. These two individuals are not professionally trained rescuers, nor are they expert swimmers. Yet, they risked their lives for strangers in a way that is almost unimaginable in today’s materialistic world.

Workshop seeks to promote media literacy



The workshop is organised in partnership with the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the Royal Oman Police and the Authority for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises. — ONA

BAHLA: A two-day national training workshop to promote media literacy concepts kicked off in the Wilayat of Bahla, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, under the theme of ‘Empowering Minds in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI)’. The workshop is organised by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). It is attended by a large segment of teachers, students and representatives of civil society institutions. Held under the auspices of Shaikh Said bin Ali al Nuaimi, Wali of Bahla, the workshop helps the community to keep pace with the

accelerating digital transformation. It seeks to enhance the responsible use of information and modern technologies. The workshop also aims to promote international concepts of media and information literacy, empower participants with skills needed to verify information and combat misinformation, raise awareness about the ethical dimensions of using digital technologies, introduce relevant legislation and support entrepreneurship trends in the digital space. The programme of the first day of the workshop focuses on efforts made by the Ministry of Information to

promote media literacy and security media as a model in supporting information awareness. In addition, it underlines the role of religious discourse as a means of combating misinformation. The programme of the second day deals with the ethics of using AI applications, mechanisms for building entrepreneurial projects and information verification skills. It is worth noting that the workshop is organised in partnership with the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and the Authority for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises. — ONA

Frankincense symposium in Sadah evokes innovation

SADAH: The Office of the Wali of Sadah, Dhofar Governorate, on Tuesday organised a symposium titled “Frankincense in Sadah: A renewed heritage and sustainable innovations”. **HISTORICAL ROLE** The symposium focused on the historical and economic importance of the frankincense tree in the Wilayat of Sadah and discussed investment opportunities in this



The symposium focused on the historical and economic importance of the frankincense tree. — ONA industry, in addition to marketing of the product in Oman and abroad. The symposium was held under the auspices of Shaikh Ahmed bin Ali al Daree, Wali of Sadah. It underscored three main

themes: “The Historical role of frankincense in the Wilayat of Sadah”, “Modern uses of frankincense based on scientific evidence” and “Investment in frankincense and marketing its products locally and globally.” Al Daree said that research and investment in frankincense industry constitute opportunities for supporting economic diversification and preserving this heritage for future generations. — ONA

Expatriates can be hired as legal consultants in Oman

KABEER YOUSUF MUSCAT, MARCH 31 April 3, the legal profession in the Sultanate of Oman will operate under a clear distinction between lawyers and legal consultants, in accordance with Royal Decree No 41/2024. To Omanise the legal profession and to encourage fresh Omani graduates to choose their career in law, the Sultanate of Oman has been encouraging law firms to appoint Omanis to appear in courts. However, the law says that expatriates can be employed as legal consultants in legal consultancy offices, but not as lawyers. Speaking to the Observer, Dr Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Zadjali, Secretary-General of the Gulf Lawyers Union, explained that law firms and legal consultants must meet all requirements by April 2, marking the end of the one-year period granted for regularisation. After this date, the distinction becomes fully effective: while law firms may appear before courts and undertake advocacy work as defined under the Law of Advocacy and Legal Consultations, legal consultancy offices are limited to providing legal services. Oman’s Basic Law defines a



The registration of legal firms has been shifted from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs. The registration of foreign legal firms should be subject to the approval of the competent authority and the terms and conditions thereof

DR MOHAMMED AL ZADJALI Secretary-General of the Gulf Lawyers Union



lawyer as “anyone registered in one of the lawyers’ registers in accordance with the provisions of this law,” while a legal consultant is “anyone registered in one of the legal consultants’ registers in accordance with the provisions of the law.” “Also, the registration of legal firms has been shifted from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs. The registration of foreign legal firms should be subject to the approval of the competent authority and the terms and conditions thereof,” Dr Al Zadjali said. Civil law firms existing in partnership with a non-Omani partner shall continue to operate for a period of three years from

the date of implementation of the Law. Transfer of ownership or any share therein to a non-Omani is prohibited during this period, and the registration of the non-Omani partner shall continue until the expiry of that period. Further, Foreign law firms may also be permitted to open legal consultancy offices in Oman if they can demonstrate at least 15 years of establishment and operate branches in three or more different countries, subject to the conditions and controls specified by the executive regulation. Dr Al Zadjali said given the increasing presence of foreign companies and international investment activities in Oman, there is a need for expatriate legal consultants.



TENDER

PROVISION OF AD HOC LEGAL CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP) is responsible for procuring new capacity for power and water in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the requirements of the law for the regulation and privatization of the electricity and related water sector promulgated by Royal Decree 78/2004 as amended and the PWP license.

Tender Description	PWP invites proposals from qualified law firms for inclusion in a panel to provide ad hoc legal consultancy services. The selected firms will be engaged on an as-needed basis to deliver legal advisory services across a range of matters relevant to PWP's business, in accordance with the terms of this tender.
Tender Number	OPWP/2026/004
Tender Purchase Period	From 30 March 2026 to 06 April 2026
Tender Fee	105 OMR / Free of charges for (SME) with a valid Riyada card
Submission date	21 April 2026 at 12:00 PM Oman Time Zone
Collection & Payment Methods	The tender documents are available for purchase in an electronic format through PWP website (https://omanpwp.om/tenders). The payment is done electronically through PWP website. In case of any queries, please send an email to: procurement.officer@Omanpwp.nama.om
Bank Guarantee	A Tender Bond (in the form set out in the tender documents) or a bank certified cheque of 200 OMR, to be valid for a period of 120 days from the submission deadline date referred to above. The tender bond or certified cheque shall be enclosed as part of the bid.

SPOTLIGHT



Public awareness about risks through media and local community engagement is needed.

— FILE PHOTO

KABEER YOUSUF

CAN’T STOP HEAVY RAINS, BUT CAN EASE ITS IMPACT

EVERY ADVERSE weather condition is a new opportunity to design and learn newer methods of minimising the impact of such conditions.

Some of the initiatives currently in operation include strengthening infrastructure, implementing early warning systems, enforcing strict safety protocols, building flood protection dams, clearing drainage, using the ‘Muzn’ system for accurate forecasting, enforcing penalties for crossing wadis and providing mandatory guidelines to secure work sites.

It doesn’t end there, the high mountain road leading to Al Amerat, the advanced drainage system of Ruwi and Al Hamriya, are examples of innovative solutions.

In the recent rains, the newly built 30-metre-channel bridge (beam bridge) across Wadi Al Hoqain was blocked with trees and other debris.

“Such an incident where wadi flowed through the village was a first in my life,” said Ahmed al Ghabshi, a senior citizen. “That too with a bridge in place to let water flow smoothly,” he adds.

In another incident, the villages of Al Mazari, Al Ya and Fayq, located in the Wilayat of Qurayat, Muscat Governorate, faced flooding of the wadis.

“This is not new; it has persisted for decades without any real, fundamental solutions being implemented to address the issues with the valleys or the roads affected by them,” said Ahmed al Sulaimani, a resident.

During the Al Masarat depression, the Wadi Dayqah Dam in Al Mazari experienced

severe flooding, leading to the closure of the vital road connecting the villages of Al Mazari.

However, with careful planning and understanding, and identifying the flood-prone areas, losses can be minimised to a great extent, according to experts in safety and security.

“Oman needs to focus on the establishment of risk management departments in all government agencies, and pay attention to improving urban planning to handle flash floods and manage coastal vulnerability. Greater focus should be paid on community-level engagement to improve public safety behaviour during rains,” said Abdullah al Khadouri.

Repairing damaged roads and constructing a bridge in places like Al Mazari will help, according to the villagers.

“Finding sustainable engineering solutions will resolve this issue and qualify these villages to become the premier tourist destination in Muscat Governorate,” said Al Sulaimani.

According to Mohammed Al Aghbari, an oil and gas safety expert, the construction of flood protection dams and improved drainage systems to manage wadi flows prevents waterlogging.

“As part of the safety protocols and education, public awareness about risks through media and local community engagement should be raised and drainage networks should be actively maintained and cleared before rainy seasons. Heavy equipment should be kept in standby mode for quick intervention by municipalities,” said Al Aghbari.

وزارة الإعلام
Ministry of Information

ELECTRONIC BIDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Information shall be electronically bidding vehicles through on Mazad Oman ([www.mazad.om](#)) in accordance with the following statement:

Statement	Place of Inspection	Date and Timing of Inspection	Date of Electronic Bidding
Vehicles	Madinat Al Ilam	Monday 6/4/2026 Tuesday 7/4/2026 Between 8:00 am & 1:00 pm	From Wednesday 8/4/2026 To Thursday 9/4/2026

- You may acquaint yourself with the terms and sign up through [www.mazad.om](#)
- For further details, you may reach us through [info@mazad.om](#)

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Oman needs to focus on the establishment of risk management departments in all government agencies, and pay attention to improving urban planning to handle flash floods and manage coastal vulnerability

As part of the safety protocols and education, public awareness about risks through media and local community engagement should be raised and drainage networks should be actively maintained and cleared before rainy seasons



30 NEW STUDENTS JOIN ARABIC COURSE

MANAH: The Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to non-Native Speakers in the Wilayat of Manah, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, on Tuesday received 30 students who will join the institute’s 61st course, which will last 8 weeks.

The students hail from Türkiye, Vietnam, India, Uzbekistan, France, Germany, Russia, Japan, Slovakia, Hungary, Comoros Islands and the United States of America. The institute organised an orientation day for the new students. The event included a presentation that provided an overview of the study system and

accompanying cultural activities. Later, the students went on a tour of the institute’s facilities.

The course comprises integrated educational programmes that combine language learning and identification of the values of Omani society.

The 61st course constitutes a step forward in the institute’s mission of spreading Arabic language and enhancing its global presence.

Through this approach, the institute extends bridges of cultural communication between the Sultanate of Oman and the countries of the world. — ONA

NOTICE
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Al Omaniya Financial Services SAOG hereby announces that Mr. Abdullah Hamdan Shamis Al Mamari, an Omani national holding Civil ID No. 468348, is no longer employed by the Company as of 01 April 2026 and no longer represents the Company in any capacity.

Accordingly, the Company shall bear no responsibility for any transactions conducted with the individual, nor will it consider any claims relating to him that are submitted seven (7) days after the date of publication of this notice.

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Forum talks about quality of education



The forum encompasses transformation and the development of leadership and development of educational competencies. — ONA

A FORUM titled “Educational Leadership to Enhance the Quality of School Performance in Light of Educational Indicators and External Review,” began on Tuesday in the Dhofar Governorate. The forum discusses the importance of promoting integration among the various components of educational work. This integration aims to contribute to elevating the quality of school performance and achieving the best educational and administrative practices.

The two-day forum, organised by the Directorate-General of Education in Dhofar Governorate, targets approximately 500 school principals, educational supervisors, educational evaluation specialists, and professionals from the Human Resources Department.

The forum encompasses several main themes, including institutional

transformation and the development of educational leadership, the management of educational data and indicators, and the development of educational supervision competencies.

It also covers external reviews and the improvement of school performance, the efficiency of administrative operations and occupational discipline, supervisory follow-up and elevating performance motivation, digital transformation and the challenges faced by remote schools, and the evaluation of school leadership.

This is in addition to fostering innovation in educational solutions through a dedicated solutions laboratory.

The event included presenting a group of specialised working papers and discussion panels addressing the themes of enhancing

the effectiveness of educational supervision in developing school performance in light of external review reports, and developing the skills of educational supervisors in employing educational indicators in decision-making.

These sessions focused heavily on building the capacities of supervisors in analysing educational data. It is worth noting that the forum aims to enhance the concepts of institutional transformation in educational supervision and school administration to raise the efficiency of institutional performance.

It further seeks to empower educational leaders to effectively employ educational data and indicators to support decision-making and improve student learning, while promoting the exchange of expertise and applied experiences among participants. — ONA

UTAS board discusses progress made for inclusion in world rankings

MUSCAT: The Academic Board of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) on Tuesday held its third meeting in the current academic year 2025-2026. The meeting was chaired by Dr Said bin Hamad al Ruba’ee, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Chairman of UTAS Academic Board.

The Board discussed the progress made in the preparedness of UTAS for inclusion in the QS World University Rankings, endorsed the university’s graduates for the fall semester (2025/2026 academic year) and approved the university’s



The meeting was chaired by Dr Said bin Hamad al Ruba’ee, Chairman of UTAS Academic Board. — ONA

Admission Plan for the 2026-2027 Academic Year.

The Board also reviewed a proposal to apply a comprehensive institutional framework that integrates the principles of sustainable development into education, research, innovation and community engagement in line with Oman Vision

2040 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, UTAS Board looked into steps to integrate the University’s policies and procedures to make them more comprehensive, clear and flexible and to formulate them in accordance with the University’s new strategic plan. — ONA

شركة قبة الصحراء ش.م.ع.ح

Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.)
P.O. Box 311, Muscat, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman.

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER ENDED ON FEBRUARY 28, 2026.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit the unaudited financial statement of the company for the first quarter that ended on February 28, 2026, along with related reports.

The Revenue is **₹ 3,359,686** as against **₹ 3,412,771** in the corresponding period of the previous year whereas net Profit after taxes for the period is **₹ 633,472** as against **₹ 670,241** in the last year.

The total shareholders fund increased from **₹ 27,331,371** at the end of February 2025 to **₹ 28,037,265** at the end of February 2026 and as a result of this growth, the net assets per share has recorded **₹ 3.539**.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express the most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour Al Said for his wise leadership and generous support to the private sector. Furthermore, I would extend our gratitude to his government for their cooperation and assistance with special mention to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, Muscat Stock Exchange, and Financial Services Authority.

I conclude this report by expressing our appreciation to the shareholders, Petroleum Development Oman, our bankers and customers for their valued support and cooperation.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors,

TALAL BIN QAIS AL ZAWAWI
CHAIRMAN

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Financial Position		
as at 28 th February, 2026		
	2026	2025
	₹ '000	₹ '000
Fixed Assets	13,106	14,337
Current Assets		
Inventories	31	39
Trade & Other Receivables	5,984	5,730
Receivable from related party	21	41
Bank and Cash	13,040	11,658
	19,076	17,468
Total Assets	32,182	31,805
Current liabilities		
Trade and other Payables	891	736
Payables to related parties	2,243	2,885
Lease liability	-	18
Tax liability	599	417
	3,733	4,056
Long-term liabilities		
Deferred Tax liability	385	394
Employees' end of service benefits	27	24
	412	418
Total Liabilities	4,145	4,474
Net Assets	28,037	27,331
Shareholder's Fund		
Share Capital	7,923	7,923
Legal Reserve	2,641	2,641
Retained Earnings	17,473	16,767
Total Shareholders' Equity	28,037	27,331

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income		
For 3 months ended 28 th February, 2026		
	2026	2025
	₹ '000	₹ '000
Turnover/Revenue	3,360	3,413
Gross Profit	765	829
Other Income	129	113
Administration & General Expenses	(148)	(153)
Operating Profit	746	789
Finance Charges	(1)	(1)
Profit before taxation	745	788
Taxation	(112)	(118)
Net Profit attributable to ordinary shareholders	633	670

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be delivered to any shareholder within 7 days of receipt of the request. Such request may be sent to the Board Secretary, Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.), P.O.Box: 311, Postal Code -100, Muscat.

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 08:30 am Thursday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
1124/2026/ MOH/ NIZH-10	MAINTENANCE OF ELEVATORS IN NIZWA HOSPITAL	12/April/2026	07/May/2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25,000 Per set

- 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

O N G O I N G C O N F L I C T

RIYADH ATTACKED

Multiple explosions rattled the Saudi capital Riyadh, the latest barrage as Iran carries out attacks across the Gulf region.

BEIRUT STRIKES

A strike hit Beirut's southern suburbs on Tuesday after the Israeli military renewed its warnings for residents to leave.

'UNHELPFUL' FRANCE

US President Donald Trump lashed out at France, saying it had been "very unhelpful" after not allowing planes to fly over its territory.

'GRAVE VIOLATION'

The EU demanded an investigation into attacks on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon, after three Indonesian troops were killed.

ISRAEL OCCUPATION

Defence Minister Israel Katz said Israel's military would occupy a swathe of southern Lebanon even after the end of the current war.

FLEEING LEBANON

More than 200,000 people have fled Lebanon for Syria since fighting broke out between Hezbollah and Israel.

PHARMA CO HIT

US-Israeli strikes have hit and damaged one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in Iran which produces anaesthetic and cancer drugs.

HORMUZ PLANT HIT

Strikes have hit a desalination plant on Iran's Qeshm island in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, putting it out of service.

4 INJURED IN DUBAI

Four people were injured by debris from an interception that fell on residential houses in southern Dubai.

ISRAEL EVACUATION

Israel's emergency services said that eight people with minor injuries were evacuated to hospitals in the Tel Aviv area.

DRONE HITS SAUDI

A drone interception left two people injured in Al Kharj province, a Saudi region southeast of the capital Riyadh.

ERBIL EXPLOSION

An explosion was heard near the international airport of Erbil, a city in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region.

IRANIAN

media reported on Tuesday a wave of US-Israeli strikes

hit military bases, a cancer drug plant and a religious site — after President Donald Trump threatened to destroy the country's oil wells and power grid. Video footage showed at least two massive explosions and columns of smoke in Isfahan, central Iran. State media reported the Grand Husseiniya, a Shia religious centre, was damaged in Zanjan in the northwest.

The Iranian government also said air strikes had hit a pharmaceutical plant producing cancer drugs and anaesthetics, while a health ministry official told the ISNA news agency that a bombing had left a desalination plant on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz "completely out of service".

It was not clear when the reported strike on the desalination plant had taken place, but Iran has vowed throughout the month-old conflict to match strikes on its infrastructure with raids on its neighbours.

Desalinated water provides 42 per cent of drinking water in the United Arab Emirates, 70 per cent in Saudi Arabia, 86 per cent in Oman and 90 per cent in Kuwait. Any attack on civilian

THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT ALSO SAID AIR STRIKES HAD HIT A PHARMACEUTICAL PLANT PRODUCING CANCER DRUGS AND ANAESTHETICS, WHILE A HEALTH MINISTRY SAID THAT A BOMBING HAD LEFT A DESALINATION PLANT ON QESHM ISLAND IN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ "COMPLETELY OUT OF SERVICE"

drinking water could trigger a major escalation and draw Iran's neighbours into the fray, analysts warn, but Trump did not hold back in his latest threat, apparently designed to pressure Iran to capitulate and accept a US-proposed settlement.

REALITY OF WAR

In a post on his social media site, Trump warned that if Iran didn't strike a deal and reopen the Strait of Hormuz to sea traffic the Us would respond by "blowing up and completely obliterating all of their Electric Generating Plants, Oil Wells and Kharg Island (and possibly all desalinisation plants)". Nevertheless, Qatar's foreign ministry announced that the Arab monarchies shared a "very unified position in the Gulf on calling for the de-escalation and an end to the war."

Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, whose country is acting as an intermediary between Tehran and Washington, was in Beijing for talks on "global issues of mutual interest" with counterpart Wang Yi. Dar hosted foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Türkiye in the Pakistani capital on Sunday, saying Islamabad was ready to host talks between the United States and Iran in the "coming days". Trump has claimed to be in direct contact with senior Iranian figures, but has not identified the publicly and the Iranian foreign ministry said that Washington had sent only a request to talk via intermediaries, including Pakistan. — AFP



Smoke rises after an Israeli air strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut. — Reuters

UN WARNS OF HUGE COST OF MIDEAST WAR TO ARAB COUNTRIES



A woman holds a baby as she sits outside her family tent, at a temporary encampment for displaced people, in Beirut. — Reuters

AMMAN: The war sparked by the joint US-Israeli attack on Iran has cost Arab countries \$186 billion, a top UN official said on Tuesday, as he called for an immediate halt to the fighting. "We hope the fighting will stop tomorrow, as everyday of delay has negative repercussions on the global economy," UN assistant secretary-general Abdallah al Dardari told reporters in Amman.

"We estimate that the loss to the Arab region's GDP as a result of one month of fighting will be around six per cent... Six per cent of GDP means the region has lost around \$186 billion from its economy in a single month," he said. Al Dardari, who is also a top UN official for the Arab region, said the countries of the oil-rich Gulf were shouldering the heaviest

burden. "The impact on GDP is very significant in the Gulf region, where it could reach \$168 billion, and in the Levant region, where it could reach around \$30 billion," he said. Al Dardari sounded the alarm over the expected impact on jobs in a region already wracked by inequality. "We estimate that the number of jobs we will lose is around 3.7 million," he said. — AFP

US Pentagon says coming days in Iran war will be decisive

WASHINGTON: US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Tuesday the next few days in the war against Iran would be decisive and warned Tehran that the conflict would intensify if it did not make a deal. Hegseth issued his warning hours after Iran set ablaze a fully loaded oil tanker off Dubai, its latest attack on merchant vessels in the Gulf or in the Strait of Hormuz since the United States and Israel attacked Iran on February 28. US President Donald Trump threatened on Monday to obliterate Iran's energy plants if it does not agree to a peace deal and open the strait, a vital waterway for global oil shipments that has effectively been blocked by Iran. On Tuesday, Trump criticised countries that have not helped in the war, including France and Britain, saying they should find "some delayed courage" to take the strait and get their own oil.Sources told Reuters France had not allowed its airspace to be used to transport US weapons for use in the war.

Hegseth, who said he visited US troops in the Middle East on Saturday, said Trump was willing to make a deal and talks were ongoing and gaining strength, but that the US was prepared to continue the war if Iran did not comply. "We have more and more options, and they have less ... in only one month we set the terms, the upcoming days will be decisive. Iran knows that, and there's almost nothing they can militarily do about it."

OIL HEAD FOR RECORD

The month-old conflict has spread across the region, killing thousands, disrupting energy supplies and threatening to send the global economy into a tailspin. Crude oil prices briefly spiked again after the attack on the tanker, which can carry around 2 million barrels of oil worth more than \$200 million at current prices. Authorities in Dubai said the fire on the Kuwaiti-



We have more and more options, and they have less ... in only one month we set the terms, the upcoming days will be decisive. Iran knows that, and there's almost nothing they can militarily do about it.

PETE HEGSETH



Commuters ride past an Iranian security forces vehicle parked under a banner honouring Iran's slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran. — AFP

flagged Al Salmi had been brought under control following a drone attack, with no oil leak and no injuries to the crew. Kuwait Petroleum Corp, the ship's owner, said the vessel's hull was damaged, and photos of the Al Salmi confirmed this.

LSEG Data showed the vessel was heading to Qingdao in China, and was carrying 1.2 million barrels of Saudi crude oil and 800,000 barrels of Kuwaiti crude, according to monitoring service TankerTrackers.com. The Al Salmi may not have been the intended target. Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had targeted a container ship in

the Gulf over its ties with Israel. But they appeared to be referring to the Singapore-flagged Haiphong Express, which was anchored next to the Al Salmi, according to shipping data.

ATTEMPTS AT MEDIATION

US General Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters in Washington that the US was continuing to degrade and destroy Iran's capabilities. He said the US military was continuing to strike key manufacturing and research sites and had taken out over 150 Iranian naval vessels.

Hegseth said US strikes were causing widespread desertions in Iran. Thousands of soldiers from the US Army's elite 82nd Airborne Division have started arriving in the Middle East, two US officials told Reuters on Monday, reinforcements that could expand Trump's options to include a ground assault in Iran. With attacks showing no sign of easing, Pakistan is seeking to mediate in the war. Its foreign minister, Ishaq Dar, was due to discuss the conflict during a visit to China on Tuesday after hosting talks with Türkiye, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. — Reuters

GLOBAL FALLOUT

Asia to be hit hardest by energy crisis



SINGAPORE: Asian nations are facing a major energy crisis as a result of the Iran war, with a sharp fall in crude shipments and few alternatives, global maritime analytics firm Kpler said on Tuesday. "We think Asia will, for now, be the ones suffering the most," Kpler president Jean Maynier said in an interview at the company's offices in Singapore. Maynier said Asia did not have enough energy resources of its own to fill the gap "in China... in big countries like the Philippines or Indonesia. So it's a real energy crisis." — AFP

REGIONAL ATTACKS

Explosion heard near Iraq's Erbil airport



ERBIL: An explosion was heard near the international airport of Erbil, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region. Pro-Iran armed groups have claimed responsibility for attacks on US interests in Iraq and across the region, while strikes have also targeted the groups. Erbil is home to a major US consulate complex, while its airport houses military advisers attached to a US-led coalition. Regular drone attacks by pro-Iran armed groups have usually been intercepted by air defences. — AFP

DEMANDING PEACE

GCC 'unified' in calling for de-escalation



DOHA: The Gulf states are unified in calling for a de-escalation of the Middle East war, Qatar said as Tehran launched new strikes against its neighbours. "Our understanding is that there is a very unified position in the Gulf on calling for the de-escalation and an end to the war," Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majed al Ansari told a regular news briefing. Gulf countries have faced repeated drone and missile salvos from Iran over the past month in response to US and Israeli strikes that began at the end of February. — AFP

OPINION

Teaching children to feel fear, without becoming it



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

FEAR IS one of the first emotions a child learns to feel, yet it is one of the least understood. As parents, it can be uncomfortable to witness. The instinct is often to remove it, soften it, or quickly reassure it away. In doing so, we unintentionally teach children that these uncomfortable feelings are something to avoid, rather than something to understand.

Teaching children to feel uncertainty without becoming it is not about eliminating discomfort. It is about helping them experience it, without allowing it to define them.

Children do not just feel these emotions; they often become them. A moment of unease can quickly turn into “I am scared,” and over time, even “I am a scared person.” This is where identity begins to form around emotional experiences. Without guidance, these feelings can move from being passing states to fixed beliefs.

The role of a parent is not to prevent discomfort, but to create enough safety for a child to move through it. This begins with how we respond in the moment. When a child expresses worry, whether it is about the dark, trying something new, or the possibility of failure, the response they receive shapes their relationship with that

emotion. Dismissing it with “there’s nothing to worry about” may come from comfort, but it disconnects the child from their internal experience. Amplifying it by becoming anxious ourselves can reinforce the idea that these feelings are overwhelming.

There is a middle space. A space of acknowledgement without identification. Language plays a powerful role here. Shifting from “you are scared” to “you are feeling scared” may seem subtle; however, it creates distance between the child and the emotion. It teaches them that these big feelings are something they experience, not something they are. This distinction allows emotions to move, rather than settle into identity.

Alongside this, co-regulation becomes essential. Children, especially young ones, do not yet have the capacity to regulate their emotions independently. They borrow from the nervous system of the adult in front of them. A calm, grounded presence communicates safety. Over time, this repeated experience builds their ability to hold discomfort without becoming overwhelmed.

There is also value in allowing these feelings to be felt, rather than immediately resolved. When a child is supported in staying with the sensation, even briefly, they begin to realise that it rises, peaks and

In a world that often encourages avoidance of distress, teaching children to stay connected to themselves within these moments is one of the most valuable skills we can offer

passes. This is a powerful lesson. It teaches resilience not through avoidance, but through experience.

Courage, in this sense, is not the absence of fear. It is the ability to move through uncertainty. Parents can support this by gently encouraging small steps. Not forcing a child to “be brave,” but inviting them to explore what feels manageable. Each step builds evidence that discomfort can be faced safely.

Equally important is how we model our own relationship with uncertainty. Children observe not just what we say, but how we respond to our own challenges. When they see a parent acknowledge discomfort, move through it and remain grounded, they learn that these feelings are a natural part of life.

There is a quiet shift that happens when children learn this. Anguish no longer controls their choices in the same way. It becomes information, not identity. In a world that often encourages avoidance of distress, teaching children to stay connected to themselves within these moments is one of the most valuable skills we can offer. It builds emotional resilience, self-trust, and a deeper sense of safety within.

Ultimately, when children learn they can sit with uneasiness and still feel safe, they begin to build a relationship with themselves that no external experience can shake.

NASA BEGINS COUNTDOWN TO APRIL 1 MOON LAUNCH

CHARLOTTE CAUSIT

Nasa began its two-day countdown on Monday ahead of what is slated to be its first crewed moonshot in more than half a century, a long-anticipated loop around Earth’s satellite that is to pave the way for future exploration.

The first window to launch from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida opens on Wednesday, and Nasa officials said the countdown began at 4:44 pm.

“The vehicle is ready, the system is ready. The crew is ready,” Amit Kshatriya, the US space agency’s associate administrator, said in a briefing.

“Behind this flight stands a campaign,” he continued, noting recently announced plans including constructing a lunar base.

If Wednesday’s launch is cancelled or delayed for any reason, there are more liftoff opportunities through April 6.

As of Monday evening, Nasa officials voiced confidence that engineering operations and final preparations were proceeding smoothly.

“We’ll fly when this hardware is ready,” launch director Charlie Blackwell-Thompson told journalists.

“But certainly all indications are right now we are in excellent, excellent shape.”

The four astronauts set to carry out the Moon voyage — Americans Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch, along with Canadian colleague Jeremy Hansen — are in quarantine ahead of their journey.

Nasa officials said that they would have the opportunity to have dinner with their families at a Florida beach house.

The odyssey will mark a series of firsts: the first time a woman, a person of colour and a non-American will venture on a Moon mission.

It is also the inaugural crewed flight of Nasa’s new lunar rocket, dubbed SLS.

The mammoth orange-and-white rocket is designed to allow the United States to repeatedly return to the Moon in years to come, with the goal of establishing a permanent base that will offer a stepping stone for further exploration.

But getting it off the ground has not been simple. The Artemis 2 mission was originally due to take off as early as February, but repeated setbacks stalled that goal and even necessitated rolling the rocket back to its hangar for analysis and repairs. — AFP

War a strategic security wake-up call for GCC

IN THE ongoing war between the United States and Israel on one side and Iran on the other, Gulf states have found themselves in a deeply precarious position. A political, security and economic shock has shaken the region, raising urgent questions for its citizens: how can they live amid such instability, and how can they safeguard their security and future?

While the war has generated military and political turmoil, it has also unleashed a parallel form of chaos across social media platforms. Public discourse in the Gulf now reveals clear divisions, reflecting differences in official state positions. Some governments view the continuation of the conflict as a direct threat to economic and security stability and call for urgent political settlement, while others see weakening Iran as a strategic necessity. In both cases, vital infrastructure — energy facilities, ports and maritime routes — has become a direct target, placing not only Gulf economies but the global economy under unprecedented strain.

One of the most significant consequences of the conflict has been the erosion of public confidence in the American security umbrella. Many Gulf citizens now question whether reliance on Washington remains viable. Despite the presence of American military bases, these facilities have proven ineffective in preventing attacks. Instead, a growing perception has emerged that such bases primarily serve to protect Israel rather than the Gulf itself.

This concern has been openly reflected in public discourse. A widely circulated social media trend in Kuwait questioned the long-held belief in American protection, with



ZAHIR AL MAHROUQI

The writer focuses on regional politics

users arguing that Gulf states had spent decades assuming security guarantees that failed to materialise when most needed. Such sentiments highlight a widening gap between official security arrangements and public perception.

For Gulf citizens, the consequences are immediate and personal. There is a persistent sense of vulnerability, as cities and vital infrastructure — energy plants, desalination facilities, financial systems — are increasingly seen as potential targets. A sustained escalation could set the region back decades, affecting everything from daily communications to financial stability.

The war has also exposed deeper structural weaknesses. Security systems once considered advanced have struggled to counter modern threats such as drones, precision missiles and cyberattacks. At the same time, long-discussed initiatives for collective defence within the Gulf have remained largely theoretical.

Proposals for a unified Gulf military force were raised decades ago but never fully implemented, leaving the region without a coherent defensive framework.

Economic fragility has been equally evident. The mere possibility of closing the Strait of Hormuz has shaken markets, revealing the continued dependence of Gulf economies on oil exports. Despite vast spending on military procurement, insufficient attention has been given to economic diversification and the development of resilient security systems. The result is a paradox: wealth without strategic strength.

Another critical issue lies in the absence of an independent Gulf strategic vision. Rather than articulating a cohesive regional project, Gulf states have often

aligned themselves with external narratives, particularly in framing Iran as a primary adversary.

In some cases, this positioning appears driven more by sectarian considerations than by a rational strategic framework. Such approaches weaken regional coherence and reduce policy to reactive positioning rather than a proactive strategy.

The war has also highlighted internal societal vulnerabilities. Limited population size and heavy reliance on foreign labour create potential avenues for social and political penetration.

Reports of espionage networks linked to external actors underscore the risks associated with unmanaged demographic imbalances. Strengthening national identity, investing in education and promoting civic participation are therefore essential to building long-term resilience.

These challenges are not new. From the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 to more recent attacks on Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the region has repeatedly faced security threats with similar structural weaknesses. The persistence of these patterns suggests that critical lessons have yet to be fully absorbed.

If the current conflict serves as a strategic wake-up call, then the priority for Gulf states must be to redefine collective security and develop a shared vision for the future.

This requires deeper political coordination, genuine economic diversification and stronger societal cohesion. Only through such measures can the region move from vulnerability to resilience.

Translated by Badr al Dhafari
The original version of this article was published in Arabic in the Oman Arabic newspaper on March 30

Where rains and floods are rewriting history



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

DISASTERS OCCUR repeatedly, and some can cause both immediate and long-lasting detrimental effects on the health and well-being of individuals, communities and economies. Therefore, building resilience to disasters is essential for every country, especially those highly vulnerable to natural hazards. However, building resilience is not just about anticipating, planning and preparing for disasters; it also involves proactively undertaking long-term projects that can prevent disasters or reduce their risks. Studies suggest that strong institutional preparedness, combined with public awareness, can significantly reduce the loss of life and property during natural calamities. In addition, this method can help a country transition from reactive relief to proactive risk mitigation, fostering a safety culture in which citizens recognise risks and understand how to respond effectively. Unseasonal rains resulting in floods are a growing concern, as this increasing weather anomaly leads to the loss of human lives, devastation of crops and livestock and disruption of communities. The reality is that even in the world's most arid regions, floods have become common occurrences. They are emerging as a critical risk, forcing governments and communities to confront an uncomfortable truth. Countries in West Asia are increasingly experiencing torrential rains and floods, frequently making headlines. These events

are reshaping the history of a region once known for its arid climate, showcasing an unprecedented display of nature's power. According to a report in the Journal of Operational Oceanography, global warming has caused an increase in sea surface temperatures in the Arabian Gulf, and the summer monsoon wind axis has shifted poleward. "The increased evaporation in the southern Arabian Gulf has caused the outflow of water through the Strait of Hormuz to become denser and warmer. As a result, the warm and highly saline water sinks to the subsurface and spreads over a large area of the Arabian Sea," the report points out. A report in the Journal of Arid Environments recognises flash floods as a natural hazard in ephemeral wadi systems. "Unfortunately, such floods pose growing threats, especially to cities and expanding urban areas, where it could be argued that the speed of development has outpaced the analysis of flood risk," the report states. On the other hand, as rainfall becomes more frequent and intense, many scientists worldwide attribute this to climate change. They believe "human-caused global warming is responsible because it is intensifying the water cycle's evaporation process and disrupting rainfall patterns." This means there is no escape from unseasonal or abnormal rainfall events. We need to learn from these occurrences to be better prepared and minimise the damage. Over the past few days, the low-pressure

Countries in West Asia are increasingly experiencing torrential rains and floods. These occurrences are reshaping the history of a region once known for its arid climate, showcasing an unprecedented display of nature's power

system Al Masarat has caused heavy torrential downpours, significant flooding and strong winds across governorates in Oman. The storm resulted in substantial wadi flows, extensive infrastructure damage, loss of life and necessitated urgent rescue efforts. Oman's strong institutional preparedness and public awareness have contributed to a nationwide return to normalcy, demonstrating effective intersectoral coordination that minimised losses and safeguarded both citizens and residents. This swift return to normalcy highlights the effectiveness of the emergency management system, coordinated response efforts and public adherence to safety protocols. The event emphasises the critical role of preparedness, strategic planning and collaboration in mitigating risks during severe weather incidents. The National Centre for Emergency Management, established by Royal Decree in 2020, currently oversees emergency management in Oman through an integrated disaster risk reduction framework. Moreover, an agreement signed in August 2025 between the Environment Authority and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction enhances collaboration to improve national preparedness for environmental disasters and climate-related threats. The platform connects key organisations such as the Ministry of Health, Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, and Royal Oman Police, facilitating immediate data sharing and faster decision-making.

ARCHAEOLOGISTS FORCED BY WAR TO CUT SHORT IRAQ DIGS

ROSE TROUP BUCHANAN

Iraq is home to ruins from some of the world's earliest civilisations, but teams led by international archaeologists have been forced by drone and rocket attacks in the Middle East war to cut short their expeditions. Archaeologists said that some of the projects interrupted by the war had been planned for years, but their teams had to evacuate ancient sites since the United States and Israel attacked Iraq's neighbour, Iran. Like other countries around the region, Iraq has become engulfed in the war, bringing to an abrupt end a period of nascent stability. Iraq's precious archaeological sites, some dating back thousands of years, had for years faced threats ranging from climate change to successive conflicts. Under normal circumstances, around 60 international teams would have been working on digs, a government official said, but "all of these missions have left Iraq". Adelheid Otto of Germany's Ludwig-Maximilians-University started a long-planned dig at ancient Shuruppak, modern-day Tell Fara, on February 28. That same day, Israel and the US launched strikes against Iran, sparking a war that has dragged Iraqi armed groups into the fray - and cutting short Otto's work. "We are Near Eastern archaeologists. So that is our work. That is like a musician who can no longer play an instrument," she said. Her team - 18 German archaeologists, geologists, geophysical experts, and students, and seven Iraqi archaeologists - initially stayed, reasoning travelling the 750 km overland to Türkiye was more dangerous. "After some days, we got kind of used to the rockets and drones above our heads," she said. But Iraqi officials repeatedly urged them to depart, despite their discovery of ancient cuneiform tablets. "It is impossible" to leave, she told authorities, insisting on staying extra days. "We have to document it. We have to take photos of everything." "I told the students you have to work on all the small finds that we have," said Otto, 59, who boasts four decades of experience. "You never know in any of these countries if you will ever return," she said. Many German institutions had just started relaxing travel restrictions to Iraq after a succession of conflicts, including the 2003 US-led invasion and the IS group. Now, said Otto, archaeologists once again face being shut out. Iraq's State Board of Antiquities and Heritage head Ali Obeid Shalgham said Iraqi security forces were the sites' "true guarantors", especially as many are in remote rural areas. — AFP

If peace was the goal, why strike during talks?

AT A MOMENT when diplomacy seemed within reach, the United States and Israel chose war. That decision alone raises serious questions about their stated intentions. If the objective was truly to protect the Iranian people or prevent escalation, then why abandon negotiations at their most critical stage? Attacking during negotiations does not signal a desire for resolution; it signals the opposite. It demonstrates that diplomacy was never the priority, despite public claims that the war is about liberating the Iranian population from the regime. If peace had truly been the goal, negotiations would have continued. Instead, they were replaced by bombs. Iran's response, while deeply concerning, was predictable. "Iran's retaliation against what it claims are American targets on the territory of its neighbours was an inevitable... result," stated Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, in The Economist. This retaliation has drawn Gulf Arab countries into a conflict they neither initiated nor desired. Many of these states host American military bases under the premise of security cooperation. Yet those very bases have now become targets, turning protection into vulnerability. The economic implications are also serious. The Gulf region is not only a geopolitical crossroads but also a centre of global energy, tourism and technological development. Instability threatens all three, according to the foreign minister. One of the most critical pressure points is the Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of the world's oil supply passes. Any disruption in this corridor has immediate global repercussions. Energy prices have already shown signs of volatility in response to the escalating tensions, reflecting the fragility of global markets when conflict reaches such a strategically vital area.



Women shop at the Grand Bazaar in Tehran on Monday. — AFP



OMAN AL YAHYAI

The writer is a multilingual writer and media professional based in Paris. She specialises in human rights and immigration

Sayyid Badr has emphasised the importance of dialogue and de-escalation as the only viable path to stability. If there is to be any path forward, it must begin with a return to diplomacy

Beyond energy, the region's broader economic ambitions are at risk. Gulf countries have invested heavily in diversifying their economies, developing tourism sectors, expanding technological infrastructure and positioning themselves as global hubs. Ongoing conflict jeopardises these plans. Tourism declines when security is uncertain. Investment slows when risk increases. Long-term development strategies become harder to sustain in an environment shaped by instability. The involvement of the United States in this conflict also raises important questions about precedent. This is not the first time the US has entered a war under the banner of protecting populations or restoring stability. From Iraq in 2003, to interventions in Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia, similar justifications have been used. In many cases, the outcomes have been prolonged instability, weakened institutions and significant civilian suffering rather than the promised security or democratic transformation. Public sentiment within the United States appears to reflect a growing fatigue with such interventions. Public discourse suggests that many Americans are

increasingly sceptical of foreign military engagements, particularly those that risk entangling the country in another prolonged conflict. There is little appetite for sending troops into yet another war, especially one that does not present a clear and direct threat to US national security. At the same time, the dynamics of this conflict point to the significant influence of Israel in shaping US foreign policy in the region. Israel's longstanding tensions with Iran are well-documented, and its strategic objectives, whether framed in terms of security or regional dominance, have played a central role in escalating hostilities. Critics argue that the United States' involvement risks aligning too closely with these objectives, rather than pursuing an independent assessment of its own national interests. This alignment raises a broader concern: whether the current trajectory of the conflict is driven more by geopolitical ambitions than by genuine efforts to achieve peace. The idea that military escalation can produce stability has been repeatedly challenged by history. More often than not, it produces the opposite. As Sayyid Badr mentioned, the deeper issue is that this war appears to have been built on a miscalculation. "Israel's leadership seems to have persuaded America that Iran had been so weakened... that an unconditional surrender would swiftly follow." That assumption has already proven false. Instead of a quick resolution, the region is facing the possibility of a prolonged escalation. This is where regional actors, particularly Gulf states, could play a constructive role. Oman, long known for its diplomatic neutrality, has previously facilitated dialogue between Iran and the United States. Sayyid Badr has emphasised the importance of dialogue and de-escalation as the only viable path to stability.

SPORTS

KEY ISSUES



The meeting was chaired by Abu Bakr bin Ahmed al Jahwari, OBA Vice-Chairman, and attended by Saeed bin Ahmed al Habsi, Acting Secretary-General, board members and representatives of 21 clubs. — **Saleh al Sharji**

OBA GA HIGHLIGHTS BUDGET CONCERNS, ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

The Ordinary General Assembly of the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) reviewed several key issues during its annual meeting at the Oman Olympic Committee building in Bausher, with budget constraints and their impact on competition prize money among the main concerns, alongside calls to expand athlete development centres. The meeting was chaired by Abu Bakr bin Ahmed al Jahwari, OBA Vice-Chairman, and attended by Saeed bin Ahmed al Habsi, Acting Secretary-General, board members and representatives of 21 clubs.

After confirming the legal quorum, the assembly approved the agenda, endorsed the minutes of the previous meeting, and appointed three members to review the official minutes.

In the board’s address, Al Jahwari said the meeting reflected the spirit of partnership between the association and clubs, stressing the shared commitment to developing basketball in Oman. He congratulated clubs and teams that achieved notable results in recent competitions and praised the efforts of players, coaches and administrators in raising the level of the game.

The meeting reviewed the technical report for 2025, including national team achievements, the participation of Omani international referees in major events such as the World Cup, Asian qualifiers and club championships, as well as 3x3 basketball activity, women’s basketball programmes, technical development work and athlete development centres.

Members approved the annual financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2025, endorsed the 2026 budget, selected the auditor for the upcoming financial year, and approved Fanja Club’s membership application and participation in OBA competitions.

During the discussion session, Salih al Balushi of Qurayat Club questioned the postponement of his team’s match against Al Bashayer. Al Habsi said the competitions committee had acted on the referees’ report, which confirmed that the match could not be played due to a technical fault in the venue clock, in line with OBA regulations.

ATHLETE CENTRE

Idris al Farsi of Al Shabab Club asked about the cancellation of the club’s athlete development centre. Al Jahwari said the continuation of such centres depends on several factors, including player participation in competitions and the results achieved, while stressing the association’s commitment, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, to expanding them.

Abdullah al Abri, Chairman of Nizwa Club, raised concerns over delays in the maintenance of Nizwa Sports Complex hall, its suitability to host matches, the scheduling of youth competitions during exam periods, and the absence of the club’s coaches from overseas course nominations.

Al Habsi replied that hall maintenance falls under the ministry’s responsibility, not the association. He added that the OBA had contacted clubs about hosting matches in available venues, but only Seeb Club and Sohar Sports Complex responded. He also said final exams are taken into account in age-group scheduling where possible, while overseas coaching nominations depend on criteria set by the awarding bodies, including English proficiency and academic qualifications.

The meeting concluded with Muscat Club Chairman Nasr al Wahaibi calling on the ministry to raise the OBA budget to a level comparable to other federations to support the game’s growth and strengthen its competitions.



The evening programme consisted of four main rounds, where winners were awarded four cars and four icons, alongside financial prizes for the leading finishers.

Hyalah tops evening races at HM’s Cup Festival

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

HYALAH owned by Mohammed bin Sultan al Malki, snatched the opening round, while ‘Mahdi’, owned by Mohammed bin Said al Duraie, secured victory in the second round during the evening races at His Majesty Cup Festival 2026 camel racing in the Wilayat of Barka on Tuesday.

Shawahin, owned by Amer bin Abdullah al Amri, and Zakher, owned by Sultan Ali al Ghailani, also claimed wins in their respective rounds, completing the list of four car-winning camels in competitive contests. The event is organised with the support of the Royal Court Affairs, represented by the Royal Camel Corps (RCC), in collaboration with Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF).

The five days competition featured 85 races, in addition to 23 icons and 27 cars from March 29 until April 2.

On the third day, March 31, races were held for the Jadhaa category (four years old) over a distance of 6 km, featuring 7 morning rounds with cash prizes.

The evening programme consisted of four main rounds, where winners were awarded four cars and four icons, alongside financial prizes for the leading finishers.

10 RACES

On the fourth day, April 1, competitions will include 10 races for the Thanaya and



Mahdi’, owned by Mohammed bin Said al Duraie, secured victory in the second round.

Al Hawl categories over a distance of 8 km, with four morning races offering cash prizes. The six evening races will award four cars and four icons.

The same day will also feature four races for the traditional race (human rider) over 2 km, with prizes including a car, khanjar and cash awards.

The Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF) enforces strict anti-doping regulations, with all winning camels subject to testing and penalties applied in case of violations.

Participation is restricted to purebred Omani camels fully owned by Omani

citizens, as outlined by the Royal Camel Corps. For traditional races with human riders, participants must be at least 18 years old.

- TUESDAY’S RESULTS:
MORNING RACES OVER 6 KM
(Read as round, camel, owner)**
1. Manawrah, Jaber bin Said al Mebaihsi
 2. Walem, Jasim bin Qubaili al Maharbi
 3. Hudoor, Amer bin Sulaiman al Saadi
 4. Sahouq, Ali bin Amer al Jahafi
 5. Al Ezwa, Said bin Mubarak al Wahaibi
 6. Wudhooh, Subaih bin Salim al Ghailani
 7. Hamreen, Jasim bin Mubarak al Wahaibi

OHA General Assembly stresses wider participation

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

The Oman Hockey Association’s (OHA) ordinary General Assembly for 2026 underlined the importance of strengthening institutional work and advancing the sport at all levels during its annual meeting held at the Hockey Oman Stadium press conference hall, with 28 clubs in attendance.

Dr Marwan bin Juma al Juma, OHA Chairman, opened the meeting by praising the cooperation shown by clubs in supporting the federation’s competitions and broader development efforts. He also highlighted the national team’s preparations for the Asian Games qualifiers, set to be held in Thailand from April 2 to 10, describing the event as an important step in the game’s continued growth in Oman.

The assembly approved the agenda, appointed three members to review the minutes, endorsed the previous meeting minutes, and reviewed



Dr Marwan al Juma, OHA Chairman, praised the cooperation shown by clubs in supporting the federation’s competitions. — **Hussein al Muqballi**

the 2025 activity report, which covered domestic competitions, overseas participation, and development programmes for players, coaches and referees.

On the financial side, members approved the 2025 final accounts after reviewing a deficit of around RO 75,000. The discussion focused on the need to address the shortfall while preserving allocations for competitions, given their importance in sustaining activity and encouraging club participation.

The meeting also discussed athlete development centres,

with clubs calling for wider expansion across affiliated clubs to help identify and nurture talent for the national teams. Dr Al Juma said the priority should remain on the quality of training and outcomes rather than numbers alone, while noting that the association would raise the proposal with the relevant authorities.

Members further stressed the need to follow up with clubs that do not take part in some competitions in order to understand the reasons and improve participation levels. The chairman noted that the

latest Sultan’s Cup had attracted broad club involvement and had also been recognised Within the International Federation competitions, with matches broadcast live on international platforms, helping raise the profile of Omani hockey.

The assembly also reviewed club proposals, including a suggestion from Seeb Club to increase competition rewards and reduce the number of foreign players in the league. Dr Al Juma said prize values would be reconsidered in light of available finances, while also describing foreign players as a positive addition due to their experience and the added international attention they bring to the Omani league.

He added that the association is working on an integrated digital platform for player registration across domestic competitions as part of wider efforts to improve administrative efficiency and data accuracy. The assembly also made a proposal for a specialised sports TV channel.

GLOBALSHOWPIECE



Fifa President Gianni Infantino (C) arrives to attend a friendly football match between Iran and Costa Rica, in Antalya, Turkey, on Tuesday. — AFP

‘IRAN WILL BE AT WORLD CUP’ AND PLAY IN US, SAYS INFANTINO

ANTALYA, Turkey: Fifa president Gianni Infantino said on Tuesday that Iran “will be at the World Cup” and will play their group matches in the United States as scheduled, despite the Middle East war.

“Iran will be at the World Cup,” Infantino said at half-time of Iran’s friendly against Costa Rica in Turkey. “That’s why we’re here. We’re delighted because they’re a very, very strong team, I’m very happy.”

“I’ve seen the team, I’ve spoken to the players and the coach, so everything is fine,” added Infantino, whose attendance at Tuesday’s game was unannounced.

Infantino went on to stress that Iran’s “matches will be played where they are supposed to be, according to the draw”.

The World Cup, being hosted by the United States, Mexico and Canada, starts on June 11. Iran are set to play their first Group G game against New Zealand in Los Angeles on June 15. They are then scheduled to play Belgium in Los Angeles on June 21 and Egypt in Seattle on June 27.

Iran’s participation had been thrown into doubt by the war with the US and Israel that broke out on February 28. The Iranian football federation said earlier this month it was “negotiating” with Fifa to relocate the country’s World Cup matches from the United States to Mexico.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum also said that her country is prepared to host Iran’s first-round matches at the tournament if needed.

Infantino initially said that US President Donald Trump had given assurances that the Iranian team would still be welcome. But Trump then stated that Iran’s team should not travel to the tournament “for their own life and safety”.

Iran hit back at Trump’s comments, saying that “no one can exclude Iran’s national team from the World Cup”.

On March 19, Infantino said Fifa was committed to making sure the World Cup goes ahead “as scheduled” with “all teams” taking part.

“Fifa is looking forward to all teams participating at the World Cup to compete in a spirit of fair play and mutual respect,” Infantino said from Zurich during an online Fifa Council meeting. “Fifa can’t solve geopolitical conflicts, but we are committed to using the power of football and the World Cup to build bridges and promote peace as our thoughts are with those who are suffering as a consequence of the ongoing wars,” added Infantino.

Iran also played a friendly against Nigeria in Turkish town Belek last Friday. — AFP



Rajasthan Royals’ Vaibhav Sooryavanshi in action during the IPL match against Chennai Super Kings in Guwahati, India. — Reuters

Teen Suryavanshi shines as RR hammer Chennai

TEENAGE SENSATION Vaibhav Suryavanshi lived up to the hype with a 17-ball 52 as Rajasthan Royals thrashed Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets in their opening IPL match on Monday.

Fifteen-year-old Suryavanshi smacked four fours and five sixes in his batting blitz as Rajasthan chased down a victory target of 128 with 7.5 overs to spare in Guwahati.

Suryavanshi was the talk of world cricket after making history in last year’s Indian Premier League aged just 14 in a dazzling debut season which included a 35-ball century.

The left-handed batsman, who turned 15 last week, survived a dropped catch on the first ball he faced but soon found his groove to pummel the attack.

Suryavanshi said his birthday on Friday, March 27 was low key as he “went to sleep early” to avoid cake smearing.

On his attacking play, he said, “I do think

about defence, but today our plan was to control the game in the powerplay because in a small chase, that phase is crucial.”

He raced to his fifty in 15 balls with two sixes off Afghanistan left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmad to the noise approval of the home crowd. Suryavanshi fell when Sarfaraz Khan took a good diving catch in the deep off medium-pace bowler Anshul Kamboj.

RED-HOT FORM

The prodigy has been in red hot form as he starred for India in their Under-19 World Cup win in Harare last month, smashing a record-breaking 175 off 80 balls in the final against England.

Rajasthan’s other opener Yashasvi Jaiswal stood firm to hit an unbeaten 38 as he and skipper Riyan Parag, who made 14, steered the team home in 12.1 overs.

Rajasthan, who won the inaugural IPL in 2008 under late Australia spin legend Shane Warne, elected to field first and their bowlers set up victory.

Fast bowlers Jofra Archer, Nandre Burger and left-arm spinner Ravindra Jadeja took two wickets each to bundle out five-time champions Chennai for 127 in 19.4 overs.

India’s T20 World Cup hero Sanju Smason was bowled by South African Burger for six on his Chennai debut and Archer rattled the stumps of skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad, for six.

Chennai’s batting crumbled with number eight Jamie Overton making the total respectable with his 43 off 36 balls.

Archer returned impressive figures of 2-19, while Burger claimed 2-26 and was named player of the match.

“One good thing is, a lot of youngsters in the group, so, probably a nervy start for everyone, but good to get a game behind and good to start with lot of mistakes,” said Gaikwad. “Hopefully it will be just improvement after here.”

Chennai veteran MS Dhoni is recovering from a calf strain and likely to be out for the first two weeks of the T20 tournament scheduled to end on May 31. — AFP

Undav rescues Germany late in Ghana friendly

STUTTGART, Germany: A last-gasp Deniz Undav goal saved Germany’s blushes in an unconvincing 2-1 win over Ghana in a friendly in Stuttgart on Monday.

Germany dominated possession and field position against the visitors but needed a Kai Havertz penalty to break through just before half-time.

A counter-attacking Abdul Fatawu goal drew the visitors level and the lifeless match looked on track for a draw until Stuttgart striker Undav’s 88th-minute effort put Germany back in front.

The home fans chanted Undav’s name until the striker was brought on at half-time. The former Brighton forward told ARD: “It was crazy to hear how the fans stood behind me,”

adding “it was a perfect evening. Got the win, scored a goal — top.”

“We were completely in control in the first-half, but we have to make more out of our chances,” Undav said.

Despite a seventh win in a row, it was an inconsistent performance from Julian Nagelsmann’s men against an out-of-form Ghana side.

“We didn’t play in position. There was a lot of ‘freestyle’ play again, like against Switzerland, which left us very vulnerable to counter-attacks,” Nagelsmann said.

Former Arsenal player Thomas Partey lined up in midfield for Ghana, making his second international start since telling a London court he would plead not guilty to two new charges of rape,



Germany’s Deniz Undav celebrates after the match against Ghana. — Reuters

with a trial set to take place in November.

Before the game, Nagelsmann seemed unfazed despite Germany’s leaky defence in Friday’s 4-3 win over Switzerland on Friday, telling reporters “a clean sheet is nice, but above all we need to be winning.”

The hosts had Ghana pinned back for much of the opening half, with the visitors handing Germany the initiative with misplaced passes and failed clearances.

Involved in all four of Germany’s goals against Switzerland, Florian Wirtz went close with a dipping free-kick after six minutes, hitting the outside of the post.

Nick Woltemade set Wirtz up for what seemed to be Germany’s opener just after the half-hour mark,

but the Newcastle forward was narrowly offside in the build-up.

In first-half stoppage time, VAR showed Jonas Adjetey handled an Angelo Stiller shot, allowing Havertz to convert from the spot.

Bayern Munich starlet Lennart Karl came on at half-time and almost set up Germany’s second minutes later with a deft chip which Woltemade headed against the crossbar.

With 20 minutes left, Ghana broke through on the counter to punish the hosts for their wastefulness, Derrick Koehn threading a ball for Fatawu to tap home.

Undav had little impact until the dying stages when he collected a Leroy Sane pass and prodded the winner into the top corner. — AFP

SPORTS



King Kimi, Max misery, Bearman smash: Japan GP talking points

KIMI ANTONELLI won the Japanese Grand Prix from pole ahead of McLaren's Oscar Piastri as Max Verstappen endured another miserable outing in his Red Bull.

Three talking points from the third race weekend on the 2026 Formula One calendar:

MERCEDES PROTECT TEEN HERO

Antonelli is in only his second season, but already Mercedes are playing down expectations of the 19-year-old — now the youngest title race leader in Formula One history.

“We need to protect him now from people talking about world championships,” said Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff after the race.

Antonelli admitted he had a stroke of fortune with a safety car that enabled him to dive in for fresh tyres and emerge

in the lead after his rivals had already pitted.

It was the second race in a row where a slow getaway saw him relegated from pole position and having to play catch-up.

“I had a terrible start. I need to check what happened. Then I was lucky with the safety car to be in the lead but then the pace was incredible,” said Antonelli.

“Luckily, I’ve got three weeks, so now I can practise some clutch drops just to get a better feel with it.

“It’s been a weak point and I need to improve because you can easily win or lose races.”

VERSTAPPEN QUIT THREAT

Red Bull’s four-time world champion Verstappen openly questioned his future in Formula One after finishing eighth and lashing out again about the new cars and regulations.



Mercedes’ Italian driver Kimi Antonelli celebrates at the parc ferme after winning the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix at the Suzuka circuit in Suzuka, Mie prefecture. — AFP

“It’s really anti-driving,” he told the BBC.

“Then at one point, yeah, it’s just not what I want to do.”

Verstappen had won at Suzuka in each of the previous four years but was way off the pace and even waved goodbye to one car that overtook him, knowing that he did not have any capability to strike back.

The Dutchman said Formula One bosses “know what to do” to address his concerns and added: “You don’t need to feel sorry for me, I’ll be fine.”

BEARMAN SPARKS SAFETY CALL

Oliver Bearman escaped serious injury in a horror crash which prompted drivers to call for changes in the regulations.

The 20-year-old’s Haas was closing rapidly at high speed on Franco Colapinto and smashed into the barriers

after swerving to avoid the Argentine’s Alpine.

Drivers and teams complained it had been an accident waiting to happen because of Formula One’s new regulations that mean cars can be travelling at drastically different speeds on the track at the same time.

“These kind of closing speeds and these kind of accidents were always going to happen, and I’m not very happy with what we’ve had up until now,” Grand Prix Drivers’ Association chief Carlos Sainz told Sky Sports F1.

“Hopefully we come up with a better solution that doesn’t create these massive closing speeds and a safer way of going racing,” added the Williams driver.

Bearman said: “I think we’ve, as a group, warned the FIA what can happen, and this has been a really unfortunate result.” — AFP



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8,168.396

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$123.96
BRENT \$108.05
LIGHT \$104.81



SHORT TAKES



The measures allow empty containers to enter and exit Oman without customs declaration.

OMAN CUSTOMS EASES TRANSIT RULES AMIDST TENSIONS

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

The Royal Oman Police (ROP), represented by the General Directorate of Customs, has rolled out a package of facilitation measures to streamline the entry and movement of transit goods in response to the evolving regional situation.

The measures allow empty containers to enter and exit the Sultanate of Oman without the need for a customs declaration, with checks limited to scanning procedures. This step is expected to ease congestion at entry points and accelerate turnaround times.

In addition, transit declarations will now be processed directly from border crossings to ports using booking numbers, with clearance restricted

to containers that have physically arrived. The move is designed to improve operational efficiency and reduce administrative bottlenecks.

Vehicles and equipment arriving from GCC countries will also benefit from simplified requirements. Only a transit declaration will be needed, eliminating the requirement for a customs card or export certificate.

The latest steps underscore the authority's commitment to maintaining the smooth flow of trade, minimising delays and supporting the business community amidst heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

Rising tensions between Iran and the United States have placed added pressure on regional supply chains, prompting authorities to adopt flexible measures that safeguard logistics continuity.

The facilitation package aligns with broader efforts to reinforce Oman's position as a reliable trade and logistics hub, with initiatives such as the Green Corridor expected to further enhance the swift movement of goods across borders.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

Salalah Port Services Company SAOG said it is currently in discussions with the Omani government on extending its concession to operate and manage the Port of Salalah, which expires on November 1, 2028.

Company executives disclosed the update during a recent discussion session on the port's 2025 financial statements.

Publicly-listed Salalah Port Services is a partnership led by A P Moller-Maersk (around 30%), part of a global integrated shipping and logistics group operating across container shipping, terminals and end-to-end supply chain services.

The Omani government, through ASYAD Group, holds about 20%, while the Social Protection Fund (around 10%) and Dhofar International Development & Investment Holding Company



Port of Salalah is one of Oman's biggest transshipment and logistics hubs.

(6%) are among other key shareholders. Under agreements with the government, Salalah Port Services was granted concessions to operate the Container Terminal from November 1, 1998 and the General Cargo Terminal from October 1, 1998. Separate management agreements with APM Terminals were also signed to

provide technical and operational support services for the duration of the concessions.

Executives noted that concession terms are typically aligned with equipment lifecycles of around 25 years, meaning extensions often span 20-30 years to support major capital investment decisions.

8.8 bn investments across regulated sectors

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

INVESTMENTS in sectors regulated by the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) are projected to more than double to about RO 8.8 billion during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2026-2030), up RO 3.4 billion during the Tenth Five-Year Plan.

Disclosing these projections at the Authority's annual media briefing on Tuesday, March 31, 2026, officials also outlined key achievements in the public services sector, alongside the launch of three strategic initiatives: a continuous renewable energy generation project, battery energy storage systems and a demand response management programme. Improvements to service assurance standards for 2026 were also announced.

On digitalisation, the Authority reported strong progress in smart metering, reaching 99% penetration in the water sector and 80% in electricity, with actual remote reading rates of 97% for electricity and 97.71% for water.

Over the past five years, the Authority has issued 17 regulations, granted 14 licenses, approved 14 exemptions and developed 15 subscriber rights frameworks, in addition to six safety standards and eight network reliability standards.

Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman, said service guarantee standards have been strengthened, including doubling compensation for repeated non-compliance by service providers, adding that the Authority operates under a structured framework defining clear roles for policymakers, regulators and operators to enhance efficiency and governance.

Reviewing sector growth (2021-2025), he noted that water consumption rose by 13%, subscriber numbers by 12%, while electricity subscribers increased by 14% and consumption by 27%, reflecting Oman's ongoing economic and urban expansion.



Top officials of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) at the media briefing.



Service guarantee standards have been strengthened, including doubling compensation for repeated non-compliance by service providers and that the Authority operates under a structured framework defining clear roles for policymakers, regulators and operators to enhance efficiency and governance.

DR MANSOUR
TALIB AL HINAI
Chairman, APSR

In renewable energy, the Authority highlighted a sharp increase in clean power contribution, which is projected to reach 9.46% of total generation by 2025, up from 1.95% in 2021, with output sufficient to supply around 155,000 homes.

Abdulaziz al Siyabi, Director of Strategic Studies at APSR, said regulatory oversight includes comprehensive audits covering billing, meter reading and service disconnection procedures, alongside a "mystery shopper" programme.

Compliance reached 96% in 2025, above the 95% target.

He added that around RO 153,000 in compensation was paid to more than 9,000 subscribers, while customer satisfaction improved to 75%. Average service connection times stood at 1.17 days for electricity and 6 days for water.

The Authority also reported strong localisation and economic impact indicators, with Omanisation reaching 98.55% across regulated companies. Spending on SMEs rose 80% to RO 119 million, while local value added increased 35% to RO 50 million.

In infrastructure development, Eng Alaa al Lawati, CEO of Nama Distribution Company, said the electricity transmission network saw a 40% increase in line length

and a 13% rise in substations, while distribution networks expanded 13% in length and 8% in substations.

In the gas transmission sector, network capacity rose 3%, pipeline length increased 5.9% and transported volumes grew 22%.

Key projects include the second 42-inch Fahud-Suhar pipeline, gas supply to Marsa LNG, connection of SOGL's network to the national grid and enhancements to safety, business continuity and regulatory frameworks including RAB optimisation and system expansion studies.

In the water sector, Eng Qais al Zakwani, CEO of Nama Water Services, said network length increased 32%, treatment plants rose 9% and wastewater treatment reached 98%.

Water quality testing surged 74%, with compliance with drinking water standards reaching 99.81%.

He added that 97 projects worth around RO 966 million are currently under execution, aimed at expanding capacity and improving service efficiency.

Finally, APSR confirmed that ongoing and future investments are aligned with a strategic shift towards enhancing sustainability, operational efficiency and resilience across Oman's regulated utility sectors.

Salalah Port in talks for extension of concession beyond 2028

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



BankDhofar has launched a suite of banking products tailored to meet the daily needs of SMEs.

BANKDHOFAR’S SME GROWTH STRATEGY TO EMPOWER ENTREPRENEURS

MUSCAT: Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have become one of the main pillars of Oman’s national economy, given their rapid growth, expanding role in job creation and ability to empower ambitious Omani youth to set up their own businesses, alongside a steadily rising contribution to GDP.

As the Sultanate of Oman advances its Oman Vision 2040 diversification agenda, SMEs are no longer viewed as peripheral actors but as central drivers of innovation, localisation and economic resilience. Yet their growing importance has also exposed structural constraints that continue to limit their potential.

Many Omani SMEs still face hurdles in accessing affordable finance, navigating regulatory requirements and adopting digital tools at scale — challenges that can impede expansion, competitiveness and integration into regional and global markets. In this context, a fundamental rethink of banking support has become a strategic imperative rather than a policy option.

BankDhofar has responded by repositioning itself from a conventional lender to a strategic partner for entrepreneurs. Rather than focusing solely on credit and transactional services, the bank has embraced a more integrated model that blends financing, digital solutions, advisory support and ecosystem engagement.

At the core of this transformation, BankDhofar has launched a suite of banking products tailored to meet the daily operational needs of SMEs.

These include a SME Current account offering a smoother banking experience through simplified account-opening procedures, integration of traditional and digital point-of-sale systems (SoftPOS), payroll management under the Wage Protection System (WPS), remote cheque collection services, payment gateway solutions, dedicated debit and credit cards and POS-based financing under simplified conditions.

The bank has also expanded its role in the entrepreneurship ecosystem through strategic partnerships. Its collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has facilitated access for Sanad office owners to banking services without the need to visit branches, simplifying procedures for account opening and service utilisation.

Additionally, its partnership with Smartech has enhanced POS capabilities by integrating payment solutions with accounting systems.

A defining milestone in this evolution was the launch of Numo, BankDhofar’s dedicated SME banking brand — a new model of business banking that combines SME Centres, digital tools tailored to SME needs, flexible financing solutions and closer coordination with government entities.

Unlock signature rewards with the Lexus LX 700h

EXPERIENCE a season of signature luxury and discover the perfect opportunity to become the owner of the ultimate flagship SUV — the Lexus 700h. Known for its blend of unparalleled luxury and hybrid innovation, the LX 700h is designed to elevate every journey and family travel alike. Customers can head to the nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom to unlock exclusive deals and experience a celebration of generosity.

Prospective owners can benefit from this campaign before it ends on April 8, 2026, to own the stunning Lexus LX 700h with a host of additional privileges. The Lexus LX 700h is not just a vehicle; it is a sanctuary of comfort and a symbol of prestige, designed to shape unforgettable journeys and foster deeper connections through its refined performance.

To make the ownership experience even more rewarding, the Lexus festive campaign offers a range of high-value benefits. Customers can enjoy free first-year registration to provide a smooth start to their journey, along with stress-free maintenance through a service package valid for 10 years or 100,000 km, covering 10 services at 10,000 km intervals.

Additionally, new owners receive Al Nukhbah Loyalty Points worth RO 50, which can be conveniently redeemed against future service and repairs. (Terms and Conditions Apply)

The LX 700h stands at the forefront of the 2025 range, featuring a sophisticated 3.5L Twin-Turbo V6 hybrid engine. This advanced system produces 457 hp and 650 Nm of torque, achieving an impressive efficiency of



The LX 700h is designed to elevate every journey and family travel alike.

10.8 km/l.

Marking a significant milestone as the first hybrid in the LX lineup, it is engineered for both on-road elegance and off-road dominance. A 10-speed automatic transmission and Multi-Terrain Select ensure effortless control across any landscape.

Inside, the LX 700h reflects the pinnacle of Lexus artistry. The cabin features premium leather, ambient lighting, and ventilated seats across all rows, creating an atmosphere of indulgence.

Modern conveniences such as wireless charging, a premium sound system and seamless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto integration elevate connectivity for all passengers.

A driver-focused cockpit, complete with a head-up display, ensures every drive is intuitive and commanding.

Peace of mind comes standard with the Lexus Safety System+ 3.0. This suite of advanced technologies includes a Pre-Collision System, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Lane Tracing Assist and Auto High Beam. These features blend cutting-edge safety with an uncompromising philosophy of protection, safeguarding every journey.

Centred on a brand philosophy of delivering exceptional experiences, Lexus continues to be a symbol of global prestige.

The LX 700h now stands as a leader in this legacy, blending hybrid innovation with timeless grandeur.

ahlibank holds AGM, sustains strategic growth

MUSCAT: Following the successful conclusion of its Annual General Meeting (AGM), ahlibank proudly announced a year marked by resilient financial performance, notable achievements and sustained strategic progress for the year ended December 31, 2025.

Under the visionary leadership of Said bin Abdullah al Hatmi, Chief Executive Officer of ahlibank, the bank continued to deliver on its promise of being a Partner in Excellence, further reinforcing its role in redefining banking in the Sultanate of Oman.

A key highlight of the Annual General Meeting was the election of the Board of Directors, who will steer ahlibank in its continued pursuit of growth and excellence, with Ibrahim al Eisri as Chairman for the upcoming term.

The AGM also witnessed the approval of all agenda items, including the Board of Directors’ Report on the bank’s activities and financial position, the Corporate Governance Report and the audited financial statements for the financial year ended



The bank continued to deliver on its promise of being a Partner in Excellence.

December 31, 2025.

Shareholders further approved matters related to Board governance, including the ratification of sitting fees and remuneration of the Board of Directors and its sub-committees, as well as the Sharia Supervisory Board for the financial year ended 31 December 2025 and the determination of their fees for 2026.

In addition, the General Assembly approved the distribution of Board of

Directors’ remuneration for the financial year 2025, endorsed the Board’s performance report and approved the criteria for evaluating Board performance for the upcoming year.

Shareholders approved the appointment of an independent third party to assess the Board’s performance for 2026, along with the appointment of external auditors and Sharia auditors and the determination of their fees.

The General Assembly also ratified related party transactions undertaken during the year, as well as the bank’s contributions towards community service initiatives.

In line with its commitment to delivering sustainable value, shareholders approved a total dividend of 12 Baisas per share, comprising 6 Baisas in cash and 6 Baisas in the form of mandatory convertible bonds, underscoring the bank’s balanced approach to shareholder returns and prudent capital management.

Building on an 18-year legacy of excellence, ahlibank delivered strong growth across key financial indicators in 2025.

Vodafone Oman overhauls RED, BLACK and BLACK for Business portfolios

MUSCAT: Vodafone Oman has announced the complete revamp of its mobile portfolio across RED, BLACK and BLACK for Business, introducing a restructured plan architecture designed to reduce fragmentation, simplify how customers choose their plans and bring more of what people and businesses rely on into the plans.

The revamp addresses a long-standing gap in the market between how connectivity is used and how plans are structured. Today, mobile usage in Oman has become continuous, spanning communication, work, payments and entertainment, often across multiple countries. Customers have long had to rely on add-ons, switch between plans, or use multiple SIMs



The revamp addresses a long-standing gap in the market between how connectivity is used and how plans are structured.

to meet different needs.

In the business segment, this has translated into layered configurations and workarounds that increase operational complexity and reduce visibility across organisations.

“Connectivity has become a constant, yet mobile plans have often been built around short-term usage”, said Eng Bader al Zidi, CEO of Vodafone Oman.

“We have addressed that directly by restructuring the portfolio so that more of what customers and businesses use every day is already included.

This creates a unified experience across prepaid, postpaid and business, reduces reliance on add-ons and sets a new benchmark

for simplicity and value in the market”.

Within prepaid plans, RED has been refreshed to offer greater flexibility while including more value within plans themselves.

The portfolio now follows a clear price-led structure, comprising RED 5, RED 7, RED 9, RED 13, RED 17, RED 20 and RED 25, making it easier for customers to understand and compare their options.

This is supported by a more complete prepaid offering, where data rollover has been extended across the portfolio and Flexi minutes expanded to include Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, the Philippines and GCC countries, reflecting how customers in Oman communicate internationally.

SHORTTAKES



The forum will bring together business leaders, investors and representatives from both countries.

OMAN-BELARUS FORUM TARGETS NEW INVESTMENT FLOWS

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) is set to convene the Oman-Belarus Business Forum on Thursday (April 2), in a move aimed at advancing bilateral trade and unlocking new investment pathways across a range of strategic sectors.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said the forum reflects a deliberate push to expand the international footprint of the Omani private sector while deepening economic engagement with the Republic of Belarus. He noted that such platforms are instrumental in opening new channels for cooperation and reinforcing Oman's position in global markets.

Al Rawas highlighted that the forum will bring together business leaders, investors and institutional representatives from both countries, providing a structured environment to identify commercially viable opportunities and forge long-term partnerships. He stressed that enabling the private sector to capitalise on such engagements remains a key priority for the Chamber.

A central feature of the forum will be direct bilateral meetings between companies, designed to translate discussions into actionable projects. These engagements are expected to support the expansion of Omani exports, facilitate knowledge transfer and contribute to broader economic diversification objectives.

The forum will cover a wide spectrum of sectors, including food security, agriculture, engineering industries, furniture, pharmaceuticals, information technology, tourism, banking services and logistics. Participants will also attend a series of presentations outlining investment opportunities in Oman, alongside insights from the Belarusian delegation on priority sectors and growth prospects.

Discussions will further address enhancing shipping connectivity and strengthening banking cooperation, including payment mechanisms between the two sides. B2B meetings are expected to catalyse new trade and investment partnerships, supporting an increase in trade volumes and reinforcing economic ties between Oman and Belarus. — ONA

Oman crude surges to \$124/barrel on war shock

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MARCH 31

OMAN'S crude oil benchmark surged to a notable high in May 2026, with the average official price reaching \$124 per barrel, driven primarily by escalating disruptions linked to the ongoing US-Iran war, according to data from the Gulf Mercantile Exchange (GME).

The sharp spike represents a significant departure from earlier trends this year, when prices averaged \$64 in January and softened to \$62 in February and March, before edging up to \$68 in April.

The outbreak and intensification of hostilities between the United States/Israel and Iran have emerged as the dominant factor behind the surge, severely constraining global oil supply and triggering widespread market uncertainty.

The conflict has disrupted critical energy infrastructure and shipping routes, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz — a vital corridor for a substantial share of global crude exports.

Reflecting these developments, the average monthly price for Oman Crude Oil Futures (OQD) for May stood at \$124.05 per barrel, closely mirroring the official price and indicating strong market alignment amidst heightened volatility.

Analysts note that geopolitical risk premiums have sharply increased, with traders pricing in potential supply shortages as tensions continue to escalate.

The war has amplified concerns over the security of energy flows from the Gulf region, prompting a rapid upward adjustment in oil benchmarks.

For Oman, the surge presents immediate fiscal upside. Higher oil prices are expected to boost



Oil markets are likely to remain highly sensitive to geopolitical developments. — Reuters

BRENT HEADS FOR RECORD MONTHLY GAIN

LONDON: Brent oil futures headed for their largest monthly gain in volatile trading on Tuesday, as investors weighed the likelihood of US President Donald Trump ending the Iran war against supply shocks from a prolonged closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Brent crude futures for May, which expire on Tuesday, were up \$2.22, or 1.97%, at \$115 per barrel at 09:59 GMT. The more active June contract, was trading 64 cents, or 0.6%, higher at \$108.05 per barrel at the same time.

US West Texas Intermediate futures for May were up \$1.35, or 1.31%, at \$104.81 at 09:59 GMT. Front-month Brent futures were set for an all-time record monthly gain of 59% according to LSEG data that



A model of an oil pump is seen in front of an Iranian flag in this illustration. — Reuters

stretches back to June 1988. WTI was up 56%, the biggest jump since May 2020.

Tuesday's session was volatile, with front-month Brent futures swinging in a range of up 2.5% to down 1.3% from Monday's close.

Trump told aides he is willing to end the military campaign against Iran even if the Strait of Hormuz remains largely closed, leaving its reopening for a later date, The Wall Street Journal reported on Monday, citing administration officials.

The US president had warned that the US would "obliterate" Iran's energy plants and oil wells unless Tehran reopened the waterway.

"While diplomatic signals remain mixed, the ground reality suggests that uncertainty will persist", said Sugandha Sachdeva, founder of SS WealthStreet, a New Delhi-based research firm.

"Even in the event of de-escalation, restoring damaged infrastructure will take time, keeping supply tight". — Reuters

state revenues, strengthen fiscal buffers and support ongoing economic diversification efforts. Enhanced hydrocarbon income may also provide greater flexibility for public spending and infrastructure investment.

However, the broader global outlook remains uncertain. Elevated prices could fuel inflationary pressures and weigh on demand, particularly in energy-importing economies, potentially affecting long-term

market stability. As the conflict continues to evolve, oil markets are likely to remain highly sensitive to geopolitical developments, with volatility expected to persist in the near term.

GCC education sector expands to 10.9 million students

MUSCAT: The education sector across Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries continues to record steady expansion, with total student enrolment in general education reaching 10.9 million in the 2023/2024 academic year, according to a report issued by the GCC Statistical Centre.

The figures mark an increase from 10.4 million students in 2018/2019, reflecting an average annual growth rate of 0.8 per cent. Students now account for 17.7 per cent of the total GCC population, underlining the sector's growing demographic and economic significance.

Public education continues to



Public education continues to dominate, accommodating around 7.6 million students, or 70.2 per cent of total enrolment.

dominate, accommodating around 7.6 million students, or 70.2 per cent of total enrolment. In contrast, private education has demonstrated stronger momentum, expanding at an average annual rate of 4.8 per cent, compared to a marginal contraction of 0.6 per cent in public sector enrolment.

Gender distribution remains broadly balanced, with female students accounting for 49.5 per cent of total enrolment, equivalent to approximately 5.4 million students, compared to 5.5 million males.

Notably, female enrolment growth outpaced that of males, rising at an average annual rate of 2.3 per cent

versus 0.4 per cent. The teaching workforce has also expanded significantly, with the number of educators in public education reaching 940,100 in 2023/2024 — an increase of 169,000 teachers over five years, representing a 4 per cent annual growth rate.

School education accounts for the majority of teaching roles, with 842,000 teachers, while early childhood education employs around 98,100. Female educators form the majority of the teaching workforce, representing 63.8 per cent, highlighting the increasing role of women in shaping the region's education systems.

The report also pointed to continued expansion in educational infrastructure, supported by rising demand, higher education development and scholarship programmes. Sustained government investment and policy reforms have driven improvements in quality, innovation and alignment with labour market needs.

GCC countries are also advancing efforts to integrate education systems, accelerate digital transformation and equip students with future-ready skills — factors expected to enhance the global competitiveness of the region's education sector. — ONA

ENERGY SHIFT

Europe accelerates shift to renewables



Surging oil and gas prices amidst Middle East tensions are accelerating Europe's transition to renewable energy. Brent crude has climbed over 50% to \$111 per barrel, while gas prices surged sharply.

Demand for heat pumps, solar systems and EVs is rising, as businesses seek stability amidst disruptions, including constrained flows through the Strait of Hormuz. — Reuters

POLICY OUTLOOK

Fed signals pause amidst war risks



Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said the central bank can "wait and see" how the Iran war affects inflation and growth, signalling no immediate rate move. Rising fuel and oil costs pose inflation risks, while labour market concerns argue for caution.

Markets eased after his remarks, with expectations of near-term rate hikes largely fading. — Reuters

COMMODITY REBOUND

Gold edges up on weaker dollar



Gold prices rose on Tuesday, supported by a softer US dollar, though the metal remains on track for its steepest monthly decline in over 17 years. Spot gold climbed to \$4,544 per ounce.

Other precious metals rose as well. Elevated energy prices and persistent inflation risks continue to dampen expectations of US rate cuts this year, limiting further upside. — ONA

OPINION

IPSAS: Catalysing fiscal transparency, voluntary tax compliance



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DRIVEN by the pursuit of long-term development, Oman launched its Oman Vision 2040 with the aim to transform the Sultanate of Oman into a knowledge-based economy by 2040. The plan envisions a diversified economy that is less dependent on oil and gas revenues and focuses on creating new industries, enhancing productivity and promoting innovation.

In addition, this vision aims to attract both local and foreign investments, resulting in increasing the country tax revenues, which in turn supports the government’s financial stability.

In this context, an effective and good public governance system is essential for promoting voluntary tax compliance.

While governments globally constantly strive for tax reforms and to facilitate tax payments, which is certainly important for tax collection — trust in government among taxpayers, both individuals and business, remains the most crucial factor in ensuring voluntary compliance and preventing tax evasion. To foster this trust, taxpayers expect that public funds, including collected taxes, will be managed properly and utilised to develop public services. This is where good public governance comes in, ensuring

rational decision-making regarding these funds as well as providing governmental transparency and accountability.

As one of the most important tools of achieving good public governance, governments around the world have sought to adopt International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) in achieving this goal. Statistics from the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) showed that more than 80 member states have adopted or are in the process of adopting these standards.

The widespread adoption of these standards stems from their role in providing an effective government accounting system that delivers high-quality financial information, transparency in government financial reporting, sound financial decision-making processes and enhancing efficiency of government spending. Consequently, IPSAS certainly will enable Oman to fulfil the key objectives of its national Oman Vision 2040.

From a tax compliance perspective, IPSASs has a direct benefit. By demonstrating transparency and accountability through internationally recognised standards, government will instill trust among the society in their fiscal systems resulting in increased voluntary compliance with tax

To foster this trust, taxpayers expect that public funds, including collected taxes, will be managed properly and utilised to develop public services. This is where good public governance comes in, ensuring rational decision-making regarding these funds as well as providing governmental transparency and accountability.

obligations as opposed to reliance on the use of enforcement and penalties to enforce tax compliance. Furthermore, adopting IPSASs strengthens the ability of governments to better plan financially and allocate resources, which improves service delivery.

As taxpayers see visible improvements in infrastructure, education and all public services, their relationship with the government will improve and thus further strengthen their compliance with taxes due to them.

Significantly, the adoption of IPSASs has its challenges due to the need for investment in capacity building, upgrading financial systems and resistance to institutional changes. However, the long-term benefits of greater transparency, improved governance and increased society trust are huge reasons for investing in these standards as a future strategy.

In conclusion, the necessary reforms to improve tax compliance include not just regulatory reform, but additionally a solid governance framework through transparent financial practices. The adoption of IPSASs contributes significantly to fulfilling this objective by improving transparency, accountability, developing trust and promoting sustainable public financial management.

ENERGY WINDFALL TAXES REQUIRE NUANCE AND REALISM

SHRITAMA BOSE

Each energy shock bears lessons for the next one. To protect consumers from surging gas bills, Australia and Germany are considering slapping windfall taxes on any Iran war-fuelled super-profits enjoyed by oil and natural gas drillers.

TotalEnergies, for instance, has already made as much as \$1 billion trading Middle Eastern oil, the Financial Times reported on Monday. But previous iterations of the levy often undershot estimates. That makes the case for a more nuanced, realistic approach to the latest crisis.

Canberra and Berlin are considering whether to reprise the fiscal tool that was tried most recently in 2022 after Russia’s war in Ukraine sent energy prices soaring worldwide. The European Union, the UK and India were among jurisdictions that slapped levies on natural gas producers’ supernormal profits.

The levies can be hit-and-miss. EU member states had success collecting roughly 29 billion euros (\$33.33 billion) in “solidarity contributions” from oil and gas companies, exceeding a 25 billion euro target.

But a scheme to tax utilities that charged more than 180 euros per megawatt hour looked set to miss an initial 50 billion euro estimate. The UK versions of taxes on excess receipts and profits, which will remain in force until 2028 and 2030, respectively, have so far secured less than a quarter of the government’s forecasts. That’s because energy prices dropped sharply after an initial spike in 2022.

Which type of tax works for a country is tied to its position in the energy value chain. India, a crude-oil and natural gas-deficient nation grappling with a supply shortage, has little incentive to tax oil producers or refiners whose earnings get redeployed in the local market. To maximise domestic availability, New Delhi last week slapped fresh levies on exports of diesel and aviation turbine fuel.

It may make sense for Australia, one of the world’s top-three natural gas producers, to follow suit. Another option is to target a tax at output from its wells, as production does not fluctuate as much as prices do. So far, though, the only measure Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s government has implemented to ease the hit to consumers is halving the fuel excise tax drivers pay at the pump.

Crucial, too, is the use of proceeds. New Delhi pumped its takings of 440 billion rupees (\$4.64 billion) between 2022 and 2024 into expanding households’ access to liquefied petroleum gas.

Those gains are now being reversed as a shortage of LPG cylinders forces Indian kitchens to return to dirtier coal and firewood. Directing some of the largesse into building more renewable power and oil and gas stockpiles would provide more lasting energy security — and better insure economies against the next fossil fuel shock.

— Reuters

The sad demise of China’s economic debate

A few years ago, I had a hunch that China’s long-standing culture of spirited debate over economic policy would disappear. And now that has come to pass. That is the message sent by the sad demise of the China Development Forum (CDF), a gathering that I had the privilege of attending since its inception.

Until this year, that is. After participating in 25 consecutive CDFs — making me the longest-attending foreign delegate — I was not invited in 2026.

The organisers belatedly sent a perfunctory note thanking me for my participation over the years, along with their wishes for “a very healthy, happy and prosperous Year of the Horse”.

I was disappointed but hardly shocked. In 2024, I was informed that, while I could still attend the CDF, I would not be allowed to speak in any public sessions. My views on China (and especially Hong Kong) had turned more cautious and I was told that my comments on the Chinese economy had “generated intense scrutiny and even controversy” among the Chinese and foreign press, which suggested to them that any comments I made at the CDF would be “misinterpreted and even sensationalised” by the media. The organisers were explicit that this would not be in my — or China’s — best interest.

Still, I attended the forum as a spectator in 2024 and again last year.

As I wrote at the time, the point was to continue to show up and bear witness to the CDF’s fate. While I was not able to do that this year, my friends in China gave me a rundown of how it went. The CDF is now a day shorter, cut from three days to two in 2024, and Premier Li Qiang gave an opening speech for the third consecutive year, rather than hosting an interactive dialogue at the end.

A pirated copy of the agenda shows 13 seminars lasting 90 minutes on average, featuring a total of 117 speakers. When allowing for opening remarks by session moderators and courtesy time adjustments for eight keynote speakers, four Nobel laureates and a special address by Apple CEO Tim Cook, that boils down to an average



Chinese Premier Li Qiang delivers a speech during the opening ceremony for the China Development Forum at Diaoyutai Guesthouse in Beijing, China. — Reuters



**STEPHEN S
ROACH**

The writer is a faculty member at Yale University and former chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia.

China has never been an open society where ideas can be debated freely, save for one area: economic policy. But such engagement is no longer possible, reflected in the demise of the China Development Forum, which has morphed from a platform of true give-and-take into one cheerleading session after another.

of about six minutes per speaker. That makes it almost impossible to say anything of substance and leaves little room for questions, let alone debate.

These rapid-fire sessions hardly did justice to the important theme of this year’s CDF: how to ensure high-quality development and create new opportunities as China begins its 15th Five-Year Plan. The start of a new plan is a crucial moment for the Chinese leadership to ponder — and, yes, debate — the strategic opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Sadly, the CDF, in its current form, is ill-equipped to serve that critical function.

A fragmented agenda packed with sound-bite-length contributions from a multitude of speakers — many of whom know little about the topics they were assigned to opine on — is incapable of fostering debate over anything, especially a new five-year plan. My view, for what it’s worth (clearly not much in China these days), is that the 15th Five-Year Plan is disappointing, as it basically doubles down on the just-completed 14th Five-Year Plan.

The top priority continues to be new, high-quality productive forces, especially advanced technology. With domestic demand lagging, this leaves the Chinese economy heavily dependent on exports at a time when external demand is facing stiff headwinds, owing to

geopolitical tensions and increased protectionism.

Meanwhile, the new plan pays only lip service to the Chinese consumer, long the most obvious candidate to fill the void left by the property market’s post-crisis weakness and over-investment in both the public and private sectors.

When it comes to consumer-led rebalancing, senior Chinese leaders continue to talk the talk but are unwilling to walk the walk.

Instead of addressing the excesses of fear-driven precautionary saving that hobble long-term discretionary consumption, the new plan, like the old one, promotes trade-in campaigns for cars, appliances and other durable goods that simply borrow from demand that would have been fulfilled in any case.

Had I been at the CDF this year, I would have made that point for the umpteenth year in a row.

Sour grapes for not having been invited this year? It’s more a sense of disappointment in the Chinese government’s denial of a serious growth problem and its fixation on quashing debate in favour of the “the good stories of China”.

I will always remember my first appearance at the CDF in 2001.

Then-Premier Zhu Rongji had launched the conference a year earlier as a platform for engagement and debate between Chinese government ministers, academics (foreign and domestic) and some business executives.

It underscored Zhu’s brilliance as a strategic thinker: If China’s senior leaders couldn’t handle tough feedback immediately after the completion of the National People’s Congress, the biggest policy meeting of the year, the thinking was that they didn’t deserve their seats on the State Council.

Back then, I had long discussions with Zhu and his successor, Wen Jiabao, over the imperative of consumer-led rebalancing. True to the CDF’s original spirit, we didn’t always agree.

But there was never a problem being frank and open in expressing disagreement. Chinese leaders recognized the importance of constructive debate. Sadly, that was then, not now. China will suffer as a result. © Project Syndicate

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available and can join immediately.
Contact: 92076716

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

INDIAN Female, 25y/o, With a BSC & MSC
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79994705

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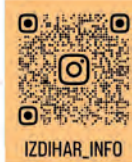
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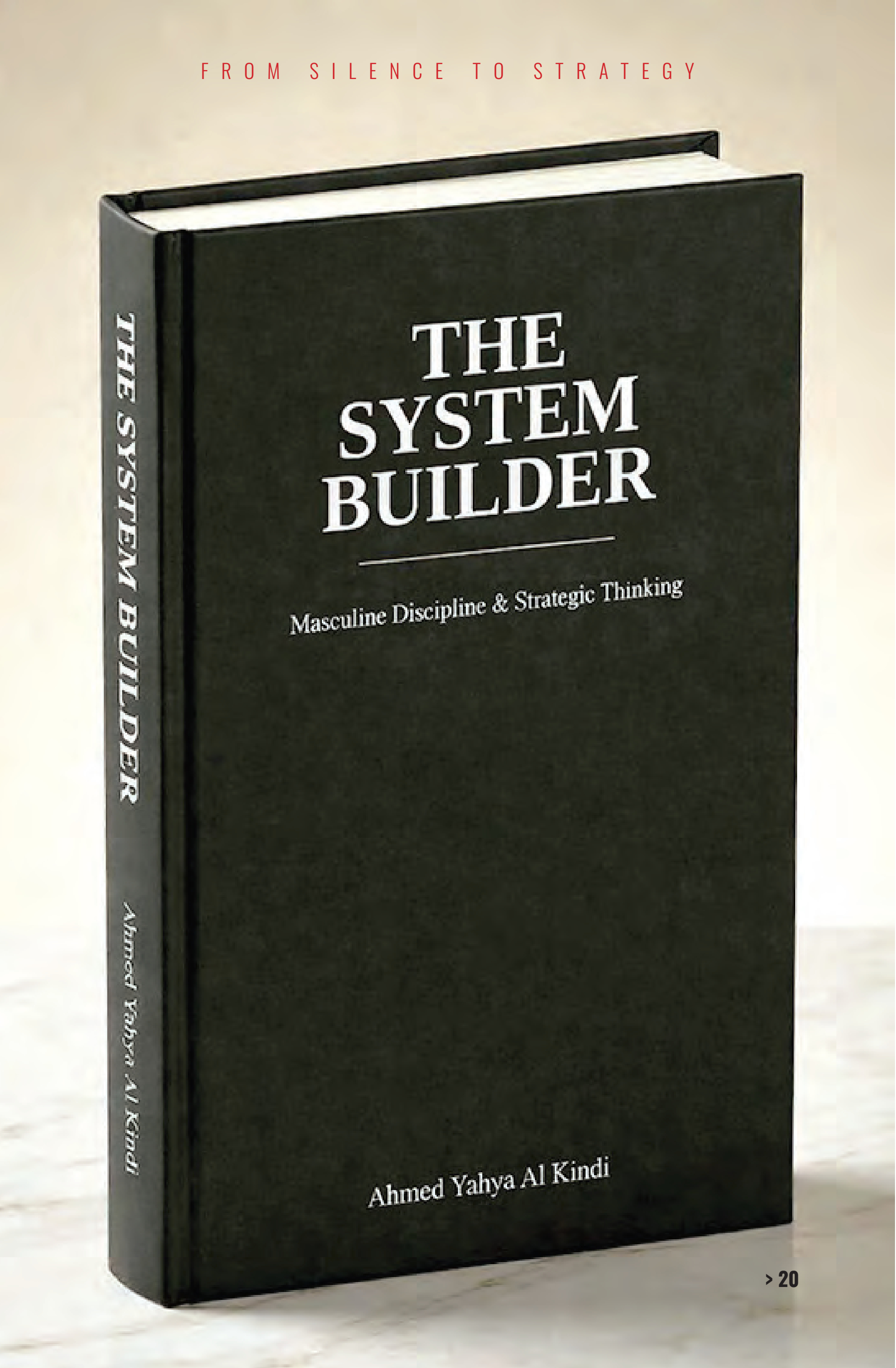


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ART/LIFE



ON SECOND THOUGHT

WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE OMANIS



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

There are moments when keeping up with the news starts to feel like a burden. One headline leads to another and before long, everything feels uncertain. Conflict, disruption, instability. They build quietly, but heavily.

And then comes the question: what do you actually do with all of this? Do you pause your life? Do you prepare for the worst? Do you withdraw and wait it out? Or do you accept that much of what is happening sits far beyond your control?

The weight of recent weeks has not just been geopolitical. It has been personal. Conversations have shifted. Among the expat community in Oman, there is a growing unease, quiet but constant. Questions around job security, sudden restructuring, delayed decisions. Plans that once felt stable now feel temporary. People are beginning to think in shorter timelines, measuring their next move rather than their long-term future. It is not panic, but it is uncertainty and it lingers.

In Oman, however, there has always been a different way of looking at things. Not careless, not dismissive, just grounded. A quiet understanding that not everything can be managed and that life still has to be lived in the meantime.

I have spent more than a decade here, long enough for acquaintances to become friendships and for those friendships to shape perspective. I remember once, in the middle of a particularly uncertain period, asking an Omani friend how he stayed so calm. He simply shrugged and said, “What will happen will happen. Why carry it twice?” It stayed with me.

Which is why this might be the perfect moment to head up to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. The rose season is brief, but it arrives with a kind of certainty that feels reassuring. Early mornings in the terraces, the steady rhythm of harvest, the scent of roses carried through the air, none of it competes with the noise of the world. It simply exists alongside it.

And in that space, something shifts. Your thoughts slow down. The urgency fades. You are reminded that not everything needs an immediate reaction.

For as long as I have known Omanis, there has always been a tendency to look at life with quiet optimism. Not because everything is easy, but because worrying about what cannot be controlled does not change the outcome.

Perhaps this moment, as uncertain as it feels, is an opportunity to lean into that mindset. After all, what is meant to happen will happen.

But inshallah and by God’s grace, we are still here and still able to live life as it should be lived.



QUICK FEATURES



LIFESTYLE

A woman photographs cherry blossom trees in Tokyo as the much-awaited season arrives. —**AFP**



CULTURE

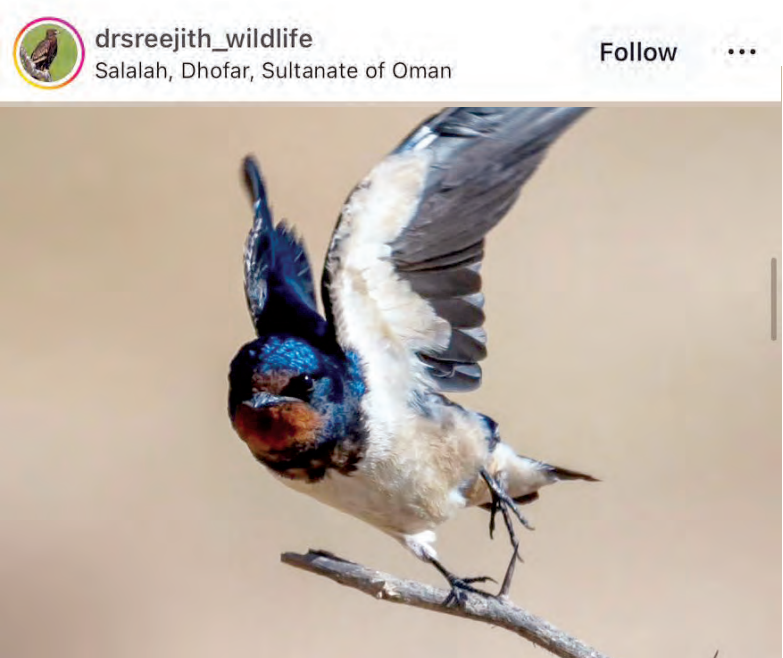
Women take part in the annual spring carnival parade in Mexico City. —**AFP**



NATURE

An arctic fox sits near the town dump in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada in the Arctic. —**Reuters**

INSTA PICKS



Where motion meets stillness



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‘PROJECT HAIL MARY’ TOPS N AMERICA BOX OFFICE FOR SECOND WEEK

Space adventure flick “Project Hail Mary” topped the North American box office for a second straight week with \$54.5 million in ticket sales, industry estimates showed on Sunday.

Ryan Gosling stars in the Amazon MGM film as a teacher-turned-astronaut who awakes on a spaceship with a mission to save Earth from a sun-dimming phenomenon.

It is adapted from a novel by Andy Weir, the author behind the 2015 hit “The Martian” starring Matt Damon.

Standing firm in second place was Disney/Pixar animated hit “Hoppers”, with \$12.2 million in the United States and Canada, according to Exhibitor Relations.

The latest original film from Disney’s Pixar tells the story of a young animal lover who uses technology to transfer her consciousness into a robotic beaver so she can better communicate and protect wildlife.

Debuting in third place was horror flick “They Will Kill You”, at \$5 million.

The Warner Bros film — which stars Zazie Beetz (TV’s “Atlanta”), Tom Felton (of “Harry Potter” fame) and Oscar winner Patricia Arquette — tells the tale of a woman working as a maid in a mysterious New York building where disappearances are common.

“These are respectable numbers for an original horror comedy with a modest budget of



around \$20 million to produce”, said analyst David A Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research. “Foreign business should be solid”.

Fourth place went to Hindi-language spy thriller “Dhurandhar: The Revenge” with \$4.75 million.

Released just three months after the original aired in North America, “Dhurandhar” continues the story of an Indian spy infiltrating Pakistani crime syndicates and politics, seeking to dismantle a terror network.

Considered political propaganda by some of India’s neighbours, it has been notably banned in Pakistan. Fifth place went to Universal’s romance film “Reminders of Him”, with \$4.7 million.

It is the latest adaptation of a novel by Colleen Hoover and stars Maika Monroe and Tyriq Withers. — AFP



U N D E R T H R E A T O F D Y I N G O U T

TURKISH ARMENIAN EVOLVES THROUGH ART

ONCE spoken by two million people across the Ottoman Empire, Turkish Armenian has shrunk to the point of becoming an endangered language following a century marked by massacres and mass emigration.

Yet defenders of Western Armenian, a language essentially spoken only by Türkiye’s now-miniscule Armenian minority, are refusing to let their native tongue become a historical curiosity.

“We live within this language; our very existence is intimately bound up with it”, said Vahakn Keshishian, whose Yeseyan cultural association has organised an Istanbul festival celebrating the language.

Up until the end of March, the Hantibum (Face to Face) festival will feature concerts, workshops and film screenings showcasing Western Armenian.

Classified by Unesco as an endangered language, it differs in both grammar and pronunciation from the Armenian spoken in modern-day Armenia proper.

“Western Armenian is certainly under threat, but it is far from being a museum piece”, said Keshishian. “It remains alive, carried by music, theatre and the publication of newspapers and books”.

Yet today, the language is spoken by fewer than 100,000 people of Türkiye’s 86 million population, as well as the descendants of the worldwide diaspora, following what most scholars agree was the Ottoman Empire’s genocide of the Armenians.

The Armenians are seeking international recognition for the massacres, which they say killed 1.5 million people between 1915 and 1917.

Türkiye strongly denies the accusation of genocide, saying that both Armenians and Turks died as a result of the First World War.

‘Invisible’

The task of passing on Armenian culture through the language has been hindered by the decline in people learning and speaking it.

“Western Armenian is spoken less and less at home because it is no longer the language of everyday life.

To break this trend, we are organising workshops for young people”, explained Betul Bakirci of Aras Publishing, which prints



books in both Turkish and Western Armenian.

“Books in Eastern Armenian are far more widely distributed and available. By contrast, to get hold of a book in Western Armenian, you have to make an effort.

Our publishing house fills that role”, she added.

While Istanbul is still home to some 15 schools teaching Western Armenian to nearly 3,000 students, enrolment has been on the decline for years.

“The political and economic situation in Türkiye is pushing young people to imagine their future elsewhere.

Many families also prefer to enrol their children in schools that teach Western languages rather than Armenian”, said Pakrat Estukyan of Agos, a bilingual Armenian-Turkish weekly newspaper.

Estukyan argued that due to their history, “Armenians prefer to make themselves invisible when the political climate becomes tense”.

DEMOCRATISE ACCESS

Estukyan saw a glimmer of light in the rising interest from young readers in the Western Armenian-language pages of his newspaper, whose print runs number 5,000 copies. For Keshishian, the festival organiser, digital tools have also given Türkiye’s branch of Armenian a new lease of life.

“The possibilities offered by new technologies have been extremely beneficial.

Online courses and artificial intelligence have helped democratise access to the language”, he explained.

In any case, Keshishian argued that Western Armenian speakers had learnt how to reinvent themselves during periods of crisis and the diaspora had an important role to play in keeping the language alive.

“Wars in the Middle East might have led to the dispersal of Armenians across the region, but they also gave birth to new Armenian-speaking communities across the world”.

FEATURES

FROM SILENCE TO STRATEGY

THE THINKER

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

IN a world saturated with noise, speed and constant digital distraction, clarity has become one of the most valuable and rare forms of intelligence. For Omani entrepreneur and author Ahmed Yahya al Kindi, that clarity was not something he stumbled upon. It was something he was shaped by.

Born completely deaf, Al Kindi’s life began in silence. But what might seem like a limitation became the foundation of a unique way of seeing the world. Without sound to guide him, he learned to observe, deeply and deliberately. He watched how people behaved, how leaders made decisions and how patterns repeated themselves across different environments. Over time, these observations formed the basis of a philosophy rooted not in motivation, but in structure. That philosophy is now captured in his book, The System Builder, a work that challenges how people think about success, discipline and personal growth.

At the heart of the book lies a simple but powerful idea: most people live within systems they did not design. These systems, shaped by habits, environments and expectations, quietly influence decisions, often without awareness. According to Al Kindi, true control begins when individuals learn to recognize and intentionally design these systems for themselves.

“Many people believe they are making independent decisions”, he explains. “But in reality, they are reacting to patterns. Once you understand those patterns, you can rebuild them”. The framework he presents is structured yet accessible. It begins with awareness, identifying hidden patterns and limiting beliefs. From there, it moves towards building internal discipline, executing consistent actions and ultimately developing long term strategic vision. Unlike many self development approaches that rely on bursts of motivation, Al Kindi’s method focuses on creating systems that make productive behaviour repeatable.

His thinking extends beyond personal development into the evolving relationship between technology and leadership. As co founder of Devmate Solutions, Al Kindi works at the intersection of artificial intelligence and business operations, helping organisations integrate automation into their workflows. Yet, he is careful to challenge the growing belief that technology alone can solve complex problems.

“Artificial intelligence does not fix weak structures”, he says. “It amplifies what already exists. If a company has strong systems, AI accelerates growth. If not, it exposes the gaps faster”.

This perspective is reflected in his latest venture, The System Builder Content Studio, an AI powered platform designed to reshape how businesses create and distribute content. Built alongside his partners Aziz and Zain, the platform functions as an integrated system that replaces traditional production roles, from photographers and videographers to editors and sound engineers.

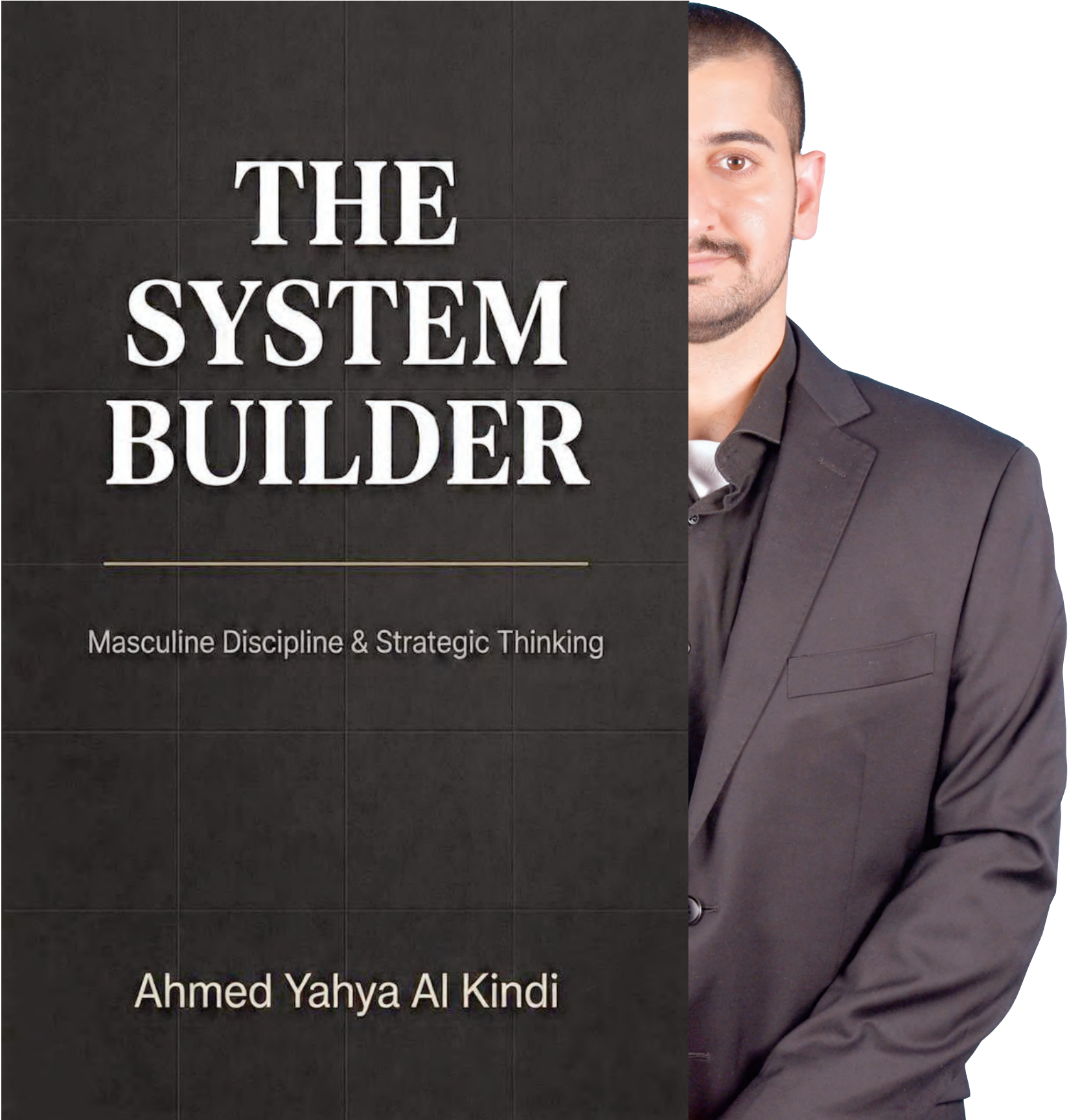
Businesses simply input their product or brand and the system generates a complete content package, visuals, videos, captions and social media posts, ready for immediate use.

With subscription plans ranging from RO 200 to over RO 1,200 per month, the platform offers a cost efficient alternative to traditional production models that can exceed RO 4,000.

But for Al Kindi, this is only the beginning. The Content Studio is one of 33 planned AI engines, spanning industries such as communication, sales, healthcare, education, logistics and government.

Together, they form the blueprint of a larger vision, an AI venture studio where each system solves a specific problem while contributing to a broader, interconnected infrastructure.

Despite the scale of his ambitions, Al Kindi’s core message remains grounded. Through his writing, consulting work and speaking engagements, he continues to



emphasise the importance of intentional design, not just in business, but in life. “Success rarely happens by accident”, he says. “It is usually the result of systems that guide behaviour over time”. In a rapidly changing world, where technology continues to redefine industries and expectations, Al Kindi’s work offers a different kind of insight, one that shifts the focus away from chasing outcomes and towards building the structures that make those outcomes inevitable.

