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INBRIEF

HM CONGRATULATES
VIETNAM PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President To Lam of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on being elected and sworn-in as his country’s new President. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of success to President To Lam in leading the people of his country in the march of progress and development in all spheres. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations of cooperation and partnership further progress and expansion in a manner that serves mutual interests.

SAYYID BILARAB
RECEIVES KUWAITI
AMBASSADOR



HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat, received Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Hajri, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Sultanate of Oman. The meeting reviewed the strong fraternal relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait. It explored ways to enhance mutual cooperation across various fields to serve shared interests and realise the aspirations of the leadership of both countries and their peoples for further progress and prosperity.

SHURA MEMBERS
FLAG RECURRING
WADI DAMAGE

The Majlis Ash’shura reviewed the performance of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology under the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan. During its 14th regular sitting of the third annual session of its tenth term, the council heard the statement of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. During the discussions, Dr Hamood bin Ahmed al Yahyaee, Chairman of the Services and Public Utilities Committee, raised concerns over recurring damage to roads and infrastructure located in wadi channels, saying the same locations continue to face repeated disruption. **DETAILS ON P2**

OMAN WELCOMES
US-IRAN CEASEFIRE

Mediators call for restraint as violations reported

PREPARATIONS
BEING MADE
FOR TALKS IN
PAKISTAN

UN ENVOY IN
IRAN TO SUPPORT
‘DURABLE’
END TO WAR

OMAN
CONDEMNS
ISRAELI ATTACKS
ON LEBANON

ERDOGAN
WARNS OF
‘SABOTAGE’ IN
IRAN TRUCE



A demonstrator holds a sign during a protest against US military action in Iran in the Manhattan borough of New York City on Wednesday. — AFP

THE Sultanate of Oman has welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America (USA). It commended the efforts undertaken by the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in this context, as well as those of all parties advocating for an end to the war. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, Oman emphasised the importance of intensifying efforts to find solutions that address the root causes of the crisis and achieve a permanent cessation of hostilities and acts of war in the region. The Sultanate of Oman condemned the attacks on the Consulate General of the State of Kuwait in Basra, Iraq, describing it as a clear violation of international diplomatic

norms and conventions which guarantee the inviolability of diplomatic missions and the safety of their staff. In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman categorically rejected the attack, stressing the need to respect the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and ensure the protection of diplomatic and consular missions under all circumstances. **RELIEF OVER TRUCE** Relief over a truce between the United States and Iran gave way on Wednesday to alarm that fighting was still raging across the region, as Israel launched its biggest attacks yet on Lebanon, and Iran struck Gulf neighbours’ oil facilities.

The Sultanate of Oman expressed its condemnation and utmost denunciation of the Israeli attacks on the lands of the sister Lebanese Republic, and what they represent in terms of war crimes and flagrant violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter. Meanwhile, a large wave of Israeli strikes killed at least 254 people and wounded many others on Wednesday, Health Minister Rakan Nassereddine told Al Jazeera. Long after the ceasefire was meant to take effect, Kuwait, the UAE and Bahrain all reported fresh Iranian missile and drone strikes, several of which targeted vital oil, power and desalination infrastructure. **SEE ALSO P6&7**

Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve attracts over 136,000 visitors

BARKA: The number of visitors to the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve during 2025 reached 136,549, compared to 105,686 visitors in 2024, reflecting the growing interest in eco-tourism in the Sultanate of Oman and reaffirming the islands’ status as a distinctive tourist destination both locally and internationally. Data issued by the Environment Authority showed a wide diversity of nationalities from various countries

around the world, with a notable presence of European visitors, including French, Italian, German and British nationals, alongside visitors from Asian and African countries, in addition to a significant number of local visitors. Zahra al Shraiqi, Head of the Natural Reserves Management Department at the Environment Authority, said that the Authority places great importance on the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve



A wide diversity of nationalities from various countries visited the islands.

due to its high environmental value, as it is considered one of the most prominent marine reserves in the Sultanate of Oman. She said that the Environment Authority undertakes numerous efforts, including regulating visits according to specific environmental controls, enhancing monitoring and protection efforts to preserve sensitive marine habitats, implementing environmental awareness programmes targeting

visitors, and supporting scientific monitoring of biodiversity, particularly coral reefs, sea turtles, and migratory and resident seabirds and land birds. She noted that the Daymaniyat Islands are distinguished by several tourist attractions, most notably the clarity of the waters and the richness of marine life, which includes diverse coral reefs and different species of fish and marine organisms. — ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The award is organised by Qatar Foundation to highlight the role of values and ethics in building societies. — ONA

OMANI INITIATIVE
‘ISMAANI’ WINS
AWARD IN QATAR

DOHA: An Omani initiative codenamed ‘Ismaani’ (Hear Me) has won the 2026 edition of ‘Our Ethics Award’ in the State of Qatar. The initiative was nurtured under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The award is organised by Qatar Foundation to highlight the role of values and ethics in building societies.

The initiative aims to empower stutterers and spread awareness about stuttering as one of the most widespread speech problems in the world. Stutterers constitute 1 per cent of the world’s population, the equivalent of about 80 million people. The initiative, the first bid of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, began in early 2020 with only 3 members, but now it includes more than 200 male and female members of different ages. Tutors undertaking the realisation of the initiative have received advanced training abroad on how to control stuttering. The tutors eventually obtained a certificate named “Training of Trainers”, which qualified them to provide programmes of high quality.

The initiative merited recognition at several important occasions, the first of which was an event organised by the Oman Human Rights Commission in 2022. In 2024, the initiative qualified for the Beirut Volunteers Award. It was the only Omani initiative that figured among the top 10 initiatives in the Arab world. It also received the Youth Excellence Award in 2025.

“Ismaani” initiative sends a clear message to all stuttering persons that their voices are audible and influential. — ONA

DEVELOPMENT OF ‘ESTIDAMAH’



MUSCAT: The Small and Medium Enterprises Committee at Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) discussed proposals to develop the services of the ‘Estidamah’ platform during a meeting held on Wednesday at the Chamber’s headquarters in Muscat. The meeting was chaired by Shaikh Ahmed bin Amer al Muselhi, Chairman of the Committee. — ONA

EA launches platform to manage climate change data

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority (EA) launched on Wednesday in Muscat the national digital platform ‘Manakh’ for managing and reporting climate change data. The platform serves as an integrated national system dedicated to managing emissions data and greenhouse gas inventories across the Sultanate of Oman. The launch of the platform was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority. The platform aims to enhance



The launch of the platform was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority. — ONA

the governance of climate data by enabling government entities and various facilities to input, collect, and update emissions data and mitigation measures in a periodic and organised manner, thereby contributing to the improvement of data quality and accuracy. The Environment Authority clarified that the platform relies on the methodologies and guidelines approved by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), ensuring data consistency and comparability in accordance with

international standards. The Authority added that the platform is based on the application of several methodologies for data reporting, measurement and verification, which enhances data reliability and transparency. This is achieved through clear mechanisms for data review and verification, tracking sources, and documentation according to the best international practices, a process that highly supports the efficient preparation of both national and international reports. — ONA

Members of Shura flag
recurring wadi damage

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

THE Majlis Ash’shura reviewed the performance of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology under the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025).

During its 14th regular sitting of the third annual session of its tenth term (2023-2027), the council heard the statement of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), covering the ministry’s performance and future plans for the transport, logistics and ICT sectors.

Ports handled more than 143 million tonnes of cargo and over 5.1 million containers, while the expansion of strategic projects and stronger integration across transport modes helped lift logistics investments.

In the ICT sector, the ministry said more than 2,277 government services had been digitised, while digital transactions exceeded 48 million in 2025. Mobile broadband coverage reached 99 per cent and fixed broadband coverage stood at 100 per cent, strengthening Oman’s digital readiness.

During the discussions, Dr Hamood bin Ahmed al Yahyaei, Chairman of the Services and Public Utilities Committee, raised concerns over recurring damage to roads and infrastructure located in wadi channels, saying the same locations continue to face repeated disruption. He said the issue underscored the need for sustainable long-term solutions instead of temporary repairs that place repeated pressure on public resources.

Al Yahyaei also said the transport, communications and ICT sector remained a key logistics pillar in a highly competitive environment, stressing the importance of strengthening Oman’s position in ports, airports, advanced technologies and artificial intelligence in line with Oman Vision 2040.



Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, with Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura, during the session in Muscat on Tuesday.

On government digital transformation, he noted a qualitative leap in service development and efficiency. More than 3,166 government services have been streamlined, and 2,277 services and permits digitised. In artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced digital technologies, the Minister confirmed that investments by several major private sector companies in this domain have surpassed RO 79 million. A number of landmark national initiatives have been launched, most notably the Omani large language model “Mu’een AI”— the first national model of its kind — alongside the establishment of the Artificial Intelligence Studio and the development of a startup-friendly ecosystem. He noted that the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed a significant expansion in communications networks, with mobile broadband population coverage reaching approximately 99 per cent, while high-speed fixed broadband services now cover 100 per cent of residential units through fibre optics, fifth-generation technologies, and low Earth orbit satellites. This has strengthened the readiness of the digital environment and

enabled the delivery of advanced services. He noted the launch of the second phase of the National Digital Economy Programme (2026–2030), designed to maximise economic impact by focusing on the digitalisation of vital economic sectors and promoting the adoption of advanced digital technologies — foremost among them artificial intelligence — thereby boosting productivity and improving service and process efficiency across sectors. Al Maawali outlined the programme’s 2030 targets: raising the direct contribution of the digital economy to approximately RO 1.5 billion in GDP, attracting RO 300 million in foreign technology investment, adding 100 new technology startups to the market, creating nearly 14,000 jobs, increasing the digitalisation rate of five targeted economic sectors to 85 per cent and enabling the listing of five technology companies on the financial market. The session was chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura, in the presence of Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash’shura.

Forum seeks to review status of health system, monitor performance

NIZWA: The activities of the seventh Health Leaders Forum of the Ministry of Health commenced on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Nizwa, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. Held under the theme “Integration and Advancement,” the two-day forum aims to review the status of the health system in the Sultanate of Oman, monitor its performance, discuss key challenges, and explore solutions to enhance and elevate its services. The opening of the forum was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health. The organisation of the forum comes within the framework of the Ministry of Health’s efforts to strengthen

effective health leadership capable of keeping pace with national transformations and supporting the objectives of the 2026-2030 Five-Year Plan. This is achieved by discussing strategic themes related to performance development, governance and the integrated response to health challenges. Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, emphasised the importance of such specialised forums, which serve as a strategic platform for enhancing direct communication with health leaders at the ministry and exchanging visions and expertise to develop the institutional work system. He noted that previous forums undertook a significant role and achieved



The opening of the forum was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health. — ONA

a clear, tangible impact within the ministry by supporting integration across leadership levels, enhancing performance efficiency and establishing a culture of collaborative work, which reflects positively on the

quality and outcomes of health services. Furthermore, the Minister underscored the pivotal role undertaken by the Ministry of Health in supporting the path of comprehensive development, noting that the

coming phase will witness the implementation of further qualitative initiatives and development projects aimed at elevating the health sector, enhancing its readiness, and aligning with national priorities and future aspirations. Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation, affirmed that the strategic directions of the health sector within the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) represent a pivotal step in the journey of developing the health system in the Sultanate of Oman and a practical launch towards achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Additionally, Brigadier Dr Saleh bin Saud al Abri, Director-General of the Medical City Hospital for Military and Security Services, delivered a presentation addressing an integrated strategic vision for transformation in the health sector. He reviewed the current state of the health system and highlighted existing challenges alongside rapid global shifts in the health field — particularly regarding innovation, digital transformation, and the growing role of data and artificial intelligence in supporting decision-making — as well as the evolving expectations of beneficiaries for higher quality and more efficient services. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



Al Nahdha Hospital succeeds in localising eye socket surgeries

MUSCAT: For the first time in the Sultanate of Oman, Al Nahdha Hospital succeeded in localising the operations on expanding the eye socket to treat patients who suffer from thyroid eye disease. The achievement was a step forward in providing advanced medical care in line with the latest international standards. Dr Al Yaqdhan al Ghafri, Director of Al Nahdha Hospital (Consultant in Corrective Eyelid Surgery, Tear Duct Surgery and Eye Orbit Surgery), said that three successful operations of this type have been performed so far, and that many patients are on the waiting list for similar operations to be conducted over the next few months.

“Such operations fall within the category of advanced surgical interventions. They are conducted to treat the bulging of the eye and to remedy high pressure inside the eye socket that results from thyroid gland disorders,” said Dr Al Yaqdhan.

He pointed out that such surgeries contribute to minimising serious complications that may threaten the safety of vision — including optic nerve damage or vision loss. The operations also reduce accompanying symptoms like dry eye and inability to completely close the eyelids, he observed. Dr Al Yaqdhan explained that localising these operations has been the outcome of efforts made by the Ministry of Health, represented by the Directorate-General of Khoula Hospital. — ONA

Partnership signed between academic and training sectors

AL RUSTAQ: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Al Rustaq on Wednesday signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with ETRADING Institute for partnership between the academic sector and the training sector. The MoC deals with the implementation of a package of training programmes.

The MoC aims to build a collaborative framework to train job-seekers, people with disabilities, students and employees and refine their skills in a manner that enables them to engage positively with the labour market. It also aims to secure a promising future for young national human resources and provide them with training programmes in the field of investment and trading in the financial markets. — ONA

RAM concludes startups leadership programme

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) concluded the Leadership for Startups Programme. Delivered in collaboration with ‘The Rising Omani Startups Programme’, the bespoke initiative focused on empowering eighteen executive leaders in Omani innovation- and technology-driven startups to scale effectively and contribute to socio-economic impact. The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance. It was attended by a number of officials, specialists and entrepreneurs.

Delivering on RAM’s mandate to ring national leaders who create socio-economic impact, the Leadership for Startups Programme provided participants with innovative leadership tools and techniques. This helps them access broader growth opportunities and enhances their regional and global competitiveness, in line with national efforts to promote economic diversification and sustainable growth.

Dr Fathiya al Rashdi, RAM’s Vice-President of Programmes, said, “Evidenced by strong engagement and practical outcomes, the Leadership for



The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance. — ONA

Startups Programme showcased the readiness of Omani entrepreneurs to expand into regional and international markets while balancing a global vision with local execution. In collaboration with the Rising Omani Startups Programme, we aimed to deliver a deeply experiential journey combining theoretical expertise with practical application and cutting-edge tools to foster a flexible and efficient leadership ecosystem capable of driving sustainable growth.”

She added, “At the Royal Academy of Management, we believe that investing in young national leaders, including entrepreneurs, is a key driver for Oman’s transition to a competitive knowledge-based economy that

is fuelled by innovation. With this programme, we aimed to create a sustainable institutional and societal impact by enabling participants to drive significant and meaningful business growth and strengthen the presence of Omani brands in regional and international markets.”

Eighteen founders and executive leaders from Omani startups completed the comprehensive and experiential six-month learning journey featuring interactive workshops, real-life case studies, in-depth dialogues with leading local and international experts, and direct mentorship and applied projects aligned with participants’ business realities. — ONA

MEDICAL CITY HOSPITAL REMOVES KIDNEY TUMOUR USING SURGICAL ROBOT

MUSCAT: The Medical City Hospital for Military and Security Services - Muscat successfully performed a delicate surgical operation that led to the removal of a cancerous tumour from a patient’s kidney by using a surgical robot.

The operation was performed using an advanced robotic surgical system that provides high-resolution 3D vision, as well as precise control of surgical instruments.

This helped remove the tumour while at the same time preserving the healthy part of the kidney.

The surgery was conducted by



The operation was performed using an advanced robotic surgical system.

Maj Dr Mohammed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Senior Specialist in Kidney and Urinary Tract Surgery, who

applied robotic and endoscopic techniques, with full support from a medical team specialised in anaesthesia, nursing and related disciplines.

The use of surgical robots contributes to the accuracy of surgical procedures, enhanced by high-definition 3D vision and precise instruments that provide a wide scope of motion that mimics the movement of the human hand, besides furnishing a high level of stability that helps perform operations in narrow or complex spaces. — ONA

Customers can be part of plan to protect fish stock

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

YELLOWFIN TUNA, one of the most popular fish, is much in demand in Oman. But it is also one of the fish that is highly monitored to maintain sustainability. While present year-round, the peak season for increased catch and large schools is generally from January to May. The price for 80kg of yellowfin tuna can reach up to RO 60. In Muscat, Qurayat is known for yellowfin tuna, and in Dhofar Governorate, Salalah is known for yellowfin landings. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) protects yellowfin tuna stocks through strict regulations, including the use of sustainable fishing methods, gear restrictions and monitoring to prevent overfishing.

The fish markets get busy once the fishermen bring their catch as early as 4 am in the morning and customers begin to pour in even after 10 am.

Said al Saadi, a data collector from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, comes to the Muttrah fish market in every day to measure the size of certain protected types of fish.

“A yellowfin tuna that is less than 37 cm should not be sold as per the rule,” explained Al Saadi.

It is tuna season in Oman. There are seasonal bans on different types of marine species, for example, the nine-month shrimp fishing ban, commencing on December 1, and



The ministry promotes long-term sustainability by managing, regulating and studying tuna fisheries.

Customers can be part of the sustainability initiative and not buy juvenile fish. They should not buy it. We try to teach people not to buy these things, but if they buy it, they encourage fishermen to catch juvenile fish more. And this will eventually affect and deplete the stock.

abalone harvesting restrictions to ensure stock sustainability.

When a seasonal ban is issued, the operators must register remaining stock immediately to avoid penalties.

“If it is not their season and they catch the fish, it affects the stock. The size of the fish is important,” explained Khalifa al Maqbali, a researcher at the MoAFWR.

“Customers can be part of the sustainability initiative and not buy juvenile fish. They should not buy it. We try to teach people not to buy these things, but if they buy it, they encourage fishermen to catch juvenile fish more. And this will eventually affect and deplete the stock,” advised Al Maqbali.

The collection of data and research is part of key initiatives that protect juvenile fish,

monitoring stock through the Fisheries Resources Survey Project, and imposing strict penalties, such as licence suspension, to ensure sustainable marine resources.

The ministry promotes long-term sustainability by managing, regulating and studying tuna fisheries, which are essential to the Omani economy and, specifically, the yellowfin, and now customers can play their part too.

The ministry protects fish stocks by enforcing seasonal bans, banning destructive gear, restricting fishing in sensitive areas and strengthening surveillance against illegal fishing. The imposed specific and temporal bans allow species to breed, rejuvenate, and ensure replenishment. Certain purse seine nets are banned to protect juvenile fish.



شركة مدينة الرسيل الصناعية ش.م.ع.م.
Al Rusayl Industrial City Co. S.A.O.C

BIDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

Rusayl Industrial City Company (SAOC) announces the following Bid:

Bidding Number	Bidding Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
RSC/ 01/2026	Rusayl Integrated Sports Complex Project	23-04-2026	14-05-2026	Design, construction, development, and operation of a fully integrated multi-use sports complex with a total area of (20,000 m2)	First and above	None

Interested and specialized companies are invited to obtain the bidding documents and submit their bids in accordance with the approved terms and conditions.

- Location for Obtaining Bidding Documents: Rusayl Industrial City Company Building – Projects Department – Ground Floor
- Location for Submitting Bids: Tender box in reception hall, Rusayl Industrial City Company Building – Ground Floor
- Timings: During official working days on the specified days, from 9:00 Am to 3:00 Pm.
- For inquiries, please contact: Email: Younis.alfahdi@madayn.om | Ahmed.Hilal@madayn.om Telephone: +968 24449619 | 24449623

SPOTLIGHT

ROSES BRIGHTEN LOCAL ECONOMY



Total
rose
plants

6,000



Annual
production

30,000

litres of rose
water



Market
value

210,000



Total
visitors
(2025)

222,151

THE spring rose harvest season in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, is witnessing growing visitor turnout, reaffirming its status as one of the most prominent tourist seasons in the Sultanate of Oman. The season is distinguished by its unique natural attributes and deeply rooted cultural heritage, which together contribute to energising tourism activity and supporting the local economy.

The season serves as a significant economic driver, empowering family-run businesses and revitalising traditional industries associated with mountain roses, foremost among them the production of rose water, soaps, and essential oils. This provides sustainable sources of income and boosts the entrepreneurship sector.

The rose season, which typically runs from mid-March to mid- or late May each year, helps boost tourism activity during the first half of the year, stimulates demand for tourism-related services, and tangibly enhances the local economy.

Estimates indicate that the number of rose plants cultivated in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar stands at approximately 6,000 plants, with an annual production of around 30,000 litres of rose water, and a market value estimated at roughly RO 210,000, highlighting the growing economic importance of this agricultural sector intertwined with cultural heritage.

Ahlam bint Hamad al Qasabi, Director of the Heritage and Tourism Department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said the rose season is one of the vital tourist seasons that reflects the unique character of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and enriches the visitor experience through direct engagement with the natural environment and local heritage. She noted that the season serves as an integrated community platform in which local residents and productive families participate by showcasing and marketing rose products and derivatives.

She explained that the promotional efforts undertaken by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism during the spring rose season include filming and producing a promotional video,



purchasing promotional gifts, acquiring a painted artwork of roses in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, implementing promotional media coverage, collaborating with influencers at various social media platforms, running digital advertisements in both the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, setting up advertising screens in several governorates of Oman, conducting continuous promotional postings about the season on social media platforms, and creating a digital promotional page for booking tourism packages in collaboration with the national travel and tourism operator.

Ahmed bin Salim al Toobi, Director-General of Administrative and Financial Affairs in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, stated that the spring rose season embodies an integrated model of harnessing natural and heritage assets to support economic diversification in the governorate. He noted that the governorate is working to develop the season into a comprehensive economic and tourism platform that contributes to stimulating activities related to tourism, agriculture and manufacturing industries.

Recent data issued by the National Centre for Statistics



and Information (NCSI) showed that the number of visitors to the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar during the past year, 2025, reached 222,151 visitors, compared to 203,629 visitors during 2024, marking an increase of 9.1%.

This year's spring rose season, organised by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate in partnership with a number of public and private institutions, features a diverse

programme of events. Most notable among them is the Rose Trail between villages, which connects several agricultural villages with the participation of approximately 400 competitors, offering an experience that combines sports, tourism, and mountain nature exploration.

The season also includes the organisation of a specialised academic symposium exploring prospects for developing the rose and aromatic plants sector in the Sultanate of Oman, alongside discussions on investment, export opportunities, and modern distillation technologies. Additionally, awareness and educational programmes targeted at children and families are held to promote environmental and agricultural awareness through interactive methods.

The residents of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar are committed to preserving the cultivation of mountain roses and passing down traditional production techniques from generation to generation, as this cultivation holds both economic and cultural value, contributing to the consolidation of local identity and enhancing the wilayat's position as a distinguished year-round tourist destination. — ONA



SHORTTAKES



The award targets Omani film-makers in the context of supporting cinematic creativity and promoting meaningful community dialogue.

REGISTRATION OPENS FOR ‘TAWASUL’ SHORT FILM AWARD FOR YOUTH

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Youth Communication and Dialogue Department, announced on Wednesday the opening of registration and participation for the fourth edition of the ‘Tawasul’ Short Film Award for Youth.

The award targets Omani film-makers in the context of supporting cinematic creativity and promoting meaningful community dialogue.

This edition focuses on exploring issues that concern individuals and society, emphasising areas of meaningful discussion and the balanced handling of opinions and viewpoints. This includes topics related to the individual’s relationship with themselves, their relationship with the group and the surrounding public environment, or the group’s relationship with the local community or broader human society.

Hilal bin Saif al Siyabi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Youth at the Ministry, stated that the ‘Tawasul’ Short Film Award for Youth continues its successful journey in its fourth edition for 2026, confirming its strong position in discovering youth energies and developing their capabilities in this vital field.

Al Siyabi added that the award falls within the framework of continuous support for youth creativity and enhancing the presence of national talents in the film-making industry. This aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 to create an informed, knowledgeable society that preserves its identity, possesses skills and capabilities, and keeps pace with cognitive advancements and technological changes. — ONA

REDEFINING IDENTITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE



In Oman, young people are negotiating a delicate balance between a deeply rooted cultural heritage and an ever-expanding digital landscape.

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

THE QUESTION these days is no longer simply ‘Who are we?’ but rather ‘How do we define ourselves in an open, digital world?’

In Oman, young people stand at the heart of this shift, negotiating a delicate balance between a deeply rooted cultural heritage and an ever-expanding digital landscape that continuously reshapes perspectives, values, and aspirations.

Social media platforms have evolved far beyond tools for communication or entertainment. They have become powerful ecosystems where values are influenced, perceptions are formed, and lifestyles are subtly curated. With a single scroll, Omani youth can move from familiar local settings to a vast array of global narratives — observing how others live, think and present themselves to the world.

Young people increasingly find themselves navigating between

Young people increasingly find themselves navigating between two parallel spheres: a traditional, community-based identity shaped by local norms, and a digital identity influenced by global culture.

two parallel spheres: a traditional, community-based identity shaped by local norms, and a digital identity influenced by global culture. As one university student explains, “Sometimes it feels like I have two versions of myself — one in real life, and another online, where I feel more free to express who I am.”

Language, too, reflects this evolving dynamic. Everyday conversations are no longer exclusively in Arabic, but often incorporate English phrases, digital shorthand and hybrid expressions shaped by online interaction. This linguistic blending is not merely about convenience — it signals a deeper cognitive shift, where ideas and modes of expression are increasingly framed within a global context.

Concepts such as independence, achievement and self-expression are being reinterpreted through multiple cultural lenses. “We constantly compare ourselves to what we see online,” says a young professional. “It creates an unspoken pressure to look or live a certain way.” This invisible pressure

is one of the defining challenges of the digital age. The highly curated nature of online content often presents an idealised version of reality, prompting some individuals to adopt lifestyles or expectations that may not fully align with their social environment.

Rashid al Muhairbi content creator notes, “Preserving identity doesn’t mean staying in the past. It means presenting it in a way that connects with today’s generation.” This perspective reflects a growing awareness that identity is not static, but rather an evolving construct shaped by both continuity and change.

Maintaining this balance, however, requires collective effort. Families today are called upon not only to guide, but to engage in open dialogue about digital influence and cultural values. Educational institutions, meanwhile, have a critical role in fostering what can be described as “digital awareness” — equipping students with the ability to critically engage with content rather than passively consume it.



REVIVING ARAB MUSIC

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), organised a specialised panel discussion titled “Reviving Arab Music: The Role of the Arab Music Academy,” held at the College of Arts and Social Sciences, with the participation of a select group of academics, experts and practitioners in the field of music. This session is part of the ministry’s ongoing efforts to strengthen the status of the arts as an authentic component of national identity and an effective tool for building cultural awareness. — ONA

Parents of ISM students concerned over fee hike

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

Parents of the children studying in Indian School Muscat (ISM) met the chairman of the Board of Directors of the Indian Schools, and raised their concerns, including the fee hike, the high cost of textbooks and the drastic fall in quality of education in the schools. In a circular dated March 11, 2026 to the parents, the school has increased the tuition fee for students from KG I to Std XII by RO 2 per month in view of the rise in the school’s operational costs.

The parents submitted a memorandum that included seven grievances, including reviewing and rationalising the price of textbooks, as the price



of textbooks is being increased unfairly every year. They quoted an example of a computer book, which is not even a core subject, being charged at RO 8,100.

Parents say that in the current geopolitical situation, it is unfair for ISM to increase fees while parents are financially worried. Parents complain

that the decision to open the school in the second week of July, when summer is at its peak, is harmful to the health of the students. Parents also demanded a review of the extension of school hours, keeping in mind the welfare of the students.

The parents told the Observer that there should be a clarification by the BoD

on the use of funds collected from students and parents for the Kerala floods, and on the infrastructure development fee collected for the renovation of the Jibroo School campus for four years.

When reached for comment, Sayed Salman, Chairman of the Board of Directors, confirmed to the Observer that the board has received a formal memorandum from the parents and will discuss it at the board meeting.

“The board values the feedback provided by the parent community,” Salman stated. “While we understand the concerns regarding rising costs, it is important to note that the increase in textbook prices reflects broader market trends globally,” he added.



العمانية للاستثمارات التعليمية والتدريبية
oman education & training investments

TENDER NOTICE No. 003 – 2026 - OETI

Oman Education & Training Investment Co. S.A.O.G is inviting a sealed tender for the Supply of Spider Lift for **Sohar University at Sohar** from contractors & Supplier having sufficient experience in relevant field with excellent or first grade.

Tender	Description	Fees OMR	Submission Date
OETI 003- 2026	Supply, Delivery, Testing, Commissioning and Handover of Spider Lift with minimum working height of 25 meters at Sohar University Main Campus	50/-	30/04/2026

Description	Deadline
Tender Release Date	09/04/2026
Last Date for collection of tenders after paying tender fee	16/04/2026
Site Visit	Not Required
Receiving clarifications, if any, from bidders	20/04/2026
Respond to bidder clarifications	23/04/2026
Receiving bids	30/04/2026

The tender document will be ready for collection by the company after paying non-refundable amount of **RO. 50/-** via depositing the money in bank or by cash on or before **16/04/2026**. Cash will be collected by **Mr. Saud Al Jarwani**, OETI, Building 20, Sohar University, Sohar.

Provide the email id to be sent along with the copy of the receipt. For Bank Transfers our account details as below:

Beneficiary : **Oman Education & Training Investment Company SAOG**
Account No : **002020004442**
Bank : **Bank Sohar**
Branch : **Sohar Branch, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman**
Swift Code : **BSHROMRU**

Please send the transfer receipt to sjarwani@oeti.om to receive the tender documents in CD or USB.

Tenders offers must be submitted online (softcopy with password protected) or in closed envelopes sealed, delivered at the OETI premises, tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and deadline for submission of offers is **30/04/2026 @ 14:00 hours**.

Tender should be addressed to CEO, OETI Office submitted to **Mr. Saud Al Jarwani** as given below during office hours **08:00 to 15:30 Sunday to Thursday**.

CEO OETI Office
Building 20, Sohar University Campus
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100, Ext.: 450 / 612

THE WORLD BREATHES A SIGH OF RELIEF

UNITED NATIONS

The UN chief “calls on all the parties to the current conflict in the Middle East to comply with their obligations under international law.

POPE LEO

I welcome with satisfaction, and as a sign of real hope, the announcement of an immediate two-week truce.

LEBANON

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun welcomed the truce, adding that Beirut continued efforts to ensure that the regional peace.

QATAR

Qatar’s foreign ministry said the truce was “an initial step toward de-escalation” and urged Iran “to immediately cease all hostile acts.

SAUDI ARABIA

The Saudi foreign ministry said it hoped the truce will represent an opportunity to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable de-escalation.

IRAQ

Iraq’s foreign ministry welcomed the ceasefire and called for building upon this positive step by launching serious and sustainable dialogue tracks.

TÜRKIYE

We insist on the fact that the temporary ceasefire be fully implemented on the ground and hope that all sides abide by the agreement.

EGYPT

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty expressed his deep appreciation for this important American step to give diplomacy a chance.

EUROPEAN UNION

The truce creates a much-needed chance to tone down threats, stop missiles, restart shipping, and create space for diplomacy.

UNITED KINGDOM

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the truce “will bring a moment of relief to the region and the world” as he headed to the region.

SPAIN

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez welcomed the US-Iran ceasefire as “good news” but said Spain would not “applaud those who set fire to the world.

UKRAINE

President Volodymyr Zelensky said that helping Middle East countries counter Iranian drone attacks would stay in the region.

IRAN FM RAISES ISRAELI ‘CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS’ IN CALL WITH PAKISTANI

US, IRAN AGREE ON TWO WEEKS OF SHAKY TRUCE



Iranians perform noon prayers as they gather in Tehran’s Revolution Square. — AFP

PAKISTAN’S Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that Islamabad would host delegations from the United States and Iran later this week following their ceasefire announcement. “I... extend deepest gratitude to the leadership of both the countries and invite their delegations to Islamabad on Friday, 10th April 2026, to further negotiate for a conclusive agreement to settle all disputes,” he said in a post on X. Pakistan, which has forged a close relationship with US President Donald Trump and is sensitive to developments in neighbouring Iran, has emerged as a channel for messaging between Tehran and Washington in recent weeks. “We earnestly hope, that the ‘Islamabad Talks’ succeed in achieving sustainable peace and wish to share more good news in coming days,” Sharif said. Both Tehran and Washington said they had

agreed to a two-week ceasefire barely an hour before Trump’s deadline to obliterate Iran was set to expire. The war began when Israel and the United States launched strikes on Iran that killed its supreme leader on February 28, sparking retaliatory attacks from Tehran on Gulf nations and Israel. Lebanon has also been drawn into the conflict after Iran-backed group Hezbollah launched attacks on Israel, which has since carried out strikes, including on the capital, and launched a ground operation in the south of the country. Sharif said the ceasefire applied “everywhere” including Lebanon, though Israel later said it would not stop its aerial and ground operations there against Hezbollah. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi raised “ceasefire violations” by Israel with Pakistani mediators on Wednesday, an Iranian ministry statement said, as reports citing senior officials warned that Tehran could pull out of the truce over attacks on Lebanon. Araghchi “discussed the Zionist



People gather after a two-week ceasefire in the Iran war was announced, in Tehran. — Reuters

regime’s violations of the ceasefire in Iran and Lebanon”, referring to Israel, in a call with the powerful Pakistani military leader Field Marshal Asim Munir, the statement said. Reports from Iranian media and Al Jazeera citing Iranian officials and well-informed sources said Tehran was prepared to withdraw from the ceasefire and retaliate over Israel’s bombardments of Lebanon. “Iran will withdraw from the agreement if Israel continues to violate the ceasefire in its attack on Lebanon,” Iran’s Tasnim news agency reported, citing a well-informed source. Iran’s Revolutionary Guards vowed on Telegram

to “punish Israel for the atrocities it has committed in Lebanon and violating ceasefire conditions”. The Al Jazeera television channel also quoted an unnamed Iranian official saying “the ceasefire includes the region, and Israel is known for breaking promises and will only be deterred by bullets.” The temporary ceasefire came after a down-to-the-wire bid by Pakistan and other mediators to avert Trump’s threat to destroy all power plants and bridges across Iran, a move that legal experts said could constitute a war crime. Türkiye and Egypt had also been helping mediate in recent days. China helped get Iran to the negotiating table, Trump said on Wednesday. Sharif, in a separate X post, said China, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Egypt and Qatar had all provided “support towards reaching the ceasefire and giving peaceful diplomatic efforts a chance”. The Pakistani leader also thanked Arab Gulf nations for their “commitment to peace and stability in the region”. — AFP

UK PM STARMER ARRIVES IN SAUDI ARABIA ON THE FIRST STOP OF A GULF TOUR



Britain’s PM Keir Starmer (C) meets aircrew members during a visit to Taif Airbase, Saudi Arabia. — AFP

RIYADH: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer arrived on Wednesday in Saudi Arabia, on the first stop of a Gulf tour aimed at bolstering the ceasefire in the Middle East war, Downing Street said. As the British leader’s arrival was being announced, the Gulf kingdom’s defence ministry said it had intercepted nine drones targeting Saudi territory in recent hours, despite the ceasefire agreed overnight between the US and Iran. The ministry’s post on X did not mention the location of the interceptions or any potential targets. Earlier, Starmer welcomed the ceasefire deal, saying in a statement it “will bring a moment of relief to the region and the world”. “Together with our partners we must do all we can to support and sustain this ceasefire, turn it into a lasting agreement and

re-open the Strait of Hormuz,” he added. Hours later, Starmer issued another joint statement with the leaders of Canada, Japan and various European countries, which said the goal must now be to negotiate an end to the war “within the coming days”. “This can only be achieved through diplomatic means,” their statement added. The UK leader’s Gulf tour follows a virtual meeting on Tuesday of military planners from over 30 countries hosted by Britain. It explored measures for an international coalition to make the Strait of Hormuz accessible and safe after a ceasefire, according to the Ministry of Defence. Last week, a UK-led diplomatic virtual meeting of around 40 countries also discussed the critical waterway. — AFP

Israel launches most violent strikes on Beirut

BEIRUT: Israel launched a series of strikes in Beirut on Wednesday, causing panic among residents in the most violent attack on the capital since the start of the war with Hezbollah. The Israeli military said it carried out its “largest coordinated strike across Lebanon”. Israel has insisted the two-week truce in its war with Iran does not apply to Lebanon. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam on Wednesday called on his country’s friends to help put an end to Israeli attacks following a series of deadly strikes across the country. In a statement, Salam said that while Beirut “welcomed the agreement between Iran and the United States and intensified our efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement in Lebanon, Israel continues to escalate its attacks”. “All of Lebanon’s friends are called upon to help us stop these attacks by all available means,” he added, after Israeli strikes that Lebanon’s health ministry said killed dozens of people and wounded hundreds more. Simultaneous strikes on the capital came without warning, prompting people on streets to start running and motorists to honk their horns in an effort to clear the way, according to journalists. “I saw the blast, it was very strong, and there were children killed, some with their hands cut off,” Yasser Abdallah, who works in an appliance store in central Beirut, said. One of the strikes hit Corniche al Mazraa, one of the main roads in the capital. A photographer saw



While Beirut welcomed the agreement between Iran and the United States and intensified our efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement in Lebanon, Israel continues to escalate its attacks”. “All of Lebanon’s friends are called upon to help us stop these attacks by all available means

NAWAF SALAM



First responders rush to the site of an Israeli air strike, in southern Lebanese coastal city of Tyre. — AFP

widespread damage, buildings ablaze and destroyed cars. Israel’s Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military had carried out a surprise attack on Wednesday targeting hundreds of Hezbollah members across Lebanon. “The IDF carried out a surprise strike on hundreds of Hezbollah members at command centres across Lebanon. This is the largest concentrated blow Hezbollah has suffered since Operation Beepers,” Katz said in a video statement, referring to a major 2024

operation against Hezbollah involving pager bombs. Lebanon’s health ministry said in a preliminary toll that the series of Israeli strikes across Lebanon on Wednesday killed dozens of people and wounded hundreds. “In a very serious escalation, Israeli warplanes launched a wave of simultaneous air strikes on several Lebanese areas, resulting in, in an initial count, dozens of martyrs and hundreds of wounded,” the ministry said in a statement. The ministry reiterated its call for citizens to “reduce

traffic congestion, especially in the neighbourhoods of the capital, to allow priority for rescue and ambulance services”. “A plane struck, and people started running left and right, and smoke was billowing” from the targeted building, said another witness, Ali Younes. Israel also hit Beirut’s southern suburbs and southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah holds sway, after issuing evacuation warnings for these areas, in parallel with strikes on the east. Ambulances were heard in the targeted areas. — AFP

SAFE TRANSIT

First ships pass through Strait of Hormuz



PARIS: Two ships have passed through the Strait of Hormuz since Iran agreed to reopen the waterway. “The Greek-owned bulk carrier NJ Earth crossed the Strait at 08:44 UTC, while the Liberia-flagged Daytona Beach transited earlier at 06:59 UTC, shortly after departing Bandar Abbas at 05:28 UTC”, it said. “NJ Earth’s transit may be an early sign of movement, but it is still too soon to tell whether this reflects a broader ceasefire-driven reopening or a previously approved exception”. — AFP

VERIFICATION ROLE

IAEA says ready to support ME peace effort



VIENNA: The UN atomic watchdog welcomes the ceasefire agreed overnight between the US and Iran and stands ready to support efforts to find a lasting solution covering Tehran’s nuclear programme, Director General Rafael Grossi said. “IAEA DG Grossi welcomes ... a return to diplomacy aimed at negotiating a settlement on key issues including Iran’s nuclear programme,” the IAEA said. “The IAEA stands ready to support these efforts through its verification role.” — Reuters

REPORTED ATTACKS

Iran hits oil facilities in the Gulf states



TEHRAN: Iran launched missile and drone attacks on Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates after air strikes against oil facilities on its Lavan island on Wednesday morning, state television reported. “Missile and drone attacks on the Emirates and Kuwait have taken place a few hours after the targeting of Lavan island oil facilities in Iran,” IRIB said. The Lavan Oil Refinery facility on the island “was subjected to a cowardly attack” at 10:00 am despite a ceasefire deal announced. — AFP

OPINION

The opposite of retreat



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

THIS week, I had the pleasure of serving as forum chair at a gathering that left more questions than answers. It made me feel, again, how deeply Oman needs more spaces where people from different disciplines can think aloud together. Real change rarely emerges when every sector speaks only to itself. Progress demands collision, reflection, and the kind of conversation willing to hold ambition up to the light and ask whether there is enough substance beneath it to endure.

The timing mattered, as the region is under real pressure. The conflict around Hormuz has reshaped shipping routes, strained supply chains, and forced governments and institutions to reckon with vulnerabilities that were, until recently, largely theoretical. Food systems, energy infrastructure, trade corridors, and the assumptions that underpin economic planning are all being tested at once. In that context, a room where people from different disciplines can think aloud together becomes a foundational necessity. Public life is full of beautiful words. Growth is one of them. Leadership is another.

Resilience follows closely behind. They move easily through speeches and strategies, annual reports and policy language, polished enough to feel unquestionable. The older I get, the more drawn I become to the weight beneath such words. A polished idea can travel far on its appearance alone. A polished institution can do the same. Pressure, however, has a way of stripping language back to its bones. It reveals whether truth or presentation is doing the carrying.

Under pressure, the instinct is usually to retreat. Sectors protect their own ground. Institutions turn inward. Conversations narrow. What this room modelled was the opposite. People leaned toward one another’s disciplines, found common language across very different experiences, and treated dialogue as a method of navigating difficulty together. That spirit of complementarity felt rare and necessary.

Across the morning, I found myself returning to the same thought. Enduring progress asks for depth. Ambition can light the first spark. It can move a room and animate a vision. Ambition alone, however, cannot carry the long middle. It cannot hold

Progress demands collision, reflection, and the kind of conversation willing to hold ambition up to the light and ask whether there is enough substance beneath it to endure

institutions steady when conditions shift, build trust where participation is missing, or leave behind something worthy of those who come after us. Only depth can do that. Only clarity. Only the steady alignment between promise and lived reality.

Creativity surfaced too, closer to the centre of the conversation than serious spaces usually grant it. Creativity may be one of the deepest forms of intelligence available to a society trying to grow with grace. It allows people to adapt, to reimagine systems that no longer fit, to make meaning in conditions that were never designed with them in mind. Serious spaces rarely give it that standing, and they should.

The best of these conversations ask ambition to be tested and sharpened. They let disciplines intersect. They push people to think beyond the boundaries of their own sectors and toward the wider shape of the future we are building together. The room emptied by noon. I am still sitting with the image someone offered of a mirage, and the question of how many of our most confident structures would survive if the shimmer were stripped away.

ARTEMIS CREW WITNESSES METEORITE IMPACTS ON MOON

CHARLOTTE CAUSIT

During their historic lunar flyby, astronauts on NASA’s Artemis II mission witnessed meteorites striking the rugged surface of the Moon, a sight that has piqued scientists’ curiosity.

“That was definitely impact flashes on the moon. And Jeremy (Hansen) just saw another one,” mission commander Reid Wiseman reported on Monday while flying around the Moon — the first such journey by humans in more than half a century.

“Amazed,” replied Kelsey Young, the mission’s lunar science lead, as she followed the spacecraft from more than 400,000 km away on Earth.

“I don’t know if I expected to have the crew see any on this mission, so you probably saw the surprise and shock on my face,” she said, recounting the strikes at a press briefing the next day.

Among NASA’s team in Houston, there were “audible screams of delight” from scientists when the crew described flashes of light caused by meteorite impact, Young said.

The phenomenon is “something that we have not witnessed often,” the mission’s backup astronaut Jenni Gibbons said.

“They were really high priority science for us, so the fact that they saw four or five was just outstanding.”

As the astronauts hurtled towards home, NASA asked them on Tuesday about the meteorite strikes they saw during their nearly seven-hour observation period.

“It’s a pinprick of light,” replied Canadian crew member Hansen. “I would suspect there were a lot more of them.” “I would say they were a millisecond, like the fastest a camera shutter can open and close,” added Wiseman, who said the flashes were “white to bluish white.”

According to NASA’s tally, the team — which broke the record for the furthest distance from Earth during their flyby — reported a total of six meteorite impacts on the lunar surface.

According to Betts, the descriptions will allow scientists to “get some idea of the frequency of impact” as well as the size of the projectiles.

One question was what size an object needed to be to create a flash visible to the astronauts, Betts said.

“It’s not a piece of dust, but it’s not a metre-size boulder, either.” The observations raise questions and show that the “daily flux of meteors should be monitored more closely in the future before a lunar base is established,” said Peter Schultz, Professor Emeritus of Geological Sciences at Brown University. — AFP

Before the Arabia dam breaks again

LONG before collapse becomes visible, it becomes predictable. We studied in school how more than two millennia ago, the Ma’rib Dam in Yemen, constructed as early as the 8th century BCE and sustained through successive repairs, began to show signs of structural fatigue. Historical and archaeological records indicate repeated breaches long before its final failure in the 6th century CE. The warnings were not hidden. They were ignored, except by a few.

Among them was Malik Ibn Fahm, the legendary leader of the Al Azd tribe. He understood a principle that modern policymakers still struggle to operationalise: you cannot wait for collapse, and you cannot trigger panic. He chose neither. Instead, he engineered a gradual exit, signalling instability, allowing others to absorb his assets, and repositioning his people toward Oman and other areas before the system around him lost its value. What he executed was not flight. It was strategic timing.

Today, the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) faces a comparable moment, not of imminent collapse, but of mounting structural stress. Since February 2026, the war of US, the Israeli occupation against Iran has expanded beyond a conventional confrontation into a regional systems shock. Drones and missiles exchanges, maritime disruptions, and escalating retaliation cycles are already affecting Gulf economies through higher insurance costs, disrupted logistics, and volatility in energy markets. This is not a distant conflict. It is a stress test of the region’s economic architecture.

A new layer of pressure is now emerging. Historically, major conflicts have often been accompanied by burden-sharing expectations. It is increasingly plausible that the US will expect its regional partners to contribute



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Those who recognise early signals and reposition gradually retain control; Those who delay are forced into reactive decisions under pressure.

directly to the financial costs of the war, while ignoring local development needs and aspirations.

This is where the KNIFE framework becomes critical. The challenge is not choosing between alignment and neutrality. It is managing exposure across multiple fronts simultaneously.

First, the conflict targeted advanced sectors, including AI, cybersecurity, and critical digital infrastructure. For GCC economies investing heavily in AI-driven growth and digital transformation, this introduces a new category of vulnerability. Strategic sectors are no longer insulated from geopolitical competition; they are becoming part of it. Second, energy geography is shifting in real time. Europe, already under pressure to diversify away from unstable supply routes, is accelerating its search for alternative energy corridors, whether through the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa, or expanded LNG imports. At the same time, Asia continues to consolidate its position as the primary destination for Gulf energy exports. This creates a dual dynamic: westward flows become more politically sensitive and fragmented, while eastward flows become more economically dominant and structurally stable. For the GCC, this is not just a market shift. It is a strategic rebalancing of dependency.

Third, the risk of fragmentation within the region itself cannot be ignored. Divide-and-conquer strategies by the Israeli occupation Pax Judaica plans have historically been a consistent feature of external interventions in the region. The current trajectory suggests attempts, whether deliberate or systemic, to create differentiated pressures on GCC states based on their strategic alignments, economic exposure, and security dependencies. However, the probability of such strategies fully succeeding remains limited.

Why? Because the cost of fragmentation is now too visible.

The shared exposure to energy infrastructure risks, maritime disruptions, and economic volatility creates a strong incentive for coordination rather than division. While tactical differences will persist, structural fragmentation is unlikely to deliver sustainable advantages to any external actor in the long term.

This brings us back to the central question: what does acting before the dam breaks actually look like today? The answer is not disengagement. It is disciplined repositioning.

Under a KNIFE-informed approach, the GCC must adopt structured neutrality supported by gradual derisking. This means maintaining core financial stability, preserving existing US-linked holdings to avoid market disruption, while systematically redirecting new capital flows toward a broader mix of geographies and asset classes. Asia, Europe, gold, and strategic regional infrastructure all become part of this diversification logic.

At the same time, the region must invest in resilience: Alternative trade routes, expanded storage capacity, and secure digital infrastructure capable of withstanding technological targeting.

Diplomatically, neutrality must be active, anchored in mediation, de-escalation, and strategic communication. Oman’s role, once again, becomes central, not as an outlier, but as a model of how balance can be maintained in a polarised environment.

The lesson from Ma’rib is not about collapse. It is about timing. Under the KNIFE framework, the insight is clear: Those who recognise early signals and reposition gradually retain control; Those who delay are forced into reactive decisions under pressure. The dam does not need to break for risk to materialise. It only needs to show cracks. In moments like these, strategy is defined not by where you stand, but by how intelligently you move before the dam system around you breaks.

The coalition of the serious...



AHMED AL MUKHAINI

The author is a policy analyst

In an age of fluid alliances and normalised destruction, the burden shifts to responsible states to act together, restore restraint, and bring power back within limits — for no power is omnipotent. The success of the Artemis programme reminds us what disciplined systems can achieve when they learn properly from catastrophe. But it also brings to mind the Challenger disaster and the body of thought that grew around it: the normalisation of deviance. Safety literature describes how organisations under pressure can grow accustomed to departures from their own rules, especially when no immediate disaster follows, until deviation itself begins to feel normal.

That concept belongs not only to engineering. It belongs, with disturbing precision, to world politics. For this is what the present conflict threatens to do to the international order. It threatens to normalise what should never become normal: the destruction of essential civilian infrastructure, the casual erosion of legal restraint, the treatment of exceptional violence as a usable policy instrument, and the quiet expectation that the rest of the world will adjust.

Systems rarely collapse all at once. More often, they decay by accommodation. A rule is breached, yet the world moves on. A legal principle is bent, yet institutions answer with language rather than consequence. An outrage occurs, yet trade resumes, markets reopen, and the next outrage arrives before the previous one has morally settled. Repetition then performs its numbing work. The abnormal survives long enough to acquire the appearance of realism. There is an old Arabic proverb: “I was eaten

the day the white ox was eaten.” Its force lies in the logic of fragmented consent. Safety is bargained for at the expense of another, and the bargain is mistaken for strategy. But once the first injustice is accepted, once the first protection is broken, what follows is often only a matter of sequence. The lesson is not merely moral. It is systemic. Orders fail when enough actors decide they can live with the first breach because it is not yet theirs. That is how deviance becomes normalised: not only through aggression, but through acquiescence.

If that is allowed to happen, then the real issue is no longer this conflict alone. The issue becomes the kind of world we are teaching ourselves to inhabit. Such a world would not be stable. It would not even be strategically intelligent. It would be a world in which law weakens not because it is formally abolished, but because enough powerful actors behave as though it were optional, while enough weaker actors conclude that resistance is futile. It would be a world in which alliances become more fluid, more transactional, and more nervous, because norms no longer provide a reliable architecture of conduct.

This is why smaller and medium-sized states must stop imagining themselves as spectators. If the mighty can redefine limits by force, then the rest of the world must stop behaving as though history is made elsewhere and merely endured locally. The proper answer is neither romantic defiance nor submissive adaptation. It is strategic coalition-building around system interests.

No power is omnipotent. No great power, however armed or technologically advanced, is free of limits. Every major power has

Systems rarely collapse all at once. More often, they decay by accommodation. A rule is breached, yet the world moves on. A legal principle is bent, yet institutions answer with language rather than consequence

vulnerabilities: supply chains, sea lanes, domestic political divisions, alliance fatigue, fiscal burdens, legitimacy deficits, exposure to global markets, dependence on wider compliance, and need for reputational cover. Power is real, but never absolute. The question is whether others are willing to organise around that fact.

That is where the coalition of the serious becomes necessary.

By serious, I do not mean ideological uniformity. I mean states that are serious about continuity, commerce, restraint, legality, and the protection of civilian life. States that are serious enough to know that if the law collapses into hierarchy, they will suffer first and longest. States that are serious enough to understand that the system's interest is now higher than the vanity of any single capital.

Such a coalition need not begin as a military bloc. It can begin as a disciplined diplomatic and economic front: defending freedom of navigation, opposing attacks on essential infrastructure — and preventing the use of their resources for that purpose, insisting on legal red lines, protecting humanitarian norms, and refusing to reward those who convert permanent exception into a method of rule. This is not idealism. It is the minimum strategic intelligence required for a world that still wishes to remain governable.

For countries like Oman, this is not abstract. Oman's geography gives it relevance, but its deeper importance lies in political memory and civilisational temperament. Its long association with dialogue, neutrality, maritime openness, and measured statecraft is not ornamental. It is strategic.

NIGERIA SWEATS IN HEATWAVE AS WAR DRIVES UP COSTS

TONYE BAKARE AND NICHOLAS ROLL

Azeez Akanni hopped on a yellow bus heading for the central business district on Lagos Island, beads of sweat rolling down his neck and arms. The 32-year-old clothier regularly navigates chaotic traffic to deliver luxury clothes and footwear to customers across the megacity of Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital.

But his and millions of others' commutes have been snarled by brutal temperatures as Africa's most populous country fights a heatwave.

Adding to the pain, a spike in fuel prices from the Iran war has sent costs for air conditioning and back-up generators shooting up alongside the mercury.

“The sun is too hot,” Akanni said, wedged between two equally sweaty passengers. High temperatures are nothing new in the west African nation, perched just above the equator.

But according to the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet), things are getting worse: it warned in a 2025 report that in the decade from 2016-2025, nine out of the 10 years were “among the 12 warmest on record”.

Last week, UK-based Korean DJ JinseoulMusic, who is currently touring Nigeria, shared her struggles in a post on Instagram to her more than 430,000 followers.

“Surviving Nigerian heat with no light,” she wrote, using the colloquial term for electricity. “Heat woke me up in the middle of the night.”

Analysts blame the rising temperatures in Lagos on climate change, its coastal location, dense population, limited greenery and heavy traffic.

The constant use of generators compounds the issue, as the petrol-guzzling machines release heat and greenhouse gases. Public transport meanwhile is shambolic, with most commercial vehicles dilapidated and lacking working air conditioning.

Temperatures peaked in Lagos at 35 °C at the end of March, according to NiMet. They reached 38 °C in the capital Abuja, while Sokoto in the northwest hit 44 °C, with NiMet describing the conditions as “unhealthy”.

Nigeria's unique economic situation as Africa's fourth-largest economy, but with a dilapidated power grid much less stable than some of its poorer neighbours, has led to the widespread use of private generators, at least among those who can afford them.

That number may be dwindling as fuel prices soar due to the Iran war.

“I no longer use it because of the hike in price,” Emmanuel Chinonso, 40, a ride-share driver in Abuja, said.

When the grid goes out on a sweltering night, so does his fan, he said. — AFP

Solar push helps Pakistan temper Gulf energy shock

PAKISTAN'S solar power push has cushioned the full impact of the war in the Middle East, analysts said, despite lingering concerns over fuel supplies and rising prices.

A study published last month assessed that the uptake of solar around 2018 helped the country avoid more than \$12 billion in oil and gas imports up to February this year. At projected market prices, it could save a further \$6.3 billion by the end of 2026, said Renewables First and the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

In the bustling side streets of Lahore, in northeast Pakistan, shopkeeper Aftab Ahmed, 49, was out shopping for solar panels to install at home to help him cut costs.

“The current fuel situation in our country is such that fuel has gone beyond the reach of the common person,” he said.

“It has become so expensive that an average person can no longer afford fuel for a motorcycle or a car. Fuel prices are also affecting electricity bills, leading to further increases.

“If we shift towards solar energy, at least some savings can be achieved from one side.”

Hours earlier, the government in Islamabad announced an eye-watering 42.7-per cent hike in the price of petrol and 54.9 per cent on diesel.

That brought protesters onto the streets, sparked queues at fuel stations, and led the government to announce free state-run public transport for a month.

Rooftop solar panels are everywhere in Pakistan, helping to provide uninterrupted power and avoid often lengthy cuts in grid supply, particularly when temperatures soar.

Nabiya Imran, an energy analyst



The uptake of solar around 2018 helped the country avoid more than \$12 billion in oil and gas imports up to February this year.

with Renewables First in the capital Islamabad, said they have also helped ease the burden caused by the disruption to shipping in the Gulf.

“Because people in Pakistan have adopted solar over the past several years, this... is providing a cushioning effect against the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, particularly in the power sector,” she said.

“Had we not adopted solar in the first place to the extent that we have, the impacts in the power sector would be much worse.”

Pakistan's solar surge does not mean it is immune to the supply shortages that have hit countries across Asia.

Last month, the government introduced austerity measures. The working week for public sector employees was cut to four days and schools were shut.

The Pakistan Super League cricket tournament was also cut from six venues to two, and crowds were banned, to save fuel.

But solar has made working from home more viable and affordable for Pakistanis because it cuts reliance on the grid and imported gas.

Market forces have largely driven the uptake, which the study called “one of the fastest consumer-led energy transitions on record”.



MUHAMMAD DAUD

The writer is a video journalist at AFP-TV, Islamabad Pakistan, covering military operations, politics, and humanitarian issues in Pakistan and beyond

SPORTS

AUDACIOUS DISPLAY



Rajasthan Royals' Vaibhav Sooryavanshi walks back after losing his wicket. — Reuters

SOORYAVANSHI, 15, HAILED AS ‘AMAZING, FEARLESS’ AFTER ACING BUMRAH TEST

NEW DELHI: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi was hailed as “amazing” and “fearless” after the 15-year-old underlined his rare talent with an audacious display against superstar Indian bowler Jasprit Bumrah in the IPL.

Rajasthan Royals opener Sooryavanshi faced the 32-year-old pacer Bumrah, of Mumbai Indians, for the first time on Tuesday and immediately hit him over the wide long-on fence for a six.

Bumrah smiled as he walked back to his run up, then three balls later the precocious teenage batsman did it again with a pull shot that went over deep backward square leg.

Sooryavanshi hammered 39 off 14 balls and put on 80 runs with opening partner Yashasvi Jaiswal, who hit an unbeaten 77, as Rajasthan won by 27 runs in a rain-shortened 11-overs-a-side contest in Guwahati.

Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya said it had been “fascinating” to see Sooryavanshi take on one of the world’s best bowlers.

“Amazing to see the way he bats, the kind of fearlessness he has, the kind of shots he has,” said Pandya.

Sooryavanshi took on another senior pace bowler in the New Zealander Trent Boult to pummel an attempted yorker into the crowd over backward square leg.

His knock was cut short by a stunning catch in the deep by Tilak Varma after attempting another big hit off Shardul Thakur.

Sooryavanshi was angry at himself, covering his face and letting out a scream, before trudging back to the pavilion.

Fellow left-hander Jaiswal watched the blitz from the other end captivated.

“The way he has been playing, it’s tremendous,” said player of the match Jaiswal.

“He’s working so hard as well. So I also get motivated — okay, I also need to develop some different shots.

“And if he’s taking on someone, I’ll just keep giving him positive messages that you can go after him and whatever, just play freely.”

Jaiswal, 24, said he doesn’t need to play the big brother.

“He’s amazing and he understands the game very well. He’s quite capable to do it himself. He’s enjoying his game and he’s playing unbelievably well.”

Sooryavanshi made history in last year’s IPL in a dazzling debut season highlighted by a 35-ball century, the second fastest in the history of the T20 tournament.

He started this edition with a blazing fifty to live up to big expectations and received praise from former cricketers including spin legend Anil Kumble, who said the prodigy should be fast-tracked into the senior Indian national team.

Sooryavanshi has already made his mark at youth international level, hammering 175 off just 80 balls as India beat England in the Under-19 World Cup final in February. — AFP

Al Ain reach final under Omani coach Al Maamari

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

OMANI coach Jamal al Maamari has continued to make a strong impression in his first professional experience outside Oman after guiding Al Ain to the final of the UAE President’s Cup Volleyball 2026.

Al Ain sealed their place in the final with a straight-set win over Al Jazira in the semifinal on April 7, underlining the team’s technical discipline and organised display in a match they controlled from the outset. The side had earlier booked their semifinal place after overcoming Shabab Al Ahli 3-2 in the quarterfinals, showing resilience and composure in a demanding knockout contest.

Al Maamari will now lead Al Ain into his first final with the club on Friday, April 17, when they face Bani Yas at Al Ain Club Hall to decide the title of the 2025-26 edition.

Reaching the final marks an important step in Al Maamari’s coaching career, especially as it comes in his debut season with Al Ain. In a short period, he has managed to impose his technical style and shape a cohesive side capable of competing strongly in major tournaments. The achievement also adds to the success he previously enjoyed in Oman with Seeb and Al Salam, further highlighting the ability of Omani coaches to make an impact abroad.

COLLECTIVE WORK
Speaking on the achievement, Al Maamari said he was delighted with the team’s progress, noting that the run to the final reflected the collective work within the club and Al Ain’s professional environment. He said his first overseas coaching experience has been progressing positively, with the team delivering a series of strong results on the way to the final of one of the UAE’s top competitions.

He added that the success was the result of combined efforts from the club’s management, players and technical and medical staff, as well as the players’ discipline in training and commitment to applying instructions on court. He also praised the support he has received since joining the club, saying it had played a key role in helping him



Jamal al Maamari’s Al Ain team in action.



Omani coach Jamal al Maamari during a match for the Al Ain team.

settle quickly.

Al Maamari noted that Al Ain still have further challenges ahead this season, including a four-team competition featuring Al Ain, Bani Yas, Al Nasr and Al Jazira in a single-round league format, giving the team another opportunity to compete for silverware.

The Omani coach said he hopes to crown his first professional stint abroad with a title, while thanking everyone who has supported him and the team, whether through encouragement or prayers, stressing that the next stage will require even greater focus and hard work.

Berrettini sinks Medvedev 6-0, 6-0; Zverev through

MONTE CARLO: Daniil Medvedev slipped to an embarrassing 6-0, 6-0 thrashing by Matteo Berrettini in the Monte Carlo Masters second round on Wednesday, as Alexander Zverev dug deep to beat Cristian Garin.

Medevdev completely unravelled against Berrettini after missing two break points in the opening game, making 30 unforced errors and serving five double faults. Medvedev did not win more than two points in any of the last 11 games and his frustrations boiled over in the second set, smashing his racquet into the court four times.

Berrettini wrapped up the double-bagel victory, the first such defeat of former world number one Medvedev’s career, in just 49 minutes.

“I think it was one of the best performances of my life,”



Italy’s Matteo Berrettini celebrates after winning against Russia’s Daniil Medvedev in Monte Carlo. — AFP

Berrettini said.

“I think I missed three shots in the entire match and it is not easy against a tricky player like Daniil. I think the game plan was perfect and my weapons

were working.”

The former Wimbledon runner-up, now ranked 90th, will face Joao Fonseca in the last 16 after the Brazilian teenager beat Arthur Rinderknech 7-5, 4-6, 6-3.

World number three Zverev, who is hoping to complete the set of all three clay-court Masters 1000 titles this week, staged a late comeback to edge out Chilean qualifier Garin 4-6, 6-4, 7-5.

Zverev has reached the semifinals at each of the Australian Open, Indian Wells and the Miami Open this year but was in danger of a shock exit after losing the first set and then trailing 4-0 in the third.

Garin also served for the match when 5-3 ahead in the deciding set, but Zverev broke and then sealed victory by reeling off five consecutive games.

He had to stave off three break points in a nervy 12th game to avoid a tie-break, but eventually got the job done on his third match point.

“My level was not there at all to be honest,” Zverev said after taking two hours and 50 minutes to get over the line.

“But it was my first clay-court match in 11 months. I didn’t have much time to prepare as I played well in Miami.

“I am happy to get the win. It was a tough match and he is someone playing well, especially here.”

The 28-year-old will face unseeded Belgian Zizou Bergs, who downed 2023 champion Andrey Rublev 6-4, 6-1, in round three.

Zverev has not won an ATP title since Munich 12 months ago, while the last of his seven Masters triumphs came in Paris in 2024. — AFP

REGIONAL TENSIONS



The Doha Diamond League was delayed by 6 weeks.

DOHA DIAMOND LEAGUE MEET POSTPONED UNTIL JUNE 19

PARIS: The Diamond League athletics meeting in Doha has been postponed for six weeks and will now take place on June 19 due to the war in the Middle East, organisers announced on Wednesday. The United States and Iran agreed on Tuesday a two-week ceasefire to the war that has killed thousands and hammered the global economy. The Diamond League organisers had previously said the opening leg of this year’s series would go ahead as planned on May 8, but have now decided to delay the event. “In the interests of athlete and spectator safety, a decision has now been taken to postpone the meeting. Should conditions allow, it will now be held on June 19,” they said in a statement. The competition will also be moved from the Qatar Sports Club to the Khalifa International Stadium in case of higher temperatures.

Several major sporting events in the Middle East have been postponed or cancelled because of the war the United States and Israel launched on Iran, including the Formula One grands prix in Bahrain and Jeddah, in Saudi Arabia.

The first Diamond League meeting will instead be in Shanghai on May 16. Several major sporting events in the Middle East have been postponed or cancelled because of the war the United States and Israel launched on Iran, including the Formula One grands prix in Bahrain and Jeddah, in Saudi Arabia. Both were scheduled for mid-April and have been cancelled. In football, the Finalissima, which was to pit European champions Spain against Copa America winners Argentina on March 27 in Qatar, was called off. The Qatar motorcycling Grand Prix, initially scheduled for the weekend of April 12, has been postponed to November 8, while a gymnastics World Cup event scheduled to take place in Doha in April was also cancelled. However, a horse racing meeting in Dubai, carrying prize money of \$30.5 million and featuring the Dubai World Cup, did go ahead on March 28. — AFP

The Khalifa stadium, which is temperature controlled, hosted the world athletics championships in 2019 and matches of the 2022 Fifa World Cup. The Diamond League is the elite one-day meeting series in track and field, a season that features 15 meets in 13 different countries across four different continents.



Paul Ricard 6HR first challenge for Al Harthy

AHMAD AL HARTHY READY TO SHINE AGAIN IN WORLD’S BIGGEST GT SERIES

CIRCUIT PAUL RICARD HOSTS RD1 OF GTWCE ENDURANCE CUP THIS WEEKEND

OUTRIGHT CATEGORY RACE WINNER RELISHING 6HR NIGHT RACE WITH BMW M4

SEASON OPENER START OF OMAN RACING BY CENTURY MOTORSPORT PARTNERSHIP

CIRCUIT

PAUL RICARD in the south of France will host the opening race of the 2026 GT World Challenge Europe powered by AWS Endurance Cup on April 11, where Ahmad al Harthy will be aiming for a strong and successful start for the new Oman Racing by Century Motorsport squad. Confirming his full-time return to GTWCE in late February, the Omani is now raring to go for the 2026 campaign where he will bid for the Bronze Cup class title along with team-mates Javier Sagrera and Calan Williams at the wheel of the No 42 BMW M4 GT3 EVO. Round one of the season is a six-hour night race at the Le Castellet track, beginning on Saturday at 18.00 local time, and is a venue where Al Harthy has been a Pro-Am class podium finisher in the past. His most recent race at Paul Ricard was in 2024, where he was sixth in the Bronze class. Having focused on the FIA World Endurance Championship and, before that, the European Le Mans Series for the past few years, Al Harthy made his first appearance in the GTWCE Endurance Cup since the 2019 season a couple of years ago where he made history at Monza. With a headline grabbing performance, along with then team-mates Sam De Haan and Jens Klingmann, the trio claimed a



remarkable outright GTWCE race victory at the Italian track – the first ever Bronze class entry to achieve such a feat. They then secured another class podium in the 2024 season finale in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to finish the season fourth in the Bronze standings. Al Harthy’s focus on GTWCE this year is very much an endurance racing home-coming, as the series has played a major role in his glittering motorsport career. Debuting in the championship back in 2013, since that time he has achieved a series of incredible milestones including, of course, his two Pro-Am class championship victories in 2017 and 2019. This weekend’s action will feature an incredible packed grid of 59 cars in total, with the Bronze division featuring the biggest

single class entry of 18. Al Harthy’s season is being supported by prestigious partners OQ, Omantel, Oman LNG and the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. NEW CHALLENGE Ahmad al Harthy: “It’s fantastic to be back in GTWCE Endurance Cup, and especially with a new challenge working with the guys at Oman Racing by Century Motorsport and my new team-mates Javier and Calan. It’s the biggest, and most hotly contested, GT endurance championship in the world and it really is a delight to be back where I’ve achieved so much success in the past for Oman. “We go into this weekend at Paul Ricard aiming to do as well as we possibly can, targeting the biggest result, but we also know the Bronze class is going to be incredibly competitive – you don’t expect anything less in GTWCE. Hopefully, the prologue over the next two days will go well and then we can take that confidence through free practice and into qualifying and the race on Saturday.” The build-up to round one begins on April 8 and 9, with the traditional pair of official prologue test days at Circuit Paul Ricard. Bronze testing and two more practice sessions follow on April 10, with qualifying taking place at 12.05 local time on April 11, Saturday. The six-hour race itself will begin at 18.00 local time on Saturday evening.

Houston Rockets comeback sinks Phoenix on Durant return

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Durant scored 24 points against his former team to help inspire the Houston Rockets to a come-from-behind 119-105 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday. Durant, who was traded from Phoenix to Houston last year, received a mixed reception upon his return to Arizona, with sections of the Suns home crowd subjecting him to boos throughout a see-saw game. Phoenix needed a victory to keep their faint hopes of bagging an automatic playoff spot in the Western Conference alive. And the home side got off to a dream start after surging into a 21-point first-quarter lead against a stunned Rockets line-up. But Houston recovered before outscoring Phoenix 38-21 in the fourth quarter to complete a victory that means the Suns will miss out on direct entry to the playoffs.

“They hit us with a good punch early on...I love how we weathered the storm and stayed together and took that first punch,” Durant said. “It’s a great team win.” The Minnesota Timberwolves will instead be assured of the final playoff ticket from the Western Conference after cruising to a 124-104 defeat of the struggling Indiana Pacers. After the Pacers led briefly in the first quarter, Minnesota quickly asserted their superiority and led by eight points heading into the second quarter. The Timberwolves — once again missing Anthony Edwards with a knee issue — never looked like surrendering that advantage and led by as many as 31 points midway through the fourth quarter as they closed out a comfortable victory. Ayo Dosunmu led the Minnesota



Houston Rockets’ Kevin Durant (7) goes past Phoenix Suns’ Dillon Brooks (3) at Mortgage Matchup Center. — **Imagn Images**

scoring with 24 points from 10-of-17 shooting while Julius Randle and Bones Hyland added 19 points apiece. The Toronto Raptors kept their automatic playoff hopes on track with a 121-95 blowout of the Miami Heat. Miami had needed a win to keep their slim chances of securing a top-six finish alive in a razor-thin Eastern Conference playoff race. But Toronto took the lead early in the second quarter and steadily pulled away for a victory which leaves them occupying the sixth and final direct entry playoff place in the Eastern Conference standings. Scottie Barnes scored 25 points and Brandon Ingram 23 to guide Toronto to the win. The Raptors are now 44-35 with three games of the regular season remaining, one game ahead of the

seventh-placed Philadelphia 76ers. Miami’s loss locked them into the East’s four-team play-in tournament next week which will determine the final two teams who advance to the playoffs. The Boston Celtics closed in on securing the No 2 seed in the Eastern Conference after holding off the in-form Charlotte Hornets 113-102 at the TD Garden in Boston. Back in the Western Conference, the injury-hit Los Angeles Lakers drifted further out of contention for the number three seed after suffering a 123-87 pummeling to the Oklahoma City Thunder at home. The Lakers, whose hopes of mounting a postseason charge have been left in tatters after injuries to Luka Doncic and Austin Reaves, rested LeBron James as Oklahoma City cruised to a lopsided win. — **AFP**

SPORTS

CHAMPIONSLEAGUE



Arsenal’s Kai Havertz celebrates scoring their first goal against Sporting Lisbon in Lisbon, Portugal. — Reuters

HAVERTZ’S LATE WINNER PUTS ARSENAL ON TOP AGAINST SPORTING

LISBON: Kai Havertz snatched a last-gasp winner as Arsenal bounced back from their domestic distress to steal a 1-0 victory at Sporting Lisbon in the Champions League quarterfinal first leg on Tuesday.

Mikel Arteta’s side arrived at the Jose Alvalade Stadium rocked by successive defeats against Manchester City in the League Cup final and Southampton in the FA Cup quarterfinals.

Once again, the Gunners were below their best but they emerged with the win thanks to David Raya’s fine saves and Havertz’s clinical finish in stoppage-time.

Arsenal will be firm favourites to advance to the semifinals in the second leg in north London on April 15, but they will have to improve significantly to win the tournament for the first time.

Those agonising losses to City and second-tier Southampton marked the first time that Arsenal had been beaten in successive matches this term, with the embarrassing FA Cup defeat just the Gunners’ fifth of the season.

The after-shocks were still being felt as Arsenal struggled to find any momentum in Lisbon, but not for the first time this season they found a way to win ugly.

“We had to be a little bit crisper, faster, more efficient to break them down when they had that block,” Arteta said.

“We had a goal disallowed and there were two or three occasions where we were close but we lacked that final pass. In the end a magic moment from the finishers win us the game.

“It’s beautiful and that’s the impact you need when you get to this stage of the season. Everybody has to make an impact and they certainly did that tonight.”

Praising the outstanding Raya, Arteta added: “He had two moments where he made two big saves. At the moment he’s phenomenal and extraordinary since he joined us. We are very lucky to have him.”

Aiming to finally banish accusations that they are English football’s nearly men by winning their first major trophy since the 2020 FA Cup, Arsenal have faced pointed questions about their perceived lack of mental strength.

Grinding out the win in Lisbon was a suitable riposte to the critics.

Insisting his players were “hungrier than ever”, Arteta had urged Arsenal to use the “pain” of their recent defeats as motivation and they rose to the challenge.

Sitting nine points clear of second-placed Manchester City, the Premier League leaders are also on course for their first title in 22 years.

Sporting went close to snatching a late goal when Luis Suarez’s cross reached Catamo for a flicked header that Raya pushed away.

But Arsenal grabbed the winner in stoppage-time via Arteta’s substitutes.

Gabriel Martinelli played a superb pass over the Sporting defence and Havertz beat the offside trap to slot past Silva from 10 yards as Arteta punched the air in delight. — AFP



Arsenal’s Kai Havertz scores their first goal past Sporting Lisbon’s Rui Silva. — Reuters



Bayern Munich’s English forward #09 Harry Kane (L) shoots challenged by Real Madrid’s Brazilian defender #03 Eder Militao during the Uefa Champions League quarterfinal first-leg match at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid. — AFP

LUIS DIAZ and **HARRY KANE** scored the goals that gave dominant Bayern Munich a crucial 2-1 Champions League quarterfinal first leg win away to Real Madrid on Tuesday.

Kylian Mbappe’s strike 16 minutes from time gave record 15-time winners Real a lifeline at their Bernabeu home in a gripping battle.

Vincent Kompany’s side, arguably the strongest team in Europe this season, produced a masterclass in the first half and could have been several goals ahead.

Instead they had only one from Diaz, which Kane added to after the interval, but French superstar Mbappe’s goal kept Alvaro Arbeloa’s side in the tie.

“It’s a shame it wasn’t 2-0 at the end to be completely honest,” said Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, who made several good saves in the second half as Madrid ramped up the pressure.

“You know how dangerous Real Madrid are, we saw that again today. They had plenty of chances and could’ve scored more.

“First up we’re happy about the victory here away from home, but it’ll be a tough challenge back in Munich.”

Real Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger said that Mbappe’s goal had kept the tie open.

“For me, the two goals we conceded were gifts, and in the second half we needed more,” Rudiger told Movistar.

“I think we’re alive, everything is open with that goal from Mbappe. I think we had many chances to score goals, but in the end this is how it is.”

The round’s glamour fixture was a European classic — a record 29th time these heavyweights have faced each other in the competition.

Bayern flew out of the blocks and Konrad Laimer’s rasping effort narrowly over the bar showed that Kompany’s side had come to the Spanish capital to attack.

After nine consecutive matches against Madrid without a win,

Bayern Munich’s Colombian forward #14 Luis Diaz celebrates scoring the opening goal. — AFP



DIAZ, KANE GIVE BAYERN CL EDGE AT REAL MADRID

Bayern were determined to put an end to that streak and show why many consider them favourites to lift the trophy this season.

Bayern should have taken the lead through defender Dayot Upamecano, who fluffed his lines from point-blank range, after Kane cushioned the ball into his path, allowing Alvaro Carreras to hack the ball off the line.

Madrid were largely pinned back as Bayern dominated the ball, but the hosts sought to send through rapid strikers Mbappe and Vinicius Junior on the counter, with Neuer saving from both.

Madrid’s defensive work was nearly undone by a moment of madness from 18-year-old midfielder Thiago Pitarch, starting in place of Jude Bellingham, whose poor back pass under pressure was straight to Serge Gnabry in front of goal, but goalkeeper Andriy Lunin deflected the German’s shot behind.

SLICK BAYERN

Bayern toyed at times with Real, who ceded possession far too often,

and their opening goal was a slick combination play which caught the hosts on their heels.

Gnabry exchanged a one-two with Kane and pushed the ball in behind Trent Alexander-Arnold for the Madrid defender’s former Liverpool team-mate Diaz to reach and stroke home past Lunin in the 41st minute.

Kane, who was a doubt to start because of an ankle problem, did not seem fully fit but made an even bigger impact less than a minute into the second half.

Olise cut the ball back to him on the edge of the box and Kane fizzed a curling effort into the bottom corner to double Bayern’s lead.

It was his 11th Champions League strike this season, trailing only Mbappe on 14, and his 49th goal across all competitions.

Vinicius had a fine chance to pull one back for Real when Upamecano badly underhit a header back to Neuer, but the Brazilian sliced his shot into the side-netting.

Neuer made a brilliant save to thwart Mbappe once more and left with the man of the match trophy.

With Bellingham on as a substitute, Madrid stepped up a level and eventually found the net with Alexander-Arnold guiding a low cross to the far post where Mbappe beat Neuer, smashing home off the crossbar after 74 minutes.

Bayern angrily roared back with Kane volleying wide as they tried to restore their advantage, but instead they take a slender lead back to Bavaria for next Wednesday’s second leg. — AFP

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN - \$99.06
BRENT \$94.25
LIGHT \$95.52



SHORT TAKES



The meeting focused on advancing joint work and identifying investment prospects for Oman & Libya.

Oman and Libya explore investment and trade avenues

MUSCAT: Oman and Libya have stepped up efforts to deepen economic cooperation, as senior officials from both countries reviewed a range of promising investment opportunities aligned with their national priorities.

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), received a high-level Libyan delegation on Wednesday, led by Dr Khalifa Rajab Abdul Sadiq, Acting Minister of Oil and Gas; and Dr Suhail Bushiha, Minister of Economy and Trade, along with accompanying officials.

The meeting focused on advancing joint work and identifying investment prospects that support the strategic objectives of both the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Libya. Discussions also covered existing areas of cooperation and avenues to expand collaboration across key sectors.

Priority areas highlighted during the talks included food security, infrastructure development, medical industries, renewable energy, information technology and healthcare services — sectors seen as offering strong potential for mutually beneficial partnerships.

Both sides underscored the importance of reinforcing economic and investment ties, with emphasis on enabling greater participation from public and private sector entities, as well as entrepreneurs.

The engagement reflects a shared intent to create a more dynamic investment landscape and unlock new channels for bilateral cooperation.

The discussions come amidst broader efforts by Oman to diversify its economy and strengthen international partnerships, in line with Oman Vision 2040. For Libya, the engagement signals continued outreach to regional partners to support economic recovery and development.

Officials from both sides expressed optimism that enhanced coordination and sustained dialogue would pave the way for tangible investment outcomes, contributing to long-term growth and stability in both countries.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to build on existing relations and translate identified opportunities into actionable projects, reinforcing the longstanding ties between the two nations. — ONA

1.2 bn road projects to enhance connectivity

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

IN a significant boost to infrastructure development and economic growth, the Sultanate of Oman announced the implementation of a massive package of road projects exceeding RO 1.2 billion, reflecting the government's commitment to enhancing national connectivity and fostering sustainable development.

During the 14th regular session of the Majlis Ash'shura, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, affirmed that the roads sector is witnessing the implementation of several high-quality strategic projects distributed across the country.

They include new roads, the upgrading and rehabilitation of existing roads, particularly those affected by climatic factors or those that have reached the end of their lifespan, in addition to routine road maintenance projects overseen by the Ministry.

The Eleventh Five-Year Plan for the roads sector focuses on completing ongoing projects, including the implementation of new projects during 2026, such as the dual carriageway expansion of main roads and the rehabilitation and upgrading of several vital routes.

The Ministry aims to open and operate a package of strategic road projects by 2026, including the expansion of the Muscat Expressway from the Al Qurum Natural Park intersection to the Halban intersection. The primary objective of the redesign is to achieve a solution that will prevent current congestion levels from recurring for at least 25 years.

The study results also revealed that the core of the problem lies not only in the number of lanes but also in the design of exits and entrances; and in the intersections between vehicles. These intersections lead to a cascade of



Muscat Expressway expansion to cater to traffic demand growth over next 25 years.

The roads sector is witnessing the implementation of several high-quality strategic projects distributed across the country. They include new roads, the upgrading and rehabilitation of existing roads, particularly those affected by climatic factors or those that have reached the end of their lifespan, in addition to routine road maintenance projects overseen by the Ministry.

decelerations, which then escalate into widespread traffic jams. The new design, which begins in Al Qurum and extends to Halban, addresses this issue by separating traffic flows, improving the efficiency of exits and entrances; and increasing the number of lanes in certain locations as needed.

This is in addition to strategic projects such as the dual carriageway project for the Ibra Road (Al-Yahmedi-Al-Qafisi), at a cost of RO 186.3 million.

Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport, previously stated that awarding the Muscat Expressway expansion project and the Ibra Road dual carriageway project represents a strategic step within the Ministry's plans to enhance the efficiency of the main road network, keep pace with rapid urban and population growth, improve connectivity between governorates and provide a safe transportation environment.

According to the State Budget Guide for the fiscal year 2026, the Eleventh Five-Year

Development Plan will complete the implementation of ongoing development projects from the Tenth Five-Year Plan.

The State Budget for 2026 has allocated approximately RO 900 million for annual spending on development projects, including the roads sector.

These projects include completing: the dual carriageway of the Al-Ansab-Al-Jafnain road; Sultan Turki bin Said Road (the Eastern Expressway from Al Kamil W'al Wafi to Sur); dual carriageway of the Raysut-Al-Mughsail road; dual carriageway of the Sultan Said bin Taimur Road (Adam-Thamrait); Harweeb-Mitan road in the Dhofar Governorate; and dual carriageway of the Farq-Heritage District-Nizwa road, in addition to widening the Muscat Expressway.

These massive investments underscore the Sultanate of Oman's advanced standing in road quality, ranking eighth globally and second in the Arab world according to the World Economic Forum's 2024 ranking.

This reflects its commitment to implementing the highest international standards in developing a safe and sustainable road network.

Oman launches national aviation decarbonisation initiative

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

Representatives of aviation operators, along with key stakeholders from government, academia and the wider aviation industry, attended the official launch on April 7, 2026, of a national initiative aimed at supporting the decarbonisation of the aviation sector in Oman.

The initiative is being led by the Centre of Environmental Studies and Research (CESAR) at Sultan Qaboos University, on behalf of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) of the Sultanate of Oman.

An inception workshop — focusing on aviation operators in the first phase — outlined the goal of formulating a structured, evidence-based pathway for reducing emissions from the sector in Oman, Dr Malik al Wardy, Director of CESAR, said in a recent



Dr Malik al Wardy, Director of CESAR, addressing the inception workshop.

post. During the workshop, CESAR outlined the project's scope, methodology and 12-month action plan, highlighting key components of the initiative. These include the

development of the sector's first emissions inventory, alongside the modelling of future emissions scenarios to better inform policy and planning.

The discussions also covered the identification and evaluation of mitigation measures, supported by cost-benefit analyses of priority actions.

In addition, CESAR presented plans for the conceptualisation of an electronic monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) platform, while also clarifying data requirements, stakeholder roles and implementation responsibilities essential to the project's delivery.

“The discussions also highlighted the importance of building a strong baseline, improving data readiness, and establishing practical coordination mechanisms among relevant entities so that the project can

move effectively from assessment to action. A key part of the dialogue focused on the vision for a digital MRV platform that can help standardise emissions data collection, support scenario analysis; and strengthen compliance and reporting processes”, Dr Al Wardy said.

Oman's strategy for decarbonising its aviation sector centres on building a regulatory and industrial ecosystem around Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) as the primary lever for emissions reduction.

The CAA is actively developing policies, fuel standards and a dedicated national task force to enable SAF production and uptake, in alignment with the Sultanate of Oman's net-zero target for 2050.

This approach is supported by cross-sector collaboration with energy stakeholders such as OQ and PDO, as well as international

bodies, with early-stage projects and planned fuel trials positioning Oman as a potential regional hub for low-carbon aviation fuels.

Complementing the SAF push, the CAA's strategy incorporates regulatory, operational and market-based measures to curb aviation emissions.

These include the implementation of the global CORSIA carbon offsetting framework — mandating airlines to monitor, report and offset emissions — as well as initiatives to integrate sustainable practices at airports, such as clean energy use and future SAF infrastructure.

“This project comes at an important time, as Oman continues aligning sectoral development with Oman Vision 2040, its net-zero 2050 aspirations and relevant international climate and aviation frameworks”, the CESAR Director added.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The service was inaugurated by Dr Muhanna al Musalhi, Director General of Private Health Institutions, Ministry of Health, Sultanate of Oman.

BURJEEL HOSPITAL INTRODUCES SCALP COOLING THERAPY TO OMAN

MUSCAT: Burjeel Hospital announced the launch of scalp cooling therapy in its oncology department — the first time this therapy has been made available in Oman. The service was inaugurated by Dr Muhanna al Musalhi, Director General of Private Health Institutions, Ministry of Health, Sultanate of Oman.

Scalp cooling therapy helps reduce chemotherapy-induced hair loss by lowering scalp temperature during treatment, improving the quality of life and psychological wellbeing of patients undergoing systemic cancer treatment. The service will be delivered by the hospital's oncology team, led by Dr Ashok Sebastian Komaranchath, consultant in medical oncology and Dr Ramez Albakouni, specialist in haematology and oncology, supported by Burjeel's multidisciplinary cancer care experts.

"We are proud to introduce this important supportive care option to patients in Oman", said Shammad Abdul Kader, Hospital Director, Burjeel Hospital. "Our goal is to provide compassionate, state-of-the-art oncology services that preserve dignity and improve the treatment experience for patients and their families".

Dr Muhanna al Musalhi commented at the inauguration: "The availability of scalp cooling at Burjeel Hospital represents a meaningful advancement in comprehensive cancer care within the private sector in Oman. It reflects our ongoing commitment to expanding access to innovative therapies".

Dr Ashok Sebastian Komaranchath and Dr Ramez Albakouni noted that scalp cooling is appropriate for many, but not all, chemotherapy regimens or patients. Each patient will receive an individualised assessment to determine suitability and expected outcomes, alongside full counselling on the benefits and limitations of the therapy.

With this technology now available in the Sultanate of Oman for the first time, eligible cancer patients may experience a reduction in hair loss of up to 40–60%.

Key benefits and features:

- First scalp cooling service available in Oman.
- Delivered by Burjeel Hospital's oncology experts with integrated nursing and supportive care teams.
- Individualised suitability assessments and counselling for patients undergoing chemotherapy.
- Aimed at improving psychological wellbeing and the overall treatment experience.

Explore Lincoln Nautilus and unlock privileges

THE all-new Lincoln Nautilus is redefining the midsize luxury segment, arriving with a unique suite of signature privileges. Tailored for a new generation of drivers who demand both aesthetic beauty and cutting-edge connectivity, the Nautilus transforms every commute into a high-tech escape.

From February 10 to April 9, 2026, Lincoln Oman is inviting enthusiasts to discover this innovative SUV through a campaign that blends modern digital experiences with the traditional spirit of seasonal giving.

Ownership during this special period is designed to be as fluid and effortless as the vehicle's performance. This includes a 5-year/100,000 km service package, ensuring that the first 10 scheduled maintenance visits are fully covered.

This is paired with a 5-year/100,000 km manufacturer's warranty and free one-year registration.

By removing the complexities of maintenance and administrative costs, Lincoln Oman allows drivers to fully immerse themselves in the Nautilus's advanced features from the very first day.

The celebration continues with a tech-focused raffle that mirrors the innovative nature of the vehicle itself. Any guest who visits the showroom for a Nautilus test drive will be entered into a draw to win one of two iPhone 17s.

Furthermore, customers who complete their purchase during this period will enter the Buy & Win draw for the chance to own the revolutionary iPhone 17 Air. These prizes, to be drawn on April 26, 2026, add



The Nautilus transforms every commute into a high-tech escape.

a layer of contemporary excitement to the seasonal festivities.

Stepping inside the Nautilus reveals a revolutionary 48-inch panoramic display, the largest screen in its class, which pairs with an 11.1-inch centre touchscreen to create an immersive, customisable interface.

This digital sanctuary is further enhanced by the Lincoln Rejuvenate system, which acts as a personal recharge station by synchronising lighting, visuals and calming scents

With the available 24-Way Perfect Position seats and a 28-speaker Revel Ultima 3D audio system, the Nautilus cabin is less of a car interior and more of a private lounge

designed for modern relaxation.

On the road, the Nautilus offers an agile and responsive drive, powered by a 2.0L turbocharged engine or an efficient hybrid option, both delivering a refined "gliding" sensation.

Driving confidence is standard, thanks to the Lincoln Co-Pilot360 Drive 2.0 suite, which provides a 360-degree view and adaptive safety technologies to keep every passenger protected. Lincoln Oman invites you to experience this new era of intelligent luxury at your nearest showroom and see how the Nautilus makes every journey a restorative retreat this season.

Bayan College holds workshop for five-year plan

MUSCAT: Bayan College organised a preparatory inclusive workshop for its five-year strategic plan (2026–2031). It aligns with modern national developments in academia and future-oriented trends.

The workshop focused on several key domains, most particularly enhancing the quality of educational materials and creating a supportive, conducive learning environment for students.

Additionally, participants discussed mechanisms for advancing scientific research among the academic staff and encouraging student engagement, enabling them to play a more significant role than they did in the previous plan.

Participants also reviewed the college's previous five-year plan, specifically examining quality assurance reports and academic



Participants discussed mechanisms for advancing scientific research among the academic staff and encouraging student engagement.

performance. They identified key areas for improvement and formulated strategies to address these gaps in the upcoming plan.

Conversely, they highlighted existing strengths across

various performance metrics, emphasising the importance of sustaining and enhancing these successes to align with the next developmental phase, labour market demands and the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

A few influential figures from various academic institutions, as well as leaders from the private and government sectors, attended the workshop.

Representatives from the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees, faculty members, student committees and distinguished alumni who made significant contributions during their academic journeys were also in attendance. The participants shared their insights and perspectives to help evaluate the college's performance and, ultimately, shape an inspiring vision for the future.

The diverse perspectives shared significantly enriched the workshop, highlighting key challenges and identifying ways to overcome them. This paved the way for a bright future for the college's academic mission.

Lulu Dream Drive 2026 winners take home MG RX9 4WD SUVs

MUSCAT: The air at Lulu Hypermarket Bausher was electric with festive joy as Lulu Oman officially concluded its spectacular Dream Drive 2026 promotion.

In a grand prize distribution ceremony that served as the perfect finale to the season, eight thrilled winners were handed the keys to their brand-new 2026 MG RX9 Luxury 4WD vehicles.

The Dream Drive campaign, which ran from January 11 to March 21, 2026, was more than just a promotion; it was a nationwide celebration. Spanning the Accession Day of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and continuing through the holy month of Ramadhan and Eid Al Fitr, the initiative turned everyday shopping into an opportunity for customers across the Sultanate of Oman.



The Dream Drive campaign was more than just a promotion; it was a nationwide celebration.

A SEASON OF ABUNDANCE

The celebration extended far beyond the grand prizes. While the eight MG RX9s were the stars of the show, Lulu's commitment to rewarding its community saw 40 additional shoppers go home with high-value Ikon appliances, including smart TVs, refrigerators and air fryers.

Participation was simple and inclusive: a spend of just RO 10 at any Lulu store in Oman earned shoppers an entry into the e-affle.

THE FACES OF SUCCESS

Eight grand prize winners who drove home in luxury this year are: Musthafa al Shibli, Ali Fayez Addina, Mohammed al Balushi, Jithin Babu, Manaal Mahmood, Nonet, Naser al Hamdali and Issa al Qassabi.

Speaking at the heart-warming ceremony, Shabeer K A, Director of Lulu Hypermarkets — Oman, shared his enthusiasm, "This campaign is our way of expressing heartfelt gratitude to our loyal customers.

We are delighted by the overwhelming response to Dream Drive 2026 and it is a privilege to enrich the shopping experience with such exciting rewards.

At Lulu, we strive to exceed expectations through innovative strategies and premium service". Throughout the Ramadhan and Eid festivities, Lulu remained the ultimate destination for value, offering exclusive deals across all categories from groceries to fashion ensuring every family enjoyed a memorable holiday shopping experience."

SHORTTAKES



The programme featured a series of specialised presentations.

NORM FACILITY PLAN GAINS MOMENTUM IN OMAN

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals, in partnership with be'ah, convened a stakeholder engagement session on the National Facility for Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) Waste Management Project, underscoring ongoing national efforts to establish a comprehensive and secure system for handling radioactive waste arising from oil and gas operations in the Sultanate of Oman.

The session was inaugurated by Dr Saleh bin Ali al Anbouri, Director-General of Exploration and Production at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. The event sought to present the project's scope while examining its technical, operational and regulatory aspects, in addition to enhancing coordination among key stakeholders to support environmental safety standards and sustainability goals within the energy sector.

The programme featured a series of specialised presentations. be'ah outlined the National Facility for NORM Waste Management Project, detailing its objectives, core components and its role in ensuring the safe management of such waste in accordance with international best practices.

The company also presented standard operating procedures covering the inventory and classification of NORM waste, alongside protocols for waste acceptance and transportation, offering clarity on operational processes across all stages of waste handling.

The Environment Authority delivered a presentation on the legislative and regulatory framework governing radioactive waste management in Oman, highlighting key requirements, safety benchmarks and compliance obligations. The session concluded with an open discussion moderated by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, where participants' queries were addressed and key issues further examined, fostering constructive dialogue and strengthening collaboration between government entities and oil and gas operators.

Oman eyes polysilicon lead with Sohar project

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

AHEAD of the full commercial launch of Oman's landmark polysilicon production plant at Sohar Freezone, Oman Vision 2040 — which has played a notable role in enabling this strategic investment — has highlighted the project's far-reaching economic benefits.

In a recent post, Oman Vision 2040 noted that output from United Solar Polysilicon's project will unlock promising industrial opportunities, reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's drive to build a diversified economy anchored in advanced industries and renewable energy, while strengthening its position in global clean energy value chains.

The Sohar plant is the largest facility of its kind in the Middle East, with an investment of approximately RO 616 million (US\$1.6 billion) and an annual production capacity of 100,000 tonnes, underscoring its strategic importance to the renewable energy sector.

The facility will produce high-purity polysilicon, a key input in the manufacture of solar panels and semiconductors.

This is expected to support renewable energy projects in Oman, lower the cost of solar power generation and enable



The polysilicon project will catalyse structural transformation across Oman's energy and industrial sectors.

the expansion of green hydrogen initiatives.

The production process begins with quartz (sand), followed by a series of advanced industrial stages to yield high-purity silicon — a cornerstone of the solar energy value chain.

At full capacity, the plant is expected to support the production of around 40 gigawatts of solar panels annually.

Suhar was selected as the project site due to its strategic

advantages, including proximity to global markets, world-class logistics infrastructure, integrated industrial ecosystems and government incentives supporting renewable energy development.

The project's economic value lies in its potential to stimulate downstream metal-based industries, strengthen clean energy supply chains, attract high-quality investment and generate employment, thereby enhancing the competitiveness

and export potential of the national economy.

It also represents a significant milestone for both the company and the broader industry, contributing to the resilience and sustainability of global solar supply chains.

Notably, more than 80 per cent of the project's capital has been mobilised from Omani institutions, as well as local and regional banks, alongside support from the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

Looking ahead, the Sohar polysilicon project is poised to serve not merely as an industrial asset, but as a catalyst for structural transformation across Oman's energy and industrial sectors, driven by rapidly growing global demand for solar energy.

It is also expected to enhance Oman's integration into global supply chains by linking Asian, European and African markets, leveraging the country's strategic location and logistics capabilities.

With this landmark investment, Oman is positioning itself as a major player in the global polysilicon market, with ambitions to become the world's second-largest producer after China — a testament to rising international confidence in the Sultanate of Oman's investment environment and its capacity to lead future-facing industries, Oman Vision 2040 added.

OMAN OIL PRICE REACHES \$99.06 PER BARREL

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman crude oil for June delivery reached \$99.06 per barrel on Wednesday. The price of Oman crude oil witnessed a decrease of \$20.25 compared to Tuesday's price of \$119.31.

The average monthly price of Omani crude oil for April delivery was \$86.15 per barrel, an increase of \$5.98 compared to the price for

March delivery.

Meanwhile, international oil fell below \$100 per barrel on Wednesday after US President Donald Trump said he had agreed to a two-week ceasefire with Iran, subject to the immediate and safe reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Brent futures fell \$15.02 to \$94.25 a barrel, while WTI slid \$17.43, or 15.4%, to \$95.52 a barrel.

Trump's turnaround came shortly before his deadline for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz, where 20% of the world's oil transits, or face widespread attacks on its civilian infrastructure. "This will be a double sided CEASEFIRE!" he wrote on social media, after posting earlier on Tuesday that "a whole civilisation will die tonight" if his demands were not met. — **Agencies**

Consumer protection office launched at Sohar Port

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 8

Sulayem bin Ali al Hakmani, Chairman of Consumer Protection Authority (CPA), inaugurated the Consumer Protection Office at Sohar Port on Wednesday, April 8, 2026, marking a step towards strengthening the regulatory system at critical entry points.

The inauguration was attended by Dr Abdulhakim bin Abdullah al Ghilani, Director General of the Consumer Protection Department in Al Batinah North Governorate, along with officials from government and civil entities; and representatives of the port management.

The new office is designed to expedite regulatory procedures by enhancing direct coordination among relevant authorities



Officials representing Hutchison Ports Sohar and the Consumer Protection Authority at the launch.

through co-location. This will enable faster responses to observations, immediate handling of issues and the prompt enforcement of legal measures against violations.

The initiative aims to strengthen the efficiency of monitoring and initial inspection of goods arriving through Sohar Port, ensuring their safety and compliance with approved standards and specifications, while preventing the entry of non-compliant or counterfeit goods, in line with the Consumer Protection Law and its Executive Regulations.

These efforts are expected to further safeguard consumer health and safety.

In addition, the office will help ensure adherence to applicable laws and regulations, prevent the entry of goods that violate regulatory decisions, establish an integrated

and accurate database of goods and enhance collaboration with relevant entities.

The office represents a qualitative addition to the Authority's efforts, through its Al Batinah North directorate, in monitoring goods and supply chains before they reach the market.

This supports the creation of a safe and stable commercial environment, keeps pace with the governorate's economic growth and strengthens consumer confidence in the quality of goods and services.

It also reflects the outcomes of close cooperation between the Authority and the Oman International Container Terminal (Hutchison Ports Sohar) at Sohar Port, within the framework of ongoing public-private partnership, contributing to the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and enhancing service quality.

COMMODITY DROP

Wheat, corn prices fall on ceasefire



Wheat prices fell about 3 per cent and corn declined 1 per cent after a US-announced two-week ceasefire with Iran eased geopolitical tensions. Improved weather in the United States and expectations of higher Russian output also weighed on prices.

Wheat futures dropped to \$5.81 per bushel, while soybeans edged lower, reflecting reduced risk premiums across agricultural markets. — **ONA**

EXTERNAL STRENGTH

South Korea posts record current account



South Korea recorded its highest-ever monthly current account surplus of \$23.19 billion in February, driven by robust exports and a rebound in semiconductors.

The surplus extended a 33-month streak, the second-longest on record. The figure surpassed December's previous high, reinforcing the country's strong external position following a record annual surplus in 2025. — **ONA**

MARKET RALLY

Gold hits near three-week high



Gold prices surged to their highest level in nearly three weeks, supported by easing geopolitical tensions following a US-announced ceasefire with Iran.

Spot gold rose 2.3 per cent to \$4,812.49 per ounce, after climbing more than 3 per cent earlier. Other precious metals also gained, as markets reassessed inflation risks linked to energy prices and adjusted safe-haven demand expectations. — **ONA**

OPINION

Measures for enhancing trade between Oman and GCC states



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI

THE Royal Oman Police (ROP), represented by the Directorate General of Customs, is implementing simplified procedures to enhance intra-regional trade movement between the Sultanate of Oman and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, particularly concerning land freight trucks and the entry and transit movement of goods (transit shipments). These procedures are being applied as part of several facilitation measures aimed at easing access to GCC countries as well, especially in light of the current conflict in the region. The new procedures aim to allow empty containers to enter and exit quickly without the need to submit a customs declaration. Inspection procedures are limited to scanning only, while transit data is processed from border checkpoints to Gulf ports using booking reference numbers. These steps reflect the commitment of the Royal Oman Police to ensuring the smooth flow of trade between Oman and other GCC countries and to reducing any complex procedures that may cause delays in delivering goods and products. This helps the business community strengthen economic integration among Gulf markets under these

changing regional conditions. Everyone is aware of the repercussions resulting from the continuation of the war in the region, which increases tensions, concerns and delays in business activities, in addition to increasing pressure on companies and institutions across the Gulf region. The difficulties caused by slower ship movements through the Strait of Hormuz have led to a significant rise in global oil prices, which continue to increase with each new military development in the region. Consequently, operating, shipping and insurance costs have increased in maritime and air transport sectors, as well as in logistics services, industrial production and supply chains. This step facilitates the entry of empty GCC trucks to transport goods, while the “Bayan” system provides electronic services linked to dozens of government entities to accelerate procedures and reduce paperwork. The final result of these procedures is reduced clearance time, lower costs and faster cargo movement. There are several strategic reasons behind Oman’s decision to provide these facilities. Among them is strengthening Oman’s position as a regional logistics corridor. The Sultanate of Oman aims to become a transit gateway for goods between Asia, the Gulf region and

The new procedures aim to allow empty containers to enter and exit quickly without the need to submit a customs declaration. Inspection procedures are limited to scanning only, while transit data is processed from border checkpoints to Gulf ports using booking reference numbers.

Africa — not merely a consumer market. They also support Gulf supply chains by ensuring faster movement of goods from Omani ports to Gulf markets. In addition, they help attract shipping companies and logistics investments, as faster and simpler procedures increase the likelihood that international transport companies will use Omani ports as transit hubs. These facilitation measures also align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, as the logistics sector is considered one of the key economic sectors targeted as an alternative to oil. They further enhance competitiveness in the logistics sector by providing additional advantages that help attract shipping lines. The measures taken by the Sultanate of Oman will benefit GCC countries during the current conflict by enabling faster delivery of goods through Omani ports to Gulf markets, reducing pressure on other ports, lowering land transport costs, improving supply chain continuity and supporting intra-GCC trade. Goods can enter through Omani ports and then be transported by land to the rest of the GCC countries quickly. These benefits are expected to increase in the future, strengthening Oman’s role as a safe alternative transit corridor, particularly in the event of disruptions to traditional shipping routes.

JAPAN’S TAKEOVER FEARS THREATEN RECORD M&A BOOM

HUDSON LOCKETT

In 1989, Sony co-founder Akio Morita co-authored “The Japan That Can Say No”, an essay in which he argued Japanese firms should reject, among other things, corporate America’s focus on mergers and acquisitions. Today Japan Inc is finally embracing those concepts, but the government body behind the recent surge in deal activity is poised to give companies new tools to rebuff unwanted takeovers — potentially imperiling the \$4 trillion economy’s nascent revival. The move is a curveball from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, whose fair M&A guidelines published in 2023 lack the teeth of hard law but now carry so much weight with corporate boards that Japan-related M&A nearly doubled last year to \$400 billion, per Dealogic. Private equity firms led by Bain Capital and KKR, once decried as barbarians at the gates, are acquiring Japanese companies at a record pace. These and other foreign buyout barons have raised huge sums for their Asia funds to deploy in what has become the region’s most vibrant and lucrative market. This frenzy is the culmination of a more than decade-long top-down push, further facilitated by reforms at Japan Exchange, to stir corporate activity that boosts efficiency and growth to offset the drag of the country’s ageing population. Yet hostile buyouts and activist campaigns have brought with them a gut-wrenching pace of change and stoked concerns over ‘undesirable’ deals, judged solely on price, that could auction off economic crown jewels, undermine national security or disrupt vital supply chains. Hence METI’s pledge in February to clarify the guidelines later this year — possibly as early as May — by foregrounding the concept of ‘corporate value’ which it defines as the net present value of future cash flows. Hiroyuki Sameshima, director of the ministry’s corporate system division, said that a board “has the right to say no if it believes that incumbent management can better enhance corporate value, or if it judges that a buyer could later engage in asset stripping or extract technology”, though he added, “the purpose of this update is not to encourage companies to implement takeover defence measures”. Yet firms already appeal to such rejection rationales without METI’s prodding: Seven & i deflected a \$46 billion overture from Canada’s Alimentation Couche-Tard last year by arguing management could better boost returns while also asserting its convenience stores were vital national infrastructure. The 7-Eleven owner’s stock now trades at a roughly 20% discount to Couche-Tard’s last offer price. At worst, the ministry’s clarifications could slow deal flow and give boards a licence to overlook the value that strategic and private entity buyers bring to many deals. — Reuters

Women hold 40 per cent of Irish board seats

MINDFUL of moving towards gender equality throughout the European Union, Ireland has made much progress in that direction. Female representation on the boards of Ireland’s largest listed companies stood at 40 per cent in 2025, new figures show. New data from the government established Balance for Better Business (B4BB) review group shows that women accounted for 40 per cent of board members across companies in the Iseq20 index in March 2025. This represents a slight fall from 42 per cent previously cited. Across all publicly listed companies in Ireland, female board representation now stands at 38 per cent, the report said. Ireland has also moved up the European rankings for female board representation. The country now ranks sixth across the EU for the proportion of women on company boards, compared with 16th place in 2018.

However, this marks a slight drop from fifth place recorded in November 2025. Female representation on leadership teams at Ireland’s largest listed companies has remained unchanged at 26 per cent, it said. The report also points to a widening difference between executive and non-executive positions. Women hold 48 per cent of non-executive director roles, but their presence among executive directors has fallen, dropping three percentage points to just 8 per cent since November last year. While 70 per cent of publicly listed companies have three or more women on their boards, only 45 per cent of Iseq20 firms (20 largest, most liquid and most influential companies) have three or more women on their leadership teams. Across all listed companies the average figure is 43 per cent, the report said. The data also shows limited female representation in some of the most senior corporate positions. Within the Iseq20 index there is currently one female chief executive and one female chair. Across the broader group of



Across all publicly listed companies in Ireland, female board representation now stands at 38 per cent.



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

Ireland has also moved up the European rankings for female board representation. The country now ranks sixth across the EU for the proportion of women on company boards, compared with 16th place in 2018.

listed companies there are three female chief financial officers, the report said. Organisations with gender balanced leadership are better positioned to navigate change, said Peter Burke the minister for enterprise, tourism and employment. “Irish businesses continue to face a period of considerable international volatility. Against this backdrop, gender balanced businesses are better equipped with the capabilities and talent to navigate change, enhance their competitiveness and unlock future growth”, Burke said. Maintaining progress would require organisations to prioritise gender balance at senior level, added Niamh Smith, the minister of state at the Department of Enterprise. “The data published reflects continued progress by Irish businesses on their gender balance journey”, she said. “To maintain this, it’s crucial that all organisations make gender balance a core business priority. When gender balance is prioritised at the top, it accelerates change throughout organisations for the better”. In the UK — Rathbones wealth chief executive, Camilla Stowell and

Freshfields senior partner, Georgia Dawson are among the 23 members of a new leadership council set up by Women in Banking and Finance (WIBF). The non-profit, which promotes diversity and gender equality in financial services, has brought together a group of leaders to focus on the growth, innovation and global competitiveness of the UK’s finance sector, it said in a statement. Nishma Gosrani, a partner at Bain & Company, will chair the leadership council. “It is an honour to chair this council at such a pivotal time for UK financial services. The sector is a cornerstone of our economy and by uniting leading minds from across finance, we aim to drive innovation and nurture talent to secure Britain’s future as a global powerhouse”, said Gosrani. “The launch of the leadership council underscores WIBF’s commitment to advancing industry excellence and growth”, said Anna Lane, president and CEO of WIBF. She added: “By harnessing the insight of this accomplished group, we can better support the UK’s ambitions for financial services — from strengthening its international competitiveness to developing the next generation of leaders”.

CLASSIFIEDS

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

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

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

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

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INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in “MEP” construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

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Experience: 5 - 7 yrs
Location: Mahout, Al Wusta
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Experience: 1 - 3 yrs
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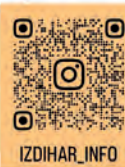
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ART/LIFE



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CHANGING WORLD

US AND IRAN CEASEFIRE: A NEW ERA OF PEACE



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

As I sit down to write this column, the news of a ceasefire between the US, Israel and Iran has brought a wave of relief to the world. The past few days have been tense, with fears of a full-blown war looming large. But today, there's a glimmer of hope.

I've been following the developments closely and it's clear that this ceasefire is a significant step towards peace. The US and Iran have agreed to a two-week pause in hostilities, with negotiations set to begin. It's a fragile peace, but it's a start.

As I reflect on the situation, I'm reminded of the human cost of war. The lives lost, the families torn apart, the cities destroyed. It's a devastating cycle that needs to be broken. The ceasefire is a small step towards healing and rebuilding.

Oman and its people have a deep love for peace, evident in their diplomatic efforts and cultural values. Omanis prioritise harmony and coexistence, reflected in their warm hospitality and welcoming nature.

But let's be real, this is just the beginning. Iran wants a permanent end to the war, not just a temporary reprieve. The road ahead will be long and arduous, with many challenges to overcome.

As an observer, I'm heartened to see the international community coming together to support the ceasefire. Pakistan's mediation efforts are commendable and it's clear that diplomacy is the only way forward.

In Oman, we're no strangers to the impact of conflict. Our strategic location in the Middle East means that we're often caught in the crossfire. But Oman's commitment to

peace and stability remains unwavering. As the saying goes, "we have a watch, but they have time" — a testament to the country's relaxed pace of life and emphasis on relationships.

Oman and its people have a deep love for peace, evident in their diplomatic efforts and cultural values. Omanis prioritise harmony and coexistence, reflected in their warm hospitality and welcoming nature. The country's history of peaceful coexistence with diverse cultures and religions has created a unique blend of traditions.

Hence, the ceasefire is a reminder that even in the darkest of times, there's always hope. Hope for a better future, hope for peace and hope for a world where nations can resolve their differences through dialogue, not violence.

As I conclude, I'm left wondering — what's next? Will the ceasefire hold, or will tensions escalate again? How will the international community support the peace process? The world is watching and it's time for leaders to come together to build a more peaceful future.

QUICK FEATURES



TOURISM

A pedestrian wearing reflective attire looks on near the entrance of the Sacre Coeur Basilica atop Montmartre hill, on Easter Monday. — **AFP**



ENTERTAINMENT

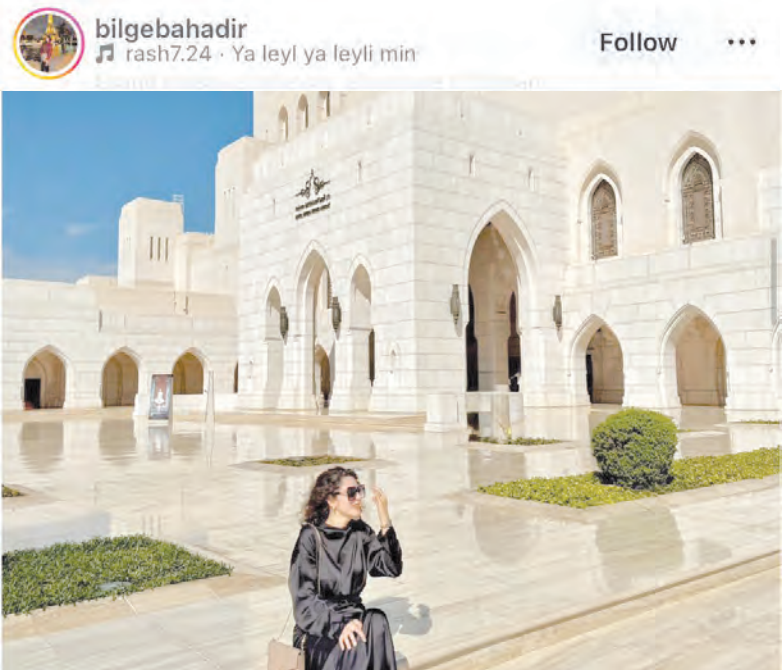
The 90s it-girl US actress Cameron Diaz attends the premiere of AppleTV's "Outcome" in New York. — **AFP**



LIFESTYLE

Visitors walk among the colourful tulips at the Memorial Gardens across from Buckingham Palace. — **AFP**

INSTA PICKS



The Royal Opera House in Muscat



The ever-dazzling Arabian chameleon

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STREAMING CHANNEL FOR PETS LAUNCHED IN CHINA

Cats and dogs can now fill the hours their owners are at work with a dedicated all-day streaming channel for pets launched by Chinese tech giant Tencent.

Clips of a duckling swimming in a bath or two happy pooches patrolling their neighbourhood are examples of the curated programming on “PetTV”.

The new channel on Tencent Video — China’s most popular online streaming platform — is meant to keep pets company while alone or can act as an activity for animals and humans to enjoy together.

“This is all dog content, when will the cat programme be on?” one person engrossed in the service wrote in the chatroom on PetTV’s streaming page.

Tencent Video described PetTV as a “24-hour happiness hub specially designed for your furry kids” in a post on social media app WeChat introducing the service last weekend.

Dogs and cats’ senses are different to humans’, so the channel’s colours, refresh rates and audio frequencies have been designed to suit their specific needs, it said.

PetTV is available to paid subscribers of Tencent Video, which said its market research found that 66 per cent of dog owners leave the television on for their pets when they are out.

But the streaming service isn’t



the only pet specific media on the market.

Popular Headspace mindfulness app posted a YouTube video this week titled: “When your pets miss you, play this: 6 hour calming music for dogs and cats”.

Tencent Video will also take advantage of third-party content including airing America’s DogTV — the world’s first TV channel and streaming service for pets.

The value of China’s growing urban pet market is estimated to reach 405 billion yuan (\$59 billion) in 2028, according to a recent report by PetData.cn.

On average last year, Chinese households spent more than 3,000 yuan (\$435) on each dog and more than 2,000 yuan on each cat for their care needs.

— AFP



Atlad is a pop-up that brings together sustainability and creativity in the fashion industry

Fashion pop-up ‘Atlad’ opens in Muscat today

HIBBA AL KINDI

AN event highlighting the intersection of clothing waste, sustainability and creativity is taking place in Muscat today, Thursday, April 9.

Sustainable fashion pop-up ‘Atlad’, hosted by local artist Shahad al Hamdi, brings together artists, thrift vendors and community members to explore alternatives to fast fashion.

Speaking to the Observer, Al Hamdi shared,

“Atlad is a pop-up that brings together sustainability and creativity in the fashion industry”, Al Hamdi said. “I noticed that there isn’t a strong culture of sustainability in fashion here in Oman, so I wanted to encourage creativity in that field instead of people simply throwing away old garments or donating ones that are not actually usable for donation”.

“The event focuses on upcycling, getting creative, thrifting and bringing the community together to make a difference in whatever ways we can within the fast fashion industry”, she added.

Visitors attending the event will find a mix of slow fashion vendors, thrift selections and interactive activities centred around reusing clothing. Around 14 vendors are participating, including local creators who produce handmade or limited pieces.

Among the key attractions is a clothes swap corner, where visitors are encouraged to bring garments they no longer wear and exchange them with others.

“For you to really experience the event, you need to bring clothes with you”, Al Hamdi explained. “They can be pieces you’ve outgrown, clothes you’re bored of, or items you want to give new life to”.

“If the clothes are still in good condition, you can swap them”, she said. “If they’re pieces you love but can’t wear anymore, there will be live artists who can help upcycle them”.

The event also features a craft corner where visitors can



Artist Shahad al Hamdi

experiment with fabric scraps, collage textiles and create new pieces from old materials. A sewing station will also be available for those interested in repairing or transforming garments.

“There will be someone there with a sewing machine who can help create new solutions for your clothes”, Al Hamdi said. “Even if something feels too ruined to wear, you can still transform it into something else”.

Beyond the interactive elements, Al Hamdi will also present an art installation created from donated clothing that explores the impact and aftermath of fast fashion.

“The installation is created by the efforts of the entire community that donated these clothes”, she said.

Through the event, Al Hamdi

hopes to challenge perceptions around second-hand fashion and encourage people to rethink how they engage with clothing.

“There’s no shame in wearing used clothes”, she said. “A lot of people still feel uncomfortable about it, but I’m trying to break that barrier”.

“I want people to see that instead of throwing clothes away or constantly buying from fast fashion, there are other options such as buying local, swapping, upcycling and getting creative as a community”.

The two-day event runs from 6 pm to 10 pm on April 9 and 10 at Locals Park in Al Qurum.

More information about the artist and the event can be found on Instagram at @shahadtheartist.

FEATURES

MARKING ARAB MUSIC DAY

OMAN BRIDGES GULF TRADITION AND MODERN SOUND

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

UNDER the vaulted halls of Sultan Qaboos University, music was not simply performed, it was remembered, reinterpreted and sent forward. The celebration of Arab Music Day unfolded as more than an annual occasion. It became a reflection of Oman's place within the wider Khaleeji musical landscape, where tradition and renewal move in constant dialogue.

Organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Directorate General of Arts and the Oman Music Centre, in collaboration with the university's College of Arts and Social Sciences and its Department of Music and Musicology, the event underscored a shared institutional commitment to preserving and activating Arab musical heritage.

From the outset, the message was clear: music remains one of the most profound cultural expressions in the Arab world, preserving collective memory and carrying human experiences, from joy to sorrow, across generations. The presence of Ibrahim bin Saif Bani Araba, Assistant Director General at the Directorate General of Arts, as patron of the event, alongside Professor Mohammed al Saqri, Dean of the College, reflected the significance of this cultural moment.

The evening opened with musical performances that set the tone for a dialogue between past and present. The first piece, Natharto, based on classical Arabic poetry by Abbas ibn al Ahnaf and composed by Dr Nasser al Naabi, Director of Oman Centre for Traditional Music, offered a refined blend of literary heritage and musical interpretation. It was followed by Imtidad, an original composition and arrangement by Amir Awadh, an accomplished alumnus of SQU, which stood out as a defining moment of the event.

Imtidad was more than a musical work. It was a contemporary expression of Omani identity, weaving traditional rhythmic structures into a modern sonic framework. As the music unfolded, a visual projection showcased Oman's diverse landscapes on the background, from sea to desert, reinforcing the deep connection between geography and sound. This interplay highlighted a defining feature of Omani music, its grounding in place and movement.

Within the broader Khaleeji context, this identity takes on added depth. Gulf music has long been shaped by mobility, trade and cultural exchange. In Oman, these influences are particularly layered, enriched by historical connections with East Africa and Asia. The result is a rhythm-driven musical language that reflects both local specificity and regional belonging.

The dialogue session that followed expanded the conversation from performance to preservation. Moderated by Ru'a al Lamki, Oman's representative to the Arab Music Academy, the panel explored the role of institutions in sustaining Arab music.

Dr Nasser al Naabi highlighted the work of the Oman Music Centre, established in 1984, which has documented traditional musical forms across Oman through extensive fieldwork. Today, the centre houses more than 50,000 archival items, forming a vital



Music remains one of the most profound cultural expressions in the Arab world, preserving collective memory and carrying human experiences, from joy to sorrow, across generations.

repository for researchers and musicians alike.

Dr Ayat al Matani, Head of the Music & Musicology Department at SQU, emphasised interdisciplinary collaboration, where music intersects with language, history and archival science. Current projects document traditional arts such as Al sharoud, Al wailah, Al ayyala and maritime musical traditions, ensuring they are preserved through both academic analysis and international archiving standards.

Dr Nahil Salloum, an assitant professor at SQU, offered a regional perspective, noting that local musical traditions across Oman and the Gulf are part of a larger Arab musical identity. Through the initiatives of the Arab Music Academy, including academic journals, awards and conferences, musicians and researchers are given platforms to engage beyond national borders.

Oman's active role within this framework was also evident. The Sultanate of Oman has hosted major gatherings of the Academy and recently signed a cultural cooperation agreement, reinforcing its position as a key contributor to Arab musical development.

Equally significant was the focus on students. With the launch of new digital platforms and publication opportunities by the Academy, young Omanis are encouraged to contribute not only as performers, but as researchers and writers shaping the future of Arab music.

In Muscat, this celebration of Arab Music Day was not simply about honouring tradition. It was about extending it. In Oman and across the Gulf, music continues to live, not as a static heritage, but as an evolving expression of identity, memory and belonging.



Photos by: **Shamsa al Harthi**

