

OMAN
Observer
DAILY

12

BARCELONA ON
VERGE OF LIGA
TITLE, VILLARREAL
SECURE TOP FOUR

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INBRIEF

NO CHANGE
IN SCHOOL DAY
SCHEDULE THIS YEAR

The Ministry of Education has confirmed that the approved school day schedule for the 2025/2026 academic year will continue without any changes, dismissing rumours circulating on social media regarding a possible reduction in school hours during the remaining weeks of the academic year. In a statement issued through its official social media platforms, the ministry stressed that the current school timetable remains in effect in accordance with Ministerial Decision No 103/2025 concerning the annual academic calendar for schools. The ministry underlined the importance of full adherence to the approved school day duration to ensure the smooth continuation of the educational process and the achievement of its academic and educational objectives.

DETAILS ON P3

RESIDENTIAL
POWER TARIFFS CUT
FOR SUMMER

The Public Services Regulatory Authority (APSR) has introduced temporary reduction in residential electricity tariffs to ease the impact of higher consumption during the summer months. The measures apply to a single basic account from May through August and are aimed at supporting households during periods of peak demand driven by high temperatures. Under the revised tariff structure, a 15 per cent discount will apply in May for consumption between 0 and 4,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh), 10 per cent for usage between 4,001 and 6,000 kWh; and 5 per cent for consumption exceeding 6,000 kWh. DETAILS ON P13

SIGNIFICANCE OF TAKRIZ



Fisheries Research Centre in the Governorate of Dhofar is conducting a survey of natural stocks of sea urchins known locally as “Takriz” that inhabit coasts of the governorate. The survey was prompted by a significant rise in the number of the sea urchins during 2025 in the area extending between the Wilayat of Mirbat and the Niyabat of Hasik in the Wilayat of Sadah. SEE P2

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, MAY 3

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) is implementing its strategic and operational plans aligned with Oman Vision 2040, having achieved progress on 13 of its indicators during 2025, with four additional indicators approaching their target levels. This was announced during the SQU’s annual media meeting held on Sunday to review its most notable achievements, performance

indicators, and future plans, in keeping with its vision of becoming “a distinguished university with global impact and standing.” HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, stated that the qualitative achievements realised by the university come as a realisation of the Royal patronage and continuous support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, for the education, scientific research, and innovation sectors, serving as a constant impetus to continue the



HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin al Julanda al Said

march of excellence and enhance the university’s role in serving the nation. The university is moving forward in implementing its strategic and operational plans aligned with the targets of Oman Vision 2040. HH Sayyid Dr Fahd added that the university achieved progress on 13 vision indicators during 2025, most notably attaining 334th position globally and eighth in the Arab world in the QS World University Rankings. He said that the results reflect notable progress across various areas

of institutional performance. The rate of labour market satisfaction with the university’s graduates reached 85 per cent, while the proportion of accredited undergraduate academic programmes stood at 70 per cent. In the field of scientific research, the university recorded the publication of 1,851 research papers in peer-reviewed journals, alongside an improvement in its global ranking to 334th position according to the QS World University Rankings. TURN TO P2

Royal Decrees give public utility status for projects

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued four Royal Decrees. Royal Decree No (51/2026) ascribes the public utility status to the project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Wadi Meglas in the Wilayat of Qurayat in the Governorate of Muscat. Article (1) states that the

project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Wadi Meglas in the Wilayat of Qurayat in the Governorate of Muscat, as defined in the memo and diagram attached to this decree, is henceforth deemed a public utility project. Article (2) stipulates that the authorities concerned may

expropriate, through direct implementation, the properties and lands necessary for the aforementioned project, along with all the installations therein in accordance with the Public Utility Expropriation Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 71/2023. Article (3) says that this decree

shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. Royal Decree No (52/2026) ascribes the public utility status to the project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Niyabat of Lima in the Wilayat of Khasab in the Governorate of Musandam. TURN TO P2

TRUMP MULLS IRAN 'S PEACE PROPOSAL

OMAN CALLS FOR MEASURES TO EASE REGIONAL TENSIONS

SAYYID

BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDY, Foreign Minister, and Dr Sayyid Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, discussed in a telephone call the latest developments regarding efforts aimed at reaching a consensus between Iran and the United States of America concerning the nuclear file and other outstanding issues, particularly those related to maritime navigation and its freedom in the region.

The two ministers exchanged views and consulted on measures that contribute to containing and repelling escalation attempts, while pushing towards a path of dialogue and constructive understanding in a manner that guarantees the rights of all parties and ensures commitment to international law.

A telephone call also took place between the Foreign Minister and Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye.

The two ministers reviewed several regional and international developments and exchanged views on them, reflecting the keenness of both sides to enhance consultation and coordination regarding various issues of common interest.

The two sides further addressed developments in maritime navigation within vital corridors and the efforts being exerted to enhance security and stability in the region, ensuring the smooth



A man walks past the Alameh Tabatabaei high school, which was destroyed by a US-Israeli air strike during the war, in Tehran, on Sunday. — AFP

flow of international trade to contribute to supporting global economic stability. Meanwhile, Iran’s Revolutionary Guards on Sunday said the United States

faced a choice between an “impossible” military operation or a “bad deal” with Tehran, after President Donald Trump disparaged Iran’s latest peace proposal.

Negotiations between the two countries have been deadlocked since a ceasefire came into effect on April 8, with only one round of direct peace talks held so far. Iran’s Tasnim and Fars news agencies reported that Tehran had submitted a 14-point proposal to mediator Pakistan, but Trump was quick to cast doubt on it.

US news website Axios reported, citing two sources briefed on the proposal, that it set “a one-month deadline for negotiations on a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, end the US naval blockade and permanently end the war in Iran and in Lebanon”. In a statement on Sunday, the Revolutionary Guards sought to put the onus back on Trump, saying he must choose between “an impossible operation or a bad deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran”. “The room for US decision-making has narrowed,” they said. The day before, Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi told diplomats in Tehran that “the ball is in the United States’ court to choose the path of diplomacy or the continuation of a confrontational approach”. Iran, he said, was “prepared for both paths”. SEE ALSO P6 & 7

The advertisement is a horizontal banner with a dark blue background. On the left, the 'PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE' logo is displayed with a small icon of a person. Below it are two circular award seals: 'OMAN'S 1st EXCHANGE' and 'TRUSTED SINCE 1920'. At the bottom left is a 'WINNER OMAN'S MOST TRUSTED BRAND 2025' badge. The central text reads 'Transfer money worldwide instantly via Western Union using the PK Remit mobile app.' Below this text are three yellow circular icons: a lightning bolt for 'FAST TRANSFER', a padlock for 'SECURE & RELIABLE', and a globe for 'WORLDWIDE NETWORK'. On the right, a smartphone displays the 'PK REMIT' app interface, showing a 'Receiving Country' dropdown and the Western Union logo. To the right of the phone is a QR code and the text 'SCAN & DOWNLOAD PK REMIT APP NOW'. At the bottom right are 'GET IT ON Google Play' and 'Download on the App Store' buttons. The 'PK REMIT' logo and the Western Union logo are also present at the top right.

SHORT TAKES

SURVEY UNVEILS SIGNIFICANCE OF 'TAKRIZ'

SALALAH: *The Fisheries Research Centre in the Governorate of Dhofar is conducting a survey of natural stocks of sea urchins known locally as 'Takriz' that inhabit coasts of the governorate.*

The survey was prompted by a significant rise in the number of the sea urchins during 2025 in the area extending between the Wilayat of Mirbat and the Niyabat of Hasik in the Wilayat of Sadah.

Eng Salim bin Ahmed al Ghassani, Director of the Fisheries Research Centre in Dhofar Governorate, said that the survey is in pursuance of the ministry's efforts to monitor changes in the life cycle of marine organisms and assess their impact on the marine environment.

Al Ghassani pointed out that initial reports showed a rise in numbers of this species in 2025, compared to the years before.

The programme aims to identify the locations and impact of this species on seagrasses and algae, said Al Ghassani. He explained that the monitoring process and follow-up work use the method of latitudinal surveying which aims to assess the density of the urchins and their areas of concentration. — ONA

ROYAL DECREES GIVE PUBLIC UTILITY STATUS FOR PROJECTS

FROM P1

Article (1) states that the project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Neyabat of Lima in the Wilayat of Khasab in the Governorate of Musandam, as defined in the memo and diagram attached to this decree, is henceforth deemed a public utility project.

Article (2) stipulates that the authorities concerned may expropriate, through direct implementation, the properties and lands necessary for the aforementioned project, along with all the installations therein in accordance with the Public Utility Expropriation Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 71/2023.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No (53/2026) ascribes the public utility status to the project of constructing a dam for protection against

floods in Niyabat of Samad Al Shan in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi in the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah North.

Article (1) states that the project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Niyabat of Samad Al Shan in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi in the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah North, as defined in the memo and diagram attached to this decree is henceforth deemed a public utility project.

Article (2) stipulates that the authorities concerned may expropriate, through direct implementation, the properties and lands necessary for the aforementioned project, along with all the installations therein in accordance with the Public Utility Expropriation Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 71/2023.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue.

Royal Decree No (54/2026) ascribes

the public utility status to the project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Wadi Bani Omar Al Gharbi in the Wilayat of Liwa in the Governorate of Al Batinah North.

Article (1) states that the project of constructing a dam for protection against floods in Wadi Bani Omar Al Gharbi in the Wilayat of Liwa in the Governorate of Al Batinah North, as defined in the memo and diagram attached to this decree, is henceforth deemed a public utility project.

Article (2) stipulates that the authorities concerned may expropriate, through direct implementation, the properties and lands necessary for the aforementioned project, along with all the installations therein in accordance with the Public Utility Expropriation Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 71/2023.

Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

SQU highlights achievements

FROM PAGE 1

The SQU showcased its academic, research and institutional achievements during its 2026 annual media briefing, reaffirming its commitment to excellence and alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

HH Sayyid Dr Fahd, said noted that the university's long-term strategy (2016–2040) focuses on quality education, research excellence, innovation and entrepreneurship, supported by its third executive plan (2026–2030), which prioritises digital transformation, human capital development and global competitiveness.

The university has expanded its academic offerings, introducing programmes in artificial intelligence, data science, digital business and veterinary medicine, while postgraduate programmes reached 123 across master's and doctoral levels.

HH Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU, emphasised the importance of partnerships, she stated, between 2024 and 2025, the university signed 51 cooperation agreements, reinforcing our international presence and supporting research, skills development and academic quality.”

She added, these partnerships are a cornerstone of our development ecosystem, contributing to improved education, advanced research and stronger global rankings, while serving the



The achievements reflect the continued Royal support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for education and innovation. — ONA

community.” Dr Amir bin Saif al Hinaï, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies and Research said, the revised academic promotion system is based on teaching and learning, research and innovation, and community service, with clear evaluation criteria and defined weights.

Dr Salim bin Hamoud al Harthy, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Community Service, highlighted the university's focus on artificial intelligence, noting: "We began integrating emerging technologies into academic programmes early on and have trained around 800 academics in AI applications."

Dr Nasser bin Musbah al Zaidi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Administrative and Financial Affairs, outlined future infrastructure projects, stated that the male student residential city will accommodate up to 6,000 students, with the first phase serving 2,000 students within three to four years.” He added, the project will include integrated facilities such as sports, commercial and service areas, creating an attractive and comprehensive student environment.”

HH Sayyid Dr Fahad bin

Al Julanda al Said further stated, the university's future projects include the development of a male student residential city, a new housing facility for female students, and the expansion of the Colleges of Arts and Economics. Plans also focus on enhancing campus accessibility for people with disabilities, upgrading facilities, and improving the overall learning environment. In addition, upcoming initiatives include the establishment of an emerging technologies unit, a research centres complex, a veterinary clinic, and new facilities for the earthquake monitoring centre."

The university also reported progress in sustainability, reducing energy consumption by over 14 per cent, while advancing digital transformation through smart systems that enhance efficiency and data-driven decision-making.

Through its integrated approach to education, research and innovation, Sultan Qaboos University continues to strengthen its position as a leading institution, contributing to national development and enhancing Oman's global academic presence.

NBO Global Equity Fund			
Investment Manager Report			
For the period ending 31 st March 2026			
Global Markets witnessed high volatility during the month of March due to the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East, marking the worst quarterly performance for many benchmarks since 2022. The market reactions included a broad-based sell off in equities and sovereign bonds across all major economies anticipating a global slowdown due to the surge in energy price. While the year began with optimism and AI-driven gains, the escalation led to a historic surge in oil prices and a rotation away from growth stocks toward commodities and defensive sectors. Despite the anticipated growth slowdown, the Central Banks of major economies maintained a cautious, "wait and see" stance, refusing to commit to nearterm easing. This change was primarily driven by an energy price shock in March, sparked by Middle East conflict and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which reignited global inflation fears. The MSCIs Global and Developed indices decreased by 3.52% and 3.88% respectively while the Emerging Market index decreased by 0.51% during the year. Among Developed Markets (DM), the S&P 500 Index (USA) decreased by 4.63%, while Nasdaq Composite (USA) decreased by 7.1%, and the UK Index increased by 0.67%. The Euro Stoxx 50 Index (Eurozone) and Japan decreased by 5.43% and 0.23% respectively. Among Emerging Markets (EM), the Taiwanese and Korean markets increased by 7.36% and 13.93% respectively, while the Indian and Chinese markets decreased by 8.56% and 0.63 respectively (USD returns considered for all indices). The US Dollar increased by 1.67% during the quarter and hit the lowest level in last 3 years during January 2026. For Q1 2026, USD is now up by 1.67% with the Dollar Index (DXY) at 99.96 on 31st March 2026 as compared to its peak level of 109.96 in early Jan 2025. In the bond markets, the US 10 year yields ended at 4.32% in Q1 2026, as compared to 4.17% in the previous quarter. The Global Aggregate Bond Index ended the quarter down by 1.07%. The fund has outperformed relative to the broader global equity index during Q1 2026. This performance was driven by strategic positioning throughout the previous quarter, designed to capture gains from a robust corporate earnings cycle. Looking ahead for 2026, further rate reduction will likely depend on the core inflation trajectory, jobs data, deescalation of conflicts that may prove inflationary in the future, and the likely trend of fiscal policy and US trade & tariff policies. Historically, a downward trending interest rate scenario should support global equities growth generally as valuations rise. However, we maintain a cautious stance in light of ongoing macroeconomic volatility. Our fund's strategy continues to focus on maintaining fund quality, and diversifying sources of fund returns, in order to preserve value during any possible downturns and also to grow the fund over the long term, in line with the respective global indices.			
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026			
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
	31 March 2026	31 March 2025	31 Dec 2025
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
ASSETS			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	3,724,622	3,345,327	4,035,627
Cash and cash equivalents	229,671	128,433	23,284
Dividend receivable	5,621	6,397	1,175
Total assets	3,959,914	3,480,157	4,060,086
LIABILITIES			
Accruals and other payables	13,151	15,021	13,841
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	3,946,763	3,465,136	4,046,245
Net asset value per unit	1.029	0.971	1.055
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	31 Dec 2025	31 March 2025	31 Dec 2025
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
INCOME			
Net realized gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	67,345	21,598	36,593
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	(144,692)	(160,767)	429,876
Dividend income	12,663	11,742	40,856
Other income	94	128	35
	(64,590)	(127,299)	507,360
Expenses			
Brokerage commission	5,485	7,660	23,243
Management fees	10,819	9,129	39,340
Fund Management Body fees	7,000	7,000	35,000
Investment advisor fees	4,028	4,210	13,958
Administration and custodian service fees	2,557	2,749	10,589
Foreign exchange loss	-	-	732
General and administration	5,003	10,666	40,114
	34,892	41,414	162,976
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the period	(99,482)	(168,713)	344,384
Net profit per unit	(0.026)	(0.047)	0.096

Investment Manager

Note: The complete account in Arabic or English, as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholders within 7 days of written request addressed to the Administrator, Standard Chartered Bank.

البنك الوطني العماني
NBO

SHORT TAKES



The committee discussed the articles of disagreement between the two councils.

JOINT COMMITTEE AGREES ON DRAFT MINERAL RESOURCES LAW

MUSCAT: The joint committee of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura concluded its discussion of the articles of disagreement regarding the draft amendment to certain provisions of the Mineral Resources Law, a step that paves the way for completing the legislative procedures for the amendments.

The committee discussed the articles of disagreement between the two councils on the draft amendment referred from the Council of Ministers, with a total of 7 articles out of the twenty articles included in the draft.

The committee reached an agreement on all the disputed articles, reflecting the level of coordination and integration between the two councils in studying legislation. This paves the way for submitting the final report for discussion and approval in a joint session.

This agreement is expected to expedite the completion of the legislative process for the amendment project, supporting the development of the mineral resources sector and enhancing its regulatory legal framework.

MoE AFFIRMS NO CHANGE IN SCHOOL TIMETABLE

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 3

THE MINISTRY of Education (MoE) has confirmed that the approved school day schedule for the 2025-2026 academic year will remain unchanged, dismissing social media rumours suggesting a possible reduction in school hours during the remaining weeks of the academic year.

In a clarification issued through its official social media platforms, the ministry stressed that the current school timetable continues to be in effect in accordance with Ministerial Decision No 103/2025 on the academic calendar for schools.

The ministry underlined the importance of full adherence to the approved school day duration to ensure the smooth continuation of the educational process and the achievement of its academic objectives.

The statement comes amid growing discussions on social media calling for shorter school hours as temperatures rise and the academic year approaches its final weeks. The ministry said its clarification aims to end speculation and reaffirm continuity of the approved schedule.

According to the MoE, maintaining designated school hours is a key pillar in ensuring the stability and effectiveness of the education system.

It said the academic timetable had been designed in line with educational standards, taking into account curriculum distribution, assessment periods and school



Attendance is important as final examinations approach and curriculum plans near completion.

activities, while balancing academic and developmental goals.

The ministry also noted that any reduction in school hours could negatively affect curriculum completion and disrupt educational plans linked to the academic calendar. It reaffirmed its commitment to monitoring the well-being of students, teachers and administrative staff across schools in the Sultanate of Oman.

The ministry called on parents, students, and education staff to support regular attendance and school discipline, stressing that consistency contributes significantly to improved academic performance and a stable learning environment.

Abdullah bin Hamad al Balushi, principal of a government school in Muscat Governorate, said attendance during this phase of the academic year is particularly important as final examinations approach and curriculum plans near completion.

“The final weeks of the academic year

are not a marginal period. They are among the most important stages, during which final lessons, revision programmes, and assessments are completed, along with monitoring students’ academic and behavioural progress,” he told Observer.

He added that school administrations are working continuously to provide a suitable learning environment and ensure student comfort and safety, supporting the smooth continuation of the educational process.

Al Balushi stressed that cooperation between schools and families remains essential in encouraging consistent attendance.

Meanwhile, teacher Khalid bin Saif al Alawi said regular attendance at this stage has a direct impact on academic performance, noting that current lessons focus on revision and exam preparation.

“Reducing school hours could affect the implementation of educational plans, particularly in subjects that require continuous explanation and revision. Maintaining the approved schedule ensures students receive the intended learning outcomes,” he said.

He added that schools are actively working to keep students engaged through interactive teaching methods and varied learning activities.

Educational specialists said the ministry’s decision reflects its commitment to maintaining stability in the education system and preventing disruption caused by misinformation on digital platforms, particularly during exam periods.

WHERE OMAN’S ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY FUTURE TAKES SHAPE



18 - 20 MAY 2026 OMAN CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

From 18–20 May, Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) and Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES) will return as a three-day exhibition at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, convening energy, sustainability, and infrastructure leaders on a single national platform.

This is where strategy meets execution.

At the heart of the programme:

OPES & OSW Expo (18–20 May) will bring together leading local, regional and international companies to showcase the latest technologies, integrated solutions, and innovations driving the transformation of Oman’s energy, infrastructure, and sustainability sectors.

OPES Talks (18–20 May) and OSW Talks (19–20 May) are CPD-certified programmes that will open big conversations from energy transition, ESG, climate action to future cities.

International Sustainability Resources & Technology Conference (ISRTC) (18-19 May) part of Oman Sustainability Week 2026, organised by Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) and programmed by Economist Enterprise, will bring together leading experts and practitioners to explore practical, scalable solutions advancing resource efficiency, decarbonisation, and sustainable development on 18 and 19 May.



The SPE Conference (18–20 May), incorporated within Oman Petroleum & Energy Show 2026, will feature a carefully selected faculty of highly acclaimed experts and distinguished industry leaders from across the global energy sector, focusing on innovative solutions shaping the future of oil and gas.

The C-Level Roundtable (18 & 19 May) facilitated by EY Oman, will convene senior decision-makers to engage in strategic dialogue on policy direction, investment priorities, and cross-sector collaboration shaping the future of energy and sustainability in Oman.

The OSW Awards (17 May) will recognise the projects, organisations, and innovators leading Oman’s sustainability progress.

From high-level strategy to on-the-ground innovation, every conversation, and every recognition is designed to create opportunity.
If you’re part of Oman’s energy and sustainability ecosystem - this is where you need to be.

REGISTER FREE AND BE PART OF THE CONVERSATIONS THAT MATTER.
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MOH 4219-10/2025

G C C T R A F F I C W E E K

Focus on wadi crossing risks

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MAY 3

THE Royal Oman Police (ROP), represented by the Directorate-General of Traffic, has launched the week-long 38th Unified GCC Traffic Week 2026 under the slogan ‘Cross Safely’.

The activities, which run until May 7 in Oman, were inaugurated on Sunday at the Mall of Oman by Eng Ahmed bin Said al Amri, Chairman of Muscat Municipality.

The opening ceremony was attended by senior ROP officials, alongside representatives from government and private sector entities. The initiative aims to promote traffic awareness and foster a culture of road safety among

all road users, as part of a unified GCC effort to reduce accidents and minimise human and material losses.

Observed across GCC states, the annual campaign extends until May 9, while Oman’s programme focuses on achieving zero pedestrian fatalities. Emphasis is placed on using designated crossings, adhering to traffic signals, and avoiding risky behaviours such as jaywalking.

Authorities are also intensifying awareness efforts on safe driving practices, including avoiding mobile phone use while driving and ensuring seat-belt compliance.

The accompanying exhibition features participation from multiple government and private



The week-long Unified GCC Traffic Week 2026 began under the slogan ‘Cross Safely’.

institutions. It includes interactive displays, awareness materials, and demonstrations of traffic safety applications, highlighting key statistics and ongoing initiatives by

traffic safety institutes across various governorates.

Planned activities include awareness lectures in schools and workplaces, field outreach programmes for road users, and the use of

both traditional and digital media platforms to maximise public engagement.

Speaking to the media, the chief guest underscored the importance of strengthening community awareness and enhancing overall road safety. He noted that the week’s activities aim to reduce accident rates while reinforcing the concept of shared responsibility among community members.

A key focus this year is raising awareness about the dangers of crossing wadis during periods of rainfall. Authorities highlighted several tragic incidents in recent years, including fatalities during heavy rains in March 2026, the loss of at least 20 lives in April 2024, multiple deaths in Wadi Al Maddam in July 2025, and

further casualties during severe flooding in Sur in October 2024.

“The majority of these fatalities occurred when vehicles were swept away while attempting to cross flowing wadis or low-lying areas. We aim to highlight how such risky behaviour can lead to devastating consequences for individuals, society, and the nation,” an ROP spokesperson said.

According to official figures, Oman recorded 107 pedestrian deaths in road traffic accidents in 2025, including 21 women. The fatalities were distributed across several governorates, with Muscat reporting 89 deaths, Dhofar (90), Al Dakhiliyah (99), Al Batinah North (72), Al Batinah South (64), and Al Dhahirah (51).

Mubashir Appointed to Design the Permanent Exhibition of the National Records and Archives Authority within the Sayyid Tarik bin Taimur Cultural Complex

OMANI STORYTELLERS APPOINTED TO SHAPE FLAGSHIP EXPERIENCE NARRATING THE NATION’S ARCHIVAL HERITAGE



MUBASHIR, Oman’s leading storytelling and communications company, has been appointed to design the Permanent Exhibition of the National Records and Archives Authority

at the Sayyid Tarik bin Taimur Cultural Complex.

Commissioned through SAH-SML JV Co. LLC on behalf of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Mubashir

will work with the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) to create an immersive, narrative-driven exhibition experience that brings to life Oman’s history and legacy of documentation.

The exhibition will serve as the public gateway to the nation’s archival collection, welcoming local visitors, students, tourists and the wider community.

A Privilege and Responsibility

“This is not simply another project for us, it is a national calling,” said Ali Al Raisi, Co-founder & CEO of Mubashir. “The National Archives holds the documented memory of our nation. For a decade, we have served as Oman’s storytellers, and we approach this responsibility with the care and respect it deserves.”

Delivery Approach

Mubashir has engaged SIGONGtech, a globally recognised leader in cultural exhibition design, to collaborate on delivering a flagship exhibition on par with the highest industry standards. SIGONGtech brings decades of experience executing world-class technical design to exhibitions around the world, including significant

projects across the Middle East.

“Together with our partners, we look forward to creating an experience that helps Omanis of all generations connect with their documented heritage,” said Raif Al Harthy, Co-founder & Chief Growth Officer at Mubashir.

Preserving and Presenting Heritage

The project honours the fundamental work of the NRAA, whose meticulous dedication to preserving Oman’s historical records has safeguarded the nation’s collective memory for decades. The Permanent Exhibition will be a momentous platform for visitors to engage with Oman’s recorded history.

As an Omani SME backed by the Oman Investment Authority, Mubashir brings deep cultural understanding and a decade of narrative-driven work across digital and physical experiences to one of the nation’s most significant heritage projects.

SHORT TAKES



The operations were in pursuance of ongoing national efforts. — ONA

8 ADVANCED SURGERIES BOOST DECENTRALISATION

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos Hospital in Salalah and Nizwa Hospital, a specialised medical team from Khoula Hospital’s Department of Orthopaedic Surgery recently performed 8 high-quality shoulder surgeries as part of a programme of field visits.

The programme aimed to transfer expertise and expand the scope of specialised medical services beyond the Governorate of Muscat. The operations were in pursuance of ongoing national efforts to enhance integration among health institutions within the context of decentralisation in the Sultanate of Oman.

In Nizwa Hospital, the visiting team conducted the first two surgeries to replace the inverted shoulder joint. It also dealt with a variety of medical cases that required precise surgical intervention, thus sparing the patients the need to travel for treatment. — ONA

CPA WARNS AGAINST USING SOME PORTABLE CHARGERS

MUSCAT: The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has issued a consumer awareness warning regarding a number of portable chargers belonging to the Anker brand, due to their non-compliance with approved requirements and standard specifications, and the potential risks their use may pose to user safety.

CPA explained that the warning covers the following specific models: A1647, A1652, A1257, A1681, and A1689. Warnings received through the Gulf’s Aajel rapid alert system indicated that these products may cause overheating or technical malfunctions, which may pose a risk to users during operation.

As part of the measures taken, CPA confirmed that field search and inspection operations were carried out by enforcement officers. However, no authorised local distributor for these products was found within the Sultanate of Oman, which suggests that they may have entered the market through unofficial channels such as online shopping or individual importation from neighbouring countries, making it necessary to raise consumer awareness.

CPA called upon consumers to avoid using the chargers covered by the warning and to verify the source of products before purchasing them, especially through online platforms.

It also emphasised the importance of following warnings issued through the CPA’s official website and the Aajel platform affiliated with the Gulf Standardization Organization (GSO).

MoU WITH UNITAR TO BOOST DIPLOMATIC CAPACITY BUILDING

GENEVA: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Diplomatic Academy, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) to enhance cooperation in diplomatic capacity building.

The agreement was signed at the headquarters of the Permanent Mission of Oman in Geneva.

On behalf of Oman, it was signed by Ambassador Idris bin Abdulrahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of Oman to the United Nations and international organisations in Geneva.

On behalf of UNITAR, it was signed by Michelle Giles-McDonough, Assistant Secretary-



The MoU helps implement practical, high-impact training programmes.

General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UNITAR.

The MoU aims to strengthen partnership between the two sides by moving beyond general cooperation towards the implementation of practical, high-impact training programmes

designed to develop national competencies in diplomatic and multilateral work.

It reflects a shared commitment to building a sustainable, long-term partnership that enhances multilateral engagement and supports global efforts in addressing complex international challenges.

UNITAR, a specialised agency of the United Nations system established in Geneva in 1965, plays a key role in strengthening institutional and human capacities at the global level.

The institute provides advanced training and research programmes for policymakers, government officials, and professionals — particularly from developing countries. — ONA

Oman, Italy showcase archaeological heritage

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, MAY 3

THE NATIONAL Museum, represented by its Learning Centre and in cooperation with the Embassy of the Italian Republic in Muscat, on Sunday organised an event titled ‘Italy and Oman: Promoting Tourism and Cultural Identity through Archaeology’, highlighting the role of archaeology in preserving cultural identity, strengthening bilateral cooperation and supporting sustainable tourism.

Held under the auspices of Jamal bin Hassan Al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, the event brought together archaeologists, tourism specialists, academics, students and cultural enthusiasts to exchange ideas on heritage preservation and archaeological collaboration between Oman and Italy.

Opening the conference, Pierluigi D’Elia, Ambassador of Italy to Oman, praised the longstanding cooperation between Italian and Omani archaeologists, noting that academic and archaeological collaboration between the two countries dates back nearly half a century, with continued support from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Embassy of Italy.

Dr Fatma al Balushi, Adviser to the Secretary-General for Museum Affairs at the National Museum, highlighted the museum’s efforts in showcasing the work of Italian archaeological missions in Oman through exhibitions, lectures and joint cultural initiatives, underlining the value of such partnerships in preserving and promoting Omani heritage regionally and



The National Museum and Italian Embassy held an event titled ‘Italy and Oman: Promoting Tourism and Cultural Identity through Archaeology’.

A key highlight of the event was the presentation of findings from the Al Taykha archaeological site in Wilayat of Al Rustaq by Prof Sara Pizzimenti, Associate Professor of Archaeology at the University of Pisa, Italian Republic, and Prof Khalid Douglas, Professor of Archaeology at Sultan Qaboos University.

internationally.

A key highlight of the event was the presentation of findings from the Al Taykha archaeological site in Wilayat of Al Rustaq by Prof Sara Pizzimenti, Associate Professor of Archaeology at the University of Pisa, Italian Republic, and Prof Khalid Douglas, Professor of Archaeology at Sultan Qaboos University.

The site, one of the largest known settlements of the Umm an Nar culture, spans more than 70 hectares and dates back to the third millennium BCE.

Excavations have uncovered residential structures, circular tombs and massive towers measuring around 20 metres in diameter, alongside evidence of copper production and trade links

with Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley civilisation, highlighting Oman’s significance as an early centre of trade and civilisation.

Speaking to Observer, Prof Sara said the team recognised Al Taykha’s significance early on because of the site’s scale and visible archaeological features, but it was the discovery of three stamp seals during excavations at one of its key structures that confirmed its extraordinary importance.

“When we started uncovering the stamp seals - not just one, but three - it became clear to us that we were in front of something really important and extraordinary,” she said, noting that the finds point to an administrative role that underlines the settlement’s historical prominence.

SQU study reveals bacterial variations in cafeteria sandwiches

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 3

Ameer al Rawahi, a student in the Department of Food Science and Nutrition at Sultan Qaboos University’s College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences, explored a question often overlooked in everyday food consumption: how safe are ready-made sandwiches sold in cafeterias and shops?

Sandwiches are widely considered a convenient, quick and appetising meal option. Their familiar appearance often creates a sense of reassurance. However, behind this simplicity lies a more complex food safety reality.

Variations in ingredients, reliance on manual preparation, and potential breaks in the cold chain can all influence microbial safety and determine whether such meals remain safe for consumption.

Motivated by an interest in food safety, Al Rawahi, under the supervision of Dr Ismail al Balushi, conducted a field-based study to assess the microbial quality of ready-made sandwiches.

The research involved the collection of 60 samples from cafés and shops across Muscat Governorate.

The samples included egg, chicken, tuna and meat sandwiches, which were analysed to evaluate



A field-based study was conducted to assess the microbial quality of ready-made sandwiches.

bacterial contamination levels and overall microbiological safety.

Laboratory findings showed noticeable variation in bacterial counts across the different sandwich types.

Meat sandwiches recorded the highest total bacterial load, followed by tuna, chicken and egg sandwiches.

Some samples also reflected microbial indicators suggesting differences in hygiene practices during preparation and handling.

However, the study confirmed the absence of Salmonella bacteria in all tested samples, an encouraging result that points to generally safe consumption levels.

Based on the Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) guidelines, most samples fell within acceptable microbiological limits, indicating that while variations exist, the products largely remain safe for public consumption.

The study recommends expanding future research to include a larger sample size and a broader range of pathogenic bacteria.

Such efforts would help provide a more comprehensive understanding of ready-made food safety, strengthen regulatory monitoring and support improvements in hygiene standards across food outlets.

IRAN SAYS US MILITARY OPERATION ‘IMPOSSIBLE’

IRAN'S Revolutionary Guards on Sunday said the United States faced a choice between an “impossible” military operation or a “bad deal” with Tehran, after President Donald Trump disparaged Iran's latest peace proposal. Negotiations between the two countries have been deadlocked since a ceasefire came into effect on April 8, with only one round of direct peace talks held so far. Iran's Tasnim and Fars news agencies reported that Tehran had submitted a 14-point proposal to mediator Pakistan, but Trump was quick to cast doubt on it. “I will soon be reviewing the plan that Iran has just sent to us, but can't imagine that it would be acceptable in that they have not yet paid a big enough price for what they have done to Humanity, and the World, over the last 47 years,” Trump said on his Truth Social platform. US news website Axios reported, citing two sources briefed on the proposal, that it set “a one-month deadline for negotiations on a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, end the US naval blockade and permanently end the war in Iran and in Lebanon”.

In a statement on Sunday, the Revolutionary Guards sought

IN A STATEMENT ON SUNDAY, THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS SOUGHT TO PUT THE ONUS BACK ON TRUMP, SAYING HE MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN “AN IMPOSSIBLE OPERATION OR A BAD DEAL WITH THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN”. “THE ROOM FOR US DECISION-MAKING HAS NARROWED,” THEY SAID

to put the onus back on Trump, saying he must choose between “an impossible operation or a bad deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran”. “The room for US decision-making has narrowed,” they said. The day before, Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi told diplomats in Tehran that “the ball is in the United States’ court to choose the path of diplomacy or the continuation of a confrontational approach”. Iran, he said, was “prepared for both paths”.

In a brief interview with reporters in West Palm Beach, Florida, on Saturday the US president declined to specify what could trigger new American military action. “If they misbehave, if they do something bad, but right now, we'll see,” he said. “But it's a possibility that could happen, certainly.”

In yet more bellicose rhetoric, Mohsen Rezaei, a military adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, said Iranian forces would sink US ships. “The US is the only pirate in the world that possesses aircraft carriers. Our ability to confront pirates is no less than our ability to sink warships. Prepare to face a graveyard of your carriers and forces,” he posted on X.

There is no evidence that Iran has sunk any US military vessels



A woman holds a poster depicting Iran's new Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, during a rally in Tehran. — Reuters



during the war. Axios reported earlier in the week that Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff had asked for Tehran's nuclear programme to be put back on the negotiating table. But Iran's mission to the UN pointed to the massive US nuclear arsenal, accusing Washington on Saturday of “hypocritical behaviour” towards Iran's own atomic ambitions.

Iran has maintained a stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz since the war began, choking off major flows of oil, gas and fertiliser to the world economy, while the United States has imposed a counter-blockade on Iranian ports. Oil prices are about 50 per cent above pre-war levels. The deputy speaker of Iran's parliament, Ali Nikzad, said that under draft legislation being considered for managing the strait, 30 per cent of tolls collected would go towards military infrastructure, with the rest earmarked for “economic development”. “Managing the Strait of Hormuz is more important than acquiring nuclear weapons,” he said.

In Iran, the war's economic toll is deepening, with oil exports curtailed and inflation surging past 50 per cent. “Everyone is trying to endure it, but... they are falling apart,” 40-year old Amir, a Tehran resident, a reporter based outside the country. “We still have not seen much of the economic effects because everyone had a bit of savings. They had some gold and dollars for a rainy day. When they run out, things will change.” — AFP

SHORT TAKES



An F-35 fighter jet flies with weapon bay doors open at Hatzerim Airbase, in southern Israel. — Reuters

ISRAEL APPROVES DEAL WITH US TO BUY FIGHTER JETS

TEL AVIV: Israel on Sunday approved a multi-billion-dollar deal to acquire two combat squadrons of fighter jets from the United States, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying it would “reinforce” its air superiority. The purchase includes a squadron of F-35 multi-role stealth fighters from Lockheed Martin and another of F-15A warplanes from Boeing, Israel's defence ministry said.

The plan aims to “ensure Israel's air superiority for decades to come,” Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a statement. “The F-35 and F-15A acquisitions are central to the ‘Shield of Israel’ plan, which is designed to give the IDF (Israeli military) a lasting qualitative edge,” he said. The F-35, a joint project between the United States and a number of allies, is one of the world's most advanced military aircraft. Israel already operates several dozen of the jets. — AFP



Germany's Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul

GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER DEMANDS HORMUZ REOPENING

BERLIN: German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul on Sunday demanded that Iran reopen the Strait of Hormuz and give up its nuclear weapons programme in a telephone call with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi. “I emphasised that Germany supports a negotiated solution,” Wadephul said in a post on X about the call. “As a close US ally, we share the same goal: Iran must completely and verifiably renounce nuclear weapons and immediately open the Strait of Hormuz, as also demanded” by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Wadephul said.

In recent days, Wadephul and other German officials have been trying to ease a spat between US President Donald Trump and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. Merz said that Iran was “humiliating” US at the negotiating table, which provoked angry responses from. — AFP

KUWAITI STUDENTS BACK TO IN-PERSON CLASSES



Secondary school students wave the Kuwaiti flag as they gather in the grounds of the Fajr al Sabah School to attend in-person classes in Kuwait City. High school students resumed in-person classes after a suspension of more than two months following military strikes launched by the US and Israel against Iran that killed its supreme leader, triggering a war that spread across the Middle East and prompting the Kuwaiti Education Ministry to implement remote learning for students. — AFP

Israel strikes southern Lebanon, kills one and wounds rescuers

BEIRUT: Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon killed at least one person and wounded four rescuers on Sunday, the Lebanese health ministry said, as Israel maintained its attacks on the country despite a fragile truce in its war with Hezbollah. In separate statements, the ministry said the a strike on Arabsalim killed at least one person and wounded three, including a child, and another strike on Srafa wounded five people including four rescuers from the Hezbollah-affiliated Islamic Health Committee, as the strike hit near one of their centres. “The Ministry reiterates its condemnation of these repeated attacks and recalls what is included in Article 19 of the Geneva Convention regarding the need to verify that medical facilities are safe from any danger caused by attacks in conflict zones, while what is happening is exactly the opposite.”

Israel's military on Sunday issued new evacuation warnings in southern Lebanon for villages beyond the area it occupies. The warning covers more than 10 villages and towns including several in the district of Nabatieh, which lies north of the Litani River, south of which Israel has stationed troops. Arabsalim and Srafa were included in the warning. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported a series of Israeli strikes across southern Lebanon, including on towns not mentioned in the evacuation warning.

Since April 17 a fragile ceasefire has been in place between Israel and Lebanon, which was aimed at pausing the violence between Hezbollah and Israel's military. On Wednesday Israel's military chief of staff Eyal Zamir had threatened to



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Mayfadoun. — AFP

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strike Hezbollah “beyond the yellow line”, which marks the area of Israeli control. “Any threat, anywhere, against our communities or our forces — including beyond the Yellow Line and north of the Litani — will be eliminated,” he said during a visit to Israeli troops. The ceasefire text grants Israel the right to act against “planned, imminent or ongoing attacks”.

In the past week two soldiers and an army contractor have been killed by drone attacks in the area, with dozens of soldiers wounded. Hezbollah has recently begun using cheap drones controlled by fibre-optic cable, making them largely immune to electronic jamming, to conduct daily attacks. These drones have a range of several dozen kilometres, which puts Israeli troops

in Lebanon and communities in northern Israel under threat.

The group on Monday said it targeted Israeli troops in Bayada, southern Lebanon, with a drone in response to Israel's “violation” of the ceasefire. The United States has called for direct peace negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, but Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called on Wednesday for Israel to fully implement the ceasefire before the talks can take place. Hezbollah is strongly opposed to direct talks, with lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah saying on Sunday that the group was “capable of thwarting all the objectives of these negotiations, which increase the sharp division in the country between the factions of our people and within the state itself”. — AFP

M I D D L E E A S T L A T E S T D E V E L O P M E N T S

FLOTILLA ACTIVISTS APPEAR IN COURT

Two foreign activists from a Gaza-bound flotilla who were brought to Israel for interrogation appeared before an Israeli court, a rights group defending them said.

ISRAEL ISSUES WARNING IN LEBANON

Israel's military issued new evacuation warnings in southern Lebanon for villages beyond the area it occupies, despite a truce with Lebanon intended to halt fighting with Hezbollah.

IRAN PLANS WAR MUSEUM

Iranian authorities plan to turn a bomb site at a university in central Iran into a museum about the impact of US-Israeli strikes, an official said.

US NUMBERS IN GERMANY TO WITHDRAW

US President Donald Trump said the United States would withdraw more troops from Germany than was previously announced by the Pentagon.

GERMAN FERTILISER MAKERS STRUGGLE

As Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz roils the global economy, a German town has been scrambling to help make up the shortfall in essential supplies of fertilisers.

TRUMP CASTS DOUBT

Trump said he would review a new Iranian peace deal but cast doubt over its prospects, as Iranian media reported Tehran had submitted a 14-point proposal to mediator Pakistan.

THREE KILLED IN LEBANON

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said Israeli strikes across southern Lebanon killed three people in Sammayeh in the Tyre district.

ISRAEL DAMAGES CONVENT

A Catholic charity condemned what it called the “deliberate act of destruction against a place of worship” after a convent was damaged by Israeli forces in Lebanon.

GERMAN FM DEMANDS HORMUZ REOPENING

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul demanded that Iran reopen the Strait of Hormuz in a telephone call with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi.

FRESH CONFLICT WITH US ‘LIKELY’

A senior Iranian military officer said on Saturday that renewed fighting with the US was “likely”, hours after President Donald Trump said he was not satisfied with an Iranian negotiating proposal.

OPINION

Financial literacy key to preparing students for future



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

ONE OF THE most oft-repeated concerns in education today is that it is not preparing students for the challenges of the future.

Based on traditional learning styles and content, education still focuses on bookish knowledge, instead of how to exactly use that knowledge in the real world outside the classroom.

An important skill that should be taught from an early age is financial responsibility. This needs to be specifically taught from middle school onwards to inculcate a sustainable and positive relationship of the individual with the world of finance.

Financial education will equip students with the skills to enable them to make informed and responsible decisions about money.

At its most basic, it helps people understand and value financial independence and confidence. It teaches children how to budget and spend wisely. This could reduce the chances of falling into debt or suffering financial stress in the future.

At any time in history, financial planning is challenging, but today, the challenges

are manifold. In addition to existing stress points of urban living and an unpredictable job market, there are additional issues of easy credit and aspirational lifestyles that impact youngsters. Knowing when and how to leverage economic comfort will go a long way in ensuring financial comfort and confidence.

Financial education also encourages responsible consumption. People become more aware of the difference between needs and wants, and this will automatically lead to more thoughtful spending, avoiding impulsive buying to some extent.

Such a mindset will promote stability, not only for individuals but also for families and communities, contributing to a healthier and more sustainable economy.

When people know how to manage their income effectively, they are better prepared to handle unexpected expenses and plan for long-term goals such as higher education, family responsibilities, or retirement.

Schools should play a more central role in introducing financial education in a structured and systematic way. This would entail gradual sharing of information across all levels, combining theoretical with

Schools should play a more central role in introducing financial education in a structured and systematic way

practical learning opportunities.

Rather than treating it as a separate subject, financial literacy can be integrated into existing curricula, including mathematics and social studies. This approach will help students see the practical relevance of what they are learning.

For example, finance can be an interactive teaching game. Activities like participating in mock stock market investing or savings challenges will provide a context for students to experience the pitfalls and opportunities of real-world scenarios. Such a simulation will also make abstract concepts more concrete, immediate and relevant to their social context.

Part of financial literacy today also includes awareness of digital tools and applications for tasks such as budgeting and tracking long-term goals.

Even though technology will inevitably develop and change, awareness will give confidence to students to continue to learn about such platforms.

Financial education is not only important to students but also to the community, which will benefit from a well-informed and confident generation.

VENDOR CURBS PUSH STREET FOOD OUT

MONTIRA RUNGJIRAJITTRANON

Across Bangkok, aromas of garlic, chilli and grilled meat drift from roadside stalls and carts, but tighter controls on vendors threaten livelihoods and the street food culture that defines the Thai capital.

Convenient, full of flavour and popular among locals and tourists alike, Bangkok’s street food is one of the city’s signatures - where sizzling woks and smoky charcoal grills turn boulevards and sidewalks into open-air kitchens from morning until late at night.

But many street sellers in the foodie paradise face an uncertain future as the Bangkok government in recent years has moved to clear footpaths, improve order and relocate vendors from curbsides in packed commercial districts to designated market stalls.

“I am worried because we are here illegally,” said Looknam Sinwirakit, who was once fined \$30 for obstructing the street while selling 50-baht fried glutinous rice cakes in the capital’s Chinatown.

One of Bangkok’s busiest tourist areas, the neighbourhood’s steady flow of customers is worth the risk of city fines, Looknam, 45, said.

“Vendors need to earn a living,” she said. “It’s not fair just to evict us, but if they tell us to (leave) then we have to.”

Nearby, durian seller Wong Jaidee, who has sold the strong-smelling fruit for more than two decades, said he also feared being made to move.

“I don’t have any backup plan,” the 56-year-old said. “Bangkok is a high-priced city and we may not be able to cope.”

Since 2022, the estimated number of mobile vendors in the city has fallen by more than 60 per cent, with around 10,000 fewer now on the streets, according to data from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA).

While dozens have moved to informal markets and hawker centres - using a model similar to Singapore, where food vendors are grouped in designated locations - many others have simply closed their business due to the stricter regulations or because they were no longer profitable, said BMA official Kunanop Lertpraiwan.

The municipality has mostly targeted vendors crowding main roads with heavy pedestrian foot traffic, while those on side streets and in areas popular with backpackers and other tourists were allowed more flexibility, Kunanop said.

“We give them time and communicate with them clearly,” he said, adding that some sellers were given several months to find a new location. “It’s not like we will move them tomorrow.”

The city is pushing more vendors to set up shop in one of five hawker centres opened in recent years - the latest in April beside Bangkok’s popular Lumpini Park. — AFP

Rediscovering humility and coexistence

OFTEN find myself asking a simple question. Why do conversations about faith turn tense so quickly?

When the conversation slows and people really listen, another picture begins to appear. It feels quieter, more grounded, and far less confrontational.

Are people of faith really that far apart, or do they simply forget how close they already stand?

At its heart, faith points beyond the self. It speaks of a Creator, a source of meaning, and the belief that life matters and that choices carry weight.

Many people across different traditions share this understanding, even if they describe it in different ways. This shared ground comes up often when people talk about faith, but it rarely shapes how those conversations unfold.

Why does humility disappear so quickly once debate begins? If faith teaches anything, it teaches humility. It reminds people that the ego does not sit at the centre, and raised voices rarely carry wisdom.

Prayer shows this more clearly than long explanations ever could. People pray in different ways and with different forms, but the moment itself feels familiar.

It is a pause from noise, a step back from distraction, and a quiet search for guidance, calm, and clarity. In prayer, people admit that they do not have all the answers and that they need help beyond themselves. Is that not one of the most honest human moments?

Many recent reflections describe prayer and spiritual discipline as habits that slow people down and steady their reactions. Prayer teaches patience before it invites opinion, and it softens responses long before it tries to soften anyone else’s views.

Faith also shows itself through discipline. Times of fasting, reflection, or restraint appear



DR KHALFAN HAMED AL HARRASI

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across traditions, sometimes even overlapping in the calendar.

These moments invite people to step back from excess, notice the needs of others, and practise self control. When many people move through these periods at the same time, something subtle happens in society.

Is it surprising that there is often more patience, more awareness, and sometimes a little more kindness? These shared rhythms rarely attract attention, yet they shape behaviour in ways arguments never do.

What matters most, however, is not what people say they believe, but how faith appears in everyday life. Character matters and the way someone speaks to parents.

The way they treat those who struggle. Whether they deal honestly. Whether they choose forgiveness when holding on to anger would feel easier. Are these not the real tests of faith? These are the places where faith becomes real. Not in arguments, but in behaviour.

Many conversations about faith and coexistence return to this point for a reason. When people focus on living decently rather than arguing constantly, faith brings steadiness rather than tension.

People of different faiths work side by side, share streets and workplaces, raise families, and carry similar worries and hopes.

They stand by each other during illness, loss and hardship. In many communities, people also serve together through charity, volunteering, or simple acts of neighbourly care.

Why do these stories receive so little attention? These shared efforts build trust quietly. They rarely make headlines, but they carry far more meaning than loud disputes ever will.

Problems tend to surface when faith drifts away from its purpose.

Many recent reflections point out that pride, or pressure around identity, often creates more tension than faith itself. When faith turns into something to defend rather than something to practise, something important slips away.

Does strong faith really need constant defence? Strong faith shows itself through restraint, patience and dignity.

The world does not need more faith-based victories. It needs more faith-shaped character. It needs people who listen before they react, who pause before they judge, and who trust that faith can stand on its own without noise or hostility. Someone who feels secure in faith does not feel threatened by the faith of others.

Faith already gives people their own answers. The better question is simpler and more honest. Is our faith making us kinder, fairer and more careful with one another?

If the answer leans toward yes, faith is doing what it was always meant to do, and that is how bridges begin to form.

A journey that brought the nation closer



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author,
translator and
communications
professional

THERE ARE journeys that move across land, and there are journeys that move through a nation's understanding of itself. The recent tour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik across Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South governorates belongs to the latter. It was not simply a physical movement, but an intentional act of presence — a moment that carries meaning beyond distance and direction.

At their core, these visits reaffirm a fundamental principle: governance is not only exercised from a distance, but strengthened through proximity. In a world where leadership can often feel distant from everyday realities, such tours restore a sense of connection. They remind citizens that authority is not separate from them, but engaged with them — built as much on trust as on structure.

This connection is not symbolic alone; it has practical significance. As Oman continues its path towards long-term development, the challenge is not only to plan, but to ensure that progress reflects the realities of all governorates. Field visits play a crucial role in this process. They bring leadership closer to lived experiences, ensuring that national strategies are informed by what is seen, heard and understood on the ground. In this way, they form a bridge between vision and reality. Proximity, in turn, reshapes how

governance is perceived and practiced. Decisions are no longer distant abstractions, and their consequences become more immediate and visible. A road under construction is not just a project on paper, but a space encountered directly. Community needs are no longer generalised concerns, but human experiences that leave a lasting impression. These encounters narrow the gap between policy and outcome, making governance more responsive and grounded. Beyond policy and development, these visits communicate something less tangible but equally important. There is a language conveyed through presence itself — through attention, time and the act of being there. It is a language that does not rely on words, yet carries a clear message: people are seen and acknowledged.

From this recognition emerges a deeper form of loyalty. It is not imposed or requested, but naturally formed. It reflects a shared understanding that leadership and society are part of the same journey, moving forward together. In this sense, the tours do not seek to inspire loyalty through declaration; they cultivate it through connection.

What remains after such visits is not only their immediate impact, but the memory they create. A visit becomes more than an event; it becomes a moment of recognition that endures. To be recognised is to feel included, and to feel included is to matter. These moments accumulate into a broader sense

The recent tour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik across Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South governorates was not simply a physical movement, but an intentional act of presence — a moment that carries meaning beyond distance and direction

of belonging, reinforcing the idea that the nation's progress is a collective effort. This is where the deeper significance of these journeys becomes clear. They contribute to a shared confidence that the country is not advancing in isolation, but through alignment between leadership and people. Government and society are not moving on separate paths, but walking forward together. There is also something essentially powerful about leadership in motion. Away from formal settings and structured environments, governance takes on a more immediate and human dimension. It becomes visible, tangible and direct. In these moments, the distance between leadership and daily life fades, and a different kind of engagement emerges — one shaped by presence rather than procedure. Ultimately, these tours are not ceremonial in nature, but meaningful in essence. They reflect an approach to governance that values understanding as much as planning. While reports and data provide necessary insight, they cannot fully replace the clarity that comes from direct experience. In this way, such journeys do more than mark movement across governorates — they reinforce a way of governing that remains closely connected to the people it serves. And sometimes, that connection is what renews a nation, not by changing its direction, but by strengthening the bond between where it is going and who it moves with.

JAPAN EYES SLICE OF RISING GLOBAL DEFENCE SPENDING

HIROSHI HIYAMA AND JULIEN GIRAULT

Long-pacifist Japan has shed its self-imposed ban on lethal weaponry exports, gunning for a prominent place in the global defence trade - a challenging feat that analysts say could take years to achieve.

Under Japan's once-strict stance adopted following its World War II surrender and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it has generally restricted arms exports in recent times to non-lethal categories like rescue, transport and surveillance.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's government scrapped these constraints last month, allowing firms to supply lethal weaponry to any of the 17 countries where Japan has defence cooperation agreements. Prohibitions on sales to nations at war remain but can be circumvented under special circumstances.

Five Japanese firms, including Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Kawasaki Heavy Industries, are already in the top 100 global defence companies, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

But they have largely lived off domestic demand from Japan's military, often in cooperation with US defence firms. Analysts say a focus on high-tech sectors could help the transition, but caution that it could take years for defence exports to become a big contributor to economic growth, hampered by capacity and workforce shortages.

Bloomberg Intelligence analyst Ian Ma said it was a "transition from a domestic, ministry-led procurement model to a normal practice which companies could drive business opportunities just like other global companies are doing."

He added that as newcomers on the global market, Japanese firms should focus on "higher-tech niches" like naval and propulsion systems, advanced missiles, sensors and electronics.

With conflicts raging around the world, the international defence market is huge and fast growing, soaring by 41 per cent between 2016 and 2025 to almost \$3 trillion, according to SIPRI.

While Japanese firms may only export to 17 countries, those include some of the world's biggest defence spenders like the United States, Germany, India and Britain. Evolutions in technology and the way wars are fought - notably with drones - are also making the global arms market more diffuse, which could benefit Japan, according to analysts at the Stimson Center.

Along with a steep decline in Russian arms exports, Washington's "increasingly unpredictable, extractive, and at times confrontational approach" has also pushed importers to seek alternatives to the United States, the Stimson Center said in a research note. "Though the trend remains nascent, for Japan, the wandering eyes of traditional US defence partners could add to the demand for the sorts of sophisticated capabilities Tokyo is well-prepared to offer." — AFP

More Nepalis drive electric, evading global fuel shocks

AS global fuel markets reel from the Middle East war, motorists in Nepal are increasingly turning to electric vehicles, with high demand putting a strain on dealerships.

Electric microbus driver Purushottam Adhikari said he was now shuttling more passengers along the 300-km journey between his town in Chitwan district and the capital Kathmandu.

"My profession is not affected (by the conflict)," said the 48-year-old, who drives his 18-seater Chinese-made e-van along Nepal's highways daily. "In fact, more people are choosing EVs."

Soaring global oil prices and fuel supply disruption since Iran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz have led to long queues at gas stations in countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan, but Nepal has largely avoided the worst of the crisis.

"One of the main reasons is the increased penetration of electric vehicles on Nepal's roads," alternative energy expert Govind Raj Pokharel said.

The country of 30 million people has an estimated 50,000 EVs, still a small fraction of the total 6.2 million motor vehicles, but a figure officials expect would keep increasing.

The price of petrol in Nepal, which imports all of its gasoline, has nearly doubled since the war began in late February with US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

While transport fares have gone up, Adhikari said that his prices remain unchanged at Rs 700 (\$4.60) for a one-way trip in his Joylong A6, which in turn costs \$8 for a full recharge.

A full tank for a similar diesel vehicle would have cost "more than \$66", he said.

An expanding network of charging stations along major highways has made long-distance electric travel increasingly viable.

Boarding Adhikari's van, 20-year-old Susmita Bishowkarma said she prefers to travel in EVs because they are "environmentally friendly...



An electric microbus driver charges his vehicle at a charging station in Kathmandu on Sunday. — AFP



ANUP
OJHA

The writer is an experienced journalist for AFP based in Kathmandu

The Himalayan nation imported more than 13,500 EVs between mid-2024 and mid-2025 — double that of petrol vehicles and a sharp rise from just seven a decade ago, government data shows

comfortable and comparatively cheap". Buoyed by a surge in hydropower generation and a greener electric grid than neighbouring India and Bangladesh, Nepal has emerged as one of the world's fastest adopters of EVs.

The Himalayan nation imported more than 13,500 EVs between mid-2024 and mid-2025 - double that of petrol vehicles and a sharp rise from just seven a decade ago, government data shows.

Fume-free taxis and cars manufactured in China are a common sight in Kathmandu, with traffic officials estimating that up to 60 per cent of minibuses entering the city from key routes are now electric.

Customs department spokesman Kishor Bartaula said the number of EVs would rise further with hundreds awaiting clearance at Nepal's ports. In line with its clean energy policy, the government is seeking to replace some 10,000 vehicles damaged during anti-corruption protests last year with EVs, finance ministry spokesman Amrit Lamsal said.

Concerns that the ongoing conflict in the Middle East could prolong

global fuel uncertainty are also influencing consumer behaviour. Shraban Bhattari, 49, who recently bought a BYD Atto-2, said the Chinese-made car is saving him daily fuel expenses.

"I no longer need to go to the petrol pump," he said.

In April, the government approved a legal framework to allow people to convert their petrol and diesel vehicles into electric ones, known as "retrofitting".

But EV dealers said they were struggling to meet demand. "It is getting challenging to meet the demand," said Ritima Pandey, customer relations officer at Venture Motors.

"As the price of diesel has gone up, many people are coming to trade in fuel vehicles for EV vans."

Schools and colleges are also exploring electric fleet purchases, dealer Dinesh Raj Pandeya said, signalling a shift beyond individual commuters.

Energy expert Pokharel urged policymakers to build on the momentum by encouraging domestic EV manufacturing and assembly.

"This will give us a long-term solution," he said.

SPORTS

SEEB TIGHTEN TITLE GRIP; SOHAR AND BAHLA DRAW

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT MAY 3

SOHAR AND Bahla opened round 23 of the Jindal League (JL) with a 1-1 draw at Sohar Sports Complex, before leaders Seeb moved closer to the league title with a dramatic 2-1 home win over Dhofar at Seeb Stadium.

At Sohar Sports Complex, the hosts made a brighter start and went ahead inside the opening 10 minutes when Saif al Dhabbari headed home from a cross by Saud al Maqbali. The early goal lifted Sohar, who continued to threaten, while Bahla gradually worked their way back into the contest through Majid al Shukaili and Karl Winda.

Just as Sohar looked set to carry their lead into the break, Bahla struck in first-half stoppage time. Majid al Shukaili slipped a pass through to his brother Abdulsalam al Shukaili, who fired home to make it 1-1.

Bahla looked the more dangerous side after the interval and created the better chances, but poor finishing and a strong display from the Sohar goalkeeper Majdi Shaaban denied them a second goal.

Sohar also had moments in attack, including a penalty appeal that was waved away, but neither side could find a winner. The draw lifted Sohar to 36 points in fifth place, while Bahla moved to 34 points in sixth.



Action from Seeb's 2-1 win over Dhofar in round 23 of the Jindal League.



A moment from Sohar's home draw against Bahla in the Jindal League.

LEADERS SEEB MOVE CLEAR

Later at Seeb Stadium, Seeb took another major step towards the title with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Dhofar to reach 60 points, while Dhofar remained on 21 points in ninth place.

The opening half was played at a high tempo, with Dhofar enjoying much of the early momentum through Hamoud al Saadi and Qasim Said, who kept pressure on Seeb's defence. The hosts, however, gradually settled and broke the deadlock in the 22nd minute when Omar al Fazari rose and first-time shot past Mazin al Kasbi.

The goal gave Seeb greater control, although Dhofar nearly equalised in first-half stoppage time when Hamoud al Saadi failed to convert from close range after meeting a cross from Qasim Said.

The second half began in lively fashion. Seeb missed an early chance to extend their lead before Dhofar drew level in the 56th minute, when a shot came back off the crossbar, and Mohammed al Mehri reacted quickest to turn the ball home with a bicycle kick.

Seeb were awarded a penalty in the 84th minute after a VAR review, but Mazin al Kasbi produced an excellent save to deny Nasser al Rawahi. There was still time for late drama, with Fahd al Mukhaini sent off for Seeb in stoppage time, but the leaders still found the winner when Al Rawahi drilled a low effort into the net deep in added time.

Nizwa extend lead as Seeb and Al Amerat register convincing wins

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT MAY 3

Nizwa maintained their lead at the top of the Athletes' Development Centres Basketball League after defeating Al Bashayer 54-32 in the fourth round of the 2025-2026 season.

Seeb also continued their chase with a convincing 57-29 win over Sohar Sports Complex Centre, while Al Amerat secured a strong 75-41 victory against Salalah. The matches were held at the sub-hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat.

With these results, Nizwa moved to eight points at the top of the standings, followed by Seeb in second place with seven points.

Al Amerat climbed to third with six points, while Al Bashayer and Salalah are level on four points each.



Players compete during the fourth round of the Athletes' Development Centres Basketball League at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat. — Ammar al Musafir

Sohar Sports Complex remained on three points.

Nizwa showed early authority in the opening match, combining quick transitions with accurate passing and strong finishing under the basket. They dominated the first quarter 23-4 before extending their lead to 37-15 by half-time.

Al Bashayer improved after the break and managed to reduce the gap in the third quarter, scoring eight points while limiting Nizwa to three.

However, Nizwa regained control in the final period, adding 14 points against nine to close the match 54-32.

Wail Ambosaidi and Hamza al Sabri led Nizwa's scoring with 10 points each, while Mutaz al Rashdi added nine and Nawaf Ambosaidi scored six.

For Al Bashayer, Ridha al

Riyami stood out with 14 points, while Elias al Busaidy added four.

In the second match, Seeb produced a disciplined display to overcome Sohar Sports Complex Centre 57-29. Seeb imposed their rhythm from the start, using tight defence and sharp attacking execution to win the first quarter 24-4. They remained in control in the second quarter and went into half-time ahead 39-13.

Sohar Sports Complex showed improvement in the third quarter performance, and its players managed to reduce the gap relatively by scoring 8 points compared to 5 points for Seeb. Seeb finished strongly in the fourth period, adding 13 points against eight to seal another important win. Saif al Mughairi was Seeb's leading scorer with 20 points, followed by Al Farooq al Hasani with 17.

For Sohar Sports Complex, Mohammed al Shezawi scored 12 points, while Omran al Shezawi added five. Al Amerat completed the day's action with a commanding 75-41 victory over Salalah. They began strongly, taking the first quarter 18-7, before maintaining their attacking rhythm to lead 40-24 at half-time.

The third quarter proved decisive as Al Amerat tightened its defence and held Salalah to only four points while scoring 18. They continued their superiority in the final quarter to complete a deserved win.

Abdulrahman Shamas and Laith al Kindi scored 13 points each for Al Amerat, while Moathir al Battashi and Al Yaman al Badi added nine points apiece. Fahad Sanjoor led Salalah with 24 points, supported by Murshid Abu Salasil with nine.

NBAPLAYOFFS



Khawla al Rawahi honours the top players at the conclusion of the Omani Women's Badminton Championship.

HIND AL RASHDI CLAIMS OMANI WOMEN'S BADMINTON TITLE

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 3

Hind al Rashdi was crowned champion of the 2026 Omani Women's Badminton Championship after delivering a technically strong performance in a competitive field at the sub-hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Shaikha al Mahtheori finished runner-up following a spirited campaign, while Hoor al Masrouri took third place and Maram al Bahri came fourth. The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Khawla al Rawahi, Director of the Women's Sports Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in the presence of Ruqaya al Omairi, board member of the Oman Racket Sports Committee. The tournament attracted 45 Omani players from different governorates and age categories from 15 years and above, reflecting the growing base of girls and women taking up badminton in the Sultanate of Oman. The event formed part of the Oman Badminton Championships and aimed to strengthen women's participation, identify promising talents and prepare players for future regional and international assignments. The competition began with a group-stage format before moving into the knockout rounds, giving players valuable match exposure and a stronger competitive platform. The event also stood out for being managed by an Omani women's officiating team, including chair umpires and line judges. Khawla al Rawahi said the allocation of a dedicated championship for Omani women was an important step by the Oman Racket Sports Committee. She praised the quality of organisation and officiating, noting that Omani women had shown their ability to contribute effectively both on and off the court. The final showed a good technical level and confirmed the progress of Omani players in badminton, she said, adding that the tournament reflected the committee's efforts to empower women in racket sports and widen their competitive opportunities. Ruqaya al Omairi, who also served as the tournament referee, said the championship was successful from both technical and organisational perspectives. She added that the presence of a full Omani women's refereeing team helped develop female officials and provided them with important practical experience.



GCC championship for ladies and Juniors held at Ghala Golf Club 2024. — File Picture

Faiz drives Oman golf growth under Vision 2040

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

OMAN HAS witnessed a clear and steady development in the sport of golf over the past two years, led by the Vice-Chairman of the Oman Golf Association (OGA), Faiz Mohammad Riyadh. This progress aligns closely with Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises youth empowerment, sporting excellence, and strengthening the Sultanate's international presence. The association's transformation is driven by a structured strategy focused on grassroots development, increased international participation, and improving competitive performance. These pillars have contributed to the growing recognition of Omani golf as an emerging force in the region. A key highlight of recent years has been the success of Oman's national teams in regional competitions. The teams achieved a historic milestone by winning the first-ever GCC Under-18 Gold Medal in Saudi Arabia. In addition, Omani golfers have secured multiple podium finishes across junior categories and maintained strong representation in GCC and regional championships, reflecting consistent progress in player development. Youth development remains at the core of the OGA's strategy. The association has invested in national training camps, structured coaching programs, and talent identification initiatives across the Sultanate. Participation of young players has significantly increased,



FAIZ MOHAMMAD RIYADH
Vice-President of the Golf Club Association



"We are proud of what our players have achieved, but more importantly, we are focused on building a system that produces champions for the future. This is only the beginning of Oman's journey in golf."

supported by long-term athlete development pathways designed to prepare future champions. These efforts directly support the objectives of Vision 2040 in empowering young Omanis through sport. Oman has also strengthened its position as a regional hub for golf by hosting major events such as the GCC Ladies and Junior Championships in Muscat, alongside other regional tournaments featuring international participation. These events provide valuable exposure for local athletes while enhancing Oman's visibility on the global sporting map.

In parallel, the OGA has expanded its international partnerships with regional and global golf bodies. These collaborations have created opportunities for Omani players to compete abroad, gain technical experience, and benefit from knowledge exchange programs. Such partnerships are considered essential for accelerating the technical and competitive development of players. Commenting on the progress, Faiz Mohammad Riyadh, Vice-Chairman of the Oman Golf Association, said: "Our vision is fully aligned with Oman Vision 2040, focusing on empowering youth, building a sustainable sporting ecosystem, and representing Oman with pride internationally. Golf is no longer just a sport; it has become a platform for national development and global recognition." He added: "We are proud of what our players have achieved, but more importantly, we are focused on building a system that produces champions for the future. This is only the beginning of Oman's journey in golf." Women's golf has also seen notable progress, with increased participation, improved representation in competitions, and inclusive development programs. This aligns with Vision 2040's emphasis on equality and providing opportunities for all. Looking ahead, the Oman Golf Association aims to further improve international performance, expand grassroots participation across the country, and continue developing a sustainable golf ecosystem that ensures long-term growth and success.

World Championship draw places Oman in a tough group

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
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Oman's national beach handball team has been drawn into a challenging group for the 12th IHF Beach Handball World Championship for men and women, scheduled to take place in Croatia from June 23 to 28, 2026, with the participation of 32 teams '16 men's and 16 women's teams'. The Asian champions have been placed in Group D alongside hosts Croatia, France, and Australia—widely regarded as one of the tournament's toughest groups due to the strength and experience of the European sides, as well as Australia's recent development. Oman entered the draw ranked in the third seeding pot. The tournament will be held



The beach handball team.

on open courts along Jarun Lake in Zagreb, bringing together elite teams from across the globe in what promises to be a highly competitive event. Group A includes Spain, Portugal, Iran (Asian runners-up) and

the United States, while Group B features Hungary, Denmark, Tunisia and Puerto Rico. Group C comprises Germany, Brazil, Argentina and Italy. The competition will begin with a preliminary round divided into

four groups, with the top three teams from each group advancing to the main round. The main round will then be split into two groups before progressing to the knockout stages, starting from the quarterfinals through to the final. In the women's competition, defending champions Germany were drawn in Group A alongside the Netherlands, Vietnam, and Uruguay, while the remaining groups include strong contenders such as Spain, Norway, Brazil, and Argentina. FEDERATION BOARD MEETING SET FOR TOMORROW As part of preparations for upcoming competitions, the Oman Handball Association's Board of Directors will convene tomorrow Tuesday, under the chairmanship

of Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, to discuss key matters related to the sport's development and future plans. The agenda will also include a review of technical and administrative reports from the team's recent participation in the 6th Asian Beach Games held in Sanya, China, in order to assess strengths and challenges and build on them moving forward. Additionally, the board will discuss the preparation program for the national youth indoor handball team, as well as the Competitions Committee's plan for the 2026/2027 season, aimed at enhancing domestic tournaments and raising the level of clubs and players. Financial matters and the operational plans of various committees will also be reviewed.

SPORTS

Lewandowski, Torres lift
FC Barcelona; Villarreal CF
seal UCL spot

BARCELONA
ON VERGE OF
LIGA TITLE,
VILLARREAL
SECURE
TOP FOUR



FC Barcelona's Dani Olmo shoots at goal from a free kick. — Reuters

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI AND FERRAN TORRES took Barcelona to the brink of the La Liga title with late goals to earn them a 2-1 win at Osasuna on Saturday.

Elsewhere, Villarreal guaranteed themselves a Champions League qualification spot with a 5-1 romp over Levante in La Liga.

Diego Simeone rotated his whole team with the Champions League in mind as Atletico Madrid defeated Valencia 2-0 at Mestalla. Catalan giants Barcelona moved 14 points clear of second-placed Real Madrid and will be crowned champions if their rivals drop points at Espanyol on Sunday. Lewandowski headed home after 81 minutes to break the deadlock, with Torres slotting in a second with four minutes to go.

Osasuna pulled one back through Raul Garcia late on but Barca secured the three points to close in on a second consecutive league title and a 29th in the club's history. If Real Madrid do defeat Espanyol, then Barcelona's next opportunity to clinch the title will be in the Clasico against their arch-rivals on May 10. "For me the important thing was that today we did our job, it's not in our hands what happens tomorrow," Flick told reporters. "It's like that. We have to wait — this is a good situation...

"If we win the title (by Madrid slipping up), we will also celebrate, I think it doesn't matter (how)."

Barca striker Torres said he would prefer for the title to be sewn up "as soon as possible".

"We've put the pressure on Madrid because tomorrow, if they don't win, then we really will be champions," Torres told DAZN. Barca's first half was that of a team perched on a comfortable cushion and the feeling of having little at stake.

Without the injured Lamine Yamal, Barca lose a lot of their dynamism, and although they had much the ball in the first half they found it hard to break down Osasuna to create clear chances. Osasuna had the best opening in the first period, forged by Croatian striker Ante Budimir all on his own, showing strength to hold off two defenders before prodding against the post.

Barcelona had a slightly higher tempo in the second half, particularly after Flick sent on winger Marcus Rashford to play on the right flank.

The Manchester United forward, on loan at Barca, curled narrowly over and offered a welcome injection of pace. Rashford created the opener with a perfect cross for Lewandowski, who took advantage of slack marking to find space and power a header home. Torres, another substitute, produced a clinical finish to double Barca's lead, but they were made to sweat through eight minutes of stoppage time after Garcia headed in for the hosts when left free in the box. The Catalans battled hard, thumping balls to safety as Osasuna turned the screw, but were eventually able to celebrate a 10th consecutive league win — and now they wait.

Flick said he was not going to watch Madrid's clash with Espanyol and instead he was considering going to see magician El Mago Pop. "I think it's the last day... maybe I go with my wife," said the coach.

UCL BOOKED

Marcelino's Villarreal, third, moved 18 points clear of fifth-place Real Betis, who have only five games left to play. Georges Mikautadze struck twice in the Yellow Submarine's derby victory, with Alberto

Moleiro, Tajon Buchanan and Nicolas Pepe also on target. Carlos

Espi netted for Levante, 19th, provisionally three points from safety and in severe danger of relegation, with Sevilla and Alaves above them still to play this weekend.

"Congratulations to each and every one of the players. Let's continue enjoying this moment," said Marcelino, poised to leave Villarreal at the end of the season according to Spanish reports. "Let's keep competing because we want to finish third."

Villarreal are five points clear of fourth-placed Atletico, who won at Valencia despite Simeone rotating all 11 players from the Champions League semi-final first leg 1-1 draw against Arsenal. This was match number 1000 for Simeone in his coaching career, but he was thinking more about 1001, in London on Tuesday against Mikel Arteta's Premier League leaders.

Youngsters Iker Luque and Miguel Cubo struck second-half goals for Atletico, with defeated Valencia, 13th, only five points clear of the relegation zone. — AFP



FC Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters



FC Barcelona's Ferran Torres celebrates scoring their second goal. — Reuters



Vinicius Jr disappointed as Real Madrid suffer defeat

SHORTTAKES



The measures apply to a single basic account from May through August 2026.

APSR CUTS RESIDENTIAL POWER TARIFFS FOR SUMMER

MUSCAT: The Public Services Regulatory Authority (APSR) has introduced temporary reductions in residential electricity tariffs to ease the impact of higher consumption during the summer months.

The measures apply to a single basic account from May through August 2026 and are aimed at supporting households during periods of peak demand driven by high temperatures.

Under the revised tariff structure, a 15 per cent discount will apply in May for consumption between 0 and 4,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh), 10 per cent for usage between 4,001 and 6,000 kWh; and 5 per cent for consumption exceeding 6,000 kWh. The discounts increase during June, July and August, reaching 20 per cent, 15 per cent and 10 per cent respectively across the same usage bands.

— ONA

Opec+ to agree on third oil hike

LONDON: The Opec+ is poised to approve a third consecutive monthly increase in oil output quotas, although the move is expected to have limited immediate impact as the ongoing US-Iran conflict 2026 continues to disrupt regional supply routes.

Sources indicate that seven core producers — Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Algeria, Kazakhstan, Russia and Oman — are set to raise combined production targets by around 188,000 barrels per day (bpd) in June. The planned increase follows similar adjustments in recent months and



A 3D printed oil pump jack is seen in front of displayed Opec logo in this picture. — Reuters

signals the group's readiness to restore supply once conditions stabilise.

However, the continued closure of the Strait of Hormuz — a critical artery for global oil shipments — has severely constrained

exports from key Gulf producers.

Since the outbreak of hostilities on February 28, flows from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have been significantly curtailed, limiting the practical effect of any quota increases.

Market participants suggest that even if transit through Hormuz resumes, it could take weeks or months for supply chains to normalise fully.

As a result, the latest production hike is widely viewed as a strategic signal rather than a near-term supply boost. — Reuters

Power output surges 15.6%

MUSCAT: Oman's electricity sector recorded strong growth by the end of March 2026, reflecting rising demand across residential, commercial and industrial segments.

Preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed total electricity production increased by 16 per cent to 10,544 gigawatt-hours (GWh), compared to 9,091.4 GWh during the same period in 2025.

The expansion underscores sustained consumption trends linked to economic activity and seasonal requirements. Net electricity production — which includes purchases by the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company and the Rural Areas Electricity Company — rose by 15.6 per cent to 10,216.1 GWh, up from 8,840.5 GWh a year earlier.



The expansion underscores sustained consumption trends linked to economic activity and seasonal requirements.

This indicator points to tangible increases in end-user demand and grid utilisation. By contrast, water production declined by 2.8 per cent to 118,412.6 million cubic metres.

Muscat Governorate posted the largest contraction, with output falling 5.2 per cent to 46,259 million cubic metres, down from 48,787.4 million cubic

metres. Production across other governorates also dropped by 2.4 per cent to 53,206.1 million cubic metres.

However, Dhofar Governorate recorded a 2.5 per cent increase to 18,947.5 million cubic metres, indicating improved supply conditions or shifting seasonal demand patterns.

— ONA

Khazaen Economic City secures car assembly deal

KHAZAEN

Economic City has signed an agreement with

China's Spruce Group to establish a modern car assembly and production centre, reinforcing its appeal as a destination for foreign investment.

The initiative aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in advancing economic diversification and strengthening high-value industrial sectors.

The project is expected to add depth to Oman's manufacturing base, especially within the automotive segment. It will incorporate advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence and robotics, while adhering to environmental standards through the production of electric and hybrid vehicles.

The facility will target markets across the Middle East and Africa, supporting the expansion of Omani industrial exports. In its initial phase, the project



The project is expected to add depth to Oman's manufacturing base, especially within the automotive segment.

Annual production capacity is projected at between 2,899 and 3,218 vehicles, highlighting the scale of the investment and its contribution to economic output.

will provide training for 20 Omani nationals, contributing to workforce development and knowledge transfer. It is also expected to stimulate the creation of a broader automotive ecosystem, including spare parts and component manufacturing such as spark plugs and oil filters, thereby enhancing the “Made in Oman”

value chain. Annual production capacity is projected at between 2,899 and 3,218 vehicles, highlighting the scale of the investment and its contribution to economic output. Khazaen's strategic location and infrastructure position it as a competitive logistics hub for regional and international vehicle exports. — ONA



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender:-

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (ر.ع.)
NESC/2026/011	Provide Promotional Items	17/05/2026	24/05/2026	Specialist	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -					
Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.				
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om , using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.				
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.				
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of not less than Ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.				
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - A certificate confirming Omanization achievement, bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization. - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.				
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.				



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ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Sector Day highlights OETC’s position as a key enabler of the energy sector and one of the main pillars of national development.

OETC CELEBRATES 21 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND GROWTH

MUSCAT: The Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) celebrated 21 years since its establishment and its journey in developing and operating the national electricity grid, which has formed one of the fundamental pillars supporting the energy system and development landscape in Oman.

The company continues to play its pivotal role in the sector by adopting the latest technologies, innovative solutions and best practices in managing the electricity grid, contributing to enhancing the stability of the power system and supporting the comprehensive development journey across various sectors in the country.

Sector Day, which falls on the first of May each year, highlights OETC’s position as a key enabler of the energy sector and one of the main pillars of national development. The company has succeeded in building an electricity network characterised by high levels of reliability, safety and sustainability, ranking among the most reliable networks in the region.

OETC concluded the previous year with a reliability rate of 99.9994%, in accordance with the highest global standards in operation and maintenance, supported by more than 116 power stations operating efficiently. The network is also witnessing significant expansion through strategic and high-impact projects aimed at reaching all parts of the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting the growth, resilience and capacity of the transmission infrastructure to meet increasing development demands.

The company is also continuing the implementation of a range of strategic projects, including interconnection and expansion initiatives, which contribute to reducing reliance on diesel fuel and lowering carbon emissions.

These efforts further enhance the integration of renewable energy projects, supporting national targets to increase the contribution of renewable energy to 30% by 2030 and achieve Net-Zero emissions by 2050.

In line with the transition towards clean energy, OETC is implementing several projects to connect renewable energy sources from wind and solar power, with total capacities of 1,220 MW for wind energy and 500 MW for solar energy. These initiatives are expected to significantly reduce carbon emissions by more than 1.9 million tons annually.

Bank Muscat strengthens partnership with OHB

AS part of its continued commitment to supporting national priorities and enhancing the social and economic wellbeing of Omani citizens, Bank Muscat has announced a strategic partnership with Oman Housing Bank to provide accessible housing finance solutions under the “Iskan” programme.

Building on its leading position in the banking sector, Bank Muscat has continued to play an active role in supporting citizens’ housing needs through a range of financing initiatives designed to facilitate home ownership in a more structured and sustainable manner.

The bank’s approach combines prudent credit practices with customer-centric banking solutions, ensuring a balance between responsible financing and meeting the evolving needs of the community.

This partnership reflects the shared vision of Bank Muscat and Oman Housing Bank to enhance access to housing, support government efforts to improve quality of life and contribute to the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly those related to inclusive growth and the development of sustainable communities.

The agreement was signed by Ahmed bin Faqir al Bulushi, Deputy Chief Executive Officer — Banking at Bank Muscat and Moosa bin Masoud al Jadidi, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Housing Bank, at OHB’s headquarters.

Under this initiative, Bank Muscat will provide housing finance to eligible beneficiaries enrolled in the Iskan programme who choose Bank Muscat to complete their financing procedures.

This partnership enables a wider segment of citizens on waiting lists to realise their aspiration of home ownership.

The programme offers financing of up



Bank Muscat has continued to play an active role in supporting citizens’ housing needs.

to RO 80,000 for housing projects within integrated Cites and up to RO 60,000 for other housing projects, with flexible repayment tenures of up to 25 years, in line with the bank’s approved credit policies.

Eligible citizens can utilise the Iskan digital platform to complete the registration process. Oman Housing Bank will upload beneficiary lists based on defined priorities and notify eligible individuals via SMS when their turn approaches, providing a direct link that allows applicants to seamlessly proceed with their housing finance application.

Commenting on the partnership, Ahmed bin Faqir al Bulushi, Deputy Chief Executive Officer — Banking at Bank Muscat, said: “We are pleased to collaborate with Oman Housing Bank in delivering housing finance

solutions under the Iskan programme, which represents one of the key national initiatives to support citizens in achieving home ownership.

At Bank Muscat, we remain focused on providing impactful financial solutions that contribute to social stability and long-term economic development.

This partnership embodies our commitment to supporting government initiatives and expanding access to housing finance through flexible and responsible lending solutions”.

For his part, Moosa al Jadidi, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Housing Bank, stated that the partnership marks an important step in expanding the reach and enhancing the efficiency of the Iskan programme.

OAB signs strategic MoU with United Finance

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with United Finance Company (UFC), marking a strategic collaboration aimed at advancing customer-centric financial solutions through the adoption of the e-Mandate facility. The agreement was signed during an official ceremony between Sulaiman al Harthy, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Arab Bank and Nasser bin Salim al Rashdi, Chief Executive Officer of United Finance Company.

The partnership reflects a shared ambition to simplify financial processes and elevate the customer experience by enabling secure, automated payment solutions. By leveraging the e-Mandate framework, both institutions will work together to introduce more efficient and transparent mechanisms for managing recurring payments, empowering customers with greater control



The agreement was signed by Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of Oman Arab Bank and Nasser bin Salim al Rashdi, CEO of United Finance.

and convenience in meeting their financial commitments.

This collaboration builds on Oman Arab Bank’s broader digital transformation journey, which focuses on strengthening

financial infrastructure and expanding the scope of smart banking services across the Sultanate of Oman. Through partnerships that prioritise innovation and operational efficiency, the Bank continues to drive meaningful enhancements in how customers interact with financial services, while supporting the evolving needs of both individuals and businesses.

Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, said, “Our partnership with United Finance reflects our ongoing commitment to building meaningful collaborations that deliver practical value to our customers. By enabling the e-Mandate facility, we are not only simplifying payment processes, but also creating a more seamless and connected digital experience. This initiative reinforces our vision of developing a financial ecosystem that is responsive, efficient and centred around customer needs”.

BankDhofar holds ‘Coffee with Numo’ to strengthen relationships with SMEs

MUSCAT: BankDhofar has organised the “Coffee with Numo” event, a new initiative aimed at enhancing communication and building stronger relationships with the bank’s small and medium enterprise (SME) clients.

The initiative forms part of the bank’s ongoing efforts to support this vital sector and promote its growth and sustainability.

During the event, Adnan bin Mohsin al Balushi, Head of Numo SME Banking, highlighted key banking solutions, features and specialised services offered by the bank to meet the evolving needs of SMEs. He emphasised BankDhofar’s commitment to its role as a strategic partner in empowering entrepreneurs and supporting the expansion of their businesses.

Al Balushi noted that the event underscores the bank’s keenness



The initiative forms part of the bank’s ongoing efforts to support this vital sector and promote its growth and sustainability.

to strengthen partnerships with the SME sector and support the business environment in the Sultanate of Oman, in line with its strategic direction to contribute to sustainable economic development.

The event also provided a platform for open dialogue, with bank officials engaging directly with participants to gather feedback, insights and practical experiences.

This interaction supports the continuous enhancement of banking services and the delivery of solutions aligned with market needs and challenges.

The event featured two SME entrepreneurs who shared their journeys in establishing and growing their businesses, as well as the challenges they encountered along the way. They highlighted the pivotal role played by BankDhofar — particularly through its financial

and advisory support — in helping them achieve their business goals.

Earlier this year, BankDhofar officially launched its dedicated SME banking brand, “Numo”, reflecting its strong commitment to supporting this vital sector. Numo aims to accompany entrepreneurs at every stage of their business journey — from idea development to accessing regional and global markets — by offering an integrated suite of specialised banking solutions tailored to SME needs. The initiative seeks to position SMEs as a key driver of growth within Oman’s economic landscape.

Numo offers a comprehensive range of digital banking solutions, enabling entrepreneurs to manage their finances flexibly from anywhere, alongside instant transfer services and efficient payroll processing.

SHORTTAKES



The event also recognised recipients of the 2025 Trade Union Award.

WORKERS’ DAY
HIGHLIGHTS LABOUR
PROGRESS IN OMAN

MUSCAT: The General Federation of Oman Workers marked International Workers’ Day with a ceremony reaffirming the importance of trade unions in enhancing labour conditions across the private sector. The event also recognised recipients of the 2025 Trade Union Award and was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

Speaking at the event, Chairman Nabhan bin Ahmed al Batashi said Oman’s recent economic and developmental progress reflects the effectiveness of national strategies aimed at building a diversified and sustainable economy. He emphasised that economic growth must translate into improved living standards, job security and social stability for workers. The federation launched a media campaign to promote stronger social protection systems, with particular focus on safeguarding workers against termination and ensuring stability during periods of unemployment. The ceremony also reviewed key achievements and indicators from the federation’s 2025 annual report, alongside the unveiling of the artwork “Oman’s Arms”.

The ceremony also reviewed key achievements and indicators from the federation’s 2025 annual report, alongside the unveiling of the artwork “Oman’s Arms”. In addition, cooperation agreements were signed with Petroleum Development Oman and a memorandum of understanding with Oman Energy Society (OPAL), highlighting the role of dialogue between employers and labour representatives. The number of labour unions in Oman reached around 340 by the end of 2025. — ONA

Why Oman needs a new energy architecture

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 3

OMAN’S next phase of growth will hinge not just on how much energy it produces, but on how effectively that energy is delivered and aligned with economic activity. Industry experts Jasim Alyamani, a strategic tech executive and Dr Abdullah al Abri, Vice President of Sustainability at SOHAR Port and Freezone, argue that this requires a shift away from traditional energy planning towards a more flexible, location-specific “energy architecture”.

Writing in The Majan Council newsletter, the authors note that Oman’s energy system has evolved significantly over time. Early efforts were largely supply-driven, focused on expanding generation, transmission and fuel availability. This later matured into a more balanced national model that integrated supply and demand through forecasting and coordinated planning.

While effective thus far, they stress that this approach is no longer sufficient for a more complex and diversified economy.

As Oman expands into advanced manufacturing, logistics and cleaner industries, energy demand is becoming more concentrated and variable.

Nowhere is this more visible than in industrial clusters such as SOHAR Port and Freezone and Salalah Port and Freezone, where large-scale industry, port operations and logistics activity are tightly integrated.

These environments place specific and often time-sensitive demands on energy systems that broad national planning alone cannot address. In response, the authors propose the development of “local energy hubs” — integrated systems designed around the needs of specific locations.



The authors propose the development of “local energy hubs” — integrated systems designed around the needs of specific locations.

By treating energy hubs as platforms rather than standalone projects, Oman can use them to build capabilities in areas such as software, data analytics and systems integration. Industrial zones like SOHAR Port and Freezone and Salalah Port and Freezone can serve as practical testbeds where energy and digital systems are developed together and refined over time.

Rather than treating major industrial zones as passive consumers of centrally supplied power, this model positions them as active managers of energy flows.

In practice, that means coordinating electricity, fuels, storage and utilities in ways that reflect the operational profile of each site.

For example, SOHAR Port and Freezone, with its heavy industrial base, may prioritise firm baseload power and process heat.

By contrast, Salalah Port and Freezone, a major logistics and transshipment hub, may place greater emphasis on flexibility, efficiency, and reliability.

A key advantage of this approach is its scalability, according to the authors. Hubs do not need to be built as large, complex systems from the outset.

They can begin with core electricity supply — including grid power, renewables, and storage — and expand over time to incorporate additional elements such as gas, thermal systems, or hydrogen, as demand evolves. Beyond efficiency gains,

the model also opens up wider opportunities.

By treating energy hubs as platforms rather than standalone projects, Oman can use them to build capabilities in areas such as software, data analytics and systems integration.

Industrial zones like SOHAR Port and Freezone and Salalah Port and Freezone can serve as practical testbeds where energy and digital systems are developed together and refined over time.

The authors also stress the importance of combining local expertise with international know-how to accelerate progress and ensure knowledge transfer into the domestic ecosystem.

Ultimately, while national energy systems will remain essential for security and scale, future competitiveness will be shaped at the local level.

Designing energy systems around key growth centres, rather than relying solely on centralised supply, will be critical to supporting Oman’s economic ambitions in the years ahead, they emphasise.

OCCI Al Batinah North spurs logistics dialogue

SIHAM AL SAIDI
MUSCAT, MAY 3

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry branch in Al Batinah North Governorate has stepped up engagement with industry stakeholders, convening a high-level virtual meeting to address mounting logistics pressures and safeguard supply chain continuity amidst shifting regional dynamics.

The session forms part of ongoing coordination with government and private sector entities, including the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, alongside representatives from agriculture, consumer



ENGINEER SAID AL ABRI
Chairman of OCCI Al Batinah North branch.

response to global developments and reflects national efforts to reinforce supply chain resilience.

protection, the Royal Oman Police and customs authorities.

Discussions centred on maintaining the uninterrupted flow of food supplies, imports and exports during a period of geopolitical uncertainty.

Engineer Said al Abri, Chairman of the Chamber, said the initiative comes in

He noted that disruptions, including the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, have accelerated the need to optimise the use of Oman’s ports and airports, strengthening the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a strategic logistics gateway linking Gulf, regional and international markets.

Participants flagged key challenges, notably a surge in trucking costs driven by higher demand, fuel prices and insurance premiums, effectively doubling shipping costs for imports and exports.

In response, authorities have introduced facilitative measures such as permitting empty trucks to enter and load cargo, while also streamlining customs procedures, particularly for transit shipments.

Private sector representatives called for greater regulatory flexibility, including a review of weight restrictions and broader visa access to support workforce requirements. Despite these pressures, Al Abri noted that Oman remains among the least affected countries in the Gulf in terms of inflation, maintaining rates below 0.02 per cent, supported by its strategic location and economic stability.

The Chamber also highlighted ongoing virtual engagements and exchange visits with the Dubai Chamber to enhance logistical integration and market connectivity. Al Abri pointed to growing momentum in the sector, stressing the need for sustained support to contain cost pressures on essential goods.

CORPORATE EARNINGS

Berkshire profit rises, cash hits record



Berkshire Hathaway reported an 18 per cent rise in first-quarter operating profit to \$11.35 billion despite pressure on consumer-facing units. The group, built by Warren Buffett and led by Greg Abel, also posted record cash reserves, reflecting limited investment opportunities. Net income more than doubled, while share buybacks resumed modestly during the quarter. — Reuters

AVIATION POLICY

Britain allows flight mergers



Britain has introduced temporary measures allowing airlines to combine passengers from multiple flights onto fewer aircraft to reduce fuel consumption. The temporary measures target underfilled routes, improving operational efficiency and limiting waste. While officials say it will enhance schedule reliability, critics argue it could reduce passenger choice. — ONA

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Vietnam inflation climbs



Vietnam’s inflation accelerated to 5.46 per cent in April, up from 4.65 per cent in March, driven by rising energy and transport costs linked to global fuel trends. Industrial and factory output surged 9.9 per cent year-on-year, while exports rose 21 per cent. However, imports climbed faster, widening the trade deficit to \$3.28 billion from \$677 million in March. — ONA

OPINION

Oman emerges as a smart destination for real estate investment



AYA AL SIYABI

The writer is an Omani author and novelist.

RECENT months have witnessed a relative fluctuation in market activity, shaped by mounting political and economic pressures across the region and, to some extent, globally. This turbulence has unsettled the long-standing perception of the Gulf region as a safe haven for long-term investments, traditionally anchored in a balanced equation of security and financial return.

At this juncture, Oman's measured neutrality and consistent political stance position it as an immediate and intelligent choice for investors seeking to preserve wealth, particularly within the real estate sector. The Omani market today demonstrates a notable capacity to remain insulated from cycles of tension in both their intensity and duration, a factor that significantly reinforces investor confidence in property assets.

Beyond stability, Oman presents a compelling real estate value proposition. Entry prices remain relatively accessible compared to more mature regional markets, while the potential for long-term capital appreciation is supported by ongoing infrastructure expansion and population growth.

For investors, this creates a rare balance between affordability today and value creation over time. Oman's tax environment also supports long-term investment, with no personal income tax and no capital gains

tax on real estate for individuals—further reinforcing overall return potential.

In parallel, the Sultanate of Oman has, in recent years, introduced a suite of modern legislative frameworks that have reshaped the investment landscape. Key reforms, including the Foreign Investment Law, the Public-Private Partnership Law, and the Bankruptcy Law, have collectively established a transparent legal environment. This clarity reduces operational risk, enhances predictability of returns, and provides investors with a more coherent long-term outlook. In addition, designated Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITCs) allow foreign investors to own property with full freehold rights, often coupled with residency eligibility, further enhancing Oman's appeal as both an investment and lifestyle destination.

Smart real estate investment, by definition, anticipates growth rather than follows it. Oman exemplifies this principle through its substantial investment in infrastructure, roads, ports, emerging urban developments, and economic zones well ahead of actual demand.

This long-term foundation is now being translated into tangible real estate value through developers such as Sarooj Development Company, which focuses on delivering master-planned, infrastructure-led communities designed for long-term livability and investment performance. Projects like Sarooj Oasis within Sultan

Haitham City reflect this shift, where development is not approached as standalone real estate but as part of a larger, integrated ecosystem that brings together residential, commercial, and community elements.

This approach signals a maturing market, where long-term value is created through planning, connectivity, and quality of life, rather than short-term speculation, an increasingly important factor for institutional and individual real estate investors alike.

Unlike markets tied to a single economic driver, Oman is advancing through a clearly defined diversification strategy. This includes oil and gas (with expanding petrochemical activities), renewable energy, free zones such as Duqm, Sohar, and Salalah, and a growing industrial sector led by Madayn.

This diversified base generates multi-source demand across residential, industrial, and commercial real estate segments, while also enhancing the market's resilience against volatility.

The relative slowdown observed in recent years should not be interpreted as a weakness, but rather as a process of market recalibration. Industry perspectives indicate that the sector is undergoing a healthy correction following a period of unsustainable expansion. This transition opens the door to more mature, abundant, and lower-risk investment opportunities. Importantly, Oman's real estate sector is no longer operating within traditional parameters.

At this juncture, Oman's measured neutrality and consistent political stance position it as an immediate and intelligent choice for investors seeking to preserve wealth, particularly within the real estate sector.

WHY THE OIL SURGE
THREATENS
A US RECESSION

JON SINDREU

US President Donald Trump's war with Iran was always unpopular at home. What made it tenable is that the American economy, buoyed by oil exports and an artificial-intelligence boom, seemed almost recession-proof. With the Strait of Hormuz still disrupted, however, even the world's largest economy needs to reckon with the possibility of a downturn.

Until recently, economic forecasts were relatively benign, especially for the United States. When the International Monetary Fund (IMF) updated its global projections earlier this month, its so-called baseline scenario still had world output expanding 3.1% this year.

When the International Monetary Fund (IMF) updated its global projections earlier this month, its so-called baseline scenario still had world output expanding 3.1% this year.

Only under its "severe scenario", which assumed crude prices averaging \$110 per barrel in 2026 and \$125 in 2027, did the IMF foresee global growth falling below 2%, a pace consistent with outright contractions in many countries.

That hypothetical future no longer feels far-fetched. The key Brent crude oil price has traded persistently above \$110 per barrel over the past week, even briefly surpassing \$120 on Thursday.

On Thursday, official data showed a rebound in US GDP in the first quarter: output expanded at an annual 2%. This is far above growth rates in the euro zone and the United Kingdom. American unemployment, at 4.3%, remains low.

Consider the 1990 Gulf War, though. The US economy enjoyed solid growth and near-full employment at the time. But labour demand was softening and households were starting to get worried amidst the savings and loan crisis. When oil prices surged 150%, consumer confidence collapsed and real-terms spending stalled.

The Federal Reserve, constrained by rising inflation, was slow to ease policy. Many of those conditions are echoed today, including a divided Fed likely to resist pressure from its new chair to cut rates. Surveys already show depressed consumer sentiment and higher inflation expectations.

Comparing oil shocks across decades is complicated by the fact that richer households now spend a smaller share of income on energy. In recent years, energy goods and services have accounted for less than 4% of US disposable income, compared with about 5% before the Gulf War and 6% ahead of the 1970s crises.

One way to bridge that gap is to examine how much households are forced to raise that share when energy prices jump. — Reuters

Why metrics sometimes
hide the real problem

NUMBERS create a particular kind of confidence. When an organisation can point to measurable evidence of performance — targets met, growth achieved, efficiency improved — there is a natural tendency to treat those numbers as a reliable account of how the organisation is actually doing. This tendency is understandable. Measurement is how organisations make complexity manageable. It is how progress becomes visible and accountability becomes possible.

The problem is not measurement itself. The problem is what happens when the metrics an organisation uses to track performance diverge, quietly and gradually, from the underlying conditions those metrics were designed to represent. When this happens, an organisation can find itself in the unusual position of performing well by every measure it tracks while the actual health of the business deteriorates in the spaces between what is being counted.

This divergence is not the result of poor data or inadequate systems. It is the result of a structural feature of measurement that is easy to overlook: metrics measure what they are designed to measure and nothing else. The decision about what to measure is itself a strategic judgement — one that reflects assumptions about what matters, what is observable and what is worth tracking.

When those assumptions stop matching the reality the organisation operates in, the metrics do not adjust automatically.

They continue to produce numbers. The numbers continue to look meaningful. The problem they are failing to capture continues to develop. An organisation that measures everything it can see and nothing it cannot is not being rigorous. It is being selectively blind. Consider what standard performance dashboards typically capture well: revenue, cost, headcount, utilisation, customer

Measurement is how organisations make complexity manageable.

KAMLA AL RAHBI

The writer is a leadership and business strategist

An organisation that measures everything it can see and nothing it cannot is not being rigorous. It is being selectively blind. Consider what standard performance dashboards typically capture well: revenue, cost, headcount, utilisation, customer satisfaction scores, delivery timelines. These are real and important.

satisfaction scores, delivery timelines. These are real and important. Consider what they typically capture poorly: the quality of decisions being made at the operational level, the degree to which frontline employees understand and believe in the direction they are executing, the gap between what the organisation officially knows and what its people actually know, the rate at which strategic assumptions are being tested against emerging reality.

These are also real and important — and they are often the variables that determine whether the measurable performance of today is building towards sustainable performance tomorrow or depleting the foundations on which it depends.

The organisations most vulnerable to this dynamic are frequently those that have invested most heavily in measurement infrastructure. The sophistication of their dashboards creates a false completeness, a sense that because so much is being tracked, little is being missed.

In reality, the investment in measuring what is measurable can quietly crowd out the attention that should be paid to what is not.

The most important things an organisation needs to know about itself are usually the things it has not yet found a way to measure.

Leadership responses to this challenge tend to fall into two traps. The first is the addition of more metrics an attempt to close

the gap by expanding the scope of measurement. This rarely works, because the problem is not insufficient measurement but misaligned measurement. Adding more of the wrong metrics does not produce better insight; it produces more complexity around the same blind spots.

The second trap is the dismissal of qualitative information the observations, assessments and judgements that experienced people in the organisation carry but that do not fit neatly into a reporting framework. This information is often the most accurate picture of what is actually happening, and its systematic exclusion from decision-making is among the most expensive mistakes organisations make. The more productive approach treats metrics as one input among several, rather than as the primary language in which organisational reality is described.

It involves regular, structured conversations about what the current measurement framework is not capturing not as a critique of the data, but as a discipline of ensuring that the picture leadership uses to make decisions is as complete as it can reasonably be made.

It also requires a specific kind of intellectual honesty about the relationship between measurement and management. The things that get measured tend to get managed.

This is a feature of metrics, not a flaw. But it means that the decision about what to measure is, in practice, a decision about what the organisation will attend to and what it will not. Making that decision consciously rather than inheriting it from historical reporting structures — is one of the more consequential acts of strategic leadership.

Metrics are among the most powerful tools available for managing complex organisations.

They are also, when mistaken for the territory rather than the map, among the most reliable sources of the strategic surprises that no one saw coming because the signals were there all along, in the spaces the dashboard did not reach.

A CONSUMER goods distribution company FMCG headquartered in Muscat with several branches across the Sultanate of Oman is seeking qualified candidates for the following positions:

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ART/LIFE



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TAKING TO THE STAGE

MASSIVE CROWDS FILL RIO'S COPACABANA BEACH FOR SHAKIRA CONCERT



Latin pop queen Shakira kicked off her free mega-concert on Rio's famed Copacabana beach under a full moon on Saturday, with drones forming the image of a she-wolf — her nickname — overhead as she took the stage over an hour late.

About two million people were expected to attend the free outdoor concert by the 49-year-old Colombian superstar, who performed on a massive stage outside the legendary Copacabana Hotel.

This beach has hosted the biggest divas in pop in recent years, with Madonna striking a pose for 1.6 million in 2024 and Lady Gaga singing her greatest hits to 2.1 million fans last year.

“Shakira doesn't need to fit into molds, she makes real art, she does what she wants out of love. I'm very inspired by her, she's a Latin woman at the top”, 26-year-old designer Joao Pedro Yellin said, dressed in an overcoat made of scraps representing Latin American flags.

To see the show, superfan Graciele Vaz slept on the beach Friday night after travelling four hours from the resort town of Paraty.

“I've been a Shakira fan for more than 20 years”, the 43-year-old said, sporting a large tattoo on her back of Shakira's name over a she-wolf — the singer's nickname and the symbol of her current world tour.

With more than 90 million records sold, four Grammys, 15 Latin Grammys and a generation-spanning repertoire including bangers “Hips Don't Lie”, “Waka Waka” and “Whenever, Wherever”, she enjoys unique popularity in Brazil, where she has performed numerous times.

“She loves Brazil so much and the love she has for us is the love we have for her”, Vaz said.

Her 2025 tour kicked off in Rio and has already earned a Guinness World Record for highest-grossing tour for a Latin artist.

Thousands of fans crowded around the stage were treated to her performance of “O Leaozinho” with Veloso.

Rio has been readying for the concert for days, with huge posters blanketing the city and Copacabana's vendors were busy Saturday hawking drinks, caipirinhas, t-shirts and little vials of “Shakira's tears”, a nod to her current “Women No Longer Cry” tour.

Christopher Yataco, a 28-year-old Peruvian, saved for a year to travel from Lima to see his idol and said that he admires “her passion, her warmth as a person, how down-to-earth she is, how Latina she is, how she represents the entire Latin community and women's empowerment”.

City officials estimate the event will inject more than \$160 million (800 million reais) into the local economy. National tourism officials said airline bookings were up 80 per cent this week compared to 2024.

The performance will likely be Shakira's biggest concert to date. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES

ENTERTAINMENT

A swarm of 1,500 drones forms the shape of Spider-Man in the night sky above Gwangang Bridge during a drone light show to promote the movie “Spider-Man: Brand New Day”. — AFP



COSPLAY

A man dressed as a character from the game “World of Warcraft” looks on in a forest during a festival near the town of Doksy, Czech Republic. — Reuters



GASTRONOMY

This photo taken shows street food vendor Thitisakulthip Sang-uamsap selling fried vegetarian snacks in Chinatown in Bangkok. — AFP



INSTA PICKS



Quiet observer of the wild



The stunning waterfalls in Wadi Fins

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We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

AI ACTORS
AND WRITERS
NOT ELIGIBLE
FOR OSCARS:
ACADEMY



Actors created with artificial intelligence will not be eligible for an Oscar, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said on Friday as it launched a crackdown on the use of AI.

New rules include a requirement that only real, live human performers — not their AI avatars — are eligible for the film world’s biggest prizes and screenplays must have been penned by a person, rather than a chatbot.

“In the Acting category, only roles credited in the film’s legal billing and demonstrably performed by humans with their consent will be considered eligible”, the Academy said.

“In the Writing categories, the rules codify that screenplays must be human-authored to be eligible”. The ruling comes days after an AI version of the late Val Kilmer was unveiled to an audience of cinema owners, a year after the “Top Gun” star’s death. A youthful, digital version of Kilmer appeared in the trailer for archeological

action pic “As Deep as the Grave”, telling another character: “Don’t fear the dead and don’t fear me”.

The project was created with the enthusiastic support of the actor’s family, who granted access to Kilmer’s video archives, which were used to recreate the actor at multiple stages of his life.

The use of artificial intelligence remains one of the most sensitive issues in the entertainment industry and was central to the 2023 strikes that shut down Hollywood, as actors and writers warned that unchecked technology threatened their livelihoods.

Other updates to the Academy’s rules include a change in the way that films can be nominated for best international feature.

Until this year, only a film selected by an official national grouping could be entered — a problem for any critical movie made in an authoritarian state.

For example, Iranian director Jafar Panahi’s “It Was Just an Accident” was nominated earlier this year as a submission from France.

Under the new rules, a non-English language film also can be submitted in the category if it wins a qualifying award at a major international film festival, including Cannes, Berlin, Busan, Venice or Toronto.

In that same category, the film will be deemed the nominee and not the country; and its director will be “listed on the statuette plaque after the film title” along with the country if applicable, the Academy announced. — AFP

WHEN THE FINISH LINE BECOMES A BEGINNING
THE STORY OF MOHAMMED AL RUDAINI



SIHAM AL SAIDI

ON a quiet morning in Al Khabourah, before the streets fully awaken, 33-year-old Mohammed bin Rashid bin Harib al Rudaini is already in motion. The rhythm of his footsteps or the steady strokes of his arms through water are more than exercise, they are declarations of strength, resilience and belonging.

Mohammed, who has a mild intellectual disability, is not defined by labels. At Al Wafa Centre for Rehabilitation in Al Khabourah, he is known as an athlete, a determined trainee and a man whose ambition refuses to be silenced.

At the heart of his journey is unwavering support. His parents, whom he calls his greatest strength, stood beside him when others doubted him. The staff at Al Wafa Centre, especially the vocational rehabilitation team and his sports coach Ms Naeima, helped guide his path. More importantly, they believed in him.

His achievements reflect years of perseverance. In 2019, Mohammed proudly represented Oman at the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi, winning a silver medal in swimming. “When I win”, he says, “I feel strong. I feel important. I feel that I exist”.

Closer to home, he won gold in the 100-metre race at the Sixth Festival for Persons with Disabilities in Muscat and another gold medal in badminton at a competition in Suhar. He also participated in the Syria Special



33-year-old Mohammed bin Rashid bin Harib al Rudaini, who has a mild intellectual disability, is not defined by labels. He is an accomplished swimmer with gold medals in regional and international competitions. Beyond sports, Mohammed has developed practical skills through vocational training, including gypsum crafts, scented candle production, date processing and agriculture. Trainers describe him as respectful, cooperative and eager to learn.

Olympics Championship in 2010. Each medal tells the story of someone who answered doubt with determination.

Beyond sports, Mohammed has developed practical skills through vocational training, including gypsum crafts, scented candle

production, date processing and agriculture. Trainers describe him as respectful, cooperative and eager to learn.

Dalal al Badi, Assistant Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, says Mohammed stands out not only for his abilities but for his character. “He is polite, motivated and always ready to learn. He supports others and creates a positive environment wherever he goes”, she says. After training in customer service and safety monitoring at a commercial centre, he received an excellent evaluation. “We truly believe he is ready for employment”.

Yet Mohammed’s greatest challenge has not been physical, but social perception. “The way people look at us hurts”, he says quietly. “We may be different, but we can live with others, like them”.

One painful setback came after he completed training at a local institution, where he performed excellently but was not offered a job because the disability hiring quota had already been met.

Still, Mohammed refuses to be defined by disappointment. He trains harder, works harder and keeps moving forwards. His dream is simple yet powerful: to be a productive member of society and serve his country.

His message is clear: “Do not see us as a problem. Help us face our challenges. And to everyone struggling, be brave. You can overcome”.

In every race he runs or swims, Mohammed is not just chasing a finish line, he is redefining it.

FEATURES

Oman’s favourite place for skating is gone



Photos courtesy OmanSkate/ Hytham al Wahaibi

YERU EBUN

WHEN OMAN SKATE opened its doors in Al Wadi Al Kabir in 2018, it marked a rare moment for a small but determined group of young people who had long been skating on the margins.

For years, skateboarders in Oman had no dedicated space. They moved between car parks and pavements, often asked to leave. The opening of a purpose-built park, led by Hytham al Wahaibi, gave the community something it had never had before: a place to stay.

I was there at the opening. It was not a grand launch, but there was a clear sense of arrival. When I spoke to Hytham, he described the park as something the community had needed for years. It felt like more than a business.

Eight years later, that chapter has come to an end.

FINANCIAL PRESSURES AND CLOSURE

In a statement, Oman Skate confirmed that both the skate park and its retail shop would close, citing financial strain.

“The skate park opened in 2018 with the intention of growing the skateboarding community and embracing the culture in Oman. Over the years, we’ve achieved more than we imagined.

“However, running both the skate park and the skate shop has become an increasing financial challenge... With that, we announce the closure of the Oman Skate skate park and shop in Al Wadi Al Kabir”.

The space became a focal point for skaters across Muscat and beyond.

Hytham said the decision was not taken lightly and expressed hope the initiative might find a new home.

“We believe we have done our part for the community... and we welcome anyone who may wish to carry this vision forward”.

A GROWING BUT OVERLOOKED SPORT

Skateboarding in Oman has developed quietly over the past decade, driven largely by youth participation rather than institutional support.

Globally, the sport gained recognition after its inclusion in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Athletes such as Yuto Horigome and Rayssa Leal brought international attention.

In Oman, however, development has remained limited. Skateboarding is still often viewed socially rather than as a structured sport and skaters are frequently seen as disruptive in public spaces.

Within the community, it is understood differently: a discipline requiring consistency, skill and resilience.

MORE THAN A FACILITY, REACTION FROM THE COMMUNITY

For many, Oman Skate was more than a venue. It brought together Omanis and expatriates, teenagers and adults; and offered a controlled space to practice.

Attempts were made to expand its reach through gatherings and competitions aimed at formalising the sport locally. While participation grew, sustained institutional or financial backing did not follow.

After the announcement, supporters described the park’s impact on a generation of skaters.

Two Thousand Magazine called it “a real community and an incubator of the youth’s energies and talents... that built a soul and inspired a generation”.

Others said it was “your second home... a home for creatives, skaters and dreamers”.

Another response noted: “I’m shocked there wasn’t any support to keep this going”.

The reactions highlight a wider issue: the lack of support for youth-led activities in Oman.

END OF AN ERA

When Hytham locked the gates for the final time, it was not just a closure. It was a question left open: what happens to a generation when its spaces disappear?

It is easy to call this inevitable. Financial realities. Practical decisions.

But having witnessed its beginning and end, it feels like a missed opportunity.

Because sometimes, all it takes is one sponsor, one believer to sustain what passion alone cannot.

A place where young people found a version of themselves that made sense.

That loss carries weight.



THE OPENING OF A PURPOSE-BUILT PARK, LED BY HYTHAM AL WAHAIBI, GAVE THE COMMUNITY SOMETHING IT HAD NEVER HAD BEFORE: A PLACE TO STAY.



HYTHAM AL WAHAIBI