

OMAN, NETHERLANDS REAFFIRM DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIP

O U R S T R O N G E S T B O N D I S C O N N E C T I O N B E T W E E N P E O P L E S



The visit underscored the deep historical ties between Oman and the Netherlands, tracing back over 400 years of trade and people-to-people connections.

HM CONCLUDES STATE VISIT, LEAVES THE NETHERLANDS

AMSTERDAM: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik left the Kingdom of the Netherlands on Wednesday evening after a three-day state visit.

His Majesty was seen off at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol by Rear Admiral Ludger Brummelaar, Chief of the Military House of the King, Reinette Klever, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, and officials in the Netherlands.

Upon his departure, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a cable of thanks to King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and his spouse Queen Măxima.

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere appreciation for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to him and the accompanying delegation.

His Majesty lauded the outcomes of his meeting with the King and the Prime Minister, as it was an opportunity to promote the relations and opening new vistas for partnership and cooperation in various spheres.

His Majesty the Sultan wished the King and the Queen permanent success to achieve further aspirations of progress and prosperity for the Dutch people.

SEE P2, 3 and 4

HM AND PRIME MINISTER DISCUSS BILATERAL RELATIONS

RENEW
COMMITMENT TO
STRENGTHENING
COOPERATION

EMPHASISE
IMPORTANCE
OF BUSINESS
PARTNERSHIPS

VISIT SAW SIGNING
OF SEVERAL
AGREEMENTS
AND MOUS

THE Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation across various sectors, emphasising the importance of government-to-government collaboration and business partnerships to drive mutual economic growth and innovation.

This came in a joint communique issued on the occasion of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's state visit to the Netherlands. It reads as follows: "On April 15 and 16, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman, paid a state visit to the Kingdom of the Netherlands at the invitation of His Majesty King Willem-Alexander.

The visit underscored the deep historical ties between Oman and the Netherlands, tracing back over 400 years of trade and people-to-people connections.

The two nations have evolved from early maritime exchanges into a dynamic partnership rooted in openness, international trade, and fostering dialogue on global challenges.

During the visit, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met with His Majesty King Willem-Alexander and Prime Minister Dick Schoof, and engaged in a comprehensive

exchange on bilateral and international issues. Both nations reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation across various sectors, emphasising the importance of government-to-government collaboration and business partnerships to drive mutual economic growth and innovation. The visit also saw the signing of several agreements and memoranda of understanding that establish a framework to enhance various fields.

Opportunities for trade and investment in key sectors such as energy transition, sustainable logistics and water were explored. A CEO round table followed by a reception with His Majesty King Willem-Alexander and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik facilitated discussions on expanding business ties. Recognising their shared maritime heritage and strategic advantages in the maritime and logistics sectors, both nations explored ways to deepen cooperation in port development and sustainable logistics. In this regard, discussions were held on enhancing collaboration between the ports of Sohar and Salalah, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, as well as on innovative marine construction initiatives harnessing ocean currents as part of their shared commitment to sustainability. **TURN TO P2**

NATIONS TO FOCUS ON RENEWABLE ENERGY, GREEN HYDROGEN

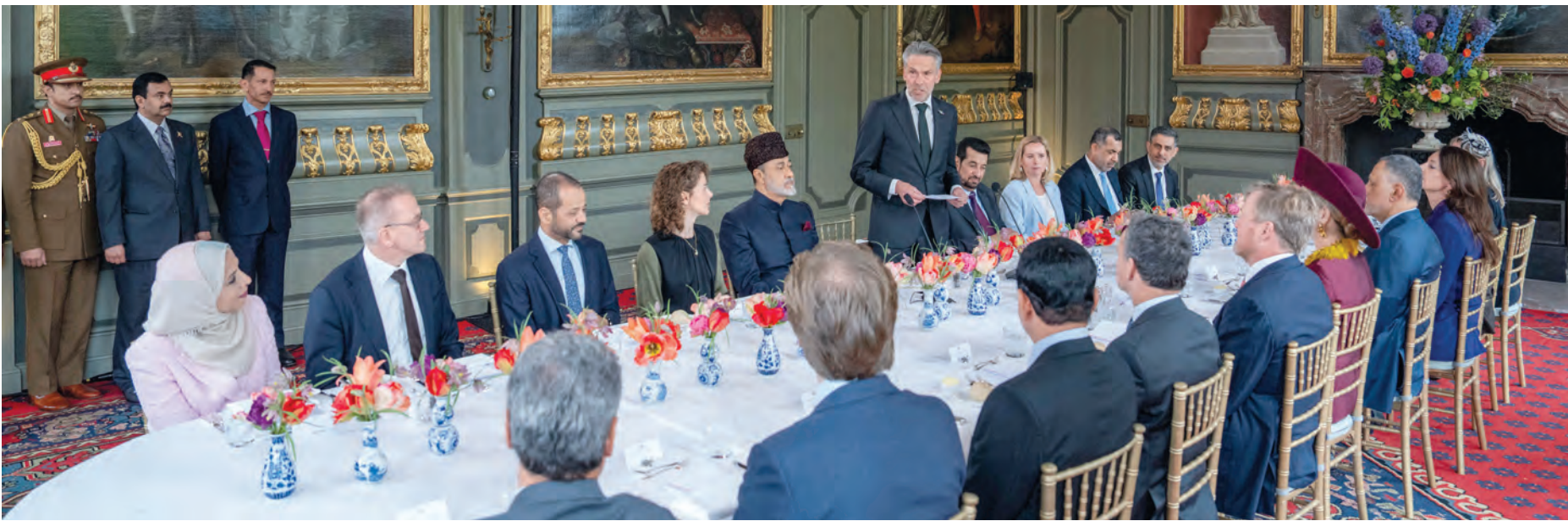
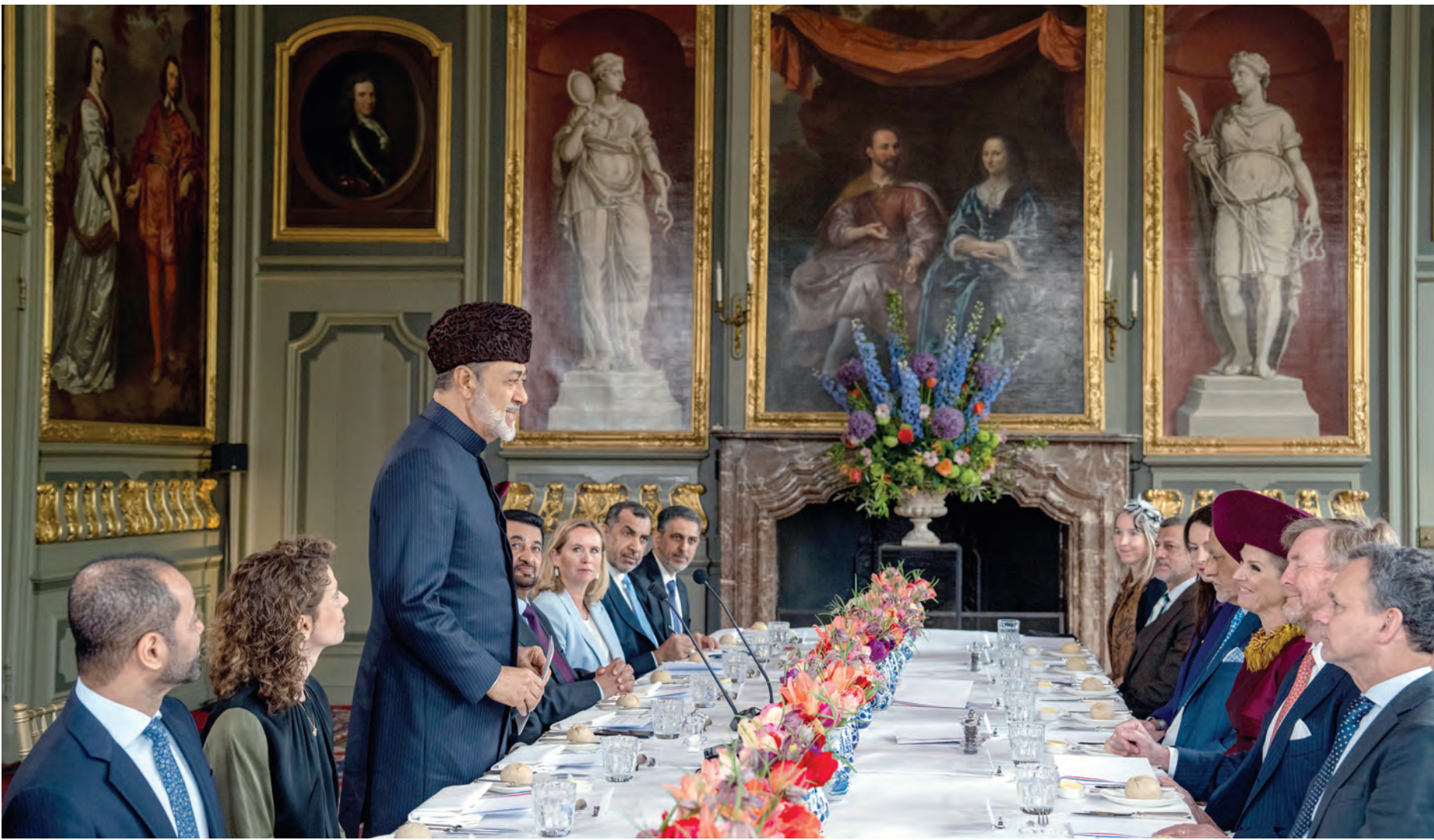
ACKNOWLEDGE ROLE OF PEOPLE- TO-PEOPLE CONNECTIONS

BOTH SHARE
COMMITMENT TO
GLOBAL PEACE
AND STABILITY

LEADERS
EXCHANGE VIEWS
ON REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENTS



MARKING HM’S VISIT, DUTCH PM HOSTS WORKING LUNCH



In a manifestation of delight over the Royal visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, and to promote cooperation and partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Dick Schoof, Dutch Prime Minister, hosted a working lunch.

The event was attended by King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and his spouse Queen Máxima, at the Dutch government headquarters in The Hague.

His Majesty delivered a speech during the event. It reads as follows:

“Your Majesty,
Mr Prime Minister,
Thank you for your kind words and warm hospitality.

The Netherlands has a strong reputation in Oman for its commitment to open dialogue, its emphasis on peace and its pursuit of global understanding. These values resonate deeply with us, as our countries share an outward-looking and inquisitive seafaring past, so it is perhaps unsurprising that these Dutch qualities also lie at the heart of Oman’s cultural identity.

I am delighted to be here with you today, not only to celebrate these shared values, but also to explore new opportunities to deepen our relationship even further.

The close ties and partnership between Oman and the Netherlands are built on a shared history of seafaring and commerce, the result is a dynamic strategic partnership, where we align our ambitions and complement each other’s strengths. This collaboration has led to the development of innovative projects that advance our shared goals and interests in logistics, trade and green manufacturing and leverages our countries’ respective expertise.

Your Majesty,
Mr Prime Minister,
Beyond trade and industry, the Netherlands is now well recognised as a valued partner in innovation and education. Currently, an increasing number of Omani students are enrolled in Dutch educational institutions, and we look forward to welcoming Dutch students to pursue their studies at educational institutions in Oman.

As we navigate an evolving global landscape, Oman takes great pride in our close cooperation with the Netherlands



in the energy transition. Our joint focus on green hydrogen and our broader ambition to establish energy exchange corridors reflect our mutual commitment to a cleaner, more sustainable future. Oman welcomes Dutch insight, investment and technology as we pursue this transformation together.

Your Majesty,
Mr Prime Minister,
The strongest and most enduring bond between our countries is the connection between our peoples. The mutual trust, respect and admiration between our communities ensure that our friendship will continue to thrive for generations to come. As we continue to champion our common values - justice, multilateralism and the rule of law - I am confident that we can work together to promote peace and stability on a global scale.

I look forward to strengthening this partnership even further. This visit has provided a valuable opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to dialogue, sustainability and peace. These principles will empower us to take concrete steps towards achieving our shared objectives.

Please accept my sincere appreciation for your warm welcome and for your unwavering dedication to expanding the Omani Dutch partnership. I look forward to the many opportunities that lie ahead.

Thank You.”

On his turn, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands delivered a speech expressing his utmost pleasure and appreciation for the visit of His Majesty the Sultan and his accompanying delegation. He looked forward to working together to explore new avenues of cooperation, and economic and investment partnerships that would achieve mutual benefits for the two friendly countries.

He emphasised that the partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands is increasingly shifting towards promising future sectors, such as green hydrogen, water management, and sustainable logistics and mobility, strengthening the partnership for the future in a world growing more turbulent and unstable by the day.

He noted that his country highly appreciates the role played by the Sultanate of Oman in the region and the world as large as a voice of reason and dialogue, affirming that both nations recognise the importance of open dialogue in building a better future for their two friendly peoples. He called for continued efforts towards this goal for the benefit of future generations. — ONA

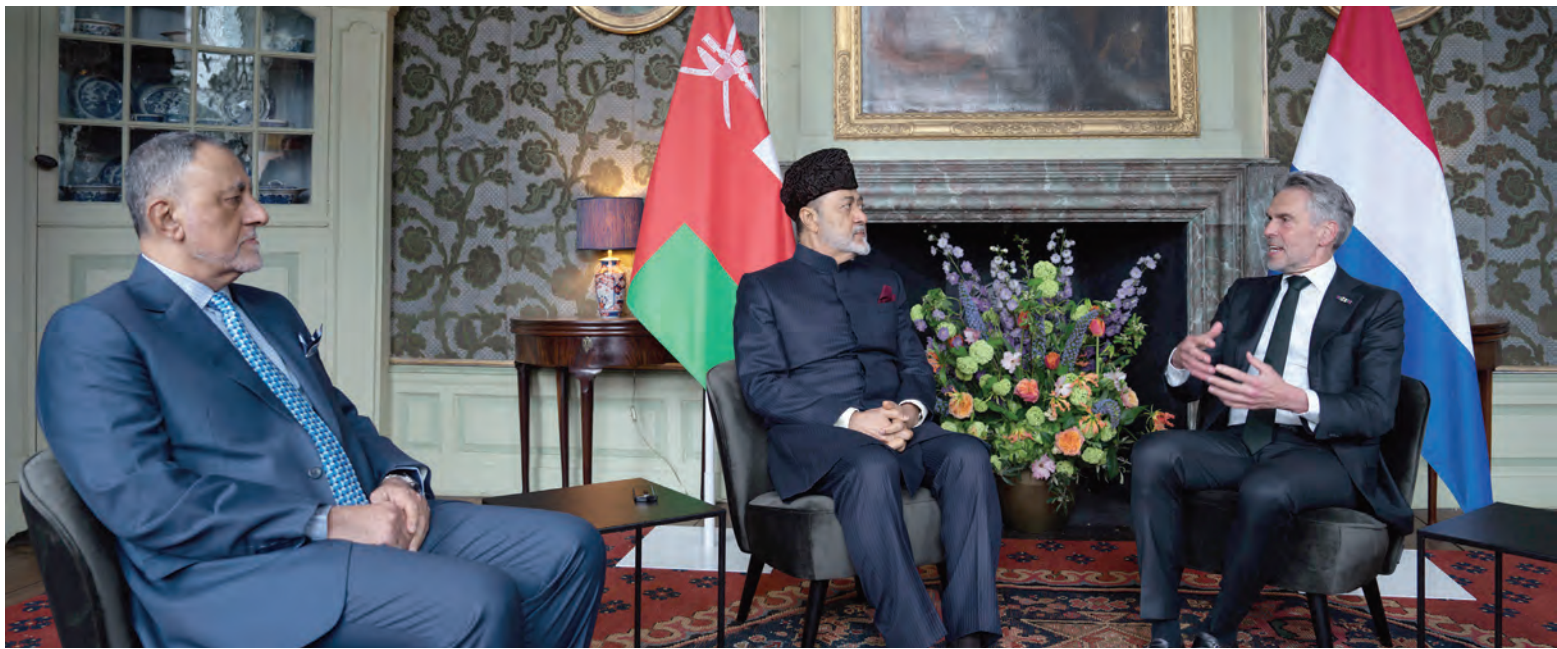
OMAN, NETHERLANDS REAFFIRM DYNAMIC PARTNERSHIP

FROM PAGE 1
The two nations reiterated their commitment to advancing the energy transition, focusing on decarbonisation, renewable energy and green hydrogen. Cooperation in water management was also a key area of discussion, building on the long-standing expertise of both countries in sustainable water solutions.

Acknowledging the importance of people-to-people connections, Oman and the Netherlands committed to strengthening cooperation in governance, cultural exchange, science and sports. Both nations emphasised knowledge exchange and innovation, aligning with the triple helix model, where government, academia and business collaborate for sustainable development.

Both sides expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of the visit and their determination to build on this momentum for the benefit of both countries. Looking ahead, the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands remain committed to strengthening their historic and strategic relationship, deepening cooperation across key sectors, and fostering a future built on collaboration and mutual understanding.” — ONA

HM meets Dutch Prime Minister



THE HAGUE: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq met at the headquarters of the Dutch Cabinet in The Hague on Wednesday with Dick Schoof, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The meeting reviewed the historical relations between the two countries and means of promoting them to serve interests of the Omani and Dutch peoples. It also discussed areas of the economic and investment cooperation between the two sides. Furthermore, His Majesty and the Dutch Prime Minister exchanged views on the developments at the global arena and touched on issues of common concern. Following the meeting,

commemorative photos were taken of His Majesty with the Dutch Prime Minister, in the presence of the King and the Queen of the Netherlands. The meeting was attended by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, and Caspar Veldkamp, Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs. — ONA

HM meets President of Dutch Senate, Speaker of House of Representatives



THE HAGUE: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq met at the Dutch Parliament in The Hague on Wednesday with Prof Jan Anthonie Bruijn, President of the Dutch Senate and Dr Martin Bosma, Speaker of the House of Representatives. The meeting reviewed areas of cooperation and partnership between the two countries and means of promoting them to serve the joint interests.

The meeting was attended by the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan, as well as several members of the Dutch Parliament.

At the conclusion of the visit, His Majesty signed the VIP visitors’ register at the Dutch Parliament, expressing his delight. His Majesty underlined the advanced bilateral relations and the keenness to further developing them across various spheres. — ONA



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OMANI, DUTCH OFFICIALS HAIL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

ROTTERDAM: As part of the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a number of ministers and officials visited the Port of Rotterda, on Wednesday.

Speaking during the visit, engineer Salem bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, said: “The Port of Rotterdam is a major gateway to the European market, as much as we desire to communicate with other ports, noting that there are many immediate goals. Regarding the future of hydrogen, be it ammonia, methanol, liquid hydrogen, or any derivative we may export, it still represents an important gateway to the European market and of course to the Netherlands in consideration of its size. He emphasized that work is ongoing with the Dutch side to embark on plans that were in place two years ago.

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), said that the strategic partnership between the Port of Rotterdam and the Port of Sohar is very important for Oman. He emphasized the development witnessed by this partnership, as well as the growing awareness of this partnership and the success achieved by this decades-long partnership between

the two friendly countries. Omar bin Mahmoud al Mahrizi, CEO of Asyad Ports and Freezones, said that Asyad Group seeks to exchange expertise, enhance the Omani competencies, and hone them with appropriate skills. He added that Asyad Group is a global provider of integrated logistics services in the Sultanate of Oman.

Boudewijn Siemons, CEO of the Port of Rotterdam Authority, welcomed the visit of the Omani ministers, officials, and CEOs to the port, highlighting the port’s historical development and its interconnectivity with the city. He added that the Port of Rotterdam has a highly valued partnership with the Sultanate of Oman which has flourished over two decades. This relationship has led to fruitful cooperation with the Asyad Group for Sohar Port and Freezone.

Reinette Klever, Minister of Foreign Trade and Development of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, said: “The Port of Sohar, a successful joint venture between the Sultanate of Oman and the Port of Rotterdam, is a powerful example of what can be achieved together. It directly contributes 2-3 per cent of Oman’s GDP and has the potential to create tens of thousands of jobs.” — ONA

HIS MAJESTY LEAVES THE NETHERLANDS



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK left the Kingdom of the Netherlands on Wednesday evening after a three-day state visit.

His Majesty was seen off at Amsterdam Airport Schiphol by Rear Admiral Ludger Brummelaar, Chief of the Military House of the King, Reinette Klever, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development and some officials in the Netherlands.

Upon his departure, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a cable of thanks to King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and his spouse Queen Máxima.

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His Majesty lauded the outcomes of his meeting with the King and the Prime Minister, as it was an opportunity to promote the relations and opening new vistas for partnership and cooperation in various spheres.

His Majesty the Sultan wished the King and the Queen permanent success to achieve further aspirations of progress and prosperity for the Dutch people.

His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied during the visit by a high-ranking official delegation

comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head of Private Office of His Majesty the Sultan, Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy, Ambassador of Oman to the Netherlands. — ONA

OQ boosts Oman–Netherlands collaboration

OQ, a global investment energy group, joined His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on his state visit to the Netherlands, celebrating 400 years of maritime relations between the two countries, at the invitation of King Willem-Alexander. During this historic visit, OQ joined ten major industry players to advance bilateral cooperation in energy, technology and sustainable industrial growth.

As Oman and the Netherlands deepen their partnership at a pivotal moment for the global energy transition, OQ steps forward as a powerful enabler, building strategic alliances that turn shared ambition into tangible action. From green hydrogen to next-generation industrial infrastructure, OQ is reinforcing its role as a bridge between regions, a magnet for investment and a catalyst for a cleaner, more connected future.

“At OQ, we believe progress is powered by partnerships,” said Ashraf Hamed al Mamari, Group CEO of OQ. “This collaboration with the Netherlands

is more than diplomacy, it’s a shared blueprint for economic diversification, green industrialisation and future energy resilience. We’re not only building infrastructure; we’re building opportunity, linking Oman’s geography and talent with Europe’s energy needs and climate ambitions.”

Backed by its integrated portfolio and strategic role as a state-owned enterprise, OQ is forging partnerships that strengthen global supply chains, accelerate technology transfer and enable both nations to co-create solutions aligned with the EU’s Fit for 55 strategy and Oman Vision 2040.

As the first steps in this new chapter of strategic collaboration, OQ signed two significant memoranda of understanding (MoUs) that signal intent, capability and momentum. The first, with Royal Vopak, reinforces OQ’s commitment to developing Duqm into a world-class industrial and storage hub.

The second agreement, signed in collaboration with Hydrom, the Port of Duqm and leading European partners,

sets the stage for the world’s first commercial liquid hydrogen corridor. The project, which will connect the Port of Duqm with the ports of Amsterdam and Duisburg, is poised to become a transformative milestone for global green hydrogen flows.

These developments underscore OQ’s strategic role in positioning Oman as a global energy connector, linking resource-rich regions with clean energy demand centres across Europe and Asia. Through its leadership, Duqm is evolving into a next-generation industrial ecosystem powered by clean fuels, technology transfer and international collaboration. Guided by ESG principles and a long-term vision for productive energy, OQ’s partnerships go beyond infrastructure.

They enable knowledge exchange, foster innovation and deliver sustainable value. As Oman and the Netherlands deepen their historic cooperation, OQ stands at the forefront, connecting continents and shaping the energy systems of tomorrow.

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Apple Royal Gala South Africa Per Kg

0.700

WOW!

0.500

HOT DEAL

1.250

2

1.500

PRICE BLASTER

3.500

KILLER PRICE

3.500

6

1.000

22+2

1.000

KILLER PRICE

1.000

4

1.000

2

2.000

2

3.000

SHORT TAKES



Oman's participation underscores the ministry's commitment to empowering Omani youth

OMAN AT 2025
INTERNATIONAL
YOUTH FORUM

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman took part in the International Youth Forum organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in New York, a three-day event aimed at fostering global youth engagement.

Oman's delegation was led by Ahmed Khalaf al Adawi, Advisor for Planning and Studies at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in the presence Ambassador Omar Said al Kathiri, Oman's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

This marks Oman's third consecutive year participating in the forum, underscoring the ministry's commitment to empowering Omani youth and facilitating their interaction with peers worldwide. The participation aims to explore global best practices in comprehensive development and sustainable economic goals, exchange insights on youth policies and discuss their role in reshaping national and global cultures amid rapid digital and technological advancements. — ONA

CP INITIATIVE AIMS
TO CUT COMPLAINTS,
RAISE AWARENESS

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

To streamline consumer-supplier relations and ensure legal compliance, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has launched the 'Your Contract Protects You' initiative. The programme ensures that all commercial agreements align with the Consumer Protection Law and related regulations, safeguarding the rights of both consumers and suppliers. Issa bin Muslim al Nabhani, Director of the Studies and Market Research Department, stated that the initiative aims to reduce legal violations, enhance the business environment and simplify market procedures — especially in contractual dealings. Now in its second edition, the campaign targets all sectors and types of commercial transactions. The initiative seeks to clarify the CPA's responsibilities regarding contracts and invoices, promote fairness and transparency in commercial agreements and raise awareness of consumer rights and legal obligations. It also aims to eliminate unfair contract terms and foster a market based on legal and ethical practices. To support the initiative, an educational awareness team has been deployed across Omani markets. This team will educate consumers and suppliers on their rights and responsibilities during and after transactions, highlight challenges and provide practical solutions. Key expected outcomes include a reduction in consumer complaints, improved quality of awareness programmes and enhanced service delivery across all sectors. The initiative is expected to lead to better compliance, fewer violations and an improved business climate by encouraging suppliers and shopping mall owners.

GLOBE
FORUM
SHOWCASES
GREEN
INNOVATIONS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education on Wednesday organised the National Student Research Forum for the GLOBE Environmental Programme 2025. The event saw the participation of over 60 male and female students, along with 30 programme teachers from various educational directorates under the ministry from Oman's various governorates.

The forum aimed to showcase scientific research conducted by students from schools that qualified

for the final stage at the national level. These studies contribute to addressing and evaluating environmental issues through a specialised scientific judging committee, while also raising environmental awareness among students and teachers about the importance of environmental challenges and how to address them using modern scientific tools.

The forum seeks to motivate students to conduct scientific research in diverse environmental

fields, such as climate change, water quality and biodiversity protection, encouraging them to further develop their research projects and achieve more scientific accomplishments in the future.

During the event, the winning research projects in the competition were felicitated. This aims to promote environmental education in Omani schools and prepare youth to become leaders in environmental conservation and sustainable development. — ONA

Culture takes centre stage
at 29th Muscat Book Fair

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

UNDER the theme 'Cultural Diversity and the Richness of Civilisations,' the Muscat International Book Fair announced the details of its 29th edition during a press conference held recently. Scheduled from April 24 to May 3 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, the fair promises a vibrant lineup of cultural activities, intellectual discourse and family-friendly programming.

This year's edition will be inaugurated under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University. The Al Batinah North Governorate will be honoured as the 'Guest of Honour,' showcasing its cultural heritage, historical achievements and key figures through a dedicated pavilion.

Ahmed al Rawahi, Director of the Muscat International Book Fair, highlighted that the event will offer a wide array of programming tailored to children, youth and families. "This year we are also celebrating Saudi Cultural Days, which reflects the deep-rooted and

Al Batinah
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Governorate will
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as the 'Guest
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cultural heritage,
historical
achievements



Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information, addressing the press conference

thriving relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," he stated. Saudi Arabia will host a rich cultural programme at their pavilion and across various venues at the fair.

Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information, announced that around 500 temporary employment opportunities will be created as part of the fair, supporting Omani job seekers and promoting national

talent.

Shaikh Saud bin Mohammed al Hinai, Wali of Al Mudhaibi and Chairman of the Executive Committee for Al Sharqiyah North Governorate's participation, emphasised the region's contribution to Omani heritage and literature. "Our focus will be on culture, literature and the region's prominent intellectual figures," he said. Key features include: Children's Pavilion: A rich programme including theatrical shows, workshops, Arabic language activities and nine international participants alongside 95 Omani contributors. Cultural Cafés: Spread across participating pavilions for informal discussions and literary engagement.

Publishing and book industry: Over 674 publishing houses from 35 countries — 640 direct participants and 34 indirect — featuring more than 681,000 titles.

Digital Integration: Includes an exhibition app, a 3D map, mobile directory and electronic payment solutions in collaboration with Oman Arab Bank.

The exhibition will host 211 cultural events, including 84 discussion panels, 13 seminars, 15 lectures, 16 book launches and musical performances.

Food Safety Conference from April 21

KABEER YOUSUF
@KABIYUSEF
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR), represented by the Food Safety and Quality Centre, in cooperation with the government agencies concerned with food safety, is organising the 7th Oman International Food Safety and Quality Conference at the Oman Exhibition and Convention Centre (OCEC) from April 21 to 23.

The three-day high level conference and discussion sessions will see a number of prominent local and international speakers and experts from several

government and private agencies from across the world kick start discussions and debates on special topics on the efforts and challenges facing countries in their quest to ensure food safety and quality, according to Eng Yaqoub bin Khalfan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Fisheries, Chairman of the Main Committee for Food Safety Week.

On the first day, speech on 'Addressing resilience of food systems globally — the indispensable transformation', will be organised while the key topic of 'Modernising food safety and quality control

and oversight — Role of new technologies and Artificial Intelligence' will be discussed as part of the second session.

This session will review the role of modern technology in developing innovative solutions that enhance food safety and quality, including but not limited to Modern traceability systems, novel methods used to improve production, storage and distribution processes, as well as using smart sensing technologies that support rapid detection of contaminants

The third session on 'Food Fraud' will be dedicated to reviewing methods and approaches supporting efforts to ascertain authenticity of food products, inputs such as

pesticides and processes, thus contributing to the protection of consumers' health and confidence in food products available for sale.

"Such efforts are also associated with the reduction of the rate of food loss and waste; and would contribute positively to national economies overall. This session will review food quality management processes and analytical methods used to verify food authenticity and to detect adulterated or counterfeit ingredients, including Mass Spectrometry-based techniques, Infrared spectroscopy (IR), Genetic analysis and sensory or organoleptic tests," said Dr Hussain, D-G at the Quality Assurance at the Ministry.

Shabab Oman II sets sail for 6-month 15-nation voyage

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

The Royal Navy of Oman organised a special visit on Wednesday for a group of media professionals from various print, audio, visual and digital outlets to its ship Shabab Oman II, docked at Sultan Qaboos Port in Muttrah.

This visit was held in celebration of the inclusion of the Shabab Oman programme for peace and

sustainable cultural dialogue within the Unesco programmes, in recognition of its pioneering role in promoting cultural communication and mutual understanding among nations.

During the visit, Lt Col Issa bin Salim al Jahwari, Commander of Shabab Oman II, gave a comprehensive briefing on the ship's humanitarian and cultural mission, emphasising that it is more than just a training vessel. He described



Shabab Oman II docked at Muscat port

it as a complete platform for spreading values of love and peace; and enhancing Oman's presence in international forums.

Al Jahwari explained that Shabab Oman II is equipped with the latest navigation and communication systems, enabling it to perform its missions efficiently. He stated that work on board is structured around six main objectives, foremost among them supporting Oman Vision 2040, particularly the theme of 'People

and Society.' The ship provides a practical training environment that differs significantly from traditional education, where trainees engage in daily tasks enhancing their physical and mental abilities; and reducing digital isolation.

The ship is preparing for its seventh international voyage, titled Glory of the Seas, which will span approximately six months, visiting 30 ports in 15 countries and covering nearly 18,000 nautical miles.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



400,000 CHILDREN IN SYRIA RISK ‘SEVERE MALNUTRITION’

DAMASCUS: Save the Children said on Wednesday that more than 400,000 children in Syria were at risk of ‘severe malnutrition’ after the United States suspended aid, forcing the charity to slash operations in the war-torn country.

Bujar Hoxha, Save the Children’s Syria director, in a statement called on the international community to urgently fill the funding gap, warning that needs were “higher than ever” after years of war and economic collapse. “More than 416,000 children in Syria are now at significant risk of severe malnutrition following the sudden suspension of foreign aid,” Save the Children said in a statement, adding separately that the cuts were those of the United States. The agency had an annual budget of \$42.8 billion, representing 42 per cent of total global humanitarian aid.

The suspension has “forced the closure of one third of Save the Children’s life-saving nutrition activities” across Syria, the charity said, halting “vital care for over 40,500 children” aged under five.

Hoxha said the closure of the charity’s nutrition centres “comes at the worst possible time” with “the needs in Syria are higher than ever”.

Its clinics that are still open are “reporting a surge in malnutrition cases while struggling to keep up with the growing demand for care”, the charity added. — AFP

PUTIN, QATAR’S EMIR TO DISCUSS UKRAINE AND ENERGY

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin and Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani will discuss efforts to find a possible peace deal to end the war in Ukraine when they meet in Moscow on Thursday, Russia and Qatar said.

US President Donald Trump, who says he wants to be remembered as a peacemaker, has repeatedly said he wants to end the “bloodbath” of the three-year-old war in Ukraine, though Moscow has said it is not easy to agree a settlement.

The Kremlin said that Putin’s talks with the Qatari emir in Moscow would focus on “topical issues” with an emphasis on trade as well as on a number of issues on the international agenda.

“There will definitely be an exchange of views between Putin and the Emir of Qatar on Ukrainian affairs,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. “There will also be an exchange of views on regional affairs”. “The region is replete with conflict potential.

And Qatar plays a very big and important role in attempts to resolve many situations,” Peskov said. — Reuters

FINLAND EXTENDS RUSSIA BORDER CLOSURE INDEFINITELY

HELSINKI: Finland said on Wednesday that its eastern border with Russia, which it closed in December 2023, will remain closed indefinitely.

The Nordic country shut its 1,340-kilometre border with Russia after the arrival of around 1,000 migrants without visas. Helsinki claimed the surge of migrants was orchestrated by Russia, a charge the Kremlin has denied.

“Based on information available to the Finnish authorities, the risk that instrumentalised migration will resume and expand as seen previously remains likely,” the government said in a statement.

“If the phenomenon were to continue, it would pose a serious threat to Finland’s national security and public order,” it said.

Applications for international protection have been directed to the country’s other border crossing points, it said.

In April 2024, the Finnish government decided to close the eastern border “until further notice,” a decision it now has renewed.

“The government’s decision on the closure of the border has been in force under the same conditions for about a year.

This is why it was reasonable to reassess the content of the decision and its preconditions,” the government said. — AFP

Palestine slams Israeli leader’s Gaza visit

THE Palestinian foreign ministry on Wednesday condemned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to Gaza the previous day, in which he vowed to keep up Israel’s offensive against Hamas.

“The provocative incursion by Benjamin Netanyahu into northern Gaza, along with his accompanying statements, is intended to prolong and intensify the crimes of genocide and forced displacement” in the Palestinian territory, the West Bank-based ministry said in a statement.

Israel said on Wednesday it would keep blocking humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, where a relentless military offensive has turned the Palestinian territory into a “mass grave”, a medical charity reported.

Air and ground attacks resumed across the Gaza Strip on March 18, ending a two-month ceasefire with Hamas that had largely halted hostilities in the territory.

However, Israel has halted the entry of aid into Gaza since March 2, as the humanitarian crisis continues to grow amid ongoing military assaults which rescuers said killed at least 11 people on Wednesday.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said Israel would continue preventing aid from entering the besieged territory of 2.4 million people.

“Israel’s policy is clear: no humanitarian aid will enter Gaza and blocking this aid is one of the main pressure levers preventing Hamas from using it as a tool with the population,” Katz said in a statement on Wednesday.

“No one is currently planning to allow any humanitarian aid into Gaza and there are no preparations to enable such aid.”

Israeli officials including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have cited military pressure as the only way to secure the release of the 58 hostages held in Gaza.

“Hamas will continue to suffer blow after blow. We insist that they release our hostages and we insist on achieving all of our war objectives,” Netanyahu said on Tuesday.

The Ramallah-based Palestinian



Palestinians check the damaged following overnight Israeli strikes on a residential neighbourhood in Jabalia’s southwestern district of Nazla in the northern Gaza Strip. — AFP

foreign ministry denounced his Gaza visit, calling it a “provocative intrusion intended to prolong and intensify the crimes of genocide and forced displacement” of Gazans.

Medical aid agency Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said Israeli military operations and the blockage of aid had transformed Gaza into a graveyard for Palestinians and those who help them.

“Gaza has been turned into a mass grave of Palestinians and those coming to their assistance,” said MSF coordinator Amande Bazerolle.

“With nowhere safe for

Palestinians or those trying to help them, the humanitarian response is severely struggling under the weight of insecurity and critical supply shortages, leaving people with few, if any, options for accessing care,” she said.

The UN had warned on Monday that Gaza is facing its most severe humanitarian crisis since the war began in October 2023.

“The humanitarian situation is now likely the worst it has been in the 18 months since the outbreak of hostilities,” said the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. — AFP

Xi meets Malaysian leaders, vows to ‘safeguard’ Asia allies

KUALA LUMPUR: President Xi Jinping on Wednesday urged greater cooperation with Malaysia in the face of “shocks to the global order”, during the Chinese leader’s regional tour against the backdrop of a US trade war.

“China and Malaysia will stand with countries in the region to combat the undercurrent of geopolitical and camp-based confrontation, as well as the counter currents of unilateralism and protectionism,” he said.

“And together, we will safeguard the bright prospects of our Asian family,” Xi added during a speech in Malaysia’s administrative capital Putrajaya.

Xi embarked this week on a Southeast Asia tour that has already taken him to Vietnam and will also include Cambodia, with Beijing trying to position itself as a stable alternative to US President Donald Trump’s punitive tariff regime.

Malaysia premier Anwar Ibrahim said China has been “a rational, strong and reliable partner” amid the tariff turbulence.

His nation will “remain an unwavering and principled friend to China”, Anwar said as he hosted Xi for dinner at his official residence.

Xi was welcomed to Malaysia by the country’s king, Sultan Ibrahim,



China’s President Xi Jinping meets with Malaysia’s Prime Minister Anwar in Putrajaya. — AFP

in a colourful ceremony at the golden-domed palace.

He later held talks with Anwar and witnessed the exchange of 31 cooperation agreements on sectors

including emerging technologies, artificial intelligence, media and tourism. “It’s not just about friendship, it’s about realigning the regional centre of gravity towards Beijing,” said Khoo Ying Hooi from Malaya University.

The visit was a calculated move to “test the waters for regional solidarity at a time when US trade measures are disrupting global markets”, said Khoo, an associate professor in the Department of International and Strategic Studies.

Malaysia is this year’s chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) regional bloc, whose members have been among the

hardest hit by US tariffs.

Asean member Vietnam, a manufacturing powerhouse, was slapped with 46 per cent tariffs and Cambodia — was hit with a 49 per cent duty.

The levies have been paused for 90 days but Trump has said no country is “off the hook”.

“Regionally, Xi is likely to frame China as a partner in stability and development, not a hegemon,” Khoo said.

“At the same time, his message carries an implicit warning, that is: don’t let Washington’s tariffs or alliances undermine Asia’s own regional cohesion,” she said. — AFP

Amid shadow of conflict, Oman hosts hope of dialogue



ASIM
AL SHIDI

The writer is the Editor-in-Chief of Oman Arabic daily newspaper

VERY recently, the eyes of the world turned to Oman - not because of conflict, but because it remains one of the last places in the Middle East where opposing powers can meet and speak.

The Sultanate of Oman continues to prove itself as a space for dialogue, a neutral ground capable of managing fragile historical moments when the region most needs a moral and geopolitical compass.

The latest meeting between Washington and Tehran, which opened last Sunday in Muscat, is neither unprecedented nor likely to be the final round. Yet this encounter comes at a particularly critical time - marked by rising tensions, complex symbolism and high-stakes agendas that extend beyond the nuclear file. The negotiations reflect not just a technical dispute, but a deeper geopolitical contest with global implications.

The key question now is not simply whether the talks will succeed or fail - though early signs appear cautiously optimistic, but what has driven both parties to return to the negotiating table at all. What has shifted? Who is running against time? And who is trying to reset the balance of power before things spiral into a full-blown conflict?

At its core, the Iranian nuclear issue has

long served as a mask for a broader struggle - one rooted in Iran's political independence and civilisational pride. Since the 1979 revolution, Iran has openly rejected Western hegemony, a stance that continues to unsettle Washington. The fear is not only about uranium enrichment or centrifuge counts, but about Iran's refusal to conform.

This non-compliance threatens the established global order built to exclude powers outside the Western sphere. Yet, this does not mean the region can afford to ignore any nuclear ambitions - whether Iranian, Israeli, or otherwise. A nuclear-free Middle East remains a shared aspiration.

With Donald Trump back in the White House, his desire to showcase his negotiation skills is apparent. But beyond personal ambition lies a clear strategic aim: to prevent Iran from acquiring even symbolic deterrent power, especially in relation to the Washington-Tel Aviv alliance.

As former president Franklin D Roosevelt once remarked, "In politics, nothing happens by accident."

This round of negotiations, unlike the secret ones Oman hosted a decade ago, is unfolding in full view of the public. It reflects two competing visions: Washington seeks to salvage its image without yielding control,

Oman understands the region's delicate balances and is working to ensure that the historic moment in the talks is not lost

while Tehran wants to preserve its dignity without forfeiting its regional role.

The US wants to broaden the deal to include Iran's missile programme and its regional presence - non-negotiable issues for Tehran. Meanwhile, Iran has hinted at limiting uranium enrichment under international oversight but firmly rejects dismantling its nuclear infrastructure or withdrawing from key areas of influence.

The answer may lie in recognising that this is not merely a geopolitical contest, but a civilisational clash. On one side stands a global power that sees itself as the custodian of liberal values; on the other, a nation with a deep historical identity and a narrative of resistance to dominance.

Oman, fully aware of the stakes, continues to facilitate dialogue with great care. It understands the region's delicate balances and is working to ensure that this historic moment is not lost. In a world leaning towards polarisation, Oman remains a reminder that dialogue is still possible, and perhaps even necessary.

Translated by Badr al Dhafari
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EU-UK DEFENCE DEAL SNAGS ON FISH

UMBERTO BACCHI

Cod and herring are normally more likely to be on the dinner menu than the negotiating table at European security talks.

Yet, mackerel and missiles have become entangled in a tense diplomatic dance between London and Brussels that is causing friction ahead of a landmark EU-UK summit next month.

Both sides are hoping a defence and security pact will be the highlight of the May 19 meeting, as Donald Trump's return to the White House casts doubt over the US commitment to Nato and European protection.

The London summit is also meant to turn the page on years of post-Brexit rancour, as part of a 'reset' in relations vowed by British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. But captained by France, some EU countries are pushing to link the opening of defence talks to successful negotiations in other areas, with fishing a major sticking point.

"A very large majority of member states are in favour of signing this partnership during the summit," said a diplomatic source. "France's position is more tied to its own issues". The commission is due to update member states on the negotiations. Fishing, one of the thorniest points in Brexit negotiations, was always due to make a comeback on the cross-Channel diplomatic agenda, as a deal granting European boats access to British waters is to expire in 2026.

France and other EU countries on the North Sea would like the current agreement rolled over -- with London so far reluctant.

Even though fishing represents a fraction of Britain's economy, it still stirs passions as politicians rally behind the island's rich maritime history. Caving to French requests could play out poorly as England gears up for local elections on May 1, said Sebastien Maillard, a special adviser to the Jacques Delors Institute, a think tank.

On the other hand, Paris sees an extension as a needed sign of goodwill from Britain, which wants to renegotiate in its favour other aspects of a post-Brexit trade deal with the EU to help fire up a stagnant economy, he said.

"We very much welcome the UK's desire to move closer to Europe after deciding to leave five years ago. We can now build a positive agenda that is in our mutual interest in a changing strategic and economic context," said a French diplomat.

"We look forward to hearing more about the commitments the British are prepared to make in this regard." The UK has much to gain from a security deal that would open the door for British defence companies to benefit from European programmes to boost weapons production.

London is also eyeing a new veterinary pact to smooth exports of British agricultural goods.

So far however, a proposal floated by the European Commission -- a mobility programme for under-30s -- has been ruled out on the British side. — AFP

Oman's model of responsible freedom

FREEDOM of expression is a cornerstone of any modern and open society - one that believes in the individual, in rights, and in the citizen's ability to contribute to national development.

Across the world, states have enshrined this right in their legal frameworks, recognising it as essential to the social and political participation of their people.

International charters affirm freedom of expression as a fundamental right for individuals and communities. However, this right is not absolute. It is subject to limits that safeguard public order, national security and the moral fabric of societies.

Article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that the exercise of freedoms is subject to legal limitations, especially where it affects the rights of others, public order, or general welfare. Likewise, Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) allows restrictions on expression when necessary to protect the rights or reputations of others, or for national security and public morality.

These limitations reflect a balanced understanding: while freedom of expression is vital, it must not become a tool to destabilise societies or incite hatred and division. In an era of vast digital communication, some misuse this freedom to spread harmful ideologies or sow discord - prompting governments worldwide to adopt policies aimed at preserving public order and protecting the moral foundations of society.

True freedom of expression must be constructive. It should respect national identity and the dignity of others. Those who value this right must also understand that it carries responsibility. The state guarantees the right, but also sets the framework to ensure that its practice promotes growth rather than chaos.

Oman is among the nations that has embedded this principle within



AISHA
AL DARMAKI

The writer is a researcher specialising in semiotics and a member of the State Council

The Omani approach empowers its people to speak responsibly and nurtures a society that respects national symbols, values institutions and upholds the rights of others



its Basic Law. Article 35 guarantees freedom of opinion and expression, but within the bounds of the law. This is not a contradiction - it is a safeguard to ensure that expression does not harm the very society that enables it.

Unlimited expression, without respect for law and values, becomes a threat to peace and social cohesion.

Observers of the Omani media, including social platforms, can see the level of freedom enjoyed in the country. Opinions, suggestions, criticism, and even grievances are voiced with openness - freedoms not guaranteed in many places that claim to be democratic. Oman does not merely allow responsible expression; it encourages it, particularly when it contributes to development and the correction of public affairs.

Oman's stance on freedom of expression is also evident in its foreign policy. Its support for just causes, such as the Palestinian struggle, showcases a transparent and principled position. As global media outlets come under scrutiny for suppressing narratives about Palestine, Oman stands firm in its commitment to humanitarian principles, peace and dialogue over violence and injustice.

The Omani approach empowers its people to speak responsibly. It nurtures a society that respects national symbols, values institutions

and upholds the rights of others. When rare cases of abuse occur, the people themselves are often the first to demand accountability. This collective awareness reflects a deeply rooted understanding that rights come with obligations.

Recent events, such as peaceful solidarity gatherings with Palestine, show that Omanis - especially the youth - grasp the true meaning of expression: to support justice without violating laws or provoking discord.

Their behaviour reflects a model of civic maturity that many nations aspire to.

Oman's policies and laws, alongside its commitment to justice and social peace, have fostered a climate where freedom of expression thrives responsibly. The nation distinguishes between constructive criticism and harmful incitement, upholding a freedom rooted in citizenship, unity and trust in its institutions.

In a world where speech can often divide, Oman demonstrates that expression can also heal, unite and build. Responsible freedom is not a contradiction - it is the path towards sustainable peace and national strength.

Translated by Badr al Dhafari
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OPINION

Oman leads a global first in hydrogen



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

The writer is an environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development, focusing on climate change impacts in the Middle East and women's empowerment in environmental solutions

THERE are moments in one's career that feel heavy with meaning. Not because of the titles in the room, but because of the quiet sense that something lasting is being built. For me, that moment came this Tuesday in Amsterdam.

It was my first time participating in a state visit representing my home. The occasion was the historic visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On the sidelines of that grand diplomacy, something deeply personal unfolded. A project I had been patiently building for nearly two years came to life in the form of a world-first agreement.

For 23 months, I have been part of the team behind what is now the first liquid hydrogen corridor globally. From the deserts of Al Duqm to the port of Amsterdam and the industrial landscapes of Germany, we brought together every piece of the value chain. Production, liquefaction, shipping, import terminals and offtake were all

aligned through one unified vision. What began as a shared ambition among a handful of determined partners is now a signed commitment among eleven entities representing three nations.

After the signing, I had the rare honour of meeting Their Majesties, the Sultan of Oman and the King of the Netherlands, in a networking reception. I stood there not just as a delegate, but as someone who had helped build this bridge from an idea into something real. And in that moment, I had the privilege to share with them a quiet but powerful truth. This was the first of its kind in the world. A global first. A moment where Oman, the Netherlands and Germany were not following a trend, but setting one.

It is difficult to describe the weight of that moment. To stand in front of two monarchs and articulate a vision that has consumed nearly two years of your life. But what I felt most was clarity. This was not about ceremony. This was about legacy.

This corridor is not just about molecules.

The big moment in Amsterdam showed the world that Oman is not only ready to participate in the energy transition but to lead it with purpose

It is about meaning. It is about how nations can come together to solve shared challenges. It is about showing the world that Oman is not only ready to participate in the energy transition but to lead it with purpose.

At the heart of the project lies Duqm, soon to be home to the largest hydrogen liquefaction, storage and export terminal in the world. By 2030, it will deliver green, RFNBO-compliant hydrogen directly to Europe. Around it, new industries will grow. Jobs will be created. Value will be generated. The impact will ripple across borders.

Liquid hydrogen is not new. It has fuelled spacecraft for decades. What is new is our decision to scale it here on Earth. Not for exploration, but for decarbonisation. Not for propulsion, but for transformation.

As I left that room, I carried more than pride. I carried a stillness. A quiet recognition that 23 months of effort had led to something real. Something historic.

And I knew, without doubt, that this was only the beginning.

DUTCH FLOWER INDUSTRY GRASPS PESTICIDE ISSUE

CHARLOTTE VAN OUWERKERK

As Margriet Mantingh gazes at flowers stretching as far as the eye can see at the world's biggest flower market near Amsterdam, all she sees is a huge bouquet of pesticides. Known globally for tulips, the Dutch are world leaders in the international flower sector, which is coming under increasing scrutiny for pesticides sprayed on the fields.

This global leadership role makes it all the more important for the Dutch to show the way in the face of mounting criticism of the industry, said Mantingh, president of the PAN-NL anti-pesticide group.

Her organisation recently published a study showing most bouquets bought at a florist, supermarket, or online, are stuffed full of pesticides.

She said the flowers were sprayed with a toxic cocktail that can cause cancer, affect hormones and decrease fertility.

"We examined 13 bouquets and found 71 different pesticides, one third of which were banned substances" in the European Union, the 78-year-old retiree said. The flowers examined contained traces of insecticides and fungicides, some of which are banned "because they are very toxic for humans," she said.

The issue of pesticides on flowers hit the headlines in France after a young girl died of a leukaemia linked to her mother's exposure to the chemicals, as she worked as a florist during her pregnancy.

French consumer group UFC Que Choisir has also raised concerns about pesticide contamination of cut flowers, warning of dangers for those handling the flowers. At Aalsmeer, near the Dutch capital, dozens of staff on electric scooters weave through the world's biggest flower market.

The Royal FloraHolland group based there sells some nine billion flowers per year for an annual turnover of around \$5.8 billion.

Most of their produce is exported, mainly to Germany, Britain and France.

Dutch companies also import some three billion stems annually from Africa, notably Ethiopia and Kenya, said Michel van Schie, spokesman for Royal FloraHolland. And the rules on pesticides are determined by the country cultivating the flowers — often applying different standards, he added.

"In Africa, there are different diseases than in Europe. That means that other products are needed to fight against these diseases," he said.

The problem is that these flowers then make their way into the European market, say groups like UFC Que Choisir and PAN-NL.

There are no EU laws limiting pesticides on cut flowers, 80 per cent of which are imported from countries still permitting the use of highly toxic substances, said PAN-NL's Mantingh. — AFP

Connecting Oman and the Netherlands

I usually write about education and its importance. But let us not forget that education goes beyond the formal institutions as well. I am referring to the learning that takes place in other contexts, including at a family home or across cultures.

Let me explain. This week, I learned from articles published in this newspaper and posts shared on social media that His Majesty the Sultan is currently visiting the Netherlands. My Omani family and I are currently visiting the Netherlands as well, but unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to watch His Majesty visiting a monument in Amsterdam.

Instead, we have been mostly staying at a house on a street in Amstelveen, a municipality near Amsterdam, where I was once born and raised and where my father currently resides while we take care of him due to unforeseen circumstances. Let me simply sum it up as the 'best of times and the worst of times,' as we get to spend a little bit of quality time with someone facing a challenge we wish he did not have to.

My father lives on a street opposite a village called Ouderkerk, which means Old Church. His street and the village are separated by the Amstel River, which also runs through Amsterdam, which is famous for its canals. The Venice of the north of Europe.

Mind you, two famous Hollywood actors were born and raised in Amstelveen as well, not just little old me. From his house, my father can see two Churches, one Protestant and one Catholic. I have a special memory that relates to one of them. Both churches still have bells that they ring.

In our street in Oman, we have a mosque and I miss the call for prayers.

So, earlier this week, we could not attend the ceremony that involved HM the Sultan in Amsterdam as we had to do homework for school, a formal institution in Oman and I had to work from this Dutch



The village of Ouderkerk, separated by the Amstel River, which also flows through Amsterdam, is renowned for its picturesque canals



BREGJE VAN
BAAREN

The writer is a consultant and former expert in government undergraduate scholarships

home for the Oman government organisation to which I currently contribute. As always, it is an honour to serve a great nation like Oman.

My husband is an Omani national, while my parents are both Dutch. Given the visit of His Majesty the Sultan to the Netherlands and my own experience, I could go on and on about the unique relationship and areas of cooperation between the two countries. However, the truth is that today, many Dutch people still ask me why I feel more at home in Oman than in the Netherlands.

The answer is that I feel a bit more like 'myself' in Oman, not primarily because of what the two countries have in common but more because of the differences between the two. I love the gentle and family-comes-first approach of Omanis, the amazing natural beauty; and the norms and values that derive from a beautiful religion.

I do appreciate the story about a ship called 'The Amstelveen' that

Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, once told me. In 1763, the Dutch ship 'Amstelveen' set sail from the Dutch East Indies for Muscat. Through a combination of human error and rough seas, the ship never made it to port, sinking off the southern coast of Oman. The 30 surviving crew members then faced a challenging trek across a desolate desert landscape to Muscat.

After hearing this story, that was again the theme of an article that appeared in this newspaper earlier this week, I started imagining that I might have ancestors who were on that ship. One of my late grandmothers grew up as an orphan, so you never really know. But I guess this was my way of explaining why I have always felt such a sense of belonging in Oman, a sense that I could never feel at home to that extent in the Netherlands, which is my birth country that I love and respect, but, as it turns out, is not my home country.

The algorithm that mirrors life...



DR MUAMAR AL TOBI

The writer is an academic and researcher

ONE scene has remained etched in my memory ever since my doctoral studies in the United Kingdom, during a chapter of my thesis that dealt with applying the genetic algorithm to an artificial intelligence model. I was telling my supervisor how the genetic algorithm had been running on my computer for almost 24 hours straight, still searching for the optimal solution. He laughed and said, “Life and all its intricacies, according to the law of evolution, took millions of years to shape into what we see today, don’t fret over a few dozen computational hours!” That moment captured the profound link between genetic algorithms and their natural and mathematical counterparts, a connection this article seeks to explore.

The term “algorithm” has become a buzzword in today’s digital discourse - including in my own published articles - often tightly coupled with artificial intelligence. However, the concept of an algorithm is broader than its modern usage implies. In the digital world, an algorithm is a logical, step-by-step mathematical approach to achieving a goal. It’s a general mathematical methodology whose applications vary widely depending on the context.

In artificial intelligence systems, algorithms function as the digital brain. They interlink inputs, facilitate training and generate desired outputs. Among these, one of the most powerful is the Genetic Algorithm

(GA), often used directly on datasets to perform tasks such as optimisation and selection. In fact, the GA can be integrated with primary AI algorithms to enhance their efficiency and performance.

This raises a common question: what do genes have to do with mathematics? Genetic material, after all, is biological, tied to hereditary traits and DNA analysis used in diagnosing or predicting diseases. Yet, the Genetic Algorithm borrows the logic of natural genetics and evolution, applying it through pure mathematics to simulate biological processes. To understand this better, let’s explore how the GA works and how it is applied, especially in AI.

The Genetic Algorithm is one of the evolutionary algorithms inspired by Darwin’s theory of natural selection, but in this context, it’s a non-random, guided process. It shines in fields like AI and machine learning in solving optimisation problems, where multiple solutions are evaluated, compared and refined.

The process begins with initialisation, randomly generating a group of potential solutions, known as individuals or chromosomes. These serve as the starting population. Using mechanisms that mimic genetic crossover and mutation, the algorithm gradually improves the population. Each individual is evaluated through a fitness function that measures how well it solves the problem. The best-performing individuals are then selected in the selection phase, similar

The concept of an algorithm is broader than its modern usage implies. In the digital world, an algorithm is a logical, step-by-step mathematical approach to achieving a goal

to survival of the fittest.

Next comes crossover, the digital equivalent of biological reproduction. Here, two “parent” solutions combine parts of their data to create “offspring”, new solutions that inherit traits from both. This increases the diversity of the population and allows for exploration of new, potentially better areas of the solution space.

To prevent stagnation or premature convergence, mutation is introduced. In biological terms, this refers to random changes in DNA; in algorithms, it’s a controlled alteration of a solution’s data to maintain diversity. Although most mutations are minor, some can significantly enhance (or reduce) the fitness of an individual, a phenomenon also observed in real genetics. In fact, I’ve previously expressed the idea, detailed in my book Between Science and Faith, that so-called “random mutations” may actually conceal an intricate, undiscovered order beyond the grasp of current science.

Following mutation is the replacement stage, where the new population (or part of it) replaces the older one based on overall fitness. This iterative cycle continues until the termination condition is met, usually when a sufficient solution is found, or a maximum number of iterations is reached. In this way, the algorithm doesn’t just simulate biology, it demonstrates how complex systems, whether digital or organic, evolve towards optimal states through competition, adaptation and change.

INDONESIANS TURN VINTAGE SCOOTERS ELECTRIC!

DESSY SAGITA

When Indonesian executive Heret Frasthio takes his antique 1957 VL Vespa for a ride, its white paint peeling off, the usual fumes and hum of the free-spirited scooters cannot be seen or heard.

The two-wheeler is just one of the vintage models converted by his company as it tries to turn a love for the Italian icon into an environmentally friendly pursuit. Indonesia has long suffered from air pollution partly driven by its addiction to inefficient, old cars and scooters, including nearly one million Vespas as of 2022, according to the country’s Vespa Club. “Vespa has a unique design. It has a historical and nostalgic value. It’s not just a vehicle, it’s also fashion,” said Frasthio, chief executive of Elders, which converts the older bikes into electric vehicles.

The country’s leaders are pushing for more EVs on its roads, with a target of 13 million electric motorcycles by 2030 – ambitiously far from the current number of 160,000, according to transport ministry data.

But Elders is playing its part in what the government hopes will be the early stages of an electric vehicle revolution.

Frasthio says the firm has converted and sold around 1,000 Vespas across the country since its founding in 2021 and one day aims to develop its own electric scooter.

Once converted, a Vespa’s fully charged electric battery can last 60-120 km, and up to 200 km for an upgraded battery. “This electric Vespa can be a solution for countries that require low emissions from motorcycles,” Frasthio said.

Yet pricing remains a major stumbling block in Southeast Asia’s biggest economy.

Frasthio’s proud but humble Vespa cost \$34,000 to buy before conversion.

A brand-new Vespa Elettrica imported from Italy can cost 198 million rupiah (\$11,750) and the European company already sells a range of electric scooters in the continent. But for those who want to stay retro, there are kits to convert to vintage scooters to electric that cost between \$1,500 and \$3,900, Frasthio said.

The chance to switch is attracting customers who want a fashionable ride without contributing to noise and air pollution. One of them is Hendra Iswahyudi, who bought a converted Vespa from Frasthio’s firm, remembering the effort of riding an old model as a student.

“You would turn on the ignition and take a shower while waiting for the engine to be ready,” the 56-year-old said.

Riding an antique Vespa from the 1960s without the pollution and the noise in Jakarta’s heavy traffic has also earned him curious looks.

“People who like Vespa came to have a closer look and told me that my scooter was very cool,” he said. — AFP

Europe after the end of the liberal world order

THROUGHOUT Europe, US President Donald Trump is seen as a chaos-monger with a reverse Midas touch: everything he touches ends up worse than he found it. Yet despite his anachronistic views on most issues, he is the perfect embodiment of our era.

In 2021, I authored The Age of Unpeace, which argued that we need to start reimagining the rules of international relations for an era of hyper-connectivity. All the institutions and arrangements that were supposed to bring us together, I observed, were instead being weaponised. Today’s global politics is like a marriage gone wrong. In a failed marriage, shared items like a holiday home, the pet dog, or children can be used by one estranged partner to harm the other; similarly, trade, the Internet, energy sources, supply chains, migration flows, critical raw materials and cutting-edge technology can be used to exercise geopolitical influence and inflict pain.

In this new world, I noted, the boundaries between war and peace have been eroded. We were wrong to think that we had secured a golden age of peace at the end of the Cold War. In reality, there was violence everywhere, but it came in the form of sanctions, export controls, energy cut-offs, election interference and weaponised migration – all of which stopped short of formal war.

Just a few months after my book came out, Vladimir Putin launched Russia’s full-scale war on Ukraine. Since then, much of the world’s attention has focused on the traditional elements of war and the need to defend against Russian tanks, planes and missiles. Analysts and policymakers drew on the lessons of the past, rather than focusing on the novelty of the situation. Yet the war in Ukraine has always been unique – a strange hybrid of the nineteenth and the twenty-first centuries, featuring soldiers and trenches but also sanctions, drones, AI, and a contest for influence on social media.



The liberal international order couldn’t be called liberal after the atrocities at Abu Ghraib or Guantánamo Bay.



MARK LEONARD

The writer is Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, is the author of The Age of Unpeace: How Connectivity Causes Conflict

US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz responded to Russia’s war by trying to recreate the old order. But especially since Trump’s re-election, it has been obvious that we need a new way of looking at the world. Gone is any clear distinction between war and peace, allies and enemies, national and private interests, or left and right. With Trump launching a trade war against the rest of the world, attempting to extort minerals from Ukraine, and threatening the territorial integrity of Greenland and Panama, the old rules of international order no longer apply.

Unfortunately, this is not just about “disorder”, which would imply that there is some basic agreement on what “order” looks like. There isn’t. Thinking about international order has been completely overtaken by events. For years, governments muddled through crises rooted in hyper-connectivity and interdependence – from the 2008 market crash to the Syrian refugee crisis to the pandemic – leaving policymakers unable to win their citizens’ confidence. Many resorted to emergency measures

and states of exception; but now, so many exceptions have been made that the international rulebook looks like Swiss cheese. It has become an exceptions-based order, rather than a rules-based one.

Trump understood this. He tapped into the popular frustration with elites who pretended that they had all the answers, yet consistently failed to do what they had promised. Americans are catching up to many others around the world who had always thought that the liberal international order was a con – much like the Holy Roman Empire, which was neither holy nor Roman nor an empire. The liberal international order couldn’t be called liberal after the atrocities at Abu Ghraib or Guantánamo Bay; it couldn’t be called international when many parts of the world were still mired in civil wars; and owing to these failings, it couldn’t be called an order. As Europeans rearm to confront Russian war, they also need to figure out how to survive in the age of “unpeace” that Trump, Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, and other strongmen are ushering in. One of the biggest challenges will be to make interdependence feel safe again. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

GLOBAL AUDIENCE



OMAN LNG PARTNERS WITH WORLD ENDURANCE RACER AL HARTHY

MUSCAT: International racing driver Ahmad al Harthy is delighted to welcome Oman LNG as the newest member of his prestigious partner portfolio, confirming a key association ahead of this weekend’s second round of the FIA World Endurance Championship.

Al Harthy, who is proudly flying the flag for Oman once again in 2025 in the globe’s biggest motor racing series of its kind with Team WRT and BMW, has agreed an important partnership with Oman LNG – which was established by Royal Decree in 1994 for the production of liquefied natural gas. Based in Qalhat, near Sur, Oman LNG prides itself on corporate social responsibility with a major focus on integrity and professionalism, values all shared wholeheartedly by multiple FIA World Endurance Championship LMG3 podium finisher Al Harthy.

Additionally, the Omani – who is partnered with Italian global sporting icon Valentino Rossi and South Africa’s Kelvin van der Linde in the No 46 BMW M4 LMG3 in FIA WEC – shares Oman LNG’s guiding principles around teamwork, accountability, respect and empowerment.

Through the new partnership, Oman LNG will reach a global audience as Al Harthy races across the world from Europe to Brazil, the USA to Japan. Notably, of course, the season finale in November will take place in Bahrain in the Middle East. Helping to promote the company’s work internationally, Oman LNG joins a prestigious group of partners associated with Al Harthy.

Hamed al Naamany, Chief Executive Officer Oman LNG: “Oman LNG is proud to partner with Omani motor racing champion Ahmad al Harthy as he represents the Sultanate of Oman on the global stage. This partnership reflects our unwavering commitment to supporting national talent and promoting excellence in sports.

“As Ahmad competes in the prestigious FIA World Endurance Championship across key international arenas, we stand firmly behind him and look forward to seeing the Omani flag fly high through his remarkable achievements.”

Ahmad al Harthy: “I’m really delighted to be partnering with Oman LNG, this is an incredibly important new and prestigious partnership with great synergies between us – not least the focus we all place on integrity, teamwork and corporate social responsibility. We will be racing in some key markets for Oman LNG where the aim will be to share and enjoy some great successes together.”

SAAYID THEYAZIN OPENS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT CENTRES

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth on Wednesday graced over the opening of Active Oman Centre and Action Point Oman at the Oman Automobile Association.

HH Sayyid Theyazin inaugurated the new identity of Oman Automobile Association ‘Active Oman’. He also toured the facilities of Active Point Centre and the Action Point Oman.

The centre is a sports entertainment destination that aims to empower youth to practice their hobbies and to hone their skills in an environment that stimulates innovation and contributes to developing the sports and tourism sectors. Action Point Oman features six indoor shooting ranges built based on global standards and



equipped with state-of-the-art technology.

Active Oman Centre includes halls for padel, acrobatics, snooker, billiards and digital golf, in addition to a bowling alley, tracks for car and bike racing, and an international karting circuit. — ONA

AL RUSTAQ TRIUMPH OVER SUR IN OL

SOHAR, AL KHABOURAH, SAHAM AND IBRI SETTLE FOR DRAWS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

AL RUSTAQ claimed a precious 1-0 victory over Sur, as part of the 18th round of the Omantel League on Tuesday.

Al Rustaq dominated most of the first half and threatened Sur’s goal with several attempts from Laith al Adawi and Ernest. The breakthrough came in the 36th minute when Al Adawi scored with a header following a precise cross from Ernest. Sur attempted to respond through counter-attacks but lacked effectiveness, ending the first half with Al Rustaq in the lead.

In the second half, both teams continued to press ahead. Sur had a notable chance in the 55th minute, and Al Rustaq responded with a shot over the bar in the 60th minute. Both coaches made substitutions to bolster their attacks. Abdullah al Mushaikhi and Aysar al Alawi stood out for Sur but couldn’t change the result. The match ended with Al Rustaq taking all three points. With this win, Al Rustaq raised their tally to 20 points, moving up to eighth place and distancing themselves from relegation danger. Sur remained on 13 points, remaining among the favourites for relegation.

SOHAR, AL KHABOURAH SHARE POINTS
Sohar and Al Khabourah played to a 1-1 draw at Al Rustaq Sports Complex as part



Sohar and Al Khabourah players in action.

of the Omantel League.

The first half saw a moderate level of play with both sides attempting to break the deadlock.

The best chances came from a long-range effort by Mohsin Jawhar that sailed over the crossbar in the ninth minute, and a dangerous header from Rashid al Hosani that was brilliantly saved by

goalkeeper Fayeze al Rushaidi in the 25th minute. Despite Al Khabourah’s relative dominance in aerial balls, Sohar opened the scoring in the 41st minute through Saud al Muqbali, who finished from a cross, ending the half 1-0 in Sohar’s favour.

Al Khabourah came out strongly in the second half and pressed for an equaliser, which came in the 51st minute via a header from Mohammed Lami off a cross. Both teams continued to trade attacks, but neither could secure the win, even with six minutes of added time, ending the game in a 1-1 draw.

Sohar’s draw brings them to 18 points, slipping to 11th place, while Al Khabourah climb to 22 points in fifth place.

SAHAM, IBRI DRAW 2-2
Saham and Ibri battled to a 2-2 draw at the Sur Sports Complex.

Ibri had a slight upper hand in the first half and scored an early goal in the ninth minute through Yousef al Khalili. They maintained their lead into half-time.

In the second half, Saham responded strongly.

Nigerian striker Adeniji Babatunde equalised in the 48th minute and scored again in the 72nd to give Saham a 2-1 lead. However, Ibri reacted quickly and levelled the score just two minutes later with a goal by Viston Abdul.

The draw puts Saham at 21 points in sixth place, while Ibri climb to 20 points in ninth place.

Al Dakhiliyah boys emerge overall champions in School Sports Days

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

Following four days of thrilling actions, the Oman School Sports Association (OSSA) concluded the School Sports Days for boys on Wednesday and girls on Monday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The Directorate-General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah dominated as they managed to clinch the overall championship. Al Batinah North secured second place while Al Dhahirah took third spot.

Al Dakhiliyah boys delivered an outstanding show in majority events including athletics and cross-country as they took first place demonstrating strong overall performance.

Earlier in the girls’ section, Al Dakhiliyah secured the top place.



The Directorate-General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah clinched the overall championships in the boys and girls categories of the School Sports Days.

The School Sports Days event was a platform to showcase the sporting and mental capabilities of students from across Oman. The event’s success will be reflected by having potential athletes who will join the national team in the

coming future.

In boys athletics, the junior athletes from different governorates excelled with a solid performance filled with excitement across all categories. Al Dakhiliyah boys secured first place

in the overall athletics standings with 54 points. Al Batinah North followed with 46 points while Muscat came in third with 41 points.

The potential athletes will add a positive value to the national athletics team by joining it in the near future.

MUSCAT TOP IN BOWLING
In the bowling competition, Muscat earned first place while Al Dakhiliyah came second and Al Dhahirah finished third. The table tennis title was won by Al Dhahirah, followed by Al Batinah North in second place and Muscat in third.

In badminton, Khalid al Shibli from Al Batinah North secured first place. Mohammed al Hinai and Uday al Hinai, both from Al Dakhiliyah, came second and third respectively. In chess, Ammar bin

Yasser Basic Education School from Al Dhahirah won first place, followed by Mohammed bin Jaafar al Azkawi School from Al Dakhiliyah in second, and al Mas’a Education School from Al Batinah North in third.

The concluding ceremony of School Sports Days for boys ended with a vibrant show at the main hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The event was attended by Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of the Automotive, Construction Equipment, and Renewable Energy Division at Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC in presence of Hisham bin Salim al Adwani, Vice-Chairman of Oman School Sports Association and officials. At the end, the chief guest presented the medals to the winners of the top three positions in all the competitions.

OCLLEAGUE



Sukhwinder Singh and Arslan Zaheer made key contributions in Peace Players' victory.

MMM-B THUMP
OCT AL NAHDHA,
PEACE PLAYERS WIN

MUSCAT: Peace Players beat Fortune Engg and Services by five wickets in the Oman Cricket E Division League 2024-25.

Batting first, Fortune Engg managed to score 162 runs courtesy of both openers, Jibin K and Mohd Ali Khader scoring 42 and 41 respectively. Sukhwinder Singh's five-wicket haul including a hat-trick spun the trick for Peace Players to restrict Fortune Engg. In response, Peace Players chased the target in 19.2 overs as Arslan Zaheer scored 52 while Mohd Rashid scored a quick-fire 48 as opener. Shamzan Siraj picked 3 wickets for Fortune.

In G Division, Mordern Muscat Mountains B thumped OCT Al Nahdha by 103 runs.

Fahad T Hamza swash buckled an unbeaten 175 of just 87 balls with 19 boundaries and seven maximums. MMM-B scored 245 in 20 overs as Khalil al Balushi was the pick of the bowlers for picking 1 wicket for OCT Al Nahdha. In response, OCT Al Nahdha managed to drag upto 142 courtesy Asad Hamed's 51. Banwari Lal was the pick of the bowlers for MMM-B picking 2 wickets. **Brief Scores**

E Division: Fortune Engg and Services 162-8 in 20 overs (Jibin K 42 (24) — 4x5, 6x1; Sukhwinder Singh 5-24) lost to Peace Players 163-5 in 19.2 overs (Arslan Zaheer 52 (38) — 4x1, 6x2; Shamzan Siraj 3-21) by 5 wickets.

G Division: MMM-B 245-3 in 20 overs (Fahad Hamza 175 (87)* — 4x19, 6x7; Khalil al Balushi 1-38) beat OCT Al Nahdha 142-9 in 20 overs (Asad Hamed 51 (45) — 4x6; Banwari Lal 2-16) by 103 runs.



Fahad Hamza of Mordern Muscat Mountains.



Punjab Kings' Yuzvendra Chahal celebrates with Marco Jansen after taking the wicket of Kolkata Knight Riders' Rinku Singh. — Reuters

Chahal stars as Punjab
defend 111 in 'best win'

SPINNER

Yuzvendra Chahal returned figures of 4-28 as Punjab Kings defended IPL's lowest ever total of 111 to down holders Kolkata Knight Riders by 16 runs in a thriller on Tuesday.

Kolkata looked to be cruising at 62-2 before Chahal cut through the chase with his leg-spin and the side collapsed to 95 all out in 15.1 overs at Mullanpur, near Chandigarh.

Punjab were earlier bowled out for 111 in 15.3 overs but Chahal and company turned the match on its head to better Chennai Super Kings' record — they defended 116 against them (formerly Kings XI Punjab) in 2009. Kolkata's Andre Russell attempted to pull off the chase from 79-8 when he hit two sixes and a four off Chahal but Punjab held their nerve.

Arshdeep Singh sent back Vaibhav Arora and then fellow left-arm quick Marco Jansen bowled Russell to trigger wild celebrations in Punjab's home ground.

"I have coached a lot of games in the IPL and that might just be about the best win I

ever had," head coach Ricky Ponting said after the close contest.

Kolkata skipper Ajinkya Rahane and impact substitute Angkrish Raghuvanshi put on 55 runs for the third wicket when Chahal broke through to get the captain back in the pavilion lbw. Ball tracker suggested the ball was outside the off stump, but Rahane did not take the review.

RAHANE TAKES BLAME

"Pretty disappointed with the effort," said Rahane. "I'll take the blame, played the wrong shot, although it was missing."

Chahal, with his tail now up, got Raghuvanshi caught out in the next over for 37 and the Punjab were in the game when Glenn Maxwell had Venkatesh Iyer lbw for seven.

Chahal then got two in two — Rinku Singh stumped and Ramandeep Singh out for a golden duck — before Harshit Rana avoided the hat-trick ball.

But the day belonged Chahal and Punjab who moved into the top four of the 10-team table with their fourth win in six matches.

Ponting said Chahal, who was named player of the match, had a fitness test before the game for a shoulder injury he picked in his previous outing.

Earlier, Rana rattled the Punjab top-order after a brisk start by the openers and returned figures of 3-25 from his three overs.

New batting sensation Priyansh Arya and Prabhsimran Singh made the hosts race to 39 in 3.1 overs, before Rana struck to send back the left-handed Arya caught at fine leg for 22.

Rana got one more wicket two balls later when Ramandeep pulled off a stunning catch in the deep to dismiss skipper Shreyas Iyer, for a duck.

Spinner Varun Chakravarthy joined forces in the next over to have Punjab's England import Josh Inglis bowled for two.

Prabhsimran, who made 30, attempted to hit back with two sixes off Rana but the bowler had the last laugh with Ramandeep once again taking a catch at point.

Chakravarthy and fellow spinner Sunil Narine kept striking regular blows as Punjab's batting faltered only for their bowlers to ultimately save the day. — AFP

Top seed Alcaraz follows Ruud into Barcelona Open last 16

BARCELONA: World number two Carlos Alcaraz came back from a break down in the second set to defeat Ethan Quinn 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) and reach the Barcelona Open last 16 on Tuesday.

The home favourite, who triumphed at the Monte Carlo Masters last week, stormed through the first set but Quinn, ranked 126th, battled valiantly in the second.

Alcaraz has endured an inconsistent start to the year, crashing out of the Miami Open at the first hurdle in March, as he prepares for his French Open title defence.

The 21-year-old is aiming for a third triumph on the clay in Barcelona, after lifting the trophy in 2022 and 2023. He was unable



I made some mistakes, I found it hard to maintain (the right) level, but I am happy to have solved the problems that came in the second set, and to end up winning in two sets.

CARLOS
ALCARAZ



to participate in the last edition because of injury. "Last year it was very painful not to be here, so I am very happy to be able to come back and play here again; and more so to win," Alcaraz said. "I made some mistakes, I found it hard to maintain (the right) level, but I am happy to have solved the problems that came in the second set, and to end up winning in two sets."

Alcaraz saved all five break points he faced in the first set, breaking Quinn in the third and fifth games for a 5-1 lead.

The Spaniard failed to convert a set point in the seventh game but did so at the third time of asking on his serve after opening up a triple set point. The second set was topsy-turvy, with both players exchanging

breaks on three occasions, forcing a tie-break.

Alcaraz saved a set point before dispatching Quinn with a drop shot to claim victory.

Earlier, defending Barcelona Open champion Casper Ruud sailed into the last 16 with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Daniel Elahi Galan.

The world number 10, targeting his first trophy of the season, blew away his Colombian opponent hitting 25 winners and without facing a break point.

In the second set Ruud broke for a 4-2 lead and served it out.

France's Arthur Fils beat Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta 7-6 (8/6), 6-3, while last year's runner-up Stefanos Tsitsipas crushed giant American Reilly Opelka 6-2, 6-2. — AFP



Oman's State Visit to the Netherlands

A Milestone in Green Energy Co-operation

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's state visit to the Netherlands commemorates 400 years of historic maritime relations between the two nations. The visit highlights a shared commitment to strengthening economic co-operation, with a particular focus on renewable energy — including green hydrogen — as well as water management and sustainable logistics.

KEY MILESTONES

- NOVEMBER 2022**
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed during COP27 for green hydrogen corridors.
- DECEMBER 2023**
Joint Study Agreement (JSA) signed at COP28 for a commercial scale liquid hydrogen corridor.

PARTNERSHIP AND GOALS



Oman and the Netherlands are committed to **advancing green hydrogen technologies**.



The state visit will further **solidify existing partnerships**, driving renewable energy development and environmental sustainability.

AGREEMENTS DETAILS

Oman-Europe Liquid Hydrogen Corridor



PROJECT'S OBJECTIVE

Leverage Oman's renewable energy resources to establish Oman as a leader in green hydrogen, promoting economic diversification and decarbonisation.



SIGNED AGREEMENT

Joint Development Agreement between 11 major industry players including OQ, Hydrom, Hynetwork Services, Port of Duqm, Port of Amsterdam and Port of Duisport

Partnership with Royal Vopak



PROJECT'S OBJECTIVE

Development of Duqm as an integrated storage hub for hydrocarbons, chemicals, and low-carbon products, unlocking growth opportunities in logistics and energy transition.



SIGNED AGREEMENT

Partnership Framework Agreement for Duqm storage and infrastructure development.

MoU with Gasunie



PROJECT'S OBJECTIVE

Strategic collaboration to support the development of green hydrogen-related infrastructure in Oman.



SIGNED MoU

To collaborate on green hydrogen infrastructure development and CCUS knowledge exchange.



Energy beyond Limits

This visit is expected to further enhance Oman's position as a leader in green energy, establishing lasting ties with Europe through joint hydrogen efforts and mutual goals in sustainability.



MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
4,304.436

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$66.72
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LIGHT \$61.78



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Proactive planning is necessary to ensure Omani products remain competitive in global markets.

FTA TO SOFTEN BLOW OF US TARIFFS ON OMANI EXPORTS

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

THE OMAN Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) organised a virtual workshop on Tuesday titled, “US Tariffs and Their Impact on Omani Exports”, focusing on the recent executive decision by the United States regarding reciprocal tariff measures. The session addressed the potential repercussions of the new policy on Omani exporting companies and the broader national economy.

The event also highlighted proposed mechanisms to mitigate any negative outcomes and discussed strategies for Omani institutions and businesses to preserve their competitiveness in the American and global markets.

His Highness Sayyid Dr Adham bin Turki al Said, Chairman of the Economic Committee at OCCI, emphasised the significance of the new tariffs, stating: “The imposition of uniform global customs tariffs by the US represents a significant challenge for Omani trade, especially regarding bilateral commerce.

However, the continued benefits of the Oman–US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) offer a competitive edge compared to other countries. Omani institutions must closely monitor these developments and verify tariff codes and the country of origin to ensure they continue to benefit from exemptions and advantages granted under the agreement.”

He further stressed the importance of proactive planning to ensure that Omani products remain competitive in US and global markets.

Shaikh Saud bin Ahmed al Nahari, Board Member of OCCI, highlighted that the session is part of the Chamber’s efforts to keep pace with changes in global trade policies and help Omani companies prepare for any potential impacts.

Pact for world’s first liquid hydrogen corridor

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

AS part of the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Sultanate of Oman signed a historic Joint Development Agreement (JDA) to establish the world’s first commercial-scale liquid hydrogen corridor linking Oman to the Netherlands and Germany.

The agreement marks a critical point in the global energy transition journey and brings Oman one step closer to becoming the leading hub for green hydrogen production and export.

The corridor will enable the export of RFNBO-compliant liquid hydrogen from Oman’s Port of Duqm to the Port of Amsterdam and key logistics hubs in Germany, including the Port of Duisburg, and onward to other European countries.

At the heart of this corridor is the world’s largest hydrogen liquefaction, storage, and export terminal to be established in the Port of Duqm. Hydrom, as the orchestrator of Oman’s green hydrogen sector, will ensure upstream production is aligned with national plans and that the project integrates seamlessly into Oman’s broader hydrogen infrastructure and policy framework.

OQ, Oman’s energy transition enabler, leading the liquefaction infrastructure, will develop the hydrogen plant along with related storage and export facilities, contributing directly to the corridor’s supply capabilities and Oman’s national hydrogen targets.



The agreement marks a critical point in the global energy transition journey and brings Oman one step closer to becoming the leading hub for green hydrogen production and export.

The centralised facility will draw from Duqm’s growing renewable hydrogen developments, leveraging the port’s strategic location as a global maritime hub and Special Economic Zone.

The centralised liquefaction plant will be supported by revolutionary maritime transportation vessels developed by ECOLOG to ship liquid hydrogen with zero boil-off, ensuring greater efficiency and reduced losses.

On the European side, the corridor will be anchored by re-gasification import terminals in the Port of Amsterdam from which the hydrogen will be distributed to industrial offtakers in the Netherlands and Germany via gas pipeline networks, rail connections, and barge distribution through the Dutch canal network.

“Today’s landmark signing demonstrates how Oman is turning its hydrogen ambitions into concrete projects aligned with global demand and national priorities,” said Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of Hydrom. “While this corridor

will enable the large-scale export of Omani hydrogen to Europe, its true value lies in how it supports our broader vision of an integrated sector that advances our national objectives.

From industrial diversification and infrastructure development to job creation and capacity building, we are committed to building a future-ready sector that will position Oman at the centre of green hydrogen global supply chain and deliver tangible economic value for the country.”

“This agreement represents a landmark moment in our commitment to clean energy,” stated Sophie Hermans, the Dutch Minister for Climate and Green Growth. “By linking Omani green hydrogen with Europe’s energy needs, we are advancing our shared climate goals and establishing a sustainable energy future.”

Oman’s green hydrogen sector, led by Hydrom, is fast becoming one of the world’s most structured and investment-ready ecosystems. To date, large-scale green hydrogen projects have been awarded to consortiums

from 22 global companies all of which have commenced development activities within their blocks in Al Duqm and Dhofar. Hydrom is also preparing to launch its third land auction round later this month, focused on mid-scale projects and aimed at aligning upstream production with downstream industries, further reinforcing Oman’s strategy to become a competitive and integrated global hydrogen hub.

The agreement was signed by eleven public and private sector entities from Oman, The Netherlands, and Germany represented by Hydrom and OQ alongside the Port of Amsterdam, Port of Duisport, ECOLOG, EnBW, Tata Steel, Advanced Methanol Amsterdam (AMA), Hynetwork Services (HNS), and the Port of Duqm Company (PODC).

The signing follows three feasibility studies jointly commissioned by Hydrom and partners in 2024 and delivers on the ambitions outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding on green energy co-operation signed between Oman and the Netherlands at COP27.

Oman’s MSX leads GCC in quarterly earnings

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

Wreport by Kamco Invest on corporate earnings across GCC stock markets for the fourth quarter of 2024 revealed mixed performance across the region, with Oman emerging as the top performer in quarterly earnings growth, even as the broader GCC saw a downturn due to weak results in the energy and utilities sectors.

Publicly listed companies on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded the strongest quarterly growth among GCC peers, with net earnings surging by 83.4 per cent in Q4 2024 compared with the

same quarter a year earlier.

This exceptional rebound was primarily driven by the banking sector, which posted a 29 per cent increase in profits, along with a more than fourfold rise in energy sector earnings for the quarter, despite the sector’s annual decline.

Key contributors included Bank Muscat, which reported a 6.2 per cent increase in annual net profit, supported by stronger net interest income and growth in Islamic financing.

GCC-wide profitability declines

At the regional level, aggregate net profits of listed companies in the GCC fell by five per cent quarter-on-quarter to \$57.3 billion—the lowest level in three



Companies on the MSX recorded the strongest quarterly growth among GCC peers.

consecutive quarters.

The energy sector was the main contributor to the decline, with net earnings dropping 16.6

per cent, impacted by lower oil export volumes, weaker prices, and narrower refining margins. This was notably evident in the performance of Saudi Aramco and OQ Exploration and Production in Oman.

The utilities sector also dragged down regional performance, posting a net loss of \$1.3 billion, largely due to the significant losses reported by the Saudi Electricity Company.

On the positive side, the telecommunications and banking sectors helped cushion the overall impact. The telecom sector saw a 51.7 per cent increase in annual profits, driven by extraordinary gains by STC (Saudi Telecom

Company), while the banking sector recorded a 10.3 per cent growth in net earnings, with total GCC banking profits reaching \$60.1 billion.

The earnings outlook for 2025 is cautiously optimistic. Continued pressure in energy and utilities could challenge short-term performance, yet economic diversification, digital transformation, and renewable energy investment present significant growth opportunities. Oman, in particular, is well positioned to capitalise on its structural reforms and rising investor confidence—cementing its role as a competitive and resilient economy in the Gulf.

BUSINESS



ITHCA and Yango unite to launch Yango ecosystem in Oman with the acquisition of Otaxi.

ITHCA AND YANGO JOIN HANDS TO ACQUIRE OTAXI

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

IN A landmark step to propel Oman’s digital revolution, ITHCA Group – the ICT investment arm of the Omani government - has partnered with pioneering technology firm Yango Group to officially bring the Yango ecosystem to the Sultanate of Oman. The strategic collaboration will play a key role in propelling Oman Vision 2040 and positioning Oman as a competitive digital hub in the region.

As part of the launch, ITHCA and Yango have completed the acquisition of Otaxi, a prominent Omani mobility platform. With support from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), the partnership will enhance Otaxi’s technology infrastructure to boost speed, accuracy, and service accessibility across all governorates.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communication and Information Technology, stated that Otaxi has been acquired by a leading global firm and a major local technology company, marking a significant milestone for Oman’s digital economy.

Eng Al Maawali Said “Otaxi was founded seven years ago and has grown into a national success story. The acquisition deal includes a strategic partnership between the two firms, aimed at expanding beyond taxi services into entertainment, promotions, retail via quick commerce, and other key sectors,” he stated.

Eng Al Maawali added “The move highlights the growing potential of Oman’s tech landscape and the rising impact of local entrepreneurs.” he ended.

The new system will expand its range of services beyond taxi-hailing, including home delivery, car rental services, interactive maps, and more AI-driven offerings. These are all geared toward making Otaxi more international-standard compliant while also more integrated and customer-oriented experiences.

Eng Said bin Abdullah al Mandhari, ITHCA Group CEO, highlighted the potential of strategic acquisitions to be a game-changer, stating: “This is a watershed moment for Otaxi. Aligning with a world technology leader not only strengthens its presence in local and international markets but also enables rapid absorption of global best practices.”

He emphasised that these collaborations open new doors for Omani startups, speeding innovation, improving services, and paving the way for global competitiveness.

Islam bin Abdul Karim, Yango Group Middle East Regional Head, commented: “Oman’s digital growth is underpinned by ambitious national strategies. We are pleased to collaborate with ITHCA to introduce globally-proven technologies tailored to local needs. We are committed to creating sustainable economic value by servicing communities through innovative digital solutions.”

MUSCAT: The Islamic banking sector in Oman has seen a transformative journey since its inception over a decade ago. Today, it plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth, financing critical projects, and aligning with Oman Vision 2040.

Amor bin Said bin Mohamed al Amri, DGM & Head of Retail Banking Dhofar Islamic, highlighted the sector’s robust growth. “Over the last ten years, Islamic banking in Oman has matured significantly, gaining a growing share

of the market. This progress reflects the expertise, visionary leadership, and ability to innovate while meeting the needs of society and investors alike.

Dhofar Islamic, formerly known as Maisarah Islamic Banking, has emerged as a key player in Oman’s Islamic banking sector. Its recent rebranding signifies a renewed commitment to innovation and customer-centricity.

“The new Dhofar Islamic identity embodies a blend of heritage and

modernity, symbolised by our logo’s transition from a single star to a galaxy of capabilities, reflecting our core values of ethical banking, transparency, and excellence.

The bank has made significant strides in expanding its offerings, launching innovative products like the Savings Plan and MasterCard World Credit Card, and supporting the financing of major projects across sectors such as energy, real estate, and infrastructure. It has also established

OMAN INVESTMENT BANK APPOINTS ACTING CEO

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of Oman Investment Bank is pleased to announce the appointment of Mohamed bin Sultan bin Salim al Habsi as acting Chief Executive Officer. This appointment represents a key step in the bank’s leadership transition and underscores its ongoing commitment to sustainable growth and long-term success.

Commenting on the appointment, Abdulsalam al Murshidi, Chairman of the Board, said: “This planned transition marks a significant milestone in our growth journey. We have full confidence in our leadership team, and under Mohamed al Habsi’s guidance as acting Chief Executive Officer, we look forward to entering a new chapter of innovation, progress and sustainable



MOHAMED SULTAN SALIM AL HABSI
Acting Chief Executive Officer

value creation for all stakeholders.”

Mohamed al Habsi is committed to delivering forward-thinking financial solutions that meet evolving client needs, while making a positive impact on the communities Oman Investment Bank serves. His leadership is rooted in integrity, purpose, and a clear vision for value creation across all fronts.

With more than 17 years of experience in investment banking and international business, Mohamed al Habsi brings a proven track record and strategic acumen -both within Oman and internationally, to his role as acting Chief Executive Officer.

Prior to this appointment, he held prominent leadership positions across the banking sector, including within Oman Investment Bank, where he actively contributed to advancing the bank’s vision by championing customer-centric solutions and fostering a culture of performance and innovation to support sustainable, long-term growth. He earned his MBA from Alliance Manchester Business School and holds a Bachelor of Science from Sultan Qaboos University.

Projects to enhance Muscat’s green spaces

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

GREEN areas in Muscat Governorate grew by over 30 per cent during 2024 in line with Muscat Municipality’s strategy to “humanise” urban environments through enhanced green spaces and inclusive planning, Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, stated here on Wednesday.

Addressing the 8th Oman Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM) Conference currently underway in the city, highlighted ongoing efforts to support the urban transformation of the capital city. These initiatives are part of a broader push to improve liveability and environmental sustainability in the capital.



More than 20 urban enhancement projects are slated for implementation during the 2024–2025 period

Strategic cooperation with the private sector has been vital to this progress, with annual projects valued at RO 3–5 million being implemented jointly. Notably, the Chairman announced the successful completion of Oman’s longest green walkway in Muscat, delivered in partnership with a

leading private company.

He also revealed that a major new walkway in Al Qurum, developed at a cost exceeding RO 10 million, is scheduled to open in mid-May.

More than 20 urban enhancement projects are planned for the 2024–2025 period, including the

SOHAR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORTS GULF TRAFFIC WEEK 2025

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its commitment to community engagement and road safety, Sohar International was honoured for its participation as the Golden Sponsor of Gulf Traffic Week 2025. This prominent regional initiative, organised in collaboration with the Royal Oman Police (ROP), was held under the theme “No Phone While Driving.”

The campaign aimed to raise public awareness about the dangers of distracted driving and to encourage responsible road behaviour. The official opening ceremony took place at Mall of Oman, under the auspices of Issa bin Hamed al Azri, Secretary-General of the Supreme Judiciary Council.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Government and Private Banking Officer at Sohar International. The ceremony marked the formal launch of the nationwide awareness drive and underscored the collective commitment to promoting road safety across the Sultanate of Oman.

Commenting on the occasion, Khalil bin Salim



The campaign aimed to raise public awareness about the dangers of distracted driving and to encourage responsible road behaviour.

al Hedaifi, Chief Government & Private Banking Officer at Sohar International, stated: “At Sohar International, we view our participation in the Gulf Traffic Week not merely as a corporate responsibility, but as a national duty. Partnering with esteemed institutions such as the Royal

Oman Police allows us to contribute meaningfully to raising public awareness around critical safety issues. Through our sponsorship, we aim to make a tangible impact in reducing such risks, protecting lives, and empowering a more informed and safety-conscious community.”

Following the opening, a comprehensive exhibition and a series of activations were rolled out across Oman, drawing strong attendance and active participation from diverse segments of society. Visitors engaged in a range of educational and interactive experiences designed to highlight the dangers of mobile phone use while driving—one of the leading causes of traffic accidents.

The programme also emphasised the importance of seatbelt use for all passengers and encouraged the adoption of safer driving habits across all age groups.

The exhibitions featured awareness booths, live demonstrations illustrating the impact of mobile phone use on driver focus, and interactive workshops tailored to various social groups—further enhancing public understanding of essential road safety practices.

Dhofar Islamic leads Islamic banking sector with 25 branches across Oman



The bank plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth, financing critical projects, and aligning with Oman Vision 2040.

modernity, symbolised by our logo’s transition from a single star to a galaxy of capabilities, reflecting our core values of ethical banking, transparency, and excellence.

The bank has made significant strides in expanding its offerings, launching innovative products like the Savings Plan and MasterCard World Credit Card, and supporting the financing of major projects across sectors such as energy, real estate, and infrastructure. It has also established

a 10-Year RO 250 million Sukuk Al Musharaka ProgramMme, enabling it to tap into Islamic capital markets. Supporting SMEs is a top priority for Dhofar Islamic. The bank provides financing, training, and consulting services to foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

It has also significantly invested in digital banking, enhancing customer experiences through mobile applications and electronic payment systems.

BUSINESS



Representatives from OQGN and Gasunie at the MoU signing.

OQGN, GASUNIE INK MOU ON HYDROGEN CORRIDOR AND CCUS

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

OQ GAS Networks SAOG (OQGN), the exclusive operator of Oman’s natural gas transmission network, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Gasunie Waterstof Holding BV (Gasunie), a Dutch natural gas infrastructure and transportation company operating in the Netherlands and Germany.

Aligned with Oman’s Vision 2040 and its commitment to a sustainable energy future, this strategic agreement reflects OQGN’s ambition to position the Sultanate of Oman as a key global player in the energy transition.

The collaboration will explore the development of a hydrogen corridor between Oman and the Netherlands/Northwest Europe and facilitate mutual knowledge exchange in carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS) opportunities. This MoU builds upon the earlier government-level MoU signed between Oman and the Netherlands in November 2022 during COP27, which aimed to enhance bilateral cooperation in green energy and support the development of hydrogen export-import corridors.

The MoU was co-signed by Eng Mansoor bin Ali al Abdali, CEO of OQGN, and Willemien Terpstra, CEO of NV Nederlandse Gasunie and 100% shareholder of Gasunie Waterstof B.V.

This strategic collaboration aims to explore the creation of a hydrogen supply chain linking the Sultanate of Oman with the Netherlands and Northwest Europe, with a focus on assessing the development of the necessary hydrogen infrastructure within Oman. It also seeks to establish a strong foundation for the exchange of expertise in CCUS technologies, supporting both countries’ commitments to global climate goals and sustainable development.

Commenting on the signing, Eng Mansoor bin Ali al Abdali, CEO of OQGN, stated: “OQGN is proud to support the advancement of Oman’s green hydrogen value chain by ensuring the timely development of critical hydrogen infrastructure.”

Khazaen attracts \$1.38 billion in investments

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

KHAZAEN Economic City (Khazaen), a flagship integrated economic development zone in Oman, has recorded robust investment growth and milestone project completions in 2024, as revealed during the annual media forum organised by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) on April 14, 2025, under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

As of 2024, Khazaen has signed a total of 118 investment agreements with a cumulative value of \$1.38 billion, attracting investors from more than 19 countries.

The city continues to draw both foreign and domestic interest, with Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) amounting to \$832 million, and Domestic Direct Investments (DDI) reaching \$551 million.



The development currently supports over 33 industrial and logistics projects under construction, spanning across six key economic sectors.

The development currently supports over 33 industrial and logistics projects under construction, spanning across six key economic sectors.

Several landmark developments were inaugurated this year, reflecting the city’s accelerating growth and readiness to serve multiple sectors. Among the most notable was the opening of the “Silal” Fruit and Vegetable Central Market, which aims to become a central hub for agro-logistics and food distribution in Oman.

Complementing this was the opening of the Flag Oman Logistics Centre, a state-of-the-art facility supporting freight handling and supply chain efficiency in the region.

Khazaen also launched the Al Maskan Labour Village, a modern residential complex designed to accommodate the city’s growing workforce while maintaining high standards for quality of life and safety.

In the pharmaceutical sector, Khazaen saw significant momentum with the launch

of several initiatives and investment projects, most notably the Opal Biopharma Project, which is specialised in the production of human vaccines.

This project underlines Oman’s strategic ambition to develop a domestic biopharmaceutical capability while boosting health security and export potential. The total investments in the pharmaceutical sector now stand at \$405 million.

The industrial sector also witnessed notable activity with the launch of manufacturing initiatives such as Al Watania Paper Products and Jana International Plastic Products. These projects are part of the \$350 million investment channelled into Khazaen’s industrial sector, supporting local manufacturing and import substitution strategies.

Meanwhile, the food sector continues to be a strong contributor with \$427 million in investments, and the logistics sector saw \$130 million in funding, capitalising on Khazaen’s access to Oman’s multimodal transport corridors.

OMAN-TÜRKIYE FORUM 2025 SET TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC TIES

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) has officially announced the Oman-Türkiye International Forum 2025, a landmark event aimed at enhancing trade and investment relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye.

Speaking at a press conference here on April 16, 2025, the Chamber revealed that the forum will take place from December 15 to 17, 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Shaikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the OCCI, described the forum as “timely and strategic,” aligning with Oman Vision 2040 to expand foreign investment and



foster economic diversification. “This initiative builds upon our historic and

friendly ties with Türkiye. It represents a unique platform to promote vital sectors and encourage productive partnerships,” he said.

The event will feature bilateral meetings, a specialised trade exhibition, and workshops tailored to highlight investment-ready projects in both countries. Omani businesses will have the chance to explore Turkish markets, while Turkish investors are expected to benefit from Oman’s stable and attractive investment climate.

Shaikh Salem bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Omani side of the Oman-Türkiye Business Council, said the forum was more than a traditional economic gathering. “It is a foundation for long-term strategic partnerships that will support job creation and national economic growth,” he noted.

OHSRM unveils initiative to empower working women

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, APRIL 16

The Omani Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM) unveiled “Raya” - an initiative aimed at empowering women in the Omani workplace - during the last day of the OSHRM conference in Muscat.

“At the conclusion of its eighth annual conference, OSHRM launched the ‘Raya’ initiative, aimed at empowering women in the Omani workplace by designing an innovative, psychologically safe, motivating, and equitable work model,” the organisation shared in a statement.

The initiative, according to OSHRM, is rooted in “recent data to provide practical solutions that take cultural specificity



OSHRM board members unveil the Raya initiative.

into account, with a focus on flexible work arrangements, work-life balance, and the creation of equal opportunities.”

“It also includes training and mentorship programmes, workshops, and policy review sessions, in collaboration with educational

institutions and local and international organisations,” the statement continued.

Events of the third day of the conference included two panels.

The first titled, “The Inclusion Revolution: Driven by Technology”, explored the potential role technology can play in fostering equity, diversity and inclusion in the workplace. It featured workplace empathy advocate and author Mimi Nicklin, Executive President of University Medical City, Dr Siham bint Salim al Sinaniyah, CEO of Liva Insurance Hanaa al Hinai and Executive Coach and Leadership Trainer Dr Corrie Block.

The second panel, titled “Excellence in Leadership: How Culture and Well-being Drive Human Potential,” on the other hand

shed light on the importance of workplace wellness and cultural empowerment.

It featured Dr Ahmed al Banna, CEO – Origin Group; Dr Saud bin Mohammed al Farsi, Adviser to the Governor of Dhofar; Shabib al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman; Sahal Khan, Senior Manager, Culture & Wellbeing at ROSHN; and Hanan alsaiif, Managing Director at ZRG Partners.

The event also included multiple keynote presentations addressing an array of topics including: digital mental health, leading in open spaces, cultural humility in leadership and creating psychological safety at workplaces amongst other topics.

The three-day conference and exhibition was attended by over 1000 individuals this year.

BOOSTING PURCHASE

India to end import tax on US ethane, LPG



India plans to end taxes on US ethane and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) imports under broader negotiations with Washington as it looks to reduce its trade surplus and ease its tariff burden, three sources said.

The proposal to get rid of duties for the products used for cooking gas and petrochemical production comes as India mulls scrapping import tax for US LNG and boosting purchases of the fuel from the United States. — Reuters

NEW SALVO

Stocks retreat as US hits Nvidia chip export



European and Asian stock markets mostly retreated on Wednesday after the United States government imposed restrictions on exports of a key Nvidia chip to China, the latest trade war salvo between the world’s biggest economies.

Nvidia late on Tuesday notified regulators that it expects a \$5.5 billion hit this first quarter owing to a new United States licensing requirement on the chip it can legally sell in the Asian country. — AFP

RECORD HIGH

Gold rises amid tariff uncertainty



Gold prices on Wednesday rose amid continued uncertainty over US President Donald Trump’s tariff plans and their impact on the global economy. Spot gold was up 0.5% at \$3,226.24 an ounce. Bullion hit a record high of \$3,245.42 in the previous session.

US gold futures edged up 0.5% to \$3,242.50. Spot silver lost 0.2% to \$32.29 an ounce, platinum fell 0.2% to \$949.21, and palladium eased 1.4% to \$943. — ONA

OPINION

Impacts of the Gaza war for the Israeli economy



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

SINCE the outbreak of the barbaric Israeli war on the people of Gaza on October 8, 2023, the crises facing Palestinian families in this territory have also increased. This is due to the scarcity of food, drink, medicine, and all the necessary supplies and goods for survival amid the closure of the main crossings.

However, what the world did not expect was that the people of the occupying state would also be afflicted by this economic and social crisis, as the ongoing war contributes significantly to rising in the prices of goods and products in the Zionist state.

Today, it has become common for Israelis to wait for hours to obtain a free meal or food aid from some donor company. These lines can stretch hundreds of metres in length on the streets of Tel Aviv.

There is a severe economic crisis affecting Israeli markets, not to mention the political, military, and economic problems resulting from the refusal of reserve soldiers to participate in this war waged by Netanyahu and his clique to remain in power. This war has revealed a severe economic crisis manifested in several aspects, and increased transportation and insurance costs.

Production and commercial activity are

in steady decline as a result of the closure of institutions, factories, and stores, especially in the south.

The technology sector, one of Israel’s most important sources of income, has also been affected by the call-up of a large number of its workers to military service. Indeed, Israel is suffering today from the daily costs of war due to the continued operation of military equipment, not to mention the compensation required to be paid to civilians affected by the war, whether in terms of infrastructure, homes, or businesses.

In terms of investment and tourism, foreign investors have become more cautious about continuing these trends, while tourism activity is declining due to the security situation. This is leading to a growing fiscal deficit resulting from increased military spending, declining revenues, a budget deficit, and the government’s need to borrow.

Many vital sectors in Israel have been affected and supply chains and logistics have also been disrupted, impacting production and distribution and declining industrial exports.

In the small and medium-sized business sector, shops, restaurants, and offices have been affected, and the number of customers has decreased due to security concerns and

There is a severe economic crisis affecting Israeli markets, not to mention the political, military, and economic problems resulting from the refusal of reserve soldiers to participate in this war waged by Netanyahu and his clique to remain in power.

limited movement. Difficulties in paying rent and salaries have led to the layoff of a number of employees.

Consequently, development and innovation projects have slowed, and international deals and investments have been postponed.

This ongoing war also affects healthcare services due to the significant pressure on hospitals due to the number of casualties.

There is a significant shortage of medical personnel in some areas due to their call-up to reserve duty, not to mention the challenges in providing medical equipment and supplies. Consequently, this crisis exacerbates labour and employment problems, and unemployment and layoff rates rise.

The war on Gaza has caused significant losses to the Israeli financial market, not to mention the decline in the value of the Israeli shekel and the deterioration of the occupying state’s credit rating.

What is the outcome of this conflict? The migration of more Israelis to the countries from which they came over more than half a century. This is a natural consequence of the occupation of Palestinian land, and the beginning of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

COPPER MARKET CAUGHT BETWEEN TRUMP’S TWIN TARIFF THREATS

BY ANDY HOME

US President Donald Trump’s tariffs blitz has left Doctor Copper battered and bruised. Last week’s copper chaos was of course just a small part of the global turmoil as markets gyrated to the frenetic beat of Trump’s changeable tariffs policy.

But in copper’s case, which owes its nickname to its ability to diagnose the health of the broader economy, tariff calculations are doubly complicated.

The market is trying simultaneously to price in both the broader tariff threat to global manufacturing activity and the specific threat of US tariffs on copper imports.

Outright price turbulence overlays a re-configuration of the physical supply chain as traders ship copper to the United States to beat the unknown tariff deadline, which is starting to tighten up availability everywhere else, including in China. London Metal Exchange (LME) three-month copper slumped to a 17-month low of \$8,105 per metric ton on April 7 after China responded to US tariffs in kind.

The subsequent 90-day reduction of US tariffs on everyone but China and a reprieve for electronic goods have generated an equally violent price correction back above the \$9,000-per tonne level.

LME time-spreads have flipped from contango to backwardation and back to contango. The arbitrage between the LME price and the US price traded on the CME has been particularly wild.

The CME premium over the London price collapsed from \$1,600 per ton at the start of April to just \$230 per tonne on April 8 but has since rebounded back above \$1,000.

The violence of the moves suggests forced unwinds of futures, spreads and arbitrage positions. The roller-coaster ride was evidently just too scary for some punters.

TARIFF BLUES
Copper’s initial reaction to Trump’s tariffs tells you how negative the market thinks the potential hit to manufacturing activity and copper demand will be. Analysts have moved quickly to downgrade their price forecasts on concerns about the dampening effect on global economic growth.

Citi, which now expects copper to hit \$8,000 per tonne over the next three months, warns that commodity markets are still not pricing the full potential impact on demand.

There are “some corollaries” with the downward deflationary spiral of 2015, when copper fell as low as \$4,000 per ton, the bank said in an April 7 research note.

The truth is that no-one really knows which way Trump’s tariff roulette wheel will spin next. That uncertainty is itself a negative for the copper price. — Reuters

Ireland’s deputy PM: US is more open to negotiate

AFTER the US President Donald Trump’s latest announcement of the pause on tariffs, Ireland’s Deputy Prime Minister Simon Harris said his meeting with US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick “confirmed my view that there is an openness on the part of the US to engage” in a negotiation process.

The encounter in Washington took place the day after Trump said he would be delaying tariffs on most nations for 90 days while raising the tax on Chinese imports.

US treasury secretary Scott Bessant had said Trump was keeping his 10pc baseline tariffs on most countries. Harris called the latest announcement “timely, valuable and substantive”, saying that the next possible steps had been discussed.

“I welcomed the fact that the president has announced the suspension of the higher tariffs – this I know will come as a relief to many businesses in Ireland”, Harris said. Adding: “I recognise that further engagement and clarification is required between the European Commission and the US administration on the detail of this.

“We also had an opportunity for a substantive engagement on pharma and I outlined the mutually beneficial role that the sector plays for Ireland and the United States.”

Harris said he had also outlined the dynamic interconnected economic relationship between Europe, Ireland and the US.

“I conveyed our commitment through the European Union to comprehensive negotiations that would address a broad range of issues,” he said.

“I outlined my view that Ireland as part of the EU, wants to play a constructive role and will continue to be a voice for calm and measured engagement in the time ahead.”

Chief economist with the Institute of International and European Affairs, Dan O’Brien, said an American U-turn always looked possible, given the scale of market reaction following Trump’s announcement of the huge tariffs, so the EU’s best move may be to do



Ireland’s Deputy Prime Minister Simon Harris speaks to the media in Athlone Ireland, in this file photo. — Reuters



ANDY JALIL

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

nothing for now, in terms of its own retaliatory measures.

Earlier, Ireland’s prime minister, Michael Martin had warned the parliament that a global trade war would have dire consequences for millions of people around the globe.

The Government was “already hearing from some who are seeing their orders from the US slowing or even drying up entirely, putting valuable and skilled jobs at risk,” Martin said. “And there may be more to come”.

Although Trump has hit pause on tariff, there remains huge uncertainty, not least about sectors that are key in the Irish economy.

“Ireland has yet to see the approach the US will take on pharmaceuticals, semi-conductors and other sectors excluded this far,” Martin said.

Trump had specifically warned that he would be tackling pharma next – a sector that accounts for nearly half of Irish exports by value and has such a huge effect on the country’s economy with over 48,000 people directly employed in med-tech in Ireland.

The share price of several pharma companies with operations in Ireland – including Ely Lilly, Pfizer and Merck – slumped in early trading on the US market on April 9, before rebounding following the news of changes to the tariff rates.

“I hope the US will reflect carefully before taking any further steps,” Martin said. “Industries like pharma involve deeply complex and interconnected supply chains, as we saw clearly during the pandemic.

I have spoken to many leaders in the pharmaceutical sector in recent days to discuss how best we can navigate these very serious challenges.”

The prime minister said he knew how concerned companies and their employees were. “It is not a sector in which production can be turned on and off overnight”, he added.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister, Paschal Donohoe painted a bleak picture of lower living standards if future trade was left “fragmented”. “Tariffs, to put it simply, are taxes in consumption and investment and are unambiguously negative for economic growth,” he said.

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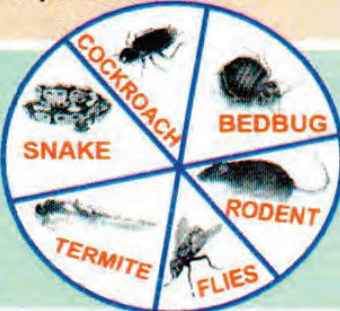
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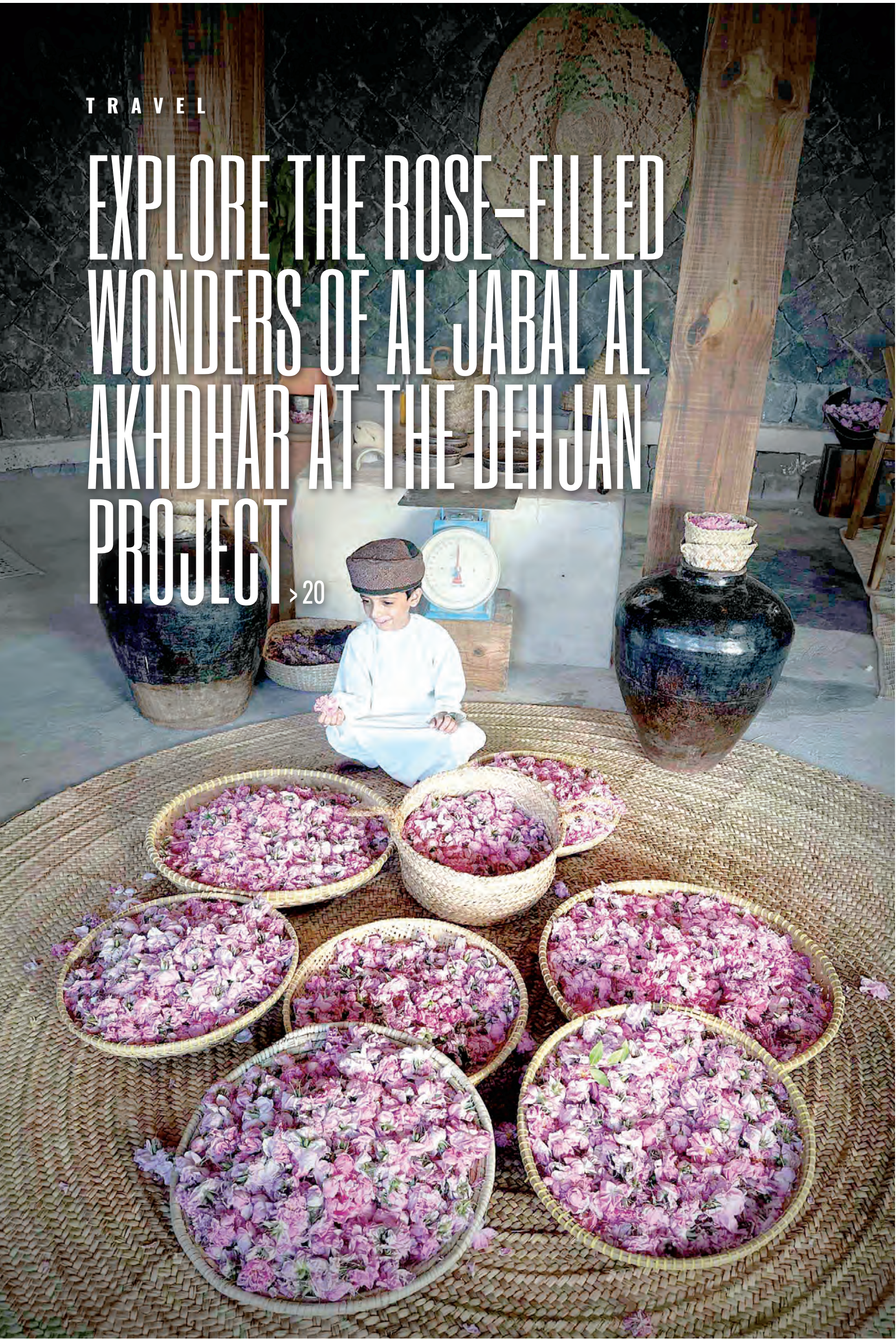
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ENTERTAINMENT

TV show ‘Black Mirror’ returns to its roots in new season



THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED British television series “Black Mirror” returns to Netflix on Thursday for a seventh season, promising to immerse fans once again in its iconic, dystopian worlds replete with futuristic technology.

After a two-year wait, the award-winning series, created by British writer Charlie Brooker, will air six new episodes, including a sequel to the fourth season’s “USS Callister” episode -- a space epic inspired by the Star Trek universe.

“There are a few episodes that are quite unpleasant,” Brooker said last month at a festival in the northern French city of Lille. He added they were more like the “OG (original) Black Mirror”, referring to the earlier seasons which often explored disturbing scenarios driven by technology.

“There’s quite a lot of emotional ones (episodes)... So, it’s a mix, which is kind of what you’d expect from Black Mirror, of the familiar and the unexpected,” added Brooker.

Some of the episodes are, ironically, dripping in nostalgia, exploring technology that could allow you to relive a memory by entering an old photograph, or recreate a black-and-white film using artificial intelligence.

Fans will see actors Paul Giamatti (“The Holdovers”), Rashida Jones (“Parks and Recreation”), Issa Rae (“Insecure”) and Emma Corrin (“The Crown”) on their screen through the season.

The cult series, which has nine Emmy awards to its name, first aired on UK’s Channel 4 between 2011 and 2014, before moving to Netflix in 2016 and winning global acclaim.

The previous season, written during the Covid-19 pandemic at a time when Brooker said he was “sick of technology”, was more gory and supernatural than older seasons, the writer said in a press release.

The seventh season should appeal to long-time fans, thanks to its return to “OG Black Mirror” and the near-future tech themes, with the satirical undercurrent and social commentary sprinkled on top,” said Brooker.

It is a recipe for success that the season, often praised for its prescience, swiftly reprises in the disturbing first episode called “Common People”.

The episode tells the story of a woman saved by miraculous medical technology that her husband signs up to but which gradually consumes the couple with its cynical subscription-based model. The series shows how technology itself is “not evil or malicious”, Brooker said in Lille. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



ENTERTAINMENT

Horror film director Anggy Umbara posing next to a ‘kuyang’ (a ghost widely known in Indonesia) posing for a photo at a horror entertainment venue at a mall in Jakarta. — AFP



ART

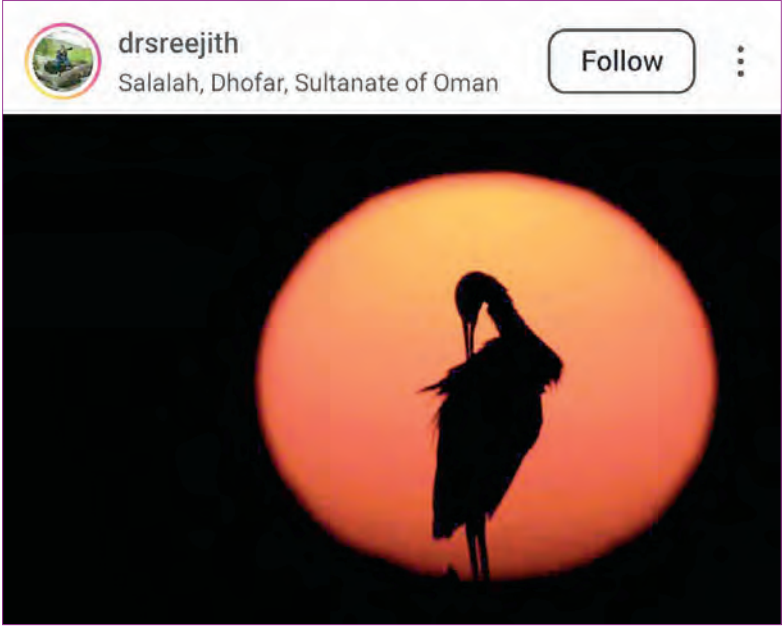
Berlin-based Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson speaks as he stands in front of his work: “Seeing a surprise before it’s reduced, split, and then further reduced”. — AFP



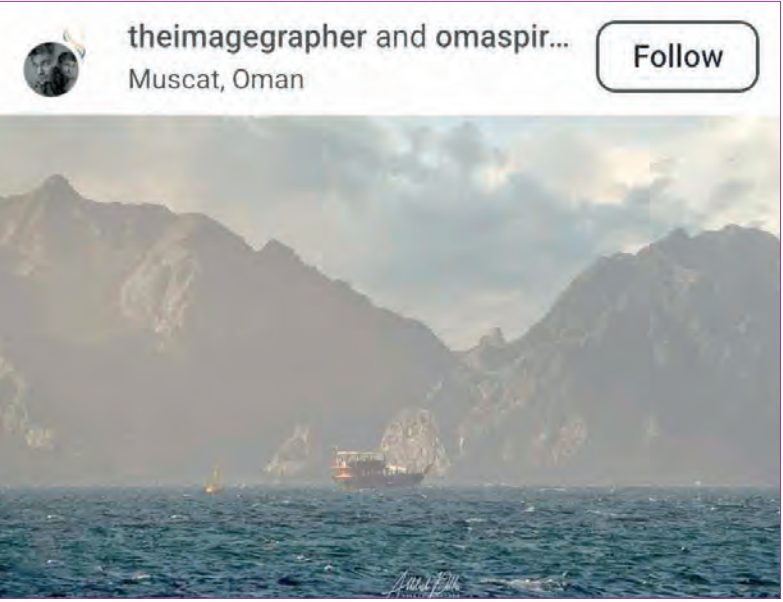
LIFESTYLE

Locals showcase the preparation of traditional bread baked in hot sand, often called “sand bread” or “desert bread”, during the Nomads Festival in Mhamid El-Ghizlane in Morocco’s southern Sahara desert. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Fading Light



The Beauty of Remote Places

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Study warns of dramatic Austrian glacier melt



EXPERTS ARE warning that the once mighty glaciers of Austria could almost completely disappear in the foreseeable future due to climate change. In order to save even a small part of the ice masses, the global temperature increase would have to be limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius, according to a study by an Austrian-British research team published in the journal The Cryosphere on Thursday. Five glaciers completely disappeared in the Ötztal and Stubaital regions between 2006 and 2017. A temperature increase of 2.7 degrees is currently expected. “The window of opportunity is closing very quickly,” said co-author Fabien Maussion from the Universities of Bristol and Innsbruck. The researchers’ prognosis refers to glaciers in the province of Tyrol. However, the results can be applied to the whole of Austria, according to the study.

“We are watching the glaciers disappear. Ice remnants that no longer have any flow movement or a feeding area are actually no longer glaciers. They are called dead ice,” said a researcher from the Institute for Interdisciplinary Mountain Research at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW). Glaciers are crucial freshwater reservoirs for Austria, releasing vital water that feeds its rivers and lakes. This supply is not only integral for drinking water but also supports the agricultural sector through irrigation. In addition to freshwater, these glaciers are a cornerstone of Austria’s energy infrastructure. Hydropower accounts for a substantial amount of the country’s electricity generation, and the consistent water flow from melting glaciers is essential for maintaining operational efficiency of hydropower plants, particularly during periods of low precipitation. — dpa



Lebanon museum sees new life after long civil war

WHEN LEBANON’S civil war erupted 50 years ago this month, its national museum became a flashpoint of its capital’s deadly frontline, with militants barricaded among ancient sarcophagi and sniping through historic mosaics. Now, students and tourists roam through its artefacts — some still blackened by indoor campfires lit by those fighters — and into a new pavilion opened during Lebanon’s most recent war last year when Israel and Hezbollah traded heavy fire. For its admirers, the building not only houses the country’s heritage but also symbolises its resilience. “I hope these young people I see here also know what happened in the museum in 1975, because what happened here is something worthy of respect,” said Lebanon’s Culture Minister Ghassan Salameh, speaking to Reuters in the main museum hall. “There is a right to forget. The Lebanese who want to forget the civil war - it’s their right to do so. But there is also a duty to remember so that we do not repeat it again, and again, and again.” The war erupted on April 13, 1975, after gunmen fired on a bus carrying Palestinian fighters in Beirut — just a few kilometres from the museum, which first opened in 1942. A frontline running directly adjacent to the museum split east Beirut from the west. After the fighters took up the museum as a barracks, the director of antiquities at the time, Maurice Chehab, ferried small artefacts to vaults at Lebanon’s central bank and encased the larger pieces in reinforced concrete to protect them from shelling. At least four major pieces were damaged, Salameh said. They are visible in the museum today, including a football-sized hole in a floor-to-ceiling 5th century mosaic used by snipers to target rival militants near the front. The war lasted 15 years, leaving



more than 100,000 dead and displacing hundreds of thousands more. Even as that conflict was raging, the museum worked to open a new wing for rotating exhibitions. As construction was underway, archaeologists uncovered dozens of artefacts that Chehab had buried in the museum’s backyard to protect them, said Sarkis Khoury, Lebanon’s current director of antiquities. He spoke to Reuters while standing in front of an outer wall damaged during the civil war that museum authorities had decided to preserve as a testament to its resilience. “The things we left visible are a lesson for the future, because we are a country that should be a country of peace, a country of coexistence, because this is our history,” said Sarkis Khoury, Lebanon’s current director of antiquities. “Its face is full of wounds and wrinkles, but this is a beautiful face for Lebanon,” Khoury said, gesturing at the pockmarked wall.

Keeping the wall is a rare example of memory preservation in Lebanon, where other landmarks of the civil war have remained abandoned or were covered up by the rapid construction of high-rises once the conflict ended. The post-war administration agreed on a general amnesty for all political crimes perpetrated before the war’s end, and most school curriculums opt not to teach its history. Asked whether Lebanon should one day establish a museum dedicated solely to the civil war, Salameh, the minister, said no — because it had only “produced destruction.” But he remained hopeful about his country’s future. “This country has been declared dead dozens, even hundreds of times... but this part of the Mediterranean has remained standing, with its specificities and its problems.” “It never ceases to be.” — Reuters

FEATURES

BY AMAL AL RIYAMI

AS SPRING breathes life into the hills of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, an extraordinary event begins—the blooming of its stunning roses. From mid-March through to the end of April, visitors can take part in an unforgettable experience at the “Dehjan” project, where the enchanting scent of roses mingles with the rich tradition of distillation. This local initiative not only celebrates nature’s beauty but also offers a glimpse into the artisanal craftsmanship that has been cultivated over generations.

The Dehjan project is much more than just a rose farm; it features a guesthouse and a small factory dedicated to producing high-quality rose water and rose oil. Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is famous for the exceptional quality of its roses, which serve as a key income source for the local community. With an ever-growing demand for rose products, this project plays a vital role in sustaining the local economy while preserving traditional practices.

Visitors arriving at Dehjan are greeted by fields of vibrant roses, beckoning them to partake in the morning ritual of harvesting. Here, guests have the opportunity to pick roses firsthand, enjoying not only the fragrant blossoms but also learning about the entire process — from cultivation to distillation. It’s a unique experience that appeals to both nature lovers and those interested in the art of crafting aromatic products.

One of the highlights of visiting the Dehjan project is gaining insight into the distinct distillation methods used to create rose water. Qais al Amri, the passionate owner of the project, shares that the term “Dehjan” refers to the traditional device used in distilling rose water. This traditional method involves a stone oven crafted from clay and pebbles, featuring specially designed vents. A clay vessel called the “Barama” is filled with freshly picked roses, while a smaller copper vessel — known as the “Sahla” — sits above it to collect the steam that condenses into pure rose water.

“Using this time-honoured technique, one kilogramme of roses can produce approximately 400 to 450 millilitres of rose water,” Qais explains. He notes that the entire process takes about three hours for each batch, with the project currently utilising four ovens, consuming roughly four kilogrammes of roses per distillation cycle. This meticulous process not only showcases the artisans’ skills but also enhances visitors’ appreciation for the fragrant products they often take for granted.

However, Dehjan isn’t just limited to traditional methods. In a bid to meet increasing demand, the project has recently integrated modern technology into its production processes. A large copper distillation device—similar to those used in Saudi Arabia — can process around 22 kilogrammes of roses at once, along with 40 litres of water. This upgrade aims to boost production efficiency, especially when extracting pure rose oil, one of the rarest and most valuable aromatic oils in the world.

Qais elaborates on the rarity of pure rose oil, stating, “To obtain just 6 millilitres of our pure rose oil, we need approximately 6,000 rose flowers.” This exquisite oil plays a significant role in luxury perfumes and high-quality incense, making it a highly sought-after ingredient in the fragrance industry.

In addition to rose water and oil, the Dehjan project offers a variety of handcrafted products derived from roses. Visitors can explore skincare and hair care items, unique perfumes, incense, and even innovative blends like rose-infused coffee and oud oil enhanced with the essence of roses. Their extensive product line demonstrates the versatility of roses and the creativity involved in crafting natural items.

The blend of tradition and innovation at the Dehjan project embodies the deep connection between the people of Oman and their land. Many visitors find themselves transported into a world where nature and tradition flourish side by side. This immersive experience provides a wonderful opportunity to learn about the heritage of



EXPLORE THE ROSE-FILLED WONDERS OF AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR AT THE DEHJAN PROJECT



rose cultivation and distillation, fostering a greater appreciation for the landscape that flourishes in flowers.

Moreover, staying at the guesthouse allows guests to savour the experience longer. The accommodations provide a peaceful retreat, where the sweet aroma of roses fills the air, creating an enchanting atmosphere. Guests can enjoy leisurely evenings, soaking in the beauty of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar while reflecting on the day’s experiences.

As visitors interact with the local artisans and gain insights into their craft, they also contribute to the preservation of traditional practices and the support of local communities. By choosing to engage in this unique experience, guests help keep these age-old methods alive for future generations, making their visit not only enjoyable but also impactful.