

Observer



CLEAN ENERGY PLANS DRIVE OMAN'S SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

HIS MAJESTY ISSUES ROYAL DECREE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued Royal Decree No 48/2026 on appointing a Non-resident Ambassador. Article (1) appoints Abdul Ghaffar bin Abdul Karim bin Issa al Balushi, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Federative Republic of Brazil, as Oman's non-resident Ambassador to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Republic of Paraguay, the Republic of Ecuador and the Republic of Chile. Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the date of its issue. — ONA

HIS MAJESTY AWARDED ARAB TOURISM EXCELLENCE MEDAL



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has been awarded the Arab Tourism Excellence Medal by the Arab Tourism Organization, in recognition of His Majesty's contributions to joint Arab action and greater integration among Arab states, particularly in the tourism sector. The medal was received by Sayyid Najib bin Hilal al Busaidy, the Sultanate of Oman's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during a meeting with Dr Bandar bin Fahd al Fuhaid, President of the Arab Tourism Organization, at the organisation's headquarters in Jeddah.

APPLICATIONS FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

The deadline for submitting candidacy applications for the election of members of the Municipal Councils for the fourth term (2026) will close on Thursday. The Ministry of Interior has called upon eligible citizens who wish to run for candidacy and meet the required conditions to expedite the submission of their applications before the deadline. Submissions can be made through the 'Intakhib' (Elect) application or the official election website (elections.om), with all necessary supporting documents attached.

HM, Gen Burhan discuss boosting partnerships

HM receives Chairman of Transitional Sovereignty Council in Sudan

HM, SUDAN
LEADER
DISCUSS
BOOSTING
TIES

GEN BURHAN
IS ON PRIVATE
FRATERNAL
VISIT

HM'S ROLE IN REGIONAL PEACE APPRECIATED

ROLE IN RESOLVING SUDAN CONFLICT HAILED

STRESS ON
DIALOGUE
AND
PEACEFUL
MEANS

FOCUS ON
PROMOTING
JOINT
PARTNERSHIPS



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK received at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday Gen Abdul Fattah al Burhan, Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council in the Republic of Sudan, during his private fraternal visit to the Sultanate of Oman. At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the guest, wishing him success in carrying out his national responsibilities to realise further aspirations of security, stability and prosperity for the Sudanese people.

For his part, the guest

expressed his profound gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan for the ongoing efforts undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman under His Majesty's leadership to support endeavours aimed at resolving the conflict in Sudan through dialogue and peaceful means, enhancing national unity and prioritising the national interest. The meeting addressed the cordial and close ties binding the two countries, which are built upon firm foundations of mutual respect and constructive cooperation. Both

sides affirmed the importance of boosting areas of partnership in a manner that aligns with the developmental aspirations.

From the Omani side, the meeting was attended by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office of His Majesty the Sultan.

TURN TO P2

No
answer
yet from
Iran on
last-ditch
peace
talks

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its condemnation and denunciation of any acts or attempts targeting the security and stability of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), or any interference in its internal affairs. Oman affirmed its enduring solidarity with the UAE in all measures it undertakes to safeguard its territorial integrity, preserve its security and protect the safety of its society.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed its steadfast position rejecting all forms of violence, extremism and terrorism, as well as any incitement thereto, regardless of motives or justifications. Oman further underscored its commitment to good neighbourly relations and



An Iranian woman walks past a mural in Tehran amid a ceasefire in the region, on Tuesday. — **AFP**

constructive cooperation with all Arab and friendly nations in countering such reprehensible acts.

Meanwhile, host nation Pakistan said on Tuesday there was still no confirmation that Iran would attend last-ditch peace talks with the United States, after US forces boarded a huge Iranian oil tanker at sea with just a day left to the ceasefire.

President Donald Trump said he hoped to reach a “great deal” to end the US-Israeli war on Iran, but he did not want to extend the ceasefire, and the US military was “raring to go” if negotiations were not successful.

Vice-President JD Vance, due to lead the US delegation, had yet to board a flight for Islamabad, where the centre of the city has been locked down and a luxury hotel has been cleared out to host the talks.

A White House official said Vance would be participating on Tuesday in additional policy meetings at the White House. “Formal response from Iranian side about confirmation of delegation to attend Islamabad Peace Talks is still awaited,” Pakistan’s information minister, Attaullah Tarar, said in a post on X. “Pakistan as the mediator is in constant touch with Iranians and pursuing the path of diplomacy and dialogue.”

Asked about the possibility of extending the truce, Trump told CNBC, "I don't want to do that. We don't have that much time."

Iranian government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said, "We do not want to be attacked again, but if such attacks occur, we will definitely respond more firmly than before," according to IRNA. **SEE ALSO P6 & 7**

HM, GEN BURHAN DISCUSS OMAN-SUDAN PARTNERSHIPS

HIS MAJESTY, GEN BURHAN DISCUSS PEACE IN SUDAN



FROM PAGE 1

From the Sudanese side, it was attended by Muhi al Din Salem Ahmed, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, General Ahmed Ibrahim Mufaddal, Director-General of the General Intelligence Service, and Issam Awad Ahmed Metwally, Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan to the Sultanate of Oman.

It is worth mentioning that the guest had arrived in the country earlier in the day. He was received and seen off at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Shaikh Faisal bin Omar al Marhoon, Head of the Arab Department at the Foreign Ministry, and members of the Sudanese Embassy in Muscat. — ONA



SHORT TAKES



The meeting was chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura.

SHURA REVIEWS REPORTS AND MINISTERIAL REPLIES

MUSCAT: The Office of Majlis Ash'shura on Tuesday reviewed the responses of the Council of Ministers to a proposal concerning the enhancement of investment in the private healthcare sector. The response indicated that the relevant authorities are working within the framework of the national five-year health development plans, while strengthening public-private partnerships through a range of programmes and initiatives aimed at expanding investment opportunities, improving the quality of healthcare services, creating employment opportunities and regulating the private healthcare sector. It also emphasised integrating the sector effectively into the comprehensive health coverage system, thereby reinforcing its role in improving public health and supporting economic growth.

The meeting was chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura.

The meeting also reviewed a number of ministerial responses to follow-up tools submitted by Council members. Among the most prominent was the response of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to a request for clarification regarding the suspension of issuing and renewing marine fishing licences.

The Council reviewed a proposal to establish a national framework for developing the gaming and e-sports sector in the Sultanate of Oman. It also examined a number of requests for clarification submitted by Council members, including inquiries addressed to the Minister of Social Development regarding street vendors, to the Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs concerning the reassignment of imams from mosques to larger congregational mosques, as well as requests related to the social responsibility contributions of mining and quarrying companies, and another concerning the construction of protective barriers for wadis.

Symposium calls for charter to control interpretation of Holy Quran

YUSEF AL HABSI
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

The symposium titled 'The Quran and Human Development', organised by the Imam Jaber bin Zaid Endowment Foundation, concluded on Tuesday. Saif bin Salem al Busaidy, CEO of the Imam Jaber bin Zaid Endowment Foundation, said that the symposium is in line with the Foundation's mission to highlight the centrality of the Holy Quran as an authentic reference point in human development and the shaping of intellectual and moral awareness. He noted that the specialised scholarly papers presented at the symposium reflect the ongoing need for a conscious re-reading of the Quranic discourse which comprehends the challenges of the present and anticipates future horizons in light of values and identity. The symposium included nine sessions with the participation of sixteen speakers, including scholars, educators, and specialists, and was attended by



The symposium included nine sessions with sixteen speakers

over 4,000 people. The symposium recommended establishing a charter to govern the spiritual, faith-based, methodological and scientific principles for the interpretation of the Holy Quran. This charter aims to curb the distortion of understanding and should serve as a guide for academic studies in universities, pre-university institutions, and postgraduate programmes. It also recommended connecting students at all educational levels with

curricula that consider the Holy Quran an essential source of knowledge in humanities and natural sciences. In addition, the symposium called upon relevant institutions, such as the ministries of Education and Awqaf and Religious Affairs, to establish a Quranic laboratory staffed by specialists proficient in Quranic studies. This laboratory would be responsible for evaluating, reviewing and revising all educational curricula.

Wilayat of Ibra reports highest rainfall in March

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

During the last rains in March 2026, the Wilayat of Ibra received the highest amount of rainfall, as reported by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). In March, a significant weather system brought heavy rain, thunderstorms and flash floods to Oman, particularly affecting the northern governorates and the Hajar Mountains between March

20 and 30. In its 'Climate Insight' report released on Tuesday, the CAA highlighted March as a notable month for the Sultanate of Oman, as it was impacted by multiple troughs that brought heavy rainfall, especially in the northern governorates. The period from March 7 to 10 recorded the heaviest rainfall, with the highest daily accumulation reaching 76mm, recorded at the Bahla station. The total monthly

rainfall for March 2026 across selected stations shows that Dhank received 138.2mm of rainfall, while Al Suwaiq received the lowest at 87.8mm. Other rainfall totals include Adam (115.40mm), Al Awabi (114.7mm), Al Rustaq (114.2mm), Bahla (107.6mm), Al Kamil W'al Wafi (105.6mm), Sur (102mm), Sinaw (95.2mm), Al Musannah (94.8mm), Wadi Al Maawil (94.2mm), Barka (92mm), Bidbid (89.8mm), Yanqul (89.4mm),

Ibri (89.3mm) and Al Suwaiq (87.8mm). The report also notes that Muscat recorded the highest temperature in March 2026 at 26.5°C, which was +0.9° from the previous month. The temperature anomalies (deviation from the long-term monthly average based on historical data) from the monthly average (°C) are as follows: Muscat 26.5°C (+0.9°), Suhar 25.5°C (+1.9°), Thamrait 25.5°C (+0.5°), Ibri 25.1°C (+1.5°), Al Rustaq 25.5°C (+0.2°) and Sur 27.1°C (+0.7°).

Oman mourns passing of screen icon Hayat al Fahad

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

THE Gulf artistic scene suffered a significant loss on Tuesday with the passing of the Kuwaiti actress Hayat al Fahad at the age of 78 after battling an illness. She leaves behind a remarkable legacy of artistic works that spans over six decades.

Known as the 'Lady of the Gulf Screen', the late actress was one of the region's most prominent media icons. She delivered numerous memorable performances in television, theatre and cinema, contributing to the shaping of a rich Gulf artistic heritage.

Talib al Balushi, an actor and director of drama, television serials, short films and cinema, expressed, "Hayat al Fahad is a star who is irreplaceable. She dedicated 59 years of hard work to the field of drama as an actor and writer."

Although Talib never had the chance to work with her, he mentioned that Hayat closely followed Omani drama and commended his work in the film 'Goat Life'. "The last time I saw her was in Kuwait



Hayat al Fahad was known as the 'Lady of the Gulf Screen'.

in November 2024, and she expressed how proud she was of my performance in 'Goat Life'. Today, we mourn the loss of a significant and renowned star in our Gulf region — one of the greatest icons in Arab drama," Talib added. Al Fahad entertained different generations, as noted by Mohammed al Kindi, an Omani film director. "Regardless of

the era, Hayat has been a part of people's lives from the 50s all the way to the present day. She was not only an actress but also a writer. I have admired her acting in both theatre and on screen for a long time. She has visited Oman multiple times and participated in theatre festivals here. Her popularity extends beyond the GCC to all Arab countries," Al Kindi emphasised.

Al Kindi mentioned that she has left behind a legacy of acting that has influenced even the current generation. "Hayat al Fahad was known for her humility and generosity. She had a unique acting style, and we will miss that school of acting," Al Kindi added. Zuha Qader, an actress and writer, described Hayat as a leading figure in acting. "I watch her dramas, especially the older ones from 15 to 20 years ago, to learn from her. She is one of the pioneers of the drama industry in the Gulf. She started at a time when there was only one television channel airing for a few hours, and then theatre emerged," she explained. Hayat began her career with the series 'The Bu Jassoum Family', later appearing in the play 'The Victim' and making her film debut in 'Bass Ya Bahr'. Throughout her career, she collaborated with some of the Gulf's finest actors, including Abdul Hussain Abdul Redha, Saad Al Farraj, Suaad Abdullah, Ghanem al Saleh, Khaled al Nafisi, and Mohammed al Mansour, solidifying her position as a cornerstone of the Gulf artistic landscape until her final days.



Tender Announcement

Financial Services Authority announces the following tender :-					
Tender name	Tender Number	Release the RFP	Last date for Purchase of RFP	Last date of Submitting the proposal	Tender fees in OMR
Classification and Management Consultancy Services, Data Governance	FSA 006/2026	22 April 2026	29 April 2026 03:00 PM	13 May 2026 02:00 PM	30 Non Refundable

- Specialized companies interested in participating in the above tender must deposit the tender fee into bank account, and submit payment receipt of the tender along with a copy of the commercial registration certificate and the contact details of the authorized person to the Services & Public Relations Department e-mail : Tenders@fsa.gov.om. hence, we shall provide you with Tender document by e-mail.
- All participating companies must provide a bank guarantee, issued by locally registered bank not less than 2 % of the tender value addressed to FSA , the bond shall be valid for 90 days from the submission of the proposal.
- All bids shall be submitted in tender box at the headquarters of the Financial Services Authority, located in Airport Heights.
- FSA is not obliged to accept the lowest bid or any other bid without any justifiable reasons.



To view

Bank account information :-
Name of beneficiary : Financial Services Authority
Account no : 0423019706330018
Bank : Bank Muscat- Corporate Branch- CBD
SWIFT code : BMUSOMRXXX
Please attach a copy of the deposit receipt

For inquiries, please contact :-
E-mail : Tenders@fsa.gov.om
Telephone Number : 24823299, 24823133
Timing : 8:00 am to 3:00 pm
Workdays : Sunday to Thursday.

OMAN

TECHNOLOGYGROWTH



The event was held under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani. — ONA

PROGRAMME
SEEKS TO ENABLE
TECH STARTUPS TO
ACHIEVE GROWTH

MUSCAT: The 3rd edition of a programme titled “Growth of technology companies and startups” began on Tuesday in Muscat. The event saw the participation of 66 companies undergoing different stages of growth.

The programme is an initiative undertaken by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology to support emerging technology companies. It constitutes a step forward in responding to a rising trend in the sector of technology companies and digitised entrepreneurship. It also reflects the growing role of programmes specialised in accelerating the growth of companies and enhancing their competitiveness.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology.

The programme seeks to enable technology companies and startups to achieve sustainable growth. It provides the companies with the necessary knowledge and expertise, motivates their local and regional expansion and augments the percentage of local content in the sector of communications and information technology.

The programme offers a comprehensive package of services, including specialised consultancies that are provided by local and international experts. Its services cover marketing strategies, accelerated growth measures, developing technological products, enhancing preparedness for investment and establishing organisational structures.

The programme also includes promotional support, as it provides advertising spaces for beneficiaries on various platforms. This contributes to enhancing the presence of companies and empowering them to reach wider segments of customers.

The programme also helps the companies garner opportunities and foster partnerships by linking them with public and private sector establishments. In addition, it enables the target companies to participate in local, regional and global events.

Access to the programme requires the interested parties to meet a number of criteria. The companies wishing to join the programme should have remarkable growth rates, own a technical product or service and have active user bases, in addition to licensed business records and actual presence in the market.

The third edition of the programme, termed “Growth,” is in pursuance of constant efforts to enhance the system of innovation and digitised entrepreneurship. It lends support to the role of technical companies and startups that serve as a basic driver of the digital economy and sustainable economic development. — ONA

WORKSHOP COMMENCES FOR ‘PLANT OMAN 2050’ INITIATIVE

MUSCAT: The inaugural workshop for the “Plant Oman 2050” initiative project commenced in Muscat. The workshop aims to expand organised afforestation, enhance environmental sustainability, support food security and contribute to achieving Net-Zero carbon emissions targets.

The opening of the workshop was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture. It seeks to enhance the environment and biodiversity by restoring degraded



The two-day workshop aims to support food security by expanding the cultivation of fruit-bearing trees. — ONA

natural habitats, combating desertification, increasing vegetation cover through the planting of wild and native trees, and improving the efficiency of ecosystems across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The two-day workshop aims to support food security by expanding the cultivation of fruit-bearing trees, enhancing local food production

and generating sustainable economic value from agricultural resources. Additionally, it seeks to contribute to climate action by increasing carbon absorption and expanding blue carbon and green carbon projects, in line with national directions towards climate sustainability.

A cooperation agreement was inked between the Environment Authority and Oman Agricultural Development Company to implement a project on tissue culture protocols for the propagation of wild trees and mangroves. — ONA

E A R T H D A Y T O D A Y

Clean energy plans drive
Oman’s sustainable future

IDRIS AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

AS the world marks Earth Day on Wednesday (April 22), the Sultanate of Oman is joining the global call for environmental responsibility through a series of initiatives that combine urban planning, education, biodiversity protection and clean energy action.

In Muscat, the governorate has launched an ‘alternative afforestation’ initiative, reshaping urban greening as a strategic environmental tool rather than simple tree replacement. The approach focuses on selecting tree species suited to Oman’s climate, aiming to build greener, safer, and more liveable cities.

Officials highlight that carefully selected trees can reduce street temperatures by three to five degrees Celsius, providing meaningful relief in hot urban environments. The initiative also prioritises water conservation by using drought- and salt-tolerant species, reducing irrigation needs in an arid climate. Beyond climate benefits, it improves air quality by reducing dust and pollution while increasing shade and pedestrian comfort.

At the national level, environmental planning was further advanced by the Environment Authority, which launched the foundational workshop for the ‘Plant Oman 2050’ project under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Nasser al Bakri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture. The project aims to strengthen biodiversity, enhance environmental protection, support food security and contribute to climate action as part of Oman’s long-term green vision.



Climate advocate Rumaitha al Busaidi also highlighted Oman’s growing role in green hydrogen. She pointed to Hydrom and its work in building a hydrogen ecosystem, strengthening infrastructure, boosting local value creation and opening new opportunities in the clean energy sector.



Meanwhile, at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Earth Day was marked through a collaboration with Nama Electricity Distribution Company under the theme “Earth Day Energy Literacy for Youth Awareness and Responsible Action.” The event brought together students, experts and professionals to explore sustainable energy pathways.

Sessions highlighted solar energy as a key future investment, led by Hilal bin Said al Hadi, Director-General of Network Development at Nama Electricity Distribution Company, who emphasised its growing role in diversifying Oman’s energy mix. Another session focused on climate change and green finance, where Maha bint Ali al Balushi, Director of Climate Change Mitigation at the Environment Authority, discussed tools for transitioning towards a low-carbon economy.

Adding an ecological perspective, marine biologist Malak al Lawati,



Regional Coordinator at Wetlands International, highlighted Oman’s rich coastal ecosystems. She described the country as a biological engine of lagoons, mangroves, seagrass beds and coral reefs, emphasising the importance of preserving these highly productive environments.

Climate advocate Rumaitha al Busaidi also highlighted Oman’s growing role in green hydrogen. She pointed to Hydrom and its work in building a hydrogen ecosystem, strengthening infrastructure, boosting local value creation and opening new opportunities in the clean energy sector.

Together, these initiatives reflect a unified national direction towards sustainability, connecting urban greening, biodiversity conservation, education and renewable energy development. Earth Day in Oman stands not only as a global observance, but as a coordinated expression of long-term environmental commitment.

Ideas and innovative thinking can shape a better future

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

World Creativity and Innovation Day, which is marked on April 21 every year, highlights how fresh ideas and inventive thinking can shape a better future. The day serves as a reminder that creativity is not limited to art – it is a powerful tool for solving challenges, improving livelihoods and driving sustainable growth.

The United Nations designated April 21 as World Creativity and Innovation Day to raise awareness of the role of creativity and innovation

in human development.

“Oman Observer explores creativity and innovation to narrate cultural and heritage aspects,” said Abdullah al Shueili, Editor-In-Chief of the daily.

“Innovation is everywhere right now, but we need to narrow it down to understand the term ‘innovation’ and how we can use it. In our culture, as an Omani, how can we promote the cultural identity, and how do we promote our legacies and our traditions? AI has helped us in narrating the stories to convey to others our manners, customs, traditions and values. This kind



The United Nations designated April 21 as World Creativity and Innovation Day to raise awareness of the role of creativity and innovation in human development. — AI generated image

of innovation might be on a small scale, but producing some AI videos has been impactful in promoting the culture itself, whether it is the Eid customs, collecting frankincense, or rose picking in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar,” he said.

“Failure breeds creativity because if one idea fails, the mind pushes for success, and a new line of creativity is born. A new day is what I call innovation, giving one the drive for a new brand. I feel creativity is internal and innovation is external,” reflected HH Sayyidah Zawan al Said, a broadcaster and currently a property developer.

“Innovation is a function of situational awareness and creative response. It is about reorienting our perspective,” said Ahmed al Mukhaini, policy analyst.

In Oman, the Ministry of Health held events to mark the World Creativity and Innovation Day at its headquarters under the auspices of Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs. Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation, and other senior officials were also present.

SHORT TAKES



The workshop featured discussions on a number of indicators related to measuring beneficiary satisfaction.

WORKSHOP ON SATISFACTION STANDARDS HELD

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, organised a workshop on beneficiary satisfaction standards, with the participation of more than 15 government entities. The workshop aimed to enhance awareness of the 2026 requirements for measuring beneficiary satisfaction and to improve the quality of services provided.

The workshop featured discussions on a number of indicators related to measuring beneficiary satisfaction, in addition to reviewing key challenges faced by government entities in implementing these standards and proposing appropriate solutions.

It also provided a platform for exchanging expertise and best practices among participants, contributing to improved government performance and the achievement of higher levels of beneficiary satisfaction.

HEALTHCARE FORUM DISCUSSES LATEST DEVELOPMENTS



These efforts aim to produce practical recommendations that contribute to improving service quality. — ONA

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: The activities of the Primary Healthcare Forum commenced on Tuesday in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. Organised by the General-Directorate of Health Services in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, the forum brings together healthcare personnel and experts to discuss the latest scientific developments in the field of primary healthcare and to showcase successful initiatives. The forum's agenda included the presentation of several working papers and field initiatives, among them the "Iqra'ani" (Read Me) initiative concerning the food card, as well as the "Ghiras" (Planting) and 'Wellness Kit' initiatives. — ONA

Exploring prospects for students with hearing disabilities

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), in collaboration with the Omani Association for Persons with Hearing Disabilities, will organise a symposium on Sunday under the title 'Toward an Inclusive University: Prospects for Admitting Students with Hearing Disabilities into Higher Education Institutions'. The symposium coincides with Arab Deaf Week, reflecting a national commitment to enhancing inclusive education opportunities and reinforcing the principles of equity and equal access within higher education institutions.



The symposium aims to raise societal and university-wide awareness of the right of students with hearing disabilities to enrol in higher education, while establishing an academic and

discursive platform bringing together decision-makers, academics, specialists, civil society organisations, and the students themselves. Discussions will focus on the current state of university

admission policies, challenges related to making higher education accessible to this group, and the presentation of best practices in inclusive education at both local and international levels. The symposium will explore the role of art education as an effective pathway for empowerment and inclusive learning. This is in addition to presenting field experiences and inspiring success stories of students with hearing disabilities — highlighting their abilities and potential for academic and social integration. — ONA

Masirah fishermen stress need for landing sites

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

THE Environment Authority conducted a field inspection tour along the coastline of Masirah Island as part of ongoing national efforts to strengthen environmental sustainability and regulate coastal activities. The visit aimed to assess proposed fish landing sites while identifying key environmental risks, particularly in areas known for turtle nesting, which are considered among the most sensitive ecological zones in the Sultanate of Oman. The initiative was carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the Environment Society of Oman, and Bahar Al Mustaqbal Company, reflecting a coordinated approach to balancing environmental protection with the sustainability of the fisheries sector. During the field visit, specialists highlighted several environmental challenges affecting the island's coastal environment. Among the most prominent issues were abandoned fishing nets, often referred to as "ghost nets", which pose a serious threat to marine life. In addition, discarded plastic ice bags were spotted accumulating along the shore, contributing to coastal pollution



Specialists highlighted several environmental challenges affecting the island's coastal environment.

and increasing risks to marine species, particularly turtles that may ingest plastic debris or become entangled. Another key concern discussed was the impact of vehicle movement on beaches, especially within turtle nesting areas. Experts noted that uncontrolled driving on sandy shores can damage nests and disrupt natural nesting cycles, posing a risk to turtle populations. Officials emphasised that Masirah Island is home to a unique biodiversity and hosts one of the region's most important turtle nesting sites. They stressed the importance of

adopting scientific solutions to regulate coastal activities while maintaining a balance between environmental conservation and economic needs. Local fishermen voiced their support for the initiative, while highlighting the importance of involving them in future planning. "We rely on the sea as our main source of livelihood, and we understand the importance of protecting it," said fisherman Salem bin Rashid. "Establishing clearly designated landing sites would help us work more efficiently while minimising environmental impact." Another fisherman, Hamad bin Said, also pointed to

broader challenges, noting that not all pollution originates from fishing activities. "Some waste is left behind by visitors, while other debris drifts in from the sea. We need stronger awareness efforts, along with proper waste disposal facilities at landing sites," he said. The field tour forms part of wider national efforts to enhance sustainable coastal management through cooperation among relevant stakeholders. By addressing environmental challenges and improving infrastructure, authorities aim to ensure the long-term sustainability of both the marine environment and the fisheries sector.

Tourism forum enhances direct engagement with young talents

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism organised the University Tourism Students Forum, held at Sultan Qaboos University, under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU. The forum was held under the theme 'Participate... Discuss... Shape the Future' and targeted final-year tourism students from higher education institutions. The event aimed to strengthen direct engagement with young Omani talents, gain insight into their professional aspirations in the tourism sector, and introduce them to career opportunities and future challenges within this vital industry. It also sought to encourage students to actively contribute to the development of tourism and support Oman's broader

development journey. The forum brought together more than 150 students specialising in tourism from Sultan Qaboos University, German University of Technology in Oman, Oman Tourism College, and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (Nizwa and Salalah branches). During the panel discussion, Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, outlined the ministry's plans and programmes under the 11th Five-Year Plan (2026- 2030). He highlighted that the ministry's investment strategy focuses on diversifying tourism offerings, achieving 80 per cent digital transformation in the sector, and strengthening tourism's role in economic diversification through major investment opportunities. Key priorities include the



The forum also featured an accompanying exhibition showcasing a variety of pavilions, including business tourism and adventure tourism.

development of forts and castles, adventure tourism and service enhancement, with expectations that the private sector will generate approximately 50,000 job opportunities annually. Sayyid Ibrahim emphasised that the forum plays a vital role in enhancing

communication with students in tourism-related disciplines, clarifying the ministry's policies and strategic plans in heritage and tourism and creating a meaningful dialogue platform to listen to students' ideas and benefit from their perspectives. Ahmed bin Amir al Sawai,

Director of Oman Vision 2040 Office at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, stated that the University Tourism Students Forum serves as a key platform bringing together students from across Oman's universities, offering them direct engagement with officials and experts while contributing to shaping the future of the tourism sector. He noted that the forum features an accompanying exhibition with tourism entities and entrepreneurial showcases, alongside sections on investment, promotion and employment pathways, helping students explore career opportunities. He added that the event provides an open dialogue with industry leaders and academics, fostering knowledge exchange and capturing youth aspirations. The forum also featured an accompanying exhibition

showcasing a variety of pavilions, including business tourism, adventure tourism, Omani culinary tourism and gastronomy, labour market and employment programmes, tourism promotion initiatives, and investment opportunities in heritage and tourism. Additional sections displayed the Ministry's scientific publications, meteorites and archaeological artefacts. Key sector partners participated with prominent booths, including Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group), Oman Air and Oman Sail, alongside leading companies in luxury and adventure tourism. The exhibition also provided dedicated spaces for showcasing student graduation projects and academic research from participating universities and colleges.



A woman walks past an anti-US and anti-Israel mural, in Tehran. — AFP

PRESIDENT Donald Trump said on Tuesday that he did not want to extend a rapidly expiring ceasefire in the US-Israeli war on Iran and that the US military was “raring to go” if negotiations were not successful. He spoke shortly after the US military announced it had boarded a huge Iranian oil tanker at sea in international waters, the first such move against Iran’s crude exports.

That could make it more difficult to revive peace talks with Iran, which has said it will not negotiate while Washington enforces a blockade of its ports. Washington has expressed confidence that last-ditch talks with Iran will go ahead in Pakistan, and a senior Iranian official said Tehran was considering joining. But with the final hours of a two-week truce ticking by, there was little time left.

Asked about the possibility of extending the truce, Trump told CNBC: “I don’t want to do that. We don’t have that much time.” “I expect to be bombing because I think that’s a better attitude to go in with,” he added. “But we’re ready to go. I mean, the military is raring to go.” Iranian government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said: “We do not want to be attacked again, but if such attacks occur, we will

TRUMP REJECTS EXTENDING WAR TRUCE

definitely respond more firmly than before,” according to the state news agency IRNA.

HORMUZ REMAINS CLOSED Iran has largely blocked off the Strait of Hormuz that controls access to the Gulf to all ships but its own. It had announced last week that it would reopen the strait, but reversed that decision on Saturday after Trump refused to lift his blockade of Iranian ports. That has left the strait closed and the world deprived of the 20 million barrels of oil that typically crossed it each day.

Pakistani officials said that if the delegations do attend talks, they will not arrive until Wednesday. A first session of talks 10 days ago produced no agreement and Tehran had been ruling out a second round after the US refused to end its blockade and seized an Iranian cargo ship. Trump has threatened to attack Iran’s civilian infrastructure if no deal is done. Still, a Pakistani source involved in the discussions told Reuters there was momentum for talks to resume and US Vice President JD Vance was expected in Islamabad.

Pakistan is still awaiting a formal response from Iran about confirmation of delegation to attend a second round of peace talks with the US in Islamabad, the country’s Information

Minister Attaullah Tarar said in a post on X. “Decision from Iran to attend the talks before the end of two weeks ceasefire is critical,” Tarar said in a post on X, adding that Pakistan has made sincere efforts to convince the Iranian leadership to participate in the second round of talks.

An Iranian official said on Monday that Tehran was “positively reviewing” its participation, but stressed that it was waiting to see if its conditions would be met, including recognition of its right to enrich uranium. Oil prices eased around \$0.30 and stocks bounced back in Asia on expectations that peace talks will resume, with European shares also up. Oil had jumped around 6% on Monday on doubts about the talks.

IRAN NUCLEAR PROGRAMME Trump wants an agreement that would prevent further oil price rises and stock market shocks, but has insisted Iran cannot have the means to develop a nuclear weapon. He wants Iran to give up its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, which can, if further enriched, be used for a nuclear warhead. Tehran hopes to exploit its control of the strait to strike a deal that averts a restart of the war and lifts

sanctions, while retaining more of its nuclear programme, which it says is for peaceful purposes.

Trump initially announced the ceasefire would last two weeks from the evening of Tuesday, April 7 in Washington, though he has lately suggested it runs until the evening of Wednesday, April 22, effectively an extra 24 hours. A Pakistani source involved in the talks also said it would expire at 8 pm Eastern Time on Wednesday, which is 3:30 am Thursday in Iran.

The Pentagon on Tuesday unveiled more details of President Donald Trump’s \$1.5 trillion defence budget request for fiscal year 2027, by far the largest year-over-year increase in defence spending in the post-World War Two era.

In a new wrinkle, the Pentagon has created a category it is calling “presidential priorities,” covering Golden Dome missile defence, drone dominance, artificial intelligence and data infrastructure, and the defence industrial base, Pentagon officials told reporters. The request includes a pay raise weighted toward junior enlisted troops, getting a 7% increase, 6% for their superiors and 5% for the top ranks. — Reuters

US CLAIMS ITS STANCE ‘STRONG’ US President Donald Trump touted what he said was Washington’s strong negotiation position as his envoys prepared for talks.	HEZBOLLAH MASS BURIALS Hezbollah announced it will hold mass funerals in south Lebanon for 44 fighters killed during more than six weeks of war with Israel.	NO IRANIAN DEPARTURE “So far, no delegation from Iran has departed for Islamabad, Pakistan; whether it is the main or subsidiary delegation; primary or secondary,” Iranian state TV said.	ISRAELI PRESSURE ON HEZBOLLAH Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said his country’s campaign in Lebanon relied on both military and diplomatic pressure to disarm Hezbollah.	OIL DIPS, STOCKS EDGE Oil prices slid while stocks edged higher on lingering hopes for a deal to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz.	IRANIAN SHIPS SLIP BLOCKADE Shipping industry intelligence site Lloyd’s List reported that more than 20 Iranian so-called “shadow vessels”, had transited past the US blockade.
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A boy stands amid the debris of a destroyed building in the Haret Hreik area of Beirut southern suburbs. — AFP

Lebanon’s Berri slams Israeli troops in south

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s parliament speaker warned on Tuesday that Israeli forces occupying parts of the country’s south would face resistance if they fail to withdraw, signalling a risk of renewed confrontation ahead of US-mediated talks this week. A 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon’s Hezbollah mediated by Washington has largely held since last Thursday, but Israeli forces remain deployed in a belt of Lebanese land 5-10 km deep along the entire border.

Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, Lebanon’s most senior Shi’ite statesman and a Hezbollah ally, told Lebanese newspaper al-Jumhouria that Lebanon could not tolerate losing a metre of land. If Israel “maintains its occupation, whether of areas, positions, or by drawing yellow lines, it will smell the scent of resistance every day,” said Berri, leader of the Amal Movement. “If they insist on remaining, they will face resistance and our history bears witness to that,” Berri said. Berri, in his comments to Al-Jumhouria, reiterated his view that there was no need for direct talks with Israel, noting that he had been a party to several rounds of indirect negotiations with Israel over the years.

Meanwhile, Lebanon’s prime minister and French President Emmanuel Macron will discuss on Tuesday how to strengthen the country’s hand in possible direct negotiations with Israel in the United States later this week, as Beirut turns to a trusted European ally. Israeli troops occupy territory deep in the south, aiming to create a buffer zone to shield northern Israel from Hezbollah attack, while the group says it maintains the “right to resist” Israeli occupation.

“France’s role is not to insert itself between the parties in discussions that are, by nature, bilateral and direct,” a French presidency official said ahead of Prime Minister Nawaf Salam’s meeting with Macron. “France is one of the countries capable of playing a very concrete role in strengthening the Lebanese government’s hand and supporting its action in practical terms.”

Israel’s ambassador to Washington said last week that France should be excluded from any talks, describing Paris as having “no positive influence.” The US, while maintaining contact with France on the issue, has also sought to marginalise its role. — Reuters

IRAN CRISIS COSTS FRANCE UP TO 6 BILLION EUROS

PARIS: The economic fallout from the crisis in Iran has cost France between 4 billion euros (\$4.70 billion) and 6 billion euros, Finance Minister Roland Lescure said on Tuesday, as the government prepares new support measures alongside a freeze on some spending. The French government will fully offset the economic fallout from the Iran crisis by freezing some spending, it said on Tuesday, as it prepares a new round of support measures. There has been a sharp rise in bond yields since the start of the conflict in the Middle East, and the subsequent increase in government borrowing costs alone are adding an extra 3.6 billion euros to the budget, Lescure said.

Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu’s government has pledged to fully offset the budgetary impact of measures aimed at helping households cope with the energy price shock triggered by the conflict. Lescure said he would outline plans to freeze some spending at a meeting with lawmakers on Tuesday, stressing that the government would stop short of outright budget cuts. He added that PM Lecornu would announce new measures on Tuesday evening to help consumers manage higher energy prices, with a particular focus on people who rely on vehicles for work.

France, which already has one of the largest budget deficits in the euro zone, can only afford support measures that are strictly targeted at those most in need, the government has said. So far, it has focused on emergency fuel subsidies for the transport, fishing and farming sectors. The government is meanwhile facing pressure from the far right to introduce a costly cut in the 20% value-added tax on fuel, while the hard-left has called for energy prices to be capped. — Reuters



France’s Economy, Finances and Industry Minister Roland Lescure arrives at the public finances alert committee in Paris. — AFP

UN maritime agency urges help for stranded sailors

SINGAPORE: The head of the UN maritime agency appealed on Tuesday for help for thousands of seafarers stranded due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, as the Middle East war paralyses the vital shipping route. Around 20,000 seafarers and 2,000 ships have been stranded after shipping was disrupted in the strategic strait following US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 that triggered the war, according to the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Around one-fifth of the world’s crude and liquefied natural gas normally passes through the strait. IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez told a maritime conference in Singapore on Tuesday that stranded sailors were



Around 20,000 seafarers and 2,000 ships have been stranded in Hormuz.

suffering from stress and fatigue. “We need to know everything that they’re going through,” he said. Dominguez urged shipping companies to provide remote support to the sailors on areas like mental health. He said some countries have established round-the-clock helplines for the seafarers, while others have been providing them with food.

But more could be done on a personal level, such as proactively reaching out to sailors to listen to them so they feel less isolated. Shipping remained curtailed in the strait as the United States and Iran both warned they were ready for war, while the clock ticked down on a ceasefire set to expire on Wednesday. — AFP

under US Central Command. “International waters are not a refuge for sanctioned vessels,” the Pentagon said in its post, which included video footage showing helicopters landing on a large, bright orange tanker. Sources have identified the vessel as one affiliated with Iranian activity. Donald Trump has vowed to maintain a blockade on Iran “until there is a deal” to end the war. Doubts remained regarding if a second round of negotiations would take place in Islamabad. — AFP

WASHINGTON: The US Defense Department said on Tuesday that its forces intercepted and boarded a “stateless sanctioned” vessel as part of Washington’s efforts against networks that provide support to Iran.

“Overnight, US forces conducted a right-of-visit, maritime interdiction and boarding of the stateless sanctioned M/T Tifani without incident in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility,” the department posted on its X page.

The statement said the United States was determined “to disrupt illicit networks and interdict sanctioned vessels providing material support to Iran — anywhere they operate.”

The exact location of the operation was not made clear. INDOPACOM is the US Indo-Pacific Command, which oversees a broad region that includes the Pacific and Indian oceans.

It is not responsible for the Gulf or the Strait of Hormuz, which fall

US SAYS IT INTERCEPTED SANCTIONED OIL VESSEL IN ASIA-PACIFIC

OPINION

How to bend without breaking: The real nature of resilience



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

RESILIENCE IS often misunderstood. It is commonly associated with strength, endurance and the ability to push through difficulty without faltering. Many people carry the belief that being resilient means holding everything together and continuing no matter what. On the surface, this can look admirable. Internally, however, it often comes at a cost. True resilience is not about rigidity, suppressing emotion, or forcing stability in moments that feel anything but stable. Resilience, in its truest form, is the capacity to bend without breaking. It is the ability to remain connected to yourself, even when life feels uncertain or overwhelming. There is a difference between coping and resilience. Coping often involves pushing feelings aside in order to function. It serves a purpose in the short term, especially in moments that demand immediate action. Over time, however, constant coping can lead to disconnection. Emotions that are repeatedly dismissed do not disappear. They remain beneath the surface, shaping how we respond, how we relate and how we experience ourselves. Resilience asks for something deeper. It invites presence rather than avoidance. It allows emotions to be felt without letting them take over. This does not mean becoming overwhelmed by every feeling. It means

acknowledging what is real while staying anchored within yourself. The body plays a central role in this process. When faced with stress or uncertainty, the nervous system responds instinctively. It may move into heightened alertness, where everything feels urgent, or into withdrawal, where energy begins to fade. These responses are not signs of weakness. They are protective mechanisms designed to keep you safe. The difficulty arises when these states become prolonged. Living in constant alertness or ongoing shutdown narrows emotional capacity. It becomes harder to access calm, clarity, or connection. Resilience is not found in remaining in these states, but in the ability to move through them and return to balance. There is also a quiet permission within resilience that is often overlooked. The permission to not be okay at times. The permission to feel stretched, uncertain, or affected by what life brings. Denying these experiences does not create strength. Allowing them, while staying connected to yourself, does. Emotional flexibility becomes essential, allowing you to adapt without losing your centre. This may look like adjusting expectations, stepping back when needed, or asking for support rather than carrying everything alone. These are not signs of

Bending without breaking does not mean avoiding hardship. It means allowing yourself to be shaped by it, without losing who you are. Real resilience is not found in how tightly you hold yourself together, but in how safely you can soften and return.

fragility, but expressions of grounded strength. Connection also plays a vital role. Human beings are not designed to navigate hardships in isolation. Sharing, being seen, and feeling supported restores a sense of steadiness that cannot be created alone. Resilience is often measured by how quickly someone recovers or how little they are affected. However, it is not about speed or performance. It is about depth, how truthfully you can meet your experience and how gently you can return to yourself afterwards. Nature offers a quieter, more honest reflection of this. A tree does not become strong by standing in perfect stillness. It is shaped by the wind and storms. It bends, sways and at times, branches even break. This is how it deepens its roots, strengthens its structure, and learns to endure. Without that movement or resistance, it would remain frail. Bending without breaking does not mean avoiding hardship. It means allowing yourself to be shaped by it, without losing who you are. Real resilience is not found in how tightly you hold yourself together, but in how safely you can soften and return. This is where true strength lives, not in control, but in the quiet trust that you can meet life as it is, without losing yourself within it.

Pakistan faces economic imperative in Iran war peace push

ASAD HASHIM

Sheikh Nadeem sat on a plastic chair outside his bedding store in the Pakistani capital Islamabad, scrolling through his phone as he waited for customers he knew were not coming. Between rising fuel costs and rolling blackouts due to the US-Israel war on Iran, and government restrictions on opening hours aimed at saving electricity, he said the effect on business owners has been “devastating”. “We can’t cover our expenses, and neither do we have the income to be able to pay our workers’ salaries,” the 40-year-old said. Pakistan has been enjoying the diplomatic spotlight as it mediates between the United States and Iran, burnishing its credentials as a regional power — but it has a pressing economic imperative to resolve the crisis, too. Ravaged by decades of external shocks and mismanagement, Pakistan’s economy is heavily dependent on oil and natural gas imports from the Gulf, and a sustained supply and price shock could push the country’s nascent macroeconomic recovery back over the edge. Some say the process has already begun. Petrol prices are up by more than 14 per cent at the pump, and last week authorities ordered widespread rolling blackouts to save precious natural gas. “When petrol goes up, everything becomes more expensive,” said Waqar Saleem, a day labourer at an Islamabad shoe store. “Flour, sugar, everything. When we go to get vegetables they tell us that freight transportation is closed.” For economic analyst Khurram Husain, the blackouts are the main problem, with knock-on effects for both industries and households. The shock is hitting just as the country was cautiously emerging from the depths of one of its cyclical economic upheavals. Consumer inflation hit 7.3 per cent in March, according to official data, but Pakistanis have been reeling from years of double-digit pandemic-era price increases, which hit a peak of 38 per cent in May 2023. Unemployment was at 7.1 per cent last year, as per government data, but around 29 per cent of the country’s more than 250 million people remain in poverty — up from 23 per cent in 2018-19. While policymakers have touted a recovery from the brink of sovereign default three years ago, people say macroeconomic stability has not translated to better opportunities. — AFP

Trump’s AI image ruckus reveals growing tensions

DONALD TRUMP has long cultivated an image of himself as a singular, almost indispensable figure in American politics. But his recent decision to share an AI-generated image depicting himself as Jesus Christ, and then quickly delete it following backlash, reveals how far that arrogance has gone, and where even his most loyal supporters begin to draw the line. The reaction was immediate. Critics, religious leaders and even some of Trump’s own supporters described the image as disrespectful and in many cases, outright blasphemous. In a political environment where hyperbole is common, comparing oneself to a religious figure of such significance crossed into territory that many found unacceptable. This was not simply a political misstep, it was a religious and spiritual one. Trump has, for years, leaned into a narrative that positions him as a kind of saviour figure. His rhetoric often frames him as the only person capable of fixing the country’s problems, the only one who truly understands “the people,” and the only one willing to fight perceived enemies. This messaging has resonated deeply with segments of his base, particularly within certain evangelical communities, where support for Trump has sometimes taken on a quasi-religious tone. Reports from journalists and researchers covering American evangelical spaces have documented instances where Trump is prayed for in church settings, described in messianic terms or portrayed as divinely chosen. While not representative of all his supporters, this phenomenon has been significant enough to shape public discourse around the intersection of religion and politics in the United



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AI-generated images can blur the line between satire, propaganda and genuine belief. When used by political figures, they can amplify messaging in ways that are difficult to control once released into the public sphere.

States. Yet the AI-generated image appears to have pushed that dynamic too far. Even for supporters who view Trump as a defender of their values, visually equating himself with Jesus disrupted an important boundary. Religious symbolism carries weight and for many believers, it is not something to be appropriated for political self-promotion. Trump’s later claim that the image was intended to depict him as a doctor did little to calm criticism, particularly given how clearly the imagery evoked religious iconography. The controversy also comes at a time when Trump’s political standing is facing more scrutiny from within his own base. In recent months, social media platforms and polling data have shown a growing number of voters expressing frustration with economic conditions, including the rising cost of living. According to data from institutions like the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, inflation has significantly impacted everyday expenses, from housing to food, putting pressure on working- and middle-class Americans. For many voters, economic relief was a central reason for supporting Trump. As expectations remain unmet, some have begun to question whether his policies prioritise ordinary Americans or align more closely with corporate and business interests. Analysts from organisations such as the Brookings Institution and the Peterson Institute for International Economics have long argued that certain economic strategies associated with Trump-era policies disproportionately benefit wealthier individuals and large corporations. Foreign policy decisions have also contributed to growing unease. Trump’s involvement in escalating tensions with Iran has

been controversial, particularly among voters who favour a more isolationist approach. Public opinion surveys consistently show that a significant portion of Americans are wary of new military conflicts, especially in the Middle East. For many people, entering another potential war without a direct threat to US territory reinforces concerns about unnecessary intervention. Within this broader context, the AI image controversy feels less like an isolated incident and more like part of a larger pattern. It reflects a style of leadership that relies heavily on spectacle, personal branding and exaggerated self-presentation. While this approach has proven effective in capturing attention and mobilising support, it also carries risks, particularly when it intersects with deeply held cultural or religious values. The incident also highlights a growing issue in modern politics: the role of artificial intelligence in shaping political narratives. AI-generated images can blur the line between satire, propaganda and genuine belief. When used by political figures, they can amplify messaging in ways that are difficult to control once released into the public sphere. In this case, what may have been intended as provocative or symbolic quickly became a source of backlash and reputational damage. Ultimately, the deletion of the image suggests that even in a highly polarised political environment, there are limits to how far personal branding can go. Trump’s ability to command attention remains undeniable, but this episode demonstrates that not all attention is beneficial and that even his most loyal supporters are not immune to discomfort when those limits are crossed.

War beyond the supply chain blockade



SAMUEL KUTTY

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NEARLY TWO months into the US-Israel war on Iran, with no end in sight, its aftermath is reverberating across the globe, as the growing risk of recession ripples through the food, energy, and consumer markets worldwide.

The effects are particularly burdensome for poor countries, which have the fewest resources. Nations in Africa, South Asia, Latin America, and parts of the Middle East that rely heavily on imports for most of their products and services face significant challenges in affording skyrocketing costs.

Supplies of oil, gas, fertilisers, and many other crucial commodities are unavailable due to the effective blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route, as well as damage to energy infrastructure throughout the Gulf region.

Farmers around the globe rely on fertilisers to maintain crop yields, and interruptions in supply chains could lead to food shortages. About 30 per cent of the world’s supply of urea, a petrochemical-based product vital for agriculture, is said to transit the Strait of Hormuz.

According to a study published in the journal Global Food Security, the war is threatening the food security of millions of people worldwide.

“The Strait of Hormuz represents a critical chokepoint, whose disruption simultaneously increases fertiliser costs and raises food processing and cold-chain operating expenses,” the study points out.

At the same time, a new United Nations

report estimates that the war could push an additional four million people across the Arab world into poverty and reduce the region’s output by more than \$100 billion.

“A short-lived military escalation in the Middle East could generate profound and widespread socio-economic impacts across the Arab States region,” the authors of the UN report point out.

The overall loss could cause the regional unemployment rate to rise by as much as 4 percentage points, resulting in the loss of approximately 3.6 million jobs and pushing up to 4 million people into poverty, the report states.

The Guardian, citing an International Monetary Fund (IMF) report, stated that more than 32 million people worldwide could be plunged into poverty due to the economic fallout from the war, with developing countries expected to be hit hardest.

The Washington Post argues that the war’s economic fallout is landing hardest on more vulnerable economies outside the main conflict zone.

Fragile nations and lower-income countries are especially vulnerable to price fluctuations, humanitarian consequences, funding shortages, and increased strain on already overburdened health systems.

According to the IMF’s latest World Economic Outlook, the war has halted the positive momentum in the global economy. Uncertainty about the war’s duration and the potential severity of damage to energy infrastructure in the region is unsettling governments, businesses, and consumers.

Fragile nations and lower-income countries are especially vulnerable to price fluctuations, humanitarian consequences, funding shortages, and increased strain on already overburdened health systems

“Oil impacted importers, particularly non-resource-rich and fragile states, face deteriorating trade balances, rising living costs, and limited buffers to absorb future shocks,” warned Abebe Selassie, IMF Director for Africa, at a press conference on April 17.

The IMF now projects global growth of 3.1 per cent in 2026, a 0.2 percentage point downgrade from its January forecast. This modest revision assumes that the war will be “relatively short-lived,” it stated. Global inflation is also expected to rise to 4.4 per cent this year.

Fuel shortages have already spread across Africa, affecting countries from Ethiopia to Sierra Leone.

In some nations, disruptions to fuel supply have impacted electricity generation and transportation, while soaring fertiliser prices have driven up food costs.

More than a third of sub-Saharan African countries are at high risk of, or already experiencing, debt distress, according to an IMF report. Additionally, in 21 countries, fiscal deficits exceed the levels required to stabilise debt.

If the indirect consequences are visible in the supply chain, another significant impact is on critical sectors such as healthcare and education, particularly in developing countries burdened with high levels of debt.

Heightened community instability and susceptibility may lead to greater poverty and reduced access to educational and health resources, as marginalised communities possess less ability to cope with health challenges over time.

IN LEBANON’S NABATIEH, RESIDENTS FEAR A RETURN TO WAR

ACIL TABBARA

Outside her gutted home in southern Lebanon’s Nabatieh, Zainab Farran, who recently lost two members of her family in Israeli strikes, keeps her clothes packed in a car in case the temporary truce between Hezbollah and Israel does not last.

She returned to the city with her family as soon as the 10-day ceasefire agreed between Lebanon and Israel, which included the Lebanese group, went into force on Friday, only to find their home in ruins from Israeli bombardment.

“There is nothing left, no doors, no furniture,” the 51-year-old woman said, stepping over the rubble of her charred living room and kitchen.

They had fled to Kfar Hatta village further north a day after Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel. Farran and her family stayed with some relatives, while her daughter-in-law went to stay with her parents.

Death caught up to the latter earlier this month, when an Israeli strike on April 5 killed her along with her five-year-old daughter and four other family members. With her home destroyed, Farran now sleeps at the house of her newly-widowed son, who stayed in Nabatieh working for an electrical company. “We will wait and see if they will renew the truce,” Farran said from her deserted neighbourhood, where several houses lie in ruins.

“If they do not renew it, we will see where to go... my stuff is still in the car.”

Israeli strikes on Lebanon killed more than 2,300 people and displaced more than a million, most of them from the south, which Israel now occupies a portion of. The truce is due to expire on Sunday. In the city surrounded by fields of buttercups, collapsed buildings and gutted shops follow one another, from bakeries to florists.

Few locals believe that the 10-day truce would be renewed. “Nabatieh had 90,000 residents,” mayor Abbas Fakhreddine said. “Only around 200 families remained by the end of the war.”

Around 40 per cent of residents came back during the truce, but only to check on their homes before leaving again as they are “worried for the future”, Fakhreddine estimated.

Local authorities are preparing for the worst in the city that has seen more than its share of war, and a three-year Israeli occupation between 1982 and 1985. Fakhreddine said they “stored some food supplies and diesel fuel for electricity generators, as a precaution in case, God forbid, the war returns again.” Fakhreddine received AFP in a temporary office because the municipal headquarters was destroyed by an Israeli strike during an earlier 2024 war, killing his predecessor and 13 other people. — AFP

Training between profit, popularity, real impact

IN THE world of training and professional development, the language of ‘impact’ is everywhere. Many trainers present themselves as agents of change whose mission is not merely to deliver information, but to make a meaningful difference in people and institutions. Yet, in practice, there is often a clear gap between this claim and the reality on the ground. Training, in some cases, has become driven less by purpose and more by the pursuit of quick profit, wider visibility, and personal branding.

This reality calls for a more honest conversation about what training should truly represent if it is to remain a serious developmental endeavour rather than a passing commercial activity. At its best, training is not a performance, nor a packaged product designed only for sale. It is a responsibility rooted in knowledge, values, and a sincere commitment to building human capability. From this platform, I would like to highlight a number of key points.

Impact before return: The primary purpose of training should be to enhance human capability, improve performance, and enable people to carry out their roles with awareness and competence, rather than to make financial return the highest driver and ultimate end. When profit becomes the sole compass, training loses much of its spirit and is reduced to a fast-moving product — shallow in depth and limited in value. But when impact is placed first, the trainer is compelled to ask: What will change in the trainee? What difference will appear in performance after this experience?

Values are the true engine of the training process: It is not enough for a trainer to possess knowledge or presentation skills. Values must be present throughout every stage of the training process: from needs assessment, to programme design, to delivery, and finally to evaluation.



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Integrity is reflected when a trainer refuses to offer a programme they know an organisation or individuals do not genuinely need. Excellence is demonstrated when they review their material carefully, update their examples, stay informed of current developments, and devote extra hours to preparation when necessary.

Responsibility is reflected in the understanding that respecting trainees begins with respecting their time, intellect, and real needs — not merely filling hours or fulfilling a contract.

The real criterion is competence, not superficial affiliations: The selection of trainers should be directed towards those with genuine competence: those who are intellectually capable, continuously informed, and committed to updating their knowledge and tools. Country of origin, age, institutional affiliation, or even outward image should not be the governing standard in selection. The criterion most deserving of consideration is depth of knowledge, currency of understanding, and the ability to translate complex ideas into clear meaning that can be understood and applied.

Fame is not sufficient proof of quality: One of the common errors in the world of training is to treat fame as a measure of quality, as though public visibility, number of followers, or repeated presence across platforms were sufficient evidence of scientific or practical value.

In truth, fame may precede knowledge, and the image may shine while the content remains fragile or superficial.

The standard that deserves priority is depth of expertise, soundness of argument, and the ability to offer real added value — not mere media glitter.

The need for specialisation, not excessive generality: One of the important directions training should take today is a shift from

broad generalisation to deeper specialisation. It is no longer convincing for a trainer to speak on everything — from leadership to strategy, innovation, public policy, and institutional culture — without genuine depth in any of them. Today, there is a greater need for trainers who specialise in fields such as leadership, change management, public policy, institutional development, leadership communication, or team building.

Specialisation not only elevates the quality of knowledge, but also strengthens applicability and enhances the credibility and impact of training.

The trainer’s role does not end when the training ends: It is important to understand that training is not a moment that ends when participants leave the room. It is a process that should extend beyond the session or programme itself.

Follow-up, measurement of application, provision of feedback, and the design of reinforcement mechanisms after training are all part of the trainer’s or training provider’s responsibility. The issue is not merely whether there is a momentary “impact” or a quick positive impression, but how deep that impact runs, and the extent to which it becomes practice, behaviour, and renewed performance within the workplace.

In the final analysis, training should not be reduced to profit, nor judged merely by popularity or reach. Its worth must be measured by the difference it creates, the capability it builds, and the lasting effect it leaves on individuals and institutions.

The more training returns to its ethical and intellectual core, the closer it comes to its true mission, and the further it moves away from becoming a superficial activity that consumes time and resources without producing meaningful transformation.

SPORTS

ASIAN BEACH GAMES



Omani official Nawaf al Ghadani measures wind speed during an event.

OMAN SAIL’S NAWAF APPOINTED AS NATIONAL RACE OFFICER IN SANYA

MUSCAT: Experienced National Race Officer Nawaf Yaqoob al Ghadani has been officially appointed by the Asian Sailing Federation (ASAF) as a National Race Officer and selected as part of the Technical Officials Team for the sixth Asian Beach Games, taking place in Sanya, China.

He will be among the Omani officials at the Games, reflecting the strong trust in Omani technical expertise and his extensive experience in race management.

Nawaf is one of Oman’s most experienced race officials with 13 years of officiating events in Oman, across the region and internationally, including every Musannah Race Week and every Oman National Championship since 2016. He was also selected to be part of the Technical Officials Team for the Arab Sailing Championships, GCC Youth Games and GCC Beach Games, and major world events such as the Youth Sailing World Championships, 49er and 49erFX World Championships, ANOC World Beach Games, and the recent World Sailing Inclusion Championship held in Al Musannah.

Abdulaziz bin Salim al Shidi, Acting Sailing Director at Oman Sail, said, “We are all very proud of Nawaf’s selection and his achievements have helped to reinforce Oman’s standing in global sailing. The Asian Beach Games holds special meaning for Oman and Oman Sail. As hosts of the second edition in 2010, the event helped us to develop one of the best sailing facilities in Asia at Al Musannah and host many regional and international events which has supported talented race officials and sailors to gain experience and represent the nation at all levels. We wish Nawaf all the best for the sixth Asian Beach Games.”

Nawaf said: “It is a great honour to be selected as a National Race Officer for the Asian Beach Games and represent Oman internationally in the sport of sailing. I am very grateful to have enjoyed many years in the sport and had the opportunity to officiate around the world, supporting the sailors and ensuring fair play at every competition. This reflects Oman’s strong reputation in the sport, and I hope to be able to share the benefits of my experience with the next generation of Omani officials.”

Sailing at the Asian Beach Games will take place from April 23–28 at Haihong Square, Sanya Bay. The competition features eight gold medal events across four classes: Foil Windsurfing, Optimist, ILCA 4, and Formula Kite.

Oman to attend 6th Asian Beach Games opening

1,970 athletes from 45 countries competing in 14 sports

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

THE Sultanate of Oman delegation will participate on Wednesday evening in the opening ceremony of the sixth Asian Beach Games, hosted by the Chinese city of Sanya from April 22 to 30.

Oman are competing in five sports: beach soccer, beach volleyball, beach handball, athletics and triathlon (aquathlon), and have previously secured 17 medals in the history of the Asian Beach Games, including six gold, four silver and seven bronze medals.

The Omani delegation at the opening ceremony will be headed by Taha bin Suleiman al Kishry, Board Member of the Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), while the national flag will be carried by triathlete Mohammed al Ghailani and athletics team member Alia al Mughairi. This edition of the Games features the participation of 1,970 athletes representing 45 countries, competing across 14 sports and 61 events.

The Asian Beach Games were first launched in 2008 in Bali, Indonesia, followed by the second edition in Oman in 2010, then Haiyang in China in 2012, Bangkok in Thailand in 2014 and Nha Trang in Vietnam in 2016. The Games were then suspended for 10 years before returning in 2026 in Sanya, China.

TECHNICAL MEETINGS

The technical meeting for the beach handball competition was held on Tuesday in the presence of representatives of the participating teams, along with officials from the Asian federation, including the technical committee chairman and the chief referee. Participants were briefed on all competition details, regulations, and schedules in accordance with international federation rules, while discussions also covered team registrations, match uniforms, applicable regulations and the appointment of referees.

Technical meetings for beach soccer and beach volleyball are scheduled to take place on



The technical meeting for the beach handball competition was held on Tuesday.



Oman delegation will participate on Wednesday evening in the Asian Beach Games opening ceremony in Chinese city of Sanya.



Oman’s participation reflects continued continental presence and the development of beach sports.

TAHA BIN SULEIMAN AL KISHRY
Board Member of the OOC

Wednesday morning, where competition systems, match draws, and other relevant details will be presented. Meanwhile, Omani national teams continue their intensive training sessions at the official competition venues, as the beach soccer, handball and volleyball teams have played several friendly matches in recent days to adapt to the sand conditions, which differ from those they are accustomed to, with the aim of delivering strong performances.

DEVELOPMENT OF OMANI SPORTS

Taha al Kishry affirmed that Oman’s participation in this edition represents an important milestone in its continental sporting presence and reflects the ongoing development in preparation methodologies and planning for international participation. He stated that the OOC views this participation as

an opportunity to enhance its presence, compete responsibly, and contribute to the development of beach sports in the Sultanate of Oman.

He added that the Games serve as a true test of the readiness of national teams in a highly competitive Asian environment, as well as an opportunity to assess technical, administrative, and organisational performance against advanced Asian competitors.

Al Kishry emphasised that Oman approaches such continental participations as part of an integrated national sports project focused on honourable representation, responsible competition, and long-term athlete development. He highlighted that beach sports represent a promising pathway for Omani sport, given the country’s extensive coastline and natural resources, which provide strong foundations for future growth and expansion in this field.

He praised the coordination between the OOC and sports federations, describing it as a structured institutional partnership based on clear roles.

THREE MAIN OBJECTIVES

Al Kishry explained that the objectives of Oman’s participation are centred on achieving an honourable representation that reflects the country’s standing, securing the best possible technical results in sports with realistic medal opportunities, and utilising participation as a platform to further develop beach sports. He noted that expectations are approached with realism due to the high level of competition and the various factors that may influence outcomes, including the draw and match conditions.

Al Kishry stressed that participation should not be viewed solely in terms of immediate results but rather as an opportunity for evaluation and development, as it allows for identifying technical and organisational gaps compared to leading Asian nations and supports improvements in athlete preparation, coaching and sports structures.

OTA reviews future plans with clubs, private academies

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

The Oman Tennis Association (OTA) held a meeting with a number of private tennis academies and clubs in Muscat to discuss the future development of the sport in the Sultanate of Oman and ways to expand its grassroots base in the coming phase. The meeting was chaired by Mutasim bin Hamood al Zadjali, Chairman of OTA. The meeting, held at the association’s headquarters, brought together representatives from Pro Tennis, Al Hayat Tennis Centre, PDO Tennis Club, Easy Tennis Club, and LJ Tennis Club, alongside OTF officials.

Al Zadjali praised the significant efforts made by academies in

developing tennis in Oman, highlighting their vital role in nurturing players across different age groups. He noted that these efforts have contributed positively to the national teams, which have achieved encouraging results in recent international competitions.

He also expressed his appreciation for the role played by academies and private clubs in enhancing player development and expanding competitive opportunities across various age categories, as well as their continued participation in tournaments organised by the association.

The OTA chief emphasised the importance of such meetings in aligning perspectives and understanding the needs of



The OTA chief praised the significant efforts made by academies in developing tennis in Oman.

clubs and academies to better serve the sport. He stated that the objective of the meeting was to exchange ideas, benefit from shared experiences, and establish stronger collaboration between the association and academies in both technical and administrative

areas. He further highlighted that the upcoming phase will be crucial in implementing player ranking systems at both local and international levels. This includes linking domestic tournament participation to international ranking points, encouraging academies to ensure consistent participation in OTA competitions throughout the season. He also stressed the importance of increasing player numbers in tournaments and working jointly to organise events across all age groups to enhance player development and continuity.

The OTA chairman also outlined future plans to establish new grassroots training centres and expand ‘mini tennis’ initiatives

across various governorates.

Representatives of the academies expressed their appreciation for the meeting, describing it as a positive step towards strengthening cooperation and advancing the sport. They reaffirmed their commitment to contributing further to the development of competitions and actively participating in federation-led activities.

During the session, Al Zadjali also listened to several proposals and requests from academy representatives, all aimed at supporting the continued growth of tennis in Oman. From the OTAs’ side, the meeting was attended by Ahmed al Balushi, Sara al Balushi and coach Nabil Dube.

NBAPLAYOFFS



Minnesota Timberwolves' Anthony Edwards (5) calls for a replay against the Denver Nuggets during game two of the first round of the 2026 NBA Playoffs at Ball Arena. — **Imagn Images**

TIMBERWOLVES
BATTLE BACK TO
STUN NUGGETS

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Edwards scored 30 points as the Minnesota Timberwolves staged a double-digit fightback for a series-leveling 119-114 upset of the Denver Nuggets in the NBA playoffs on Monday. A titanic duel in Denver saw the Wolves overturn an early 19-point deficit before a clinical fourth-quarter display sealed a crucial victory in the best-of-seven Western Conference first-round series.

The Nuggets, 116-105 winners in game one on Saturday, picked up where they left off with a blistering first-quarter performance that pushed them into a 39-25 lead. But the Timberwolves bounced back in the second quarter to tie the game 64-64 at halftime before edging the second half.

Edwards was backed by 24 points from Julius Randle while Donte DiVincenzo added 16. Jamal Murray led the Denver scoring with 30 points while Nikola Jokic added 24 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists. “We did what we expected to do,” Randle said. “When you’re coming on the road to start a series you want to steal one. So we did that, and now we go home and we’ve got two days to get our bodies right.”

CJ McCollum scored 32 points and led a dramatic fourth-quarter comeback as the Atlanta Hawks overturned a 12-point deficit to score a series-leveling 107-106 defeat of the New York Knicks.

Atlanta looked poised to fall 2-0 down in the series after trailing a confident Knicks line-up by as much as 14 points in the third quarter at Madison Square Garden. But the Hawks roared back to life in the fourth quarter, hauling themselves back into the contest with an 11-0 run to take a 103-100 lead with under two minutes remaining.

A Jalen Brunson three-pointer tied it at 103-103 but McCollum calmly nailed a fadeaway jump shot to put Atlanta back in front before Jalen Johnson’s dunk gave the Hawks a 107-103 lead with 10 seconds remaining. Another Brunson three-pointer cut the lead to 107-106 to set up a frantic finale, but Mikal Bridges missed an attempted buzzer-beater for New York and Atlanta claimed the win.

CAVS TAKE CONTROL

Donovan Mitchell and James Harden combined for 58 points as the Cleveland Cavaliers defeated the Toronto Raptors 115-105 to take a commanding 2-0 lead in their Eastern Conference series.

Fourth seeds Cleveland, convincing 126-113 victors in game one on Saturday, once again proved too strong for fifth-seeded Toronto as they powered to a wire-to-wire victory.

Mitchell scored 30 points including four three-pointers while Harden finished with 28 points, five rebounds and four assists.

Evan Mobley also had a big night for the Cavs, weighing in with 25 points from an efficient 11-of-13 shooting display. — **AFP**



Mumbai Indians' Tilak Varma celebrates after reaching his century during the Indian Premier League match against Gujarat Titans at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad, India. — **Reuters**

Tilak Varma’s ton injects
fresh life into Mumbai

MIRED

in a four-match losing streak, Mumbai Indians needed something special to revitalise their Indian Premier League (IPL) campaign and batter Tilak Varma duly delivered with an unbeaten century in Monday’s win over Gujarat Titans.

The middle-order batter smashed 101 off 45 balls to lead the five-time champions to a 99-run win that hauled them off the bottom of the table and up to seventh in the 10-team league.

Varma’s previous best this season was 20 and the 23-year-old said he had struck form at just the right time.

“The first hundred will always be special — and to be honest, it was very important for us,” he added.

“We don’t have much time from here. Every game is important for us.”

Batting at number five, Varma collected 19 from his first 22 balls before racing to his first IPL hundred in just 45 balls.

After going five innings without a six, he launched seven against a potent Gujarat attack that included Mohammed Siraj, Kagiso Rabada and Rashid Khan.

“In the last five games, I haven’t spent much time in the middle. So I was just thinking that in this game, I want to spend time in the middle,” he said.

“If you see the first 20 balls, I was just going ball-by-ball. Later on, once I had faced



Mumbai Indians' Tilak Varma (R) and captain Hardik Pandya react during the match. — **Reuters**

a few balls, I knew what I am capable of.

“I was stable, keeping my head still and following my basics. I’ve got all the fancy shots — when the team needs, I can use that.”

Mumbai captain Hardik Pandya, who played a largely support role in an 81-run stand with Varma, never doubted his

teammate’s talent.

“The only thing I kept telling him (was) — you’re going to just watch the ball and hit the ball because I genuinely believe the kind of (way the) ball travels from his bat is something really special,” Pandya said.

— **Reuters**

Rana stars as Bangladesh down New Zealand to level ODI series

DHAKA: Pace sensation Nahid Rana took 5-32 to lead Bangladesh to a comfortable six-wicket win over New Zealand in the second one-day international and level the three-match series at 1-1 on Monday.

Rana registered his second five-wicket ODI haul as Bangladesh bundled out New Zealand for 198, a total they overhauled with 14.3 overs to spare in Dhaka.

Opener Tanzid Hasan Tamim, who top-scored with 76, and Najmul Hossain Shanto, retired hurt on 50, steered the hosts to 199-4 in 35.3 overs, setting up a series decider on Thursday in Chattogram.

Bangladesh suffered early blows with opener Saif Hassan and Soumya Sarkar out for eight apiece, but Tanzid hit back with an aggressive counter-attack that hauled the hosts to 67 in 10 overs.

Tanzid found an able ally in Shanto and the left-handed pair put on 120 runs for the third-wicket stand to put the chase firmly in Bangladesh’s control.

Left-arm spinner Jayden Lennox briefly threatened to spark a collapse, dismissing Tanzid and Litton Das in quick succession — both falling while attempting to clear the boundary.

Tanzid struck 10 fours and four



Bangladesh's Nahid Rana celebrates his five-wicket haul after the wicket of New Zealand's Jayden Lennox during the second ODI at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur. — **AFP**

sixes in his 58-ball knock. Litton made seven.

Shanto kept his calm as he raised his fifty off 71 balls, but was forced to retire due to severe cramp.

Towhid Hridoy, unbeaten on 30, and skipper Mehidy Hasan Miraz, not out on eight, saw Bangladesh home without further trouble.

Earlier, the 23-year-old Rana set up the win during New Zealand’s innings after he operated across four separate spells and struck in the first over of each new burst.

Left-arm quick Shoriful Islam provided strong support, returning 2-32 from his 10 overs, including the wicket of Nick Kelly (83).

Fast bowlers Soumya and Taskin Ahmed took one wicket each, as did leg-spinner Rishad Hossain.

New Zealand’s innings was held together almost single-handedly by opener Kelly, who made 83 for his maiden ODI half-century.

No other visiting batter reached 20, with Muhammad Abbas the next highest scorer, on 19.

Shoriful set the platform early, delivering an incisive opening spell of six overs for just 17 runs, generating 29 dot balls to put the tourists on the back foot.

Rana tightened the stranglehold, collecting two wickets in his opening five-over spell. — **AFP**

SPORTS

HK FOOTBALL FESTIVAL



Manchester City's Erling Haaland with teammates celebrate after the match against Arsenal at Etihad Stadium, Manchester, Britain. — Reuters

MAN CITY, INTER, CHELSEA AND JUVE TO FACE OFF PRE-SEASON IN HONG KONG

HONG KONG: English and Italian football giants Manchester City, Chelsea, Inter Milan and Juventus will square up for pre-season friendlies in Hong Kong in August, the clubs announced on Tuesday.

Pep Guardiola's Manchester City, currently arm-wrestling Arsenal for the Premier League title, will take on Inter Milan on Saturday, August 1, spearheaded by their Norwegian goal machine Erling Haaland.

The match will kick off the 'Hong Kong Football Festival' at the city's futuristic 50,000-seat Kai Tak stadium.

The gleaming arena opened a year ago, featuring a roof that can be closed and air-conditioning to combat the fierce summer heat and humidity in Hong Kong.

Chelsea will play Juventus on Wednesday August 5 to round off the mini-tournament.

Pep Guardiola's Manchester City, currently arm-wrestling Arsenal for the Premier League title, will take on Inter Milan on Saturday, August 1, spearheaded by their Norwegian goal machine Erling Haaland.

Inter, under former Romanian international Cristian Chivu, are eight points clear at the top of Serie A as they look for a 21st title, second only to Juventus who have won a record 36 Italian top-flight championships.

Juventus are fourth and looking to secure a Champions League spot under Luciano Spalletti.

Chelsea beat PSG to win the Club World Cup in the United States last year but have since parted company with then manager Enzo Maresca.

Liam Rosenior took charge but is under pressure to keep his job after Chelsea lost five of their last six Premier League matches to drop to sixth, seven points adrift of the Champions League places.

It remains to be seen whether Rosenior will still be in charge when Chelsea land in Hong Kong as they were also drubbed 8-2 on aggregate by PSG in the Champions League last 16.

All the teams will hold open training sessions ahead of the matches giving Hong Kong fans an extra chance to see star players such as City's Gianluigi Donnarumma, Chelsea's Cole Palmer, Inter's Lautaro Martinez and Juventus's Dusan Vlahovic.

The action does not stop there for fans in the football-mad southern Chinese city, as Bayern Munich and Aston Villa have already announced they will play a friendly in Hong Kong on Friday, August 7.

During pre-season last year, 50,000 sell-out crowds in Hong Kong watched Liverpool play AC Milan and Tottenham face Arsenal in the first north London derby outside of the UK.

Tens of thousands also turned out to watch the teams' open training sessions. — AFP



Juventus' Italian midfielder #05 Manuel Locatelli and teammates greet supporters after their Italian Serie A match against Bologna at the Allianz stadium in Turin. — AFP

- Goals from Galeno and Toney earn Al Ahli victory
- Al Ahli on track to become first team to retain title since 2005

Toney strike takes Al Ahli into Asian CL Elite final



Al Ahli's Ivan Toney celebrates with teammate after scoring against Japan's Vissel Kobe in the semifinal of the Asian Champions League Elite in Jeddah. — AFC

AL AHLI battled back from a goal down to defeat Japan's Vissel Kobe 2-1 in the semifinals of the Asian Champions League Elite on Monday as the defending champions advanced to the tournament decider through Ivan Toney's 70th-minute strike.

Yoshinori Muto gave the J-League outfit a 31st-minute lead in Jeddah but Galeno levelled 17 minutes into the second half with a thunderous strike and Toney confirmed Al Ahli's progress eight minutes later with an inch-perfect finish.

The win takes Al Ahli into a second consecutive final and keeps Matthias Jaissle's side on track to become the first team since fellow Saudi Pro League side Al Ittihad to win back-to-back titles in 2005.

"We're really proud again to be in the final, back-to-back is something special and a huge honour and privilege," said Jaissle. "The game was not easy, as always in this stage, in a semifinal in this competition. Details decided the game."

The Japanese side took the lead when Katsuya Nagato's free kick from midway inside the Al Ahli half was nodded across goal by Yuya Osako to the unmarked Yoshinori

“We’re really proud again to be in the final, back-to-back is something special and a huge honour and privilege. The game was not easy, as always in this stage, in a semifinal in this competition. Details decided the game.”

MATTHIAS JAISSE
Al Ahli coach

Muto and he slid his shot past Edouard Mendy.

Al Ahli almost levelled with the first half in stoppage time, Rayan Hamed heading Galeno's free kick from the right against the far post while, moments later, Toney's attempt to flick in Enzo Millot's cross went narrowly wide.

TONEY SEALS WIN

Franck Kessie headed wide seconds after the restart and Toney saw his attempt ruled out for offside five minutes into the half as Al Ahli cranked up the pressure on the Japanese outfit.

Daiju Sasaki should have doubled Kobe's lead in the 54th minute when he was found unmarked inside the area by Mitsuki Hidaka but the winger crashed his shot against the crossbar.

However, eight minutes later Al Ahli were level when Galeno unleashed an unstoppable strike from 25



Al Ahli's Galeno celebrates after scoring their first goal. — AFC

yards that fizzed beyond the reach of goalkeeper Daiya Maekawa.

A further eight minutes later Al Ahli were in front, Maekawa flapping at Galeno's cross from the left allowed Toney the time and space to slide his low finish past three Kobe defenders on the line.

Al Ahli will face either Shabab Al Ahli from the United Arab Emirates or Japan's Machida Zelvia in the final with the pair meeting on Tuesday.

— Reuters

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
8,224.854

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$92.01
BRENT 94.53
LIGHT \$88.07



OIA launches Furas digital platform

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

OMAN Investment Authority (OIA) has launched Furas, a digital platform designed to give local suppliers and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) early sight of procurement opportunities across its portfolio companies, in a move that sharpens market transparency and strengthens Oman's local content agenda.

The platform, launched under the auspices of Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Minister of Economy, currently features 290 active tenders, offering businesses a clearer forward view of procurement demand across a range of sectors.

Its central value lies in timing. Furas allows suppliers to see planned tenders three to six months before formal issuance, giving firms more time to prepare technically and financially, form partnerships, assess capacity and position themselves more effectively before bidding begins.

That matters especially for smaller Omani businesses,



The OIA is preparing an updated local content strategy linked to its national development portfolio, positioning local content as a practical lever for economic diversification and private-sector growth.

AL MUATASIM AL SARIRI
Director-General of Local Content and Innovation at OIA



The platform, launched under the auspices of Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Minister of Economy, offers businesses a clearer forward view of procurement demand across a range of sectors.

which often struggle not because opportunities do not exist, but because information reaches them too late for meaningful preparation.

The launch also puts harder numbers behind Oman's local content drive. Data presented at the event showed that total spending across supply chains reached RO 1.3 billion during 2023–2025, with average local value-added spending at 32 per cent. More than 20 per cent of that spending was directed to SMEs.

Further programme results up to the end of 2025 showed that 383 products and services had been included in the mandatory local content list, with spending of RO 210 million through that channel. In parallel, 64 work packages were approved under

business allocation initiatives worth RO 118 million, while 58 SMEs were qualified under supplier development programmes representing around RO 29 million.

Together, the figures suggest that the policy conversation is shifting from aspiration to execution. Rather than treating local content as a broad target, OIA is building mechanisms around procurement visibility, supplier readiness and pipeline planning.

Munir al Muneeri, OIA Vice-President for Operations, said the platform forms part of a wider set of initiatives being rolled out with OIA subsidiaries to maximise local content and innovation, while increasing economic value in line with Oman Vision 2040.

He said Furas gives suppliers a more proactive view of future opportunities, improves transparency in tender disclosure and helps businesses strengthen readiness before the official tendering stage.

OIA said the platform also serves as an integrated digital tool for supply-chain data management, helping suppliers and entrepreneurs track procurement plans and better understand future demand across its wider ecosystem.

Al Muatasim al Sariri, Director-General of Local Content and Innovation at OIA, said the authority has aligned its local content agenda with national strategies, including the framework led by the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, to ensure closer policy coordination.

He added that OIA is preparing an updated local content strategy linked to its national development portfolio, positioning local content as a practical lever for economic diversification and private-sector growth.

During its pilot phase, the platform received 30 procurement plans from OIA subsidiaries, with more still being added. The public portal provides details on issuing entities, project type and expected tender timelines, alongside direct communication channels with the relevant bodies.

Investment portfolio unveiled for food security projects

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), through Invest Oman and in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, has announced the launch of a package of high-quality investment opportunities in the food security sector through its online platform.

The offerings include projects in agriculture, aquaculture and related industries, reflecting the Sultanate of Oman's diverse natural and productive resources and its capacity to attract value-added investments across food supply chains.

This initiative comes as part of Oman's ongoing efforts to enhance self-sufficiency, support resource sustainability and increase the contribution of productive sectors to the national economy.

In the agricultural sector, the platform offers five investment opportunities in Al Najd Agricultural City.

These include onion cultivation and processing projects with an investment value of approximately RO 4.8 million, garlic cultivation — RO 2.3 million, melon cultivation — RO 2.1 million, a greenhouse leafy vegetable cultivation project valued at RO 1.6 million; and a potato cultivation and processing project at around RO 5.5 million. These projects aim to leverage the region's agricultural potential and enhance local production.

In the fisheries sector, the opportunities include



The investment opportunities are distributed across Oman's agriculture, aquaculture and related industries.

five diverse projects, most notably an algae aquaculture project in Al Suwaiq with an investment value of around RO 2 million, an Omani abalone aquaculture project in Sharabithat, Dhofar Governorate, valued at around RO 10 million, a giant shrimp aquaculture project in Ras Madrakah with an investment value of approximately RO 32 million, a white-leg shrimp aquaculture project in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali valued at around RO 25 million and a tuna fattening project using floating cages in Qurayat with an investment value of RO 4.7 million.

These opportunities are considered high-quality and are aimed at enhancing the production of high-value marine species and expanding aquaculture activities in Oman.

The portfolio also includes supporting food industry projects, including a sustainable alternative fish feed manufacturing

project in Samayil Industrial Area with an investment value of around RO 3.8 million, contributing to strengthening value chain integration and supporting industries related to the sector.

The investment values of these opportunities range from medium-scale projects starting at approximately RO 1.6 million to major strategic projects exceeding RO 32 million, providing diverse options for investors and enhancing opportunities for partnerships and long-term investments.

These opportunities are underpinned by a range of competitive advantages that Oman offers, including the availability of suitable agricultural land, diverse marine resources, a strategic geographic location, advanced infrastructure in agricultural and industrial zones, and a supportive legislative and regulatory environment for investment in the agriculture and fisheries sectors.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/2026/010	Digital Media Content and Performance Management Services	03/05/2026	12/05/2026	Specialist	26.250

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



Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC
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Tel: +968 24250800 | CR 1/71235/7
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ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The upgraded Mastercard Debit range is designed to combine the convenience of everyday banking.

BankDhofar
Mastercard debit
cards unlock premium
lifestyle, travel benefits

MUSCAT: Customers of BankDhofar can now access a wider range of lifestyle, travel and everyday banking benefits through the bank’s enhanced portfolio of debit cards issued in partnership with Mastercard.

The upgraded Mastercard Debit range — comprising Standard, Platinum and World cards — is designed to combine the convenience of everyday banking with privileges typically associated with premium payment products.

The initiative reflects the growing evolution of debit cards from simple payment tools into lifestyle-focused financial solutions that support travel, shopping and global connectivity.

Cardholders benefit from worldwide acceptance, enabling seamless payments at millions of merchants across international markets. Whether making purchases in-store or online, the cards support secure transactions through advanced authentication and fraud protection systems that enhance payment safety.

The cards also feature contactless payment technology, allowing customers to complete purchases quickly and securely with a simple tap. In addition, users can access a vast international ATM network, providing convenient cash withdrawals while travelling abroad.

One of the key attractions of the enhanced debit cards is the suite of travel privileges available, particularly for Platinum and World cardholders.

These premium cards provide access to selected airport lounges worldwide, offering travellers the opportunity to relax in comfort before their flights.

Under the Mastercard programme, eligible customers receive a complimentary lounge visit, with continued access available through minimal quarterly card usage. The travel benefits complement the broader global reach of the cards, making them particularly suited to customers who travel frequently for business or leisure. The ability to make secure international transactions, withdraw cash globally and access airport lounges adds a layer of convenience and comfort to the travel experience.

Beyond travel, the cards offer a range of lifestyle and dining privileges through exclusive discounts, curated offers and special promotions across a variety of retail and hospitality outlets. These benefits are designed to enhance everyday spending while delivering additional value to customers.

The cards also support safe and seamless e-commerce transactions, enabling users to shop confidently on international digital platforms while benefitting from Mastercard’s global payment infrastructure. For customers who prefer to manage their spending directly from their bank accounts rather than relying on credit, the enhanced debit cards provide access to premium benefits without the need for a credit facility.

MUZN
ISLAMIC
BANKING
RELOCATES
SUR BRANCH

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) Muzn Islamic banking has announced the official opening of its relocated Sur branch, reaffirming its commitment to improving accessibility and serving the evolving needs of customers in Sur. The branch has been relocated to Al Noor Street to better support customers in the area.

The branch offers a full range of everyday banking services, alongside specialised Sharia compliant financial solutions for both individuals and businesses. Salima bint Obaid al Marzooqi,



Assistant General Manager — Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO, said, “The relocation of our Sur branch reflects our continued focus on bringing our services closer to the communities. At Muzn Islamic banking, we are committed to

delivering accessible, customer-centric solutions that respond to evolving needs, while adhering to the principles of Sharia compliant banking”.

The new branch provides a convenient, welcoming banking environment, supported by dedicated staff and efficient service delivery, ensuring a smooth customer experience. This relocation forms part of Muzn Islamic banking’s broader efforts to ensure that customers across Oman continue to benefit from reliable, well-supported banking solutions.

TopGear names Kia Best
Manufacturer 2026

KIA has been named ‘Best Manufacturer’ at the TopGear.com EV Awards 2026. Now in its seventh year, the annual awards recognise the best electric vehicles currently on sale in the UK and celebrate the manufacturers leading the transition to electrification.

Kia’s latest accolade follows further success at the BBC TopGear.com Awards, where the PV5 Passenger was named ‘Family Car of the Year’.

“Whether you’re in an EV3 or the enormous EV9, the sleek EV6, or the boxy PV5, there’s a familiar sortedness running through the e-Kias like the proverbial stick of rock”, said Ollie Kew, Deputy Editor at TopGear.com. “Reliable range, unfussy performance, pleasing comfort and the confidence to bookend its EV ranks with an entry-level EV2 alongside a super SUV in the shape of the EV9 GT”.

“We’re honoured to be named TopGear.com’s Best Manufacturer at the EV Awards 2026”, said Minsoo Kim, Executive Vice President and Head of Kia Global Brand and CX. “This award reflects the trust placed in Kia’s electric vehicles and recognises the dedication of our global teams who continue to push boundaries in design, engineering



The PV5 Passenger was named ‘Family Car of the Year’.

and customer experience. This collective effort enables us to deliver a diverse and compelling EV line up for our customers while continuing to advance our vision for sustainable mobility”.

ROAD TO ELECTRIFICATION

Kia has been rapidly expanding its EV line-up. Its diverse range now comprises the EV3, EV4, EV5, EV6, EV9 and PV5. The EV2

represents the next step in the brand’s ‘Plan S’ strategy, which began with the launch of the EV6 in 2021. As Kia’s most compact and affordable EV to date, the EV2 has been designed, engineered and manufactured in Europe, with a strong focus on meeting the needs of customers across the region.

First customer deliveries of the EV2 are underway and GT versions of the EV3, EV4 and EV5 will be introduced at a later stage.

Sohar Islamic expands mobile app capabilities

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its position as a Sharia-compliant financial partner committed to sustainable expansion and responsible financial management, Sohar Islamic has launched an enhanced version of its Corporate Mobile App, purpose-built to address the evolving operational requirements of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and corporates across the Sultanate of Oman.

The upgraded platform reflects a deliberate shift towards greater operational autonomy, empowering



The upgraded platform reflects a deliberate shift towards greater operational autonomy.

businesses to oversee and execute core financial functions through an integrated management interface that supports transaction initiation and instant authorisation, streamlined salary payments and centralised bill management within a secure, Sharia-compliant digital framework.

Fahad al Zadjali, Head of Sohar Islamic stated, “Islamic finance is grounded in disciplined governance and responsible growth. With this enhanced digital platform, we are strengthening

the operational capacity of businesses that form the backbone of Oman’s economy.

By integrating advanced mobile capabilities, we enable enterprises to manage financial obligations with greater clarity, control and timeliness. Improved visibility and execution at the enterprise level support more disciplined liquidity management, stronger financial planning and enhanced business continuity, thereby collectively contributing to a more stable and competitive economic environment”.

Sohar International platinum sponsor at CBFS ESG Forum

MUSCAT: Sohar International participated as a Platinum Sponsor at the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) ESG Forum 2026, held under the theme ‘Building a Sustainable Future’.

The forum was held under the auspices of Ahmed bin Ali al Mamari, Executive Vice President of the Financial Services Authority (FSA), convening policymakers, financial sector leaders and sustainability practitioners to advance dialogue and strengthen collaboration around the evolving Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) landscape across the region.

The forum provided a strategic platform to explore the role of financial institutions in enabling responsible growth and supporting the transition towards more resilient economic models.

A key highlight of the event was the recognition of Sohar International’s continued



As part of its active participation, Sohar International contributed to key discussions shaping the future of sustainable finance.

efforts to integrate environmental and social considerations into its institutional framework and strategic priorities.

The award was received by Mahira bint Saleh al Raisi, Chief People Officer at Sohar International, on behalf of the Bank.

As part of its active participation, Sohar International contributed to key discussions shaping the future of sustainable finance.

Ibrahim al Zakwani, Head of ESG & Executive Mandates, delivered a keynote address titled ‘Responsible Financing for a Sustainable Future’, offering insights into ESG-linked financing structures and the mechanisms through which sustainability considerations are embedded into capital allocation and strategic decision-making.

The bank also participated in an interactive deep-dive session alongside industry peers, exploring effective approaches to embedding ESG metrics within financial frameworks and

advancing their application across the sector.

The bank’s participation highlights its focus on enhancing internal capabilities to support sustainable finance and contribute to broader ESG integration regionally. As regulations evolve and market expectations shift, the bank is consistently refining its sustainability approach by developing viable solutions and supporting structured, insight-driven industry discussions.

Aligned with Oman Vision 2040 objectives and reflecting a growing emphasis on responsible investment and economic diversification, the bank continues to deepen its ESG financing capabilities, expand its portfolio of sustainability-linked solutions and strengthen the governance frameworks that underpin them. Through this approach, Sohar International translates strategic intent into measurable outcomes, contributing to a more resilient and future-focused financial system.

SHORTTAKES



The expo offers a platform to promote Omani products and make linkages with buyers & suppliers.

OMAN SHOWCASES PRODUCTS AT ASIA FOOD EXPO

SINGAPORE: Oman is taking part in the Food and Hospitality Asia exhibition, with a delegation of Omani companies representing the food, beverage and hospitality sectors, as it seeks to expand its footprint in key Asian markets.

The multi-day event is regarded as one of Asia’s leading industry platforms, bringing together decision-makers, investors and innovators from across the global food and hospitality landscape. It provides a venue for forging partnerships, exploring investment prospects and exchanging expertise in emerging technologies shaping the sector.

This year’s edition features more than 2,750 exhibitors from over 115 countries and is expected to attract upwards of 80,000 visitors. The exhibition highlights advancements in food and beverage products, hospitality solutions, sustainable practices and seafood industries, reflecting shifting global consumption trends and supply chain innovations.

Mahmoud bin Sulaiman al Yazidi, Head of Export Promotion at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said Oman’s participation aligns with ongoing efforts to boost non-oil exports and strengthen access to high-growth markets in Asia.

He noted that the exhibition offers a strategic platform to promote Omani products and establish direct linkages with international buyers and suppliers. He added that such engagements are essential in enhancing the visibility of Omani goods in competitive global markets while supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s broader economic diversification strategy.

Jawaher bint Nasser al Rashidi, Export Specialist at the Ministry, said the Omani pavilion reflects the growing competitiveness and innovation within the domestic food industry. She added that local producers are adopting advanced technologies and modern production methods to meet evolving global standards. — ONA

Asyad acquires Ligentia to expand global footprint

ASYAD Group has acquired UK-based logistics firm Ligentia, in a move that significantly expands its global footprint and accelerates its strategy to become a leading integrated logistics provider.

The acquisition effectively doubles Asyad’s capacity to deliver end-to-end, multimodal logistics solutions across global value chains. It also extends the Group’s operational network to 24 countries and 76 cities, reinforcing its presence across key international trade corridors.

Central to the transaction is Ligentia’s advanced digital platform, Legentix, which offers real-time supply chain visibility, integration with enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems and predictive analytics.

The platform is expected to enhance Asyad’s service efficiency, strengthen operational transparency and enable data-driven decision-making across its logistics ecosystem.

The deal marks Asyad’s second international acquisition in less than two years, following its purchase of Skybridge Freight Solutions in July 2024, highlighting a clear acceleration in its global expansion strategy. The Group is targeting major logistics hubs and high-growth markets as it seeks to scale its capabilities and diversify revenue streams.

Eng Abdulrahman bin Salim al Hatmi, Group CEO, said the acquisition represents a pivotal milestone in Asyad’s evolution into a global logistics player.

He noted that integrating Ligentia’s international network and digital expertise with



The acquisition doubles Asyad’s capacity to deliver end-to-end, multimodal logistics solutions across global value chains.

Asyad’s assets will strengthen the Group’s ability to deliver seamless and intelligent logistics solutions.

He added that the move supports Oman’s broader economic diversification objectives by enhancing connectivity between Omani ports, free zones and global markets.

It is also expected to create new opportunities for Omani businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), by improving access to international supply chains and trade routes.

The acquisition will bring more than 6,000 additional clients into Asyad’s portfolio, significantly expanding its customer base. It also



ENG ABDULRAHMAN BIN SALIM AL HATMI
CEO, Asyad Group

strengthens the Group’s fourth-party logistics (4PL) capabilities, particularly in high-value sectors such as retail, automotive, manufacturing and e-commerce, where complex supply chain management and digital integration are increasingly critical.

As part of the integration, a regional supply chain control centre will be established in Muscat to monitor and analyse logistics flows.

The centre will link Ligentia’s global operations with Oman’s advanced port infrastructure, helping attract new trade flows and optimise supply chain performance.

Asyad’s growth trajectory has been marked by strong financial and operational expansion.

Revenues have increased from RO 123 million in 2016 to more than RO 800 million by 2026, reflecting sustained investment and strategic positioning.

Its maritime fleet has also expanded from 52 vessels to over 90 ships, serving more than 200 ports in 60 countries.

This expansion is supported by a diversified portfolio that includes ports, free zones, shipping and logistics services, as well as major infrastructure projects such as dry dock facilities and the planned railway link between Oman and the UAE.

The acquisition of Ligentia reinforces Asyad’s role in positioning the Sultanate of Oman as a competitive global logistics gateway, leveraging advanced technology, integrated infrastructure and a growing international network to capture emerging trade opportunities. — ONA

Energy Development Oman posts revenue of \$14.77 billion in 2025

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 21

Energy Development Oman (EDO), the Sultanate of Oman’s state-owned energy investment arm, reported a net profit of \$523.017 million for 2025, marking a decline from the \$712.215 million profit recorded in 2024.

According to its consolidated financial statement, EDO posted revenue of \$14.77 billion in 2025, down from \$16.07 billion in 2024. Total revenues and other income similarly fell to \$14.80 billion, compared with \$16.11 billion a year earlier.

The company’s cost profile remained significant, with royalty expenses at \$5.2 billion and depreciation, depletion and



EDO holds the government’s upstream oil and gas interests, including its stake in Petroleum Development Oman.

amortisation charges rising to \$4.12 billion, up from \$3.74 billion in 2024. Production expenses also edged higher to \$1.27 billion.

As a result, profit before interest and tax declined to \$3.72 billion, down from \$4.78 billion in the previous year. Nevertheless, the company maintained strong equity growth, with total equity rising to \$11.63 billion at the end of 2025, up from \$10.20 billion a year earlier.

A key driver of this increase was the conversion of \$3.31 billion in shareholder loans and accrued interest into equity, significantly strengthening the company’s balance sheet. This was partially offset by substantial shareholder returns, including an interim dividend payout of \$2.41 billion. Despite the decline in

earnings, EDO reported a modest improvement in other comprehensive income. This brought total comprehensive income to \$558.4 million, down from \$724.9 million in the prior year.

Established as a key pillar of Oman’s energy sector restructuring, EDO holds the government’s upstream oil and gas interests, including its stake in Petroleum Development Oman, the country’s largest hydrocarbon producer. The company plays a central role in managing revenues from hydrocarbons while supporting fiscal stability and long-term investment in the energy sector.

In 2021, EDO assumed the government’s participating interests in Block 6 — the country’s largest and most significant oil and gas

concession, spanning around 90,000 sq km. This included the transfer of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals’ stake in Petroleum Development Oman, which continues to operate the concession and manage exploration, production and related activities under established agreements.

Since its formation, EDO has also expanded its portfolio through the creation of subsidiaries aligned with Oman’s evolving energy priorities. These include Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), tasked with advancing the green hydrogen sector, as well as entities focused on gas operations and future energy ventures, reflecting EDO’s dual role in managing conventional resources while supporting the country’s energy transition agenda.

OIL MARKETS

Oil falls on renewed talks hopes



Oil prices declined as expectations of renewed US-Iran talks improved the outlook for additional Middle East supply. Brent crude fell 1% to \$94.53, while West Texas Intermediate dropped 1.7% to \$88.07, with the June contract also easing.

The decline follows strong gains in the previous session as markets reassessed geopolitical risks and supply disruption concerns. — Reuters

CORPORATE LEADERSHIP

Apple names Ternus as next chief

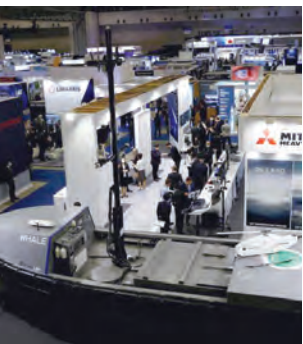


Apple appointed John Ternus as its next Chief Executive Officer, with Tim Cook set to become executive chairman on September 1.

Ternus, a long-time insider, has led key hardware projects including Mac, iPad and AirPods. The transition comes as the tech-giant Apple seeks to strengthen its competitive position in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. — Reuters

DEFENCE POLICY

Japan eases rules on arms exports



Japan announced a major overhaul of defence export rules, allowing overseas sales of weapons such as missiles and warships. The reform aims to strengthen its defence industrial base and deepen partnerships with allies.

The overhaul reflects a gradual shift from postwar pacifist policies amidst rising regional tensions and growing demand for diversified security cooperation. — Reuters

OPINION

Energy shock ripples across the global economy



ADV R MADHUSOODANAN
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The writer is the Executive Advisor to the Board, Global Money Exchange, Muscat

EVEN if the diplomatic talks between the United States and Iran result in an amicable settlement, resolving the ongoing energy crisis could take several months. Critical infrastructure across West Asia will require time to be repaired, supply chains must stabilise and market confidence will need to be gradually restored.

The Strait of Hormuz is currently open to commercial vessels, but the reopening is conditional and not permanent. Uncertainty persists amidst an ongoing US naval blockade and Iranian warnings that the vital shipping lane could be closed again.

Earlier rounds of conciliation talks between the two countries, held in Islamabad, failed to produce any meaningful breakthrough, dimming hopes for a near-term resolution. Next round of talks are happening shortly. No doubt, the continued uncertainty has heightened concerns in global energy markets, particularly among energy-importing nations.

Countries across Asia and Europe are already grappling with rising import bills and widening trade deficits. The burden extends beyond crude oil prices, as shipping costs and insurance premiums have surged sharply.

War risk premiums, driven by fears of escalation between the US and Iran, have reportedly increased multiple times, significantly adding to overall fuel import costs. Energy price shocks tend to ripple through the broader economy. Oil and gas are critical inputs for transportation and

industrial production. As energy costs rise, businesses pass on the increased cost of production to consumers, triggering inflationary pressures.

For households, this translates into reduced disposable income and lower consumer spending. As inflation breaches the comfort thresholds of central banks, monetary authorities respond by raising interest rates. This, in turn, increases borrowing costs for both individuals and corporations, further dampening economic growth.

The macroeconomic impact is particularly severe for developing economies. Many countries are already struggling with a fragile balance of payments position and widening current account deficits (CAD). Higher energy import bills drain foreign exchange reserves, exert pressure on currencies and often lead to depreciation. This volatility can trigger capital outflows, as investors shift towards safer assets.

The broader consequence is a slowdown in economic growth. Reduced consumer demand, combined with higher business operating costs, weakens overall economic momentum. Energy-intensive sectors such as logistics, aviation and agriculture are among the hardest hit.

The crisis also threatens global food security. Gulf nations such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman are key exporters of fertilisers like urea and ammonia.

Supply chain disruptions in the region are already affecting exports, with potential consequences for agricultural production

Global financial institutions have sounded warnings over the economic outlook. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have both cautioned about a potential slowdown, with growth forecasts revised downward across major economies.

worldwide. Reduced fertiliser availability could lead to lower crop yields, tighter food supply and rising global food prices.

Global financial institutions have sounded warnings over the economic outlook. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have both cautioned about a potential slowdown, with growth forecasts revised downward across major economies.

According to recent projections, the United Kingdom's growth is expected to slow to 0.8 per cent, while China's growth forecast for 2026 has been trimmed to 4.4 per cent.

The Middle East and North Africa region is projected to grow at just 1.1 per cent, with the Eurozone showing a similar pace. India's growth outlook has also been revised downward by around one percentage point.

As geopolitical tensions persist, the global economy faces an increasingly uncertain path, with energy markets once again emerging as the central driver of economic stability and risk.

The surge in oil prices underscores the vulnerability of the global economy to energy shocks. While diplomacy may help ease tensions, the structural effects of the crisis are likely to linger. Repairing damaged infrastructure, rebuilding supply chains and rebalancing global demand and supply will take time. Ultimately, the duration and severity of the crisis will determine how quickly oil prices stabilise. A prolonged disruption could have lasting consequences, potentially reshaping energy policies and accelerating the transition towards alternative energy sources.

Can renewable energy realistically replace fossil fuels in Oman?



DR HUSSAIN A KAZEM

The writer is Unesco RCQE Chair in Renewable and Sustainable Energy Emerging Technologies, at Sohar University

It is realistic to replace a large share of Oman's electricity generation with renewables — solar, wind and energy storage — within 20 years. However, it is unrealistic to fully replace all fossil-fuel use across the economy in that timeframe without major additional actions, such as mass electrification, green hydrogen at scale, carbon capture and storage; and very large investment. A reasonable outcome by 2046 is

high renewable penetration in power generation, reaching 40–70% depending on policy and investment, while oil and gas continue to supply transport, industrial feedstocks and residual generation.

TECHNICAL ARGUMENTS

Resource strength: Oman has excellent solar (~5.5–7 kWh/m²/day) and good coastal wind in parts (annual mean 4–6 m/s at low heights, higher at hub heights). Technically the resource base can support multi-GW Photovoltaics and wind installations.

Grid integration and flexibility: High variable renewable energy penetration requires upgrades: transmission reinforcement, situational awareness, fast ramping resources, demand response and distributed generation management.

ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS

Levelised costs: Utility-scale PV and onshore wind are already the cheapest marginal sources in many regions; levelised cost of electricity for new PV in the Gulf is low and falling. This favours rapid buildup of renewables for power generation.

Storage and balancing cost: Battery costs remain the major incremental expense. For high variable renewable energy shares, system cost increases nonlinearly as long-duration firm capacity is required; green hydrogen and seasonal storage are still costly per kWh equivalent compared with gas.

CONCLUSIONS

Replacing most fossil use in electricity generation in Oman over 20 years is technically and economically reasonable with strong policy and large investment, producing major emissions reductions.

Replacing all fossil fuels economy-wide (transport, heavy industry, export hydrocarbons) within two decades is unlikely without transformational changes (very large long-duration storage or low-cost hydrogen, aggressive electrification and major fiscal shifts).

When the Strait of Hormuz crisis reaches our wallets

GEOPOLITICAL crises often seem distant when they first unfold. We see them in headlines, shipping maps, military briefings and oil market charts. Yet their true significance only becomes clear when they begin to affect ordinary people in their daily lives. Few recent events demonstrate this more clearly than the disruption in the Strait of Hormuz.

For many readers, the Strait may appear to be merely a narrow waterway on the map. In reality, it is one of the world's most critical economic arteries, carrying around 20 million barrels of oil every day — roughly one fifth of global oil consumption. More than 80% of that oil moves towards Asia.

When this route is disrupted, the consequences do not remain confined to energy traders or shipping companies. They eventually appear where people feel them most: at fuel stations, in electricity bills, in food prices and ultimately in household budgets.

What I believe this latest Hormuz shock has exposed more than anything else is that not all economies experience the same crisis in the same way. Two countries may both import energy, yet one absorbs the shock while the other transmits it directly to its people. The difference lies not simply in access to fuel, but in how the economy itself has been designed.

Take the Philippines. It offers perhaps the clearest example of what genuine economic exposure looks like. Nearly 98% of its crude oil imports come from the Middle East, meaning that the country's energy security is tied heavily to a single high-risk geopolitical corridor. When disruption hit the Strait, the effects were immediate.

Fuel prices in Manila rose sharply, the peso weakened to record lows and the cost of transport and food climbed together. For many Filipino households, it meant daily commuting became more expensive, groceries cost more and wages no



The Strait of Hormuz is seen in this illustration. — Reuters



DR ZIAD ALZAIDI

The writer is a strategic management & organisational transformation consultant

For many readers, the Strait may appear to be merely a narrow waterway on the map. In reality, it is one of the world's most critical economic arteries, carrying around 20 million barrels of oil every day — roughly one fifth of global oil consumption.

longer stretched as far as they did before.

Now compare that with Singapore. Despite importing nearly all of its energy needs, Singapore reacts very differently to the same shock.

More than 70% of its oil imports come from the Middle East and almost all of its electricity generation depends on imported natural gas. Yet energy disruption there does not produce the same social strain.

Why? Because Singapore has built an economic system capable of intercepting shocks before they reach households. Strong fiscal reserves, strategic stockpiles, targeted support measures and a high-income economic structure all provide layers of protection.

Singaporean households may notice higher prices, but they do not experience the same level of economic distress.

Jordan presents a third and more balanced case. As an energy-importing country in a volatile region, it remains vulnerable to global energy shocks, but it benefits from partial logistical insulation. A significant portion of its imports arrives through the Red Sea via Aqaba, reducing direct dependence on Hormuz.

Even so, rising global oil prices still affect the Jordanian consumer and the government frequently

steps in to absorb part of the burden through subsidies or fiscal support.

In this model, the shock is shared between the state and the citizen rather than falling entirely on households.

To me, the lesson from these three examples is clear: energy vulnerability is not simply about how much oil a country imports. It is about the quality of the economic model behind that dependence. Two nations can face the same external shock yet produce entirely different outcomes for their citizens.

The determining factors are institutional strength, fiscal flexibility, currency stability, logistical planning and the broader structure of household income and expenditure. In weaker systems, the shock passes rapidly from global markets into people's pockets. In stronger systems, it is absorbed, managed and redistributed before it becomes a social burden.

In my view, the most resilient economies are not those that avoid shocks entirely — no country can. They are those that can absorb disruption without allowing it to become a domestic crisis.

That requires far more than secure fuel supplies. It requires productive economic sectors, prudent fiscal policy, strong institutions, strategic foresight and long-term discipline in policymaking.

Some states have managed this well. Their oil and gas wealth undoubtedly helped, but resources alone do not create resilience. Many resource-rich economies remain highly fragile.

What distinguishes the more successful models is that they used periods of prosperity not simply to spend more, but to build stronger institutions, improve governance, create fiscal buffers and prepare for instability before it arrived.

Ultimately, crises like the Strait of Hormuz disruption test more than energy markets. They test the underlying design of national economies.

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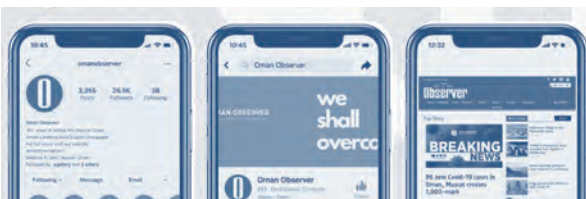
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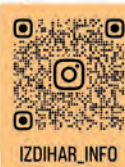
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OMAN'S FIRST FEMALE

CAR MECHANIC

REDEFINING THE ROAD AHEAD

> 20

ON SECOND **THOUGHT**

AL HAMRA'S FUTURE WAS ALREADY IN ITS FIELDS



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

The first time I went to Al Hamra in 2016, it was not a destination in the way we understand destinations today. There were no itineraries, no carefully packaged experiences. What drew people in was Bait Al Safah, a restored mud-brick home set within one of Oman's oldest surviving harat, where the past was not displayed but lived, explained, and, in many ways, still practised.

It was there that I understood this: life in Al Hamra was organised around farming, not as a profession but as a shared system. You could trace it in the smallest details. The sound of pestle against mortar in the early morning, as coffee was prepared, carried across the lanes like a quiet signal that the day had begun. Men gathered at the edge of the village, not formally, but with purpose discussing water, land and the small decisions that keep a place functioning. The falaj moved steadily through terraces and homes, sustaining more than crops. It sustained a way of living rooted in mutual understanding.

Returning now, nearly a decade later, the shift is unmistakable. Al Hamra has opened up. There are cafés where there were none, boutique stays occupying restored homes and a visible effort to make the town more accessible. Yet what stands out is that this transition has not been imposed from the outside. It is being shaped largely by Omanis themselves — particularly younger families choosing to stay, to return and to invest in what already exists.

In that context, the growing attention on agritourism feels less like a pivot and more like a correction.

What is taking shape is not the conversion of farmland into attraction, but the recognition that these landscapes already hold value beyond production. In villages such as Misfat Al Abriyeen, visitors do not observe agriculture from a distance; they move through it. They walk narrow paths between terraces, see how the falaj is allocated and maintained, and sit down to meals inseparable from the land around them. Farmers are not stepping away from their work. They are extending it, allowing it to be understood.

This distinction matters. In many parts of the world, agritourism has become a strategy for survival. In Italy, it has helped farms remain viable by turning them into places of stay and exchange. In Japan, it has slowed the erosion of rural communities by reconnecting them with visitors willing to engage with seasonal life. What has made these models endure is not reinvention, but clarity.

Al Hamra does not need to construct that clarity. It is already present.

The farms are active. The systems are intact. The knowledge has not been displaced. What is happening now is an acknowledgement that these elements can carry economic weight without being altered beyond recognition.

The risk, of course, is that in making agriculture visible, it becomes performative. So far, in Al Hamra, the pace remains measured, the scale deliberate. The involvement of local families suggests a level of custodianship that cannot be easily replicated.

QUICK FEATURES



LIFESTYLE

Children take part in an activity in a muddy field as part of an organised event, involving mud races and wrestling matches, in Hong Kong. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Welsh actress Jessica Sula attends the Los Angeles premiere of Lionsgate's "Michael" at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP



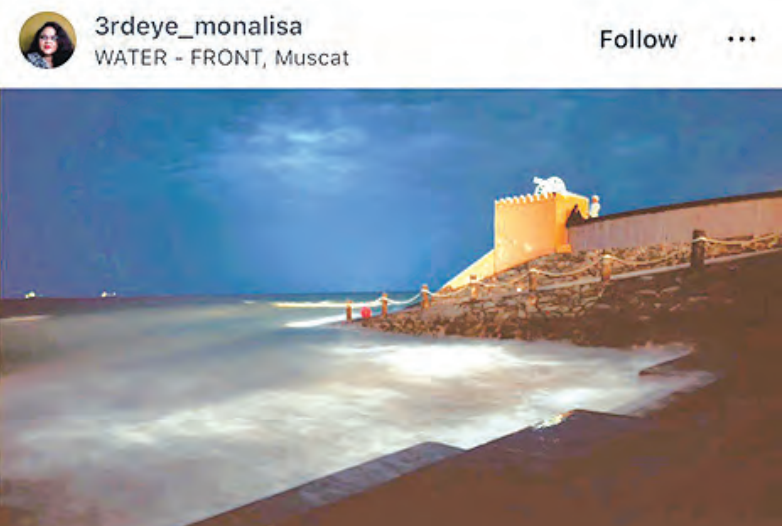
FESTIVITIES

A snowboarder in a festive costume attempts to cross a pool of water at the foot of a slope marking the end of a ski season in Russia. — Reuters

INSTA PICKS



Pretty in Pink — Flamingos in perfect poise



Serene waves at Al Qurum Beach

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ACE MEXICAN WRITER’S TYPEWRITER, PHOTOS GO ON DISPLAY

An old Smith Corona typewriter, letters from literary contemporaries and photographs are part of the items spanning the life of renowned Mexican writer and journalist Elena Poniatowska to go on display this week in Mexico City.

Poniatowska, winner of the 2013 Cervantes Prize — the most prestigious award in Spanish-language literature — and still active at the age of 93, was not at all pleased with the idea of an exhibition about her life.

“But what I’ve done my whole life is give a voice to others!” the writer protested when organisers proposed the project to her, according to Alejandro Brito, director of the Museo del Estanquillo in the historic centre of the Mexican capital.

The exhibition, which explores her career in journalism and literature, opens on Saturday at the museum founded by Carlos Monsivais, Poniatowska’s close friend and literary partner who died in 2010.

On display is a 1955 essay on photography by Mexican painter Diego Rivera, a letter from author Fernando del Paso and photographs from Poniatowska’s interviews with figures who have shaped Mexico’s artistic, political and social life over the past seven decades.

The writer, born in Paris in 1932 and distantly related to the last Polish king, arrived in Mexico aged 10 and developed an interest in journalism and literature early on.



‘Massacre in Mexico’ Photographs show her reporting from a prison, where she interviewed students who were political prisoners following a massacre against student demonstrators in 1968.

Those interviews inspired her to write one of her most courageous and well-known books “Massacre in Mexico”. At the time, the work was hailed for raising awareness about the brutal military repression that had been kept under wraps.

According to her son Felipe Haro, director of the Elena Poniatowska Amor Foundation, his mother wrote the book because “she felt comfortable in the prison; she liked the stories” she found there.

“Elena is a great storyteller”, he said during a media tour of the exhibition.

The author, who continues to write and publish, recently visited President Claudia Sheinbaum at Mexico’s National Palace. — AFP



PHOTOS BY SALEH AL SHARJI

SCHOOL THEATRE FESTIVAL OPENS IN MUSCAT



MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

THE 11th School Theatre Festival was launched on Monday evening, April 20, 2026, at 7:00 pm, under the theme “Rooted Values... Creative Generation”, at Dohat Al Adab School Theatre, under the Directorate General of Education in Muscat.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Shibli, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Higher Education. The programme began with the honouring of the patron, marking the official opening of the festival.

This was followed by a piano performance presented by student Luai al Hinai from Shaikh Salem bin Said Al Saighi School.

Al Hinai said his talent in piano began during the lockdown period, when he borrowed an instrument from a friend and started learning. He explained that the early stages were challenging, but through continued practice and learning musical notes, he was able to develop his skills.

He added that he is currently participating at the Sultanate of Oman level and aspires to achieve



first place.

Following the musical segment, a play titled “Barawiz” was presented as part of the festival programme. The performance was followed by a discussion session with the audience, during which themes related to art and identity were raised, along with reflections on the role of performance in educational activities.

The discussion also highlighted different aspects of the performance, including its presentation and the ideas it conveyed, while allowing the audience to engage and share their observations in an open setting.

In this context, Ali al Alawi, a school activities supervisor at the Directorate General of Education in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, said his role in the festival involves providing feedback on the performances. He noted that the purpose of this feedback is to evaluate and support the efforts of students and teachers involved in the work, while also encouraging them and raising their morale.

Al Alawi also called on parents to support their children’s talents and encourage their participation, stressing that school activities form an essential part of the educational process.

FEATURES

OMAN'S FIRST FEMALE

CAR MECHANIC

REDEFINING THE ROAD
AHEAD



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

In a workshop where the scent of engine oil lingers in the air and the rhythm of tools echoes against metal, Zalikhah al-Bulushi is quietly reshaping expectations, one engine, one video, and one mindset at a time.

Growing up in Oman, Zalikhah's fascination with cars didn't begin in a classroom, but in her own backyard. Her parents' habit of buying and selling vehicles turned her childhood into an informal showroom, where curiosity replaced hesitation. While other children played, she observed, questioned and built, often with Legos in hand, unknowingly laying the foundation for a future in mechanical engineering.

That curiosity matured into a degree in mechanical engineering, complemented by certifications in Health, Safety, and Environment, HSE. But Zalikhah refused to let her knowledge remain confined to textbooks or workshop walls. Instead, she found an unexpected yet powerful outlet, social media.

For her, engineering is not just about formulas, it is about responsibility, storytelling and impact. Through her content, she translates complex mechanical concepts into accessible, engaging visuals, often infused with humor and real life examples. Whether explaining how a car system works or emphasising safety practices, she bridges the gap between technical expertise and everyday understanding.

In doing so, she is also quietly dismantling long standing perceptions.

"In Oman, there are still expectations around what women should study or where they should work", she says. Yet Zalikhah does not frame her



journey as defiance alone. Instead, she sees it as expansion.

By standing confidently in a male dominated field while maintaining a creative, expressive presence online, she challenges the idea that women must choose between logic and creativity, or tradition and ambition. "You don't have to fit into one box," she says. "You can be all of it."

The road, however, has not been without resistance. Questions about her capability and the suitability of her field have come from both men and women. But rather than confronting criticism directly, she lets her work speak. Consistency, she believes, is the most convincing argument.

And it is working.

The turning point came not from metrics or views, but from a message, someone had begun considering mechanical engineering because of her content. Closer to home, even her younger cousins started applying what they learned from her videos.

In those moments, Zalikhah realised her platform was more than just content, it was influence.

Balancing cultural identity with personal ambition remains central to her journey. She approaches it with intention, creating content that reflects both her roots and her individuality. For her, balance is not compromise, it is integration.

Today, Zalikhah represents more than a profession, she represents possibility. In a society evolving at its own pace, she is part of a generation proving that change does not always arrive loudly. Sometimes, it hums steadily, like an engine coming to life, reshaping the road ahead for those who dare to follow.