

O M A N
عُومَانِ
D A I L Y

Observer



20

EXPLORING THE
LIVING HERITAGE OF
HAMASA VILLAGE IN
AL BURAIMI

VOL. 44, NO. 182
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 05:25 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 04:02 AM

DHUHR 12:08 PM

ASR 03:31 PM

MAGHRIB 06:46 PM

ISHA 08:05 PM

GULF-US RELATIONS LONG-TERM
AND STRATEGIC

ON BEHALF OF HM, SAYYID ASAAD HEADS
OMAN’S DELEGATION AT GULF-US SUMMIT



US President Donald Trump poses with Gulf leaders and representatives before the Gulf-US Summit in Riyadh on Wednesday.

US THANKED FOR
CONSTRUCTIVE
PARTNERSHIP

MOMENT TO
SHAPE A BETTER
FUTURE FOR ME

PARTNERSHIP
BOOSTS
ECONOMIC
INTERESTS

FOCUS ON
HUMANITARIAN
CRISIS IN GAZA

STEPS MADE
TOWARDS PEACE
AND STABILITY

YEMEN PEACE TO
BRING REGIONAL
PROSPERITY

RIYADH: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, headed the Sultanate of Oman's delegation at the Gulf-US Summit held in Riyadh on Wednesday.

In his speech during the summit, HH Sayyid Asaad conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his best wishes for the success of the meeting.

The speech reads as follows: “I am honoured to represent His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman, at this important Gulf-US summit. I am pleased to convey to you all His Majesty’s greetings and his best wishes for the success of this meeting.

We hereby express our deep thanks and gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, for their kind invitation to this summit.

We would also like to express our thanks and appreciation to the United States of America for its ardent and constructive partnership. We would like to extend our gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its hospitality and warm welcome.

We meet here today at a historical moment, one that we hope it will help shape a better future for the Middle East and chart out a path of stability, prosperity and goodness for all. The Gulf-US relations are long-term and strategic that aim at establishing the foundations of security, stability and prosperity.

This partnership that binds us takes shape in our shared commitment to achieve integration and reciprocity in political, economic, technological and defence interests, besides cooperating to resolve regional and international crises and addressing challenges. **TURN TO P2**

Oman welcomes US move on Syria sanctions

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed the announcement of President Donald Trump of the United States of America regarding the lifting of US sanctions on the Syrian Arab Republic — a step that enables the Syrian government and people to achieve development and prosperity.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, Oman commended the efforts of all Arab and friendly countries in promoting stability, which supports the political and economic recovery of Syria.



Syrians celebrate in Damascus on Tuesday night after US President Donald Trump said he would order the lifting of sanctions on Syria. — **AFP**

Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on Wednesday that the foreign ministers of Türkiye, the United

States and Syria will meet in southern Türkiye on Thursday to discuss details of Trump’s pledge to lift sanctions on Syria,

In a surprise announcement, Trump said on Tuesday he would order the lifting of sanctions on Syria.

The removal of the sanctions has long been a key goal for Riyadh and Ankara.

Fidan said the lifting of sanctions would enable financial flows, investment and infrastructure development in Syria, which was politically fractured and left in widespread ruins by the war. — **Agencies**



PATEK PHILIPPE
GENEVE

BEGIN YOUR OWN TRADITION





YOU NEVER ACTUALLY OWN A PATEK PHILIPPE.
YOU MERELY TAKE CARE OF IT FOR THE NEXT GENERATION.

ANNUAL CALENDAR REF. 5205G

Patek Philippe Boutique
at

القرم
Al-Qurum

MUSCAT • 22009991

OMAN



Experience Better

Their future starts today!

Change to AWASR, Fastest Internet In Oman

Get Ashel Educational Platform for free!

Unlimited data for all plans





SUBSCRIBE NOW !
WhatsApp
80001000
Website: [awasr.om](#)

GULF-US RELATIONS ARE STRATEGIC

FROM PAGE 1
In this context, we would like to express our profound concern about the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, the outcome of decades of illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. This ongoing injustice, coupled with the international community’s inability to achieve a just peace, is at the heart of many regional challenges. Yet, a glimmer of hope still exists.

PEACE AND STABILITY
We have witnessed historic steps being made towards peace and stability. We would like to express our appreciation for President Donald Trump’s constructive role in ending the conflict with Yemen and restoring safe navigation in the Red Sea. We hope that this achievement will pave the way for further success in the Yemeni issue, leading to a lasting peace and prosperity for this age-old Arab country.

It is encouraging to observe the realism and mutual respect that mark the ongoing dialogue between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran about the non-proliferation of nuclear arms. These efforts inspire confidence in the possibility of reaching a practical and sustainable agreement between the two sides, motivating us all to cooperate collectively to address other issues in the region.

The Trump administration’s pursuit of a policy of strategic diplomacy – which favours dialogue and deal-making over escalation and confrontation – represents an exemplary approach that is highly welcomed by us. By engaging all parties and, by challenging outdated theories, the United States has opened a practical path for real positive change.

LASTING SECURITY
We hereby reaffirm that it is impossible to achieve comprehensive peace, lasting



HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said heading the Sultanate of Oman’s delegation at the Gulf-US Summit in Riyadh on Wednesday.

security and the prosperity sought by all except through the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, enabling both Palestinians and Israelis to live in dignity, exercise sovereignty over their respective lands and build prosperous and dignified nations. Therefore, we look forward to the Trump administration’s drive to resolve this long-standing conflict that weighed heavily our region for a long time.”

Meanwhile, Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, also delivered a speech at the opening of the summit saying that this summit is in pursuance of the historical relationship and strategic partnership between the GCC states and the United States of America.

He pointed out that this relationship continued to grow and develop over the past decades and it has become a model for joint

cooperation. This, he added, reflects joint commitment to collective action to consolidate relations, expand and develop strategic partnerships in order to meet the common aspirations.

Prince Mohammed said that the GCC states share the United States’ belief in the importance of economic partnership and trade cooperation. He described the United States as a major trade and investment partner, as the volume of trade exchange between the two sides stood at about \$120 billion in 2024.

“The future we aspire to establish through the Sustainable Development Goals requires a stable and secure environment. We are aware of the magnitude of the challenge facing our region. With Your Excellency, Mr President, and, in cooperation with our brethren in the GCC states, we seek to de-escalate the confrontation in the region, end the war in Gaza and find a lasting and comprehensive

settlement to the Palestinian cause in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and relevant international resolutions in a manner that achieves security and safety for the peoples of the region,” said Prince Mohammed.

EFFECTIVE ROLE
In his speech, US President Donald Trump said that the GCC states are among the most stable and prosperous nations and that the entire world is looking out for opportunities available in these countries, lauding their effective role in halting the escalation in Gaza and commending their endeavours to enhance prospects for peace in the region.

In his speech, Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, commended the Sultanate of Oman’s diplomatic efforts that gave rise to a ceasefire agreement between the United States and Yemen. He pointed out that this step will contribute to ensuring freedom of navigation and the smooth flow of international commercial shipping.

Shaikh Mishal added, “The GCC states believe that regional stability is a shared responsibility. Partnership with the United States represents a cornerstone in this process. We hope that this summit will be a step forward in building a more stable, balanced and integrated regional system based on international law, mutual respect and shared interests.”

Shaikh Mishal expressed the hope that the summit would provide a gateway for addressing the region’s concerns and highlighting the need to reach a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian cause. He also hoped that the summit would bolster the international community’s efforts to ensure security and stability in Syria, preserve the Arab republic’s

sovereignty and territorial integrity, end the suffering of its people and halt foreign interference in its affairs.

SAFE ZONE
In his speech, King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain expressed his aspiration for the realisation of further cooperation to establish a safe, stable and prosperous zone that comprises all countries of the region.

King Hamad said that this wise political approach represents a unique opportunity to move towards achieving a just and lasting peace that guarantees the rights of the Palestinian people through a two-state solution, preserves regional security and stability and contributes to making the region free of weapons of mass destruction.

In his speech, Jassim Mohammed al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), said the Gulf-US partnership - based on solid grounds, supported by figures and facts - paves the way for a future phase of close cooperation in all areas of common interest.

Al Budaiwi noted that the GCC states continue to lead in traditional energy markets and are moving forward with partnerships with the United States in the field of clean energy. He expressed the GCC’s hope for the success of international efforts to achieve a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and establish an environment that ensures security and stability for the Palestinian people.

The summit dealt with means of consolidating the strategic partnership and economic investment between the GCC states and the United States, notably in the fields of technology and artificial intelligence (AI). It also covered current regional and international issues of significance to security and stability in the region. — ONA



SHABAB OMAN II DOCKS AT JEDDAH ISLAMIC PORT

The Royal Navy of Oman’s (RNO) vessel Shabab Oman II docked at Jeddah Islamic Port in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as part of its seventh international voyage (Glories of the Seas) on route to Europe. The vessel will make stops at several ports and destinations throughout its journey.

Council of Oman at OIC Parliamentary Union session

JAKARTA: The Council of Oman participated in the 19th session of the Conference of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), held in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, on Wednesday.

The Council of Oman’s delegation was headed by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura. He delivered at the opening session in which he emphasised that the Sultanate of Oman’s experience in promoting good governance has always been a focus of attention in shaping the future and planning the country’s national visions.

He added: “Through Oman Vision 2040, the government has attached great attention to the principle of governance due to its importance in promoting comprehensive national development. Governance has been adopted as one of the fundamental principles for achieving efficiency in institutional performance and ensuring transparency and integrity. Oman Vision 2040 seeks to establish an integrated system of good governance based on the foundations of accountability, justice and the rule of law while adopting the best administrative and technical practices to ensure the quality and sustainability of government services. The vision also emphasises the importance of involving the community in decision-making and achieving a balance between economic growth and social development within an effective and



Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura, speaking at the session on Wednesday.

transparent regulatory environment.”

The Council of Oman’s delegation participating in the 19th session of the Conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC comprises SShaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash’shura; Mohammed bin Salem al Harthy, Member of the State Council; Khalil bin Khalfan al Wahaibi, Said bin Mohammed al Saadi and Younis bin Mohammed al Siyabi, members of the Majlis Ash’shura. — ONA



BANKING THAT IS PROUDLY HUMAN

**THE DIFFERENCE..
OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU**

With **120+** branches, More than **360** ATMs and CDMs we are always at your service.



bankdhofar



2479 1111



[www.bankdhofar.com](#)



بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

SHORT TAKES



RAO TAKES PART
IN CATERING
COMPETITION IN UK

The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) participated in the 2025 Catering Competition, held in Grantham, United Kingdom, with the participation of a number of catering crews from various countries around the world.

The RAO’s participation in the 2025 Catering Competition, which lasts until May 17, aims to boost the efficiency of its catering crews, hone their technical capabilities in the logistical and administrative fields as well as enhance their ability to cope with varying conditions in military operations which require high administrative readiness.

It is noteworthy that the RAO catering team had previously achieved advanced positions in its previous participations and this year it hopes to maintain its advanced level in various competitions. — ONA

CARDIAC CARE
UNIT AT AL BURAIMI
HOSPITAL OPENS



A new Cardiac Care Unit was inaugurated at Al Buraimi Hospital, marking another step in the Ministry of Health’s efforts to develop specialised healthcare services and enhance medical infrastructure in line with community needs.

The unit is staffed with qualified cardiac specialists and equipped with advanced medical devices, following internationally approved treatment protocols to ensure effective and safe care for both critical and chronic cardiac cases. The opening ceremony, presided over by Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs, included an inspection tour of the facility. Attendees reviewed the unit’s emergency response systems and operational workflows designed to optimise cardiac emergency management.

INTERACTIVE
ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
TEXTBOOK
PROJECT
LAUNCHED

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education launched the Interactive English Language Textbook Project for grades one to six, under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education. The launch ceremony highlighted the project’s objectives and implementation mechanism, featuring an introductory video on the interactive English textbooks’ content.

The materials include interactive activities, games, digital assessments and audiovisual resources designed to make learning



more engaging. This was followed by a video showcasing feedback and real-life experiences from teachers, students and parents regarding the new textbooks.

The under-secretary stated: “The launch of the Interactive

English Textbook Project reflects the Ministry’s commitment to enhancing English language instruction. Starting with grades one to six in collaboration with the implementing company, these books incorporate interactive elements such as dialogues and audio exercises to boost student engagement. This initiative aims to improve learning outcomes, helping students grasp English language concepts and skills effectively. The ministry will continue expanding the project to cover grades seven and eight, eventually extending it through grade twelve.” — ONA

Winners of ‘Share the Change’ honoured

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

THE Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth announced the winning projects of the second edition of the “Share the Change” competition on Tuesday night, during a ceremony held at W Muscat Hotel under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

This year’s competition saw broad participation, with 119 projects submitted, out of which 25 advanced to the final stage. The results saw the project “Fitana Bracelet” winning first place, followed by “Sustainable Steps” in second place and “Smart Movement Path” taking third. The “Iqdam App” project won the award for Best Use of Modern Technology, while “Play It Right” earned the award for Best Awareness Content. “Khatwa App” received the first encouragement award and “Fit Wheels” took home the second encouragement award.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed bin Ahmed al Amri, Director General of Sports Activities, stated that the competition aligns with the ministry’s efforts to implement the objectives of Oman’s sports strategy in line with Oman Vision 2040, particularly under the “Sports and Society” theme. He said that the ministry aims to raise awareness about the importance of physical activity and to make it part of daily life rather than a temporary endeavour.

Al Amri noted that the second edition focused on innovative awareness initiatives, targeting societal behaviour towards adopting a healthy lifestyle. He added that the qualified projects benefitted from specialised training workshops in health, marketing, artificial intelligence and media campaigns, in addition to participating



Share the Change competition winners with the chief guest. PHOTO BY ABDULWAHID AL HAMDANI

in the Muscat International Book Fair to showcase youth ideas and allow the public to vote.

He affirmed the ministry’s commitment to empowering youth and turning their projects into reality, in accordance with the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and with the support and follow-up of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Raghad al Jalandani, representing the “Fitana Bracelet” team, presented the idea of smart family bracelets connected to a mobile app that offers group challenges to promote health, physical activity and family bonding. She noted that the project has not been implemented yet, but the execution plan is ready, including bracelet production both locally and internationally, with a focus on cost and innovation.

Nusra al Abri, from the “Sustainable

Steps” project team, explained that their project aims to convert kinetic energy from walking into sustainable electricity using smart tiles and fitness devices. The project is linked to a smart app that rewards users with points to encourage exercise and provide access to commercial and service-based offers.

Fahad al Jabri, from the “Smart Movement Path” team, outlined their project: a smart fitness track equipped with interactive screens linked to a website that tracks physical activity. The goal is to encourage walking and combat sedentary lifestyles and chronic diseases. He described the competition as an enriching experience, saying that entering the challenge and creating a community-benefitting project was exciting and rewarding. He added that the team drew from their university studies to refine the idea into a scientifically and practically feasible concept.

20 artworks by children with autism spectrum disorder opens

MUSCAT: In celebration of World Autism Awareness Day, the Ministry of Social Development, represented by the National Autism Centre in collaboration with the Royal Opera House Muscat, inaugurated the Second Autism Spectrum Disorder Art Exhibition, titled “Citizenship: Identity and Belonging.”

The event was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers; and in the presence of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, along with several high-ranking officials and

members of the State Council.

The exhibition aims to showcase the talents and creativity of individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), highlighting their abilities particularly in the creative arts — as a means of expression that helps them communicate, interact socially, stimulate creative thinking, build self-confidence and promote social inclusion.

The exhibition features 20 unique artworks created by children with ASD, along with a collection of artistic products. This year’s works reflect themes of national identity and citizenship, aiming to foster a sense of belonging and community



The Second Autism Spectrum Disorder Art Exhibition, titled ‘Citizenship: Identity and Belonging’ was opened on Tuesday evening.

responsibility while raising public awareness of the individual’s role in nation-building. It also highlights the role of culture and art in strengthening social cohesion and delivering meaningful messages through a visual language accessible to all segments of society.

The event also featured the official launch of the children’s story “A Spectrum of Light”, the second in a series inspired by the real-life experiences of individuals with ASD. The book, authored by Fawzia bint Ali al Fahdiyyah and illustrated by Haneen al Lawati, is supported by Omantel. The story tells the inspiring journey of a child

with ASD and showcases the efforts of the National Autism Centre in supporting and developing the child’s skills. The book aims to promote awareness, acceptance and empathy among children towards their peers with ASD.

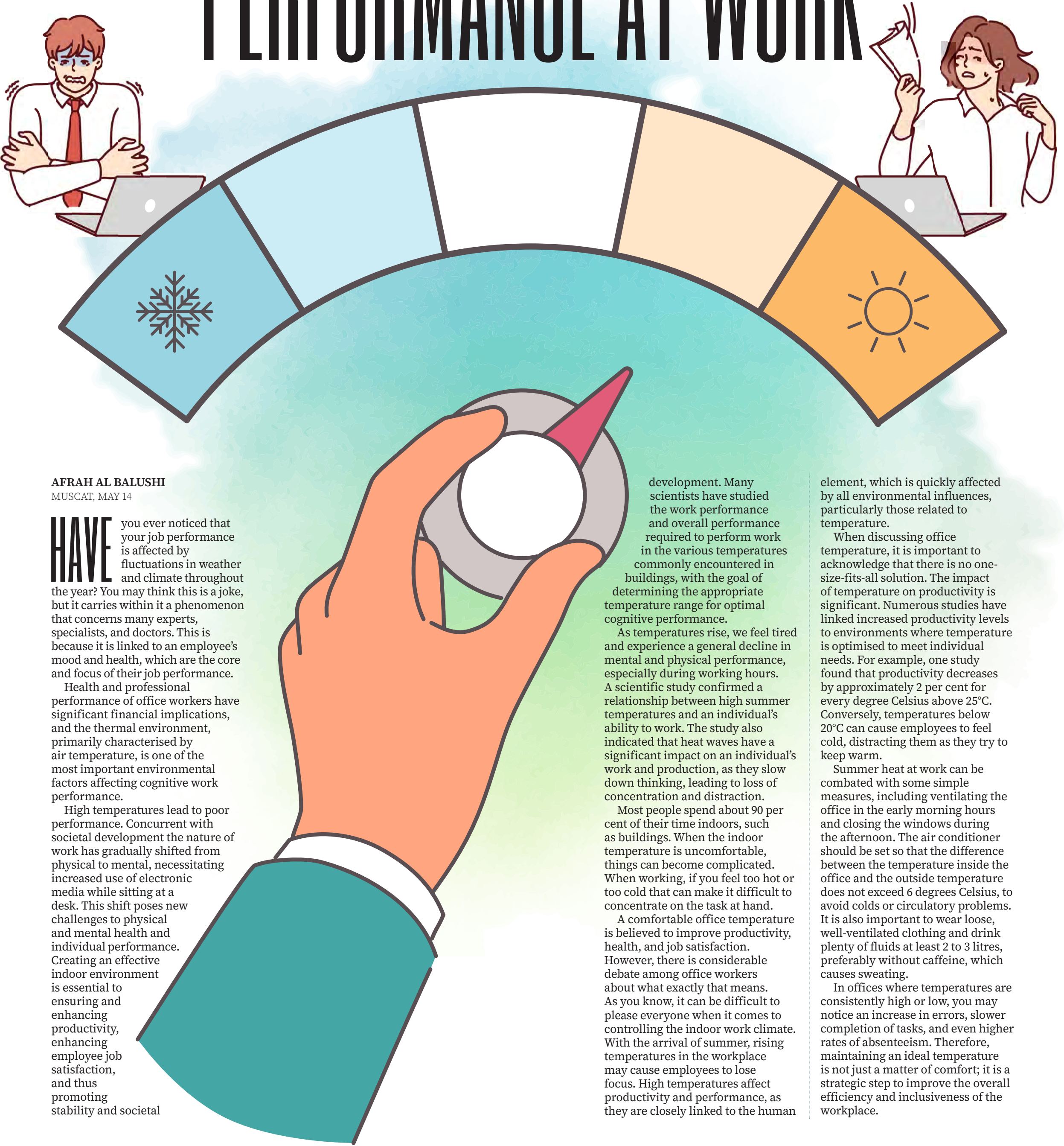
Additionally, an agreement was signed during the ceremony with the Mohammed al Barwani Foundation for Charitable Works to support the establishment of a Hydroponic Agricultural Reserve, designed to provide vocational training for individuals with ASD.

The initiative seeks to offer a supportive learning environment for participants.

SPOTLIGHT

AS TEMPERATURES RISE, WE FEEL TIRED AND EXPERIENCE A GENERAL DECLINE IN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PERFORMANCE, ESPECIALLY DURING WORKING HOURS. A SCIENTIFIC STUDY CONFIRMED A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGH SUMMER TEMPERATURES AND AN INDIVIDUAL’S ABILITY TO WORK

TEMPERATURE AND PERFORMANCE AT WORK



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

HAVE you ever noticed that your job performance is affected by fluctuations in weather and climate throughout the year? You may think this is a joke, but it carries within it a phenomenon that concerns many experts, specialists, and doctors. This is because it is linked to an employee's mood and health, which are the core and focus of their job performance.

Health and professional performance of office workers have significant financial implications, and the thermal environment, primarily characterised by air temperature, is one of the most important environmental factors affecting cognitive work performance.

High temperatures lead to poor performance. Concurrent with societal development the nature of work has gradually shifted from physical to mental, necessitating increased use of electronic media while sitting at a desk. This shift poses new challenges to physical and mental health and individual performance. Creating an effective indoor environment is essential to ensuring and enhancing productivity, enhancing employee job satisfaction, and thus promoting stability and societal

development. Many scientists have studied the work performance and overall performance required to perform work in the various temperatures commonly encountered in buildings, with the goal of determining the appropriate temperature range for optimal cognitive performance.

As temperatures rise, we feel tired and experience a general decline in mental and physical performance, especially during working hours. A scientific study confirmed a relationship between high summer temperatures and an individual's ability to work. The study also indicated that heat waves have a significant impact on an individual's work and production, as they slow down thinking, leading to loss of concentration and distraction.

Most people spend about 90 per cent of their time indoors, such as buildings. When the indoor temperature is uncomfortable, things can become complicated. When working, if you feel too hot or too cold that can make it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand.

A comfortable office temperature is believed to improve productivity, health, and job satisfaction. However, there is considerable debate among office workers about what exactly that means. As you know, it can be difficult to please everyone when it comes to controlling the indoor work climate. With the arrival of summer, rising temperatures in the workplace may cause employees to lose focus. High temperatures affect productivity and performance, as they are closely linked to the human

element, which is quickly affected by all environmental influences, particularly those related to temperature.

When discussing office temperature, it is important to acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. The impact of temperature on productivity is significant. Numerous studies have linked increased productivity levels to environments where temperature is optimised to meet individual needs. For example, one study found that productivity decreases by approximately 2 per cent for every degree Celsius above 25°C. Conversely, temperatures below 20°C can cause employees to feel cold, distracting them as they try to keep warm.

Summer heat at work can be combated with some simple measures, including ventilating the office in the early morning hours and closing the windows during the afternoon. The air conditioner should be set so that the difference between the temperature inside the office and the outside temperature does not exceed 6 degrees Celsius, to avoid colds or circulatory problems. It is also important to wear loose, well-ventilated clothing and drink plenty of fluids at least 2 to 3 litres, preferably without caffeine, which causes sweating.

In offices where temperatures are consistently high or low, you may notice an increase in errors, slower completion of tasks, and even higher rates of absenteeism. Therefore, maintaining an ideal temperature is not just a matter of comfort; it is a strategic step to improve the overall efficiency and inclusiveness of the workplace.

SHORT TAKES



GOVERNORATES’
AMBASSADORS
FORUM IN MUSCAT

Acting in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, the Governorate of Muscat will host the first “Governates’ Ambassadors Forum” during May 20-22. The event aims to strengthen institutional integration and exchange expertise among various government entities. The forum will bring together specialists and professionals in project management and administrative governance from the offices of the governors across the Sultanate of Oman. The forum seeks to establish effective communication channels between stakeholders, share best practices in contracts, tenders and project management; and support balanced development. It also aims to enhance governmental coordination at the governorate level while showcasing key projects implemented in Muscat. The agenda includes an official opening ceremony, followed by sessions and workshops.

ANNUAL SCIENCE
FIESTA ON MAY 23

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MAY 14

Oman will host two days of celebration of science with special focus on AI on May 23 and 24 at the National University of Science and Technology, Al Hail campus, as part of the 70th year of India-Oman diplomatic relations. The annual science festival, organised by the Indian Science Forum (ISF), which is currently in its 18th edition, will see students from across the country vying with each other with their creative scientific ideas on the two days. For those children with a knack for science, the Annual Science Fiesta 2025 is a flagship celebration of science and innovation aimed at fostering scientific knowledge, curiosity and creativity among them. G V Srinivas, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, will be the chief guest. “The Annual Science Fiesta 2025 promises a dynamic lineup of activities, including competitions, exhibitions, workshops and interactive sessions. Over the years, ISF has successfully organised a wide range of science events such as the Sastra Pratibha Contest, Science Quiz, Science Debate, On-the-Spot Presentations, Digital Symposiums, Poster Making and Science Exhibitions — all of which have garnered enthusiastic participation from students, educators and parents across Oman,” the organisers said.

FREUD GOT TALENT
SET FOR MAY 17

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MAY 14

May is the Mental Health Awareness Month, with the objective to educate the public about mental health, treatment and research; and in the process, remove the stigma, making sure no one suffers in silence. Coinciding with the month of mental awareness, the Not Alone Campaign is holding the third edition of Freud Got Talent, a creative arts competition that celebrates artistic expression as a voice for mental health awareness. The founder of the Not Alone campaign, HH Sayyidah Basma al Said, speaking to the Observer, said, “The initiative is about how we can spread awareness through arts because a lot of people can express through art instead of talking. So we are using a lot of ways, such as music, writing, acting, painting, etc. The competition is for different age groups and all nationalities. We are very excited and at the same time, we are also trying to explain to people that art is not just about paintings,” added HH Sayyidah Basma. The event will be held over two days, with semi-finals on May 17 and the finals on May 22 at Downe House School Muscat, bringing together amateur and professional artists of all ages and backgrounds from across Oman.

Symposium explores AI’s
role in shaping justice

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

AMIDST the accelerating digital transformation the world is witnessing today, the Supreme Judicial Council organised an international symposium on “Foresight Artificial Intelligence in Judicial Work” on Wednesday, under the auspices of Shaikh Ghosn bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of the State Audit Institution. The symposium brought together an elite group of ministers, under-secretaries, judges, as well as experts and researchers from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad. The event was aimed at exploring the prospects of utilising artificial intelligence (AI) in judiciary and to envision its future in this vital sector. Shaikh Issa al Azri, Secretary-General of the Supreme Judicial Council, emphasised that AI is no longer just a technological option, but has become a fundamental pillar for enhancing institutional efficiency and improving service quality. He pointed out that judicial institutions can benefit from AI to accelerate dispute resolution, improve accuracy and facilitate access to justice. However, he stressed that these technologies must remain supportive tools for judges, not a replacement. Al Azri added that AI offers wide-ranging capabilities to develop advanced analytical tools that help retrieve legal precedents, classify cases, predict their resolution timelines and assist judges in drafting verdicts, all while maintaining the core values and principles of justice. For his part, Dr Salem al Hashmi, Assistant Secretary-General, highlighted Oman’s significant focus on the government digital transformation programme as a key driver for enhancing the national economy and attracting investments. He affirmed the Supreme Judicial Council’s commitment to keeping pace with technological developments by adopting the latest innovations, such as AI-based judgment prediction tools, chatbots for legal consultations and blockchain technology to document rulings and judicial records, aiming to simplify procedures and achieve justice with high efficiency and quality. The symposium reviewed 11 research papers distributed across three main themes. The first addressed the legal, ethical and security challenges associated with AI in the judiciary. The second explored practical



Dignitaries at the symposium on Wednesday.

applications of AI technologies in judicial work. The third discussed international cooperation and future developments in this field. The symposium also featured in-depth discussions on critical issues such as the quality of data feeding AI systems, the need to protect privacy and countering biases that could undermine judicial impartiality. It emphasised the importance of balancing the use of advanced technologies with the protection of human rights and promoting transparency, which is essential for building public trust. The symposium concluded with several important recommendations covering legislative, ethical and technical dimensions. On the legislative level, it called for the issuance of clear laws regulating the use of AI in judicial work, defining permissible tools such as analysis, prediction and risk assessment software, while ensuring effective human oversight at all stages. It also stressed the need to enact legislation to protect data from misuse and to establish a legal framework for accountability regarding AI errors, reaffirming that these systems are supportive tools, not replacements for judges. Additionally, the recommendations highlighted the importance of defining the legal value of AI outputs and expanding the use of such tools throughout all stages of litigation — from providing legal advice to

individuals to managing court procedures. At the ethical level, the symposium emphasised the need for AI developers to commit to transparency and provide clear, understandable information to the public. It recommended the establishment of an Algorithmic Transparency Committee to monitor AI systems’ performance and ensure they are free of bias. It also stressed preserving judges’ discretionary authority in making final decisions and preventing them from becoming mere executors of machine-generated outcomes. Developers were urged to consider human and social factors when designing algorithms. The symposium highlighted that data is the “fuel” of AI systems, requiring careful and responsible input to ensure justice is served. It also called for enhancing international cooperation to exchange expertise and build joint judicial capacities, ensuring that all countries benefit from these technologies in line with agreed ethical standards. At the technical level, the symposium stressed the importance of developing the judicial sector’s technical infrastructure, providing continuous training for its staff and updating AI tools to secure them against cyber threats. It also recommended strengthening partnerships between judicial authorities and leading technology companies to leverage their experience in this field.

Consumer awareness seminar in Nizwa
highlights safe online shopping

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MAY 14

The Consumer Protection Department in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate organised an awareness seminar under the title “Safe Online Shopping”, in cooperation with the Omani Women’s Association in the Wilayat of Nizwa and the Ihsan Association — Al Dakhiliyah branch on Wednesday. The event was aimed to raise public awareness about consumer rights and safe purchasing practices amidst the rapid transformation of the digital economy. The seminar, which saw a wide community turnout, began with an opening speech by Ali bin Salim al Hadhrami, Director of the Consumer Protection Department in Al Dakhiliyah. He stated, “Online shopping has become a part of our daily lives. With this widespread usage, challenges such as commercial fraud, delivery delays and non-compliance with product specifications have also increased. Therefore, awareness



The event was aimed to raise public awareness about consumer rights.

is no longer optional — it is essential to protect consumers from practices that harm their interests.” He added: “This seminar coincides with the launch of the second edition of the ‘Safe Shopping in the Digital Economy’ campaign for 2025. We hope it will leave a positive impact on the community by enhancing consumer awareness.” The event featured visual presentations and working

papers. One of the key presentations was a paper titled “Electronic Contracting”, delivered by legal researcher Nasrah bint Mohammed al Saeghiyah, in which she reviewed key consumer rights in digital transactions. She noted that 3,340 violations of the Consumer Protection Law were recorded in 2023 alone, according to figures presented during the 2024 Public Prosecution Conference. Another working paper

was presented by Samiah bint Nasser al Riyamiyah, Quality and Goods Specialist; and Fatma bint Ali al Ramhiyah, Consumer Complaints Researcher, discussing procedures for submitting and processing electronic complaints. The seminar also addressed fundamental consumer rights in online transactions, such as the right to accurate information, freedom of choice, cultural respect, compensation in the case of damage, receiving invoices in Arabic, product quality guarantees and the legal right to return or exchange goods. Mustafa bin Mohammed al Suleimani, Head of the Market Regulation and Monitoring Section, explained that most complaints in the online shopping sector involve cloth and accessories. He emphasised the availability of various complaint channels, including the consumer protection hotline and the official website, noting that administrative penalties such as fines and license revocations are imposed on violators.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Burnt cars line a street in Tripoli, following renewed clashes in Libya's capital. — AFP

FRESH GUNBATTLES
ROCK LIBYA CAPITAL
AFTER BRIEF LULL

TRIPOLI: Fresh gunbattles have erupted in the Libyan capital between two powerful armed groups, a security official said on Wednesday — just a day after authorities declared the fighting over. Clashes flared between the Radaa force and the 444 Brigade in key areas of Tripoli, including the port, the source said. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The official described the fighting as “urban warfare”, with intermittent clashes in residential areas involving light and medium weapons. In other areas, heavy weapons were being used to target rival positions.

Fighting now extended in southern and western Tripoli as Radaa and “groups supporting it came as reinforcements against the 444 Brigade”, the interior ministry source said. The United Nations mission in Libya said it was “deeply alarmed by escalating violence in densely populated neighbourhoods of Tripoli for the second night in a row”. In a statement, it called for “an immediate, unconditional ceasefire in all areas, allowing safe corridors for the evacuation of civilians trapped in intense conflict zones”. — AFP

UN EXPERTS DECRY
‘SYSTEMATIC’
VIOLENCE IN SUDAN



Displaced Sudanese sit at a shelter after they were evacuated, in Omdurman. — AFP

GENEVA: Women and girls in war-ravaged Sudan face gang slavery and killings, particularly at the hands of the paramilitary forces. The war has killed tens of thousands, displaced more than 13 million people and triggered what the United Nations calls one of the world’s worst humanitarian disasters.

Amid the carnage, women and girls are particularly vulnerable and face escalating risks of gang trafficking and forced marriage, warned a group of nine independent United Nations experts. “We are deeply troubled by the harrowing reports of physical violence, abductions, and killings targeting women and children, including in displacement camps, which reflect a systematic and brutal campaign against those least protected in Sudanese society,” they said in a statement.

The experts, including the special rapporteurs on violence against women and girls, on torture and on contemporary forms of slavery, noted that so far this year at least 330 cases of conflict-related violence had been documents. The real number is surely far higher, they said, warning that a number of traumatised victims were known to have committed suicide. — AFP

MEMBERS SLASH

WHO reduces team after funding cuts



The World Health Organization chief told staff on Wednesday the UN agency was reducing its management team after US funding cuts forced it to shrink its budget dramatically. In a short e-mail to WHO staff, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus announced the new “composition of the executive management team” at the agency’s Geneva headquarters, with six members. The agency has been bracing for planned full withdrawal of the United States next January. — AFP

IRAN TO HOLD
NUCLEAR
TALKS WITH
EUROPEANS
THIS WEEK

TEHRAN: Iran will hold a fresh round of nuclear talks with European powers in Türkiye later this week, its foreign ministry said on Wednesday. The talks with Britain, France and Germany would be held in Istanbul on Friday, ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said. French diplomatic sources gave the same information, but there was still no word from Berlin or London on the meeting which was originally slated for earlier this month but postponed. Iranian Foreign Minister

Abbas Araghchi said the talks would be held “at the level of deputy foreign ministers”.

The European nations — known as the E3 — were among the world powers that negotiated the landmark 2015 Iran nuclear deal along with China, Russia and the United States. “While we continue the dialogue with the United States, we are also ready to talk with the Europeans,” Araghchi said. “Unfortunately, the Europeans themselves have become somewhat

isolated in these negotiations with their own policies,” he added, without elaborating. “We do not want such a situation and that’s why we have continued our negotiations” with them, he said.

Friday’s meeting will follow the latest round of Iran-US talks, which Tehran described as “difficult but useful” while a US official said Washington was “encouraged”. Iran and the US have so far held four rounds of talks, the highest-level contact in years. — AFP

Pakistan returns captured
Indian border guard

PAKISTAN

returned a captured border guard to India on

Wednesday, in a fresh sign of detente after a ceasefire ended four days of conflict between the nuclear-armed nations. The guard was captured a day after an April attack in Indian-administered Kashmir which killed 26 people and sparked missile, drone and fighter jet attacks. No group claimed responsibility for the April 22 attack. “Purnam Kumar Shaw, who had been in the custody of Pakistan Rangers since 23 April 2025, was handed over to India,” India’s Border Security Force said in a statement.

The handover was “conducted peacefully and in accordance with established protocols,” it added. Shaw’s wife Rajani had earlier told the Indian Express newspaper that she was confident he would come back after the ceasefire was announced.

Pakistan’s army announced on Wednesday a new death toll from the fighting, saying India’s “unprovoked and reprehensible dastardly attacks” killed 40 civilians, including seven women and 15 children, and that 13 military service members had died in operations.

India has said that 15 civilians and five soldiers died. The flare-up in violence was the worst since the rivals’ last open conflict in 1999 and sparked global shudders that it could spiral into a full-blown war.

The Pakistani military has said it downed five Indian jets, but has not



A father walks with his daughters as schools reopen after the ceasefire announcement, in Srinagar. — Reuters

Purnam Kumar Shaw, who had been in the custody since 23 April 2025, was handed over to India. The handover was conducted peacefully and in accordance with established protocols. Shaw’s wife Rajani had earlier said that she was confident he would come back after the ceasefire was announced

admitted losing any aircraft of its own. India has not disclosed losing any aircraft.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a televised address to the nation on Monday that Pakistan had chosen to attack rather than help it fight “terrorism”.

“If another terrorist attack against India is carried out, a strong response will be given,” he said. Modi wrote on X on Tuesday that he had met with service members involved in the conflict.

“It was a very special experience to be with those who epitomise courage, determination and fearlessness. India is eternally grateful to our armed forces for everything they do for our nation,” he said.

Pakistan’s foreign ministry said in a statement that it rejected “provocative and inflammatory

assertions” and his “propensity to fabricate misleading narratives to justify aggression”.

“Make no mistake, we will closely monitor India’s actions and behaviour in this regard in the coming days. We also urge the international community to do the same,” it added.

Despite mutual claims on initial violations, the ceasefire still appeared to be holding on Tuesday. Trump said on Monday that US intervention had prevented a “bad nuclear war”.

“We stopped a nuclear conflict... millions of people could have been killed. So I’m very proud of that,” he told reporters at the White House.

Schools have reopened their doors in Chakothi, a Pakistani village along the border, as well as in Srinagar, a key city in Indian-administered Kashmir. — AFP

STRIKES KILL 80 IN GAZA, AMID TALKS



GAZA: Gaza rescuers said at least 80 people were killed in Israeli strikes, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held talks with US envoy Steve Witkoff over the release of hostages. Negotiations for the release of the remaining hostages have been ongoing, with the latest talks taking place in the Qatari capital Doha, where US President Donald Trump landed on Wednesday.

Hamas had said it called on Trump’s administration “to continue efforts to bring the war to an end”. Fighting meanwhile raged on in Gaza, where the civil defence reported that “at least 80 people were killed and dozens wounded,” in northern Gaza. — AFP

IRREVOCABLE RESIGNATION

Peru PM quits ahead of no-confidence vote



Peruvian Prime Minister Gustavo Adrianzen resigned on the eve of a no-confidence vote against him, as the government faces mounting pressure over a spike in violent crime. Adrianzen presented his “irrevocable resignation” to Boluarte and ministers. Members of parliament had called for Adrianzen’s ouster over his handling of the unprecedented wave in gang violence, which has seen soldiers deployed under a state of emergency. — AFP

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

Japanese military training plane crashes



A Japanese military training plane crashed near a lake shortly after takeoff with two people on board, authorities said on Wednesday. “A T-4 training aircraft that belongs to the Air Self-Defence Force crashed at 3:08 pm after radar lost (it) near a lake... after taking off at Komaki Air Base” in central Japan, Defence Minister Gen Nakatani told reporters. Nakatani said two people were on board, without revealing their identity. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Men watch the announcement of PKK’s (Kurdish Workers Party) dissolution, in Diyarbakir. — AFP

TURKIYE EYES LEGAL STEPS AFTER PKK GROUP DISBANDS

ANKARA: After the decision by the Kurdish group PKK to disband, Türkiye was eyeing on Wednesday a raft of legal and technical measures to ensure its full implementation and finally end a four-decade insurgency. Monday’s announcement sought to draw a line under a bloody chapter that began in 1984 when the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) took up arms, triggering a conflict that cost more than 40,000 lives. “What matters most is the implementation,” President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday, pledging to “meticulously monitor whether the promises are kept”. The pro-Kurdish DEM party, a key player that facilitated contact between jailed PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan and the political establishment, urged Ankara to take “confidence-building steps” such as freeing political prisoners. So far, Turkish officials have said little but the government is working on a proposal that could ease prison sentences in general. The text, which should be submitted to parliament by June at the latest, provides for the conditional release of all those in pre-trial detention for offences committed before July 31, 2023. — AFP

AUSTRALIAN ROCKET SET FOR LAUNCH



An Australian company says it aims to make the first orbital test launch of a locally-developed rocket, carrying a jar of Vegemite as its payload. The three-stage Eris rocket is set to fly from a spaceport near Bowen on the east coast, said its developer, Gilmour Space Technologies. If successful, it would be the first Australian-made rocket to make an orbital launch from Australian soil. — AFP

POLISH PRESIDENT MEETS ROMANIA’S FAR-RIGHT SIMION

WARSAW: Poland’s outgoing head of state Andrzej Duda hosted Romania’s far-right presidential candidate George Simion, Duda’s office said on Wednesday, as both EU countries gear up for presidential elections. Simion, a big fan of US President Donald Trump, will face a pro-EU centrist candidate in Sunday’s run-off — the same day Poland will hold the first round of its presidential election. The conservative Duda, an ally of the nationalist opposition, received

Simion in the presidential palace in Warsaw. The main topic was relations between the two countries, Duda’s office said on X, posting a picture from the meeting. Former Polish prime minister Mateusz Morawiecki — who led the previous conservative Law and Justice (PiS) government — also took part in the meeting, it added. Romania’s vote will be closely watched internationally following a rare annulment of the vote held in November in the key Nato country

of 19 million people. Simion showed up at a rally of Polish presidential candidate Karol Nawrocki, a historian backed by Duda and the nationalist PiS party. “Together when George wins, together when we win, on May 18, we will build a Europe of values, a Europe of homelands, in which we will not allow the EU to centralise,” Nawrocki said. Simion said: “We will oppose illegal migration, we will stop the anti-American change in Europe. — AFP

Putin, Trump still ‘maybes’ for Ukraine peace talks

US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin were still “maybes” for what could be the first direct peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv in years after the Kremlin on Wednesday held off disclosing who would represent Russia. Putin on Sunday proposed direct negotiations with Ukraine in Istanbul on Thursday “without any preconditions”. But he did not say who would be attending from Moscow’s side and his spokesman was unable to give further details on the matter on Wednesday. Trump earlier this week urged Ukraine to attend the talks and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky quickly said he would be there, but only if Putin showed up, setting up a diplomatic standoff as part of an apparent contest to show Trump who wants peace more. Trump said on Wednesday he himself was still considering whether to attend the talks in Türkiye but did not know whether Putin would go, something that Zelenskiy has challenged the Kremlin leader to do “if he’s not afraid”. “(Putin) would like me to be there, and that’s a possibility... I don’t know that he would be there if I’m not there. We’re going to find out,” Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One en route to Qatar. Trump wants the two sides to sign up to a 30-day ceasefire in what is Europe’s biggest land war since World War Two, and a Russian lawmaker said on Wednesday there could also be discussions about a huge prisoner of war exchange. Zelensky backs an immediate 30-day ceasefire, but Putin has said he first wants to start talks at which the details of such a ceasefire could be discussed. Trump, who is growing increasingly frustrated with both Russia and Ukraine as he tries to push them towards a peace settlement, said he was “always considering” secondary sanctions against Moscow if he thought it was blocking the process. US officials have spoken about possible financial sanctions as well as potential secondary sanctions on buyers of Russian oil. A Ukrainian diplomatic source said on Wednesday that Ukraine’s leadership would decide on its next steps for peace talks in



A child sits at a playground near a damaged school in Kramatorsk, Donetsk region. — AFP

Türkiye once there was clarity on Putin’s participation. “Everything will depend on whether Putin is scared of coming to Istanbul or not. Based on his response, the Ukrainian leadership will decide on the next steps,” the source said, If Putin agrees to join, it would be the first meeting between the leaders of the two warring countries since December 2019. Direct talks between negotiators from Ukraine and Russia last took place in Istanbul in March 2022, a month after Putin sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine. Unconfirmed Russian and US media reports have said that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Yuri Ushakov, Putin’s foreign policy aide, will be in Istanbul and ready to meet their Ukrainian counterparts. Asked by reporters in a daily briefing on Wednesday if the Kremlin could reveal

the make-up of the Russian delegation, spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: “We will do that when we get an instruction to do so from the president.” “The Russian delegation will be waiting for the Ukrainian delegation in Istanbul on May 15,” he added. Trump has said he will send Secretary of State Marco Rubio and senior envoys Steve Witkoff and Keith Kellogg to the talks, while also offering to attend himself. Failure to achieve a just peace that respects Ukraine’s territorial integrity would undermine international law and cause chaos worldwide, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Wednesday. “It is extremely important in a moment like this that international law prevails,” he said at a conference in Berlin on the U.N.’s peacekeeping operations. “Otherwise we are paving the way for chaos around the world.” — Reuters

Germany aims to have EU’s ‘strongest conventional army’: Merz

BERLIN: German Chancellor Friedrich Merz pledged on Wednesday to build up “the strongest conventional army in Europe” as the continent faces a hostile Russia while the Ukraine war rages on. “This is appropriate for Europe’s most populous and economically powerful country,” Merz told parliament. “Our friends and partners also expect this from us. Indeed, they practically demand it.” In his first major address to the Bundestag since his government was inaugurated last week, Merz vowed to “provide all financial means necessary” for the long-underfunded defence forces. Germany, with its dark World War II history, has long been reluctant to spend big on its military, and funding dropped off sharply after the Cold War as European countries relied on Nato heavyweight the United States for security. US President Donald Trump has

demanded that Germany and other allies spend more on common defence and thrown into doubt Washington’s future commitment to the transatlantic military alliance. Merz has pledged a greater diplomatic and security role for Berlin in Europe at a time of high geopolitical tensions. He warned on Wednesday that “anyone who seriously believes that Russia would be satisfied with a victory over Ukraine or with the annexation of parts of the country is mistaken”. His government has already cleared the way for a spending “bazooka” worth hundreds of billions of euros in extra funding for defence and infrastructure by getting a fiscal plan passed by the previous parliament. “Strengthening the Bundeswehr (armed forces) is our top priority,” Merz said. “The German government will provide all the financial resources the Bundeswehr needs to become



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz delivers his first government statement at the Bundestag, in Berlin. — AFP

Europe’s strongest conventional army.” “Strength deters aggressors, while weakness invites aggression,”

he added. He also emphasised continued support for Ukraine but also said that “we are not a party to

war, and we don’t want to become one”. “Our goal is a Germany and a Europe that are so strong together that we never have to use our weapons,” Merz said. “To achieve this, we will have to assume more responsibility within NATO and the EU.” For now, the challenges are huge. In recent years, Germany’s Bundeswehr has been mocked for equipment failures, including helicopters that cannot fly and rifles that do not shoot straight. Germany halted military conscription under chancellor Angela Merkel, but Merz said steps would be taken to rebuild troop strength. “We will create a new, attractive voluntary military service,” he said. “There are many young people in our country who want to take responsibility for Germany, its defence capability, and its security. We want to and we will promote this.” — AFP

OPINION

Reflections from Oman Sustainability Week...



RUMAITHA
AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

WHEN I arrived at Oman Sustainability Week, I was ready to dive straight in. Instead, I found myself trapped in loops around a packed parking lot. My coffee cooled as frustration grew. By the time I parked, my panel had already begun. It was a minor inconvenience, but it felt oddly symbolic. Real sustainability isn't just about what happens inside exhibition halls; it begins with the choices we make long before the event itself. Perhaps next year we might consider carpooling, shuttles, or even park-and-ride schemes to reflect the commitments we discuss on stage.

Inside, the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre overflowed with ambition, but also contradictions. For the first time, the Petroleum and Energy Show and Sustainability Week shared the same space. Two worlds merged into one, yet I overheard whispers in the corridors. "The oil show and sustainability; what exactly are we selling here?" This quiet exchange stuck with me. Simply gathering under one roof doesn't mean our messages are unified. Without clear framing and sincerity, even the most genuine intentions risk being misunderstood.

Later, I spoke with a sustainability director preparing to present their firm's sustainability initiatives. "How do you feel

about your message?" I asked. They hesitated before responding, "I need more than glossy brochures to convince our shareholders and the public. They want measurable progress." Their candour underscored a deeper truth. Trust comes from transparency, not clever branding alone. Just around the corner, I found a different atmosphere entirely. Full-scale Swiss and Italian delegations confidently engaged visitors, openly inviting scrutiny and sharing measurable targets. Their presence sent an encouraging signal. Actively participating in sustainability conversations, rather than cautiously observing, builds credibility far quicker.

This contrast between cautious hesitation and bold transparency lies at the heart of our sustainability journey. It reflects a question each of us must confront: Are we comfortable enough to openly share both our successes and our uncertainties?

Oman Sustainability Week embodied our national ambition, aligning closely with Oman Vision 2040's promise of diversification, transparency and accountable governance.

Workshops delved into circular economy practices, while open-data initiatives like Makman, Oman's new national platform providing public access to comprehensive upstream oil and gas sector data, demonstrated a clear shift towards greater

Oman Sustainability Week embodied our national ambition, aligning closely with Oman Vision 2040's promise of diversification, transparency and accountable governance

transparency, empowering decision-makers and citizens alike.

Yet, as energising as the announcements and innovations were, the true measure of sustainability isn't found in the moment of applause. It lies in what happens next. Will the ambitious memoranda we celebrated evolve into solar farms lighting homes in rural Oman? Will Makman's open data genuinely shape public understanding and drive accountability? Can pilot transport schemes, hinted at during the week, become everyday realities?

Here's the reflection I want to share openly: Sustainability is more than headlines and handshakes. It begins with transparent commitments and visible accountability. It is about tracking our progress honestly, holding each other accountable and ensuring the momentum generated inside these halls translates to everyday practice.

Next year, I hope our first challenge won't be finding a parking space but instead deciding on the most sustainable way to arrive. Because true sustainability isn't about what we announce. It's about what we choose, every single day.

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

NATO HATCHES DEAL ON HIGHER SPENDING TO KEEP TRUMP HAPPY

MAX DELANY

Nato foreign ministers meeting in Antalya from Wednesday will look to forge a compromise deal on ramping up defence spending as allies scramble to satisfy US President Donald Trump's demand to agree to five per cent of GDP at a summit next month. The two-day gathering in the sun-baked Turkish seaside resort comes as diplomatic intrigue swirls over a possible meeting across the country in Istanbul between Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky and Russia's Vladimir Putin.

But it will be the internal wrangling over Nato's spending target that dominates the meat of the debate on Thursday among foreign ministers with just over six weeks before leaders come face-to-face with Trump in The Hague.

Trump has piled on pressure ahead of the summit by insisting he wants Nato to agree to devote five per cent of GDP to defence — a level no member, including the United States, currently reaches. The volatile former reality TV star has rattled European allies worried about the menace from Russia by threatening not to protect countries that, in his eyes, don't spend enough.

In a bid to prevent him blowing up the alliance, Nato boss Mark Rutte has floated a proposal for allies to commit to 3.5 per cent of direct military spending by 2032, as well as another 1.5 per cent of broader security-related expenditure. That would hand Trump the headline figure he's demanding while giving enough wiggle room to European allies who are struggling just to reach Nato's current spending threshold of two per cent.

"Trump will be able to claim victory and say that he got Nato to spend five per cent," one senior Nato diplomat, talking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. "In reality it will be more complicated than that — but that will be the essential political message from the summit."

Diplomats say that Rutte's plan, which hasn't been made public, envisions ratcheting up direct defence spending by 0.2 per cent each year over the next seven years until countries hit the 3.5 target.

The other 1.5 per cent of more loosely defined spending could include a wide-range of areas including infrastructure, cyber defence, border controls and even support for Ukraine.

Diplomats admit it's a budgetary sleight-of-hand aimed at softening the blow for countries, such as Canada, Spain and Italy, who are still only just limping towards two per cent. — AFP

US sanctions relief offers Syria hope; hurdles stay

DONALD Trump's decision to lift US sanctions on Syria signals a major shift in the war-battered country's efforts to rebuild, offering hope of recovery but leaving significant obstacles in place.

In Riyadh during a Middle East tour, the US president said he "will be ordering the cessation of sanctions against Syria in order to give them a chance at greatness".

Syria's foreign ministry hailed the move as a "pivotal turning point", while Finance Minister Mohammed Barnieh said it would help bring in investment and restore key services.

Barnieh said the decision would "help Syria in building its institutions, providing essential services to the people and create great opportunities to attract investment and restore confidence".

Jihad Yazigi, editor of economic publication The Syria Report, said "US sanctions were by far the most impactful" of all those imposed during former president Bashar al Assad's rule.

Since ousting Assad in December, Syria's new leadership has pushed for the lifting of Western sanctions.

US measures cut Syria off from the global financial system for more than a decade, hampering trade and aid transfers. "The most immediate impact will be a facilitation of the transfer of funds from Gulf states and development aid in general to Syria," Yazigi said.

A United Nations report in February said 90 per cent of Syrians live in poverty and a quarter are jobless. Sanctions relief for the banking sector could open access to the US financial system and spur trade, investment and jobs, Yazigi said. The move would lead to "a



People celebrate in Damascus' Omeyyad square after US President Donald Trump's decision to lift sanctions in Syria, on Tuesday. — AFP



NADER
DURGHAM

The writer is a Lebanese journalist based in Beirut



LAURE AL KHOURY

The writer is AFP news agency correspondent for Syria and Lebanon

facilitation of transfers in and out of Syria; and it's going to improve trade activity, it is going to improve investment and it's going to generate a lot of business opportunities and employment", he added.

As for the Syrian pound, which lost around 90 per cent of its value during the war, the influx of US dollars could help strengthen the currency, according to the expert.

Since the start of the civil war in 2011, the pound has plunged from 50 to about 10,000-12,000 against the greenback. But Yazigi warned the currency would remain unstable if the government prints money to raise salaries.

Syria still faces numerous challenges threatening its recovery.

"The procedure for lifting sanctions is quite long, even with the presence of political willingness," said Syrian economic expert Karam Shaar.

"It would still take months for these sanctions to be lifted because

you're talking also about sanctions legislation, some of them are under acts as opposed to executive orders," he added. While executive orders can be reversed easily, acts require congressional action.

Sanctions relief is also but one step in the lengthy reconstruction path for Syria, which the UN estimates could cost more than \$400 billion. The United Nations estimates rebuilding Syria could cost more than \$400 billion.

Around 1.87 million Syrians have returned to their home regions since Assad's fall, according to International Organisation for Migration, but the UN body says lack of jobs and services is holding back wider returns.

Sanctions relief allows Syria to plan broader reconstruction, Yazigi said, but alone it is "not sufficient".

"There simply aren't enough funds," he said, noting few countries were willing to pour in the tens of billions of dollars needed by Syria.

A political pantomime on the global stage



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

WHILE we appreciate the democratisation of the Internet and the freedom to use social platforms, we recognise that not everyone is equipped to benefit from such openness. Free expression is debatable, especially when it is offensive or disrespectful. For that reason, anyone could be classified as having a low level of mental cognition.

Two of the most bizarre uses of artificial intelligence as political satire came from US President Donald Trump, who attested to symptoms of pathological megalomania, or informally, someone with a psychological disorder characterised by delusions of grandeur and an obsession with power.

Social media allows users to express their personalities in unique ways. We reached rock bottom with a joke that went too far with Trump's papal aspirations. Just days after Pope Francis' death, we witnessed a diplomatic pantomime in which the President of the United States dressed up as the Pope utilising technology. Trump used an unsmiling image of himself seated in an ornate chair, clad in white papal vestments and a headdress, with his right forefinger raised.

Less than a week after attending Pope Francis' burial, he shared the artificially created photo on his Truth Social platform. The White House reposted it to its official X

account. The president of the United States has yet to express regret to the more than two million Catholics worldwide.

When the president of one of the world's most powerful countries uses social media to mock faith and culture, believing he is powerful enough to ridicule the utmost solemnity for Catholics, it highlights that something is wrong - not with artificial intelligence or technology, but with the user's immature attitude.

Choosing to act like a clown on the global stage, insulting institutions and offending believers, the President of the United States shows a lack of statesmanship, disrespectful behaviour and boundless arrogance.

It is not the first time Donald Trump, voluntarily or not, raised concerns about the use of artificial intelligence. A "Trump Gaza" AI-generated video depicting the Gaza Strip as a Dubai-style paradise emerged in February shortly after the US president unveiled his property development plan for Gaza. The video depicts a family emerging from the wreckage of war-torn Gaza into a beachside resort.

Trump's bizarre posts raise questions about the misuse of technology, either in shaping public perception, to amuse, or to entertain and offend. It is a blur between satire and political communication strategy.

People can look at Trump's bold acts as amusing or controversial, as an act of

Social media is a double-edged sword. Just as fire can illuminate and warm, in the same way it can kill and destroy. Studies highlight that when users engage with toxic content, their behaviour is influenced less by technological features and more by their predisposition

audacity, or as a provocative act of disrespect. The ramifications of such actions extend to moral principles, technology and mental health.

Social media is a double-edged sword. Just as fire can illuminate and warm, in the same way it can kill and destroy. Studies highlight that when users engage with toxic content, their behaviour is influenced less by technological features and more by their predisposition.

The power of AI technologies in creating lifelike images can have implications not only for political communication but also for societal impact. The use and misuse of AI can stir emotions and divide public opinion. It can generate realistic yet fictional narratives, and public figures must navigate conflicting expectations from their audiences.

AI's ability to generate content, such as images and text, presents potential for innovation, opportunities and challenges. However, it also opens the door to misuse. The proliferation of generative AI misuse highlights the increasing importance of critical media literacy.

Responsible social media and AI use at the individual level is important. Individual character and actions shape sociotechnical dynamics. Regardless of legal requirements, there is a moral obligation to consider one's online behaviour and to pay attention to sociocultural characteristics.

HIV TESTING FALLS IN SOUTH AFRICA AFTER US AID CUT

NELLIE PEYTON

Testing and monitoring of HIV patients across South Africa have fallen since the United States cut aid that funded health workers and clinics, with pregnant women, infants and youth the most affected, previously unpublished government data shows.

South Africa has the world's highest burden of HIV, with about 8 million people - one in five adults - living with the virus. The United States was funding 17 per cent of the country's HIV budget until President Donald Trump slashed aid early this year. Data from the National Health Laboratory Service, a government entity, showed that viral load testing fell by up to 21 per cent among key groups in the last two months, which four HIV experts said appeared to be due to the loss of US funding.

Viral load testing measures how much virus is in the blood of people living with HIV who are on anti-retroviral treatment. It is normally done at least once a year. It checks whether the treatment is working and whether the virus is sufficiently suppressed to prevent it spreading to others.

With less testing, fewer people who may transmit the virus will be identified. Missing a test can also indicate that a patient has dropped out of the system and may be missing treatment.

It is especially important for pregnant women who may be at risk of transmitting HIV through childbirth, and for infants who need to be diagnosed and treated early to survive.

Trump froze many foreign aid programmes early in his presidency, before reinstating some lifesaving assistance, including parts of the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), its global HIV initiative. But South Africa was also specifically targeted, with an executive order cutting all funding to the country in February.

South Africa did not rely on US funding for its HIV drugs, but about 15,000 health workers' salaries were paid by PEPFAR, which previously gave South Africa over \$400 million a year. Most of that funding has been withdrawn, though it is unclear exactly how much.

The health workers did HIV testing and counselling in districts with a high prevalence of HIV, and followed up when patients missed a check-up or dropped off treatment, which is common.

The PEPFAR funding also supported NGO-run clinics which have now closed. The government has urged HIV patients who did check-ups at those clinics to go to public health centres instead, but public health centres often have long lines.

According to the data seen by Reuters, the number of viral load tests conducted for people aged 15-24 fell by 17.2 per cent in April compared to April last year, after dropping 7.8 per cent year-on-year in March. Total population testing was down 11.4 per cent in April. — Reuters

How has the Internet changed our minds?

HISTORY teaches us that the advent of the printing press sparked Europe's Enlightenment, while the Ottoman Empire hesitated to embrace it for fear of the upheaval it might bring to established patterns of knowledge and thought. That reluctance contributed to Western ascendancy, laying the groundwork for the intellectual and then industrial revolutions, and it marked the beginning of Ottoman, and by extension Islamic-civilisational stagnation. A similar inflection point occurred at the close of the twentieth century when the Internet emerged from its military and private confines into the wider human sphere. It has since effected an unprecedented shift in global consciousness, quietly penetrating our minds before its influence became undeniable in every aspect of our cognition, memory, reading habits and sense of time.

In the 1960s, the Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan presciently declared that "the medium is the message," suggesting that each new technology not only reflects civilisational progress, but also actively reshapes our perception of the world. At the time, few imagined that the Internet, perhaps the most pervasive medium in history, would impose upon us a new, rapid, yet often superficial mode of knowing, dominated by images and deprived of complex meaning and sustained engagement. It has converted our brains into biological systems that forsake many traditional mental skills, such as deep memorisation, logical reasoning and analytical thought, in favour of instantaneous gratification.

Neuroscience reveals that our brains possess "neuroplasticity", the capacity to reconfigure neural networks in response to experience. Constant interaction with the Internet - its speed, interactivity and continual stimulus - becomes a repeated neural experience that slowly but inexorably reprogrammes our minds. Over



The Internet's acceleration of temporal experience is equally profound.

time, we find ourselves unable to tolerate complexity or lengthy texts, craving fragmentation, summaries and immediate satisfaction. This marks a perilous transformation: we lose the depth of understanding, reflection, emotional engagement and intellectual stamina that once sustained us. Reading, no longer a profound cognitive practice, has become a shallow browsing, our eyes flitting from headline to hyperlink without lingering over meaning. We develop what might be called a "screen mind", incapable of the abstraction and slow accumulation of knowledge afforded by the printed page.

Online reading resembles fast food: momentarily filling but offering no real nourishment.

Our memory suffers as well. As the American thinker Nicholas Carr argues in The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains, we have replaced internal recall with external retrieval. Search engines such as Google serve as extensions of our memory: we no longer retain information, only its location. This fundamental shift, from an inwardly housed knowledge to one reliant on external mediators, erodes deep memory and reduces intelligence to a precarious immediacy based on access rather than understanding.



DR MUAMAR AL TOBI

The writer is an academic and researcher

The Internet's acceleration of temporal experience is equally profound. Where once we measured time by its unfolding, the gradual sediment of lived experience, we now quantify it in notifications, updates and fleeting interactions. Emotions - joy, sorrow - have become transient states, compressed into emoticons and quickly superseded by the next digital wave. This relentless pace weakens our experiential memory, leaving us momentary beings adrift from authentic existential belonging, with neither a genuine past nor a reflective horizon of the future.

Thirty years after the Internet's dawn, as we enter an even more expansive digital era shaped by artificial intelligence, we must ask: is this "liberation from time" or a detachment from meaning? Does the proliferation of knowledge sources truly make us wiser, or have we lost the equilibrium between intellectual accumulation and digital dispersion? The contemporary philosopher Byung-Chul Han speaks of "digital burnout", whereby information overload and the absence of patience yield a fragmented self in perpetual pursuit of gratification rather than comprehension.

SPORTS

OFA CUP



Seeb and Al Nasr players in action.

SEEB, BAHLA REACH OFA CUP FINAL AFTER DRAMATIC SEMIS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

Seeb Club successfully secured their spot in the final of the Oman Football Association (OFA) Cup after a goalless draw against Al Nasr at Al Saada Stadium on Tuesday. Seeb benefited from their 1-0 victory in the first leg, qualifying on aggregate. The match saw an average performance from both sides, particularly in the first half, which failed to live up to expectations due to a lack of clear attacking threat. Most of the action was concentrated in midfield without any real danger on goal. Al Nasr came close to scoring in the 33rd minute when Osama Magdy delivered a cross that Marwan Taseeb headed towards goal, but Seeb goalkeeper Ahmed al Rawahi made an impressive save. Seeb responded in the 44th minute with a powerful shot from Jameel al Yahmadi, which was brilliantly saved by Al Nasr's goalkeeper Saif Mustafa, ending the first half in a goalless draw.

In the second half, Al Nasr showed more urgency in attack, pressing hard on Seeb's defence but lacking precision in final attempts. Seeb nearly sealed the match in the 51st minute through Kamara, but his attempt narrowly missed the post. Despite ongoing efforts from both teams, the match ended in a goalless draw, confirming Seeb's qualification to the final based on their first-leg advantage.

BAHLA THROUGH DESPITE DEFEAT

Bahla Club advanced to the final on Tuesday, despite a 3-1 loss to Sohar in the second leg of the semifinal held at Nizwa Sports Complex. Bahla secured their place in the final after the Oman Football Association ruled in their favour, awarding them a 3-0 win for the first leg, despite their actual 1-0 defeat on the pitch, due to Sohar's fielding of an ineligible player.

This ruling gave Bahla the aggregate advantage, securing their place in the final.

The second leg saw Sohar start strongly, taking the lead early with a powerful strike from Mohsen al Khaldi in the eighth minute. Bahla responded through Abdul Salam al Shukeili to level the score. Sohar continued to press, and Saud al Muqbali added a second goal in the 43rd minute after a solo run through Bahla's defence, ending the first half with a 2-1 lead for Sohar.

In the second half, Sohar maintained their dominance, and Saud al Muqbali scored again in the 61st minute with a similar move to his earlier goal. Despite Sohar's continued efforts to add a fourth goal that could overturn the aggregate result, the match ended 3-1, which wasn't enough to change the outcome.

With this result, Bahla reach the final for the fourth consecutive time, while Seeb make their third consecutive appearance. The two teams are set to face off in an anticipated showdown at Seeb Stadium next Sunday, with Bahla aiming to avenge their previous final loss to reigning champions Seeb.



Bahla and Sohar players fight for the ball.

Oman set up Iran final in Asian beach handball

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

OMAN will take on Iran in a tight final clash of the 10th edition of AHF Asian Beach Handball Championship which will conclude on Thursday after intense competitions in the last few days at the sands court of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The national team players are targeting for their second Asian title after the first one in 2004.

The summit clash will kick off at 8 pm while the third and fourth playoff between Jordan and Pakistan will start at 7 pm at the same venue.

Oman team, coached by Hamood al Hasani, are all set with confidence to regain the title since the first title which was won in 2004 during the inaugural edition hosted in Muscat. Oman team had arrived to the final in six times but could not win the title except in the opening edition.

Oman team secured a slot in the final after a thrilling 2-0 win over Jordan in the semifinal while Iran beat Pakistan with the same result to seal their berth in the concluding match of the Asian event. Both Oman and Iran confirmed their presence in the forthcoming edition of the 2026 IHF Beach Handball World Championships.

Coach Hamood al Hassani and his assistant Jaber al Balushi worked out on a strong tactics to deliver top match against Iran and clinch a new Asian title. The coaching staff prepared the team players for today's assignment against heavyweights Iran team which managed to lift the title in 2022.

ONE STEP AWAY

Speaking ahead of the final encounter, coach Hamood said: "We are just one step away from the title in our home country. The final against Iran will depend on small areas and the team with less mistakes will get the title. I am fully confident that my players will deliver their outmost efforts towards earning a victory and clinching the title," he said.

"Our tactics was to focus in each game as final in this tournament and we managed to win all the games until reaching the



Oman players celebrate their win against Jordan in the semifinal.



Oman player makes a goal attempt against Jordan.

final. In the semifinal against Jordan, I did some tactical shifts and positional changes which kept the opposition off balance, proving decisive in securing the win," he added. Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, Chairman of Oman Handball Association (OHA), appreciated team's fighting spirit in their semifinal triumph. "Their performance was a true reflection of Omani grit and sportsmanship," he said. "We are proud of their qualification to the IHF World Championship next year and I

hope they will now take the Asian title."

Al Balushi urged fans to show up in full force for the final: "I am looking forward to see more fans who are acting as the heartbeat of this team and their energy will be vital as we chase our second continental title," he concluded.

FINAL CEREMONY

The final match of the Asian event and concluding ceremony will be held under patronage of His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Chairman of Oman Olympic Committee in presence of Dr Hassan Moustafa, International Handball Federation (IHF) President, and other top officials.

In the women's division, two matches are scheduled on Thursday. India will face Hong Kong and the match will kick at 5 pm while the title-deciding showdown between Vietnam and Philippines will start at 7 pm. Vietnam currently lead the standings with 10 points, followed by the Philippines with eight and both have punched their tickets to the 2026 IHF World Championship.

Oman Sail to host first World Sailing Inclusion event

MUSCAT: Oman Sail is incredibly proud to have been selected to host the first edition of the World Sailing Inclusion Championships. Due to be held from November 30 to December 8, 2025 at the Musannah Sailing School, with the official opening ceremony to be held on the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The event will champion the diverse community of sailors with disabilities and provide a unique platform for Para classified athletes to compete alongside other athletes with disabilities who do not classify under the IPC Classification code. Competition is due to be held in RS Venture Connect, RS21, Wingfoil and ILCA (Special Olympic) categories.

Over 200 sailors from around the world are expected for the week-long regatta, as well as coaches and support staff who will be present in Al Musannah for the World Sailing Inclusive Development Programme (IDP) to be held over three days prior to the championship. The IDP will connect sailors with coaches



Archive image of RS Venture Boat.

and instructors from World Sailing to help develop national Para Inclusive sailing programmes and provide guidance for sailing coaches and the sailors themselves.

The event will also include a tourism day to share Oman's rich cultural heritage with international visitors.

Dr Khamis bin Salim al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "It is a great honour to host the first edition of such an important regatta. We are incredibly proud of our achievements in breaking down barriers in sailing,



DR KHAMIS BIN SALIM AL JABRI

showcasing diversity within the sport, and supporting people with disabilities to live an active and fulfilling life on the water

through our SailFree programme. Musannah has proven to be an excellent venue for sailing championships of all sizes, with world class facilities,

accommodation and accessibility on-site, and we look forward to welcoming the world to Oman later this year and helping Para Inclusive Sailing to grow."

Jim Morris, World Sailing Director of Events, said, "We are delighted to award the inaugural edition of the World Sailing Inclusion Championships to the Sultanate of Oman and Oman Sail.

"The bid encapsulates the spirit of inclusive sailing with particular attention to the diversity of the sailing community and accessibility, as well as sustainability and long-term benefits for sailors within the region and across Asia. The Inclusive Development Programme, held before the championship begins, will also help to enhance the SailFree programme in Oman."

Hannah Stodel, Para World Sailing Manager, added, "The introduction of the World Sailing Inclusion Championships is an invaluable addition to the sailing calendar."

SIX-MONTH STINT



Serbia's Novak Djokovic with coach Andy Murray during a practice session ahead of the Australian Open. — Reuters

COACH MURRAY AND DJOKOVIC PART WAYS AHEAD OF FRENCH OPEN

BENGALURU: Andy Murray will no longer coach 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic, with the pair’s high-profile partnership coming to an end after six months and no titles, the Briton’s team said on Tuesday.

Djokovic appointed fellow former world number one Murray ahead of this year’s Australian Open and the Serb said at the Qatar Open in February that he would continue working with Murray for an indefinite period.

However, the partnership has come to an end as Djokovic looks to arrest a dip in form during the clay season at the Geneva Open next week ahead of his quest for a fourth French Open title when Roland Garros gets underway on May 25.

“Thanks to Novak for the unbelievable opportunity to work together and thanks to his team for all their hard work over the past six months,” Murray said in a statement.

“I wish Novak all the best for the rest of the season.”

Djokovic, who won 25 of his 36 matches against Murray, said he was grateful for his former rival’s hard work and support in their short spell together

“I really enjoyed deepening our friendship together,” Djokovic added.

Djokovic reached the semifinals of the Australian Open in January before injury ended his campaign. He made the Miami Open final in March but his bid for a 100th tour-level title ended in a defeat by Jakub Mensik.

The Serb, who turns 38 three days before the year’s second Grand Slam begins, has been woefully out of form since that Miami defeat and was beaten in his opening matches at Masters tournaments in Monte Carlo and Madrid last month. He was expected to jump-start his clay campaign in Rome before returning to Paris, where he won Olympic gold last year, but skipped the ongoing Italian Open without giving a reason.

Djokovic accepted a wildcard for the May 18-24 Geneva Open. — Reuters

Dubai Esports Festival shapes gaming future

A journey through Dubai’s digital playground

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

THE fourth edition of Dubai Esports and Games Festival (DEF 2025) concluded after 17 days of the great excitement and thrill at Dubai World Trade Centre. The world event, organised by Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment (DFRE), had launched the first edition in 2022. The DEF 2025 Festival sets out to shape emerging trends in both the regional and global gaming landscape, further strengthening Dubai’s standing as a premier destination for esports, immersive digital entertainment, and cutting-edge innovation. This year’s edition presented a dynamic lineup of events, including the vibrant GameExpo, high-stake esports tournaments, and influencer-led challenges. In addition, the GameExpo Summit offered a platform for industry leaders to exchange ideas and foster partnerships through its thought-provoking conference sessions and strategic B2B networking opportunities, drawing participation from companies around the globe. The festival attracted thousands of participants and spectators from across the region, offering a range of ticketing options to ensure accessibility for all, the tickets starting from AED 29 for students and AED 44 for adults for single-day access. The event featured dozens of esports tournaments and interactive challenges, with total prizes exceeding AED 500,000. One of the most thrilling and popular games at the festival was Pac-Man which is a life-sized recreation of the iconic arcade game, blending nostalgia with cutting-edge interactive technology. Already a hit in Manchester, this immersive experience invites players to journey through a glowing digital maze, complete with stunning projections, pulse-pounding challenges, and surprise encounters around every corner.

Brass Monkey at City Walk stands out as a vibrant entertainment hub, offering a wide selection of classic and modern games. With 12 bowling lanes, auto-scoring darts, billiards and a variety of retro arcade games, it provides a dynamic space where visitors can enjoy interactive and nostalgic gameplay in a lively setting.

As part of the accompanying experiences during DEF 2025, House of Hype offered visitors an expansive interactive playground filled with over 100 immersive gaming and digital adventures. Located in the heart of Dubai Mall, the space featured virtual challenges, sensory environments, and unexpected interactive elements, making it a standout destination for gamers and thrill-seekers exploring the festival’s broader scope.

INDOOR VIRTUAL REALITY ZONE
On the other hand, the world’s biggest indoor virtual reality zone, VR Park, has now evolved into Play DXB. Located in Dubai Mall (with a second location now at Dubai Hills Mall), Play DXB offers more diverse



Testing their driving skills in a high-speed race.



Testing PacMan game



entertainment with plenty of options that toddlers, teens and the young at heart can enjoy. This is the place to be for hours of non-stop fun and to test out your skills in fun competitive sessions with friends. Discover more than 30 game-changing adventures across a range of immersive and educational



MONA AL FALASI
Director of the Electronic Games Department

‘journeys’. Reminisce about the good old days on a classic carousel ride with the kids, or see if you can conquer the top scores at the arcade games. While the little ones have a ball at the inflatable playground and trampolines, you can don an Oculus gaming headset, delve into a Transformers-themed adventure and beat the bad guys.

The Dubai Esports and Games Festival (DEF 2025) offered a dynamic blend of innovation, competition, and interactive entertainment. From high-energy esports tournaments to immersive digital experiences, the festival brought together gamers, tech enthusiasts, and families for a celebration of cutting-edge gaming culture. Its diverse sections catered to all ages and interests — from virtual reality zones and classic arcade setups to futuristic showcases and influencer challenges — creating a truly engaging atmosphere.

After hours of gameplay and digital exploration, visitors naturally sought a moment of rest and culinary indulgence. Among the standout dining experiences was StreetXO, a unique venue that reinterprets global street food through bold and inventive techniques. Located in One Za’abeel, the restaurant offers a menu of creatively presented dishes that merge international flavors in unexpected ways, reflecting a playful yet sophisticated take on modern dining — the perfect pause in a day filled with adrenaline and adventure.

All-round Oman women dominate Bahrain to make clean sweep

MUSCAT: In a solid display of all-round dominance, Oman recently completed a clean sweep of the three-match T20I women’s series against Bahrain at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat.

The victories — by five wickets in the first match, 57 runs in the second, and five wickets again in the third — highlighted the team’s growing confidence, discipline and unity as they continue to build momentum for future challenges.

Oman started the series with a composed run chase in the opening T20I, overcoming Bahrain’s modest total of 87 with five wickets in hand. In the second encounter, Oman asserted full control with both bat and ball, securing a dominant 57-run victory built on a solid team

batting performance (162-5) and sharp bowling spells to restrict the visitors to 105-5. The third and final match saw a repeat of the team’s consistency, as Oman again chased down the target of 93 with poise to seal the 3-0 result as they reached 95-5 in 14.5 overs.

The series was shaped by all-round contributions from several Omani players. Opening batter Jayadhanyha Gunasekar, was a standout performer with the bat, scoring 84 runs across the three matches and providing Oman with much-needed stability at the top of the order. Her partnerships with fellow opener Trupti Pawde ensured that Oman had a solid foundation in every match.

Team captain Priyanka Mendonca



Oman players celebrate a win against Bahrain during the recent T20I series.

anchored the middle order with composed innings that added 68 runs to her tally. Her leadership with both bat and ball proved pivotal, particularly with her performance as a spinner, where she claimed six wickets, the highest across the series.

Sameera Khan also made a strong impact with the ball, taking five wickets, including crucial breakthroughs with the new ball and during the death overs.

Jayadhanyha added to her contributions with the ball as well, taking four wickets, showcasing her value as a reliable all-rounder.

Coach Desmond Berhardt, who has overseen the team’s rapid development despite limited international exposure in recent

months, expressed deep pride in the players’ resilience and performance.

He said: “I am absolutely thrilled by the team’s brilliant performance and hard work that led to the recent 3-0 victory against the Bahrain Women’s National Team.”

“It’s remarkable how much the team and support staff achieved with such a short preparation period.”

While acknowledging the signs of rust due to a lack of competitive international cricket, Berhardt praised the team’s ability to adapt under pressure.

“The team’s ability to leverage their experience and skills to navigate challenging situations speaks volumes about their resilience and talent,” he added.

SPORTS

Pacers oust top-seeded Cavs, Nuggets on brink

THE Indiana Pacers came from behind to send the Cleveland Cavaliers crashing out of the NBA playoffs on Tuesday as the Oklahoma City Thunder overcame a dazzling Nikola Jokic display to push the Denver Nuggets to the brink of elimination.

Cleveland — the top seeds in the Eastern Conference — saw their postseason come to an abrupt halt after Tyrese Haliburton scored 31 points to power the Pacers to a 114-105 victory, sealing a 4-1 series triumph.

Western Conference top seeds Oklahoma City grabbed a 112-105 victory over Denver to edge into a 3-2 lead in their titanic duel with the 2023 champions.

Three-time NBA Most Valuable Player Jokic delivered a towering performance for Denver, the Serbian star finishing with 44 points, 15 rebounds and five assists. But Jokic's heroics were in vain as the thunder — who had trailed for most of the game — unleashed a fourth-quarter bombardment to outscore Denver 34-19 and seal a pulsating win.

Jokic's rival for this season's MVP award, OKC's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, scored 31 points on a night when six Thunder players finished in double figures.

"Throughout the game it's full of swings — you make shots, you miss shots. We just trusted in our principles, and two games in a row now we've been able to pull out a W



Oklahoma City Thunder's Alex Caruso (9) and Denver Nuggets' Nikola Jokic (15) battle for a rebound as Isaiah Hartenstein (55) defends in the fourth quarter during game four of the second round of the 2025 NBA Playoffs at Ball Arena. — Reuters

(win)," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "You're only as good as your weakest link and all 10 of our guys are ready to go... All we care about is winning the game. We got one tonight and we got one more."

The loss leaves Denver facing a must-win game six in Colorado on Thursday to avoid an early end to their postseason.

"This is a really disappointing loss, and the guys should be disappointed," Denver's interim head coach David Adelman said. "We have to bounce back quickly to win game six and give ourselves a chance to come back."

HALIBURTON DRIVES PACERS

The Cavs, though, are already making their summer holiday plans after bowing out to the Pacers in Cleveland.

A flurry of six three-pointers



Indiana Pacers' Tyrese Haliburton (0) shoots over the defence of Cleveland Cavaliers' Max Strus (1) during the second half of game five of the second round for the 2025 NBA Playoffs at Rocket Arena. — Imagin Images

from Haliburton helped Indiana wrap up a series victory as the Cavaliers' promising season fizzled out in disappointing fashion on their home court. Haliburton's scoring was backed by 21 points from Pascal Siakam while Aaron Nesmith contributed 13 points with 13 rebounds. Andrew Nembhard scored 18 points.

"We're talking about eight more wins for an NBA championship," Pacers head coach Rick Carlisle said after guiding his team into the Eastern Conference finals for a second straight year. "The league is wide open this year. There are a lot of great teams but it's wide open. We've just gotta keep believing."

Trailing 3-1 heading into Tuesday's game five, Cleveland looked ready to keep the series alive

after surging into a 19-point lead midway through the second quarter at the Rocket Arena.

But Haliburton sparked into life to drain five-of-five from three-point range in a 15-point second quarter to slash Cleveland's advantage to 56-52 heading into half-time.

The Pacers' scoring onslaught continued into the third quarter with the visitors outscoring Cleveland 33-20 to open up a commanding 85-76 lead as the fourth quarter got under way. Cleveland threatened to rally in the final frame after 16 points from Donovan Mitchell, who was clearly still troubled by the sore left ankle that had threatened to rule him out of the contest.

Mitchell, who finished with 35 points, six rebounds and eight assists, reduced the Indiana lead

to 98-97 with just over five minutes remaining after nailing a three-pointer. But the Cavaliers' failure to threaten from three-point range — they managed to convert just nine-of-35 attempts from beyond the arc — continued to be a problem and hopes of a comeback were snuffed out by the Pacers defence.

Cleveland coach Kenny Atkinson lamented his team's stalled playoff campaign which followed a dominant 64-win regular season. "They were the better team, they deserved it and they played great," Atkinson said of Indiana.

Fourth-seeds Indiana will meet either the Boston Celtics or arch-rivals the New York Knicks in the Eastern Conference finals, with the winner advancing to next month's NBA Finals. — AFP

خير اكبر الاكبر

BIG BIGGER BIGGEST

Go Beyond with the Biggest Savings Ever!

الخصومات والادخار التي لا تقهر في كل منتج
مقابل قسط واحد بسيط وسريع

العودة لوقت الخصومات الجديدة التي تأتي
مع ضمانات الجودة والخدمة التي لا تتوقف

بيض الامين عمانى بيض متوسط ٣٠ بيضة Al Ameen Omani White Medium Egg 30'S OMR 1.750	برتقال فالنسيا مصر بالكيلو Orange Valencia Egypt Per Kg OMR 0.390	بطاطس مصر بالكيلو Potato Egypt Per Kg OMR 0.190
تفاح رويال جالا بالكيلو Apple Royal Gala Per Kg OMR 0.790	موز الاكوادور بالكيلو Banana Ecuador Per Kg OMR 0.390	مكسرات ومشكلة فاخرة بالكيلو Deluxe Mixed Nuts Per Kg OMR 3.990 SAVE 42.918% 6.990
لوز خام كبير بالكيلو Almond Raw Big Per Kg OMR 3.500 SAVE 36.823% 5.540	كاتليب طماطم حبة ٢٥٠ x ٦ Hayat Tomato Ketchup 6x325gm OMR 0.990 SAVE 28.777% 1.390	صابون امبريال Imperial Leather Soap Assd 6x125Gm OMR 0.890 SAVE 32.576% 1.320
ماء شرب ليلا ٢٠ x ٦٠٠ Lilac Bottled Drinking Water 6x1.5L OMR 0.290 SAVE 34.831% 0.445	ملعقة امفنية Comfort Fabric Softener Assd 2.9L OMR 1.000 SAVE 37.107% 1.590	مسحوق غسيل Ujala Detergent Powder Automatic 2.5Kg OMR 0.990 SAVE 52.857% 2.100

HYPERMARKETS | SUPERMARKETS | DEPARTMENT STORES

OMAN | SAUDI ARABIA | KUWAIT | U.A.E.

Gauff overpowers Andreeva to reach Italian Open semifinals

ROME: World number three Coco Gauff quelled the challenge of seventh seed Mirra Andreeva with a 6-4 7-6(5) victory on Wednesday to reach the Italian Open semifinals for a second successive year.

Gauff, who will take on either world number one Aryna Sabalenka or eighth seed Zheng Qinwen in the last four, has dropped just one set in her five matches at the tournament so far.

"At the end, my defence, it was tough. We were both tight in the tiebreaker, it was whoever could make the last ball," said Gauff, who has reached the semi-finals in Rome three times in her career.

"Yeah, a lot of confidence heading into the semi-finals. I think today some points weren't played at my best, but I still managed to be successful."

Gauff came into the clash with a 3-0 head-to-head lead over Andreeva and there were no early signs that things would be any different this time, with the American dominating proceedings in the first set.

Russian Andreeva put in an error-strewn performance in the opener and gave away two breakpoints at 4-3 down, which Gauff converted with a delicate dink at the net.

Andreeva broke immediately to bring the set back on serve, but Gauff's composure from the back of the court told as she broke a second time and took the opener 6-4.

Gauff had a tougher time in the second set as Andreeva regained



Coco Gauff of the US in action during her quarterfinal match against Russia's Mirra Andreeva. — Reuters



Russia's Mirra Andreeva in action during her quarterfinal match against Coco Gauff of the US. — Reuters

her focus and broke for a 3-2 lead, but the American, a relative veteran at 21 compared to her 18-year-old opponent, used the variety in her game to keep herself alive and force a tiebreaker.

The teenager struggled to match Gauff's level in the tiebreaker and hit a backhand long to surrender the contest.

Gauff's win was her ninth in 10 matches, with her only defeat in that run coming at the hands of Sabalenka in the Madrid Open final earlier this month. — Reuters

DIRECTORS' REPORT

For the Three-Month Period Ended 31 March 2025



Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the unaudited financial results of Ominvest Group for the three-month period ended 31 March 2025. Below I would like to present macroeconomics overview, and financial performance of the Ominvest Group and our major portfolio companies for the three-month period ended 31 March 2025.

A Brief on Macroeconomics

The global economy charted a cautiously optimistic course in Q1 2025, supported by continued strength in the US, ongoing policy support in China, and sustained growth momentum in India. However, early signs of softening growth began to emerge, driven by rising trade tensions, persistent geopolitical risks, and an extended pause by the US Federal Reserve keeping interest rates elevated.

Across the GCC, macroeconomic fundamentals remained broadly stable, supported by average oil prices of US\$75 per barrel. Investor sentiment toward the region held firm. Oman continued to lead in fiscal consolidation, recording a third consecutive annual budget surplus in 2024 and reducing its debt-to-GDP ratio to below 34%. Non-oil GDP grew by 3.9%, led by manufacturing activity and supported by continued progress in hydrogen and renewable energy financing.

Nevertheless, the US administration's announcement of sweeping tariff hikes on April 2 - labelled "Liberation Day"- marked a significant escalation in global trade tensions. Risk assets sold off as markets began to price in higher inflation, weaker global growth, and elevated geopolitical uncertainty. This increased uncertainty prompted the IMF to revise its 2025 global growth forecast downward from 3.3% to 2.8%, while assigning a 40% probability of a US recession. These concerns were reinforced by the release of Q1 US GDP data, which showed a 0.3% contraction, further heightening fears of a broader global economic slowdown.

For the GCC, the trade war's impact has been most visible in oil markets. Prices fell sharply, swinging from a high of US\$82 per barrel in mid-January to US\$58, following the April 2 tariff announcement and OPEC's unexpected decision to bring forward planned production cuts from July to May 2025. These developments triggered broad-based equity sell-offs across the region. At the same time, bond yields and credit default swap (CDS) spreads widened, reflecting increased uncertainty over oil prices and the broader economic outlook.

Looking ahead, the outlook points to slower growth and renewed fiscal pressures. However, Oman is better positioned to navigate this environment, following five years of disciplined fiscal policy and sustained debt reduction. The broader GCC region also enters this period with improved resilience, underpinned by macroeconomic stability, enhanced competitiveness, stronger contributions from the non-hydrocarbon economy, and progress in regional diplomacy.

Group Consolidated Performance

During the quarter ended 31 March 2025, the Group revenue increased by 10.20% to RO 129.20 million as compared to RO 117.24 million during the corresponding period in 2024, and the net profit attributable to Ominvest's shareholders increased by 3.4% to RO 10.46 million as compared to RO 10.11 million during the corresponding period in 2024. All our strategic investments have shown strong performance compared to the corresponding period in 2024.

Parent Company Performance

During the quarter ended 31 March 2025, the Parent Company reported total revenues of RO 19.06 million. Net profit for the three-month period remained stable at RO 10.2 million consistent with the performance recorded in the corresponding quarter of 2024. The results reflect the resilience and strength of the Company's diversified investment portfolio. All key portfolio companies delivered results in line with expectations, underscoring effective portfolio management and the sustained operational performance of underlying businesses.

Performance of Key Subsidiaries and Associates

Bank Muscat SAOG (Bank Muscat) our major associate in the banking sector continues to perform well and maintain its leadership position in Oman's financial services sector. Bank Muscat sustained its strong performance in the first quarter of 2025, reporting an 8% increase in net profit to RO 58.56 million from RO 54.24 million during the corresponding period in 2024, mainly due to improvement in the operating performance. As of 31 March 2025, the Bank's total assets grew by 2.4% to reach RO 14.36 billion. Bank Muscat's capital adequacy ratio stood at a healthy level of 19.01%. Bank Muscat's loan book increased by 6.9% to RO 10.54 billion, driven by corporate, retail, and Islamic banking growth and customer deposits also grew by 2.6% to RO 10 billion, as of 31 March 2025.

Liva Group SAOG (Liva Group), our insurance subsidiary, building on the strong momentum established in the second half of 2024, achieved a robust performance in the first quarter of 2025 reporting a profit of RO 4.22 million, a significant improvement from a loss of RO 0.66 million during the corresponding period in 2024. This return to profitability was driven by the collective success of all Liva's operating entities, with effective underwriting and a balanced product mix. This increase was particularly driven by a notable 21% increase in insurance service revenue, reaching RO 94.10 million as of 31 March 2025 compared to RO 77.96 million during the corresponding period in 2024. This performance was driven by continued customer base expansion, successful new product launches, and strengthened distribution partnerships across across Oman, UAE, and KSA - together contributing to a strong Liva Group-wide result. The insurance service result improved significantly to RO 4.8 million as of 31 March 2025 compared to loss of RO 1.04 million during the corresponding period in 2024, reflecting effective risk management and a strong emphasis on customer value. LIVA Group remains focused on driving further operational efficiencies and pursuing strategic expansion as it advances its long-term ambition to scale and diversify across the GCC.

International General Insurance (IGI), our associate in insurance sector, is an international specialty insurance and reinsurance group, registered in Bermuda and listed on the Nasdaq Capital Markets under the symbol "IGIC". IGI has a financial strength rating of "A-" (Strong) from S&P Global Ratings and "A" (Excellent) from AM Best with a Stable Outlook. IGI's gross written premiums for the quarter ended 31 March 2025 increased by 13.7% to USD 206.5 million, compared to USD 181.6 million in the corresponding period of 2024. Profit for the quarter was USD 27.9 million, while the combined ratio was 94.4%. Net investment income for the quarter was USD 15.5 million, primarily driven by higher yields on an expanded fixed income portfolio. The return on average equity for the quarter was 16.7%. IGI continues to demonstrate strong performance across market cycles, underpinned by its disciplined and intelligent risk selection strategy.

Oman Arab Bank SAOG (OAB) our associate in the banking sector, reported a consolidated profit of RO 7.42 million for the quarter ended 31 March 2025, up 16% compared to RO 6.42 million during the corresponding

period in 2024, driven by a strong growth in its core operations. OAB's net loans and advances, including Islamic finance, increased by 3% to RO 3.54 billion as at 31 March 2025 compared to RO 3.44 billion as at 31 March 2024. Customer deposits increased by 8% to reach RO 3.67 billion as at 31 March 2025 compared to RO 3.39 billion as at 31 March 2024. OAB's capital adequacy ratio reached 16.24%. Alizz Islamic Bank SAOC, a fully owned subsidiary of OAB consistently increased its profits and assets since the merger with OAB in 2020 and its profit grew by 20% to RO 2.4 million for the three-month ended 31 March 2025 compared to RO 2 million for the same period in 2024.

National Finance Company SAOG (NFC), our associate in the leasing sector remains the largest Finance and Leasing Company in the Sultanate of Oman in terms of asset size, branch network, revenues and profit. NFC reported an increase of 36.8% in profit to RO 3.31 million for the quarter ended 31 March 2025 compared to RO 2.42 million during the corresponding period in 2024. Loan book grew by 3.78% to RO 600.74 million as at 31 March 2025 compared to RO 578.87 million as at 31 December 2024. National Finance's total regulatory capital of RO 141.63 million as at 31 March 2025 is the highest among Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs) in Sultanate of Oman, which gives them a strong base to build business.

Oman Real Estate Investments & Services SAOC (ORIS), our real estate subsidiary, launched the prestigious LA VIE project in 2023, featuring a world-class golf course, luxury hotel, and premium residential units. Construction is advancing ahead of schedule, with construction progressing steadily since December 2023 and an impressive 71% of the scope already completed. The full structural work was finalized in just 10 months.

Other key investments include, private equity investments, which are focused on diverse sectors and expanding into new growth markets in Asia, amounted to RO 72.5 million.

Corporate Citizenship

Ominvest's approach to business is guided by a strong commitment to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, embedded across our operations. A key milestone during the first quarter of 2025 was the completion of our 2024 Sustainability Report, prepared in alignment with the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative). Now in its third consecutive year, the report reflects Ominvest's ongoing commitment to responsible investing and its focus on delivering meaningful sustainable growth.

We also completed our inaugural ESG disclosure through the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) portal, in accordance with the newly mandated reporting requirements. This represents an important step in reinforcing our transparency and alignment with leading sustainability practices.

Ominvest accelerated its efforts towards sustainable value creation through the adoption of an advanced ESG monitoring platform. The AI-driven software enhances our ability to track and measure our ESG performance, further embedding these principles into its core strategy. We remain committed to ESG integration as a driver of sustainable growth, long-term stakeholder value, and positive community impact.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to our inspirational leader His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his vision and initiatives as he continues to lead the country on the path of development, peace, and enduring prosperity.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank the Financial Services Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange, and Central Bank of Oman for their continued support and guidance. I would also like to thank our dedicated teams at Ominvest and across our Group companies for their commitment and hard work.

Khalid Muhammad AlZubair
Chairman

UNAUDITED INTERIM CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED AND PARENT COMPANY STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2025				
	Consolidated		Parent Company	
	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-25 (RO'000)	(Audited) 31-Dec-24 (RO'000)	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-25 (RO'000)	(Audited) 31-Dec-24 (RO'000)
Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	49,171	46,195	8,044	3,650
Deposits with banks	166,162	157,271	-	-
Insurance contract assets	1,517	7,272	-	-
Re-insurance contract assets	81,762	97,015	-	-
Investment securities	274,162	267,158	12,035	10,615
Investment in associates	536,420	550,690	289,855	298,835
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	427,792	449,229
Due from subsidiaries	-	-	62,750	30,024
Other assets	70,425	49,431	15,257	4,202
Investment properties	6,145	6,399	2,000	2,000
Property and equipment	18,829	18,775	605	633
Work in progress	31,145	26,463	-	-
Intangible assets	50,259	50,724	-	-
Total assets	1,285,997	1,277,393	818,338	799,188
Equity and liabilities				
Equity				
Share capital	93,571	66,837	93,571	66,837
Share premium	-	5,778	-	5,778
Legal reserve	22,279	22,279	22,279	22,279
Other non-distributable reserves	10,757	10,944	10,757	10,944
Mandatory convertible bonds	13,367	13,367	13,367	13,367
Cumulative changes in fair value reserve	1,497	1,414	709	1,175
Retained earnings	56,176	90,819	54,277	89,075
Equity attributable to equity holders of the Parent Company	197,647	211,438	194,960	209,455
Perpetual bonds / sukuku	110,720	110,720	112,159	112,159
	308,367	322,158	307,119	321,614
	82,305	79,622	-	-
Total equity	390,672	401,780	307,119	321,614
Liabilities				
Due to banks	572,998	553,913	451,508	431,113
Insurance contract liabilities	227,863	234,866	-	-
Reinsurance contract liabilities	16,061	32,020	-	-
Other liabilities	72,765	48,438	58,731	45,481
Taxation	5,638	6,376	980	980
Total liabilities	895,325	875,613	511,219	477,574
Total equity and liabilities	1,285,997	1,277,393	818,338	799,188
Net assets per share (Rial Omani)	0.211	0.316	0.208	0.313

UNAUDITED INTERIM CONDENSED CONSOLIDATED AND PARENT COMPANY STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTH ENDED 31 MARCH 2025				
	Consolidated		Parent Company	
	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-25 (RO'000)	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-24 (RO'000)	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-25 (RO'000)	(Unaudited) 31-Mar-24 (RO'000)
Insurance revenue	103,162	87,162	-	-
Interest income	3,782	3,507	588	1,153
Investment income	3,229	7,667	50	3,409
Fee and commission income	1,704	1,413	36	50
Other operating income	2,911	3,477	-	-
Share of results from subsidiaries	-	-	11,206	8,669
Share of results from associates	14,446	14,019	7,175	6,274
Total revenue	129,234	117,245	19,055	19,555
Insurance service expense	(80,469)	(80,322)	-	-
Net reinsurance expense	(15,587)	(6,272)	-	-
Fee and commission expenses	(2,186)	(1,894)	-	-
Interest expense	(8,306)	(9,709)	(7,157)	(7,840)
Operating expenses	(8,501)	(8,869)	(1,708)	(1,536)
Total expenses	(115,049)	(107,066)	(8,865)	(9,376)
Profit before tax	14,185	10,179	10,190	10,179
Income tax expense	(1,537)	(293)	-	-
Profit for the period	12,648	9,886	10,190	10,179
Profit for the period attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	10,458	10,115	10,190	10,179
Non-controlling interests	2,190	(229)	-	-
	12,648	9,886	10,190	10,179
Basic earnings per share attributable to the equity holders of the Parent Company (RO)	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014
Other comprehensive income / (expense) :				
<i>Items that may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:</i>				
Movement in cash flow hedge	(193)	531	(193)	531
Foreign currency translation reserve	6	7	6	7
Changes in fair value of debt instruments at fair value through other comprehensive income	314	(189)	295	(177)
<i>Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:</i>				
Changes in fair value of equity instruments at fair value through other comprehensive income and share of OCI from equity accounted investee	139	(633)	(761)	(441)
Other comprehensive income/(expense) for the period	266	(284)	(653)	(80)
Total comprehensive income for the period	12,914	9,602	9,537	10,099
Total comprehensive income for the period attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent Company	10,425	10,034	9,537	10,099
Non-controlling interests	2,489	(432)	-	-
	12,914	9,602	9,537	10,099

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
4,379.674

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$66.35
BRENT \$66.02
LIGHT \$63.07



SHARED VISION



OSHRM and London Business School sign strategic pact to develop Oman's next-generation leaders.

OSHRM, LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL INK PACT TO PROMOTE LEADERSHIP IN OMAN

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

OMAN Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM) signed a historic partnership with London Business School (LBS) to improve leadership excellence in Oman by blending world best practices with local relevance.

The partnership was formally launched at an exclusive executive roundtable in Muscat, where a select group of leaders — including Royal Family members, government dignitaries, decision-makers and alumni of the LBS Oman Chapter — convened. The occasion provided a high-level forum to exchange views on the evolving nature of leadership and to lay the ground for a shared vision to create future-proof competencies in Oman.

In remarks to the Observer, Thomas Xavier, Client Director at London Business School, discussed his enthusiasm for the institution's growing collaboration with Omani businesses, including the Oman Society for Human Resource Management (OSHRM).

"What is a source of pride — and so makes our relationship with Omani organisations so fulfilling — is the opportunity to help and make a contribution to the Oman's distinctiveness and creativity," said Xavier. "We wish to be in a position to make this distinctiveness stronger and make it an even more influential force globally."

He went on to add, "The world would be a richer place with more Omanis. In our humble way, by encouraging individual leadership and by supporting the growth of Omani businesses that will prosper abroad, we hope to make a valuable contribution. It was a pleasure to see all of you today and to hear first-hand about challenges and opportunities in the Omani business environment."

Sukuk-led growth boosts Oman's debt capital market to \$10.3 bn in 2024

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 14

ISSUANCES of debt on the capital market of the Sultanate of Oman surged by 61.4 per cent to a total of \$10.3 billion in 2024, underscoring the significant role of sukuk and conventional bond offerings by government and corporate entities in raising funds for growth and operational needs.

International ratings agency Fitch, in a commentary on Oman's Debt Capital Market (DCM), noted that issuances across multiple currencies — including treasury bills — totalled \$1.5 billion during the first quarter of 2025 alone.

Islamic sukuk issuances grew by 124.9 per cent year-on-year to \$2.9 billion in 2024, outpacing the growth of conventional bonds, which rose by 45.5 per cent year-on-year to \$7.4 billion (across all currencies).

Notably, all debt issued by government-related enterprises (GREs) last year was in the form of sukuk, Fitch observed.

"Sukuk demand remains strong,



Islamic sukuk issuances grew by 124.9 per cent year-on-year to \$2.9 billion in 2024, outpacing the growth of conventional bonds.

primarily from Oman's Islamic banks and windows — which held about 19.2 per cent of the banking system market share as of end-February 2025 — as well as from Islamic banks in other GCC countries," the ratings agency stated in its 'Non-Rating Action

Commentary'. Looking ahead, Fitch anticipates a slowdown in the pace of debt capital market issuances by Omani entities during 2025-2026, in line with the Omani government's objective to reduce its debt to around 30 per

Energy shift must reflect local realities: Experts say

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

GLOBAL energy experts convening at the Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES) have urged governments and industry leaders to adopt more realistic, inclusive and economically grounded strategies to drive the clean energy transition.

During a high-level session titled "Innovation in New Energies to Enable the Transition", speakers highlighted the urgent need for regulatory clarity, social engagement and investment frameworks that reflect on-the-ground realities in the Middle East and beyond.

Organised by the Society of Petroleum Engineers (SPE), the panel brought together senior voices from Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals, OQ, SLB, Olayan Saudi Holding Company and Petronas.

Dr Firas al Abduwani, Director General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, opened the discussion by emphasising that the real challenge lies not in technology, but in crafting effective policy.

"Everyone talks about the need for more renewables, but few appreciate the complexity of policymaking. It's not just about ambition — it's about designing policies that reflect economic and social realities," he said.

He explained that Oman's natural gas, partly subsidised and socially priced, plays a vital role in electricity generation, desalination and industrial production. Transitioning from this



The panellists emphasised that energy transition is not merely about new technologies — it is a systemic transformation that requires public acceptance, economic restructuring and policy coordination.

foundation requires careful sequencing and institutional alignment.

Dr Talal al Aulaqi, Vice President of Energy Excellence at OQ Alternative Energy, warned that while policies are accelerating, social behaviour has yet to catch up.

"Every summer, we see power demand spike. That tells us people still expect reliability from fossil systems," he said. "We must ensure the transition is inclusive and that citizens have a role in shaping it."

He called for demand-side engagement tools, such as distributed solar, energy efficiency incentives and education campaigns to bridge the gap between national strategy and public expectations.

Salih Merghani, Executive Vice President for Energy at Olayan Saudi Holding Company, said the clean energy transition cannot advance without clear, long-term market signals.

"We've seen successful pilot projects in carbon

capture and green industrial solutions, but they won't scale without demand certainty and regulatory support," he said.

He noted that the absence of carbon pricing in many regional markets is limiting the ability of private capital to move decisively into low-carbon investments.

Guillaume Verhaeghe, Director of New Energy MENA at SLB, called for leveraging decades of oil and gas expertise to fast-track carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS).

"The region has the technical capability. Now we need permitting reforms, financial incentives and cross-sector partnerships to deliver CCUS at scale," he said.

He added that reusing existing infrastructure for new energy applications could reduce transition costs and create regional leadership in climate technologies.

Emry Hisham Yusoff, Senior General Manager of Carbon Management at Petronas, said Southeast Asia is moving cautiously — balancing

environmental goals with economic development.

"Yes, we're expanding CCUS and renewables, but gas remains crucial for energy access," he said. "To scale climate solutions, we need public-private coordination and government-backed incentives."

He highlighted the role of frameworks like the US Inflation Reduction Act as models for de-risking early investment in carbon management.

Across the panel, speakers emphasised that energy transition is not merely about new technologies — it is a systemic transformation that requires public acceptance, economic restructuring and policy coordination.

As Oman moves forward under Oman Vision 2040, the session reinforced the Sultanate of Oman's position as a regional innovator in green hydrogen and low-carbon energy — but also underscored that successful transitions must be gradual, inclusive and grounded in national context.

ADVERTORIALS

STRONG COMMITMENT



This partnership reflects Awasr’s strong commitment to supporting Omani SMEs.

AWASR AND INSIGHT INFORMATION SECURITY SIGN STRATEGIC PACT

MUSCAT: Awasr, Oman’s premier fibre broadband provider, has officially signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Insight Information Security, a leading Omani cybersecurity firm, during the Insight Cybersecurity Conference held on May 13, 2025.

The signing ceremony took place on the first day of the conference, marking a significant milestone in Awasr’s ongoing efforts to enhance digital and cybersecurity resilience.

The agreement was signed by Noora al Zadjali, Vice-President of Security at Awasr, and Rashid al Salmi, CEO of Insight Information Security, in a ceremony attended by members of the media, industry professionals, and key stakeholders.

This partnership reflects Awasr’s strong commitment to supporting Omani SMEs and strengthening the local cybersecurity ecosystem. As Insight Information Security is officially recognised as a medium enterprise under the SMEs Development Authority, this collaboration reinforces the importance of empowering local innovation and entrepreneurship in critical sectors.

“We are proud to partner with a homegrown leader like Insight Information Security,” said Noora al Zadjali, Vice-President of Security at Awasr. “This agreement and collaboration with a distinguished cybersecurity firm like Insight represents a valuable addition to Awasr’s ongoing efforts to strengthen digital and cybersecurity resilience. By joining forces, Awasr aims to enhance its cybersecurity processes through the synergy of local human expertise and cutting-edge technology.

This partnership will pave the way for stronger defence mechanisms, advanced threat detection capabilities and a more secure digital environment. Above all, it reflects Awasr’s deep commitment to investing in Omani capabilities and supporting the national digital transformation journey in line with Oman Vision.”

The cooperation delivers strategic value on multiple fronts: it supports Omani SMEs and fosters local innovation; enhances Awasr’s reputation as a proactive, security-conscious telecom leader; aligns with national regulations, including the Royal Decree on personal data protection; reinforces governance and transparency in accordance with the CMA’s latest directives; and ultimately boosts public confidence in Awasr’s digital platforms as Oman accelerates its digital transformation.

“This partnership with Awasr and Insight Information Security marks an important step for the field of Information Security in Oman,” added Rashid al Salmi, CEO of Insight Information Security. It reflects our shared vision of building a resilient, secure and digitally empowered Oman.

By combining our deep cybersecurity expertise with Awasr’s digital infrastructure leadership, we will deliver robust protection against emerging threats while nurturing local talent and innovation.”

MEETHAQ ISLAMIC BANKING EXTENDS SPECIAL AUTO FINANCE OFFER

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision, Meethaq Islamic banking from Bank Muscat has extended its exclusive Auto Finance offer for customers wishing to purchase their dream car.

This limited-time offer is available until May 31, 2025, and applies to Meethaq Auto Finance, providing customers with attractive benefits.

Customers availing auto finance during the offer period can also get an extended tenor of up to 10 years on new and used vehicles, making their financing experience even more accessible.

In addition, applicants will



enjoy quick processing and minimal documentation, making the process seamless and hassle-free. Meethaq customers are eligible for up to 80% financing on their vehicles purchases.

The launch of this attractive offer is based on a detailed study of customer needs, reinforcing Meethaq’s commitment to delivering tailored financial

solutions. Meethaq remains committed to enhancing its suite of Shari’a-compliant products and services to meet customer needs while keeping pace with global trends.

As Oman’s leading provider of Sharia-compliant financial services, Meethaq Islamic Banking offers a comprehensive range of products and services.

With a network of 32 branches across the Sultanate of Oman, Meethaq ensures enhanced accessibility through its dedicated banking network and provides free access to over 900 ATMs and CDMs under Bank Muscat.

Pact signed to start food delivery using e-bikes

TALABAT, the Middle East’s leading on-demand delivery platform and EVO, Oman’s premier green-mobility provider and an OOMCO subsidiary, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to launch a six-month pilot of swappable-battery e-bikes, marking the nation’s first large-scale electric last-mile delivery trial.

The ceremony, held under the auspices of Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shammakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport during Oman Sustainability Week and was attended by representatives from MoTCIT represented in Green Mobility team, MOEM, the Oman Vision 2040 Office, the Oman Net-Zero Centre and Oman Oil Marketing Company.

Stéphane Berton, Managing Director, Talabat Oman, said: “At Talabat, we believe the future of delivery should be smarter,



The initiative supports Oman’s decarbonisation road map and talabat’s goal of building a greener, more efficient delivery infrastructure.

cleaner and more sustainable. Our collaboration with EVO reflects our commitment to innovation and Oman’s Net-Zero ambitions. This pilot is a real action step toward greener delivery solutions that benefit riders, customers and communities.”

The initiative supports Oman’s decarbonisation road map and Talabat’s goal

of building a greener, more efficient delivery infrastructure. The pilot will assess e-bikes’ contribution to reducing emissions, improving energy efficiency and enhancing urban livability.

Ziad El Helou, CEO, EVO, said: “Reaching Net-Zero mobility means addressing every transport segment from passenger vehicles to last-

mile delivery. Our pilot with Talabat marks an exciting step in that journey. By introducing e-bikes into Oman’s delivery ecosystem, EVO is expanding its portfolio beyond passenger and commercial EV solutions to include sustainable micro-mobility. We’re proud to collaborate with Talabat in proving that low-carbon, last-mile logistics is both practical and impactful.”

Thuraiya al Wahaibi, logistics operation specialist, said: “This long-awaited pilot project for food and ready-meal delivery using electric bikes marks a significant step toward sustainable and efficient last-mile services.

The ministry plays a central role in regulating the sector and facilitating procedures related to electric vehicles, and consistently seeks integration and collaboration with the private sector in various initiatives under its mandate. The Wilayat of Bausher has been selected as the first phase of implementation, in partnership with Talabat and EVO Oman.”

THE ST REGIS AL MOUJ MUSCAT, PREMIUM MOTORS AND AL MOUJ GOLF TO HOST 2025 AUDI QUATTRO CUP QUALIFIER

MUSCAT: The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat, Premium Motors and Al Mouj Golf are honoured to welcome golf enthusiasts for the prestigious 2025 Audi quattro Cup Qualifier, set to take place on Friday, May 16 at the legendary Greg Norman designed golf course at Al Mouj Golf. This exclusive event epitomises the perfect blend of refined luxury, sporting excellence and exceptional hospitality, set against the breathtaking backdrop of Oman’s premier coastal resort.

Up to 100 players will compete in teams of two, employing the Greensomes Stableford format, vying for the coveted opportunity to represent Oman at the Audi quattro Cup World Final. This global event draws approximately 70,000 amateur golfers from 38 countries annually and will return to Al Mouj Golf from November 22 to 24, 2025.



This global event draws approximately 70,000 amateur golfers from 38 countries annually.

Participants will be treated to a prize ceremony luncheon at the resort, showcasing the seamless collaboration between The St Regis, Audi and

Al Mouj Golf. The partnership reflects a shared commitment to precision, excellence and unparalleled luxury hospitality.

Competitors stand to win premium prizes offered by Audi and The St Regis, including awards for top placements, nearest the pin, longest drive and an exciting hole-in-one challenge. Additional raffle prizes will add to the event’s excitement.

Al Mouj Golf, a championship 18-hole course and a floodlit 9-hole par three layout, offers a challenging course with stunning views along the Sea of Oman, perfectly complementing the resort’s luxurious oceanfront setting.

The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, recently nominated for multiple prestigious awards including Oman’s Leading Luxury Resort 2025, ensures participants experience world-class service and amenities throughout the event.

Defender completes first rally-raid prototype test, signs Dakar rally legend

MUSCAT: Original British adventure brand Defender has accelerated its preparations for entering the World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC) by completing prototype test activity in Morocco with the Defender Dakar D7X-R, in addition to signing two stellar drivers.

Fourteen-time Dakar Rally winner Stéphane Peterhansel will join the Defender Rally team for the ultimate epic adventure, alongside emerging talent Rokas Baciūška.

French driver Peterhansel joined the Defender Rally team in Morocco, successfully completing early test activity with the first prototype of the Defender Dakar D7X-R as they began preparations for competing at the Dakar Rally in January 2026 – an event renowned as the world’s most gruelling long-distance off-road race.

Defender, the iconic and unstoppable 4x4, which is designed and engineered for capability and



Fourteen-time Dakar Rally winner Stéphane Peterhansel will join the Defender Rally team.

durability, will make its works debut at the Dakar Rally, where three Defender Dakar D7X-Rs will compete in the ‘Stock’ category for production-based cars.

A two-car entry will contest the remaining rounds of the 2026 FIA World Rally-Raid Championship.

James Barclay, Managing Director of JLR Motorsport, said: “Completing our first official test in the Defender Dakar D7X-R prototype is a huge milestone and kicks off a busy

calendar of testing activity on our journey to Dakar. The team are doing phenomenal work as we prepare for the world’s most challenging off-road race in just eight months’ time.”

“I’m also extremely proud and excited to announce the first two of our world-class driver line-ups. The world-renowned Stéphane Peterhansel brings a remarkable amount of practical experience to the team as the most successful Dakar Rally competitor ever.”

OPINION

Why health insurance is essential year-round



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

HEALTH insurance in Oman offers numerous benefits to subscribers, while relevant authorities require the minimum level of coverage in accordance with the provisions stipulated in Ministerial Resolution 34 / 2019.

Through health insurance plans for individuals and employees of institutions, can access a wide network of healthcare providers, including accredited hospitals, clinics, specialists and others.

Companies operating in these fields work to provide medical staff with diverse expertise to ensure access to the required services when patients need emergency medical treatment or routine healthcare services.

Today, health insurance has become an essential service for all people, given the individual's need to prevent illnesses and medical emergencies that can occur while they are in the country.

Based on this, companies operating worldwide work to ensure their workers to prevent any illness or emergency requiring immediate treatment.

The implementation of mandatory health insurance for private sector workers, including expatriates, residents, and visitors, has become a necessity imposed by the circumstances to meet their needs for treatment and basic health coverage. This requires providing medical insurance at

affordable prices for all.

Health insurance rates for private sector workers, both Omanis and expatriates, are low compared to their large numbers.

This requires the gradual allocation of annual funds for this important service, in cooperation with companies operating in these fields. This also includes coverage for illness or permanent disability.

This is a social system in place in many countries around the world that respects workers' rights.

Health insurance is an increasingly important necessity in many countries. With the rising costs of healthcare, this type of insurance has become an important means of protecting citizens and residents against risks associated with illness and accidents.

It provides financial coverage for any medical expenses individuals may face, thus reducing their financial burden.

In general, the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed increased interest in health insurance in recent years and has begun implementing policies to raise awareness of it.

This has resulted in arrangements for insurance to help citizens, especially those with low incomes, as well as many individuals and residents who have begun to rely on private health insurance plans to meet their healthcare needs.

However, some may face challenges in understanding the details of policies and coverage terms, highlighting the importance

Today, health insurance has become an essential service for all people, given the individual's need to prevent illnesses and medical emergencies that can occur while they are in the country. Based on this, companies operating worldwide work to ensure their workers to prevent any illness or emergency requiring immediate treatment.

of education and awareness about health insurance and its benefits as an essential tool for improving community health and the sustainability of healthcare systems.

Health insurance services vary from one country to another in the Arab world.

Some countries are advanced in these systems and have comprehensive health insurance for many citizens and residents, while other Arab countries lack these services.

This is one of the challenges facing comprehensive health insurance in these countries. It is due to several reasons, most notably the lack of funding and financial resources necessary to provide a comprehensive health system.

In addition, some countries lack health infrastructure, which affects the level of services provided.

Health policies need to be developed and procedures facilitated to enable access to health insurance for all individuals.

Finally, there is a lack of awareness, education and market regulation in these important aspects.

All countries are now required to boost investments in the health sector, improve public-private partnerships, develop policies that encourage health insurance and protect individuals' rights to access medical care and develop a comprehensive health insurance system with the participation of governments, health service providers and civil society.

TRUMP’S SAUDI VICTORY LAP BELIES AI FEARS

BY JONATHAN GUILFORD

THE UNITED STATES does not hold a monopoly on technological breakthroughs. As it sought to contain China’s advances in artificial intelligence, President Joe Biden’s administration tried to use restrictions on cutting-edge chips from Nvidia as a cudgel, slowing progress elsewhere.

His successor Donald Trump, who just kicked off a Middle East tour in Saudi Arabia, is now changing tack - by making use of US silicon contingent on spurning Chinese alternatives.

Trump on Tuesday announced a lump of investment deals with Saudi Arabia which the White House claimed tops \$600 billion in value, encompassing cooperation between the nation’s firms and promised supplies of weaponry.

Within the grab-bag came news from Nvidia that it will work with Humain, an AI firm backed by Saudi’s Public Investment Fund, to set up facilities with enough chips to consume up to 500 megawatts of power.

That was swiftly followed by a Bureau of Industry and Security announcement that any use of Chinese rival Huawei’s competing Ascend chips, anywhere in the world, now constitutes a violation of US export controls.

Under so-called AI diffusion rules implemented under Biden, Saudi and its neighbours saw their access to US AI-powering microchips limited.

Trump officials had blasted this as misguided, with AI czar David Sacks saying that there is no risk “with a friend like Saudi Arabia” and that the US does not need to block the global spread of its technology. The Department of Commerce rescinded the Biden-era controls on Tuesday.

The Biden agenda reflected an implicit assumption that US tech was superior, and that the key priority was blocking Chinese access to it. DeepSeek, a breakthrough AI model, showed what firms in the People’s Republic could do when forced to design around restricted supplies.

Now, chipmaker Huawei has launched updated systems using Ascend chips that, while less advanced than Nvidia’s state-of-the-art products, provide a lot of brute-force grunt.

Trump and Nvidia’s Humain and export control gambits have a blunt logic. If buyers are forced to use Chinese silicon, the country’s firms have captive demand that can fund rapid development. Opening up US supplies to allies helps to contain this dynamic – and so does making it harder for interested customers like Saudi and the United Arab Emirates to buy Chinese.

How this can be practically enforced is unclear. Locking the world into American supply chains, though, would bolster Nvidia and its peers.

If you can’t beat them, make others join you.

— Reuters

Chancellor woos fintech and needs to deliver



Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves gives a speech at the Treasury in London, in this file photo. — Reuters

IN a keynote speech at Innovate Finance’s 11th global summit, the chancellor Rachel Reeves confirmed the Treasury’s inaugural Financial Services Growth and Competitiveness Strategy would be published on July 15. Reeves has lauded the industry’s growth and touted the achievements of fintech.

She pledged to make the UK “one of the best places in the world for fintech to start-up and to list.” The eyes of the industry are set on July when Reeves’ commitment to fintech will be on trial and fintech leaders will be the judge.

The chief executive of London-based firm Curve, Schachar Bialick, said “Fintech must be a priority because it touches every aspect of modern economic life.

“From spending to saving to financial wellbeing, fintech is the infrastructure layer of the digital economy. Right now, the sentiment is hopeful but cautious. Firms are watching closely to see whether the government will turn policy into meaningful reform.”

She added: “Sentiment is clear: optimism hinges on delivery.”

Curve, a challenger to Apple Pay, was valued at \$781m (£587m) in a 2024 funding round. But the fintech has since retreated from the US market, cutting more than 100 jobs and posting a loss of £36m. The fintech’s chief said: “The most impactful move the chancellor can make is to level the playing field – ensuring fintech can compete fairly with Big Tech. That begins with infrastructure access.”

The European Union has mandated Apple to open access to NFC technology for third party mobile wallet providers, including those that are not Apple Pay. “If the government is serious about backing British fintech, it must act decisively and mirror Europe’s approach. This one move would unleash a wave of innovation in mobile payments and strengthen the UK’s position as a fintech leader,” Bialick said.

During her speech, Reeves hailed



ANDY JALIL

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

the UK as the top spot for fintech investment – second only to the US. But a report from KPMG revealed investment had fizzled since 2021 and hit a four-year low in 2024 at £7.9bn.

Private equity boss Rami Cassis said: “We’ll need to see bold measures from the government for it to succeed. At the moment it’s all talk, and we need to see far greater action.”

He added: “The fact is that the UK’s fintech industry still has some mountains to climb – they have only been built higher by the actions of this government”

Cassis, the chief executive of Parabellum Investments, cited the government-triggered non-dom exodus which “drove out an important group of investment banking professionals who were incredibly involved in the sector”.

Investment bankers are crucial for any UK fintech firm setting their sights on an IPO. Non-doms made up a sizeable chunk of the UK’s bankers, and the Labour Party’s policy change has left a large gap to fill.

He added: “The impact has been severe, with the likes of Zurich,

Frankfurt and Paris beginning to build up their fintech footprint at London’s expense.”

Allica Bank’s chief executive Richard Davies said the firm was “hearing good things from the Chancellor” but warned, “We can’t take (fintech’s) success for granted.” The digital bank was dubbed Europe’s fastest growing start-up by sifted and the UK’s fastest growing private company by The Times Hundred.

The growth of UK fintech has exploded in recent years as giants Monzo and Revolut became household names and a fleet of new firms entered the scene. Checkout.com’s chief marketing officer Rory O’Neil consigned regulation woes and added a “strong fintech talent pipeline” should be a key area of focus in the Treasury’s strategy.

He warned: “Failure to deliver on either risks slowing down growth for scaling fintechs, and worse, makes the UK less attractive to future start-ups and scale-ups.”

The strategy will mark a critical juncture for the industry with momentum set to speed ahead or be derailed.

CLASSIFIEDS

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC
The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc.... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care
Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

Auditors & Accountants
• Audit & Accounting • CFO Services • Secondment
• VAT & Tax Return Filing • VAT Refund Assistance
Contact: 92182750 • Email: contact@umpauditors.com

Driving School
Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)
Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

SEEKING a new Job / Logistics & supply chain professional with 10-plus years experienced in Export & Import of Sea, Land & Air transport modes (Email: nouchimp1986@gmail.com, Mob: 79820286)

Indian male (Mechanical Engineering) with 3 years experience in Diesel engine works (Gensets/Engines), 2 years in Machine Maintenance, seeks job. Contact: 78022420

ACCOUNTANT/AUDITOR
Indian Female, 3+ yrs exp. in Accounting & Auditing. Expertise in IFRS, GAAP, VAT, Financial Mgmt & Compliance. Contact: 7841408, fzahrasr@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with overs 6 years of experience Detail-Oriented Financial Professional: Expert in Accounting, Audit Prep and Expense Management. Contact: +968 78320801, Ready to join immediately.

CHIEF accountant, MBA finance 9+ years experience in financial statework auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full/ part time position in a senior role. 93988825 .

MASTER'S graduate in MSc Global logistics, operations & supply chain management from London, seeking a full-time job in Oman. Possess 2 years of sales executive experience in London and 1 year as a purchase executive in Oman. Holding a valid Oman D/L. Contact: 77231865, email: finan8157@gmail.com

Indian male 14 years experience light/ heavy driver. Looking for suitable opening currently in Oman. Contact: 77050986/ 91280205, email: kokkadmou@gmail.com

Chief accountant, MBA finance, 9+ years experience in financial statements, auditing, budgeting, VAT, tax, fixed assets, reconciliation, payroll. Seeking a full-time or part-time position in a senior role. Contact: akramhaniffa@yahoo.com / 93988825.

Indian Male /10+ years of experience in Sea, Air & Land shipments/ Looking for Sr. Logistics operations role. Aware of Incoterms & international procedures. Mob: 79820286 Email: nouchimp1986@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

Indian male MBA, 20 years experience in Oman & GCC in Project sales/ Dealer market in All construction materials including Cables & Accessories having D/L looking for the post of Sales Manager/Assistant Manager. Contact: 00968 78099493

SRI LANKAN Male – (CGMA ACMA+ CPA+BBA) Asst. Finance Manager/ Chief Accountant, 12+ Experience in Oman & GCC, Expert in Finan. Reporting (MIS), VAT, Audit, Cashflow, Budget, AR AP Recon, IFRS, Payroll, Banking. Contact: 78773250. Email: ali.mohamedown@gmail.com

INDIAN Male /CPA, CMA, CA Finalist & BCOM/ 10+ years of Experience/ Currently Working as Finance Manager, Looking for Senior Management Roles in Finance. Contact: 78611653. Email: jobcpacma@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with 5 years expertise in Accounts Payable, Receivables, Financial Reporting, VAT, Payroll, and Bank & Cash Reconciliation. Actively looking for new opportunities. Contact: 79791746 Email: Ibrahimsaw52@gmail.com

Mechanical Engineer – 4+ yrs exp. in CAD, GA/ fab drawings, BOMs. AutoCAD, SolidWorks, CATIA. Ready to join. Ph: +968 72807858

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN female (BE+EEE+MBA) 3 years of Experience in Estimation and Business Development. Looking for a suitable postition. Contact: + 968 92850930 / 78066162 vaparna14@gmail.com

LOOKING for part time OR full time Accounts/ Finance job. 20yrs experience in Muscat. Upto finalization & Audit. Please contact: 92065499

B. COM. 35 years of experience in accounts, sales coordinator, admin, HR, personal assistant, document controller with Oman D/L, looking for a job. Contact: 92558734

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving Licence. Contact: 78002582 Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

GRADUATED female candidate seeking finance, HR, Accounts, Data entry related jobs. Contact details as follows: Mobile: +968 92637030, Email: athiraanilkumarhh@gmail.com

INDIAN Female, M-Tech in Environmental Engineering, B-Tech in Civil Engineering. 7 years of Teaching experience as Asst. Professor, 2 years of professional experience in civil construction and soil investigation. Seeking suitable job, now in Muscat. Contact: 95136664, 79620397 Email: mayakrish.1804@gmail.com

PTC Rent A Car
Travel & Tours
Daily, Weekly, Monthly Car Rental Available
9345 3444

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.
Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male (MBA Fin) having more than 19 years of experience in Oman accounts & finance looking for suitable placement, NOC available and can join immediately. Contact: 92076716

MECHANICAL engineer - 4+ yrs exp. in CAD, GA/ fab drawing, BOMs. AutoCAD, SolidWorks, CATIA. Ready to join. Contact: +968 72807858.

Indian Male 35, Finance Professional. MBA & PGDM in Finance. 8 yrs of experience in Oman out of 14 yrs exp.. Handled independently Accounts Finalization, IFRS, Vat & Tax Audit. Know Oracle & Tally. Ready to Join Immediately. Contact: 71181096. Email: kansebalvant@gmail.com.

INDIAN Male (BE-Mechanical Engineer) with 17 years of Gulf Experience Looking for a Sales Engineer/ Sales Manager job in Oman (Oman D/L Available), Available in Oman

Contact No 79929442

A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, BSc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet). Contact: +968 98510880.

Indian Male, Storekeeper / Document Controller 2+yrs of experience in GCC, Completed BCA, ready to join immediately. Email: swamierzhasouth@gmail.com GSM: +968 71818173

ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAPITAL REDUCTION
IN accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company Life Panacea Trading (LLC), which is registered with the Commercial Registration No 1197993, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from RO 250, 000.000 to 20,000.000. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

WE'RE HIRING
ACCOUNTANT EXECUTIVE
Location: Muscat, Oman
Immediate joining preferred

Requirements:

- Bachelor's in Accounting/Finance
- 2-3 years experience (Oman/GCC)
- Knowledge of VAT, Accounting Software, Compliances
- English a must (Arabic a plus)

Send CV: dprana@gmail.com
Contact: +968-95506978

WE ARE HIRING
A 3-STAR HOTEL MANAGER is required in Ad Dakhiliyah Governorate. The candidate for this position must have 7-10 years of experience in the hospitality field, including 3-5 years in a managerial position. Must be fully fluent in English, possess strong leadership skills, and have experience in food and beverage management and event organization. A degree in hotel management or a related field is required.
Send your CV to the following email: **hrdoman@omantel.net.om**

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.
Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]
Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

GOLDEN FIBER
by Rayna Business Enterprises
Where Royalty Meets Perfection

Contact No.: 00968 98916209
Email: raynaventures.oman@gmail.com
Website: www.raynaventures.com

omanobserver

3,255 Posts 26.5K Followers 38 Following

Oman Observer
30+ years of telling the story of Oman
Oman's leading daily English newspaper
For full story, visit our website:
omanobserver.om
Madinat Al Sam, Muscat, Oman
Followed by sgallery and 3 others

Following Message Email

Sport iG Top Picks Weather Fashion A

1083

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels

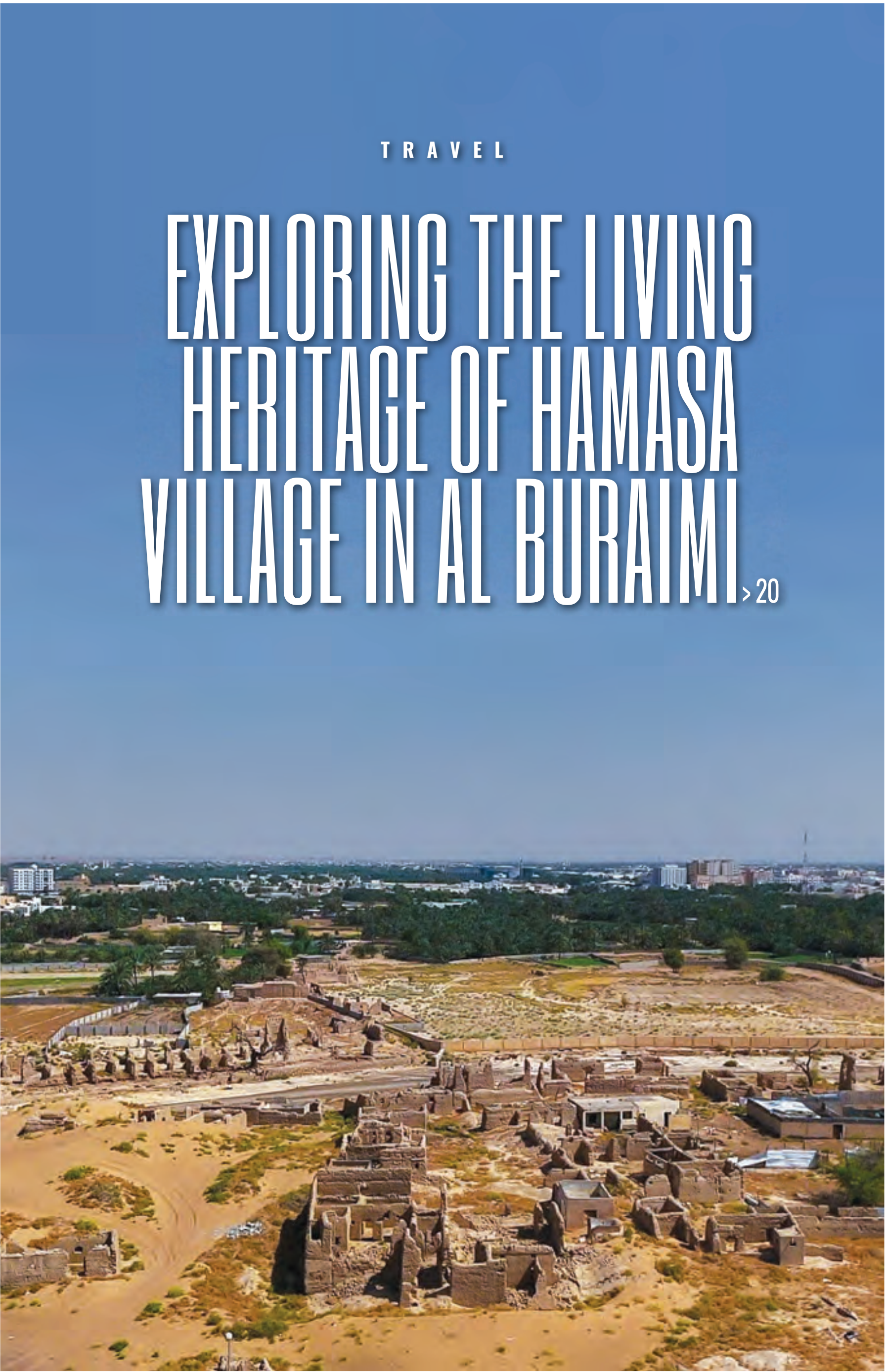


To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdihar_info izdihar.info



ART/LIFE



T R A V E L

EXPLORING THE LIVING HERITAGE OF HAMASA VILLAGE IN AL BURAIMI > 20

LIFESTYLE

Kate launches seasonal video series about the natural world



KATE, THE Princess of Wales, has urged society to “reconnect with nature and celebrate a new dawn within our hearts” in the first of a series of social media videos celebrating the seasons. Kate narrates the inaugural film from her Mother Nature series, which showcases spring, with further videos about summer, autumn and winter.

The release coincides with this year’s Mental Health Awareness Week. In a message accompanying the video, the princess emphasises that the “connection between humanity and nature” is even more vital as people navigate an “increasingly complex and digital world.”

Nature has played an important role in Kate’s personal journey with cancer, offering her solace. She has spoken about walking and swimming outdoors during and after her treatment.

Kate has also highlighted the importance of children spending time in nature. In 2019, she co-created a wilderness “Back to Nature” garden for the Chelsea Flower Show, where her children paddled in the stream and played on a rope swing, just as the princess did.

The video features images of the Prince and Princess of Wales during their recent trip to the Isle of Mull in Scotland. The future queen states: “The natural world’s capacity to inspire, nurture, and help us heal and grow is boundless and has been understood for generations.” She adds that through nature, “we can truly understand the interconnectedness of all things, the importance of balance, renewal, and resilience.” Connecting with nature allows us to deepen our understanding of ourselves, our environment, and one another.

She describes spring as “a season of rebirth, hope, and new beginnings.” From the dark days of winter, the outside world awakens with new life, bringing optimism and anticipation of positive change. “Just as nature revives and renews, so can we,” she says. “Let us reconnect with nature and celebrate a new dawn within our hearts.” She concludes with the words: “Spring is here, so let’s make the most of it together.”

Much of the footage shows flowers, plants, and trees from across the UK, illustrating the change of seasons from winter to spring. The couple is seen from behind with their arms around each other—likely filmed on their wedding anniversary on Mull, where a similar still photo was released.

Kate’s accompanying social media message, signed with her initials, states: “As we face the challenges of an increasingly complex and digital world, the importance of our connection with nature becomes even more significant. The Mother Nature series serves as a reminder of the beauty and complexity of the human experience. It honours the lessons we can learn from nature, helping us grow, and strengthening our bonds with the world and each other.” — PA Media/dpa

Q U I C K F E A T U R E S



HERITAGE

Monks stand on a vehicle carrying Buddha relics during Waisak (or Vesak) celebrations on the street in Hanoi. —AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

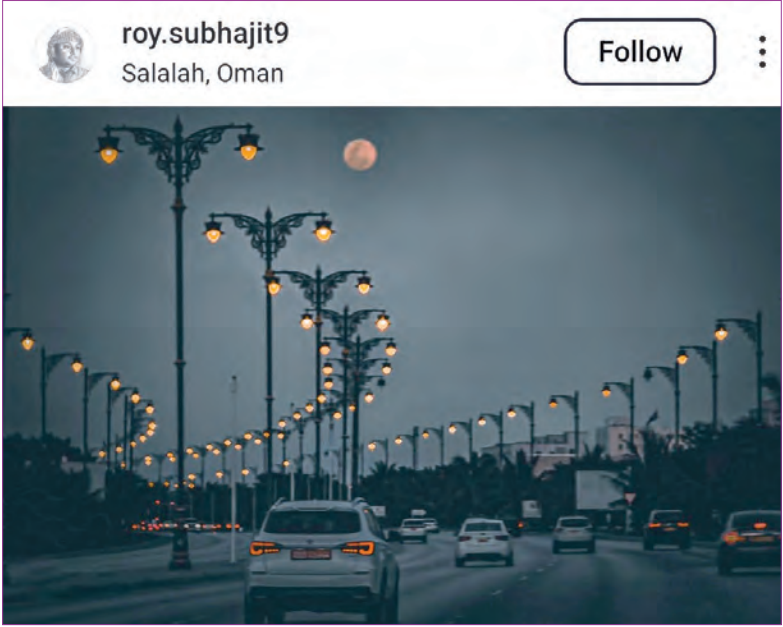
Irish actor Barry Keoghan attends the world premiere of Lionsgate’s “Hurry Up Tomorrow” in New York. —AFP



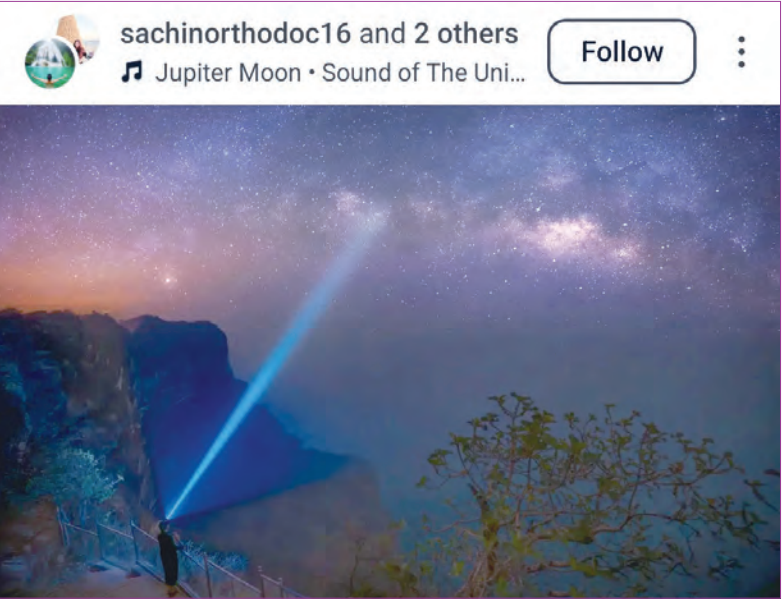
LIFESTYLE

A woman interacts with a man dressed in a cat costume looking for people to take photos with for tips on a street in Kuala Lumpur. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Where Are You Headed?



Beauty of Remote Places

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. To be selected, follow us on Instagram and every time you upload or share your photos, make sure to tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Eurovision stage
a dynamic 3D
‘playground’: producer



THE EUROVISION Song Contest’s innovative stage, built rapidly, serves as a high-tech playground for artists performing at this global live music event, according to producer Moritz Stadler. The grand final, along with semi-finals, takes place at Basel’s St. Jakobshalle arena, where the stage extends into the audience area of 6,500 spectators on three sides, creating an immersive viewing experience with lasers, lights, and advanced backdrops. Stadler describes the stage as “iconic” and unlike any previous Eurovision setup. It’s designed without a front or back, with a distinctive frame in the middle, allowing countries to utilise the entire space creatively. The Swiss Broadcasting Corporation assembled it like a “Swiss army knife,” offering countless configurations, demanding performers to innovate and maximise the stage’s features. The complex setup required over 500 workers working tirelessly for two and a half weeks. The challenge was mainly time, but Swiss watchmaking

precision ensured smooth execution. Stadler highlighted that Eurovision has evolved from its modest 1956 radio origins in Lugano, now becoming a colossal spectacle watched by between 160 and 200 million viewers globally, with over 1.2 billion social media interactions. Set designer Florian Wieder explained that due to the arena’s size, the stage is ground-supported by four hidden towers, rather than hanging from the ceiling. The design emphasises energy and audience engagement, with live visuals transmitted vividly to viewers. Lighting designer Tim Routledge described creating a “three-dimensional frame of light,” designing visuals that can be instantly changed or disappeared. The stage includes 22 cameras, 4,500 lights, 100 pyrotechnic positions, and extensive fibre optic cables, with prop changes executed in 42 seconds by a team of 30. The LED video wall covers 750 square metres, creating an impressive visual landscape for Eurovision’s grand spectacle. — AFP



Celebrating Europe Day
and Cultural Diplomacy
in Oman Through Jazz

BY YERU EBUE

THE RECENT jazz concert featuring Luca Velotti and Silvia Manco at Bait Al Zubair exemplified a truly sophisticated and culturally resonant performance, blending the rich traditions of classic jazz with a distinct European sensibility. Velotti, an acclaimed Italian saxophonist renowned for his collaborations with iconic figures such as Paolo Conte, showcased his exceptional talent through emotive solos and a nuanced approach that drew the audience into a world of mellifluous melodies. Silvia Manco, a distinguished pianist and vocalist celebrated for her inventive fusion of jazz and European musical traditions — elements prominently highlighted in her work such as her collaborations with notable jazz ensembles — delivered a captivating performance that seamlessly merged lyrical vocals with intricate piano arrangements. The duo’s performance was not merely an entertainment act; it went beyond to serve as a compelling testament to the healing and unifying power of music as a universal language. Their artistry provided a bridge between diverse cultural landscapes, evoking a sense of European heritage, and highlighting the importance of cross-cultural exchange — an ideal aligned with the spirit of Europe Day. Their music acted as a subtle reminder of the common values shared across borders, emphasising harmony, dialogue and mutual respect. Presented as part of a diplomatic celebration marking the 75th anniversary of Europe Day, the concert was hosted by the Delegation of the European Union to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman, in collaboration with the Italian Embassy. The event took place at the historic Bait Al Zubair, immersing guests in Oman’s rich cultural setting. Attendance was distinguished, with figures such as Amb. Dr Afkar bin Nathim bin Ali al Farsi, Christophe Farnaud, and Pierluigi D’Elia representing a blend of diplomatic, cultural and governmental leadership. The high-profile audience underscored the evening’s significance as a symbol of international friendship and shared



commitment to peace and dialogue. This year’s commemoration was especially meaningful, coinciding with an impressive milestone — seven and a half decades since the Schuman Declaration of 1950, which laid the foundation for the European Union. The anniversary highlights the EU’s enduring mission to transform a continent torn by war into a beacon of peace, stability and prosperity. As Farnaud articulated during the event, Europe Day is a reminder of the importance of cooperation, diversity and dialogue in building a brighter future. The EU’s partnership with Oman exemplifies this ethos, exemplifying shared aspirations for regional stability and mutual growth. In addition, the evening’s celebration underscores the flourishing European presence and influence in Oman, a trend that has gained momentum over recent years. Oman’s strategic position, openness to international investors and increasingly vibrant cultural scene have made it an attractive hub for European businesses and expatriates. Oman’s increasing popularity among European



travellers stems from its reputation as a safe, hospitable country with a touch of unspoiled natural beauty and authentic cultural experiences. The country’s efforts to foster a vibrant expatriate community and support cultural exchanges have further contributed to its appeal. This growth can be noted in the rise of European-owned businesses, cultural festivals and international events that flourish across the country, making Oman a preferred destination for European visitors searching for both adventure and cultural immersion. The performance by Velotti and Manco was not only a showcase of exceptional musicianship but also a vibrant symbol of cultural diplomacy, reinforcing the intrinsic values that underpin the Europe-Oman partnership — namely dialogue, respect and collaboration. Their artistry contributed meaningfully to a memorable evening celebrating peace, partnership, and cultural exchange, fostering ongoing connections between Europe and Oman, and highlighting the country’s emerging reputation as a welcoming, culturally diverse destination.

FEATURES



EXPLORING THE LIVING HERITAGE OF HAMASA VILLAGE IN AL BURAIMI



BY ARWA AL HASHIMI
PHOTOS BY MOHAMMED AL MASHARI

IMAGINE strolling through a village where the past feels as vibrant as the present. As you walk along narrow, sunlit pathways, the ancient walls echo with stories centuries old. The warm breeze carries, faintly, the aroma of spices and oven-baked bread from humble roadside stalls. Every turn introduces you to weathered mud-brick houses, their carved wooden doors whispering secrets of generations of Omanis who called this place home. Perhaps you pause by a small mosque with its intricate calligraphy or stop momentarily to admire a bustling old market corner where traders once called out prices in lively calls, their voices merging into a familiar hum of timeless commerce. In this moment, you feel more connected — as if you're both an explorer and a guardian of history. Here, in Hamasa, every step immerses you deeper into a living chapter of Oman's heritage.

In today's travel landscape, there's a

noticeable shift. Modern explorers are no longer satisfied with surface-level sightseeing; they yearn for genuine experiences that unlock the true soul of a place. They seek stories behind the stones, traditions preserved through centuries, and communities that continue to live and breathe their history. Hamasa perfectly embodies this trend — a place where the ancient and the living intertwine.

Tucked in the western part of Al Buraimi Governorate, Hamasa is characterised by its rich historical significance and strategic location near the Oman-UAE border. It has long been a crossroads for traders, travellers and communities, with its landmarks standing as testaments to its pivotal role in the region's history. One of its most iconic sights is the Al Khandaq Fort, a formidable structure surrounded by a protective water trench — a distinctive feature in Omani architecture. Covering around 3,700 square metres, this fortress features twelve rooms and four commanding watchtowers on each corner, a testament to its once formidable defensive purpose. The trench surrounding it, about 7.5 metres wide and 3 metres deep, was part of a strategic defence system that

now, after restoration in 1993, serves as a symbol of resilience.

Just beyond the fort lies the old Hamasa Market, which for generations was a hive of activity every Thursday and Friday. Traders would call out wares and prices in a lively, honest barter — a glimpse into a way of life where community was at the heart of commerce. The market's call-out system remains a vivid memory of the village's lively social fabric, a tradition passed down through countless generations.

Walking through Hamasa's streets, visitors can admire traditional mud-brick houses — designed with practical elegance to suit Oman's climate, with thick walls, shaded courtyards, and beautifully carved wooden doors. The old mosques further reflect the deep spiritual and cultural roots of this enduring community. Surrounding the village are farms still irrigated by the ancient falaj channels, especially the Hamasa Falaj, which continues to supply water to date. These farms produce date palms, lemons, pomegranates and seasonal crops, embodying the enduring bond between Omanis and their land.

The archaeological significance of

Hamasa has attracted scholars and researchers. In 2015, teams from Sultan Qaboos University, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and Zayed University undertook excavations and surveys, aiming to deepen understanding and safeguard the village's rich history for future generations.

Today, as Oman embraces cultural tourism, Hamasa is emerging as a cherished destination for those eager to uncover authentic stories. It's accessible from the centre of Al Buraimi, offering a tranquil yet enlightening escape where history, culture and natural beauty blend seamlessly. Whether you're a family seeking an educational day out, a photographer capturing timeless scenes, or a history enthusiast wanting to step into Oman's living past, Hamasa promises an experience that resonates well beyond superficial sightseeing.

More than just an old village frozen in time, Hamasa is a living testament to Oman's enduring identity. Walking its streets is like strolling through the pages of history — an invitation to discover, learn and connect with the heart of a nation that cherishes its past as much as its future.