

O M A N عُمَان D A I L Y

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Muscat International Book Fair 2025

29 الدورة التاسعة والمئثرون Twenty-ninth Edition

INBRIEF

KHAREEF DHOFAR TO BEGIN FROM JUNE 21



The activities of Khareef Dhofar 2025 will begin on June 21 and continue until September 20, coinciding with the astronomical start of the khareef season, according to Dr Ahmed al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality. He said that ‘Heritage Village’ will be transformed into a global village on similar lines such as Khan Al Khalili (Egypt), Souq Al Hamidiya (Syria), and Souq Waqif (Qatar). The Ateen Square will be a hub for global events, featuring an integrated shopping area, an open theatre, a modern gaming area, and revamped lighting and laser shows. The Awqad Park will be dedicated for family entertainment, while Salalah Public Park will be hosting various sporting activities throughout the khareef season. Al Murooj Theatre will host cultural events with local and international participation. **DETAILS ON P2**

CARNEY’S LIBERALS WIN CANADA POLL



Canada’s Prime Minister Mark Carney applauds during an event at the Liberal Party election night headquarters in Ottawa, Ontario. — Reuters

Prime Minister Mark Carney pledged on Tuesday to beat the United States in Donald Trump’s trade war after winning Canada’s election and leading his Liberal Party to another term in power. While the Liberals won control of parliament, they looked set to fall just short of a majority, with a handful of races in Canada’s 343 electoral districts still uncalled. Congratulatory messages from world leaders poured in, with countries including China and India saying they would welcome cooperation with Carney’s government. Following a campaign dominated by Trump’s tariffs and annexation threats, Carney promised to chart “a new path forward” in a world “fundamentally changed” by a United States that is newly hostile to free trade.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY FUNDS ESO

The Environment Society of Oman (ESO)’s executive director Suaad al Harthy has been awarded funding from the National Geographic Society to support a groundbreaking coral reef conservation and capacity-building project in Oman. Al Harthy, a National Geographic Explorer and recipient of the Society’s 2024 Wayfinder Award presented by Kia, will use her grant to further ESO’s leadership in Oman’s environmental conservation. **DETAILS ON P3**

39,000 endowment assets in Oman eye investments

M E E T I N G E X P L O R E S C H A L L E N G E S , I N V E S T M E N T O P P O R T U N I T I E S

THE FIRST meeting of endowment institutions in Oman, organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, in Muscat on Tuesday, addressed the challenges facing endowment institutions and compliance standards. The event was attended by Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. Speaking on the occasion, the under-secretary said that this inaugural meeting serves as a crucial platform bringing together all endowment institutions, both public and private. In a statement to Oman News Agency, he noted that the meeting, attended by 35 institutions, discussed challenges and solutions for endowment entities, along with implementation strategies. He highlighted the ministry’s launch of the Endowment Institutions Readiness Assessment initiative, which evaluates institutions across governance, regulation, compliance, board formation, executive management and investment. Each criterion carries a different weight in determining overall readiness. Al Rashdi emphasised that the average readiness of endowment institutions reflects their maturity, noting that Oman’s endowment history spans over a thousand years and remains active today. He explained that modern endowment institutions operate professionally, with structured boards, executive management, educational committees and risk, legal and

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The average readiness of endowment institutions reflects their maturity, and that Oman’s endowment history spans over a thousand years and remains active today. Modern endowment institutions operate professionally, with structured boards, executive management, educational committees and risk, legal and investment departments

AHMED BIN SALEH AL RASHDI
Under-Secretary

investment departments. While institutional management of endowments in Oman is relatively new, Al Rashdi acknowledged significant progress, attributing it to the vital role these institutions play in serving society - particularly in health and education. The ministry aims to strengthen public trust in endowment institutions, which now exceed 70 in number, including prominent entities. The ministry acts as a regulator, legislator, and overseer, having established governance frameworks for both public and private endowment institutions in collaboration with a governance firm. Additionally, it mandates external auditors for these entities. Meanwhile, Eng Mohammed bin Salim al Busaidy, a Board Member of the Bausher Endowment Institution, described the meeting as pivotal in uniting stakeholders. He said that institutional endowments

are still ‘new’ in Oman, with governance charters, boards, and executive councils in place under the ministry’s oversight. The meeting, he said, provided a forum to discuss challenges and exchange expertise. Al Busaidy highlighted the ministry’s role in offering investment opportunities through endowment assets, noting over 39,000 endowment assets in Oman - many requiring investment. He urged the ministry to enable institutions to capitalise on these funds. Hilal bin Hamad al Sarmi, Executive Director of the Athar Health Endowment Institution, stressed the importance of this meeting in highlighting the role and achievements of endowment institutions. He said that while these institutions are still nascent in Oman, governance-based operations require time to fully develop. Regular meetings, he added, would enhance awareness of their programmes and facilitate experience-sharing among stakeholders. Al Sarmi pointed to financial constraints, lack of core supporters, and difficulties in initiating endowment investments as key challenges. He called for collaborative investments between institutions and the ministry, particularly in financial digitisation. For his part, Dr Badr bin Khalfan al Rashdi from Samayil Public Endowment Institution, stated that the meeting aimed at addressing challenges faced by both public and private endowment entities while showcasing their experiences. — ONA

Oldest copper musical instrument discovered in Oman

MUSCAT: The Archaeology Department at Sultan Qaboos University, under the supervision of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, has uncovered a pair of complete copper cymbals during excavations at the ‘Dahwa 7’ site, located on the outskirts of Wadi Al Sakhn in the Wilayat of Saham, Al Batinah North Governorate. Archaeological evidence scattered densely across the surface indicates that the site was once a settlement of a local culture that thrived in the region between 2700 and 2000 BCE. After lying buried and hidden by

the early inhabitants of the Omani Peninsula for over 4,000 years, the excavations have revealed, for the first time, cultural secrets and religious beliefs lost to time for millennia. The archaeological team excavated several structures within the settlement, confirming that the site was highly prosperous. Its inhabitants relied heavily on copper mining for their livelihood, in addition to agriculture - particularly date palm cultivation - and livestock rearing. The discovery of large quantities of pottery imported



The archaeological team excavated several structures within the settlement.

from the Indus Valley, found within the settlement, indicates strong trade relations with the Harappan civilisation, which flourished in that region. Among the four excavated structures was a small, isolated building perched atop an elevated plateau, overlooking the rest of the settlement in the southeastern area. The excavations revealed the building’s layout: a rectangular room with a small entrance in its eastern wall, accessed via a rectangular threshold running along the wall. **TURN TO P5**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The suspects were found in possession of over 50 kilogrammes of marijuana, 3 kilograms of hashish, and 5,000 psychotropic pills.

MAJOR DRUG SMUGGLING ATTEMPT FOILED

MIDHUN RAJ
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

In a significant breakthrough, the Anti-Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Department, under the leadership of the South Eastern Police Command and in collaboration with the Coast Guard Police, on Tuesday apprehended two Pakistani nationals attempting to illegally enter the Sultanate of Oman by sea.

The suspects were found in possession of over 50 kilogrammes of marijuana, 3 kilogrammes of hashish, and 5,000 psychotropic pills. Legal procedures are currently underway against the accused, as authorities continue to intensify their crackdown on cross-border drug trafficking. In recent weeks, ROP has made several key arrests in different regions of the country involving theft, smuggling, and drug trafficking. Weeks earlier, the same police unit intercepted a major drug smuggling attempt by sea, seizing more than 95 kilogrammes of crystal meth and morphine. Three Omani nationals were arrested and charged with possession of the drugs with the intent to traffic. Legal proceedings are ongoing.

The Royal Oman Police continues to urge the public to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities through the official ROP communication channels.

SESSION EXPLORES ROLE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY



MUSCAT: The Cultural Committee of the Muscat International Book Fair organised a dialogue session titled “Cultural Diversity and Identity” as part of Fair’s activities.

The session highlighted Oman’s cultural heritage and its role in solidifying national identity and fostering a sense of belonging.

The discussion, led by Dr Nader Kazem (a writer and former professor of cultural studies at the University of Bahrain), examined the significance of cultural diversity as a fundamental element in shaping a unifying national identity, as well as strategies to preserve it amid rapid regional and global changes. Dr Kazem emphasised that multiculturalism and the coexistence of diverse identities within a single society require high levels of tolerance, acceptance, and respect for others — a theme that has persisted throughout history but gains new relevance in the context of modern nations. — ONA

STATE COUNCIL ’S OFFICE REVIEWS STUDY ON DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE



MUSCAT: The State Council Office held its fourth meeting of the second regular session of the eighth term, under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, on Tuesday.

The Office discussed a proposal submitted by Dr Aisha bint Hamad al Darmakiyah, a member of the State Council regarding a study on ‘The Demographic Structure and Its Impact on the Future of Development in the Sultanate of Oman’.

The meeting also reviewed a letter submitted by the Social and Cultural Committee regarding several aspects related to the State Council’s previous study on ‘Language Policies in the Sultanate of Oman’: Their Reality, Challenges, and Mechanisms for Their Development and Activation.’ In addition, the State Council’s Office reviewed reports submitted by the members of the State Council.

Khareef Dhofar from June 21 with diverse experiences

THE activities of Khareef Dhofar Season 2025 will begin on June 21 and continue until September 20, coinciding with the astronomical start of the khareef season, according to Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality. He revealed that Heritage Village will be transformed into a global village on similar lines such as Khan Al Khalili (Egypt), Souq Al Hamidiya (Syria) and Souq Waqif (Qatar).

During a press conference on the sidelines of its participation at the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai, the Sultanate of Oman unveiled the activities and events of Khareef Dhofar Season 2025, featuring a variety of tourism and cultural experiences.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, stated that this year’s main and accompanying events will be distributed across both existing sites undergoing continuous development and new locations, offering visitors exceptional experiences.

He explained that the “Return of the Past” activities in this edition will feature a new approach reflecting Omani authenticity and traditional life from across the Sultanate of Oman’s governorates. These will include folk art performances, heritage markets and handicraft displays. He noted that last year’s event achieved significant success and widespread acclaim from visitors and participants.



The season will coincide with the astronomical start of khareef on June 21 and run until September 20 each year. — ONA

He added that the event’s site has undergone comprehensive upgrades to enhance its heritage character, blending the charm of the past with the spirit of the present.

He affirmed that “Ateen Square” will be a hub for major entertainment events and performances, building on the remarkable success of previous editions that attracted large audiences. The site will serve as a global events centre, featuring an integrated shopping area, an open-air theatre, a modern games zone, new light and laser shows and contemporary dining facilities — solidifying

its position as a premier cultural and entertainment destination.

Dr Al Ghassani pointed out that Awqad Park will be a family entertainment centre with activities tailored for children and parents, featuring a distinct theme this year. Meanwhile, “Up Town” in Ateen Plain will debut with diverse events catering to all age groups.

He noted that Salalah Public Park will host various sports activities throughout the khareef season, with broad participation from all age groups and people with disabilities. “Al Murooj Theatre” will be dedicated to cultural events, featuring local, Gulf and Arab theatrical performances.

The municipality is expanding events to include coastal wilayats affected by the khareef season, with diverse cultural, sports and commercial activities.

Development projects — such as enhancing natural viewpoints, tourist sites, road paving and urban beautification — have been implemented in collaboration with government and private entities to improve visitor experiences and tourism infrastructure, he further added.

On his turn, Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, affirmed the ministry’s readiness to promote Khareef Dhofar Season 2025 through various programmes under a coordinated plan with relevant authorities. — ONA

Shura reviews responses to parliamentary questions

MUSCAT: The Office of Majlis Ash’shura held its tenth meeting of the second regular session of the tenth term (2023–2027), under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman, on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the office reviewed the Council of Ministers’ response to the expressed desire on the residential cities in the Sultanate of Oman. In its response, the Council of Ministers said that the government continued to implement strategic programmes and plans to achieve sustainable urban



development and improve the use of land and resources within the framework of the National Urban Development Strategy 2040.

The office also discussed the request submitted by the Economic and Financial

Committee regarding the repercussions of recent public offerings of government-owned companies on the investment landscape on the Muscat Stock Exchange. The committee’s report included the views of the hosted entities including Oman Investment Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange and the Financial Services Authority. Also discussed was the committee’s proposed recommendations to enhance investor confidence and achieve privatisation objectives.

The meeting also reviewed the response of the Secretariat-

General of the Tender Board to a request for a briefing regarding allocating procurement and tenders to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The office also reviewed the response of the Minister of Education regarding the Educational Measurement and Evaluation Centre, which outlined the Ministry’s efforts to develop the evaluation system in accordance with international best practices. It also discussed the reasons for the delay in approving the centre’s structure and determining its administrative affiliation.

Oman, Netherlands celebrate 400 years of maritime friendship

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands marked a significant chapter in their longstanding relations with the opening of the Dutch Cultural Week at Bait Al Zubair, celebrating over 400 years of maritime ties and cultural exchange.

The event was inaugurated by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy,

Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, in the presence of Omani dignitaries, artists, students and members of the Dutch community.

Organised by the Embassy of the Netherlands in Oman, the week-long celebration underscores the deep-rooted relationship between the two nations, with exhibitions and performances highlighting the themes of culture, creativity and innovation.



The week-long celebration underscores the deep-rooted relationship between the two countries

“We are immensely happy to celebrate four centuries of bilateral maritime relations — two nations separated by seas, yet bound by a resilient friendship,” said Ambassador Stella Kloth of the Netherlands. “Culture and art are powerful tools that foster dialogue, trust and mutual understanding — especially vital in times of global uncertainty.”

Dr Muna bint Hebras, General Manager of Bait Al Zubair

Foundation, also commended the initiative for strengthening Oman–Dutch ties through cultural celebration. The launch featured a performance by the Wind Quintet of the National Youth Orchestra of the Netherlands, followed by ‘Food for Thought’, a thought-provoking photo exhibition by acclaimed visual storyteller Kadir van Lohuizen. The exhibit explores global food supply chains, drawing connections between nations.

SHORT TAKES



The meeting also discussed recommendations and responses from relevant authorities. — ONA

DEVELOPMENT, SERVICE PROJECTS DISCUSSED

IBRA: The Municipal Council of Al Sharqiyah North Governorate reviewed development projects in the governorate, presented by the Projects Department of Al Sharqiyah North Municipality, along with the results of the Measurement and Performance Unit for 2024.

During its meeting held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Mahmood bin Yahya al Thuhli, Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, the council examined the recommendations of the permanent committees' minutes and the outcomes of the third Economic Committee meeting for 2025.

The meeting also discussed recommendations and responses from relevant authorities regarding matters referred by the council and its members, in addition to exchanging several proposals aimed at improving services in the governorate and supporting sustainable development efforts.

— ONA

SEMINAR DISCUSSES AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER



A key focus was the importance of early intervention systems and their role in developing language skills.

MAHADHA: The Department of Social Development in Al Buraimi Governorate organised a seminar on autism spectrum disorder (ASD) under the auspices of Shaikh Saif bin Abdullah al Maamari, Wali of Mahadha. The seminar aims to raise community awareness and familiarise professionals with the latest rehabilitation and support methods for people with disabilities.

Several specialists in disability care presented four working papers. The first paper, titled "Services Provided by Al Wafa Rehabilitation Center for People with Autism Spectrum Disorder", was followed by "Early Intervention for Speech and Language Delays in Children." The third paper addressed "How to Interact with Children on the Autism Spectrum," while the fourth covered "Sensory Challenges in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder." The event explored therapeutic, behavioural and educational aspects of ASD, highlighting available rehabilitation services, sports and recreational activities, and coordination mechanisms with the Ministry of Education to monitor inclusion cases.

A key focus was the importance of early intervention systems and their role in developing language skills, factors influencing language growth, and strategies for children with speech and language disorders. The event also outlined early indicators of autism spectrum disorder. — ONA

SHABAB OMAN BEGINS SEVENTH VOYAGE

MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman's ship 'Shabab Oman II' today embarks on the seventh international voyage titled Amjad Al Bihar (Glories of Seas).

Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, will preside over the ship's farewell ceremony at the Said Bin Sultan Naval Base.

During its six-month voyage, the



ship will disseminate the Sultanate of Oman's message of the bonds of friendship and brotherhood with various countries around the world by promoting authentic Omani culture at its international stops.

Shabab Oman II will visit several European countries to participate in long-distance sailing races as well as maritime several events and festivals.

Youth innovation shines at 'Share the Change' expo

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

THE Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre came alive with creativity and purpose as it hosted the opening of the 'Share the Change' 2025 exhibition, spotlighting 23 groundbreaking sports-related projects developed by young innovators. The initiative, now in its second edition, aims to promote healthy living in Omani society by integrating sports, technology, environmental awareness and community engagement.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology. Several dignitaries, officials and youth leaders attended the event.

Launched by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the competition continues the momentum built since its inception in 2023. It seeks to embed physical activity as a sustainable lifestyle and raise awareness of its critical role in preventing chronic health conditions such as obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

To encourage excellence and innovation, the competition allocated three major cash prizes, along with incentive awards recognising the best use of technology and the most impactful awareness video. The top project will also be implemented as a



The competition seeks to embed physical activity as a sustainable lifestyle and raise awareness

community-based model to drive long-term positive change.

The exhibition featured a wide variety of initiatives. Highlights included Madgha Town – A smart, integrated sports neighbourhood for individuals aged 19 to 50, offering dedicated health facilities and walking tracks.

Khala Sport and Iqdam – Apps promoting physical activity through engaging challenges and rewards. Sprint to Fitness – A fusion of physical exercise and environmental exploration. Hirak – A project that fosters sports communities and encourages group participation.

Other standout concepts employed

advanced technologies, such as Path of Life and Smart Movement Path – Projects that use kinetic energy and interactive screens to boost fitness awareness. Social initiatives like the 'Let's Move' podcast, 'Healthy Golden Years' programme for retirees and 'My Health in My Movement', focused on student well-being, further broadened the exhibition's impact.

Digital applications like 'Play It Right', 'Determination' and 'Step', alongside platforms such as 'Sports Media Platform' and 'Launch Platform', showcased the integration of sports with digital media and smart technologies.

The judging process followed strict criteria, with 80 per cent of the score based on project strategy – covering innovation, sustainability and social impact. The final stage focused on presentation and communication skills. Public engagement was also encouraged, contributing 10 per cent to the overall evaluation.

Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, lauded the initiative, highlighting its alignment with the National Sports Strategy and Oman Vision 2040. "These youth-driven projects are not only creative but also essential in shaping a healthier, more active society," he said.

Khalifa al Isa'ai, Chairman of the Judging Committee, emphasised the high calibre and diversity of the projects. He affirmed their relevance to national goals and praised the participants for channelling innovation into societal benefit.

ESO gets funding from Geographic Society

MUSCAT: The Environment Society of Oman (ESO)'s executive director Suaad al Harthy has been awarded funding from the National Geographic Society to support a groundbreaking coral reef conservation and capacity-building project in Oman. Al Harthy, a National Geographic Explorer and recipient of the Society's 2024 Wayfinder Award presented by Kia, will use her grant to further ESO's leadership in Oman's environmental conservation.

Using the funding, Al Harthy and ESO will pursue two primary objectives: coral reef conservation and capacity building to ensure the long-term sustainability of these critical ecosystems. ESO researchers



Using the funding, Al Harthy and ESO will pursue two primary objectives: coral reef conservation and capacity building to ensure the long-term sustainability of these critical ecosystems.

will assess the health, recovery and resilience of coral reefs surrounding Muscat, including those within and beyond the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve.

The initiative also aims to empower female field scientists to lead in coral reef

research and protection efforts. Technical support for the project is provided by New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD).

A key component of the project is a coral reef monitoring workshop, scheduled for April 20-23, 2025, in Muscat.

The workshop will be hosted

at Oman Sail headquarters. Its brand, SeaOman – the country's leading marine leisure provider and a certified PADI 5* Instructor Development Centre – is supporting ESO by facilitating reef monitoring surveys.

"I am extremely grateful for this grant, which enables my colleagues and I to deepen our understanding of the recovery and resilience of coral reef sites around Muscat, while raising awareness of their importance to both marine biodiversity and Oman's coastal economy. A key pillar of this initiative is capacity building – particularly empowering female field scientists and volunteers to play a leading role in the long-term protection of these vital ecosystems," she said.

Customers urged to book deliveries only with licensed companies

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

To regulate the commercial sector in the Sultanate of Oman, and in collaboration with the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has urged individuals, institutions and companies engaged in commercial activities to contract only with

postal service providers licensed by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority when seeking delivery or any other postal services.

Efforts are being made to ensure the quality of services provided and to safeguard the rights of beneficiaries by organising the market according to the highest standards of efficiency and quality, MoCIIP said. The list of licensed postal service providers can be



Postal or courier companies that come under the TRA are only responsible for the delivery of purchases made by international e-commerce companies.

accessed via the TRA website.

Postal or courier companies that come under the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) are only responsible for the delivery of purchases made by international e-commerce companies.

"Our companies are only responsible for deliveries of the purchases made from these companies (to and from the Sultanate of Oman), but their

actual operations are regulated by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP)," a TRA official said in reply to a query from the Observer.

Thousands of citizens and residents make purchases through international companies and delivery of products often overshoots the deadline promised by the retailer, and in some cases, the products delivered are not as promised.



A linguist’s mission to preserve the nation’s dialects



Professor Clive Douglas Holes on visit at the 29th Muscat International Book Fair



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

PROFESSOR CLIVE DOUGLAS HOLES, a renowned linguist, first arrived in Oman in 1973 — a time when Seeb Airport had just opened its doors. Back then, he was working at the British Council in Kuwait and visited Oman on a personal trip after obtaining a no-objection certificate.

His association with Oman deepened over the years. In 1980, 1983, and 1984, he returned on short consultancy visits to advise the Foundation Committee of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), and in 1985, he was appointed Director of the Language Centre at SQU.

Now, decades later, Professor Holes returns as a guest, author, and speaker at the 29th Muscat International Book Fair, where he discussed his lifelong fascination with Arabic dialects, particularly those in northern Oman.

With a rich career that spans the Arab world — including stints in Iraq, Kuwait, Algeria, and Thailand — Professor Holes has always balanced two professional paths: teaching Arabic to English speakers and English to Arabic speakers.

“Eventually, at 34, I decided to pursue Arabic seriously,” he shared. “I had studied Arabic in my twenties and was frequently posted in Arab countries. But after my PhD, I transitioned into teaching Arabic to English-speaking students. It’s all part of the same goal — language teaching. I remember arriving in Bahrain with an Arabic degree from Cambridge, but I couldn’t even order a cup of coffee in Arabic everyday. What we learned was too formal for conversation.”

He acknowledged that language teaching has evolved since then. During his travels around Oman in the 1980s, his academic focus shifted toward Omani dialects — a subject he has since documented extensively through books and research.

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CLIVE DOUGLAS HOLES
A guest, author, and speaker.



“I’ve always been fascinated by dialects,” said Holes. “This is the language people actually speak. Classical Arabic is what they write. Dialects rarely get written down, so I started recording them. We had tongues before we had pens.”

According to Professor Holes, spoken language carries its own unique history, often elusive due to a lack of written records. He recalled a pivotal moment during his early research:

“I was in Misfat Al Abriyeen and heard an old man working on a falaj. His dialect sounded exactly like what I had heard from Bahraini farmers two decades earlier. That couldn’t be a coincidence. These were shared roots, probably linked to agricultural lifestyles and migratory histories. There are also parallels in southern Yemen, where much of eastern Arabia’s population likely originated.”

His upcoming book, *The Glossary of Northern Omani Dialects*, will be published by Cambridge in both hard copy and as an Open Access edition available free of charge. The 700-page volume

will document dialects across 72 locations, complete with quotes, speaker identities, and contextual background.

But will these dialects survive in an increasingly globalised world? “People’s lives have changed.

Urbanisation and exposure to standardised Arabic through media and education have led to homogenisation,” he explained. “I was talking to a young Omani recently and mentioned a few words I’d known since the 70s — she didn’t recognise them. Those words are still familiar to people in their 50s or 60s. The clock is ticking. When people pass away, their linguistic world views often go with them.”

He emphasised the importance of preserving intangible culture alongside environmental efforts.

“Folk poetry, oral traditions, and everyday speech — these are all part of a nation’s soul. Dialects are sound waves, and unless recorded, they vanish. Thankfully, we have the tools to document them, but it requires funding, effort, and time. A national linguistic survey would be an invaluable step forward.”





OLDEST COPPER MUSICAL INSTRUMENT DISCOVERED

FROM PAGE 1

Inside, the team uncovered several architectural features, the most notable being a small stone table opposite the entrance, carefully constructed from thin stones and covered with a layer of yellow plaster.

The architectural elements suggest that the building served as a religious structure, making it one of the oldest temples discovered to date. Excavations indicate two main phases of use - an early and a late stage. After a period of use, a new floor was installed, beneath which a layer of clay was placed.

The cymbals found in this temple are the oldest ever discovered in the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant. Similar, possibly contemporaneous evidence has been found in Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley (present-day Pakistan), dating back to the Third Millennium BCE. Additionally, evidence points to the use of cymbals in Sumerian culture in the city of Ur in southern Mesopotamia.

Archaeological findings suggest that the tradition of using cymbals as musical instruments was primarily linked to religious rituals, as they were used in hymns performed during various ceremonies as early as the Third Millennium BCE. This indicates that the communities in Oman had strong connections with major civilisations - not only in trade but also in religious and intellectual spheres.

Geochemical analysis confirmed that the cymbals from 'Dahwa' site were made from local copper, likely sourced from an area near Muscat.

This discovery is significant not only due to the rarity of such artefacts but also because of the insights it provides into cultural influences and interactions between distant civilisations.

The findings of this discovery were recently published in Antiquity journal in the UK, garnering considerable attention from international scientific publications. — ONA

SEMINAR ON 'MEDIA AND LAW' HELD IN MUSANDAM

BUKHA: The Directorate-General of Education in Musandam Governorate on Tuesday organised a seminar titled 'Media and the Law' in the Wilayat of Bukha.

The event featured four working papers addressing the fundamentals of



The seminar aimed to keep pace with technology.

social media use within legal frameworks, the consequences of misuse, an introduction to key programmes and modern technologies for editing images before publication, and the principles of posting on social media platforms. — ONA

TRIAL TESTS HELD ON USING DRONES TO COMBAT DESERT LOCUSTS

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has carried out field trials to test the efficiency of drones in combating desert locusts. The step forms part of the Ministry's efforts to develop modern aerial spraying techniques used in combating locusts and other pests in farming areas.



The tests develop modern aerial spraying techniques to combat locusts and other pests

The event seeks to assess aerial spraying techniques, including drones, and develop them as standard measures in member states of Desert Locust Control Commissions. The event saw the participation of FAO experts and representatives of local and international companies specialised in developing aerial spraying technologies through the use of drones. — ONA

Oman-Tanzania Business Forum highlights trade

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

THE Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) hosted the Oman-Tanzania Business Forum on Tuesday, April 29, 2025, at its headquarters in Muscat. The event focused on strengthening economic and trade relations between the two countries and witnessed the participation of senior officials and business representatives from both sides.

The forum was attended by Eng Hamoud bin Salem al Saadi, Second Deputy Chairman of OCCI and Chairman of the Chamber's branch in Al Batinah South, and Dr Hashil Twaibu Abdallah, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade of the United Republic of Tanzania. Also present were Said bin Hilal al Ismaili, Omani representative in the Oman-Tanzania Business Council, and a number of Omani and Tanzanian businesspeople.

In his opening remarks, Dr Abdallah highlighted the growing investment opportunities in Tanzania, noting the government's reforms to improve the business climate, including a single-window system for company registration and simplified investment procedures.

"We welcome all investors to explore the growing opportunities in Tanzania. This visit strengthens the historic relationship between Oman and Tanzania," he said.

The forum included discussions on key Tanzanian sectors open to Omani investment, including agriculture, construction, tourism, mining, ICT and healthcare. Officials emphasised the legal incentives and economic stability Tanzania offers investors and called for enhanced



The forum included discussions on key Tanzanian sectors open to Omani investment.

cooperation in mutually beneficial sectors.

Eng Hamoud al Saadi stated that the relationship between Oman and Tanzania is built on deep-rooted trade and cultural ties, with Omani traders historically playing a significant role along the East African coast. "We are focusing on vital and promising sectors that offer genuine opportunities for joint investment," he said. He urged participants to leverage the roundtable meetings to initiate dialogue and develop strategic partnerships.

Dr Abdallah reaffirmed Tanzania's readiness to welcome Omani investors. "We are committed to facilitating Omani investment into vital sectors and building partnerships that advance joint development," he said.

Said al Ismaili noted the forum's role in building direct relationships between Omani and Tanzanian businesspeople. "This is a valuable opportunity to enhance bilateral

cooperation and open new investment avenues," he said, adding that the Joint Oman-Tanzania Business Council is fully committed to supporting this collaboration.

Mohammed bin Ali al Gharbi from OCCI delivered a presentation titled, "Explore the Omani Market", highlighting Oman's stable economy, investor-friendly environment and commitment to economic diversification under Oman Vision 2040. He noted that Oman's key exports include petroleum products, LNG, minerals, fish and petrochemicals.

The forum concluded with a roundtable meeting where participants discussed trade and investment opportunities, shared insights, and explored practical mechanisms for overcoming challenges.

The dialogue laid the groundwork for building productive partnerships and increasing Omani presence in Tanzanian markets.

OIA launches Mu'tamad programme

MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) announced the opening of registration for the third edition of its Graduate Employment and Development programme "Mu'tamad". This reaffirms OIA's commitment to developing and employing Omani graduates while bridging labour market gaps through job creation and enhancing Omanisation rates. The programme targets graduates in accounting, finance, cybersecurity, information security, computer science and IT. — ONA

TENDER NOTICE						
Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources						
The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -						
Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
93/2025/MAFWR/HQ-12 RECALL	Supply of Disinfection and Fumigation Materials (Actellic Insecticide)	Wednesday 23/4/2025	Sunday 4/5/2025	Tuesday 13/5/2025	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
262/2025/MAFWR/HQ-28	Maintenance Works of An Nijayd Recharge Dam In Wilayat Ibri Governorate of Al Dhahirah	Tuesday 22/4/2025	Monday 12/5/2025	Sunday 1/6/2025	Specialized companies registered with Fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
267/2025/MAFWR/HQ-29	Supply of Fumigation Tarpaulins (Plastic) for the General Directorate of Food Security Warehouses in the Governorates	Thursday 24/4/2025	Wednesday 14/5/2025	Tuesday 3/6/2025	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om .						
The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.						
The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.						
All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.						
All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@gstb.gov.om .						
TENDERS COMMITTEE Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources						

National Real Estate Development and Investments Co. (SAOG)			
P.O. Box 84, Muscat-100, Sultanate of Oman - Phone: 24702133/24701454, Fax: 24703826, C.R. No. 1/02478/7			
DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR THE THREE MONTH ENDED 31 ST MARCH 2025			
Respected shareholders, On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present herewith the result of National Real Estate Development and Investments Co. (SAOG) for the first Three-month period ended 31st March 2025.			
Operational Result The Company recorded an un-audited net loss of RO. 8580 up to the 1st quarter ended 31st March 2025 versus (2024: RO. 7,463 loss). There was no revenue and no volume up to 31st March 2025.			
Finally, on behalf of the shareholders and the Board I wish to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tareq Bin Taimour for his wise leadership and guidance.			
For the Board of Directors Chairman.			
NOTE: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder on request either in Arabic or English within 7 days of receipt of the request.			
UNAUDITED & PROVISIONAL BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 ST MARCH 2025			
	2025 RO	2024 RO	
EMPLOYMENT OF FUNDS:			
Non Current Asset	3,600,000	6,150,000	
Current Assets	44,982	66,558	
Current Liabilities	9,246	2,583	
Net Current Assets	35,736	63,975	
	3,635,736	6,213,975	
FUNDS EMPLOYED:			
Share Capital	1,762,500	1,762,500	
Legal reserve	587,500	587,500	
Revaluation reserve	7,637,254	7,637,254	
Retained earnings	(6,890,427)	(4,694,687)	
	3,096,828	5,292,567	
Non-current liabilities	538,908	921,408	
	3,635,736	6,213,975	
UNAUDITED & PROVISIONAL PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 2025			
	2025 RO	2024 RO	
Sales	-	-	
Cost of Sales	-	-	
Gross Profit	-	-	
Other Operating Income	343	536	
Expenses before Depreciation	(8,923)	(7,999)	
Profit before Depreciation	(8,580)	(7,463)	
Depreciation	-	-	
Net profit/(loss) after Depreciation	(8,580)	(7,463)	

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



A deadly fire broke out in a restaurant in China's Liaoyang City.

RESTAURANT FIRE KILLS 22 IN CHINA'S NORTHEAST

BEIJING: A restaurant fire in northeastern China killed 22 people on Tuesday, the official news agency Xinhua said, in the latest in a series of similar deadly incidents around the country.

Xinhua did not identify the cause of the fire but said President Xi Jinping called it “a deeply sobering lesson” and urged local officials to quickly treat the injured, determine what triggered the blaze and hold those responsible to account.

The fire broke out at 12:25 pm at the restaurant in a residential area of Liaoning Province's Liaoyang City, state broadcaster CCTV said. Three people were injured. Footage circulating on social media including X and Chinese platform Douyin showed bright orange flames engulfing a storefront on street level alongside scores of parked vehicles. Smoke was seen billowing out as paramedics tended to people on stretchers.

Hao Peng, secretary of Liaoning's provincial ruling party committee, said 22 fire trucks and 85 firefighters were deployed to the scene. Hao said the on-site rescue work had been completed and people had been evacuated. It was the latest in a spate of similar incidents across the country in recent years. In April, 20 people were killed in a fire that broke out in an apartment for the elderly at a nursing home in the northern province of Hebei.

— Reuters

IRAN SAYS FIRE CONTAINED AFTER DEADLY PORT BLAST



TEHRAN: Firefighters have brought under control a blaze at Iran's main port, following a deadly explosion blamed on negligence, authorities in the Islamic republic said.

The explosion, heard dozens of kilometres away, hit a dock at the southern port of Shahid Rajaei. At least 70 people were killed and more than 1,000 others suffered injuries in the blast and ensuing fire, which also caused extensive damage, state media reported.

Red Crescent official Mokhtar Salahshour said late on Monday that the fire had been “contained” and a clean-up was under way. State television aired live footage on Tuesday showing thick smoke rising from stacked containers. Iran's ILNA news agency quoted Hossein Zafari, spokesman for the country's crisis management organisation, as saying the situation had improved significantly since Monday. However, “the operation and complete extinguishing process may take around 15 to 20 days”, the agency reported. Iran's customs authority said port operations had returned to normal, according to the IRNA news agency.

— AFP

BILATERAL COOPERATION

Japan, Philippines to deepen security ties



The leaders of Japan and the Philippines pledged in Manila to deepen security ties, including increased intelligence sharing, as they grapple with territorial disputes. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, on his first visit to the Philippines since assuming office in October, said both leaders opposed “attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea and the South China Sea by force or coercion”. — AFP

TWO CARDINALS TO MISS CONCLAVE FOR HEALTH REASONS

VATICAN CITY: Two Catholic cardinals will miss next week's conclave to elect a new pope because of health issues, bringing the number of electors expected to 133, the Vatican said on Tuesday. The Vatican did not name them but a source at the archdiocese of Valencia confirmed that its archbishop emeritus, Cardinal Antonio Canizares, would not be attending the conclave due to health reasons.

A total of 135 cardinals are eligible to vote in the secret

ceremony in the Sistine Chapel, which begins on May 7 and is expected to last for several days.

If all the others attend, there will be 133 cardinals present. The winner to succeed Pope Francis will require at least a two-thirds majority, a figure that now falls to 89.

Meanwhile, Catholic cardinals will be locked up for the papal conclave but for preparatory meetings this week they must run the gauntlet of journalists desperate

for insights into who will be the next pope. “Your Eminence! Your Eminence!” shout reporters in front of Bernini's colonnade, a few steps from the majestic St Peter's Square, as the “Princes of the Church” meet every morning at 9 am.

The Catholic Church's 252 cardinals have been called back to Rome following the death on April 21 of Pope Francis, the charismatic reformer who had led the world's 1.4 billion Catholics since 2013.

— AFP

Hard-right upstarts eye big gains in local UK polls

BRITAIN'S hard-right anti-immigrant Reform UK party is seeking to prove it is a credible political force in local elections this week that will test the popularity of Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Nigel Farage's upstart party is pushing to pick up scores of council and mayoral seats, as well as a parliamentary one.

It is aiming to organise a serious grassroots-up challenge at the next general election, which is likely in 2029.

Its rise comes as polls show Britons are increasingly disenchanted with the country's two establishment parties -- the traditionally centre-left Labour and the right-wing Conservative Party.

At a UK parliamentary by-election on Thursday in Runcorn, an industrial town in northwest England, Reform is tipped to add to its small cohort of MPs, who achieved an unprecedented breakthrough in last year's national polls.

Reform secured 14 per cent of the vote at the general election in July last year, winning five seats in the 650-seat parliament -- an unprecedented haul for a hard-right party in the UK.

It tapped into opposition to immigration and concerns over a lack of jobs, performing well in areas that have suffered post-industrial decline and where there have been high levels of Euroscepticism.

Brexit champion Farage's insurgents have since led several



Mugs bearing the image of Reform UK party leader Nigel Farage are displayed for sale on a stall on the weekly street market in Frodsham, near Runcorn, north west England. — AFP

Reform topped the latest YouGov poll of voting intentions in Britain with 26 per cent, three points ahead of Labour and six up on the Conservatives

opinion polls, despite suspending one of its lawmakers, while Labour has endured a stuttering return to power after 14 years of Conservative government.

On Tuesday, Reform topped the latest YouGov poll of voting intentions in Britain with 26 per cent, three points ahead of Labour and six up on the Conservatives.

Starmer has failed to fire up the economy or reduce the number of irregular migrants arriving in England on boats from France, with almost 10,000 having reached the UK so far this year.

In 2024, that number was reached on May 24, according to interior

ministry figures. Labour has also been criticised for welfare cuts, including scrapping a winter heating payment for millions of pensioners at a time when energy prices are high.

The Runcorn and Helsby by-election was sparked by Labour MP Mike Amesbury quitting after he received a suspended jail sentence for punching a man in a brawl.

Labour won the Runcorn constituency with a 53-per cent vote share in July, while Reform finished a distant second with just 18 per cent. But Starmer acknowledged on Monday the Runcorn by-election was “going to be tough”. — AFP

BORDERS AMID TENSION



A Pakistani citizen bids goodbye to her son, an Indian citizen, as she prepares to return to her country through the India-Pakistan Wagah border post, about 35 km from Amritsar. Indian and Pakistani soldiers exchanged gunfire in Kashmir for a fifth straight night, New Delhi's army said on April 29, one week since an attack targeting tourists sent relations into a tailspin. After the April 22 attack, New Delhi downgraded diplomatic ties, withdrew visas for Pakistanis, suspended a water-sharing treaty and announced the closure of the main land border crossing with Pakistan. -- AFP

TOLL EXPECTED TO RISE

9 killed in Syria after clashes



At least nine people were killed and 15 others injured in clashes that erupted near Damascus, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. “Currently there is cautious calm in the area, but Syrian helicopters are still hovering over the area and the toll is expected to rise,” the head of the observatory, Rami Abdel Rahman, said. The Interior Ministry said investigations showed there was no proof of that, and efforts continue to identify the person. — dpa

50TH ANNIVERSARY FETE

Vietnam to release 8,000 prisoners



Vietnam will free more than 8,000 prisoners, including foreigners, ahead of the 50th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, according to a statement published on the government's news portal. The communist country often announces special amnesties before important events. It has freed nearly 100,000 prisoners ahead of their expected release dates since 2009, although political activists have never been included. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Media stand outside the Latrobe Valley Magistrates' Court in Morwell, Australia. — Reuters

WOMAN FACES TRIAL OVER ALLEGED MUSHROOM MURDERS

SYDNEY: An Australian woman accused of murdering three people with a toxic mushroom-laced beef Wellington faces trial on Wednesday in a case that has grabbed global attention. Erin Patterson, 50, is charged with three murders — including both of her parents-in-law — and one attempted murder. She has pleaded not guilty to all counts.

Patterson is accused of hosting a July 2023 lunch at which she served the baked pastry-and-beef dish, which police said was laced with poisonous mushrooms. Her estranged parents-in-law, Don and Gail Patterson, and a local pastor's wife, Heather Wilkinson, died in the days after the meal. Wilkinson's husband Ian recovered after nearly two months in hospital. Patterson will be tried in the Latrobe Valley Law Courts in Morwell, south of Melbourne — about an hour's drive from Leongatha, where the allegedly fatal meal was eaten.

A jury of 15 people was selected on Tuesday and will be whittled down to 12 via ballot as the verdict nears. Justice Christopher Beale told the jurors that prosecutors had dropped separate charges against Patterson alleging she had also attempted to murder her estranged husband. The trial is expected to run for six weeks and will begin with opening statements from the prosecution and defence, each side giving a summary of their case and detailing the witnesses and evidence they plan to rely on. — AFP

CYBERATTACK RULED OUT FOR MASSIVE BLACKOUT



Passengers wait for their trains at Atocha station in Madrid the day after a power cut affecting the entire peninsula and the south of France. — AFP

MADRID: Spain and Portugal on Tuesday ruled out a cyberattack as the cause of a sweeping blackout that sparked chaos for millions of people across the Iberian Peninsula the previous day. Telephone, Internet and lights were working again, train services resumed, shops reopened and workers flocked back to offices following Monday's outage that lasted up to 20 hours in some places.

No firm cause for the shutdown has yet emerged, although rumours had spread on social media about cyberattacks and an unusual “atmospheric phenomenon”.

“With the analysis that we have been able to carry out up to now, we can rule out a cybersecurity incident in the facilities” of Spanish grid operator Red Elctrica (REE), said its director of operations, Eduardo Prieto.

Portuguese government spokesman Antonio Leitao Amaro said it had “no information linked to a cyberattack or hostile attack at this stage” after a preliminary analysis.

Portugal's grid operator REN also denied on Tuesday it was behind a message circulated on social media attributing the blackout to a rare atmospheric event. The message in Portuguese said there was a “fault” in the Spanish electricity grid linked to “abnormal oscillations (that) were recorded in the very high-voltage lines (400 kV), a phenomenon known as ‘induced atmospheric vibration’”. — Reuters

Carney wins comeback race in Canada's federal election

CANADIAN Prime Minister Mark Carney completed a comeback victory for the governing Liberals in Monday's election, positioning himself for a global role as a champion of multilateralism against US President Donald Trump's more protectionist policies. The first person to lead two G7 central banks has the experience to earn immediate international credibility, experts say. Carney's tough words for Trump during the campaign have been closely watched in other parts of the world.

“Canada is ready to take a leadership role in building a coalition of like-minded countries who share our values,” Carney said on April 3 in Ottawa. “We believe in international cooperation. We believe in the free and open exchange of goods, services and ideas. And if the United States no longer wants to lead, Canada will.”

Carney's Liberals beat the Conservatives, led by Pierre Poilievre, whose slogan “Canada First” and sometimes acerbic style evoked comparisons with Trump that may have cost him the election. The Conservatives for months had held a wide lead in the polls that evaporated after Trump slapped tariffs on Canada and threatened to annex the country. Canadians are shunning US goods and trips in response.

While Carney remains prime minister, his Liberals appeared to win only a minority of seats in the House of Commons, making the government more fragile and dependent on smaller parties to stay in power.

Australia holds an election on May 3, and the major parties have closely watched the polling surge towards Carney, Australian



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney dances next to his wife Diana Fox Carney during an event at the Liberal Party election night headquarters in Ottawa, Ontario. — Reuters

political strategists said. As in Canada, voter concern over the global fallout from Trump's policies has tilted support toward the center-left Labor Party.

Former Canadian diplomat Colin Robertson, who knew Carney when he worked at the Finance Ministry, said Carney is Canada's best-equipped prime minister since the 1960s, given his experience leading the Bank of England and Bank of Canada.

“He goes in extremely well-prepared, with a superb Rolodex, and people will take his call and look to him because their challenges are economic right now,” he said.

Carney will likely start by expanding Canadian trade with Europe, Australia and Asian democracies such as Japan, Robertson said, blunting some of the economic damage from newly imposed US tariffs on cars, steel

and aluminum.

Leading the smallest G7 nation, Carney will then need to muster his global coalition “without waving a giant red flag in front of Donald Trump,” said Roland Paris, a former adviser to ex-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and now professor of international affairs at University of Ottawa.

“It will be a difficult tightrope or balancing act for him,” Paris said. “He and Canada have an interest in coordinating with other like-minded countries, but without necessarily setting up Canada as the organiser of an opposition. Why turn Canada into that kind of target?” Paris said Carney's calm demeanor and financial experience may elicit a more constructive response from Trump than the president directed at Trudeau, whom he belittled as “governor.” — Reuters

SOHAR POWER P.O. Box: 147, Jawharat A' Shatti, PC 134, Sultanate of Oman, Fax: 24698496, E-mail: admin@soharpower.com, Website: www.soharpower.com				
Unaudited condensed financial statement for the period 31 March 2025				
BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S REPORT				
Dear Shareholders,				
On behalf of the Board of Directors of Sohar Power Company SAOG ("Sohar Power" or the "Company"), I am pleased to present you with the Directors' Report of the Company for the period ended 31 March 2025.				
On 25 March 2025, Sohar Power Company shareholders held their Annual Ordinary General Meeting ("AOGM").				
To bring the company into full solvency position, the company is working towards the completion of Conditions Precedent (CPs) to the executed Amended and Restated Agreement (A&RA) on 12 December 2024 with lenders, is expected by Q2 2025				
Health & Safety				
The Q1-2025 has seen excellent Health and Safety performance for Sohar Power.				
during this quarter, the Company continued the following activities at site:				
(a) Dismantling of the MSF Units which is being undertaken by the MSF Buyer.				
(b) Re-commissioning and testing activities for the power plant, undertaken by the O&M Operator.				
There were no Lost Time Accidents (LTA), accumulating to 4,444 days without LTA at the end of the Q1-2025.				
Health and safety of the people working for the above activities has been accorded the highest priority. The Company is committed to maintain its record to ensure that highest standards of safety are maintained and that they are completed without any LTIs.				
The Health and Safety of our employees, contractors and visitors remains the utmost priority for the Company.				
Operations				
Following the signing of the PPA, the Company commenced the following major activities at site:				
(a) Dismantling of the MSF Units which is being undertaken by the MSF Buyer.				
(b) Re-commissioning activities for the power plant, which was undertaken by the O&M Operator.				
(c) Demonstration of Initial Performance Tests and achievement of Commercial Operation Date on 28 March 2025 (to be officially confirmed by NamaPWP).				
Financial Performance				
The Board of Directors would like to announce that the Company has ended the period with a net loss of RO 0.1 million compared to a net loss of RO 0.4 million in the same period of 2024. This is mainly due to commencement of new PPA commissioning revenue.				
The revenues for the period amount to OMR 1.9 million against OMR 0.9 million for the same period last year. This is mainly due to the commencement of the new PPA.				
The direct and indirect costs have increased from OMR 1.2 million in Q1 2024 to OMR 1.9 million in Q1 2025 which is due to costs related to recommissioning the plant for the new PPA.				
Due to the pendency of bankruptcy proceedings, trading in the company's shares was suspended on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) since July 2023. The Company is expected to re-commence trading activities post submission of the Company's audited results and after receiving a corresponding directive from the Financial Services Authority (FSA).				
Corporate Governance				
In line with efforts deployed in previous years, the Company ensured that its organization, systems, policies, and procedures follow the highest standards of governance to always comply with the Code of Corporate Governance promulgated by the FSA, including the new Code requirements effective since July 2016.				
The company has appointed external firm to carry out the internal audit services starting from Q1 2025.				
Outlook for 2025				
The process of returning the company into full solvency position is ongoing and pending few Conditions Precedent (CPs) to be satisfied with the lenders which is expected during Q2 2025. Following the entry into a long term PPA, the Company looks forward to serving the Sultanate by providing reliable power to the grid. The Company will look to improving its operations by addressing energy leakages, by closely monitoring operational efficiency and addressing issues related to component obsolescence.				
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to thank our valued stakeholders, including our shareholders, lenders, the APSR, Nama PWP, FSA and partners for their continued support, trust, and confidence, especially during the difficult times that the Company faced over the past two years. I would also like to thank all the personnel associated with the preservation of the plant in Sohar and the staff of the Company for their loyalty, dedication and commitment.				
I would also like to express our gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Government for their continued guidance, support and encouragement to the private sector.				
Miklos Almasy Chairman of the Board				
Unaudited condensed statement of financial position as at 31 March 2025				
	March 2025 RO'000	31 Dec 2024 RO'000	31 March 2025 USD'000	31 Dec 2024 USD'000
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	20,163	20,720	52,371	53,818
Right-of-use assets	1,270	1,273	3,297	3,305
	21,433	21,993	55,668	57,123
Current assets				
Trade and other receivables	2,937	6,187	7,628	16,066
Bank balances	2,592	841	6,732	2,184
Total current assets	5,529	7,028	14,360	18,250
	26,962	29,021	70,028	75,373
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Share capital	2,000	2,000	5,195	5,195
Legal reserve	667	667	1,732	1,732
Accumulated Lossess	(16,352)	(16,220)	(42,473)	(42,141)
Total capital and reserves	(13,685)	(13,553)	(35,546)	(35,214)
Non-current liabilities				
Lease liabilities	1,136	1,152	2,952	2,993
Provision for decommissioning costs	2,312	2,276	6,006	5,913
Employee end of service benefits	32	23	83	61
Deferred tax liability	705	705	1,831	1,831
Total liabilities	4,185	4,156	10,872	10,798
Current liabilities				
Term loans	30,226	32,016	78,509	83,159
Lease liabilities	-	199	-	516
Accruals and other payables	5,997	6,174	15,579	16,039
Amounts due to related parties	239	29	614	75
Total current liabilities	36,462	38,418	94,702	99,789
Total liabilities	40,647	42,574	105,574	110,587
Total equity and liabilities	26,962	29,021	70,028	75,373
Net assets per share	(0.684)	(0.678)	(1.777)	(1.761)
Unaudited condensed statement of profit or loss for the period ended 31 March 2025				
	March 2025 RO'000	31 March 2024 RO'000	31 March 2025 USD'000	31 March 2024 USD'000
Revenue				
Cost of revenue	1,856	-	4,821	-
Gross profit	(1,296)	(306)	(3,365)	(794)
	560	(306)	1,456	(794)
Expenses				
General and administrative expenses	(112)	(129)	(292)	(335)
Finance costs	(580)	(775)	(1,508)	(2,013)
	(692)	(904)	(1,800)	(2,348)
Profit(loss) before tax for the period	(132)	(1,210)	(344)	(3,142)
Income tax expense	-	-	-	-
Net profit(loss) after tax for the period	(132)	(1,210)	(344)	(3,142)
Basic and diluted earnings per share	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.018)	(0.013)
Note: The complete accounts either in English or Arabic will be sent to any shareholder by mail within 7 days of receipt.				

OPINION

Shaping a safe digital identity for the next generation



AISHA
AL DARMAKI

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

CHILD safety policies are rooted in human rights frameworks, emphasising the importance of protecting children and ensuring their access to educational and cultural opportunities that nurture growth. With the rapid expansion of digital technologies and social media, safeguarding children has evolved into a pressing global priority.

The widespread availability of devices and access to open digital platforms have granted children and adolescents unparalleled opportunities for learning and connection.

Yet, this digital access also exposes them to new risks — disinformation, exploitation and online violence among them. Recognising both the benefits and dangers of this environment, modern societies understand that abandoning technology is not an option. Instead, they must create national digital content frameworks that ensure safe, ethical, and culturally anchored spaces for youth.

Protecting children today means more than regulating harmful activities — it means building safe, positive digital environments. These spaces must offer educational and recreational content that strengthens social values, critical thinking, self-expression and responsible citizenship. They must empower children with skills for independent learning, self-protection and ethical digital participation.

Nations are racing to offer safe digital content for their young populations,

a competition intensified by the rapid evolution of generative AI technologies.

In this context, platforms like (Ayn for Children) represent a significant milestone. Launched recently during the 29th Muscat International Book Fair by the Ministry of Information, (Ayn for Children) is part of the larger (Ayn Media Platform). It offers children a safe cultural environment focused on education and entertainment through flexible, engaging programmes.

This platform expresses both the aspirations of Omani children, connecting them to knowledge and creativity while grounding them in their national identity and global horizons. Rather than relying on rigid instruction, (Ayn for Children) embraces the philosophy of ‘useful enjoyment’, where learning and fun are interwoven.

The platform features both local and global content. Locally, it offers culturally themed programmes like (Children’s Folk Songs), (Names from Oman), (Palm Harvests) and (Wissam’s Journeys), as well as educational series like (Before Bedtime Stories) and future-oriented shows such as (Team 2040) and (I Belong to My Homeland).

Programmes like (Studio Ulfa) promote scientific curiosity, while others, such as (Entrepreneurship for Children) and (Hammam in the World of Commerce), encourage economic awareness.

Globally, (Ayn for Children) brings beloved classics like (Little Women), (Haydi) and (Football Heroes), alongside adventurous

The launch of a platform dedicated to children is a critical step towards enriching the digital space for youth. In an age where technology shapes identities from an early age, lays a vital foundation for nurturing future citizens — rooted in values, open to the world and prepared for a bright future

series like (Marco Polo) and (Flory’s Dragons). The platform also encourages creative young users to contribute original content, offering them a protected space to develop their talents and build a responsible digital footprint.

Importantly, (Ayn for Children) is designed to help users cultivate a safe digital identity, offering secure profiles, search tools and direct access to age-appropriate content. The platform’s vibrant design, intuitive navigation and careful categorisation make it especially appealing to young audiences.

However, despite its strong foundation, (Ayn for Children) would benefit from broader promotion across media channels and digital platforms to ensure it reaches not only Omani children but young audiences across the Arab world.

Expanding its library of audiobooks and adapting Omani children’s literature into animations and educational programmes would further enrich its offerings.

The launch of a platform dedicated to children is a critical step towards enriching the digital space for youth. In an age where technology shapes identities from an early age, (Ayn for Children) lays a vital foundation for nurturing future citizens — rooted in values, open to the world and prepared for a bright future.

(Translated by Badr al Dhafari and the original version of this article was published in the print edition of Oman Arabic daily on April 27)

MULTIPLE ‘DAUNTING’ CHALLENGES AWAIT CANADA’S CARNEY

ANNE-MARIE PROVOST

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney celebrated election victory on Tuesday, but he admits “daunting” challenges await, including handling Donald Trump and reshaping the economy.

“There is going to be a very short honeymoon,” Marci Surkes, a former advisor to Carney’s predecessor Justin Trudeau, said.

Carney acknowledged in a victory speech that the coming months will be difficult, but said he had the experience to lead Canada through tumultuous times.

“It is a time to be bold to meet this crisis,” he told a cheering crowd in Ottawa after the Liberal Party’s comeback against the Conservatives. “The challenges ahead are daunting,” he said.

“Big changes, like the ones we’re experiencing, are always worrying. We have a long way to go, but I have confidence, I have confidence in you, I have confidence in Canada.”

Carney will first have to figure out how to deal with threats from the mercurial American president, who marked election day by again insisting Canada should become the 51st US state.

And he also will have to roll out measures to transform the Canadian economy to make it less reliant on the United States, its largest but no longer reliable trading partner. The nation of 41 million people sends three-quarters of its exports to the United States, and tariffs imposed by Trump — particularly on the automotive and steel sectors — are already damaging the economy.

Since Trump “is trying to fundamentally restructure the American economy,” Canada will have to “reinvent” its own, Carney declared during the campaign, warning that the time for close cooperation with the United States was over.

Carney has already signaled the need to remove trade barriers between Canadian provinces and to strengthen ties with Europe -- where he made his first foreign trip after replacing Justin Trudeau as prime minister in March.

But these problems cannot be solved quickly, and Canada faces “huge critical infrastructure challenges in terms of being able to even move our commodities to markets,” Surkes noted.

Opening new trade corridors will “need considerable investment” and represents a “generational challenge,” she said. — AFP

The legal ground beneath Trump’s tariff strategy

do not know about you, but I’ve grown increasingly confused about the legality of President Trump’s tariffs on imported goods.

An endless parade of legal scholars and self-proclaimed experts tell us that Trump’s tariff policies are unconstitutional, illegal and economically reckless. Yet despite all the noise, no one seems able to stop him — especially when it comes to China. So what’s going on here?

In this article, I’ll lay out the legal framework behind Trump’s use of tariffs — and why his critics insist Trump’s tariff policies are illegal.

However, are they right? Trump’s opponents argue that only Congress can impose tariffs. They cite Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution, which grants Congress the power to levy duties and regulate foreign trade. On paper, they are correct. But over the past few decades, Congress has passed laws that delegate sweeping authority to the executive branch in matters of trade. Critics say Trump is abusing the laws and using powers intended for rare national security threats as tools of economic warfare. However, intent is not the same as legality. Until the Courts rule otherwise, Trump remains on firm legal ground. Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act 1962 allows the President to impose tariffs if the Department of Commerce determines that certain imports pose a national security threat.

Trump used it to impose tariffs on steel and aluminium, including from allies like Canada and the EU. Critics claimed this was absurd — economic competition, they said,



A woman shops for items at a Costco store in Alhambra, California. — AFP



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a former Cambridge School Principal and an Interview Skills Advisor

isn’t a national security threat.

However, the law doesn’t define “national security” precisely, leaving plenty of room for interpretation. Trump used that legal ambiguity to his advantage. Section 301 of the Trade Act 1974 allows the President to retaliate against unfair trade practices. Trump used it to target China, citing intellectual property theft and forced technology transfers.

Critics argued his actions were excessive. Supporters said he was finally doing what past presidents hadn’t dared. The International Emergency Economic Powers Act 1977 allows the President to regulate commerce during a national emergency involving foreign threats. Trump threatened to use it to impose tariffs on Mexico unless it curbed illegal immigration. Legal experts were stunned — but Mexico quickly complied, and the tariffs

were never enforced.

Critics say Trump’s approach is ‘constitutionally questionable’ — a phrase that sounds damning but carries little legal weight. The Courts have mostly refused to intervene, deferring to the President’s discretion.

Congress could rewrite these laws to limit Presidential power — but it hasn’t. Maybe it lacks the will. Or maybe, deep down, it agrees with the policy. Even when the World Trade Organisation ruled against some of Trump’s tariffs, the US simply ignored the decision, citing national interest and sovereignty. So has Trump turned national security into a trade weapon?

Absolutely. However, one could argue that economic power is national security and that China’s massive export surplus poses a long-term threat to America’s industrial base.

Artificial Intelligence beyond its hype in education



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

THERE is no longer any doubt that artificial intelligence, or its commonly used abbreviation, AI, is connected to every aspect of our lives. When it comes to education, this is not something you need to imagine, but a reality that is transforming both teaching and learning.

Unlike traditional classrooms, which often struggle to accommodate students’ diverse learning paces and styles, AI-powered educational tools help students enhance their learning experiences, personalise instruction and automate their tasks.

For educators, these tools assist them in assessing and monitoring students, as well as designing more flexible learning plans. In other words, they enable educators to focus on what matters most - teaching and mentoring.

Even many parents feel overwhelmed by the rapid pace of AI development in both educational settings and workplaces, although they may find themselves facing entirely new and complex decisions related to their children’s education.

However, a mix of optimism, curiosity and concern still prevails regarding AI integration in schools. While these learning tools allow students to progress at their own pace and promote inclusivity by accommodating diverse needs, such as assistive technologies

and round-the-clock academic support, over-reliance on them can lead to digital fatigue, stress and anxiety.

“With the growing dependence on AI for learning, communication and entertainment, students are exposed to digital environments that might lead to negative consequences for their overall well-being,” says a report by Blanka Klimova and Marcel Pikhart published in Frontiers.

A global survey from education company McGraw Hill suggests that while AI is becoming more common in classrooms, most educators do not believe it will help solve their most pressing challenges, particularly those related to student well-being.

“For the second year in a row, educators worldwide and across education levels are saying the most significant obstacles they and their students are facing extend beyond the classroom,” said Simon Allen, CEO of McGraw Hill. The survey report found AI’s role in supporting social skill development and addressing mental health was seen as minimal, revealing a gap between the technology’s capabilities and the core needs reported by educators.

“That’s why it’s crucial that we continue to listen to what educators are saying so we can identify meaningful solutions to empower their work and address these ongoing challenges,” he said.

The McGraw Hill Global Education Insights

Even many parents feel overwhelmed by the rapid pace of AI development in both educational settings and workplaces, although they may find themselves facing entirely new and complex decisions related to their children’s education

Report includes opinions from over 1,000 K-12 and higher educators in 19 countries, including the US, Canada, Northern Europe, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East.

The survey also gathered responses from more than 1,300 K-12 and higher education educators across 19 countries. The top challenges cited include factors outside of school at 52 per cent, and student mental or behavioural health at 45 per cent. However, most do not seem to be reallocating this time to tasks involving social-emotional or student engagement support.

HolonIQ, a global edtech company, projects the global market for AI in education to reach \$6 billion by the year 2025. Additionally, the average growth between 2020 and 2025 will see an increase with a growth rate of 47 per cent. “These statistics indicate that it is certain AI will penetrate deeper into the global education economy, thus bringing more changes,” points out HolonIQ.

This means, artificial intelligence is here to stay, and its impact on the field of education will only grow as it continues to develop. Indeed, AI can be used to inspire and foster creativity, provide multiple perspectives, generate and enhance lesson plans, and stimulate imaginations.

It’s not the technology that matters - it’s what we do with it. We need to find out how best they can serve human ambitions, and students should play a part in that process.

MIDDLE CLASS LAG IN PAKISTAN’S SOLAR REVOLUTION

ARIBA SHAHID AND SUDARSHAN VARADHAN

Amid the forty-degree heat that paralysed the coastal city of Karachi in April, Saad Saleem blasted his air-conditioning with near-abandon. Electricity tariffs have surged, but the affluent entrepreneur has been unbothered since he spent \$7,500 installing solar panels on his bungalow’s roof as part of a solar boom in Pakistan.

Saleem bought his modules two years ago, as the International Monetary Fund and economically beleaguered Pakistan were hammering out a preliminary bailout programme. Under the deal, Pakistan sharply raised power and gas tariffs to support struggling suppliers in the heavily-indebted sector. Pakistanis now pay more than a quarter more on average for electricity, setting off a scramble to install solar modules. Solar made up over 14 per cent of Pakistan’s power supply last year, up from 4 per cent in 2021 and displacing coal as the third-largest energy source, according to UK energy think-tank Ember. That is nearly double the share in China, the world’s top supplier of solar panels and a global leader in green technologies, and one of the highest rates in Asia, according to Reuters’ analysis of Ember data.

But the explosion in solar uptake has left out many in Pakistan’s struggling urban middle class, who have been forced to cut back on electricity in face of soaring bills, according to interviews with more than two dozen people, including energy officials, consumers and power-sector analysts. Most of the nation’s solar panels aren’t connected to sell excess capacity to the grid, so the benefits of cheap and reliable power aren’t widely shared.

The flight of affluent Pakistanis with solar access from the national grid has dealt a further blow to those relying on pricey conventional sources of power. Electricity companies that lost their most lucrative clients have been forced to additionally hike prices on their shrinking pool of customers to cover operating costs, according to Arzachel, a Karachi-based energy consultancy.

Some observers also blame financial stress in the energy sector on deals Pakistan made with China for Beijing to finance billions of dollars worth of power-generation contracts, many of which involve coal-fired plants. Pakistan is behind on many of the payments and has been in talks with China about extending the time it has to repay the debt. Countries like South Africa also face widening energy gaps after affluent residents adopted solar power. But analysts are watching Pakistan particularly closely due to the pace at which the nation of 250 million has taken to sun-based energy.

“This could serve as a cautionary tale as to how regulation and policy needs to keep up with technological change and rapidly evolving economics,” said Haneesa Isaad, an energy finance specialist at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. — Reuters

The economics of life saving diagnostics

IT has been almost nine years since the UK Review on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), which I chaired, published its final recommendations. Since then, I have occasionally checked in on the progress made towards our 29 specific proposals and consistently ended up disappointed. Despite the attention our work received at the time, very few of our suggestions have been implemented.

In conducting the review, my team and I drew on our diverse past experiences and sources of expertise to address both the supply and the demand side of the problem – namely, the lack of effective treatments or alternatives, both on the market and in the development pipeline, and the excessive use of current antibiotics. As I have noted before, raising funds to develop novel antibiotics through “push incentives” (support for basic research) has had some success. But beyond one promising UK initiative, there has been little progress towards introducing stronger “pull incentives” (rewards) for pharmaceutical companies, and there has been almost no action on our other supply-boosting recommendations.

In terms of reducing demand, one big victory is the reduced use of antimicrobials in agriculture in some parts of the world. This partly reflects shifting consumer preferences in favour of antibiotic-free foods; but it also follows from policies that are similar or even identical to what we recommended.

As an economist, I always considered our most important recommendation to be the one pushing for affordable rapid diagnostics. This technological solution is key to ensuring that those who are ill get the right treatment, but also that antimicrobials are not applied unnecessarily. Permanently reducing the demand for antimicrobials is one of the most important steps we can take.

Yet very little has happened in this area, despite the rapid development and diffusion of relevant technologies like AI.



Current estimates show that 400,000 to 700,000 babies die every year from sepsis.



JIM O'NEILL

The writer is a former chairman of Goldman Sachs Asset Management and a former UK treasury minister

Why is this? One big issue, most likely, is that the cost of diagnosis still exceeds the cost of simply prescribing an antibiotic. While the proper use of diagnostics would deliver substantial benefits by slowing the spread of AMR, this is a positive externality that is not captured in the current market.

Pharmaceutical companies and others would remedy this market failure by simply allowing for a significant rise in the price of antimicrobials, arguing that this would incentivise the industry to research useful new drugs. But such proposals ignore the fact that many people across advanced, middle- and low-income economies would not be able to afford high-priced drugs. A higher price point would discriminate according to a patient’s means, when what we actually want is to discriminate according to their medical needs.

Thus, our own recommendation was for developed countries to legislate bans against prescriptions of antimicrobials in the absence of rapid diagnostics, and for global stakeholders to create stronger incentives for the development and use of such tests in low- and middle-income countries. One of our chief influences was Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance’s successful Advance

Market Commitment (AMC) model to promote vaccines across the developing world.

Another complication is that diagnostics can differ markedly depending on the disease in question. Thus, some have been approaching the problem through the lens of specific illnesses, such as gonorrhoea – where treatment-resistance is a rapidly growing issue – strep throat, or sepsis, specifically in newborns. Current estimates show that 400,000 to 700,000 babies die every year from sepsis either because they needed antibiotics but didn’t receive them, or because they received them unnecessarily. In either case, the root problem is an absence of diagnostic tools.

Recognising that accessible diagnostic tools for neonatal sepsis would be transformational, a host of researchers – including some who helped shape Gavi’s model – have come together to develop an AMC for such technologies. They estimate that if a diagnostic test was widely used, 100,000 babies’ lives could be saved every year, and antibiotic use among this patient population would fall by 20 per cent.

I remain honoured to have served as the chair of the Review on AMR. But the job is far from finished.

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SPORTS

OMANTEL LEAGUE



Al Shabab players celebrate a goal.

OMAN CLUB STUN SEEB TO DELAY TITLE PARTY

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

Oman Club clinched a thrilling 2-1 win over Seeb in the Round 20 of Omantel League at Seeb Stadium on Monday.

The game began with a balanced exchange of possession without real danger, with a slight advantage for Seeb, who were forced into an early substitution due to an injury to Hassan al Ajmi, replaced by Amjad al Harthy. Against the run of play, Oman took the lead in the 22nd minute through Spanish player Daniel Itur. Seeb came close to equalising before the end of the first half, but Abdulrahman al Mushaifri’s shot went over the crossbar.

In the second half, Seeb continued to press and managed to equalise in the 66th minute through Arshad al Alawi, who capitalised on a moment of confusion in the penalty area. As both sides shared control in the latter stages, Oman struck on a last-minute counterattack, with Yazid al Rawahi netting the decisive goal.

With this result, Oman Club spoiled Seeb’s chance to secure the league title early, as Seeb needed just one point to officially clinch the championship. Oman raised their tally to 38 points, solidifying their position in third place, while Seeb remained at 48 points. The gap between Seeb and second-placed Al Nahda is now just four points, intensifying the title race in the upcoming rounds.

SUR OVERCOME IBRI

Sur defeated Ibri 2-1 at Sur Sports Complex.

The home side started strongly, imposing their style early and earning a penalty that was converted by Mohammed al Najashi in the 15th minute. Sur maintained their attacking pressure and doubled the lead early in the second half when Mohammed al Muhajiri scored in the 46th minute, capitalising on a cross from Aysar al Alawi.

Ibri reduced the deficit in the 60th minute with a successful penalty taken by their foreign player, Fiston Abdul. Both teams continued to trade attacks, with Sur’s Al Najashi missing a clear scoring opportunity, and Ibri almost equalising in the 83rd minute, only for Ayman Ibrahim to waste a one-on-one chance by hitting the post.

Despite Ibri’s dominance in the closing minutes, Sur held onto their lead until the final whistle to secure a valuable win.

This victory lifted Sur to 20 points, clinging to their last hope of avoiding relegation, although they remain 12th in the standings, behind Ibri on goal difference. Sur must win their final two matches to stay in the top division; dropping any points will result in relegation to the First Division.

AL SHABAB, SAHAM SHARE SPOILS

The match between Al Shabab and Saham ended in a 2-2 draw at Sohar Sports Complex.

Saham opened the scoring in the 27th minute through Bassam al Saadi, holding the lead until half-time.

In the 65th minute, Mohammed al Ghafri equalised for Al Shabab, and substitute Yousef al Ghafri put them ahead in the 79th minute. However, Saham snatched a dramatic equaliser in stoppage time with a second goal by Bassam al Saadi in the 97th minute.

With this result, Saham raised their total to 25 points, moving up to seventh place, while Al Shabab increased their tally to 27 points, reclaiming fourth place on goal difference over Al Nasr.

Oman to take on Jordan ahead of Asian meet

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

OMAN NATIONAL beach handball team players entered on Tuesday the final stage of their preparation for the 10th AHF Asian Men’s and Women’s Beach Handball Championships which will be hosted in Muscat during May 6 to 15. The domestic camp started on Tuesday at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher which will be the venue for the competition and the preparatory gathering will run until May 4.

On the other side, a 35-member delegation from the Asian Handball Federation (AHF) will arrive in Muscat on Sunday to begin their tasks for the prestigious Asian event.

As part of the ongoing camp, the national team will play two friendly matches against Jordan on Saturday and Sunday. Both matches will serve as a final rehearsal for the coaching staff headed by coach Hamood al Hasani and his assistant coach Jaber al Balushi to evaluate the players’ fitness and skill levels and to address both strengths and weaknesses. Also, they will finalise the starting list for the tournament matches.

Oman head coach Hamood al Hasani will supervise the daily training sessions which will be separated into two phases including morning sessions that are focused on indoor training at the sports complex while evening sessions will take place on the sand courts to raise the training intensity as the championship approaches its start.

The coaching staff will opt the final squad of the team on Sunday including 10 players who will represent the national team in the Asian event. The current squad included Nawaf al Hasani, Saud al Hasani, Mohammed al Balushi, Said al Hasani, Yasser al Harthy, Abdulhakim al Siyabi, Bashar al Hinaï, Huthaifa al Siyabi, Asaad al Hasani, Ali al Jami, Muhannad al Zarafi, Mahdi al Sulaimani and Said al Hasani.

OHA CHIEF MEETS PLAYERS

Oman Handball Association (OHA) Chairman, Moosa Khamis al Balushi, along with the board of directors, met the players in the camp to ensure close follow up on the team’s preparations and to achieve full readiness. The chairman and board members met the players and coaching staff as they encouraged them to double their efforts, maintain high focus and work as a unified team.



The Oman team entered the final stage of preparation.



They praised the technical and administrative staff, along with the players, for their dedication and commitment to training to compete for the Asian title.

Oman is clubbed with Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong and Maldives in Group A at the 10th AHF Asian Men’s Beach Handball championship. Group B comprised of Iran, Philippines, Jordan, Pakistan and India. The women’s competition will feature only four teams in one group only including Vietnam, Hong Kong, Philippines and India.

Dr Salim al Ghilani, Head of the Medical Committee, affirmed the committee’s full readiness to provide the necessary medical support throughout the tournament to ensure the safety of all players and teams. “The committee included over 20 members from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Ministry of Health. The on-field medical teams are equipped with the latest emergency equipment, and specialised medical crews will be stationed at game venues, with additional rotating teams covering the hotels,” he said.

Seeb, Majees face off in Ministry’s Shield final today

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

The curtain will fall on Wednesday evening at 5 pm on the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth Volleyball Shield competition, with the much-anticipated final match between Seeb and Majees taking place at the main hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The final will be held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Regulation. Prior to the final, the third-place match between Salam and Al Bashayer will be played at 2 pm on the same court.

Seeb secured their place in the final after an exciting 3-0 victory over Al Bashayer in a match marked by intense competitiveness from the start. The opener was thrilling and evenly matched, with both teams trading points



Seeb make a smash past Al Bashayer defence.

until reaching a 17-17 tie. Al Bashayer impressed with strong serves and standout performances from Afghan import Islam, while Seeb relied on powerful spikes from Ismail al Hadi and Russian player Bogdan. Seeb eventually clinched the set in dramatic fashion, 31-29, thanks to crucial defensive stands.

In the second set, Al

Bashayer started strong again with attacks led by Islam, but Seeb quickly regained control through dominant blocks by Artem and Bogdan, asserting superiority at the net. Strong defensive work from Saud al Maamari helped reduce reception errors, allowing Seeb to comfortably win the set 25-17.

In the third set, Al Bashayer showed determination to fight back and took an early lead, but Seeb responded swiftly with Bogdan’s powerful backline attacks and Artem’s blocking prowess. Despite late efforts from Saman and Islam, Seeb sealed the set 25-23 to secure a spot in the final.

MAJEES ELIMINATE SALAM

Majees booked their place in the final with a solid 3-0 win over Al Salam in a tough match held at the Sohar Sports Complex.

A tightly contested set saw both teams exchange leads until the score reached 26-

26. Majees capitalised on decisive moments with tactical precision and effective serve to win 28-26.

In the second set, Majees exploited defensive lapses by Salam, particularly on counter plays, and utilised fast-paced plays behind the block to edge the set 25-23, despite a late surge from Salam.

In the third set, Majees entered the final set with confidence and dominated from the outset, capitalising on Salam’s loss of focus. They wrapped up the set 25-19 and completed the straight-set win.

This season’s Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Volleyball Shield featured 16 clubs: Seeb, Oman Club, Al Salam, Majees, Sohar, Bahla, Al Bashayer, Sur, Shabab, Al Khabourah, Masirah, Ittihad, Mirbat, Al Nasr, Salalah and Saham. The tournament witnessed varying levels of technical performance and strong competition among the participating teams.

NBA PLAYOFF



Cleveland Cavaliers' De'Andre Hunter (12) drives to the basket against Miami Heat's Andrew Wiggins (22) in the third quarter during game four at Kaseya Center. — Reuters

CAVALIERS SWEEP HEAT WITH RECORD-SETTING BLOWOUT

LOS ANGELES: Donovan Mitchell scored 22 points and the Cleveland Cavaliers clinched a 4-0 first-round series sweep with a 138-83 rout of the host Miami Heat on Monday night, the fourth-largest winning margin in an NBA playoff game. De'Andre Hunter (19 points), Ty Jerome (18) and Evan Mobley (17) all played their part, while Jarrett Allen finished with 14 points and 12 rebounds along with six first-half steals. Nikola Jovic sat out the first quarter before finishing with a career playoff-high 24 points for Miami, while Bam Adebayo posted 13 points and 12 boards.

The emphatic Game 4 victory earned the No 1 seed Cavaliers a berth in the Eastern Conference semifinals, while ending the eighth-seeded Heat's season in humiliating fashion. The 55-point margin was Miami's biggest-ever postseason defeat, surpassing the previous record of 37 points set two days ago in Game 3. "We were humbled, but they (Cavaliers) had so much to do with how we looked," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said. "None of us would have guessed this series would have gone this way coming out of our two play-ins. They just took it to another level. They left us behind these last two games." Cleveland set up the blowout by trouncing the Heat 43-17 in the first period. After Miami briefly led 3-2 early, the Cavs went on a 13-0 tear to pull ahead 15-3. They were never threatened again, another 15-0 spree taking the score to 35-8.

Davion Mitchell buried a last-second prayer from almost halfway to close an otherwise horrific quarter from the Heat, outrebounded 14-8 and coughing up six turnovers for 11 points. Donovan Mitchell had 13 first-quarter points, including three 3-pointers, Hunter added 11, and Allen had 10 points and four steals. The Cavaliers shot 15 of 24 for the period, which included 6 of 11 from downtown, while the Heat misfired at 7 of 21 from the floor and 2 of 12 from deep. Jovic played all 12 minutes in the second and scored 12 of Miami's 16 points, while Cleveland added 29 to motor ahead 72-33 at the main break. The 39-point halftime deficit was the Heat's largest in any game in franchise history, regular season or playoff. Miami showed some fight in the third, but couldn't prevent the Cavs from winning the frame 39-30. Cleveland marched ahead 111-63 when Ty Jerome sank a 37-footer on the buzzer to end the quarter, before the margin topped out at 60 points (138-78) in the fourth. — AFP



Rajasthan Royals' Vaibhav Suryavanshi walks back to the pavilion after losing his wicket, bowled out by Gujarat Titans' Prasidh Krishna. He becomes the youngest player to score an IPL century. — Reuters

Suryavanshi, 14, shatters records in stunning ton

VAIBHAV SURYAVANSHI was touted as Indian cricket's next superstar on Tuesday after the 14-year-old's IPL century off 35 balls shattered batting records. Left-handed opener Suryavanshi became the youngest player to hit a Twenty20 hundred in Rajasthan Royals' thumping eight-wicket win over Gujarat Titans on Monday. "It is like a dream," the teenager said. In only his third Indian Premier League match, he scored the second-fastest century in competition history, second only to Chris Gayle's 30-ball ton in 2013. Nicknamed 'Boss Baby', Suryavanshi has drawn instant comparisons with West Indies great Gayle, who styled himself as the 'Universe Boss'. Suryavanshi has been fearless in the face of seasoned opponents. He announced himself on debut earlier this month by launching his first ball in the IPL for six off experienced India pace bowler Shardul Thakur on his way to a quickfire 34 off 20 balls. Nine days later in Jaipur, Suryavanshi destroyed a bowling attack comprising India's Mohammed Siraj, Ishant Sharma and Washington Sundar, shredding reputations

as he hit 94 of his 101 runs in boundaries — 11 sixes and seven fours. **CARNAGE** "Vaibhav's fearless approach, bat speed, picking the length early and transferring the energy behind the ball was the recipe behind a fabulous innings," India cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar wrote on social media. Suryavanshi took 28 in one over off veteran quick Sharma on his way to a 17-ball fifty. He then gave Afghanistan pace bowler Karim Janat a debut to forget, blasting 30 runs — three sixes and three fours — off his first IPL over. Rajasthan head coach Rahul Dravid, who has a broken leg, still managed to get out of his wheelchair to celebrate when Suryavanshi hit a six off Afghanistan spin wizard Rashid Khan to bring up his century. "Have you ever seen anything like this?" former Australia white-ball captain Aaron Finch posted on social media. "What a talent!" India's 1983 World Cup-winning batsman Kris Srikkanth lauded the teenager's "composure, class and courage" beyond his years, adding: "Indian cricket's next superstar is here." India's T20 skipper and Mumbai Indians

batsman Suryakumar Yadav said it had been "carnage of an innings" and "absolutely insane!" Suryavanshi, who can also bowl spin, comes from India's poorest state, Bihar. On Tuesday, Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar announced a cash prize of one million rupees (\$11,700) for the budding batsman. "I wish that Vaibhav creates new records for the Indian team in the future and brings glory to the country," Kumar said in a social media post. Suryavanshi made his domestic debut aged only 12 in the Ranji Trophy in January 2024, then was selected for India's under-19 squad against a touring Australia team. He promptly hit a 58-ball century — the second fastest ton in youth Tests after England's Moeen Ali in 2005. After the game on Monday night, Suryavanshi, who comes from a modest family, credited his success to his parents. "Whatever I am today, I owe it to my parents," he said in a video posted on the official IPL handle on X. "My mother used to wake up early because I had to go to practise, and she used to prepare food for me. She would sleep for only three hours. My father left his work for me," Suryavanshi added. — AFP

National Private School win girls' 3x3 basketball championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

The National Private School were crowned champions of the 3x3 Girls' School Basketball Championship after delivering an outstanding performance in a competitive tournament that featured 18 schools from across Oman. Al Injaz International Private School claimed second place, while Sultan Qaboos Private School secured third. The closing ceremony was held in the presence of Dr Shaikha al Shuaibi, Assistant Director-General for Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education. The tournament was hosted at Al Amal Sports Club from April 27 to 29, organised by the Department

of Specialised Activities at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in collaboration with the Oman Basketball Association and the Oman School Sports Federation. The event was part of the 'School Sports Days' programme, which was launched in 2008 to promote physical activity among students, encourage a healthy and active lifestyle, and help develop technical and supervisory sports talent. The 3x3 basketball championship is considered one of the programme's key events. This was the second consecutive edition, and it has been officially registered with the International Basketball Federation (FIBA 3x3). The matches were officiated by an all-female refereeing crew from the 3x3



The tournament featured 18 schools from across Oman.

Basketball Referees Committee under the Oman Basketball Association, under the supervision of an international female referee —highlighting growing support for developing female professionals in sports. Student Shaima al Zadjali

from the National Private School expressed her pride in winning the title, emphasising that the victory was a result of collective effort and commitment by the players. She added that although the competition was tough, it provided a great platform for skill development

and teamwork, and the team looks forward to future competitions. Such championships are particularly important as they contribute to the international ranking of the Oman Basketball Association. All player data is recorded in the official FIBA database, giving participants the chance to collect ranking points and improve their international standing. The School Sports Days programme aims to achieve several strategic objectives, including increasing interest in school sports, diversifying programmes to benefit students, utilising school facilities and qualified staff more effectively, and encouraging schools to further invest in their sports activities.

SPORTS

MERC THIRD ROUND



Abdullah al Zubair

THREE OMANI DRIVERS TO COMPETE IN SAUDI RALLY



Zakariya al Amri

JEDDAH: Three Omani drivers will compete in Saudi International rally this weekend Jeddah in Saudi Arabia will host for the first time this weekend the third round of Middle East rally championship, where Jeddah stages will be new tracks and fresh for competitors who have never participated in a

Saudi Rally before as part of Merc. Omani participation in this round will be a triple, with Abdullah al Rawahi and his new English co-driver Ross Whittock driving a Skoda Fabia, while Abdullah al Zubair and his co-driver Taha Soomar will be driving a Subaru Impreza (N14), and Zakariya al Amri and his co-driver Mohammed al Mazrui will be driving a Subaru Impreza (N14) with the aim of continuing to lead group (N) category of the championship.

Six stages, three of which will be held on Friday and will be repeated twice, while on Saturday there will be three new stages near Jeddah and they will also be repeated twice. The competition will be strong for the lead in the rally between the current championship leader, Qatari driver Nasser al Attiyah, Abdullah al Rawahi and Qatari Abdulaziz al Kuwari. As these stages are new to all competitors, everyone will be keen to register their names on the honour roll of the first place winners of the first rally in Saudi Arabia in the Middle East rally calendar.

Al Rawahi said, “This is a round being held for the first time and there are new stages for all of us. We must be ready for everything, especially since I am participating with a new co-driver and I expect stiff competition from the big names, especially Nasser al Attiyah. We must prepare intensively because the rally is unknown and we have not participated in it before. Our goal and target now is to compete for the lead and collect the most number of points.

Competitor Abdullah al Zubair is also participating with his Navigator Taha Soomar, aiming to improve his position in the overall (N) category classification. Al Zubair had a strong race in the 2025 Oman International Rally in Suhar, while he faced a car problem in the Qatar International Rally, where he lost many points on his way to the lead.

Zakariya al Amri and Mohammed al Mazrui both looking forward to enhancing their lead of the group and hoping to end the rally with top points.



Poland’s Iga Swiatek in action during her round of 16 match against Russia’s Diana Shnaider. — Reuters

‘Chilled’ Swiatek scrapes into Madrid Open last 8

DEFENDING CHAMPION Iga Swiatek reached her fifth WTA 1000 quarterfinal of the season with a 6-0, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4 victory over 13th-seeded Diana Shnaider at the Madrid Open on Tuesday.

After a nationwide blackout cancelled the majority of play at the Caja Magica on Monday, power was restored at the venue on Tuesday morning, with matches commencing at midday.

In her first meeting with the Russian left-hander, Swiatek saved 11 of 13 break points en route to a two-hour 34-minute victory that sent her through to a last-eight showdown with Australian Open champion Madison Keys.

Asked about the power outage, the 23-year-old Swiatek admitted she enjoyed being off the grid for a few hours.

“Honestly, I liked yesterday, I think the whole world was more relaxed kind of, obviously the people who didn’t lose because of this. I had time to rest,” said Swiatek.

“It’s good that in Madrid the sun is setting pretty late. As soon as it got down and it was dark, they put the energy back in our area.

“Honestly, I just chilled and used the time not thinking about what I should do. There was no signal so basically no one used their phones. It was nice, I liked it.”

On the men’s side, Bulgaria’s Grigor Dimitrov finally completed a 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) win over Britain’s Jacob Fearnley, converting his third match point some 27 hours after his first. The match was suspended on Monday with 15th seed Dimitrov leading 6-4, 5-4. When play resumed on Tuesday, both players held serve before Dimitrov edged the tie-break.

“That shows you how quickly anything can change, in life as well. From one point, you’re serving for the match, from the other you’re about to receive, and then the lights went out,” said Dimitrov, who will face lucky loser Gabriel Diallo in the fourth round.

“I always take these type of situations as a learning curve.

“I remember when I was a kid it (blackouts) happened a lot where I grew up. I took it like this, I felt like I had the experience for it. Of course it’s not pleasant for anybody. It took us three hours to get back to the hotel yesterday. You just have to take it for what it is and move on.”

DE MINAUR ADVANCES Earlier in the day, sixth-seeded Alex de Minaur defeated Canadian Denis Shapovalov 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) and awaits Stefanos Tsitsipas or Lorenzo Musetti in the round of 16.

Recording his 24th win of the season, the Australian has now tied Carlos Alcaraz for the most victories on tour in 2025.

“It was definitely something different,” De Minaur said of the blackout. “It gives you a new perspective on your every day, how in tune you are with technology nowadays. At least for me, I enjoyed having a little bit of time off the grid. So it was quite fine.

“I’m glad it seems everything has been sorted out. It could have been quite dangerous for a lot of people, so I’m glad we’re kind of past it and we can move on.”

American 11th seed Tommy Paul overcame Russian 24th seed Karen Khachanov 6-3, 3-6, 6-2.

Frances Tiafoe, the 16th seed, beat Alexandre Muller 6-3, 6-3 to book a fourth-round meeting with Novak Djokovic’s conqueror, Matteo Arnaldi.

Both Tiafoe and Muller were among those stuck at the Caja Magica for hours waiting for cars to leave the stadium.

With no food available anywhere, Muller had Pringles and orange juice for dinner, while Tiafoe settled for chocolate and water.

“It’s one of those things man, super unprecedented. Just kind of hang around, chilling. Just kind of trying to find the laughs about it,” said Tiafoe.

“Obviously it’s one of those things, everybody in the same situation. Just had to realise how it normalises everything, everyone. Some things are so much bigger than you and kind of just take it for what it is,” he added. — AFP

Ancelotti set to leave Real Madrid, take up Brazil coaching job

MADRID: Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti is set to leave Real Madrid and take charge of the Brazil men’s national team until the 2026 World Cup.

The Athletic website, citing anonymous sources, reported that the Italian has already informed the players in the dressing room about his planned departure.

The Athletic, British broadcaster Sky, and transfer expert Fabrizio Romano say Ancelotti will already be managing the Selecao during international matches in June. He would therefore no longer be able to coach Madrid at the Club World Cup, scheduled from June 14 to July

13 in the United States.

The Spanish sports newspaper Marca reported that verbal agreements are in place, with only the signature missing.

Ancelotti, 65, is under contract with Madrid until 2026. However, his departure is expected due to recent setbacks, such as the Champions League quarterfinal exit and the loss in the Copa del Rey final against Barcelona.

Bayer Leverkusen’s title-winning coach Xabi Alonso, who previously played for Madrid, is being widely tipped as his successor.

Ancelotti has been coaching Real for a second stint since 2021,during



Carlo Ancelotti

which time he has won the Champions League twice.

Spanish league leaders Barca, who have a four-point lead, host Madrid on May 11.

Brazil sacked Dorival Junior after a 4-1 thrashing by Argentina in March and are fourth in the South American qualifying table for the tournament in the US, Mexico and Canada.

Ancelotti led Real Madrid to a Champions League and La Liga double last season, with Brazil stars Vinicius Junior and Rodrygo Goes vital parts of the team, and is one of the most successful coaches in the club’s history.

In his first spell at Real Madrid he led them to La Decima — their 10th Champions League triumph.

He has won the competition three times with Los Blancos over two stints, sacked in 2015 but returning in 2021 after Zinedine Zidane resigned.

This season Madrid have been defensively fragile and trail La Liga leaders Barcelona by four points, with a title defence their only remaining hope of major silverware.

Ancelotti has also coached AC Milan, Chelsea and Paris Saint-Germain among other teams.

— Agencies



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OETC TARGETS CAPEX OF RO 840 MILLION OVER NEXT 4 YEARS



CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

OMAN Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), the majority state-owned operator of Oman's national grid,

anticipates a capex programme amounting to RO 840 million (approx \$2.18 billion) over the 2025-2028 timeframe, consistent with a robust strategy to expand and modernise the country's electricity networks.

This compares with a capex of RO 450 million (approx \$1.168 billion) during the previous business plan spanning the 2024-2027 timeframe, according to international ratings agency Fitch.

Fitch noted in a new report that OETC's capex growth is driven by its decision to accelerate some expansion projects, including Phase 2 of the North-South Interconnector Project — a landmark initiative to link standalone grids in the north and south of the country.

The interconnector supports not only a transition to gas-powered power generation — thereby effectively phasing out pockets of diesel-powered generation — but also opening up vast swathes of Oman to renewable solar and wind power development.

In the report, Fitch affirmed OETC's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BB+' and senior unsecured rating at 'BB+' with a Recovery Rating of 'RR4'. The Outlook on the IDR is Stable, it noted.

"The affirmation reflects OETC's commensurate financial structure, despite a projected breach of its net leverage negative sensitivity in 2026, driven by high capex, before leverage improvement in 2027. Our forecast incorporates shareholders' commitment to the rating and support through equity injections and moderate dividend cuts. However, rating headroom remains very limited. Insufficient shareholder support or weaker cash flows leading to leverage consistently above its negative sensitivity would result in a negative rating action," Fitch added.

Oman's exposure to Trump tariffs limited, says IMF

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

THE LINGERING effects of US President Donald Trump's trade tariffs are poised to extract a heavy toll on Oman's economy, with losses estimated at around \$1 billion — or 0.8 per cent of national GDP — according to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) latest Global Economic Outlook.

Yet beyond the stark figures, it is the subtle, cascading consequences that economists find most concerning.

"While the direct trade impact is relatively small, despite high tariffs on steel and aluminium, most of the hit stems from lower oil prices, as hydrocarbons account for about 30 per cent of Oman's GDP," said Azza al Habsi, an economist based in Muscat.

Her comment underscores how interconnected the global economy has become — and how trade tensions in one corner of the world reverberate through others.

Despite limited direct exposure to US tariffs, Oman — like many emerging economies — faces growth pressures not from blocked shipments, but from weakened commodity markets and strained global demand.

Hydrocarbon exports, a backbone of the Sultanate of Oman's economy, remain especially sensitive to such shifts.

The IMF has historically tended towards optimistic forecasts for emerging markets, a pattern it acknowledged in its own research, citing heightened uncertainty and commodity price volatility.

Al Habsi cautioned that downward revisions may follow as global conditions remain fragile.



Hydrocarbon exports, a backbone of Oman's economy, remain especially sensitive to such shifts.

Pressure points are also appearing in fiscal planning. The IMF estimates Oman's fiscal breakeven oil price at \$57 per barrel for 2025, but national data suggests a steeper reality.

"According to the 2025 budget published by the Ministry of Finance, we need around \$65/barrel to balance this year's spending," Al Habsi noted.

Still, Oman's current posture contrasts sharply with earlier crises. Fiscal reforms, disciplined debt management and healthier reserves have left the country better shielded against external shocks.

"The positive news is that Oman has entered this period with a far stronger balance sheet compared to previous crises (2014 and 2020), with better buffers and resilience," Al Habsi explained.

She also pointed to the broader global

context: many countries are responding to trade disruptions with policies similar to those deployed during the Covid-19 pandemic. Crucially, Oman retains ample policy ammunition.

"The Central Bank of Oman retains considerable tools to address liquidity challenges if needed, beyond just adjusting interest rates.

"Similarly, fiscal authorities have sufficient room to support the economy if necessary and the Covid-19 fiscal playbook could be redeployed should conditions warrant," she added. As global trade dynamics continue to shift, the IMF's warning — amplified by local economic voices — serves as a reminder: in today's interconnected world, the aftershocks of distant policies can test the resilience of even the most prepared economies.

Oman gearing up for energy transition and decarbonisation

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

THE Sultanate of Oman is positioning itself as a key player in the global energy transition, as well as the decarbonisation of the maritime sector, according to a senior official.

Speaking during the first edition of the Oman Maritime, Ports and Energy Forum held here on Tuesday, Muhanna Moosa Baqer, Director General of Ports and Marine Affairs at the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology, said: "The world is on the cusp of a profound energy revolution and Oman is intent on realising its potential to catalyse the changes required."

According to Baqer, the maritime logistics sector plays a dual role in both facilitating and driving the energy transition.

"Shipping and ports are both the drivers and facilitators of the energy transition across the globe. Shipping will increasingly transport cargo such as LNG, hydrogen, ammonia and CO₂



The maritime logistics sector plays a dual role in both facilitating and driving the energy transition.

to all corners of the world; and the industry is a lynchpin in the development of this new and exciting global supply chain infrastructure," he said.

In addition to transporting new energy resources, the sector will also become a consumer of alternative low and zero-carbon marine fuels, said Baqer. "As well as transporting new energy sources, shipping will be consumers of this energy, using

alternative low and zero-carbon marine fuels to propel the global merchant fleet. Additionally, he shared that ports will become vital energy hubs and "gateways for the import, export and storage of low-carbon and renewable energy", while also supporting a developing bunkering sector for alternative marine fuels.

This evolving role of the maritime sector comes amid increasing global pressure to

decarbonise the sector.

"Shipping and ports have a huge responsibility for the successful delivery of decarbonisation on a national and global basis.

To facilitate this, we are seeing the introduction of a raft of national, regional and global environmental regulations, which together set out ambitious targets for the decarbonisation of shipping and ports, which will also accelerate the pace of the energy transition."

A major example, according to Baqer, is the International Maritime Organization's proposed Net-Zero Framework, which aims to set mandatory emissions limits and introduce carbon pricing across the shipping sector.

"If adopted, they would enter into force in 2027 and the IMO's Net-Zero Framework will be the first in the world to combine mandatory emissions limits and GHG pricing across an entire industry sector. So, the world is on the cusp of a profound energy revolution and Oman is intent on realising its potential to catalyse the changes required."

Consequently, Oman's port and maritime sectors are actively evolving to meet future demands, he said.

"The country's maritime and port sectors are focused on developing cutting-edge logistics excellence in tandem with meeting the requirements of environmental sustainability and stewardship."

Additionally, he shed light on the intersecting role Oman plays in both maritime trade and the energy transition.

"Oman also has a leading and proactive role to play as a key producer of renewable energy. A very recent example of this is the agreement to establish the world's first liquid hydrogen import corridor, which will connect the Port of Duqm, the Port of Amsterdam and key logistics hubs in Germany."

Concluding his remarks, Baqer noted that the Oman's maritime sector is ready for the change. "Oman's maritime, boats and bunkering sectors are building on their heritage and preparing to catalyse the change."

ADVERTORIALS

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Strategic collaboration aims to support asset value optimisation and operational performance.

BYD SEALION 7
SCORES MAXIMUM
FIVE-STAR EURO
NCAP SAFETY RATING

MUSCAT: BYD’s flagship Sealion 7 SUV has earned a maximum five-star safety rating in the latest round of tests by independent body Euro NCAP. The Electric SUV not only features a Blade Battery but also BYD’s trademark Cell-to-Body construction that picked up the top rating with strong performances.

The Sealion 7 successfully qualified in four key areas of NCAP’s most stringent safety examination — Adult Occupant protection, Child Occupant protection, Vulnerable Road Users protection and Safety Assist.

The Sealion 7, which is available with a choice of battery sizes and power outputs and incorporates the world’s fastest electric motor in mass production (23,000rpm), has picked up particularly strong scores in the two occupant areas of the test.

According to the official report issued by NCAP, the car offered good whiplash protection in a crash, while noting good protection in the side barrier test and severe side pole impact evaluation. The Adult Occupant protection rating is 87%.

The Child Occupant protection rating is even more impressive, at 93%, equalling the highest percentage score in this category over the past nine years and reinforcing the Sealion 7’s positioning as a family car.

The report states how, in the frontal offset and side barrier tests, the Sealion 7 scores maximum points for protection of all critical parts of the body for both the 10-year and six-year dummies. It also credits its direct child-presence detection system, which issues a warning when it detects that a child or infant has been left in the vehicle.

Moreover, the Sealion 7’s suite of driver-assistance features all earn praise in the evaluation, with a Safety Assist score of 79%. The report comments that the autonomous emergency braking system performs well, including responding well to pedestrians and motorcyclists; and notes the presence of lane-support and speed-assistance systems.

The Sealion 7 has officially been launched for customers in Oman. To experience BYD’s electric revolution of SUV’s, visit BYD Flagship showroom in Al Wattayah, Al Mouj and Mall of Oman. Request for a test-drive or explore more of BYD’s product lineup that include the Atto 3, Seal, Han, Qin Plus DM-I and Song Plus DM-i.

In Oman, BYD vehicles are distributed by World Auto Business LLC.

SAYARTI
AWARDED
ISO 9001:2015
CERTIFICATION
UNDER
UKAS

MUSCAT: Sayarti Rental, a key division within the Mobility & Equipment Sector of The Zubair Corporation and a leader in Oman’s transportation and equipment rental industry, has been awarded the prestigious ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System Certification by United Registrar of Systems (URS), an internationally accredited certification body.

This milestone underscores Sayarti’s unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality services in line with global best practices.

The official certification ceremony took place at The Zubair



Corporation’s headquarters in Al Athaiba, where Aziz Sulaiyam al Rahbi, Marketing Manager at Sayarti, received the certificate on behalf of the company from Bashir al Salem, General Manager of URS. The event was attended by

senior executives from The Zubair Corporation and The Zubair Automotive Group.

Commenting on the achievement, Aziz Salim al Rahbi stated: “We are proud to have earned the ISO 9001:2015 certification, which reflects our team’s collective dedication to service excellence, customer satisfaction; and maintaining a professional and safe working environment.

This accomplishment is a direct result of the culture of innovation and continuous improvement that Sayarti Leasing and Used Car Sales embraces across all its operations.”

Tamani Global and LuLu Holdings sign partnership

Tamani Global has entered into a strategic collaboration with LuLu International Holdings Limited (LIHL) to support the operational development and asset performance of Mall of Muscat. The agreement was signed on April 27 with the presence of key officials.

This partnership reflects Tamani Global’s commitment to strengthening Mall of Muscat’s market position through enhanced operational practices and strategic advisory.

Leveraging LuLu Holdings’ extensive regional experience in retail and shopping mall environments, the collaboration is focused on sharing best practices and implementing targeted initiatives to improve efficiency, tenant alignment and customer engagement.

Spanning over 1 million square feet of gross leasable area and home to more than 170 retail outlets — including the renowned Oman Aquarium, the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman — Mall of Muscat stands as a premier destination for both residents and tourists.

The partnership aims to reinforce the mall’s positioning as a lifestyle and entertainment hub by aligning its operations with evolving market trends.

Abdulaziz Salim al Mahruqi, Board Member of Tamani Global, stated: “Our



The strategic collaboration aims to support asset value optimization and operational performance.

collaboration with LuLu Holdings is a strategic move to benefit from their insights and experience in optimising retail destinations. Their strategic role will be instrumental in supporting our long-term vision to ensure sustainable value at Mall of Muscat.”

Ananth A V, Director at LuLu International Holdings, added: “We are pleased to work alongside Tamani Global in this strategic capacity. Our goal is to provide operational input and strategic guidance that will enhance the mall’s performance and deliver long-term value for all stakeholders.”

Badr Al Samaa Royal Hospital inaugurates ICCU for heart patients

MUSCAT: In a recent development, Badr Al Samaa Royal Hospital, the flagship premium venture of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals inaugurated the state-of-the art and very advanced Intensive Coronary Care, Cardiac Critical Care & Observation Unit (ICCU) to treat seriously ill heart patients suffering from heart attacks, heart failure and other critical heart conditions.

The ICCU was inaugurated by the Chief Guest, Brigadier General Dr Abdul Malik bin Sulaiman bin Khalaf al Kharousi, Assistant Chairman — Medical City for Military & Security Services (Supplies & Support) & Senior Consultant — General Medicine & Cardiology in presence of the Guest of Honour, Dr Najib al Rawahi, Director of the National Heart Centre & Chairman of the Advanced Heart Failure Committee, Royal



This advanced ICCU is fully equipped to cater seriously ill heart patients suffering from heart attacks, heart failure and other critical heart conditions.

Hospital, MoH, Managing Director, Dr P A Mohamed, Executive Director, Firasath Hassan, Senior Management of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals and various dignitaries from public and private sector.

This advanced Intensive Coronary Care, Cardiac Critical Care & Observation Unit (ICCU) at Badr Al Samaa Royal Hospital is fully equipped to cater seriously ill heart patients suffering from heart attacks, heart failure and other critical heart conditions.

With a capacity of total 7 beds, the unit is equipped with state of the art equipment and manned by an expert team of doctors and nurses under the leadership of Dr Benny Panakkal, Senior Consultant Interventional Cardiologist having more than two decades of experience in Oman.

Al Mouj Golf a world-class venue with Clutch Pro Tour event

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Golf reaffirmed its standing as a premier international sports destination by hosting the Clutch Pro Tour, a leading European development golf circuit, from April 1 to 3, 2025.

The tournament marks another milestone in Al Mouj Golf’s growing legacy of welcoming high-calibre international competitions and underscores Oman’s rise as a host nation for elite sporting events.

Recognised as premier feeder tour to the European Challenge Tour and DP World Tour, the Clutch Pro Tour serves as a launchpad for rising golf talent, attracting both emerging players and experienced professionals seeking world ranking points and competitive experience. Its debut at Al Mouj Golf brought together a diverse



The Clutch Pro Tour serves as a launchpad for rising golf talent.

field of 130 exciting professional golfers from over 20 countries, further reinforcing Oman’s status as a strategic sporting hub in the region. Over three days of competition, spectators were treated to an exciting display of golfing talent and a finale that came down to the wire. Callum Farr of England emerged as the champion in a truly clutch performance under pressure.

Carding rounds of 68, 68 and 69, Farr finished 11-under-par to secure his second Clutch Pro Tour title of the season, edging out a strong international field by a single stroke. James Ashfield of Wales claimed second place, while Reis Suart and Egor Eroshenko tied for third, each delivering standout performances that kept the leaderboard tight until the final putt.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, “Welcoming the Clutch Pro Tour to Al Mouj Golf was an important moment for us — not just as a course, but as part of Oman’s broader efforts to grow its presence on the global sports stage.

It was a privilege to see top talent compete here. We will continue to support events that inspire the next generation of athletes and shine a spotlight on Oman as a hub for world-class competition.” The Clutch Pro Tour’s successful run at Al Mouj Golf reinforces the venue’s position on the global golf calendar. With a proven ability to host elite-level competition and a course ranked among the world’s best, Al Mouj continues to attract the attention of international tours and talent — with more to come.

BUSINESS



Around 43 per cent of municipal solid waste is currently being recycled.

OMAN’S WASTE RECYCLING SECTOR EXPANDS TO 83 FIRMS

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

AS MANY as 83 companies are currently engaged in waste recycling activities, underscoring the significant growth of the circular economy in Oman over the last several years, according to Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority.

Taking part in a panel discussion on Day 1 of the Advantage Oman Forum, he said the proliferation of commercially-driven recycling activities is a testament to the enactment of effective policies and regulations that have fostered the growth of this sector.

“Four years ago, new policies were introduced to encourage internal recycling within the Sultanate of Oman. Some facilities were also made available to investors. In the past four years, we have seen the successful establishment of 83 recycling plants, focusing on various materials including iron scrap, aluminium scrap, plastic, car parts, cardboard, paper, tyres and others,” Dr Al Amri stated.

Fuelled by the growth of this sector, around 43 per cent of municipal solid waste is now being recycled, according to the official. “So we are on the right track! We expect to reach 60 per cent by 2030 and more than 90 per cent by 2040.”

Fellow panelist Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufti, Minister of Energy and Minerals, said the Oil & Gas sector is also getting its act together and dealing with oilfield waste in an environmentally responsible manner. Scrap steel and waste oil, for example, are now being recycled and processed in a sustainably approved way.

“With support from the Environment Authority and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, we are now collecting all of that waste for reprocessing within the country, thereby supporting not only environmentally friendly processes, but also creating opportunities for new industry, new jobs and so on,” he said.

OMAN HOSTS SEMINAR ON EXPANDING INSURANCE COVERAGE IN MENA

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), is hosting the third Regional Joint Seminar on the theme, “Expanding Insurance in the Middle East and North Africa: Key Challenges and Market Development Opportunities.”

The two-day forum, which began at the W Hotel Muscat, is also supported by the Insurance and Social Welfare Supervisory Authority of Morocco and the International Association of

Insurance Supervisors (IAIS).

The seminar brings together leading figures in regulatory bodies, insurance companies and industry experts from the Arab world and beyond.

The seminar is a key platform for promoting regional cooperation, exchanging experience and debating the emerging challenges and opportunities for the insurance sector amidst rapid economic and technological change.

The programme consists of a series of panel sessions and expert workshops, with priorities being strengthening regulatory

frameworks to remain in line with international developments, broadening the actuarial function to foster financial stability and examining opportunities for digital innovation to drive sectorial development.

Ahmed bin Ali al Maamari, FSA Vice President — Insurance, commented: “Legislators and regulators from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region met today with international organisations to discuss the region’s most pressing challenges, including climate change, cyber security and geopolitical tensions.”

Pact signed to drive energy efficiency in industrial hubs

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 29

THE Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed yesterday, April 29, a Memorandum of Cooperation with OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) to implement an Energy Excellence Programme.

This initiative is part of efforts to reduce carbon emissions in economic zones, free zones and industrial cities; and to support the implementation of the national strategy to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The memorandum also aims to explore potential cooperation opportunities in identifying and implementing energy efficiency initiatives and related certifications.

The Memorandum of Cooperation was signed on behalf of OPAZ by Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of OPAZ and on behalf of OQAE by Najla al Jamali, CEO of OQAE.

The areas of cooperation under the memorandum include providing support



The Energy Excellence Programme will contribute to improving energy usage in the economic zones, free zones and industrial cities.

and consultancy services for energy efficiency assessments and decarbonisation of certain technical and non-technical assets owned by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones; identifying and implementing energy efficiency improvement projects through performance contracting if both parties wish; supporting and advising the Authority on obtaining ISO 50001 certification in energy management; and providing consultancy services for developing an energy strategy for OPAZ.

Eng Mazin bin Mansour al Balushi, Head of the Technical Studies Section at

the Public Authority, stated that the Authority places great importance on environmental preservation and carbon emission reduction across the economic zones, free zones and industrial cities under its supervision.

The implementation of the Energy Excellence Programme comes in line with these objectives.

He emphasised that the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation reflects the Authority’s commitment to achieving Oman Vision 2040 objectives under the priority area of environment and natural resources.

He pointed out that in recent

years, the Authority has signed numerous agreements and memoranda of cooperation to establish projects in green hydrogen, green ammonia, green steel and direct reduced iron, reflecting the Authority’s dedication to promoting environmental sustainability in line with national sustainability goals.

He further explained that the Energy Excellence Programme will contribute to improving energy usage in the economic zones, free zones and industrial cities; and will have a positive impact on enhancing innovation and developing human capital in the areas under the Authority’s supervision.

OQAE provides a range of consulting services and solutions in energy efficiency, decarbonisation and renewable energy for various companies under the OQ Group as well as external clients. Energy Excellence Programmes are among the environmental sustainability initiatives that are receiving growing global attention due to their significant economic and environmental benefits.

GM pulls forecast due to tariffs as nervous consumers rush to buy

DETROIT: General Motors on Tuesday pulled its annual forecast, reflecting the uncertain effects of US President Donald Trump’s global trade war, even as it reported strong quarterly results.

In an unusual move, the automaker pushed its investor call to Thursday as it wanted to wait before commenting on changes to tariff policy. Trump is expected to announce changes to auto tariffs on Tuesday. GM’s shares fell nearly 2.5 per cent.

The company in January forecast net income between \$11.2 billion to \$12.5 billion for 2025, which did not include the impact of automotive tariffs.

Trump’s vacillating tariff policy has caused uncertainty in the automotive sector, with analysts log



The new GM logo is seen on the facade of the General Motors headquarters in Detroit, Michigan. — Reuters File

estimating that new car prices could rise by thousands of dollars.

“The future impact of tariffs could be significant,” GM Chief Financial Officer Paul Jacobson said on a call with the media. “We’re telling folks not to rely on the prior guidance,

and we’ll update when we have more information around tariffs.”

The automaker’s costs were up \$400 million from a year ago due to higher labor and warranty expenses, Jacobson said, even though “the underlying business is still performing pretty well”.

GM’s quarterly results were partly hurt by fewer wholesale deliveries of the profitable full-size pickups and SUVs because of several weeks of downtime at assembly plants for upgrades and a January supplier fire, Jacobson said.

The company is pausing its share buyback activity, pending more clarity on the economic situation. It had in February decided to repurchase \$2 billion of shares by the first half of this year.

Evercore ISI analyst Chris McNally

backed GM’s move to pull its annual guidance as the tariff uncertainty looms, while CFRA Research analyst Garrett Nelson said news related to tariff modification could buffer potential losses.

GM revenue rose 2.3 per cent to \$44 billion in the first quarter, boosted by customers rushing to buy before prices rise, surpassing expectations of \$43 billion. Adjusted earnings per share of \$2.78 beat estimates of \$2.74. Net income fell 6.6 per cent to \$2.8 billion.

Trump’s 25 per cent auto tariffs imposed in early April are projected to increase costs by about \$108 billion for automakers in the US this year, according to a recent study from the Center for Automotive Research.

The Trump administration will

reduce the effects of auto tariffs on Tuesday by alleviating some of the levies on foreign parts in US-made vehicles and keeping tariffs from stacking on imported vehicles.

Numerous blue-chip companies have pulled their guidance for the year in response to tariff uncertainty.

Consumer confidence has weakened since mid-February, when Trump ramped up his threats of levies on most foreign imports. Tesla last week did not give guidance, promising to revisit the issue in its next quarterly results.

“Longer-term, GM has opportunities to grow sales with its trucks and SUVs and through the expansion of its commercial business,” Edward Jones analyst Jeff Windau said in a note. — Reuters

ALLEVIATING DUTIES

Trump to reduce impact of auto tariffs



The US administration will move to reduce the impact of his automotive tariffs by alleviating some duties imposed on foreign parts in domestically manufactured cars and keeping tariffs on cars made abroad from piling on top of other ones, officials said.

“President Trump is building an important partnership with both the domestic automakers and our great American workers.” — Reuters

DEMAND GROWTH

Oil falls as tariff concerns dampen outlook



Crude oil prices fell on Tuesday as investors lowered their demand growth expectations due to the ongoing trade war between the United States and China, the world’s two biggest economies.

Brent crude futures fell by 59 cents, or 0.9%, to \$65.27 per barrel by 08:24 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures fell 49 cents, or 0.8%, to \$61.56 a barrel. — Reuters

EXPORT HIGHS

China’s trade in goods, services hits \$592 bn



The value of China’s international trade in goods and services reached 4.27 trillion yuan (about \$592.57 billion) in March 2025, up 6 % year-on-year, data showed.

Of the total, the export of goods stood at 2.13 trillion yuan and the imports reached 1.52 trillion yuan, resulting in a surplus of 603.4 billion yuan. The export of services reached 239.3 billion yuan. — ONA

OPINION

Three steps to stop Google from monitoring you



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is the founder of Knowledge Oman

LAST WEEK, my article revolved around steps one could take in order to stop their smart devices, be it mobile phones, smartwatches, wearables, etc., from listening to their conversation and tracking their whereabouts (where they go, what they do, etc.). I even shared a video on my social media network, visually, on how one could undertake the same, be it on an Apple iOS device (iPhone and/or iPad), Google Androids (and all smartphones that use the operating systems in question) and lastly Huawei Lite/Harmony OS.

Today, I want to focus on additional settings that are specific to Google’s Android smart devices/phones which would enable you (once disabled) to keep your phone healthy (in terms of performance) and safe (with your privacy). But first let me narrate to you the issue by asking a few questions.

With your Android phone specifically, do you notice that your mobile phone gets hot and is heated frequently? Do you also notice if your mobile phone battery gets drained quickly? What about the performance of the mobile phone?

Do you feel it operates slowly and the apps take time to load and/or function as well?

These are all some of the signs that your smart device has “spying” features enabled and is causing these issues that you are experiencing on the same.

The good news is that you can enhance the

experience so as to improve the performance of your Android phone and also be safe to some large extent.

The bad news is that these settings are enabled by default (when you first bought the phone) and many people are not aware of them. You may be asking why?

The official response from Google and other tech heavyweights would be to offer you a personalised experience, but the unofficial response that I can humbly share based on my professional experience is simply spying and tracking everything about you in order to sell your information to third-party companies, governments and/or the highest bidder who would love to monitor and track you.

What can you therefore do in order to disable them? I will share the hidden options for you to explore and decide their fate on your phone as of writing this article.

First, open settings on your phone, scroll down to “Google” and tap it. Then select “All services” from the list of tabs. Next, scroll down to the “Privacy and Settings” options, and you will see “Personalise using Shared Data”.

Once you click it, you will see all the apps that access your data and share information among them. Ensure you disable all apps you don’t want to have access to your data.

Google states that using on-device data helps improve experience and offer you better recommendations.

With your Android phone specifically, do you notice that your mobile phone gets hot and is heated frequently? Do you also notice if your mobile phone battery gets drained quickly? What about the performance of the mobile phone?

I say they have access to lots of your personal data. If they are not important to you, then by all means keep it open (enabled).

Second, at the same “Google” menu, ensure you also disable the “Usage and Diagnostics” option in order to stop Google from collecting your usage data. Google states that it constantly tracks how you use your phone, eg, which apps you open, how long you spend on them, etc. Keeping it open will surely drain your battery and make your phone slow. I tried it personally and found my Android phone much faster as a result.

Lastly, go back again to the “Google” option on the phone and scroll down on all services under the privacy and security section; and finally select “Ads”.

In here, make sure you press on reset advertising ID to erase all the tracking data associated with your devices and then press on delete advertising ID to permanently remove your unique ad tracking identifier.

By doing this step, you will effectively stop Google and third-party advertisers from serving targeted ads based on your browsing history. By following the above 3 steps and regularly reviewing the “Google” menu on your smart devices, you will know some of the things it is doing behind the scenes to learn about you and even sell this information to other parties.

I will continue to find ways to keep you safe. Until we catch up again next week, stay safe and keep winning.

TOYOTA INDUSTRIES \$42 BILLION BUYOUT IS SCRAP VALUE

BY ANTONY CURRIE

WHEN is a buyout premium not a buyout premium? In Japan, at least, it’s when the cross-shareholdings companies hold get in the way.

The issue is going to come into sharp focus if Toyota Motor Chair Akio Toyoda and his family follow through on the 6 trillion yen (\$42 billion) offer reported by Bloomberg on Friday to take private Toyota Industries, the original company in the industrial empire their ancestor founded more than a century ago.

The potential target started corporate life as the maker of the world’s first automatic looms, which still accounts for around 2% of its top line.

It branched out into carmaking in the 1930s, quickly spinning it off into what is now Toyota Motor.

It currently owns around 9% of its erstwhile subsidiary — which in return holds almost a quarter of its former parent.

At market close on Friday the stake in Toyota Motor was worth more than 3.2 trillion yen, about \$22 billion, equating to about 80% of Toyota Industries’ market capitalisation.

Fold in the stakes it owns in 27 other companies and there’s little if any value ascribed to its own operations.

Sure, its car parts business might not be worth a huge amount. It provides engines to some Toyota Motor models as well as building the RAV4 SUV outright; and makes some electronics and air conditioning compressors.

But the business only accounts for around a fifth of operating income and sputters along with a sub-4% operating margin, compared with almost 10% at Toyota Motor.

The chief money-spinner is its sporadically named Materials Handling Equipment division, which includes the world’s largest maker of forklift trucks and accounts for 75% of operating income.

That’ll drive this year’s overall earnings to some 280 billion yen, per analysts’ estimates gathered by LSEG. Pop that on the same 12 times multiple that its nearest rival, Germany’s Kion, trades at and a standalone Toyota Industries would be worth 3.4 trillion yen.

Add that to its Toyota Motor stake and the company’s implied worth is 6.6 trillion yen, 10% higher than what the Toyodas may put on the table. If their potential offer is an enterprise value, and not just the equity value, it’s even worse: strip out net debt and they might only be dangling 4.8 trillion yen. Granted, unaffiliated shareholders have themselves shown no interest in ascribing the full value to Toyota Industries’ varied parts. But when someone may be about to offer scrap for them, it’s worth fighting for a better deal. — Reuters

Oman emerges as prime gateway to US market

AS the United States rolls out sweeping new reciprocal tariffs, Oman’s Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the US has become more valuable than ever.

Far from being a historical footnote, the 2009 FTA now positions Oman as a resilient and strategic partner for global businesses seeking stable access to the world’s largest economy.

On April 2, 2025, the White House announced reciprocal tariffs on a broad range of imported goods, part of a strategy to level the playing field for American exporters facing high foreign duties.

Set to take full effect on July 8, these measures are already shifting global trade patterns. In this changing landscape, Oman stands out — offering preferential and in many cases duty-free, access to US markets.

OMAN’S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Under the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement, Omani goods have entered the US duty-free. Even with the newly imposed 10% reciprocal tariff, Omani products such as minerals, fertilisers and stones remain exempt.

For other categories now subject to the 10% charge, Oman still avoids the original “General” tariffs under US Normal Trade Relations, which typically range from 5% to 25%.

This distinction is critical. While countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE now face both the new reciprocal tariff and the existing general duties — resulting in total tariffs of 15% to 35% — Omani exporters generally pay no more than 10%.

For some goods listed under Executive Order 14257, Omani exporters continue to enjoy zero tariffs altogether.

REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES

Consider shaving products (HTS Code 3307.10): an Omani exporter faces only the 10% reciprocal charge, while European companies shipping the same products



Oman stands out — offering preferential and in many cases duty-free, access to US markets.

Beyond tariffs, Oman offers a stable regulatory environment, competitive energy costs, strategic geographic location, world-class infrastructure and growing incentives for investors — making it one of the region’s most promising export bases to the US.

encounter nearly 25% in combined tariffs.

Similarly, Vietnamese broom exporters now contend with nearly 49% in tariffs, while Oman’s total duty remains a modest 10%.

This pricing gap gives manufacturers and exporters based in Oman a significant advantage in the US market, offering predictability and cost competitiveness even as global trade faces rising protectionism.

CHALLENGES REMAIN

Not all sectors benefit equally. Aluminium and steel exports, for instance, still face a 25% tariff under US Section 232 rules, national security measures that the FTA does not override.

Furthermore, Omani producers competing directly with US manufacturers must work harder to remain competitive, as American companies (and some Canadian and Mexican firms under the USMCA) face no tariffs at all.

Nonetheless, Omani companies can remain competitive by smart pricing, incorporating US-origin materials; and emphasising speed and reliability in deliveries. With strategic adjustments, many Omani goods can continue to thrive in the American market.

SERVICES EXPORTS: A HIDDEN ADVANTAGE

An often-overlooked strength of the US-Oman FTA is its protection of services exports. Omani firms in sectors such as IT, consulting, design, and logistics enjoy tariff-free, unrestricted access to the US market.

The agreement guarantees national treatment, putting Omani service providers on equal footing with American competitors — an advantage unmatched by other Gulf countries.

MANUFACTURING IN OMAN: A STRATEGIC PLAY

For international companies now burdened by higher US tariffs, Oman presents an attractive alternative manufacturing hub.

Firms from Asia, Africa, or Europe can relocate operations to Oman, meet the 35% local value threshold and ship goods to the US under FTA benefits, often paying zero or minimal duties.

Beyond tariffs, Oman offers a stable regulatory environment, competitive energy costs, strategic geographic location, world-class infrastructure and growing incentives for investors — making it one of the region’s most promising export bases to the US.

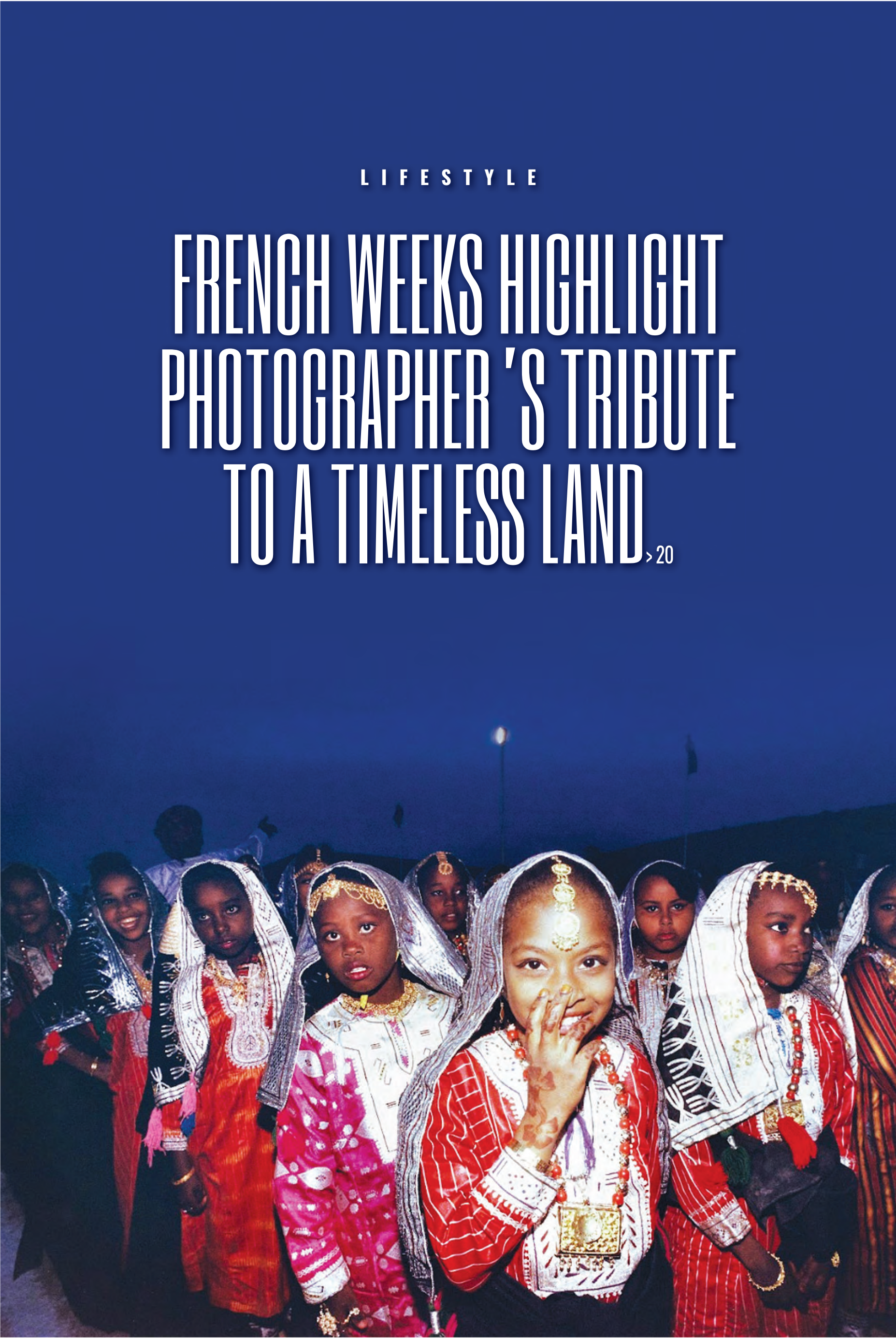
“This is a rare moment when global trade shifts create lasting opportunities,” said Ali Daud, Chairman of the Oman American Business Council (OABC).

“Oman is ready to welcome international manufacturers and help local exporters leverage access to the US market. But success will depend on smart, forward-looking decisions.”

Daud emphasised that no serious company will invest in relocating operations or opening new facilities if the opportunity looks temporary.

“No one moves factories for just four years,” he said. “Oman must focus on durable sectors — products the US cannot easily manufacture itself, or sectors that have consistently faced high tariffs under different American administrations.”

ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

FRENCH WEEKS HIGHLIGHT PHOTOGRAPHER 'S TRIBUTE TO A TIMELESS LAND>20

LIFESTYLE

Outkast, White Stripes, Cyndi Lauper among Rock Hall inductees



HIP-HOP PIONEERS Outkast and rock duo The White Stripes are among 2025's class of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees, the organisation announced late Sunday.

Cyndi Lauper, Chubby Checker, Soundgarden, Bad Company and Joe Cocker round out the performer slate of artists nominated into the prestigious music pantheon.

Hip hop icons Salt-N-Pepa along with rocker Warren Zevon will receive awards for musical influence, while the late record producer Thom Bell, pianist Nicky Hopkins and bassist Carol Kaye will receive the prizes for musical excellence.

The Ahmet Ertegun Award, which goes to a non-performing industry notable, is this year bestowed on Lenny Waronker, whose resume includes heading Warner Bros Records and signing Prince and R E M.

The induction ceremony — which doubles as a star-studded concert gala rife with tributes to the honourees — will be held on November 8 in Los Angeles.

It will stream live on Disney+ and will air later on the network ABC.

The inductees were announced live on ABC late Sunday on “American Idol,” during a special rock edition of the long-running music talent show.

Eligible nominees into the Rock Hall must have released their first commercial recording at least 25 years prior to being nominated.

Outkast, Chubby Checker, Joe Cocker and Bad Company were all first-time nominees.

The 2024 class of inductees included Cher, Mary J Blige and Ozzy Osbourne.

For many musicians, the allure of induction goes beyond mere acknowledgment. It serves as a powerful validation of their contributions to rock and roll, and popular culture.

The Hall of Fame preserves the rich history of rock music, showcasing artists who have transformed the genre. Induction places artists in the company of music royalty, enhancing their status among peers and fans. In many cases, the heightened visibility generated by the induction ceremony leads to renewed interest in their music, boosting album sales and concert ticket demand. — AFP

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



HERITAGE

A view of a work art displayed as part of the 'Angkor Royal Bronzes' exhibition at the Guimet Museum in Paris. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood actor Sooraj Pancholi attends the trailer launch of his upcoming movie 'Kesari Veer' in Mumbai. — AFP



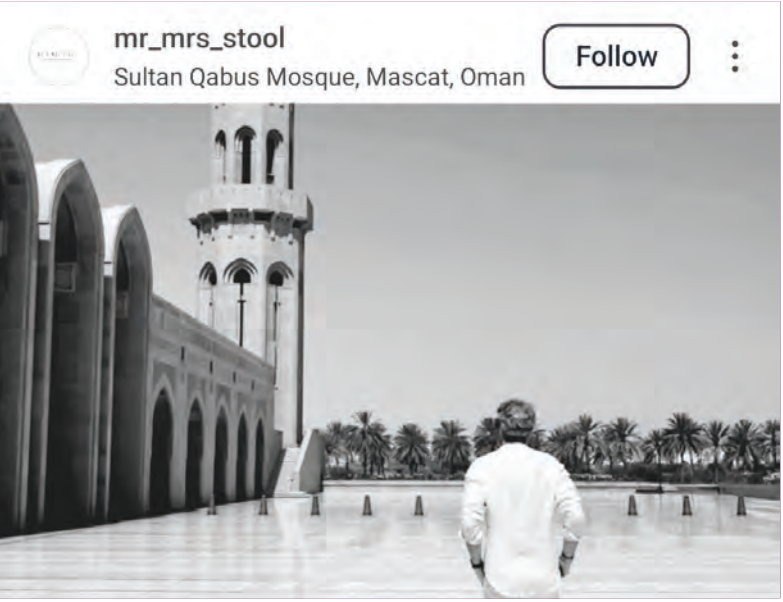
MUSIC

US singer Lady Gaga impersonator, drag queen Penelope Jean, poses for a picture at Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



The Rose Harvest



Beauty of Arabic Architecture

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.

Oldest-known ant preserved in 113 million-year-old Brazilian fossil



IN A GROUNDBREAKING discovery, scientists have identified the fossilised remains of the oldest-known ant, a winged insect known as *Vulcanidris cratensis*, which lived approximately 113 million years ago during the age of the dinosaurs. The remarkable specimen was found in limestone excavated from northeastern Brazil.

Vulcanidris cratensis belongs to a now-extinct group of ants colloquially known as “hell ants,” named for their distinctive scythe-like jaws. This species, measuring about 1.35 cm in length, possessed specialised mandibles that allowed it to effectively pin down or impale prey. “It would probably be confused with a wasp by an untrained eye,” commented entomologist Anderson Lepeco, lead author of the study published in *Current Biology*.

Unlike modern ants, *Vulcanidris*’s mandibles operated in an up-and-down motion rather than the side-to-side motion characteristic of contemporary ants. This finding

suggests a greater diversity in ant evolution than previously understood. Remarkably, this discovery predates the previous oldest ant fossils found in amber from France and Myanmar by about 13 million years.

The fossil, well-preserved in limestone from the Crato geological formation in Ceará, Brazil, was originally unearthed several decades ago and only recently donated to the Museum of Zoology at the University of São Paulo. This discovery highlights the evolutionary journey of ants, which are believed to have emerged between 168 million and 120 million years ago, evolving from wasp-like ancestors.

Vulcanidris thrived alongside a diverse array of life forms, including other insects, reptiles and even dinosaurs. Today, ants number around 20 quadrillion globally, demonstrating their extensive ecological influence across various environments. Lepeco noted their critical roles in ecosystems, including predation, herbivory and maintaining soil health. — Reuters



Emotional resonance of “The Traditional Symphonies of Yemen”

BY GEORGINA BENISON
PHOTOS KHALID AL BUSAIDI

LAST WEEKEND was a special time for aficionados of Arabic orchestral music. The Royal Opera House of Musical Arts was packed for both concerts, “The Traditional Symphonies of Yemen,” performed by the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra (ROSO) with artists from Yemen and Egypt. The ‘Heritage Symphonies’ project, curated in 2019 by Yemeni composer-conductor Mohammed Alghoom, blends Arabic and orchestral styles. The term ‘Symphonies’ denotes ‘sounding together’ rather than the Western form, showcasing a prolific composer renowned for soundtracks across films and TV series. The audience was in for an exciting evening!

A tight ensemble of sixteen solo instrumentalists from Yemen and Egypt formed the group, including a ‘semsemiya’ (a twelve-string Egyptian lyre), mizmar (a single-reed shawm like the Indian shenai) and piano. Soloists were amplified to ensure they could be heard throughout the auditorium, arranged in an inner circle on stage, dressed in their national costumes, with five percussionists and five singers at the back. The forty-strong ROSO players and sixteen choristers adorned in red, green, or black completed the ensemble. Each piece had a picture projected behind the musicians for enhancement.

To introduce his visiting musicians, the concert opened with “Awdat Mushtaq,” a composition by Alghoom, set against an evocative mountain backdrop. An Oud solo from Haitham al Hadhrami led to a mesmerising fiddle exposition by Mohamed Gharabi. Ali Joban displayed his dexterity on the Qanoon, with Lufti Mahyur playing the Nay over a sustained string drone. Abdullah Bin Abidan demonstrated how confidently the Mizmar can resonate, drawing



enthusiastic applause from the audience! ROSO provided a rich orchestral sound, interspersed with Arabic percussion in sweeping crescendos. The piece concluded with a musical dialogue between Oud and Qanoon; and a haunting vocalise from the choir.

The beloved Saudi piece, “Leila” set against an ancient Arabic house, had the audience singing along, many filming with mobile phones. A montage of Muttrah and Riyami Park illustrated “Sehr Ash’arq”, with lively orchestral sweeps making proud use of the brass section and a full chorus.

In contrast, the next piece employed a rhythmic piano riff from Abrar al Hanani, highlighted by a solo semsemiya from Qasem

Bin Nasr. Trombones thickened the orchestral texture, conjuring a contemporary Egyptian cinematic feel. Following this, another piano solo introduced a chordal, hymn-like quality set against an old Arabic majlis, evolving into a celebratory number with Nay, Mizmar and an ululating chorus in a joyous mood.

A huge cheer greeted Omani Oud player, Nebras Youssef, who appeared as guest soloist for “Kul Ma Jeet Bazur al Habeyab.” The audience’s engagement was palpable, with clapping and cheering as Oud solos contrasted with orchestral tutti. Part One closed with a syncopated Big Band sound featuring muted trumpets and rhythmic interjections from the chorus, highlighted by a playful clapping game led by Mulatif Hamidi.

Part Two opened with a Bahri folksong sung powerfully by Qasem bin Nasr against a projection of a sailing Dhow. Percussion solos and watery melodies exchanged between Nay and flute were interspersed with sweeping gestures from ROSO, creating an impressionist image. The following numbers resembled European waltzes, with ensemble solos alternating with uplifting orchestral sections reminiscent of French ballroom dances.

Guest singer Salem Fadaaq performed the poignant “Khalas Hassak Tqul Li Rouh” against an impressionist painting of a winter townscape. “Mizmar Al Habeish” offered a compelling composition featuring syncopated melodies with a contemporary twist. Mohamad Gharabi dazzled with a jazzy violin solo, leading into a remarkable Arabic jazz trumpet solo. Coloured lights illuminated windows behind Yemeni singer Omar Hadi for “Ya Summer,” evoking a religious mood with Arabic fiddle support.

The evening concluded with the final piece, “Sabbouha.” Gharabi showcased his high virtuoso technique amid a backdrop of Japanese rivers, while ROSO delivered a grand, movie-score finale, sending the audience off into the balmy night, enveloped in the spirit of the performance.

FEATURES

BY NAJAH AL RIYAMI

AS VISITORS step through the threshold of the Stal Gallery in Muscat, they are greeted by a vivid tapestry of images that beckon them to unravel the story of Oman through the lens of French-Syrian photographer Ammar Abd Rabbo. The air thrums with anticipation, a palpable connection forming between the observer and the world captured within each frame. Abd Rabbo's photographs transcend mere visuals; they are portals that transport onlookers into the heart of Omani life — where the stones speak of ancient histories, the faces reflect the dignity of everyday existence and the landscapes hum with a silent poetry. It is an invitation to connect, to reflect and to experience a cultural dialogue rich with emotion and insight.

Organised in collaboration with the French Embassy in Oman, this exhibition is a key highlight of the “French Weeks” programme, a vibrant celebration of Franco-Omani relations through art, dialogue and exchange. This marks the first time Ammar Abd Rabbo shares his personal archive of Oman with the public, bringing forth a collection titled “Oman In My Eyes.” The exhibition features 37 exquisite images, drawn from nearly three decades of his journey which began with his initial visit to the Sultanate of Oman in 1996.

The photographs encapsulate evocative portraits, traditional ceremonies, snapshots of everyday life, street photography and rare moments from national sporting events of the past. They portray not only the physical evolution of Oman but also the profound connection and affection Abd Rabbo has developed for the country. “Oman has never left me,” he expresses. “Since my first journey in 1996, almost 30 years ago, this country has etched into me its lines of stone and light, its silent and dignified faces, its still poetry within movement.” For Abd Rabbo, photography transcends mere documentation; it is “a kind of poetry and music” — a unique form of visual storytelling that seeks to elicit contemplation and emotional resonance.

What distinguishes this exhibition is the humanistic and lyrical perspective he employs in portraying his subjects. Abd Rabbo's art avoids the snares of spectacle and formality, opting instead to honour the quiet dignity woven into the fabric of daily life, reflecting the timeless essence of a country in transition. His photographs resonate with both personal and universal themes, encouraging viewers to pause and ponder the concepts of identity, change and memory.

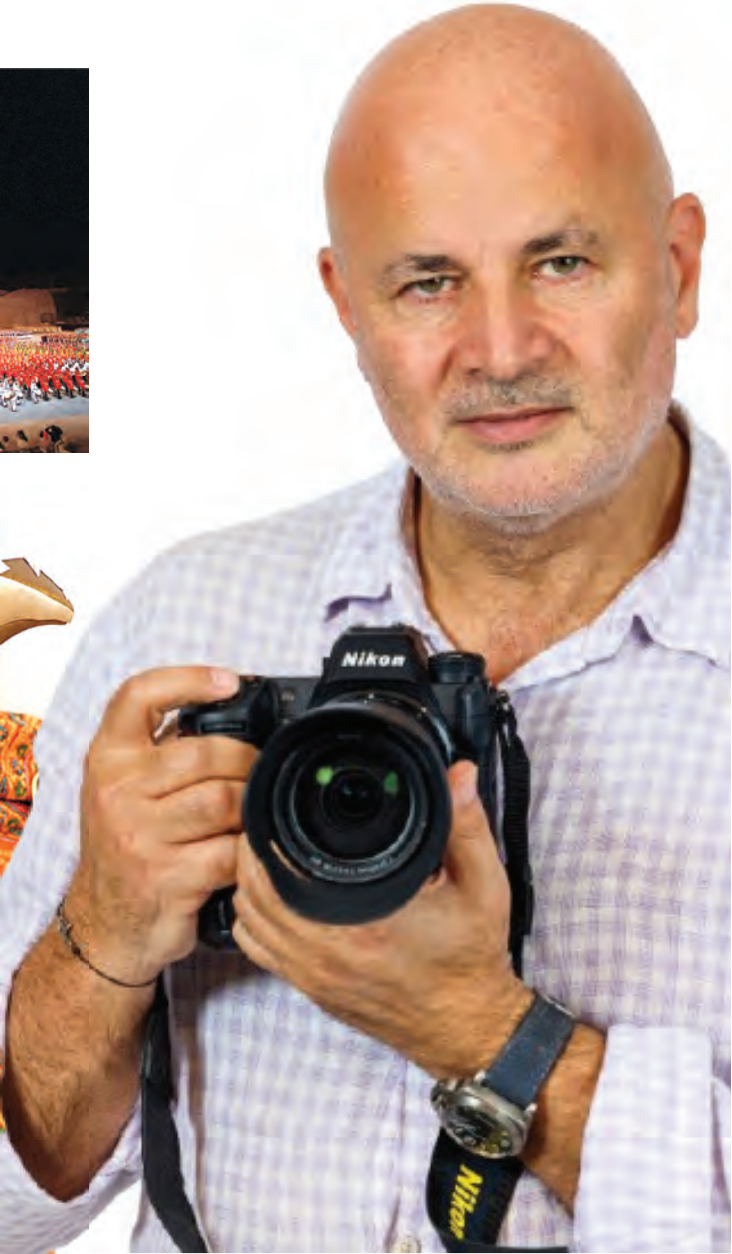
Born in Damascus in 1966, Ammar Abd Rabbo's early life was spent in Libya and Lebanon before he moved to France in 1978, following the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War. A student of political science at the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, he ventured into photojournalism with renowned agencies such as Sygma, Sipa Press and AFP. Over the past thirty years, his work has graced more than a hundred magazine and book covers; and found its way into leading international publications including Time Magazine, Le Monde, Paris Match, Der Spiegel and Asharq Al Awsat.

His lens has traversed a myriad of subjects, capturing the stark realities of war in Iraq, Libya, Lebanon and Syria, alongside significant global events like the Cannes Film Festival and Paris Fashion Week. Abd Rabbo's portraits of renowned figures, such as world leaders and cultural icons like Michael Jackson and Stephen Hawking, sit alongside tender depictions of ordinary people navigating extraordinary challenges. In conflict zones, he chooses to focus not on combat, but on the resilience of civilians — a perspective central to his poignant 2016 photo book *Alep, À Elles Eux Paix*.

Abd Rabbo's work has been showcased globally in esteemed institutions and cultural events, including Banksy's Dismaland in the UK, the Venice Biennale, MAXXI Museum in Rome and the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris. He has held solo exhibitions in cities like Doha, Dubai, Beirut



French Weeks highlight photographer's tribute to a timeless land



and Paris; and in 2018, he was honoured with the title of Chevalier of the French Order of Arts and Letters, recognising his meaningful contributions to the arts.

In “Oman In My Eyes,” Ammar Abd Rabbo invites visitors to engage with his ongoing relationship with the Sultanate of Oman — a journey enriched by admiration, curiosity and profound emotional resonance. Each image serves as a thoughtful meditation on place and presence, offering a rare and timeless view of Oman through the eyes of a seasoned storyteller.

This exhibition promises to attract a

diverse audience — from art enthusiasts and cultural historians to photography aficionados and members of the Franco-Omani community. It pays tribute to Oman's evolving landscape while celebrating the enduring connections fostered through art and cultural exchange. Visitors are heartily invited to explore this powerful visual narrative and immerse themselves in Oman as seen through the discerning eyes of a photographer whose work resonates with both gentleness and depth.

The exhibition will be open to the public from April 27 to May 12, 2025 at Stal Gallery.