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OMAN-RUSSIA

40 YEARS OF DISTINGUISHED RELATIONS

The anticipated summit between HM and President Vladimir Putin reflects the desire of the two nations to advance their shared interests by developing strategic partnerships



MUSCAT: Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultanate of Oman continues to develop areas of cooperation and partnership with various countries around the world.

His Majesty's state visit to the Russian Federation on Monday is one such milestone aimed at maximising the common interests between the two countries, particularly in economic, trade, investment, energy, and renewable energy sectors.

The anticipated summit between His Majesty the Sultan and President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation at the Kremlin in Moscow reflects the desire of the two nations to advance their shared interests by developing strategic

partnerships. This is especially significant as the two countries mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations on 26 September, 1985.

The political relations between the two countries have been characterised by sincerity and transparency regarding several contemporary regional and international issues, reaching a level of mutual trust in consultations and exchanging viewpoints. This dynamic has been reflected through phone calls between the two countries' leaders, visits by high-level official delegations, and other reciprocal official exchanges, in addition to ongoing political and parliamentary consultations held regularly in Muscat and Moscow, the foremost of which was the meeting between HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham

Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth and President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation in Moscow. During the meeting, President Putin emphasised promising areas of cooperation between the two countries, particularly in energy and tourism sectors.

By the end of 2024, the trade volume between the Sultanate of Oman and the Russian Federation exceeded approximately OMR133.108 million (equivalent to over \$346 million). Oman's key exports include metal products, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium products, while Russian imports consist of iron products and food items such as vegetables.

As of 2024, the number of registered companies with Russian shareholding in Oman reached

about 277, with a total capital exceeding OMR11.6 million (84.6% of the total invested capital in these companies). These companies operate in wholesale and retail trade, professional and scientific activities, information and communications, construction, accommodation and food services, transportation and storage, mining and quarrying, administrative and support services, arts and entertainment, and financial activities.

Hamoud bin Salim Al Tuwayah, Oman's Ambassador to the Russian Federation, affirmed to Oman News Agency (ONA) that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's state visit to Moscow holds great significance as it is the highest level of diplomatic visit between heads of state and government.

>A4

His Majesty to begin state visit to Russia on Monday

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will go on a state-visit to the Russian Federation on Monday.

A statement was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court to this effect. It reads as follows:

"In response to an invitation received by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik from President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation, His Majesty the Sultan will go on a state-visit to the Russian Federation on 21-22 April 2025.

The visit comes within the context of promoting relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Russian Federation in a manner that meets aspirations of the two countries.

The visit will discuss areas of cooperation between the two countries in various spheres and means of boosting them to serve the joint interests.

During the visit, the two leaders will exchange views on a set of current regional and international issues.

His Majesty the Sultan

will be accompanied during the visit by a high-ranking official delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Hamad bin Said Al Aafi, Head of the Private Office, Abdussalam bin Mohammed Al Murschidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Jamal bin Hassan Al Mosawi, Secretary General of the National Museum and Hamoud bin Salim Al Tuwayh, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation.

May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan in his journeys and grant him good health and wellbeing!"

— ONA

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Launch of National Health Insurance Platform

1 The Financial Services Authority will hold a press conference in Muscat on Sunday to officially unveil the National Health Insurance Platform "Dhamani." >A2

OMAN

14% rise in commercial registrations in Oman

2 The cumulative number of commercial registrations in Oman increased by 13.96% in 2024, reaching 441,773 compared to 2023. >A3

WORLD

64 killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza

3 At least 64 people have been killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza since Friday morning. >A6

CONSTRUCTIVE NEGOTIATIONS

Muscat to host next round of US-Iran talks

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Iran and the United States agreed on Saturday to hold another round of talks in Muscat, Oman News Agency reported yesterday.

In a tweet, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, said, "I would like to thank Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Seyed Abbas Araghchi and Presidential Envoy Mr Steve Witkoff for their highly constructive approach to the talks in Rome. These talks are gaining momen-



tum and now even the unlikely is possible."

A spokesperson for Oman's

Foreign Ministry confirmed that yesterday's meetings in Rome between Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. Abbas Araghchi and US Presidential Envoy Steve Witkoff, mediated by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Oman's Foreign Minister, resulted in an agreement by both parties to transition to the next phase of negotiations.

These talks aim to reach a fair, lasting, and binding agreement, ensuring Iran's to be completely free of nuclear weapons and the

full lifting of sanctions, while preserving its right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Clear communication

The spokesperson added that dialogue and clear communication remain the only path to achieving a mutually credible understanding and agreement that serves the interests of all parties at both the regional and international levels.

It was also confirmed that the next round of talks will be held in Muscat in the coming days. — ONA

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New investment opportunities worth OMR5mn announced in Jabal Shams

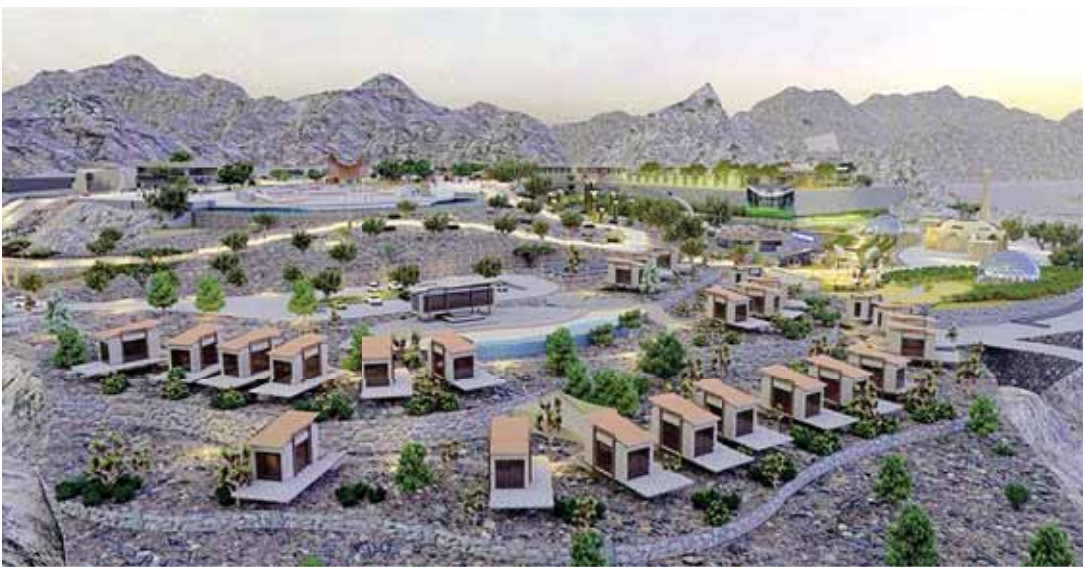
The investment offerings include tourism, agricultural, and recreational projects aimed at supporting economic diversification in the governorate and enhancing investment in the tourism and agricultural sectors

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has announced six new investment opportunities under the Jabal Shams Front Project in Wilayat of Al Hamra, with a total investment exceeding OMR5 million. These opportunities, available through the “Tatweer” platform, span a combined area of over 70,000 square metres.

The investment offerings include tourism, agricultural, and recreational projects aimed at supporting economic diversification in the governorate and enhancing investment in the tourism and agricultural sectors. The available opportunities involve:

- A full-service tourism resort (3-5 star) covering 1,400 square metres
- A fixed-structure tourist camp over 20,440 square metres
- An adventure centre spanning 10,012 square metres
- A coffee farm extending over



- 15,752 square metres
 - A fruit farm covering 9,830 square metres
 - A zip-line attraction
- Sheikh Hilal bin Said Al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, stated that the “Grand Canyon” Jabal Shams Front Project was selected

by the main committee for the Governorates’ Competition 2024 as part of developmental proposals. The first phase of the project, which includes infrastructure works, was tendered in March.

The governorate plans to launch the second phase tender later this

year, covering an administrative building, a geological exhibition, and an adventure academy. Concurrently, additional investment opportunities in the second phase will include a public square, an open theatre, remote workspaces for business meetings, a health



walkway for running and mountain trekking events, 18 kiosks distributed across the project site, a hanging bridge, a cliffside café, a multi-purpose hall, and an extended zip-line facility.

The total investment cost for the Jabal Shams Front Project amounts to OMR11 million, covering an area of 145,000 square metres, with expected annual investment returns exceeding OMR1.26 million.

Governor Al Hajri emphasised that the project’s modern design integrates the region’s natural topography with contemporary aesthetics. Event terraces will provide unique architectural spaces, and the main square will host cultural and recreational experiences, featuring a theatre with a 500-person capacity. The project also includes educational facilities designed to enhance visitors’ athletic and intellectual skills.

A long-track slide, spanning

250 metres, will be among the project’s recreational activities, along with a geological exhibition highlighting Oman’s diverse marine environment.

The initiative aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which supports local industries, private sector development, innovation, and human capital investment. It prioritises local content through increased reliance on domestic products, support for small and medium enterprises, and partnerships between public and private sectors.

Governor Al Hajri described the project as a developmental landmark situated within the stunning landscapes of Jabal Shams, creating extraordinary investment opportunities. Designed with sustainability in mind, the project ensures harmony between nature and human development, maximising available opportunities while preserving environmental integrity.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY



FSA to officially unveil the National Health Insurance Platform ‘Dhamani’

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) will hold a press conference in Muscat on Sunday to officially unveil the National Health Insurance Platform “Dhamani.”

This initiative is part of the national efforts to advance digital transformation in health insurance systems.

The launch comes at a time of growing demand for integrated digital solutions that align with the rapid developments in health insurance services.

The platform has been developed as part of the authority’s vision to establish a reliable digital insurance system that improves efficiency and facilitates seamless integration among stakeholders in the health insurance market.

“Dhamani” represents an advanced electronic national platform aimed at connecting private healthcare institutions with insurance companies, claims management firms, legislative and regulatory entities, and beneficiaries including citizens and residents.

ROYAL AIR FORCE OF OMAN

Medical evacuation conducted in Muscat

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman conducted a critical medical evacuation on Saturday, transferring a patient in need of urgent medical care from Masirah Hospital in South Sharqiyah Governorate to Royal Hospital in Muscat. This operation highlights the swift response and efficiency of the Royal Air Force in handling medical emergencies.



‘AL-NUNIYA AL-KUBRA’

UNESCO adds Omani manuscript to Memory of the World Programme

Times News Service

MUSCAT: UNESCO has officially added the Omani manuscripts “Al-Nuniya Al-Kubra” by mariner Ahmad bin Majid to its Memory of the World Programme.

This marks the second Omani manuscript to be included in the prestigious international registry.

“Al-Nuniya Al-Kubra” is one of Oman’s most significant manuscripts in navigation and marine sciences.

It documents valuable information about ancient shipping routes and vessel movements.

While earlier scientists divided the Earth into seven regions in the northern hemisphere, the manuscript expanded the knowledge base by introducing seven more regions in the southern hemisphere.

Realistic depictions

The manuscript holds immense cultural and human value as it presents realistic depictions of communities encountered by the author and his crew during their voyages.

It provides detailed descriptions of the marine environment, its creatures such as whales and snakes, and coral reefs, along with methods for anchoring ships.

Born in Oman in 1421 and passing away in 1500, Ahmad bin Majid pioneered advancements in navigation, including the development of the magnetic needle (compass).

His legacy includes over 40 works, notably “Al-Nuniya Al-Kubra,” with an original copy preserved by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth.

In 2021, UNESCO honored Ahmad bin Majid in its programme commemorating influential historical figures.

The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme, established in 1992, aims to preserve and protect documentary heritage from decay or loss due to social unrest, instability, looting, or natural factors like heat and humidity over time.

It encompasses diverse heritage forms, including manuscripts,



libraries, national archives, audio-visual recordings, cinematic films, and photographs. Oman first succeeded in including a manuscript in 2017 with “Ma’dan Al-Asrar fi ‘Ilm Al-Bihar” by navigator Nasser bin Ali Al-Khudouri.



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Number of commercial registers grows by 13.9%

The Ministry said that the volume of FDI in Oman exceeded OMR30bn by the end of 2024

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion held its annual media briefing during which it announced that the number of cumulative commercial registrations in 2024, compared to 2023 registrations, increased by 13.96 percent to 441,773.

The Ministry noted that, by the end of 2024, the contribution of domestic trade to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), at current prices, grew by 3.6 percent to more than OMR19 billion.

The Ministry pointed out that the volume of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Oman exceeded

OMR30 billion by the end of 2024, an increase of approximately OMR4.58 billion over the figures of the fourth quarter of 2023.

Meanwhile, the volume of foreign direct investment in the converting industries sector stood at more than OMR2.4 billion, the Ministry observed.

The ministry added that the

total volume of trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and other countries around the world in 2024 exceeded OMR40.9 billion and that the total commodity exports of Oman reached OMR24.2 billion.

The total number of transactions completed through “Oman Business Platform” stood at

827,129 during 2024, up by 15.1 percent as against 2023 figures, said the Ministry, adding that the number of automatic licenses stood 1,164,221 by the end of 2024, thus posting a rise of OMR1 million, since the automatic license system was first introduced in April 2021.

According to the Ministry,

Sanad Service Centres completed more than 1.2 million electronic transactions and services in 2024 through its 913 offices in different governorates of Oman.

The number of investment opportunities streamlined through “Invest Oman” platform stood at 68, while the total number of investment projects whose applications are being processed through the same platform stood at 90, said the Ministry.

By the end of February 2025, a total of 3,407 investors from more than 60 countries around the world obtained investor residency programme cards.

The media briefing was attended by Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; Dr. Saleh Said Masan, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry; Ibtisam Ahmed Al Farooji, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Investment Promotion and Pan-kaj Khimji, Adviser for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. -ONA

AFFORDABLE TRAVEL

SalamAir announces fixed fares for Khareef Season

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's low-cost airline, SalamAir has introduced fixed fares for flights between Muscat and Salalah during the Khareef season from June 30th to August 31st, 2025, exclusively for Omani nationals.

The airline said that it is offering a fixed Lite fare of 30 OMR for one way and 48 OMR for a return trip.

Adrian Hamilton-Manns, CEO of SalamAir, stated, “We're pleased to offer our Omani customers affordable travel options to experience the beauty of Salalah during the Khareef season. With fixed fares and increased capacity, we reaffirm our commitment as a national carrier to support domestic tourism.”

A MAJOR MILESTONE

Oman Air continues to progress towards sustainability with the completion of its organisational restructuring programme

MUSCAT: Oman Air has reached a major milestone in its strategic rightsizing initiative, a key component of its broader transformation aimed at enhancing financial resilience and long-term sustainability. Over the past 18 months the airline has worked closely with stakeholders to responsibly manage the process of rightsizing its workforce to align with industry benchmarks and its ongoing strategic requirements. As part of the programme, Oman Air has offered a variety of options for affected employees including severance packages, priority access to vacancies within the company and sector, and dedicated job placement support.

Ensuring that its journey towards long-term profitability is balanced with a strong commitment to employee welfare, the airline has invested around OMR 15 million in severance packages to provide those affected with financial security. Meanwhile, due to the reduction of its expatriate workforce by 487 to replace them with Omanis, the company has increased its Omanisation rate to 79.4%, compared to 74.8% in 2023 – demonstrating its dedication to developing and retaining Omani professionals and ensuring that national talent continues to play a central role in the company's

future.

To date, of the 415 employees identified as surplus, 74 have been successfully redeployed within the airline and 87 have been offered roles across the broader aviation ecosystem, while 293 have opted for severance packages ranging from 12-24 months. The company remains engaged with the Ministry of Labour and the Union to explore suitable outcomes for the remaining employees who have not yet opted for any of the available options.

“Oman Air has immense potential to contribute to national socio-economic development. However, financial challenges have severely constrained this ability. Beyond financial restructuring, this transformation is

about building the right capabilities to compete effectively in a highly complex and competitive market, create long-term value for the country and establish a strong foundation for sustainable success,” said Con Korfiatis, Oman Air's Chief Executive Officer. “A key priority throughout has been supporting our people, and we are proud that a significant number of employees whose roles were impacted have been successfully redeployed within the company or across the aviation sector. We remain committed to building an airline that will not only strengthen Oman's aviation sector but also have a lasting positive impact on the country and future generations of Omani citizens.”

OMAN CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE

Seventh edition of Oman International Food Safety Conference to commence on Monday

MUSCAT: The 7th edition of Oman International Food Safety and Quality Conference will kick off on Monday, 21 April 2025 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

Themed “Towards Resilient and Adaptive Food Systems”, the 3-day conference will be organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. It will be held on the sidelines of the Food Safety

Week.

The conference will be attended by experts and specialists from the Sultanate of Oman and 32

countries. It will explore ways to use modern technology in finding innovative solutions to enhance food safety and quality, discover food processing fraud and determine food authenticity. Such standard measures contribute to protecting consumer health, enhancing confidence in products released in markets and diminishing the volume of food waste. They also reflect positively on the national economy.

TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) hereby announces the following Tenders:

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/2696100/ 2025	Construction Network Connections in Tiwi Aisha in AL Kamil & AL Wafi, Sharqiyah South Governorate	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	1/5/2025	26/5/2025
T/2699102/ 2025	Construction of Water Distribution Networks in Al Hazim Area in Al Rustaq Wilayat (Zone 1 & 2)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	1/5/2025	26/5/2025
T/2699105/ 2025	Construction of B3C Integrated Network Services in Al Khuwair Area 17/1	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	1/5/2025	26/5/2025
T/2699107/ 2025	Construction of B3C Integrated Network Services in Al Khuwair Area 17/2	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	1/5/2025	26/5/2025
T/2699112/ 2025	Design, Build and Finance for a Pilot of Aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) scheme in Jaalan Well Field	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	1/5/2025	26/5/2025
T/2696094/ 2025	Call Off Contract for Supply of Laboratory Chemicals and consumables for Nama Water Services Laboratories for the wastewater for 3 years.	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and specialized in the works mentioned	RO. 100 /- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	1/5/2025	26/5/2025
T/2696103/ 2025	Framework Consultancy Services for Concept Studies of Water and Wastewater Projects	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2,500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	1/5/2025	26/5/2025

The tender documents can be obtained from the e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from this announcement date. The applicants shall pay the tender fee by logging into their (I-supplier Page).

Applicants who are not registered shall register through the following link: <https://owwsc.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> in order to receive the login credentials of the Supplier portal.

All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login: <https://nws.nama.om/en-us/Business-with-Us/Supplierlogin>). All participating companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope. Bid Bonds must be obtained from a local Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman addressed to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 2:00 pm on the bid submission date.

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 2:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website www.owwsc.nama.om & in case of general queries you may contact us through the email ID of tender@owwsc.nama.om

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BILATERAL TRADE

Oman-Russia: 40 years of distinguished relations

<FROM A1 This marks the first visit by an Omani Sultan to the Russian Federation and represents a historic step reflecting Oman's commitment to strengthening ties with Russia.

He added that the visit will open new avenues for bilateral cooperation in various economic, trade, cultural, tourism, and educational fields, serving as a launchpad for a new era of collaboration between Oman and Russia, benefiting both nations. The current regional and international developments will also provide an opportunity for the two countries' leaders to discuss and exchange views on global challenges.

He noted that the two nations share long-standing diplomatic relations, established on 26 September 1985. The Soviet Embassy opened in Muscat in 1987, after being represented by a non-resident ambassador for two years. In 1991, Oman officially recognized the Russian Federation as the legal successor to the Soviet Union.

The ambassador stated that the two countries' celebration of the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations highlights the depth of their ties, as they seek to boost economic, trade, cultural, and educational cooperation.

He pointed out that trade and economic cooperation between Oman and Russia has seen significant growth in recent years, bolstered by economic agreements. Russia is a major market for Omani exports, including dates, fish, aluminum, perfumes, and construction stones, while Russian exports to Oman consist of wheat, fertilizers, machinery, coal briquettes, and metal processing equipment. This visit will accelerate and expand trade exchanges and open doors for new opportunities in vital sectors like renewable energy and heavy industries.

The ambassador added that last year (2024), the Russian Export Center visited Oman with a delegation representing 39 Russian companies under the "Made in Russia" brand. Participants explored the Omani market through a session titled "Russia and Oman: New Opportunities and Prospects for Cooperation."

Additionally, Oman participated as a guest of honour in the 27th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in 2024, promoting its economic potential and investment opportunities. Oman has also actively engaged in other Russian economic forums, including the Kazan Economic Forum "Russia and the Islamic World," which brings together representatives from Islamic nations to discuss economic cooperation.

He pointed out that the trade volume between Oman and Russia by the end of 2024 reached approximately RO133.108 million (over USD346 million).

He said that the visit will witness the signing of 10 agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) in various fields, including a mutual visa waiver for ordinary passport holders and a protocol to establish the Omani-Russian Joint Committee, among others in fisheries, trade, media, diplomacy, and climate. These agreements will strengthen bilateral relations and open new cooperation avenues in trade, energy, education, and tourism, fostering economic growth.

The ambassador added that tourism is another sector with significant expansion potential between Oman and Russia. Oman's rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and scenic landscapes attract Russian tourists. The visa waiver agreement to be signed during the visit will further boost tourism cooperation. The number of tourists traveling between the two countries has been increasing annually, with around 11,000 Omani visitors to Russia in 2024 (a 70% increase from 2023) and approximately 44,000 Russian tourists visiting Oman in the same year.

He pointed out that both nations also aim to strengthen educational and cultural ties through student exchange programmes, academic collaboration, and museum partnerships.

The ambassador concluded by highlighting parliamentary cooperation between Oman and Russia as a vital tool for fostering mutual understanding and legislative experience exchange.

For his part, Oleg Vladimirovich Levin, Russian Ambassador to Oman, underscored the significance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's state visit to Russia, stating that it will open new vistas for discussions on priorities and explore fresh cooperation



ernization, logistics, and agricultural production. In tourism, Russian interest in Oman is growing, while Russia remains an attractive destination for Omanis.

He pointed out that both countries recognize the importance of transitioning to sustainable energy and exploring joint projects in solar technology, given Russia's advanced expertise and Oman's efforts to diversify its economy through innovative investments.

Culturally, the ambassador said that an "Hermitage Museum" section was opened in the National Museum of Oman earlier this year (2025). Russian cultural performances were held at the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) in early 2025, with plans for future exhibitions from the Kremlin Museums and the Tretyakov Gallery, he added. The ambassador concluded by stressing the importance of these sectors in driving economic growth, laying a solid foundation for sustainable partnerships that serve both nations' interests.

For his part, Faisal bin Abdullah Al Rowas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), stated that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's state visit to Russia opens broad prospects for enhancing economic and

investment cooperation between the two nations. The visit comes at a time of growing engagement between the private sectors of Oman and Russia through meetings and events organized by the OCCI, including Oman's participation as a guest of honour at the 27th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum and activities of the Omani-Russian Business Council.

He told ONA that these events have focused on Oman's economy and its lucrative opportunities, supported by incentives and initiatives, particularly in sectors targeted for economic diversification.

He added that Oman's strategic location, with access to open seas and year-round navigable warm waters, provides Russia with an ideal opportunity to export its products through Omani ports,

which are close to emerging markets in Asia, Africa, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. He pointed out that promising cooperation opportunities exist in food security, including the potential establishment of large wheat and grain silos in Oman for export to regional and international markets. Other investment opportunities lie in technology, petrochemicals, and tourism, with Russia being a promising tourism market, Al Rowas concluded.

Jamal bin Hassan Al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, expressed his pride in the cultural and museum cooperation between the National Museum and various museums and cultural diplomacy and strengthening ties between the two friendly nations. — ONA

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MUSCAT GOVERNORATE



Flood risk mapping and management plans reviewed

MUSCAT: Within the joint co-operation and efforts to combat flood risks, Muscat Governorate arranged a coordinating meeting with specialists from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to review the Ministry’s visions regarding the consultancy services project as visual presentations to update and prepare flood risks maps.

This meeting was attended by the Governorate and Muscat Municipality officials, a number of their Excellencies members of the Shura Council and the Municipal Council, the governorate’s Walis. During the meeting, Dr Mahmoud bin Mohammed Al Mamari conducted a comprehensive visual presentation, including the project’s purposes, stages, methodology and samples of its expected outputs.

According to Al Mamari, this project is based on three primary purposes. They include mapping and identifying flood risks’ areas, developing flood risk management and associated emergency plans, and preparing a comprehensive flood risk evaluation guide.

First, analysing rainfall and surface flow data. Second, designing detailed flood risks maps. Finally, developing risks and emergencies management plans. This project aims to implement protective strategies for the most exposed regions through designing plans that evaluate the flooding risk’s degree, he noted. These plans consist of implementing protective establishments, identifying evacuation and sheltering points, and submitting the required recommendations to the concerned entities. All these outputs will be summarised in a report entitled ‘Flood Risks Evaluation Guidebook’.

This project was officially initiated a year ago and is expected to be accomplished by 2026.

It currently has reached 54% in Muscat, Dhofar and Musandam Governorates.

Forum to focus on role of development financing

The ADFIAP event brings together 300 participants from over 40 countries

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The 48th Annual Meeting of the Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific (ADFIAP), hosted by the Sultanate of Oman and represented by the Development Bank (DB), will be held from 23 to 25 April 2025 at the Mandarin Oriental Muscat. The meeting will address topics such as community economic empowerment and the impact of development in Oman, the human factor in building entrepreneurial communities, aligning capital with development goals, and financing resilience to build sustainable economies.

The opening of the meeting will be held under the patronage of Eng. Said bin Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. This year’s meeting is held under the theme ‘Economic Gardening and Development,’ highlighting the role of development financing in supporting the national economy. The event brings together around 300 participants from over 40 countries, including a distinguished group of decision-



makers, experts and specialists in finance and development from both within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting will showcase initiatives in green banking, sustainable lending practices, environmental risk management, and innovative green financing tools. It will also explore climate resilience strategies, innovative financial instruments, international cooperation to build resilience, and the vital role of second-tier institutions in driving local economic growth and sustainability.

The meeting aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise among participants on ways to empower communities and achieve sustainable economic development. It also includes discussions on key issues such as green finance and the role of financial institutions in addressing climate challenges, contributing to enhanced economic resilience and

the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Hamad bin Salim Al Harthy, Chief MSME & Portfolio Management at DB and General Supervisor of the Meeting, emphasised the importance of the event, noting that it contributes to strengthening effective partnerships, empowering communities, and achieving sustainable economic development through the exchange of ideas and successful experiences.

He added that the meeting presents a unique opportunity to discuss the challenges facing financing institutions and ways to overcome them through international cooperation. He explained that hosting the meeting was the result of prior coordination, as the bank is an active member of this global association.

Al Harthy noted that the association, founded in 1976, comprises development financing institutions and development banks serving various economic sectors across 97 countries, with around 100 member institutions. He highlighted that the Sultanate of Oman joined the association in 2019, at a time when the bank was seeking partnerships and similar banking organisations to benefit from their experiences, particularly in addressing sustainability challenges.

He confirmed that since joining, the bank has participated in numerous meetings and is among the first Arab banks to become a member of the association, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia joining later. He added that the meeting features a fixed agenda, including meetings of the Board of Directors and the General Assembly, during which sustainability initiative awards are presented at both institutional and individual levels. DB has received several of these awards from development banks and institutions.

Al Harthy explained that Oman’s membership in the association has enabled access to a wealth of studies and practical experiences, the organisation of exchange visits with development banks in Malaysia, the signing of memoranda of understanding with member banks, and the delivery of training workshops for the bank’s staff.

He stated that the DB offers microfinance products targeted at individuals running home-based micro-enterprises or small businesses in need of development and additional capital. The objectives of microfinance include empowering individuals to become productive members of society, creating job opportunities for youth, supporting the culture of entrepreneurship, and promoting innovation and creative ideas.

The meeting will also feature the signing of several memoranda of understanding between regional and international development institutions, aimed at strengthening cooperation in financing. It will include interactive sessions, and on the final day, participants will be taken on a tour to Nizwa in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, as part of efforts to familiarise international guests with Oman’s rich history and culture. This tour will offer participants a chance to discover the cultural heritage of Oman and engage with the local community.

IN OMAN

Initiative launched to improve quality of life for senior citizens

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Al-Futtaim IKEA, in collaboration with the Ihsan Association, has transformed ‘Auntie Nasirah’s Room’—a heartfelt initiative designed to improve the quality of life for senior citizens in Oman. More than just a room, this project is a testament to care, dignity, and the importance of creating spaces where seniors feel safe, comfortable, and valued. It reflects Al-Futtaim IKEA’s ongoing commitment to making life at home better for everyone, at every stage of life.

Auntie Nasirah is not a real person but a symbol of compassion and elderly care. Within the Ihsan Association, ‘Auntie Nasirah’s Room’ serves as an educational space, welcoming around 20 visits per month from universities, schools, and families looking to understand how they can create a more senior-friendly home environment.

Every detail in the room has been carefully curated by IKEA’s home furnishing experts to enhance mobility, accessibility, and emotional well-being. Through smart design, ergonomic solutions, and a focus on safety, Al-Futtaim IKEA ensures that seniors can enjoy a home that supports their independence while remaining warm and inviting.

Jokha Al Farsi, Founder and Head of Ihsan Association, highlighted the importance of this initiative: “Auntie Nasirah’s Room is more than just a space—it’s a meaningful step toward fostering a home environment where senior citizens feel safe, comfortable, and respected.”

Mohamed Al Kurdi, Market Manager at Al-Futtaim IKEA,



added: “With our deep-rooted expertise in home furnishing, we are dedicated to providing practical, stylish, and affordable solutions that meet the everyday needs of older adults. Everyone deserves a home that supports them at every stage of life.”

To further inspire and educate the community, Al-Futtaim IKEA has created a mirrored setup of ‘Auntie Nasirah’s Room’ within its showroom, offering visitors a firsthand experience of senior-friendly home solutions. This interactive space encourages families to explore small yet impactful home adjustments that can significantly enhance the daily lives of elderly loved ones.

Mohamed Al Kurdi added: “This initiative is a reminder that good home design isn’t just about aesthetics—it’s about functionality, comfort, and ultimately, sup-

porting people to live independently and with dignity.”

This collaboration between Al-Futtaim IKEA and the Ihsan Association highlights the power of public-private partnerships in driving meaningful social change. By merging IKEA’s expertise in home design with Ihsan Association’s deep understanding of elderly care, ‘Auntie Nasirah’s Room’ sets a new standard for inclusive and thoughtful living spaces.

Aligned with Oman’s vision of enhancing social well-being, this initiative reinforces Al-Futtaim IKEA Oman’s dedication to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Inspired by real needs and real people, ‘Auntie Nasirah’s Room’ is a stepping stone toward creating homes that truly support seniors in living independently and with pride.



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Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
PRE/23/080 (Re call)	Supply Chain Management System (Re call)	11/05/2025	29/05/2025
PRS/25/003 (Re call)	Supply of Gas for Muscat Municipality (Re Call)	27/04/2025	11/05/2025
PRS-25-004 (Re call)	Supply of Building Materials for Muscat Municipality (Re Call)	27/04/2025	11/05/2025
PRE/24/328 (Re call)	Roads Paving at Hay Al Sad in Al Khoud (Re Call)	27/04/2025	11/05/2025
PRE/25/028 (Re call)	Renewal Licenses of Network Management System (Re Call)	27/04/2025	11/05/2025
PRE/24/312	Development of Al Mahaj Commercial Area	11/05/2025	29/05/2025
PRE/25/063	Hire of Road Marking Machinery with crew	11/05/2025	29/05/2025

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64 killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza Strip

The United Nations' World Food Programme has issued an urgent warning, saying that "Gaza needs food now" as thousands of people are at risk of hunger

GAZA CITY : At least 64 people have been killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza since Friday morning, and the number of casualties continues to rise, according to medical sources quoted by Al Jazeera.

The United Nations' World Food Programme has issued an urgent warning, saying that "Gaza needs food now" as thousands of people are at risk of hunger.

Al Jazeera reported that people in Gaza are "psychologically broken" due to constant Israeli airstrikes and the lack of food caused by the Israeli blockade on aid supplies. Many are struggling to feed their children.

According to the Wafa news agency, Israeli forces arrested eight Palestinians in the Fawwar refugee camp, south of Hebron in the occupied West Bank. Soldiers reportedly stormed the camp, detained several people, and eventually arrested eight. Wafa also said that many homes were raided, and property inside was damaged and vandalised.

Hazem Musleh, a paediatrician at the Kuwaiti Hospital in southern Gaza's Rafah area, told Al Jazeera that more children are dying



or facing serious health risks due to the expanding impact of Israeli attacks.

On World Heritage Day, human rights group Al-Haq said that Israel has targeted several Palestinian cultural sites, including some listed by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites.

Al Jazeera also reported that the al-Makhrour region, located in the northern Bethlehem area of the occupied West Bank and added to the UN's World Heritage List in 2014, is facing increased threats of land grabbing by Israeli settlers, according to Al-Haq.

The Gaza Government Media Office said the death toll in Gaza has now crossed 61,700. It added that thousands of people are still missing under the rubble and are presumed dead. At least 1,16,505 people have been injured since the war began 18 months ago.

As per Al Jazeera, at least 1,139 people were killed in Israel during the Hamas-led attacks on October 7, 2023. More than 200 people

were taken captive. Gaza pharmacies sans baby formula amid severe malnutrition cases

Severe malnutrition cases

Basic necessities, like baby formula, are off Gaza's markets and pharmacies, Al Jazeera reported, as Israel blocked aid into the territory.

Gaza is plagued with severe malnutrition cases, as per Al Jazeera. Families are not able to provide for their most basic needs, even for the most vulnerable - children and newborn babies.

Outside Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir el-Balah, Al Jazeera spoke to Fadi Ahmed, who had lost his son who was suffering from malnutrition.

He said his son was referred to Al-Aqsa Hospital where the medical staff discovered "massive infections in the boy's lungs, which led to a severe lack of oxygen in his blood".

"The boy's weakness and severe malnutrition led to his inability to

resist and then to his death ... after spending one week at the hospital."

Al Jazeera also spoke to Intisar Hamdan outside the hospital after she had lost her grandson due to malnutrition. Her son had not been able to find any milk for the child for three days, and after he was unable to receive treatment, the child had died, she said as she held her deceased grandson in her arms.

Children are suffering from not just malnutrition, but also serious medical complications and diseases that cannot be easily treated and require medical supplies that are scarce, as the region continues to face dire humanitarian conditions.

Gaza's Health Ministry says at least 51,065 Palestinians have been confirmed dead and 116,505 wounded in Israel's war on Gaza since it began 18 months ago, as per Al Jazeera.

At least 1,139 people were killed in Israel during the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, attacks.. -ANI



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Yemen will not back down: Houthis

SANAA: Yemen's Houthis rebels have vowed to continue their military operations against Israel and the United States following deadly airstrikes on the Ras Isa oil port that killed at least 74 people, CNN reported.

"Yemen will not back down from continuing its support operations for the Palestinian people until the Israeli aggression on Gaza stops and the siege is lifted," the Houthi-controlled armed forces in Yemen said in a statement, as reported by CNN.



The group also warned that US "aggression" would "only lead to further targeting, engagement, and confrontation."

Thursday's strikes by US forces marked one of the deadliest attacks in Yemen, leaving at least 74 dead and 171 others injured, as reported by Al Jazeera.

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed that the strikes were aimed at cutting off the Houthis' fuel and revenue sources, describing the operation as an effort to target the economic power of the Iran-backed group.

In a post on social media on Thursday, CENTCOM said, "Today, US forces took action to eliminate this source of fuel for the Iran-backed Houthi terrorists. The objective of these strikes was to degrade the economic source of power of the Houthis."

The US has been carrying out airstrikes on Houthi targets in Yemen since mid-march, targeting their oil refineries, airports and missile sites.

US President Donald Trump had vowed to use "overwhelming force" until Washington achieves its goal of stopping the Houthis from targeting shipping in the Red Sea.

Earlier, the US military's attack on Ras Isa port had killed at least 38, while about 102 have also been injured, Hodeidah's health office reported.

Houthis have launched numerous missiles against Israel and disrupted shipping in the Red Sea in what they say is in solidarity with Palestinians against Israel's war in Gaza since the October 7, 2023, attacks, CNN reported. -ANI



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STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Indian PM Modi to visit Saudi Arabia from April 22

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a visit to Saudi Arabia next week at the invitation of Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the upcoming April 22-23 visit will be the first visit of the Prime Minister to the country in his third term.

Previously, he has travelled to the Saudi kingdom twice in 2016 and in 2019.

The visit follows the State Visit of Mohammed bin Salman to New Delhi in September 2023 to attend the G20 Summit and co-chair the first meeting of the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council.

India and Saudi Arabia share close and friendly ties with a long history of socio-cultural and trade contacts. As strategic partners, the two countries share strong bilateral relations across various areas, including political, defence, security, trade, investment, energy, technology, health, education, culture and people-to-people ties.

India's relations with the Kingdom have evolved into a stronger and enduring partnership in the past decade, expanding into many strategic domains, with growing investment commitments, broadening of defence cooperation and intensive high-level exchanges across sectors, the MEA statement said.

The visit of PM Modi reflects the importance India attaches to its bilateral relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

It will provide an opportunity to further deepen and strengthen our multi-faceted partnership, as well as to exchange views on various regional and international issues of mutual interest, according to the MEA.

The Prime Minister's upcoming visit comes at a time when the US and Iran are holding talks with Washington seeking a deal on the latter's nuclear programme and tensions in West Asia with the



Hamas-Israeli conflict.

PM Modi's visit also comes ahead of the expected visit of US President Donald Trump to Saudi Arabia next month.

India and Saudi Arabia established diplomatic relations in 1947. In 2010, the bilateral relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership.

There have been regular high level exchanges between India and Saudi Arabia. Beginning 2024-till date, there have been 11 Ministerial-level visits from India to Saudi Arabia from India to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Foreign Minister and Saudi Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources visited India in November 2024 and February 2025 respectively.

Saudi side extended excellent cooperation during Operation Kaveri for the evacuation of Indian citizens from Sudan via Jeddah.

Riyadh is also seat of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). India and GCC secretariat have maintained good relations and regular dialogues at official level. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Riyadh in September 2024 to co-chair the first India-GCC Ministerial Meeting.

Saudi Arabia is India's fifth largest trading partner and India is Saudi Arabia's second largest trade partner. During FY 2023-24, India's imports from Saudi Arabia reached USD 31.42 billion and exports to Saudi Arabia were worth USD 11.56 billion. In 2023-24, bilateral trade stood at USD 42.98 billion, with Indian exports at USD 11.56 billion and imports at USD 31.42 billion.

Major commodities of export from India to Saudi Arabia include engineering goods, rice, petroleum products, chemicals, textiles, food products, ceramic tiles, whereas, major commodities of import for India from Saudi Arabia are crude oil, LPG, fertilizers, chemicals, plastic and products thereof etc.

Indian investment in Saudi Arabia has increased in recent years reaching approximately USD 3 billion (August 2023). The total Saudi investment in India has been about USD 10 billion. These investments are across diverse sectors such as management and consultancy services, construction projects, telecommunications, information technology, financial services and software development, pharmaceuticals, etc.

Saudi Arabia remained India's third largest Crude and Petroleum products sourcing destination for 2023-24. India imported 33.35 MMT of crude oil in 2023-24 from Saudi Arabia, accounting for 14.3 per cent of the India's total crude oil imports. -ANI

US ready to recognise Russian control over Crimea under peace agreement

The peace proposal includes an immediate ceasefire between the two countries. The framework was shared with the Ukrainian and European officials in Paris



WASHINGTON DC : The United States is ready to recognise Russian control over Crimea as part of a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine, CNN reported, citing an official familiar with the pro-

posed framework. The peace proposal includes an immediate ceasefire between the two countries. The framework was shared with the Ukrainian and European officials in Paris on Thursday.

A phone call regarding this proposal also took place between US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, CNN reported, quoting sources. However, there are some pieces

that still need to be filled out, and the US is planning to work with Europe and Ukraine on that next week in London, the source said. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 following a military invasion -- a move widely condemned as illegal

by the international community. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has repeatedly refused to cede the territory to Russia. Meanwhile, United States President Donald Trump on Friday (local time) said that the US may "take a pass" on its efforts to broker a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine if either side makes negotiations too difficult, CNN reported. "If, for some reason, one of the two parties makes it very difficult, we're just going to say, 'You're foolish, you're foolish. You're horrible people,' and we're just going to take a pass," Trump said. Despite the warning, Trump expressed cautious optimism about securing a deal, CNN reported. "I think we have a really good chance of getting it done. It's coming to a head right now," he added. Trump's remarks came after a statement by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who suggested abandoning the peace efforts in Ukraine within "days." Speaking in Paris after high-level talks with European, Ukrainian, and Russian officials, Rubio stressed the urgency of determining whether the war can be ended or not. "We need to determine very quickly now, and I'm talking about a matter of days, whether or not this is doable," he told reporters before departing Paris. Rubio and special envoy Steve Witkoff met with European and Ukrainian allies as part of the Trump administration's ongoing push to end war, CNN reported. "If it's not possible, if we're so far apart that this is not going to happen, then I think the president is probably at a point where he's going to say we're done. It's not our war. We didn't start it," Rubio said. "The United States has been helping Ukraine for the past three years, and we want it to end, but it's not our war. President Trump has spent 87 days at the highest level of this government, repeatedly making efforts to bring this war to an end. We are now reaching a point where we need to decide and determine whether this is even possible or not. Which is why we're engaging both sides," he added. -ANI

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

DRC boat accident death toll rises to 148

CONGO: The number of people who died after a motorised wooden boat caught fire and capsized in the Congo River in northwestern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has risen to 148, officials said on Friday. The death toll from the accident that took place on Tuesday earlier stood at 50, though there were fears the number would rise since the boat packed some 500 passengers, according to an official of Equateur province. The catastrophe began when a fire started while a person was cooking on board the vessel, said Competent Loyoko, the river commissioner. The fire broke out near Mbandaka city in the Equateur Province, at the confluence of the Congo and Ruki rivers. Officials said that several passengers, including women and children, died after jumping into the water without being able to swim.



Some of those injured were taken to nearby hospitals, but many were still waiting for news of their loved ones, according to Joseph Lokondo, a local civil society leader. "A first group of 131 bodies were found on Wednesday, with a further 12 fished out on Thursday and Friday. Several of them are charred," Josephine-Pacifique Lokumu, head of a delegation of national deputies from the region told the media. Some images and videos shared on social media showed a long boat with flames and smoke coming from it, as people on smaller vessels looked on. -DW

SPRING STORM

Deadly storm hits Italy, Switzerland

ROME: A heavy spring storm on Friday is wreaking havoc across Europe's Alps region, with Italy, Switzerland and France among the countries affected. Northern Italy on high alert due to flooding The weather system is dumping heavy rain on northern Italy, most notably the Piedmont, South Tyrol and Lombardy regions, causing flooding. In the town of Valdagno, a car swept away by the floodwaters killed a father and son. In the Piedmont region, a 92-year-old man was discovered dead on Thursday by firefighters after his home was flooded. Piedmont has allocated €5 million (\$5.7 million) in emergency assistance due to the storm. The floodwaters prompted evacuations in the Aosta Valley, with 6,400 people there without electricity, according to the Italian ANSA news agency. -DW



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SPORTS

Al Mazrui and Soomar ready for navigating in Qatar off road event

Al Mazrui has extensive experience as a navigator in the roads and stages of the Gulf rallies

MUSCAT: Omani co-driver Mohammed Al Mazrui will set in the co-driver seat when he participates in the first round of the Qatar off road Championship with Emirati Driver Noura Al Jassasi in a Can-Am Mavericks T2.

Al Mazrui has extensive experience as a navigator in the roads and stages of the Gulf rallies, having been an assistant and navigator for many Omani competitors in the Sultanate's rallies and the Middle East rallies in Qatar, Jordan and other rallies in the region.

The experience of the other navigator, Taha Soomar, in international participations with various drivers will also play an important and vital role in leading his team towards the appropriate tracks in the rally and achieving the first places if possible, as Soomar's experience as a navigator is close to twenty years.

The last participation of navigator Mohammed Al Mazrui with driver Zakaria Al Amari was in the



Qatar International Rally 2025, where he and Al Amari were able to lead the Group (N) category in a Subaru Impreza, with successful navigation from Al Mazrui. Al Mazrui, who also has extensive experience on Can-Am cars as a driver and navigator, seeks to achieve a distinctive result in his first participation with the Emirati driver Noura Al Jassasi

As for navigator Taha Soomar, his last participation was also in Qatar with competitor Abdullah



Al-Zubair in the Qatar International Rally. He previously worked with champion Khaled Soomar and other competitor from Jordan, including Shaker Juwaihian and others.

Regarding this participation, which is Al Mazrui's first race with competitor Noura Al Jassasi, who is participating for the first time in Qatar off road rallies, he said, "I am happy, first of all, to participate in the Qatar off road Rally and its first round. The Qatar Rally is not new

to me, and I have participated in many events here, especially the Middle East Championship. I have good experience in the local stages.

As for the competitor Taha Soomar, he confirmed that he hopes to succeed in this participation and to help the competitor Ahmed Al Mohammadi to achieve a positive and distinctive result in this race. He also hopes that everyone will emerge safe after the end of the round, and he hopes to stand on the podium.



Nadal to be honoured at this year's French Open

NEW DELHI: Rafael Nadal will be honoured at this year's French Open in recognition of his remarkable legacy and achievements at Roland Garros, as per the Olympics.com.

The 38-year-old Spaniard is a 22-time Grand Slam champion, with a record 14 of those titles coming on the Paris clay. The ceremony will take place on the opening Sunday of the tournament, 25 May, on Court Philippe-Chatrier, following the day's matches.

Nadal, a two-time Olympic champion (Beijing 2008 singles, Rio 2016 doubles), retired in November last year. His remarkable win-loss record at Roland Garros reads 112-4, and there are plans for him to take up an ambassadorial role at the Grand Slam.

French Tennis Federation president Gilles Moretton said of the tribute, as quoted by the Olympics.com, "It's a love story. I think it's important to talk about a love story because he has deep respect for the tournament, for clay, and we have the same respect for the player, for the ambassador he can become for Roland Garros and for the

federation."

Tournament director Amelie Mauresmo added that details of the ceremony will remain a surprise.

"Rafa has, of course, marked the history of Roland Garros in many different ways and his 14 titles will perhaps remain unequalled in a Grand Slam tournament. He will not be playing this year at Roland Garros, but he will be very present by our side for this 2025 edition. Rafa has an important bond with Roland Garros. We want it to be a surprise," she said.

Nadal's first title in Paris came in 2005 and his last in 2022. His final appearance at the French Open was in 2024, where he lost in the first round to Alexander Zverev.

Zverev became just the third man ever to beat Nadal at Roland Garros, joining Robin Soderling and Novak Djokovic (twice).

Nadal also played on the red dirt of Paris at last year's Olympics, losing to eventual champion Djokovic in the second-round singles and bowing out of the doubles with Carlos Alcaraz at the quarter-final stage. **ANI**

NEW CONTRACT

Virgil van Dijk signs new Liverpool deal to extend stay



LIVERPOOL : Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk has signed a new contract, extending his stay with the club and ensuring his leadership will continue into the upcoming seasons -- nearly seven and a half years after first arriving at Anfield, according to the official website of Liverpool FC.

This announcement comes

shortly after Mohamed Salah also agreed to fresh terms with the Reds last week.

"I'm very happy, very proud," Van Dijk told Liverpoolfc.com.

"There are so many emotions obviously that go through my head right now speaking about it," he added.

"It's a proud feeling, it's a feeling

of joy. It's just incredible. The journey I've had so far in my career, to be able to extend it with another two years at this club is amazing and I'm so happy," he noted.

"It was always Liverpool. That was the case. It was always in my head, it was always the plan and it was always Liverpool," he said.

"There wasn't any doubt in my

head that this is the place to be for me and my family. I'm one of Liverpool. Someone called me the other day an adopted Scouser - I'm really proud to hear these things, it gives me a great feeling," he remarked.

Van Dijk joined Liverpool from Southampton in January 2018 and quickly established himself as one of the world's elite defend-

ers. His commanding presence at the back has been instrumental in the team's success, helping them secure seven major trophies during his time at the club. The Dutchman has made 314 appearances and scored 27 goals to date. His trophy cabinet includes the Premier League, Champions League, FIFA Club World Cup. **ANI**

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INDIA'S FOREX MARKET

NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange (forex) market has seen strong growth in recent years, with average daily turnover nearly doubling from \$32 billion in 2020 to \$60 billion in 2024. This significant development was highlighted by RBI Governor in a meeting. — **ANI**

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SUNDAY, APRIL 20, 2025



MSX TRADING VALUE RISES

The trading value on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose to about OMR434.1 million in the first quarter of this year, registering a growth of 42.6 percent compared to OMR304.3 million in the first quarter of last year. > **B2**

Sezad earns global companies' confidence with over \$500mn funding for ACME green hydrogen project

Securing this funding for ACME's project highlights the international confidence in the projects underway in the area and reinforces Duqm's investment appeal, the official spokesperson said

Times News Service

DUQM: ACME Group announced that it has received \$140 million as the first installment of the funding allocated for its green hydrogen and green ammonia project, which amounts to \$540 million. The project is currently being implemented in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad), with a total investment of approximately \$750 million. The funding secured by the group represents 75% of the total project cost, in a step that reflects growing global interest and confidence in investing in Sezad.

Dr. Saeed bin Khalifa Al Quraini, Director General of the Investment Development Sector at the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) and official spokesperson for the Authority, stated that securing this funding for



ACME's project in Duqm highlights the international confidence in the projects underway in the area and reinforces Duqm's investment appeal.

He added in a press statement, "ACME's project is one of the strategic initiatives in the green hydrogen sector and marks the first project of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman to secure the necessary funding and sign a long-term off-

take agreement. This strengthens Duqm's leadership in the green hydrogen industry and supports the national strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and the government's broader energy transition goals."

The secured funding, along with the previously signed off-take agreement, provides a robust financial foundation for the project's continuity and long-term

market commitment, enabling successful and timely execution as planned.

The project aims to produce clean, renewable energy that aligns with Oman's aspirations to lead in sustainable energy solutions and reduce carbon emissions. The project has now entered the actual implementation phase; contracts have also been signed and purchase orders issued for the



supply of equipment and devices required for the project. Work is currently underway, in cooperation with contractors and technical service providers, to complete the project's infrastructure, reinforcing the commitment to execution timelines and the start of green hydrogen pilot production on schedule.

Gursharan Jassal, Country Manager for ACME in Oman, expressed gratitude in the achievement, saying, "Receiving the first funding tranche reflects international institutions' trust in the project's success. This milestone is significant not only for ACME but for the entire green hydrogen sector in Oman."

He added, "Securing the funding and the long-term off-take agreement represents a critical step towards realising the global green hydrogen vision, not just for the Sultanate of Oman but for the wider energy market. With support from our partners and contractors, we are moving steadily towards producing the first batch of green hydrogen by the first quarter of 2027, marking the beginning of a new era of sustainable energy."



The project's first-phase production capacity is set at 100,000 tonnes of green ammonia annually, with future expansion planned to reach 1.1 million tonnes per year.

Last year, ACME signed a binding long-term off-take agreement with Norwegian fertiliser giant Yara to supply 100,000 tonnes of green ammonia annually from its Duqm project, which is expected to begin operations in Q1 2027. Yara, renowned for its expertise in ammonia production, logistics, and global trade, is actively expanding its green ammonia portfolio.

In 2022, ACME became the world's first company to receive an internationally accredited certification for the commercial production of green hydrogen and ammonia. The certification was granted by TÜV Rheinland, a German technical services provider and one of the world's leading independent renewable energy certification agencies. This global certificate assures clients that ACME's products in Duqm are generated from renewable sources such as wind and solar energy and contain significantly lower levels of carbon emissions.

RESERVE BANK OF INDIA

RBI's gold reserve valuation triples

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reported a sharp rise in the value of its gold reserves for the week ending April 11, reflecting a global surge in gold prices.

According to data released by the RBI on Friday, the value of the central bank's gold holdings has tripled over the past year, highlighting a significant increase in its gold purchases during this period.

As per the latest data, the value of RBI's gold holdings surged by Rs 11,986 crore during the week ending April 11. As of that date, the total value of the RBI's gold reserves stands at Rs 6,88,496 crore. This increase comes at a time when central banks across the world are stepping up their gold purchases amid growing uncertainties. — **ANI**

NCSI DATA

Oman's real estate trading hits OMR362.3mn

MUSCAT: The total value of real estate transactions in the Sultanate of Oman decreased by 8.3 percent, reaching OMR362.3 million by the end of February 2025, compared to OMR394.9 million in the same period in 2024.

Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that fees collected for all legal transactions amounted to OMR12.3 million, a 5.9 percent increase compared to OMR11.6 million by the end of February 2024.

Value of sale contracts

The value of sale contracts also decreased by 18.3 percent, reaching OMR160.3 million by the end of February 2025, compared to



OMR196.2 million during the same period last year.

The number of sale contracts also decreased to 11,177, a de-

crease of 3.2 percent, compared to 11,543 by the end of February 2024.

On the other hand, the traded

value of mortgage contracts increased by 1.8 percent, recording OMR200.1 million for 3,416 contracts, compared to OMR196.5

million for 2,989 contracts at the end of February 2024.

Swap contracts decreased from 299 contracts worth OMR2.2 million at the end of February 2024 to 266 contracts worth OMR1.9 million at the end of February 2025.

The number of real estate properties issued increased slightly by 0.8 percent, reaching 39,704 properties by the end of February 2025, compared to 39,378 properties during the same period in 2024.

The number of properties issued to citizens of the Gulf Co-operation Council countries also increased by 7.1 percent, reaching 227 properties, compared to 212 properties during the same period last year. — **ONA**

RETALIATORY TARIFFS

How Trump's trade war upends Germany's economic model

BRUSSELS: Trade protectionism is nothing new in human history — not even in export-driven Germany, where in the 19th century, then-Chancellor Otto von Bismarck attempted to introduce protective tariffs on wheat imports.

Pushed by a strong farmers' lobby in the parliament, Bismarck's tariffs were intended to curb growing imports of cheap wheat from other European countries — a goal which eventually failed.

Since US President Donald Trump is known for his own, very unique take on history, he didn't hesitate to usher in a new era of protectionism, aiming to shield and isolate the world's largest economy through an aggressive tariff policy.

"Most Western economies owe a large part of their prosperity to free trade," says Carsten Brzeski, chief economist at Dutch bank ING. "That's now being rolled back, and it will take time before we see a new balance."

Pointless knee-jerk reactions

Brzeski believes it would be foolish to immediately respond to

Trump's policy with retaliation, even more so as more than a week after the US president had made his "liberation day" announcement of so-called reciprocal tariffs a clear US strategy has yet to emerge.

"Responding to Trump right now makes little sense. His policies are too erratic for that," Brzeski told DW.

Nevertheless, the European Union has already tested the waters, threatening specific retaliatory tariffs, for example, on motorcycles and bourbon whiskey. But bourbon was later taken off the list after Washington hinted that French and Italian red wine could be the next target.

A closer look at the reciprocal tariffs list reveals who Trump is really going after. It's the countries that are running a large and what he calls "unfair" trade surplus with the United States that are causing the president's ire. First and foremost, "China, Canada, Mexico, and Germany," said Brzeski.

Despite Trump's apparent disdain for the EU, the 27-nation bloc as a whole isn't his primary target. That role is reserved for China



— America's strongest contender for the title of world's largest economy.

Subsequently, the Asian economic powerhouse has been hit with the biggest duties — a staggering 145% on all of its goods exported to the US, as the White House confirmed on Thursday (April 10).

Brussels waiting for Berlin to lead retaliation

But economists Marc Schattenberg and Robin Winkler from Deutsche Bank Research believe Germany won't be able to escape the tariffs, urging German politicians to enter the fray.

The tariff shock, they wrote in a research note, has "increased pressure on the next federal government to defend the competitiveness of the German economy in an increasingly challenging global environment."

That observation cuts to the heart of Germany's current political dilemma. Following snap elections in March, a new German chancellor has yet to be elected and new ministers are waiting to be appointed.

With Germany in political limbo for a while longer, the EU is devoid of a strong voice from Europe's biggest economy. Fortunately,

the European Commission has agreed not to act hastily and instead pursue negotiations. Germany's export-dependent economy, meanwhile, has much to lose from a trade war between the Trump administration and much of the rest of the world. Industries such as automobiles, chemicals, machinery, and pharmaceuticals have a strong presence in the US markets.

A loss of US market share, argues Brzeski, may "not sound dramatic" at first glance given that only about 3% of the EU's gross domestic product (GDP) is tied to US exports. But in Germany, "hundreds of thousands of jobs" depend on exports to the US.

Moreover, if Trump succeeds in pushing Chinese suppliers out of the US market, Beijing could be tempted to dump its heavily subsidised excess capacities on the European market, undermining entire industries here.

No benefits in a trade war

ING's Brzeski thinks that, "over time," German businesses with a focus on domestic markets could reap some benefits from a shift in trade patterns. But even those

won't "escape the dance," he added, as disruptions in export industries would inevitably ripple through the broader economy.

And what about relocating German operations across the Atlantic — a primary goal of Donald Trump's trade policy?

"During the final years of the Biden administration and the Inflation Reduction Act, many European companies were already considering that," said Brzeski, as deregulation, lower energy prices, and tax cuts made the US "even more appealing."

But at the moment, the US president's "erratic" economic policies and tariff chaos have created "major doubts about legal certainty, and few business leaders are in a hurry to move there."

As Europe scrambles to find an appropriate answer to expanded US tariffs, policymakers are considering levying a digital tax on America's Big Tech corporations.

But Fabian Zacharias, managing director of Germany's digital industry association, Bitkom, warns against using what's come to be called Europe's "nuclear option" in the trade war. — **DW**

MARKET

Trading value of MSX surpasses OMR434mn in 2025 first quarter

The Muscat Stock Exchange’s market capitalisation recorded limited gains in the first quarter of this year reaching OMR27.63 billion by the end of March 2025



MUSCAT: The trading value on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose to about OMR434.1 million in the first quarter of this year, registering a growth of 42.6 percent compared to OMR304.3 million in the first quarter of last year. This rise was supported by increased trading in Ahli Bank shares, which witnessed private transactions worth more than OMR161 million in February, as a result of the sale of a 35 percent stake by the Bahrain’s Ahli United Bank. The total trading value of Ahli Bank shares in the first quarter of this year reached OMR162.8 million, representing 37.5 percent of the total trading value. OQ Exploration and Production (OQEP) came in second place with trading valued at OMR49.9 million, representing 11.5 percent of the total trading value. Bank Muscat came in third with OMR26.6 million, followed by OQ Basic Industries with OMR26.2 million, and Sohar International Bank came in fifth with trading valued at OMR22.5 million, representing 5.2 percent of the total trading value. The total number of transac-

tions executed in the first quarter of this year reached 57,000, a 14.5 percent decline from the approximately 67,000 transactions executed in the first quarter of last year. The Muscat Stock Exchange’s main index was affected in the first quarter of this year by the declines witnessed in stocks since the beginning of the year. It did not record any gains in the past three months after losing support from leading companies, which recorded a number of declines amid selling pressure on many stocks. The main index closed at the end of March at 4,367 points, down 209 points from its level in December 2024. The Muscat Stock Exchange’s market capitalisation recorded limited gains in the first quarter of this year, reaching OMR43.8 million, rising to OMR27.63 billion by the end of March. Market capitalisation was affected by the decline in the prices of several leading stocks with high market capitalization, such as OQ Exploration and Production, Omantel, Bank Sohar International, and OQ Gas Networks. OQ Exploration and Produc-

tion topped the list of public joint stock companies in terms of market capitalisation, at OMR2.56 billion. Bank Muscat came in second with a market capitalisation of OMR1.89 billion, followed by Bank Sohar International in third place with a market capitalisation of OMR860.2 million. During the first quarter of this year, the Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed the subscription of 1.41 billion shares offered by Asyad Shipping Company for public subscription, representing 20 percent of the company’s capital, at a price of 123 baisas per share. The company was listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange on March 12, and the share price closed at the end of trading during the first quarter of this year at 124 baisas, up one baisa from the closing price. As many as 892 transactions were executed, worth OMR10.73 million. In the first quarter of this year, the Muscat Stock Exchange also witnessed the transformation of Computer Stationery Manufacturing Company from a public joint-stock company to a closed joint-stock company with a capital of one million Omani riyals divided into 10 million shares. - OMA

MSX ends higher in weekly trading

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market experienced a positive week, concluding with a gain of 0.81%, breaking a two-week losing streak, according to an industry expert. “Despite this welcome weekly improvement, the market continues to navigate a broader downtrend, actively seeking potential support levels that could pave the way for a more sustainable recovery,” said George Pavel, General Manager at Naga.com Middle East. Several key factors influenced market performance and investor sentiment during the week. US-Japan trade talks eased concerns to a certain extent, although the persistent trade tensions, especially between the United States and China, remain a noteworthy risk for the global economic outlook and market stability. Additionally, comments from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell introduced a degree of uncertainty into the market landscape. “Domestically, the start of the first-quarter earnings reporting season emerged as a critical development. While the initial results released by several companies were mixed, they provided some positive impetus overall,” he said. “Investor focus will remain on the upcoming earnings reports in the following weeks, as broadly favourable results could provide substantial support for a market recovery,” he added.



Furthermore, a rebound in oil prices provided another positive signal, crucial for the Omani economy and regional sentiment, given the reliance on oil revenues. The Industry sector spearheaded the market’s advance, climbing 3.35%. Leading this charge was Voltamp Energy and Power, which surged over 13.00%, propelled by a remarkable 473% increase in net profit. Oman Flour Mills also delivered strong results, gaining 9.79% on the back of a solid 22% profit increase. Demonstrating resilience in contrast, Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles Co added 4.24% even while reporting a 28% year-on-year decline in quarterly profit. Further contributing to the sector’s positive performance, OQ Gas Industries rose 1.00%, supported by a healthy 71% rise in its net profit. The Services sector also contributed positively, finishing the week 0.74% higher. Nota-

bly, Abraj Energy Services led the sector’s gains with a 6.02% increase, achieved despite an 18% decrease reported in its Q1 net profit. In a similar vein, OQ Gas Networks posted a 0.78% gain even as its quarterly results revealed a 7% drop in profits. Oman Teleco rounded out the sector’s positive contributors with a 0.62% rise. Activity in the Financial sector resulted in a more modest overall gain of 0.32%, reflecting a mix of company performances tied to earnings reports. Several banks advanced on positive profit news: National Bank of Oman climbed 3.57%, buoyed by a 10% increase in net profit, while Ominvest gained 2.22%, supported by a 3% profit rise. Likewise, Bank Dhofar added 1.39% following its announcement of a 12% profit increase, and Bank Muscat rose 1.20%, after reporting an 8% rise in Q1 net profit. Bucking the trend of positive earnings driving gains, Sohar International Bank managed a 0.76% advance despite reporting a 14% decline in net profit; its stock drew significant attention, as one of the most actively traded during the week. “Looking ahead, the prospects for a sustained recovery in the Omani stock market appear linked to several ongoing developments,” said George Pavel. “Continued moderation in global trade tensions, a durable recovery in oil prices, and a generally positive trend in the unfolding Q1 earnings season could collectively provide strong support,” he said.

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Ford Oman and Lincoln Oman supports ROP’s ‘Driving without a Phone’ initiative

MUSCAT: Arabian Car Marketing Company the distributor for Ford and Lincoln vehicles in Oman, reinforced its commitment to road safety by encouraging drivers to put the phone down, focus on the road ahead and enjoy smart drives with the SYNC® technology. This support actively endorses the Royal Oman Police’s initiative – ‘Driving without a Phone’ and aims to promote safe journeys on the road. Raising awareness With mobile phone led distractions remaining a key contributor to road incidents, the message behind ‘Driving without a Phone’ only assists to raising awareness. Arabian Car Marketing strongly believes that change comes through creating awareness, promoting greater responsibility and usage of innovative technology that assists on-road safety. One such innovation is SYNC®, Ford and Lincoln’s advanced voice-activated system, available across their newest models. Designed to help drivers remain focused, SYNC® offers hands-

free control of essential functions such as making or receiving calls, replying to text messages, accessing navigation and managing entertainment, all without taking hands off the wheel or eyes off the road. This makes SYNC® an ideal tool in supporting the goals of the ROP’s ‘Driving without a Phone’ movement. More than a technological advancement, SYNC® stands out as a meaningful safety feature that enables drivers to stay responsibly connected. Especially in unavoidable or urgent situations, SYNC® allows communication through voice-activated, hands-free commands, helping reduce distractions and reinforcing the importance of staying focused on the road. Sharing his thoughts, a spokesperson from Arabian Car Marketing Company said “We believe that innovation should always serve a greater purpose, which in our case is safety while driving. Ford and Lincoln’s SYNC® technology is a testament to that philosophy. It empowers drivers to stay connected without compro-

mising on safety, using voice-activated, hands-free features that assist users to focus on what matters most; the road ahead! This Gulf Traffic Week 2025, we are proud to join the Royal Oman Police in championing the ‘Driving without a Phone’ campaign. We urge drivers to think more about their loved ones and to say no to using their phones while driving and instead use the intelligent SYNC® features only in case of urgent or unavoidable matters. We welcome customers to visit our showrooms and discover how SYNC® can transform the way they drive, interact and stay safe on every journey”. In Oman, Ford and Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC. Please log on to www.fordoman.com, or www.facebook.com/FordOman or www.youtube.com/FordOmanChannel or www.instagram.com/ford_oman or www.lincolnoman.com, or www.facebook.com/lincolnoman or www.instagram.com/lincoln_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.



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Mechanical engineer with over 4 yrs experience in sales and operations having Oman D/L with MSc in Engineering management from UK available to join immediately. Contact: 96111283. Email: dobin.mathew@gmail.com.

IT

Application & business Intelligence Developer 24yrs experience, indian male PowerBI, PowerApps, SharepointOnline, C#ASP.NET, SQL Server, SSIS. SSRS Nintex Cloud, Contact: 92056372

Female software Engineer full stack developer also expert in digital marketing with 5 yrs experience. Contact: 78462153

IT

10+ yrs Oman experienced IT support & SAP professional looking for suitable opportunities Oman D/L. Contact: 78029268 Email: united.emri@gmail.com

LOGISTIC

Highly organised and professional warehouse operations Manager (Indian) with 20 yrs experience in UAE & KSA seeking job. Available for immediate joining. Contact: 76418250, WA:+971 556545070, Email: kaupummer@yahoo.com

MANAGER

Business development manager MBA Indian 27 yrs of experience in Oman in FMCG, consumer durables. Strong relationships with major retailers across the country. Seeking a suitable position. Contact: 93340457

Indian male, MBA. 12 yrs of experience as (branch Manager & key accounts executive) looking for suitable position. Contact : 98132055

PROCUREMENT/ PURCHASE

Procurement Engineer, 19 yrs experience construction and trading. WhatsApp: 95839964



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LIFESTYLE

STUDY CONFIRMS
THAT **APPENDECTOMY**
REDUCES ULCERATIVE
COLITIS RELAPSES



The scientific study concluded that this significant reduction suggests that appendectomy may be an effective additional treatment option for maintaining remission of ulcerative colitis.

A British scientific study has confirmed that appendectomy (appendix removal) may reduce the risk of ulcerative colitis relapse in patients with chronic inflammatory bowel disease.

The study, published in The Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology journal, reported that the appendix plays a role by producing inflammatory proteins that stimulate the body to launch a series of immune responses.

According to experiments conducted during the study, which included 197 adult patients who all received usual medical care, half of whom underwent appendectomy surgery, it has been found that after one year, relapse rates were 36 percent in the appendectomy group and 56 percent in the usual care group.

The results also showed that the number of patients in the appendectomy group who subsequently developed a more severe form of the disease requiring treatment with biological agents decreased. Post-operative complications occurred in five cases in the appendectomy group, two of which were classified as serious. After taking into account individual patient risk factors, the risk of relapse during the study was reduced by 35 percent with appendectomy.

The scientific study concluded that this significant reduction suggests that appendectomy may be an effective additional treatment option for maintaining remission of ulcerative colitis.

Ulcerative colitis is caused by inflammation and ulcers in the large intestine and rectum, accompanied by diarrhea and abdominal pain. There is no cure for the disease. Its symptoms often recur and reappear, and can negatively impact quality of life. **-ONA**

Bayern facing scrutiny after Champions League exit

After the heartbreak of losing the 2012 final to Chelsea at the Allianz Arena, Bayern's 2025 Champions League hopes were dashed once more

BERLIN: UEFA Champions League finals on home soil continue to haunt Bayern Munich, and this season's early exit has raised tough questions about the club's future, squad structure and financial strategy.

After the heartbreak of losing the 2012 final to Chelsea at the Allianz Arena, Bayern's 2025 Champions League hopes were dashed once more - this time in the quarterfinals by a disciplined Inter Milan side. The loss marked the German champion's fourth quarterfinal exit in the past five



seasons.

"Business as usual is no option," Germany's Kicker magazine commented, urging a comprehensive squad overhaul and a more decisive direction from club leadership.

Team captain Joshua Kimmich echoed the growing concern, saying the team had "too many games where we did all right, but lost," and admitted Bayern had been fortunate just to reach the knockout stage, having narrowly advanced through the playoff round.

"We haven't beaten many top European sides this season," said

tle in 2025 - following a trophyless 2024 campaign that also saw exits from the Champions League and the German Cup - falls short of expectations, Kimmich added.

Following costly contract extensions for Alphonso Davies, Manuel Neuer, Jamal Musiala and Kimmich himself, German media are now calling for reinforcements in Bayern's inconsistent defense, as well as a reliable backup for striker and England captain Harry Kane.

The Bild tabloid has reported growing tensions within Bayern's leadership, speculating that board member for sport Max Eberl could be under pressure. Die Welt questioned whether Bayern's current squad is still at an elite European level, while Sport1 pointed to a "lack of resilience" within the team.

Meanwhile, some outlets suggest the honeymoon may be over for 39-year-old head coach Vincent Kompany. With expectations rising and performances under scrutiny, Kompany's future could depend on the team's progress next season.

Critics also took issue with Eberl's recent comments framing the season as a success, calling them misleading in light of Bayern's failures in Europe. -Xinhua

Winning only the Bundesliga ti-

EMOTIONS SPILLED OVER

Muller's goosebumps feelings in last Champions League game

BERLIN: As Thomas Muller tried to come to terms with Bayern Munich's UEFA Champions League exit, emotions spilled over as the 35-year-old left the San Siro pitch following a postgame interview.

Thousands of Bayern fans, who had stayed behind, chanted the Bavarian icon's name in an otherwise empty arena. "This makes your body react," said the two-time Champions League winner, describing a "goosebumps feeling."

"You can't trigger goosebumps," he added. "It happens. All of a sudden, it tells you about the emotions inside you."

With his dream of reaching the 2025 final in Munich left unfulfilled, Muller likely played the last Champions League match of his career-a career that has spanned 25 years in Bayern's shirt.

Catching up with legends like Lionel Messi in appearances in the world's top club competition offered



little consolation in that moment.

Muller's 163 Champions League appearances and 57 goals place him behind only Cristiano Ronaldo (183) and Iker Casillas (177) on the all-time appearance list.

Teammates showed their respect as they passed by, embracing Muller and offering congratulations after the quarterfinal defeat.

Bayern head coach Vincent Kompany spoke to the forward's legacy: "Over the upcoming months, we might fully understand how important he is and was. He is a legend," said the 39-year-old

manager.

Muller quickly turned his focus to the Bundesliga title race: "In three days, things go on in Heidenheim."

"My family was around; it might have been more emotional for them. I still feel in the middle of competition, as we want to secure the national title," he added.

Bayern chairman Jan-Christian Dreesen called Muller's achievements "a unique lifetime achievement," noting his place among the top three Champions League players.

Muller spoke about his enduring drive: "There is no before, there is no after-it's just the minutes of competition I have always loved."

The coming weeks may provide space for both Muller and fans to process the end of an era. "At the moment, I don't feel a lot," he said, appearing uncertain about his own emotions. -Xinhua

LA LIGA



Spain to have five Champions League spots in 2025-26

MADRID: Thursday's results in Europe mean that La Liga will have five teams in next season's Champions League.

Athletic Bilbao's 2-0 win at home to Rangers in the Europa League and Real Betis' 1-1 draw against Jagiellonia in the Conference League, coupled with Lazio's surprise elimination from the Europa League on penalties at home to Bodo/Glimt, means Spain takes an extra place in the Champions League based on performance.

The top two national federations in UEFA's performance ranking - based on clubs' performance in European competition across a season - each gain an extra place in the following season's Champions League. With the Premier League already having confirmed a fifth spot in next season's competition, Thursday's results mean second-placed La Liga can now not be overhauled by Italy's Serie A.

That means a total of eight Spanish sides will play in Eu-

rope next season, with the top five qualifying for the Champions League, with two more in the Europa League and one in the Conference League.

That number could increase, but would need some special circumstances, such as Athletic winning this season's Europa League, while finishing outside of the top five in La Liga, with the club currently sitting fourth.

Currently, FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid, Athletic and Villarreal are well-placed to take a spot in next season's Champions League, with Betis and Celta Vigo set to play in the Europa League, while eighth-placed Mallorca would go into the Conference League.

However, with seven rounds of matches left to play, other sides such as Real Sociedad, Rayo Vallecano, Getafe and Osasuna will also think that a late run of form will see them into Europe, adding extra jeopardy to the final weeks of the season.

LEG MUSCLE INJURY

Santos confirms new Neymar injury



RIO DE JANEIRO: Santos forward Neymar has been diagnosed with a new leg muscle injury, the club confirmed Friday, marking the latest setback in his protracted struggle to regain full fitness.

The 33-year-old was forced off in the 34th minute of Santos' 2-0 victory over Atletico Mineiro on Wednesday and subsequent tests identified damage to the semimembranosus, one of the hamstring muscles.

In a statement on its official website, Santos said the latest injury was not a reoccurrence of a

previous problem.

"The number 10 has already started treatment and ... will continue muscle strengthening work," Santos said, without providing an estimated timeframe for his recovery. Neymar has struggled with a series of soft-tissue injuries since returning from a torn anterior cruciate ligament last October following a year on the sidelines.

A brief return to form earned the former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain star a call-up to the national team for World Cup qualifiers in March. -Xinhua

FORMER SOUTH AFRICA WICKETKEEPER-BATTER

Hardik Pandya is one of best all-rounders in world: Mark Boucher

NEW DELHI : Former South Africa wicketkeeper-batter Mark Boucher is impressed with Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya's all-round performance, especially his bowling in the middle overs.

He believes that Pandya's success in bowling is giving him confidence.

"Hardik Pandya is one of the best all-rounders in the world. When he's firing, the team usually wins. I love his new role with the ball - he's not just bowling in the power play, but in the tough middle overs, the 'ugly overs'. And he's picking up wickets there too. That's giving him confidence, and it's translating into his batting,

where he's going in and finishing games," Boucher, a JioStar expert, said speaking on Match Centre Live.

Boucher also spoke about Will Jacks, he believed Will Jacks is a genuine all-rounder who has been under pressure but is now showing his true potential. He was impressed with Jack's bowling performance, which he believed would boost his batting confidence and lead to more success.

"Will Jacks has been under pressure and hasn't performed like he'd have wanted at the start of the competition. But he is amazing - he's a genuine all-rounder and more than just a part-time spinner. He bowled really



well tonight and picked up some crucial wickets. That would've fed into his batting confidence too - finally feeling like he's contributed. There's no reason he can't carry this momentum and do some fantastic things like he has for other franchises and for England," he added.

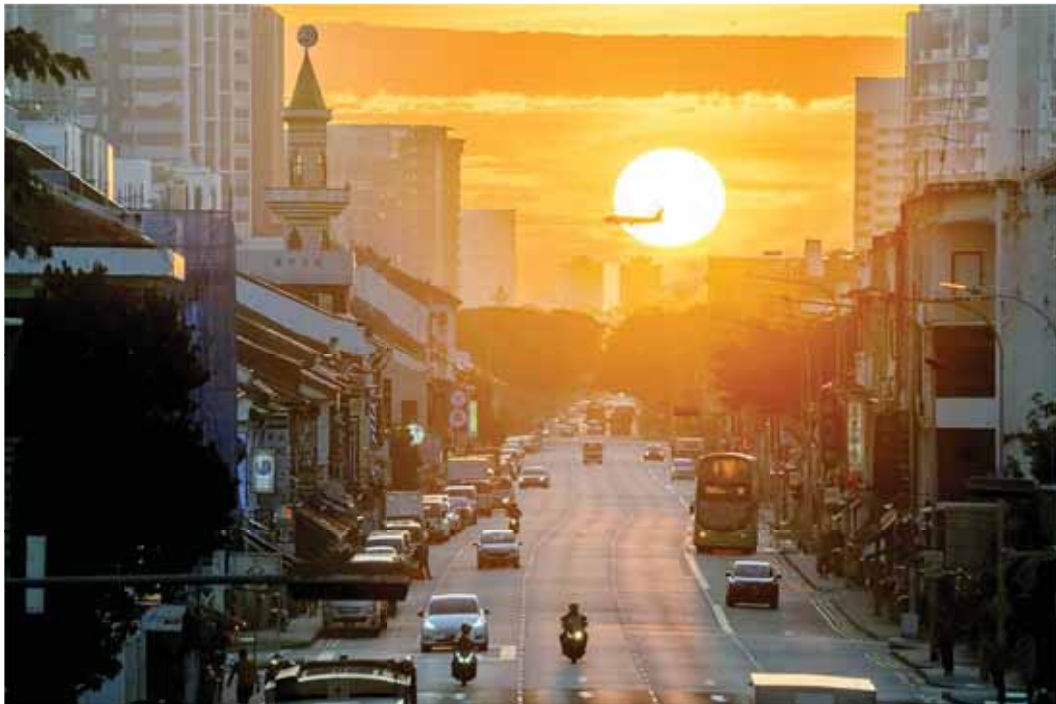
All-round performance

Will Jacks and Hardik Pandya's impressive all-round performance powered Mumbai Indians (MI) to their third win of the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL) season, as they defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) by four wickets on Thursday at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai.

MI skipper Hardik Pandya played a short but impactful cameo, blasting 21 runs off just 9 deliveries to bring the equation down to a run-a-ball. However, he was dismissed with just one run required for victory, he also claimed one wicket for 42 runs in his four overs.

Chasing 163, MI got the job done in 18.1 overs, with Jacks playing a crucial role both with bat and ball. Jack's made a vital contribution of 36 runs off 26 balls during the chase and earlier picked up two important wickets, dismissing Ishan Kishan and the dangerous Travis Head in the first innings, putting a lid on SRH's momentum. -ANI

IN PICTURES



Sunrise in Singapore
This picture shows a city view at sunrise in Singapore. *Xinhua*



BSF Jawans attend screening of Emraan Hashmi-starrer ‘Ground Zero’ in Srinagar
A special screening of Emraan Hashmi’s film ‘Ground Zero’ was hosted for BSF Jawans in Srinagar. BSF personnel watched the film in the presence of the entire team of ‘Ground Zero’, including Emraan Hashmi, Sai Tamhankar, along with director Tejas Prabha Vijay Deoskar, producers Ritesh Sidhwani with wife Dolly Sidhwani, Farhan Akhtar with wife Shibani Dandekar, and co-producer Arhan Bagati.



15th Beijing International Film Festival kicks off
Actors perform during the opening of the 15th Beijing International Film Festival (BJIFF) in Beijing, capital of China. *Xinhua*



Kuwaiti Air Force fighters participate in the ‘Jabriya 1’ exercise
Kuwaiti Air Force fighters participate in the “Jabriya 1” exercise at Abdullah Al-Mubarak Air Base in Farwaniya Governorate, Kuwait. The exercise simulates the hijacking of a civilian aircraft and the subsequent rescue of hostages, aiming to enhance joint coordination and raise readiness in dealing with such crises. *Xinhua*



World Heritage Day celebrated in Lalitpur, Nepal
Tourists visit Patan Durbar Square, a UNESCO world heritage site, in Lalitpur, Nepal. The International Day of Monuments and Sights, or World Heritage Day, is celebrated every year on April 18. *Xinhua*



Songkran Festival celebrated in Luang Prabang, Laos
Miss Songkran parade is held during the Songkran Festival in Luang Prabang, Laos. A series of celebrations are held to celebrate this traditional festival. Xinhua Media day of World Snooker Championships 2025 held in Sheffield, Britain. Players pose with the trophy during the media day of World Snooker Championships 2025 in Sheffield, Britain. *Xinhua*



Zimbabwe marks 45th independence anniversary
Zimbabwean soldiers march during a military display marking the Independence Day in Gokwe, Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa led the nation in marking the country’s 45th independence anniversary in the central province of Midlands, expressing his gratitude for the liberation and post-independence efforts to develop and modernise Zimbabwe. *Xinhua*

ROUND-UP

Bank Muscat: Multiple successes in enhancing digital transformation and offering technological solutions

Annual budget allocated for system development and integration of latest technological applications. The bank has over 800 ATMs, CDMs, and self-service kiosks offering various banking services, and the Bank is implementing a strategic plan to extend service accessibility in different locations

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, places significant emphasis on digital transformation to achieve excellence in the banking sector and offer innovative services that meet the needs of individual and corporate customers. By adopting the latest technologies and keeping pace with the rapid developments in the realm of financial technology, the Bank continues to update and improve its services, aiming to provide customers with a secure, efficient, and effective banking experience when initiating their banking transactions. With the rapid evolution of the digital sector, it has become essential for the banking sector to play a leading role in offering banking solutions that facilitate customers' businesses. In this context, Bank Muscat is one of the first banking institutions to embrace the latest digital solutions, ensuring customers have access to innovative banking services that allow them to conduct transactions in a seamless and secure manner.

To highlight the latest developments in this area and as part of a series of media visits which the Bank periodically organises, Bank Muscat held a media meet with a group of journalists and media representatives, with the aim to introduce them to the Bank's digital banking solutions and information technology services. The event comes to highlight the Bank's dedication to embracing digital transformation concepts as part of its strategy focused on providing the best digital banking services to customers. The media meet featured two presentations outlining the Bank's roles in fields of digital banking as well as information technology. During the detailed presentation on the Bank's digital banking, the audience were introduced to the digital facilities offered to them through the Bank's Internet Banking and Mobile Banking platforms. These include services like opening banking accounts, applying for and renewing debit cards, and requesting for credit cards, as well



By adopting the latest technological solutions and applications, the Bank is committed to delivering high-quality digital services, considering the importance of technology in advancing security systems and safeguarding the confidentiality of information against potential threats. Aiming to maintain its enduring customer base, Bank Muscat has launched many initiatives and projects, including the Anti-Fraud Awareness Campaign launched in cooperation with Royal Oman Police (ROP) as well as anti-money laundering initiatives."

Mohammed Al Naamani added:



as payment, money transfer, and investment solutions. Further to that, the audience were introduced to the services recently fed into the Bank's platforms such as the Eidiya payment online feature through QR code. The Bank's role in implementing information technology projects and leveraging digital technologies and modern information systems for customer service was highlighted during the IT-focused presentation, addressing different subjects including the Bank's strategy in investing in information technology and its achievements in implementing IT projects and programmes. Focus was also placed on the project innovation aspects which the Information Technology Division at Bank Muscat implements. This media meet provided an opportunity for the audience to have conversations with the Bank's officials and strengthen partnership with various media outlets which stand as an important component of the

Bank's growth and success. Speaking about the media visit, Abdullah Hamood Al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager, Digital Banking at Bank Muscat, expressed his appreciation and gratitude to all media institutions and journalists for their ongoing collaboration and interest in learning about the latest updates on the Bank's contributions to enhancing customer experiences through innovative digital banking services. He stated: "The Bank is committed to applying digital transformation concepts and investing in modern technologies as essential steps to achieve strategic goals aligned with Oman Vision 2040. Bank Muscat provides modern technological solutions via its Internet Banking and Mobile Banking platforms, enabling customers to benefit from these services with ease, security, and the ability to meet their diverse needs."

Abdullah Al Jufaili added: "The Bank's digital channels have be-

come a fundamental element in facilitating the delivery of banking services and speeding up their accessibility for customers, wherever they are. These solutions offer customers a secure, comfortable banking experience, reducing the need to visit the Bank's branches. Bank Muscat continuously enhances its digital channels and banking devices to provide the best services to customers at all times. As a strategic action taken to meet customer expectations and further reaffirm the Bank's commitment to innovation, Bank Muscat recently updated its Mobile Banking App and renewed the advantages of over 200 services and facilities offered on its digital platforms. With the growing popularity of online and mobile banking services, the quality of services has been improved to meet the increasing demand for digital banking solutions. I would like to encourage customers to make the most of these channels for conducting their banking transactions and also thank them for their continued trust in the Bank's services."

From his side, Mohammed Saud Al Naamani, Deputy General Manager, Business Applications at Bank Muscat, stated that digital banking services at the Bank are a key pillar in enhancing the banking experience for customers. He said: "Information technology plays a central role in enhancing the security of various banking practices and operations.

"Bank Muscat invests significant amounts in modern systems, applications, and technological solutions to enhance operational efficiency and provide a secure environment for customers. Also, the Bank has established a dedicated unit for technological innovation (Tech Innovation), aimed at continuously exploring options to enhance digital services and employing advanced systems for detecting cybersecurity threats, thus, significantly bolstering security measures. The Bank will uphold its commitment to investing in technology and modern systems to provide the highest levels of security and the most advanced technological solutions."

The media representatives also talked about their opinions on the Bank's initiative of regularly organizing media visits. Media reporter Mohammed Ahmed Al Shizawi said: "The initiative is a unique and strategic approach of Bank Muscat rendering it to stand out in the banking sector. Such media visits provide media representatives with an excellent opportunity to gain a closer look at Bank Muscat's efforts in offering various services and solutions. They also help us in addressing our opinions, suggestions, and questions related to these services. I would like to deliver my thanks to Bank Muscat for organizing the event, which demonstrates the Bank's acknowledgment of the importance of media in introducing

its services.

From her side, journalist Mai Said Al Abri noted: "Organising the media visit was very fruitful and beneficial for us, especially for enhancing communication with the Bank's officials and learning about its services. Such events are a sustainable and unique initiative of Bank Muscat. I previously had the opportunity to participate in a number of media visits, during which I learnt much about the Bank's programmes and initiatives as well as the other services offered to individual and corporate customers. I am pleased to have been invited to the event and contribute to its success. Such events play a role in extending the impact of media communicating to the public the updates and developments in the Banking sector."

Bank Muscat's online banking services and mobile banking app offer a wide range of banking services. For example, customers can transfer funds to and from their accounts or to other accounts within Bank Muscat or other local banks. Parents can also open accounts for their children and easily transfer funds to and from these accounts. Additionally, customers can deactivate or enable their debit, credit, and prepaid cards. To further boost the experience of customers and enable them to benefit from various banking products and services, the Bank offers services such as applying for credit or prepaid cards, car insurance, checkbook requests, bill payments, and more. Moreover, customers can take advantage of international speed transfer services to countries such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Egypt, in addition to international transfers via the SWIFT network. The Bank also offers services like a Zakat and donation calculator, updating KYC details, enrolling in the "Themaar" savings plan, and investing in Bank Muscat's Money Market Fund, Oryx Fund, and Al Tharwa Fund.

In its commitment to staying at the forefront of the digital transformation era and providing innovative banking services to businesses and institutions, Bank Muscat offers a wide range of integrated services tailored to enable customers to complete their transactions quickly, efficiently, and at a lower cost. These services include account opening, insurance products, remote check deposit, and direct debit services. The Bank has also launched an integrated platform for banking transactions, offering a broad array of services including payment processing, liquidity management, and international trade services.

Bank Muscat is leading in financial inclusion, that it upholds commitment to bringing banking services and solutions closer to customers. Bank Muscat is committed to offering banking services to all customers to ease their financial matters and meet their various needs. In addition to the services offered through the Bank's digital channels, customers can benefit from cash deposit and withdrawal services through over 800 ATMs and cash deposit machines across all regions of the Sultanate. These machines also offer services such as withdrawing cash, depositing funds, transferring money, requesting mini-statements, changing PIN numbers, and other everyday banking services. Additionally, the Bank provides self-service kiosks enabling customers to access services such as issuing debit cards.



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