



Nepal-Oman Friendship Hiking event to promote environmental awareness held

As part of the environmental awareness initiative, participants also took part in collecting plastic bottles and other litter along the route, reinforcing the message of ecological responsibility

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Nepal in Muscat, Oman, organised a Nepal-Oman Friendship Hiking programme on Saturday. The event aimed to foster friendship, promote wellness, and encourage environmental awareness among the Nepali and Omani communities.

The hiking commenced at 5:20 am from Riyam Park, proceeding through the historic Muttrah Fort and ended at Riyam Park. The approximately two-hour-long hike brought together a diverse group of 46 participants, including the Ambassador Dornath Aryal, the first Omani woman to summit Mt. Everest, Nadira Al Harthi, Embassy officials and their family members,



representatives of Nepali community organisations, Omani journalists, and renowned social media influencers. Emergency safety measures including ambulance were arranged through the Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman. Prior to the hike, Everest climber Nadira Al Harthi briefed participants on important precautions and safety tips for hiking.

All participants enjoyed the hiking trail, which offers stunning views. Since the route mostly faces north, it is suitable for hiking in the early morning and evening even during the summer season.

As part of the environmental awareness initiative, participants also took part in collecting plastic bottles and other litter along the route, reinforcing the message of ecological responsibility.

Upon completing the hike, Ambassador Aryal thanked all the participants and recounted his personal experience on the trail. He praised the breath-taking scenery, highlighting the colourful rock formations, water-filled streams, and the variety of plants along the trail.



CEREMONY TO FELICITATE THE WINNERS

Omanis win 5 prestigious awards at Gulf Smart Investor event



RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman won five prizes in the third edition of the Gulf Smart Investor Award 2025 organised by the Gulf securities market regulators.

A ceremony to felicitate the winners was held in Riyadh on Thursday under the auspices of Jassim Mohammed Al Budaiwi, GCC Secretary-General.

The ceremony honoured 44 winners of the award's four categories: video, drawing, photography and writing. In each category of the award for individuals and university students, 3 winners were felicitated, while 5 winners were felicitated in the segment of school students.

Winners from the Sultanate of Oman include: Marwa Farouk Mohammed Radwan (who won first place in the writing contest for the individuals segment); Sarah Hamad Al Maamari (who won third place in the photography contest for the university segment); Al Mohannad Mohammed Al Riyami (who won third place in the video contest for the university segment); Juhaina Suleiman Al Rashidi (who won second place in the drawing contest for the school segment); and Saleh Khalid Al Qutaiti (who won second place in the video track for the school segment). — **OWA**

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Indian Schools in Oman embark on AI and Financial Literacy to future-proof learning

As part of its strategic agenda for the 2025-27 term, the Board of Directors approved a comprehensive Financial Literacy programme across all Indian Schools in Oman from this week onwards

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Chairman of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools Oman, Syed Ahmad Salman, unveiled a series of transformative initiatives aimed at aligning the Indian schooling system in Oman with emerging global educational trends, in a press briefing held on Saturday.



These measures reflect a vision-ary enhancement in curriculum and infrastructure, designed to equip students and educators with future-ready skills and resources. As part of its strategic agenda for the 2025-27 term, the board has approved the introduction of Financial Literacy and AI (Artificial Intelligence) as part of the learning framework for students from Class 5 onwards. A comprehensive Financial Literacy programme is being rolled out across all Indian Schools in Oman from this week onwards. This initiative is designed to foster early awareness of financial prin-

ciples, empowering students with the knowledge to manage personal and household finances effectively while sparking interest in finance as a professional pathway. The AI curriculum, which will be implemented immediately after the summer break, aims to provide students with foundational exposure to machine learning, algorithms, and responsible use of AI tools—setting a precedent for technology-led education within the region. Salman stated, “The integration of AI into the curriculum marks a significant milestone. Our objective is not only to familiarise stu-

dents with emerging technologies but also to nurture critical thinking, innovation, and digital fluency from a young age.” The Chairman, further emphasised the board’s renewed commitment to infrastructure development across schools. An infrastructural audit is currently underway to ensure equity in access to facilities for all students, regardless of location. Major projects are in progress at Indian School Muscat (Jibroo campus), Indian School Dar-sait, Indian School Seeb, Indian School Sur, and Indian School Salalah, with more schools lined up for development.



In response to growing community demand, the board has also initiated feasibility studies to establish new Indian Schools in Barka and Sinaw, reaffirming its goal of expanding access to quality education in under-served regions. Recognising that the quality of education is intrinsically linked to the capabilities of its educators, the Board has commenced a Training Needs Assessment survey among teaching staff to identify key areas for Professional Development (PD). A structured PD roadmap will be formulated based on these insights to enhance instructional quality across the network. In a first-of-its-kind move, this nascently formed board has also consented for the establishment of a Sports Academy under

the supervision of the Sports Committee. The academy will nurture and train students with sporting potential and ambition, offering them structured pathways to pursue careers in sports and allied fields. Salman concluded by reiterating the board’s student-centric vision: “Every initiative taken by this board is directed towards the holistic development of our students—preparing them as global citizens, critical thinkers, and confident individuals in a rapidly evolving world.” He called upon the parent community and all stakeholders to extend their wholehearted support in embracing and advancing these progressive changes within the Indian Schooling ecosystem in Oman.

ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY



Oman marks World Migratory Bird Day

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is celebrating World Migratory Bird Day, which is observed annually on May 10. This year’s theme, “Bird-Friendly Cities and Communities,” aims to raise awareness about the importance of integrating nature into urban planning and encouraging efforts to make cities more welcoming to migratory birds. As part of these efforts, the Environment Authority continues its scientific and fieldwork initiatives to monitor and protect the Sooty Falcon, a migratory bird species at risk of extinction. Specialists have conducted field surveys in Dimaniyat Islands Nature Reserve and Fahal Island to enhance conservation efforts for this species. The authority has also installed identification rings on young falcons to track them in the future and assess natural nesting sites. Additionally, it has launched a national campaign to combat invasive bird species, which pose a threat to local ecosystems and biodiversity,

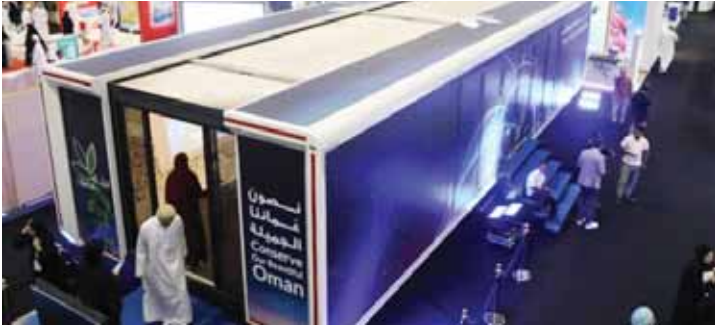
particularly the Common Myna and Indian Crow. Statistics indicate that over 1.2 million invasive birds have been recorded across Oman as of May 2025, including approximately 1.03 million Common Mynas and 171,000 Indian Crows, highlighting the challenges these species pose to native and migratory birds. The Environment Authority emphasised that balancing efforts to protect migratory birds while controlling invasive species is essential for a healthy and sustainable environment. It called on all sectors and community institutions to support bird-friendly practices, such as sustainable agriculture, clean water access, pollution reduction, and minimising bird collisions with glass structures. The authority also stressed the importance of making Omani cities safe and attractive for birds, reinforcing Oman’s role as a secure passage for international migration routes while ensuring a balance between development and biodiversity conservation.

OMAN SUSTAINABILITY WEEK 2025

Italy announces first official presence at Oman Sustainability Week to boost green partnership

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman represents an increasingly strategic economic partner for Italy in the MENA region. In 2024, bilateral trade reached €708.9 million, a significant increase from €537.9 million in 2023. Italian exports to Oman totalled €692,296,413, marking a 31% rise from €527,064,548 the previous year. Key Italian export sectors include machinery and mechanical equipment for the oil & gas industry, processed products in iron, steel, and aluminium, electrical components, and various chemical products. Omani exports to Italy also saw a substantial increase in 2024, from €103,905,260 to €243,370,202. Italy maintained a trade surplus of €448,926,211. Globally, Italy was Oman’s 18th largest supplier and 27th customer. Among major European economies, Italy ranked second (1.09% market share) after Germany (1.71%), followed by the UK (0.98%), Spain (0.59%), and France (0.43%). Italian business presence in Oman is concentrated in energy (e.g., ENI, Saipem), telecommunications (Prysmian, Sparkle), infrastructure and construction (engineering firms such as F&M Middle East and Renardet), and defence (with key Italian players active in the sector). Despite its relatively small population of around 5 million (40% expatriates), Oman offers a high-spending elite market, traditionally drawn to premium Made in Italy products (fashion, footwear, jewellery, luxury goods, and shipbuilding). Italian technical expertise is also in high demand, particularly within the country’s long-term development strategy, Vision 2040. To further enhance trade ties, ICE (Italian Trade Agency) reopened its Country Desk in Muscat in March 2024, following its temporary closure due to the pandemic. Within this context, the most promising business opportunities for Italian companies lie in Oman’s Vision 2040, the national roadmap for economic diversification. Of



particular interest are Oman’s ambitious investments in the green hydrogen sector, where several international consortia are already exploring collaboration with Italian firms. Oman’s energy sector is central to its economy, heavily dependent on natural gas (88.1%) and oil (11.5%), yet increasingly open to renewable energy. The country has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 7% by 2030 and aims for renewables to account for 30% of its electricity mix. Currently, around 70% of Oman’s annual budget stems from oil & gas revenues, which contribute 30% of its GDP. Oman continues to increase production—expecting an additional 50,000–100,000 barrels per day in coming years—through advanced technologies in heavy crude extraction. The post-2020 recovery in oil prices has strengthened government revenues, with notable opportunities remaining in upstream exploration and production. Oman actively seeks foreign expertise in drilling, hydraulic fracturing, and enhanced oil recovery technologies. Given the aging infrastructure, there is demand for modern equipment (pipelines, wellheads, pumps, seismic tools), and offshore exploration—initiated in 2017—also offers promising prospects. ENI holds exploration and development rights for two onshore and one offshore block. The government’s pledge to eliminate routine gas flaring by 2030 aligns with its sustainability goals and encourages further energy investments. To diversify its energy mix, Oman is preparing two major gas-powered Independent

Power Producer (IPP) projects for 2025. In parallel, green hydrogen and ammonia initiatives are being developed at Duqm Port with a planned capacity of 1.2 GW. The country aims to generate 20% of its electricity from renewables by 2030 and 35–39% by 2040 under Vision 2040. In 2022, total electricity production stood at 41,747.4 GWh, of which only 14 GWh came from renewables. Oman is therefore accelerating solar and hydrogen investments, targeting 163 MW in installed renewable capacity by 2025 and 3,631 MW by 2030. Pierluigi D’Elia, Ambassador of Italy to the UAE, said: “Italy and the Oman have been enjoying a steadily growing cooperation on sustainable projects. Italian companies are willing to share technologies, expertise, and innovation with their Omani friends and the Sustainability week is the right occasion to further strengthen our collaboration and create new opportunities. Italy and Oman are fully committed to a sustainable future and their trade relationship is showing a positive dynamic also in the private sector at this regard.” Valerio Soldani, Italian Trade Commissioner to the UAE and Oman, commented “Italy’s renewable energy and sustainability sectors are uniquely positioned to offer innovation, expertise, and long-term value, fully aligned with Oman’s Vision 2040 and its ambition to become a leader in the green economy. Oman Sustainability Week 2025 marks a significant milestone: for the first time ever, Italy is participating with an official delegation of 17 companies,

coordinated by the Italian Trade Agency (ITA).ITA’s dedicated office in Muscat, working in close collaboration with the Italian Embassy, is committed to supporting bilateral trade relations and fostering strategic partnerships in sustainability, energy transition, and innovation, deploying an effective toolkit of services and promotional activities in the Omani market.” The Oman Sustainability Week 2025 marks a historic milestone in the economic relations between Italy and the Sultanate of Oman: for the first time ever, the Italian Trade Agency (ICE/ITA) is present with its own official national pavilion at a trade fair in the country. This unprecedented institutional participation reflects Italy’s growing interest in Oman as a key strategic partner in the Gulf region, particularly in sectors linked to sustainable development, energy transition, and technological innovation. The initiative is not only a symbolic step forward in bilateral relations, but also a concrete platform to foster new commercial partnerships, promote Italian excellence, and support small and medium-sized enterprises in penetrating a promising and dynamic market. The presence of the ICE/ITA stand at Oman Sustainability Week 2025 is the result of a broader effort to relaunch Italy’s trade diplomacy in Oman. After the reopening of the ICE Country Desk in Muscat in March 2024, this official pavilion represents a further consolidation of Italy’s commitment to supporting its national companies in exploring the opportunities offered by Oman’s Vision 2040. Seventeen Italian companies will be featured in the national catalogue, representing sectors such as renewable energy, water and waste management, advanced engineering, and green technologies. The ICE stand will serve as a coordination and visibility hub for Italian firms, facilitating networking with Omani institutions, business counterparts, and regional stakeholders.

HONOURING CEREMONY

SQU 25th Annual Day concludes

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University concluded its 25th Annual Day celebrations by honouring 241 distinguished members of its community, including academic, administrative, technical staff, researchers, and students, in recognition of their dedication, to encourage continued achievement and excellence.

The ceremony was held under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Dr. Fahd bin Al Julanda Al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University.

In his speech, Dr. Nasser bin Musabbah Al-Zeidi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Administrative and Financial Affairs, reviewed the University's notable accomplishments across academic, administrative, and operational domains. These achievements reflect a commitment to both planning and execution, with statistics indicating an increase in labour market satisfaction with the University's graduates.

This improvement is attributed to initiatives such as increased training hours and the development of academic and administrative personnel.

Dr. Al-Zeidi also noted that the Omanisation rate has risen to approximately 45% in academic roles and around 96% in administrative and operational positions.

Furthermore, student and academic satisfaction with educational services has reached 66.2%.

In terms of academic accreditation, 15 programmes were accredited in 2024 by international bodies – 13 undergraduate and 2 postgraduate.

SQU also celebrated the inclusion and accreditation of its first programme in the Oman Qualifications Framework and the accreditation of 8 units in 2024, bringing the total number of accredited units within the Quality Assurance Office to 13.

Two dams worth OMR47mn to be inaugurated in Salalah

The opening of the two dams at Wadi Annar Dam and Wadi Adonab Dam, in the Wilayat of Salalah comes within the continued efforts of the ministry to enhance protection against flood risks

SALALAH: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources will celebrate over the next two days the opening of two new dams, Wadi Annar Dam and Wadi Adonab Dam, in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate at a total cost of OMR47 million.

The opening of these two dams comes within the continued efforts of the ministry to enhance protection against flood risks.

Wadi Annar Dam Project will be opened on Sunday in the Wilayat of Salalah.

The project is part of the flood protection system in Dhofar Governorate, with a storage capacity of approximately 16 million cubic metres at a total cost of approximately OMR23 million.

The ministry would also celebrate on Monday the opening of Wadi Adonab Dam.

It is the largest dam in Salalah's flood protection system and the second largest dam in the Sultanate of Oman, with a storage capacity of 83 million cubic metres and built at a cost is OMR 24 million.

The construction of these two



new dams aims to address the growing climate challenges witnessed in the Sultanate of Oman. It is also aimed to curb the risks of recurring flooding in Wadi Annar and Wadi Adonab. In addition, the new dams will will also help in boosting the water security and help to contain and protect from the heavy rainwater and floods coming from the mountains towards Salalah Port, Raysut Industrial City and Salalah Free Zone.

The floods protection system in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate aimed to support the sustainable development efforts and to provide the highest levels of protection from floods and to reduce the level of sedimentations carried forward to Salalah Port. –

ONA



OMAN FLOUR MILLS

OFM expects to receive over 8,000 metric tonnes of Omani wheat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Flour Mills has started the reception of locally grown wheat for the current season, continuing its commitment to investing in national agricultural production by using Omani wheat to produce flour for local markets.

A ceremony marking the occasion was held at the company's headquarters in the Wilayat of Muttrah, under the patronage of Dr Ahmed bin Nasser Al Bakri, Undersecretary for Agriculture at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

This season, the company expects to receive over 8,000 metric tonnes of Omani wheat out of a total harvest estimated at around 10,000 metric tonnes.

Through its wheat procurement programme, now in its fifth year, Oman Flour Mills supports farmers by purchasing select varieties of locally grown wheat.

This initiative, carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources, contributes to expanding wheat cultivation and developing Omani wheat products (locally known as burr).

Empowering Omani enterprises

Haitham Al Fannah, CEO of Oman Flour Mills, stated that the company's efforts are aligned with Oman Vision 2040 goals of empowering Omani enterprises and promoting agricultural investment.

He emphasised that purchasing local wheat provides a stable market for farmers, encouraging them to continue cultivation, boosting rural income, and supporting the development of agricultural communities.

He added that this initiative creates a complete economic cycle between farmers and local consumers, while also supporting related industries such as transport, storage, and logistics. Additionally, it reduces the carbon footprint associated with importing wheat, contributing to the country's sustainable development goals.

Al Fannah stressed that Oman Flour Mills plays a key role in strengthening Oman's food security by increasing the presence of



local agricultural products in the food market.

The company empowers Omani farmers to access the food production value chain through its locally produced burr flour, the first 100% Omani wheat flour product in the history of the Sultanate's food industry.

Food supply chain

He noted that sourcing local wheat further integrates Oman Flour Mills into the national food supply chain, both in terms of production and distribution across domestic and regional markets. The high quality of Omani wheat enhances the competitiveness of Omani food products locally and internationally.

Oman Flour Mills relies on advanced technology and laboratories to maintain product quality in line with global standards and is committed to food safety systems that build consumer trust in Oman and beyond.





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NCSI DATA



Over 1.7mn vehicles registered in Oman

MUSCAT: The number of vehicles registered in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of March 2025 reached 1,776,642, according to the statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The registration of private vehicles amounted to 1,407,472 representing 79.2 % of the total vehicles registered.

The commercial registration of vehicles amounted to 261,527, representing 14.7 % , the number of rental cars registered amounted to 40,678, representing 2.3 % and the taxis registered amounted to 28,307 representing 1.6 %.

The number of vehicles weighing less than three tonnes amounted to 1,612,032, representing 90.7% of the total vehicles registered in the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

SPECIALISED FORUM

Scientific symposium

IBRI: The College of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Ibri on Thursday organised a specialised scientific symposium titled “Artificial Intelligence in Business Management.”

The event was held under the auspices of Dr. Ahoud Said Al Balushi, Member of the State Council.

The symposium aimed to discuss the rapid transformations driven by AI technologies across business management fields, showcase national experiences, and examine opportunities and challenges in AI adoption while forecasting its future roles in employment and workplaces. AI’s critical role in building competitive advantages in local and global markets were discussed. — **ONA**

SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION

Oman participates in Venice Biennale of Architecture 2025

VENICE: The Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion at the 19th Venice Biennale of Architecture 2025 was opened on Thursday.

The Omani pavilion is titled “Athar” and themed “Integrating Human and Artificial Intelligence Technologies in Architecture”. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Nizar Al Julanda Al Said, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Italian Republic.

Sayyid Said bin Sultan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture (Commissioner General of the Sultanate of Oman pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Architecture 2025), said in a

speech at the opening ceremony that the Sultanate of Oman’s participation in the event provides an opportunity to showcase the features of the Omani architectural identity, rooted in authenticity and open to the concepts of modernisation, sustainability and innovation.

“It is not just a design participation, but rather an integrated experience that portrays the life of the Omani society, through narrative and visual concepts blended with architectural creativity,” Sayyid Said explained.

He pointed out that this will be Oman’s first participation in the architectural extravaganza and, accordingly, it constitutes a

milestone in our cultural and architectural presence in the international arena.

“We have sought to make our presence a true expression of the spirit of the Omani land, incarnating the country’s deep connection to nature, its adherence to authentic values and its aspirations for a future based on respect and renewed vision,” Sayyid Said added.

“The overall vision of our participation in the event is based on the ‘Omani sabla’, a typical manifestation of space for communication, decision-making, and dialogue,” Sayyid Said explained. (Sabla is a traditional social gathering place for Omani citizens during social occasions). — **ONA**

INDIA-PAKISTAN

Expats welcome ceasefire pact

<FROM A1 Pakistani expatriate Mohsin Sheikh, who lives and works in Muscat, echoed similar sentiments. “We warmly welcome the ceasefire agreement on Saturday between India and Pakistan and sincerely hope that both countries will continue to pursue peace through communication and cooperation. Mutual understanding and lasting peace are the true path forward — conflict is not the answer.”

“As a Pakistani living abroad in Oman with my Indian friends, I have never perceived any difference between us.”

Our mutual respect, cultural affinities, and shared values demonstrate the strong bonds that transcend political divides,” he further added.

Many expats also voiced concerns about the impact of regional tensions on air connectivity.

Both SalamAir and Oman Air suspended services to several cities in Pakistan after Pakistani authorities closed their airspace due to the recent developments.

In a statement, SalamAir announced: “SalamAir regrets to inform you that our flights to and from Pakistan will be suspended until the morning of 13 May due to the current situation in the region. We understand this disruption will affect our customers and we apologise for any inconvenience. Safety is our number one priority, and we are closely monitoring the situation and will resume flights when possible. Customers on cancelled flights should not proceed to the airport.”

Oman Air, the national carrier, also confirmed the cancellation of its services between Muscat and Karachi. “Due to the closure of Jinnah International Airport, flights WY323/324 on 11th and 12th May 2025 between Muscat and Karachi have been cancelled,” the airline said.

“We continue to monitor the situation closely and will share further updates as necessary. We apologise for any inconvenience caused and are working to support affected guests with rebooking options and assistance.”

Both airlines reaffirmed that the safety of passengers and crew remains their top priority.

Travellers have been advised to stay informed through official airline and airport channels for the latest travel updates.

OVER OMR87MN INVESTMENTS LOCALISED IN SOHAR INDUSTRIAL CITY

Sohar Industrial City, affiliated with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), received around 62 investment applications in 2024, 38 of which were localised with investments exceeding OMR87 million. — **ONA**



WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION

Oman to organise WTO roundtable sessions

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, in cooperation with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Government of the People’s Republic of China, will host the 13th China Roundtable on WTO Accession in Muscat on Monday.

The three-day meeting will be held under the theme “Advancing Arab Economies: From Strategic Accession to Global Trade Integration.”

This comes within the framework of the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to enhance international cooperation and support the multilateral trading system.

The roundtable programme includes five main sessions, in addition to a high-level session to

celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Sultanate of Oman’s accession to the World Trade Organisation, during which it will review its experience in leveraging its membership in the organisation, and another event titled “Omani Economic Diplomacy: Leveraging Trade to Achieve Regional

Prosperity.” The first day will witness the opening session of the roundtable meetings, which will focus on the economic visions of the GCC countries and the role of trade in achieving strategies for diversification and global economic integration.

The second day of the roundtable sessions will include the announcement of the launch of a joint Arab study on best practices in accession to the World Trade Organisation, which will address the experiences of newly acceding Arab countries and those in the process of acceding.

The sessions will also discuss ways to enhance regional economic integration and its role in facilitating accession to the World Trade Organisation, examine developments in the ongoing accession process, and the importance of technical assistance in supporting countries during and after accession.

The third day of the roundtable will highlight Omani economic diplomacy and its role in promoting regional stability and development. It will also discuss the role of the private sector in supporting Arab integration within the World Trade Organisation and best practices for enhancing its participation in the economic reform process. — **ONA**



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Sultanate of Oman MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects

Tendr. No.	Project Category	Tender	Last day to purchase tender documents	Last date of tender submission
6/2025	Construction & maintenance	Construction of players changing rooms and fencing hall at Seeb sports stadium	24/05/2025	23/06/2025
7/2025	Consulting Offices	Consultancy services (Design and supervision) Al Buraimi culture and youth center at Al Buraimi, Al Buraimi Governorate	24/05/2025	23/06/2025
8/2025	Construction of ports roads bridge railway dams and maintenance	Design and build contract of Asphalt roads and allied works in camel race track at Mahdah Al Buraimi governorate	24/05/2025	23/06/2025
9/2025	Construction of ports roads bridge railway dams and maintenance	Design and build contract of Asphalt roads and allied works in camel race track at Haima Al Wusta governorate	24/05/2025	23/06/2025
10/2025	Construction of ports roads bridge railway dams and maintenance	Design and build contract of Asphalt roads and allied works in camel race track at Jalam Bani Bu Ali Al South Sharqiah governorate	24/05/2025	23/06/2025
11/2025	Construction & maintenance	Design and build contract of camel race track railing and gates at Mahdah Al Buraimi Governorate	24/05/2025	23/06/2025
12/2025	Construction & maintenance	Design and build contract of camel race track railing and gates at Haima Al Wusta governorate	24/05/2025	23/06/2025
13/2025	Construction & maintenance	Maintenance of camel race track railing and gates at Jalam Bani Bu Ali South Sharqiya governorate	24/05/2025	23/06/2025

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

VICTORY DAY PARADE

China, Russia strive for new world order

MOSCOW: Russia's President Vladimir Putin rolled out the red carpet for his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping as the latter arrived at the Kremlin.

In a cavernous reception hall, the whole world watched as the two leaders approached each other from what felt like a distance of 100 metres.

Numerous cameras captured

the moment: Waving, smiling and shaking hands — just about everything that goes with the courtesy of state visits.

Russia is internationally isolated as a result of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The International Criminal Court has even issued an arrest warrant against Putin.

The Russian president needs allies, and only a few can match the

power and influence of Xi.

The Chinese president is in Moscow to attend Russia's Victory Day parade marking the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War II.

More than 20 other foreign dignitaries, including leaders from Cuba, Venezuela and Mongolia, among others, were in Red Square

for the event. From Europe, only Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico took part.

Xi's visit to Moscow and meeting with Putin is expected to send a signal to people in Russia and around the world that the Russian president is not alone and is respected by allies, at least by the Chinese president. —**aw**



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EU leaders visit Kyiv, advocate for Ukraine's peace and sovereignty



Russian spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state media on Saturday that “trying to scare” Russia with the threat of sanctions “is a waste of time”



KYIV: In a show of support for Ukraine, leaders from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Poland travelled to Kyiv, urging Russia to agree to a full and unconditional 30-day ceasefire.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk emphasised the importance of peace, sovereignty, and Ukraine's future as a free and European nation.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, along with the leaders,

paid tribute to the soldiers killed in the Russia-Ukraine war.

In a post on X, Zelenskyy wrote, “We remember and honor the sacrifice of the fallen Ukrainian warriors.”

Sharing a post on X, Starmer wrote, “In Kyiv today with @EmmanuelMacron, @FriedrichMerz, and @DonaldTusk. Russia must agree to a full and unconditional 30-day ceasefire to create the space for talks on a just and

lasting peace in Ukraine. Every step we take towards that is another step towards security and prosperity in the UK.”

In a post on X, Macron wrote, “Back in Kyiv, my first thoughts go to the Ukrainian people. For more than three years, you have stood with admirable courage... In the face of Russia's aggression, our response must be collective. This visit is made jointly with Germany, Poland, and the United Kingdom.”

The post added, “I have three messages. First, peace -- A just and lasting peace begins with a full and unconditional ceasefire. That is the proposal we are advancing with the United States. Ukraine accepted it on March 11. Russia, however, delays, sets preconditions, plays for time, and continues its war of invasion. Second, sovereignty -- The peace agreement to be built must guarantee Ukraine's security. That is what we have

been working on--in Paris, in London, and now here in Kyiv. We are making progress together. Finally, the future -- Ukraine is fighting for its people, but also for the European ideal we all believe in. A free, strong, prosperous, and European Ukraine is our goal.”

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk shared a photo of himself in Ukraine, accompanied by the flags of both Poland and Ukraine, showing support.

Earlier, CNN reported that Ukraine's Western allies, including the US, are threatening to slap Russia with more sanctions if Moscow fails to sign up to the 30-day truce in Ukraine proposed by the US.

US President Donald Trump on Thursday added the threat of additional sanctions from the US and “its partners” to his latest call for an “unconditional ceasefire” between Russia and Ukraine that Moscow has repeatedly rejected.

Trump has made ending the war in Ukraine one of his priorities, and he has invested much effort into trying to get Russian President Vladimir Putin on board. Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff went to Russia four times to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin

and there have been several other high-level meetings between US and Russian officials since Trump returned to the White House in January.

Russia rebuffs Western pressure for 30-day truce

Russia has rejected threats by Ukraine's Western allies of additional sanctions unless Moscow agrees to an unconditional 30-day ceasefire to end the war.

Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state media on Saturday that “trying to scare” Russia with the threat of sanctions “is a waste of time.”

“We have all got used to the sanctions by now,” Peskov said. “We even have an idea already as to what we will do after they are imposed, how we will minimize their consequences and so on.”

Peskov added that Moscow would not be intimidated, and that Ukraine and its allies “are feeling antsy.” Russian President Vladimir Putin has refused to agree to a 30-day truce without certain conditions, which include the West no longer delivering weapons to support Ukraine and the presence of Western peacekeeping forces on Ukrainian territory. —**ANI**

TRADE WAR

US, China start talks, seek to de-escalate trade war

NEW YORK: Top officials from the United States and China met in Geneva on Saturday, aiming to cool a trade war ignited by President Donald Trump's broad tariff hike and stoked by Beijing's fierce retaliation.

The talks are the first high-level meeting for Beijing and Washington since Trump's steep new levies hit China last month.

What do we know about the meeting?

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Trade Representative Jamieson Greer sat down for talks with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng.

Bessent, Greer, and about a dozen US delegates swept through the lobby of Geneva's upscale Intercontinental Hotel, brushing off reporters' questions before slipping into waiting cars and speeding away.

The Chinese team departed from the President Wilson Hotel, flanked by heavy police escorts as both convoys wove through the city, halting traffic along the route.

Chinese state media confirmed by late morning that the talks had officially begun. While the exact



venue was kept under wraps, AFP tracked the delegations to a discrete location across town.

Reduction in tariffs unlikely

While a major breakthrough looks unlikely, hopes remain that the two sides will ease the punishing tariffs they have slapped on each other.

Such a move would soothe troubled global markets and reassure companies reliant on US-China trade.

Last month, Trump hiked US tariffs on Chinese goods to 145%, prompting Beijing to hit back with a 125% levy on US imports.

The sky-high duties have effectively shut down trade between the two economic giants, disrupting flows that topped \$660 billion (about €590 billion) last year.

Even before talks kicked off, the US president hinted Friday that the US might ease tariffs on China.

“China should open up its market to USA -- would be so good for them!!! Closed markets don't work anymore,” Trump wrote in another post.

The US has placed a minimum tariff of 145 per cent on most Chinese imports, and China has responded with a 125 per cent tariff on most US imports. —**aw**

EUROPE DAY

India-EU ties continue to expand

NEW DELHI: Indian External Affairs Minister Jaishankar has said that the India-EU ties continues to expand and prosper.

Jaishankar, at the Europe Day celebrations in Delhi, on Friday, said that India and the EU are natural partners in each other's progress.

In a post on X, he said, “Pleased to participate in Europe Day celebrations in New Delhi this evening. The India-EU longstanding partnership continues to expand and prosper. As democratic polities, pluralistic societies and market economies, we are natural partners in each other's progress.”

Jaishankar attended the Eu-

rope Day celebration, marking 75 years of the Schuman Declaration.

Europe Day marks the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration, symbolising unity and cooperation among European nations.

He highlighted the growing partnership between India and European nations, citing a landmark visit by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the EU College of Commissioners in February 2025. This visit strengthened ties between India and the EU, paving the way for deeper cooperation.

“India's longstanding relationship with European nations is to-

day poised to ascend a higher level. The visit of the EU College of Commissioners led by President Ursula von der Leyen herself in February 2025 was truly a milestone in our ties,” Jaishankar said.

He emphasised that the high-level visit connected key policymakers “comprehensively,” allowing both sides to advance their partnership.

“Our cooperation is acquiring many more dimensions. We are engaged, as you heard from the envoy, in complex trade negotiations, but one that we hope, and we're confident, will produce an outcome this year itself,” he said. —**ANI**

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Oman welcomes ceasefire deal between Pakistan and India

The foreign ministry expressed hope that this agreement will mark the beginning of a constructive dialogue between the two sides, leading to the settlement of disputes through peaceful means

MUSCAT : The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed the ceasefire agreement between Pakistan and India on Saturday, stressing the importance of this step in calming tensions and enhancing regional security and stability.

The foreign ministry expressed hope that this agreement will mark the beginning of a constructive dialogue between the two sides, leading to the settlement of disputes through peaceful means, serving the interests of both nations and supporting efforts for peace and sustainable development.

Earlier on Saturday evening, amid escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, US President Donald Trump announced that both nations had agreed to a “full



and immediate ceasefire.”

Claiming that US mediation played a key role, Trump praised the leadership of both countries for choosing “common sense and great intelligence” to de-escalate the crisis.

Sharing a post on social media platform Truth Social, Trump wrote, “After a long night of talks mediated by the United States, I am pleased to announce that India and Pakistan have agreed to a FULL AND IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE. Congratulations to both Countries on using Common Sense and Great Intelligence. Thank you for your attention to this matter!”

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio also confirmed that India

and Pakistan have agreed to an immediate ceasefire and to begin comprehensive talks at a neutral location.

Rubio further said that he and Vice President JD Vance had been in close contact with senior Indian and Pakistani officials over the past 48 hours, including Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Shehbaz Sharif.

He praised the leadership of PM Modi and Sharif for demonstrating “wisdom, prudence, and statesmanship” in opting for dialogue over conflict.

Sharing a post on X, Rubio wrote, “Over the past 48 hours, @VP Vance and I have engaged with senior Indian and Pakistani officials, including Prime Minis-

ters Narendra Modi and Shehbaz Sharif, External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir, and National Security Advisors Ajit Doval and Asim Malik.”

“I am pleased to announce the Governments of India and Pakistan have agreed to an immediate ceasefire and to start talks on a broad set of issues at a neutral site. We commend Prime Ministers Modi and Sharif on their wisdom, prudence, and statesmanship in choosing the path of peace,” the post added.

Trump claim endorsed

Pakistan Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar also endorsed Trump’s claim,



“Pakistan and India have agreed to a ceasefire with immediate effect. Pakistan has always strived for peace and security in the region, without compromising on its sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

According to official sources, the ceasefire was established through direct communication between the two nations, with the Pakistan Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) initiating the call. Discussions followed, leading to an understanding without any decision to hold further talks on other issues.

Indian Foreign Secretary also confirmed the ceasefire. He said, “Pakistan’s Directors General of Military Operations (DGMO)

called Indian DGMO at 3:35pm earlier this afternoon. It was agreed between them that both sides would stop all firing and military action on land and in the air and sea with effect from 5pm Indian Standard Time. Today, instructions have been given on both sides to give effect to this understanding. The Directors General of Military Operations will talk again on May 12 at 12 noon.”

A day earlier, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, while speaking on US efforts to mediate on the conflict between India and Pakistan, had said that the US intends to de-escalate the tensions between both the countries. - Agencies

GEOGRAPHIC DESIGNATIONS

Mexico sues Google over renaming of Gulf of Mexico to Gulf of America

MEXICO CITY: Saudi Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has said her government is suing the technology giant Google for changing the name of the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America.

A decree issued by Republican President Donald Trump sought to rename the whole gulf, including waters that border on Mexico and Cuba — an order with which Google has complied for US users of its Maps service.

What has Sheinbaum said about the Gulf of Mexico?

“Google is already being sued. There has already been a first resolution, and it is awaited,” Sheinbaum said at a press conference.

“What we are saying is that Google should put Gulf of America, where it is Gulf of America, which is the part that corresponds to the territory of the United States, and put Gulf of Mexico to the territorial part that corresponds to Mexico and Cuba.”

Google has said the changes align with its policy of following official United States government



geographic designations through the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS).

Mexico’s Foreign Ministry had previously sent letters to Google asking it not to label Mexican territorial waters as the Gulf of America.

Trump proposed the name change even before taking office when Sheinbaum comically suggested renaming North America as “Mexican America” — in line with

the wording of an antecedent document to Mexico’s constitution.

Shortly after taking office, US President Donald Trump ordered the renaming of the large sea inlet along the southern US coast and eastern Mexico, citing a tribute to “American greatness.”

The waterway, known by its current name since the 16th century, borders the US states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama,

and Florida, as well as parts of Mexico and Cuba.

Trump’s order only applies within the US. Mexico, other countries and international bodies do not have to recognize the change.

In February, the White House banned the AP news agency from the White House press pool and other official events for not following Trump’s renaming order in its news coverage. - DW

160,000 PEOPLE

Restrictions lifted after toxic smoke confine thousands in Catalonia region

BARCELONA : An order was lifted on Saturday that had confined some 160,000 people in Spain’s northeastern Catalonia region after a fire at an industrial estate caused a toxic cloud of chlorine, the regional government said.

“The fire in Vilanova i la Geltrú is STABILIZED,” the Catalan fire services posted on X. “We maintain 24 units on site. The fire has not affected the adjacent warehouses and we continue to work on extinguishing the fire.”

The blaze at a swimming pool cleaning products firm started at 2:20 a.m. in Vilanova i la Geltru, a town 48 kilometres (30 miles) south of Barcelona.

Authorities had told people in the affected zone to stay home, before later lifting the sanction.

“If you are in the zone that is affected, do not leave your home

or your place of work,” the Civil Protection service posted on X earlier on Saturday.

“No casualties” had been reported, the fire service said on social media, adding that it had deployed a large number of units in order to manage the situation.

The fire service said it was “monitoring the blaze... for its toxic levels.”

“It is very difficult for chlorine to catch fire but when it does so it is very hard to put it out,” warehouse owner Jorge Vinuales Alonso told the radio station Rac1. He added that the cause of the blaze might have been a lithium battery.

Vilanova mayor Juan Luis Ruiz Lopez had earlier told the public broadcaster TVE that authorities would lift the emergency measure once the “toxic cloud” started “to dissipate. - DW

EXECUTIVE ORDER

All illegal aliens, book your free flight right now: Trump

WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order on Friday which will allow people who have entered into the US illegally to get free flights out of the US. Calling it the “first-ever self-deportation program for illegal aliens”, the US President said the order incentivises illegal immigrants to leave America.

His remarks were shared through a video message posted on the official page of the White House.

In the video message, Donald Trump said, “Today I signed an executive order to launch the first-ever self-deportation program for illegal aliens. We are making it as easy as possible for illegal aliens to leave America. Any illegal alien can simply show up at an airport and receive a free flight out of our country. We have also launched a phone app called CBP Home where illegals can book a free flight to any foreign country. As long as it’s not here, you can go anywhere you want. We’re also adding a very important exit bonus for illegals to



further incentivize their self-deportation. This deportation bonus will save American taxpayers billions and billions of dollars.”

Taking a dig at former US President Joe Biden, Trump slammed him for his policies on immigration. “What Biden did to this country can never be explained, will never, ever be accepted. Eventually, when the illegals are gone, it will save us trillions of dollars.”

Coming back to the issue of illegal immigrants, the US President said that they would face severe

consequences such as “punishments including significant jail time, enormous financial penalties, confiscation of all property, garnishment of all wages, imprisonment and incarceration, and sudden deportation in a place and manner solely of our discretion”, if they continue to stay in India.

Trump said, “So to all illegal aliens, book your free flight right now. We want you out of America, but if you’re really good, we’re going to try and help you get back in.”

Earlier in an article shared by

the White House, titled, “Week 16 wins”, on May 9, several actions taken by the US President against illegal immigrants were highlighted.

These include plans to house America’s most ruthless, violent criminals at Alcatraz prison and establishing a “Project Homecoming” to encourage illegal immigrants to voluntarily depart the US.

“The Department of Homeland Security announced it will offer financial assistance and stipends for illegal immigrants voluntarily returning to their home country via the CBP Home App -- saving taxpayers as much as USD 1 million per illegal alien family in long-term costs of welfare and public support”, the White House said in its statement.

Casey Means nominated as US Surgeon General

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump announced that Casey Means will be nominated as the next Surgeon General of the US.

Trump said that Casey has ‘Make America Healthy Again’ credentials, and will work closely with Secretary of Health and Human Services, Robert F Kennedy Jr.

“I am pleased to announce that Dr. Casey Means, will be nominated as our next Surgeon General of the United States of America. Casey has impeccable “MAHA” credentials, and will work closely with our wonderful Secretary of Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., to ensure a successful implementation of our Agenda in order to reverse the Chronic Disease Epidemic, and ensure Great Health, in the future, for ALL Americans,” he said in a post on Truth Social.

Trump said Nesheiwat, a former Fox News contributor, would work with Kennedy “in another capacity” at the health and human services department.

“Her academic achievements, together with her life’s work, are absolutely outstanding. Dr. Casey Means has the potential to be one

of the finest Surgeon Generals in United States History. Congratulations to Casey! Secretary Kennedy looks forward to working with Dr. Janette Nesheiwat in another capacity at HHS. Thank you for your attention to this matter,” he stated.

Nesheiwat was scheduled to appear before the Senate health committee, but her nomination ran into trouble on two fronts.

Laura Loomer, a conservative activist whom Trump has listened to on other personnel matters, called for a new surgeon general nominee, arguing Nesheiwat “is not ideologically aligned” with the president, *New York Times (NYT)* reported.

Reports have also raised questions about the veracity of Nesheiwat’s resume, as per *New York Times* . She is the sister-in-law of Michael Waltz, who served as Trump’s national security adviser until last week. Trump said he would nominate Waltz to be the ambassador to the United Nations, as per *New York Times*. - ANI

SPORTS

Seeb lift OPL title for fourth time



Champions received winner's shield after they concluded the 2024 Oman Professional League (OPL) season with a 1-1 draw against Al Nasr at Seeb Sports Stadium

MUSCAT: Seeb Club were officially crowned champions of the 48th edition of the Oman Professional League (OPL), securing their fourth league title in club history, after a 1-1 draw against Al Nasr in the final round at Seeb Sports Stadium on Thursday.

Having already clinched the title a round earlier, this match marked the ceremonial presentation of the championship shield.

Omantel CEO Talal Al Mamari handed over the trophy to Seeb

captain in the presence of Oman Football Association Chairman Sheikh Salim Al Wahaibi, Seeb Club's His Highness Sayyid Melek bin Shihab Al Said, Seeb Club's vice-chairman Yousuf Al Wahaibi, and a large number of fans.

The final round match was a hard-fought contest, with Al Nasr taking the lead through a 75th-minute penalty by Saonina. However, Seeb quickly responded in the 82nd minute with a goal from Abu Kamara, securing the 1-1 draw



to finish the league with 51 points.

Al Nahda secured runners-up spot in the league with a 2-0 victory over Al Rustaq at Al Buraimi

Sports Complex. Abdullah Jumaa gave them the lead early with a 14th-minute strike, and Jamal al Wahshi sealed the win with a second goal in the 88th minute,

ensuring Al Nahda finished with 47 points. Sohar secured their survival in the league with a crucial 2-0 victory over Oman Club. Goals from Saud al Muqbali and Abdul-

lah al Shibli ensured a comfortable win, with Sohar finishing with 24 points, safe from relegation.

Ibri's fate was sealed as they suffered a 1-0 defeat to Al Khabourah, dropping them to the First Division along with Sur, which was relegated in the previous round. Al Khabourah secured their fourth-place finish with 31 points.

Saham finished the season on a strong note, winning 2-1 against Sur, securing 29 points and a fifth-place finish. Sur, meanwhile, ended the campaign at the bottom with just 18 points. Bahla edged out Al Shabab 4-3, with Abdulsalam al Shukaili scoring a remarkable super hat-trick to lift Bahla to sixth place with 28 points.

Final points table (2024-25 season): 1 Seeb (51 points), 2 Al Nahda (47), 3 Oman Club (44), 4 Al Khabourah (31), 5 Saham (29), 6 Bahla (28), 7 Al Shabab (28), 8 Al Nasr (28), 9 Sohar (24), 10 Al Rustaq (23), 11 Ibri (20), 12 Sur (18).

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ICC CWC LEAGUE 2 TRI-SERIES FROM MAY 17

Oman cricketers ready to give their best, says coach Mendis



MUSCAT: Fuelled by weeks of intense preparation and a steely determination to keep their World Cup qualification hopes alive, the Oman national cricket team touched down in the United States on Friday ahead of the crucial ICC Cricket World Cup League 2 (CWC L2) tri-series, which begins on May 17 at Broward Stadium in Florida.

The tri-series will see Oman take on hosts USA and fellow contenders Canada in what is shaping up to be a pivotal leg of the League 2 campaign. Oman currently are fourth in the standings with 18 points, behind USA (22 points from 16 matches), Netherlands (22 from 17), and Canada (20), making this Florida series a must-perform tour for the Men in Red.

Arriving a week in advance, Oman will begin their pre-series schedule with two warm-up matches against Minor League Cricket sides on May 11 and 13 in Orlando, giving them time to adapt to American conditions and fine-tune combinations.

Head coach Duleep Mendis believes the team is ready, citing the high-quality preparations back home, including a fiercely contested four-match series against Kerala that ended 2-2 and a three-match face-off with Karnataka, which Oman lost 0-3 but drew vital lessons from.

"We are coming to showcase our strength in the L2 series in the USA. The preparations have been amazing," said Mendis. "First, we

had Kerala here. Then Karnataka — among top Indian domestic teams. Playing under such testing conditions has helped our players immensely. You can't ask for better match exposure than this before a major international series."

Skipper Jatinder Singh was in sublime touch during the Kerala series, scoring 210 runs in just two innings, including a commanding 150. Pruthvi Machhi also struck a century, while Mohammad Nadeem contributed with two gritty fifties. Aamir Kaleem and Mujib Ali added one fifty each. On the bowling front, Hassnain Ali Shah led the charge with 9 wickets in two games, with Shakeel Ahmed close behind, claiming 7 scalps.

Despite the clean sweep by Karnataka, the likes of Hammad Mirza (124), Machhi, Nadeem, Vinayak Shukla, and Aryan Bisht — all of whom registered fifties — showed promise. "That series, though tough, gave our youngsters the kind of match toughness that can't be taught in nets," Mendis added.

He also reflected on the rapid rebuilding process Oman Cricket undertook after losing several senior players last year. "We had to assemble a new team within two days for the Emerging Teams Asia Cup," he recalled. "Then came the tri-series in Al Amerat against Netherlands and UAE. It was a very difficult phase, but the boys adapted well and produced some remarkable results."

Among those to watch is Aryan

Bisht, a talented off-spinner and middle-order bat who played for Oman's U19 side in 2022 and made the Emerging Asia Cup squad earlier this year. This tour marks his first appearance in a senior ODI assignment.

Looking ahead, Mendis is confident that Oman's blend of youth and experience, backed by a potent spin department and a steadily maturing core, can keep their qualification hopes alive. "This is an important series. The boys are strong, the mindset is right, and I believe this team can go all the way. They are ready to give their best," he said.

As the countdown begins in Florida, Oman's campaign will be underpinned by strategic planning, disciplined execution, and a burning desire to prove that this rebuilt side has what it takes to rise on the world stage.

Squad: Jatinder Singh (captain), Vinayak Shukla (vice-captain), Aamir Kaleem, Pruthvi Machhi, Hammad Mirza, Mohammad Nadeem, Sufyan Mehmood, Shakeel Ahmed, Jay Odedra, Samay Shrivastava, Hassnain Ali Shah, Muhammad Imran, Mujib Ali, Muza-hir Raza, Aryan Bisht.

Tour schedule (Florida, USA): May 11: Warm-up match vs Minor League team, Orlando, May 13: Warm-up match vs Minor League team, Orlando, May 17: Travel to Fort Lauderdale, May 19: Oman vs Canada, May 21: Oman vs USA, May 23: Oman vs Canada, May 25: Oman vs USA, May 27: Oman vs USA.

BANK MUSCAT WINS AWARD
Bank Muscat has been awarded the prestigious “Deal of the Year” Award by Islamic Finance News for its role in the successful issuance of the inaugural US Dollar RegS/144A Sukuk Issuance by Omantel in the international capital markets.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX TRADING VALUE RISES

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) witnessed an increase in trading value, which rose to OMR28.5 million at the end of Thursday's trading, compared to OMR27.5 million in the previous week.

Progress of various ongoing projects in Sezad reviewed

Tender Committee of Opaz's visit included the new Saay Commercial District, new road projects, and the recreational centre in addition to the road project from Duqm Airport to Ras Markaz and the International Seafood Company (Simak)

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Tender Committee of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz), chaired by Eng. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of Opaz, visited the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad) to review the progress of ongoing projects in the area.

The visit included the new Saay Commercial District, new road projects, and the recreational centre. The committee held discus-



sions with project supervisors to assess timelines and address any challenges, stressing the importance of completing the projects on schedule due to their economic and social significance.

The delegation also toured the road project from Duqm Airport to Ras Markaz and visited the International Seafood Company (Simak), which was inaugurated last year with an annual capacity of 100 million canned fish products.

Ahmed Al Dheeb noted that the committee inspected several projects previously approved by the Authority's Tender Committee. These projects span critical infrastructure such as roads and services supporting both existing



and future industrial investments, as well as real estate development including public parks and residential and commercial buildings. The visit also covered lifestyle-enhancing initiatives like the recreational centre.

In a press statement, Ahmed Al Dheeb emphasised that the projects aim to achieve the authority's goals in attracting industrial and real estate investments to Duqm, improving the use of the area, and enhancing quality of life for residents, employees, and their families.

The Tender Committee includes experts in procurement and project management from various government entities and the private sector.



SIGNIFICANT STEP



Omantel successfully trials 5G advanced passive IoT technology

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its leadership in 5G technologies, Omantel has successfully completed a lab trial of self-operating Passive Internet of Things (IoT) technology. Unlike conventional IoT devices that rely on batteries, Passive IoT devices operate using ambient energy sources. This trial marks a significant step toward providing low-energy, high-efficiency technology solutions aligned with global trends in adopting sustainable and eco-friendly digital innovations.

This achievement builds on Omantel's earlier trial of RedCap technology last year — part of advanced 5G features — designed to enable effective connectivity for low-capability devices, thereby improving internet efficiency and expanding the scope of IoT applications.

Commenting on the successful trial, Eng. Saleem bin Ahmed Abdullatif, Vice President Business Unit at Omantel, said: "This success reaffirms Omantel's commitment to leading digital transformation by adopting the latest global technologies that support the development of a future-ready digital infrastructure. By enabling efficient and reliable solutions such as Passive IoT, we contribute to building a technology-enabled society and strengthening the Sultanate of Oman's position as a regional hub for innovation. We remain dedicated to supporting national objectives and addressing the evolving needs of individuals and businesses across the Sultanate."

Passive IoT is considered a promising future application of 5G networks, offering numerous opportunities for sectors such as logistics, healthcare, and smart agriculture. Unlike traditional IoT devices, Passive IoT tags do not require battery power, making them easier to install, minimizing maintenance and replacements, and ensuring longer operational lifespans.

The trial demonstrated the effectiveness of Passive IoT over Omantel's 5G network, proving its ability to successfully connect over distances of up to 200 meters. The technology is expected to bring a qualitative shift in business models across various sectors by creating new revenue streams and accelerating their digital transformation agendas. Omantel's future 5G-powered Passive IoT network will be capable of supporting millions of passive sensors across sectors such as retail, logistics, manufacturing, and others.

The relationship between RedCap and Passive IoT technologies reflects an integrated approach toward enabling a comprehensive digital environment that supports diverse types of smart devices, whether requiring direct connectivity, like RedCap devices, or operating passively using ambient energy, like Passive IoT.

Omantel has succeeded, through the integration of its operations, processes, and extensive expertise in the field of communications and digital technology, in establishing its position as a leading telecommunications company within Oman and beyond.

FINANCIAL RESULTS

ahlibank records solid growth in loans, assets, deposits in first quarter of 2025

Times News Service

MUSCAT: ahlbank recently shared its first-quarter 2025 financial results, reflecting a period of robust growth and resilience amidst a dynamic economic landscape.

The bank's first-quarter performance demonstrates strong progress, underpinned by year-on-year growth across key financial indicators when compared to the same period in 2024. Net loans, advances, and financing increased by 9.6% to OMR 3,070.4 million, while total assets expanded by 9.1% to reach OMR 3,677.0 million. Customers' deposits recorded a strong uptick of 18.3%, rising to OMR 2,954.1 million—a testament to growing customer confidence in the bank's offerings. Operating income rose by 16.0% to OMR 28.24 million, outpacing the 11.3% increase in operating expenses, thereby reinforcing operational discipline and cost efficiency. Profit for the period stood at OMR 9.71 million, reflecting a solid 12.5% year-on-year increase, while equity strengthened to OMR 552.1 million, up 6.9% from the corresponding quarter in 2024. These results underscore ahlbank's consistent trajectory of prudent growth and value-driven performance, aligned with its strategic ambitions.



Commenting on the bank's performance, Said Abdullah Al Hatmi, CEO of ahlbank, stated, "As we pursue purpose-driven growth and innovation, our commitment remains centered on delivering long-term value to our customers, stakeholders, and the wider Omani economy. Guided by a clear roadmap, we are not just responding to market shifts—we are proactively shaping a banking sector that is more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable. Through our ongoing efforts, we are dedicated to delivering practical solutions that support the development and progress of our nation."

In light of Oman's renewed fiscal stability and a favorable outlook, the bank remains steadfast in its strategic focus on sustainable

growth, innovation, and its commitment to people-centric values. In the first quarter of this year, ahlbank's momentum was further amplified through high-impact partnerships, digital transformation initiatives, and community-driven campaigns—reinforcing its role as a trusted partner in national development and inclusive economic progress.

In the first quarter of 2025, ahlbank achieved significant milestones that underscore its commitment to driving Oman's economic growth. A notable achievement was the signing of a landmark Master Services Agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), streamlining PDO's financial operations through a customized B2B digital platform.

Simultaneously, ahl bank further expanded its real estate financing portfolio through strategic partnerships, including a key collaboration with Dream Villa, the master developer of Al Ahlam District in Sultan Haitham City. Additionally, through its Islamic window, ahl islamic, the bank partnered with Al Masa Real Estate Development—the master developer of the Hay Al Azm project—in coordination with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. These initiatives reflect

the bank's commitment to supporting government-led urban development efforts across key regions of the Sultanate of Oman.

ahl islamic also served as the lead financial advisor in the structuring and funding of the Sustainable City Yiti project, Oman's first net-zero energy city. The project reflects the bank's expertise in structuring Sharia-compliant financing solutions and its long-term commitment to green infrastructure and environmentally responsible urban development.

Building on its commitment to ESG principles, ahl Islamic collaborated with be'ah to facilitate sustainable financing for environmentally responsible industrial waste treatment, reinforcing its role in supporting Oman's green economy. Together, these initiatives reflect the bank's forward-thinking approach to inclusive growth and innovation-led development.

As part of its ongoing strategy to empower small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), ahlbank introduced a comprehensive digital solution that includes the innovative ahlPOS payment application—enabling businesses to accept payments directly through Android devices without the need for extra hardware.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES

India's forex reserves fall \$2.06bn after extending gains for eighth straight week

NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange reserves (Forex) fell \$2.06 billion to \$686.06 billion in the week that ended on May 2, after extending gains for the eighth straight week, official data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) this week showed.

India's Forex rose by USD 1.983 billion to USD 688.129 billion in the week that ended on April 25.

For the reporting week, the foreign currency assets increased USD 514 million to USD 581.177 billion, the apex bank's data shows. The FCAs are the largest com-

ponents of the foreign exchange reserves which reflects the valuation impact of non-US currencies like euro, pound, and yen kept in the reserves. They are written in the dollar terms.

The gold reserves also witnessed a hit, decreasing USD 2,545 million to USD 81.82 billion during the reporting week.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), which are kept with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also saw a hit of USD 30 million, lowering at USD 18.558 billion, according to the RBI data.

The forex reserves started falling after reaching an all-time high of USD 704.89 billion in September, only to recover afterwards. The decline in reserves was most likely due to RBI intervention, aimed at preventing a sharp depreciation of the Rupee. The Indian Rupee is now at or near its all-time low against the US dollar.

An estimate by the apex bank suggests that India's foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to cover approximately 10-12 months of projected imports.

In 2023, India added around USD

58 billion to its foreign exchange reserves, contrasting with a cumulative decline of \$71 billion in 2022.

In 2024, the reserves rose by a little over \$20 billion. Foreign exchange reserves, or FX reserves, are assets held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority, primarily in reserve currencies such as the US Dollar, with smaller portions in the Euro, Japanese Yen, and Pound Sterling.

The RBI often intervenes by managing liquidity, including selling dollars, to prevent steep Rupee depreciation. -ANI

MARKET

MSX trading value rises to OMR28.5mn

Most sectoral indices registered gains, with the exception of the industrial sector index, which fell 16 points, concluding a series of gains that had lasted for several weeks

MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) witnessed an increase in trading value, which rose to OMR28.5 million at the end of Thursday's trading, compared to OMR27.5 million in the previous week. Meanwhile, the number of transactions executed decreased from 6,686 to 6,603.

The MSX main index rose 22 points last week to close at 4,351 points, rising for the second consecutive week. The index benefited from easing global pressures on stock markets, improved corporate performance in the first quarter of this year, and increased investor confidence in their ability to boost their profits.

Most sectoral indices registered gains, with the exception of the industrial sector index, which fell 16 points, concluding a series of gains that had lasted for several weeks. The financial sector index registered a gain of 21 points, and the services sector index rose 14 points. The Sharia index closed slightly higher by about one point, concluding weekly trading at 403 points.

Investors targeted OQ Basic Industries shares during the week, with trades worth OMR6.2 million,



Bank Muscat shares traded worth OMR4.2 million, and OQ Exploration and Production shares traded worth OMR4.18 million.

Bank Sohar International saw trading worth OMR2.7 million, while OQ Gas Networks saw trading worth OMR2.14 million.

During the week, the 74th issue of Government Development Bonds (GDBs) was listed, valued at OMR100 million, divided into one million bonds, each with a nominal value of OMR100 and an annual interest rate of 4.6 percent.

This listing brought the total market value of securities listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange to OMR27.33 billion by the end of trading on Thursday, recording gains of approximately OMR190 million.

During the week, the prices of 29 securities rose, while the prices of 33 securities declined, and 26 securities remained unchanged.

The Muscat Stock Exchange transferred four companies from the parallel market to the regular market after they met the required criteria. Six companies were transferred from the regular market to the parallel market after they violated certain listing requirements on the regular market, such as failing to meet the average return on investment criteria, share turnover criteria, number of trading days criteria, or trading volume criteria. - ONA

Omani stock market extends gains for a second week

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market closed with a 0.51% weekly gain, marking its second consecutive week to the upside. The rebound in oil prices bolstered sentiment, according to an industry watcher. Crude markets improved, fuelled by optimism regarding potential positive developments from a meeting between China and the US regarding tariffs.

"The market also drew support from the first-quarter (Q1) earnings results, which were largely encouraging in the preceding weeks, said Ahmed Negm, Head of Market Research MENA at XS.com. "While releases continued throughout the week, the market still requires further positive catalysts to sustain its rebound, especially given the prolonged downtrend and substantial losses experienced recently," he added.

"Against this backdrop of cautious optimism, the market could find support in Oman's consideration, through its state-owned firm Energy Development Oman (EDO) SAOC, to sell a minority stake in the vital Block 6 natural gas assets," said Ahmed Negm. "Although EDO itself is not a publicly traded entity, a strategic deal of this magnitude, aimed at attracting international partners to Oman's largest energy concession and strengthening national finances, is



poised to significantly enhance investor confidence in the country's economic outlook," he added. "Bolstering such a critical sector could generate positive ripple effects across the Omani economy, indirectly supporting the Muscat Stock Exchange and providing a substantial impetus for continued recovery from its recent extended downtrend," he said.

Sector performance presented a mixed picture during the week. The Services sector led the gains, advancing by 0.95% and saw positive performances from Abraj Energy Services, which climbed 0.86%, Al Suwadi Power (up 5.97%) and Al Batinah Power (up 7.35%).

The Financial sector also contributed to the market's upside, posting a gain of 0.28%. Key financial stocks supported this performance, with Bank Muscat shares rising by 2.32%. Al Anwar Investment also saw its value increase by 1.23%, and Omnivest shares appreciated by 2.33%.

Asyad launches 'Sohar Max' vessel



MUSCAT: Asyad Group has announced the launch of the massive cargo vessel "Sohar Max," utilising wind propulsion technology to achieve superior environmental efficiency.

This strategic initiative reflects a forward-looking commitment to sustainability in maritime transportation. The ambitious project underscores Asyad's dedication to delivering innovative solutions that drive the maritime sector's transition to sustainability by integrating wind propulsion technologies that significantly reduce carbon emissions and lead the shift toward cleaner and more efficient energy in maritime operations.

The "Sohar Max" - with a carrying capacity of 400,000 tons - is equipped with five giant rotor sails, each 35 meters tall and 5 meters in diameter, developed in collaboration with global leader Vale and Anemoi Marine Technologies. These rotor sails efficiently leverage wind energy, a physical principle that efficiently captures wind energy to enhance vessel propulsion. Leveraging this cutting-edge technology, the sails reduce fuel consumption by up to 6%. Moreover, this innovation curtails carbon emissions by 3,000 tons annually per vessel, positioning "Sohar Max" as a trailblazer in sustainable maritime shipping.

The advanced folding technology of the rotor sails, developed by "Anemoi", allows for horizontal folding during port maneuvers or when navigating under low-clearance structures such as bridges. This innovative design offers exceptional operational flexibility, ensuring smooth navigation and enhancing cargo handling efficiency and vessel performance under diverse marine conditions. These forward-thinking solutions align with Asyad Group's objectives of achieving a balance between environmental sustainability and high operational efficiency.

Dr Ibrahim Bakheet Al Nadhairy, CEO of Asyad Shipping, stated: "Today, we take a pioneering step toward building a sustainable future in maritime transport. The Sohar Max vessel presents a model of innovative solutions that contribute to supporting Oman in achieving net-zero emissions by 2050, minimizing environmental impact, and enhancing the efficiency of maritime operations. Wind propulsion technology is an opportunity to bring about a real revolution in the shipping sector, as it particularly supports sustainability efforts by reducing emissions and improving the operational performance of large vessels. This project is a true example of our commitment to sustainable innovation and milestone in our journey towards a maritime future that balances economic development and environmental preservation."

Nasser Al Azri, CEO of Vale Oman, remarked: "Equipping the 'Sohar Max' with innovative wind propulsion technology is a landmark achievement in our partnership with Asyad Group. It reflects our commitment to developing eco-friendly logistics solutions that reduce carbon emissions and enhance the efficiency of global supply chains." - ONA

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Bank Muscat wins global recognition for its role in Omantel's successful inaugural \$500mn Sukuk Issuance

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been awarded the prestigious "Deal of the Year" Award by Islamic Finance News (IFN) for its role in the successful issuance of the inaugural US Dollar RegS/144A Sukuk Issuance by the Oman Telecommunication Company (Omantel) in the international capital markets.

This outstanding recognition reaffirms the bank's pioneering contributions to the banking sector, seen in executing key investment transactions across Oman and the GCC markets. It also highlights the Bank's contribution to the transaction, as the only bank from the country to have acted as the joint book runner for the issuance.

On 17th January 2024, Omantel successfully priced its first international Sukuk issuance (RegS/144A) with a total size of USD 500mn and a 7-year tenor maturing on 16th January 2031. The issuance, structured in compliance with Sharia principles and aligned with international investment-grade standards, attracted robust demand from a wide base of regional and global investors, generating an order book exceeding USD 3.5 billion. Due to the oversubscription and strong investor demand received for this issuance, the Sukuk was priced at a profit rate of 5.375% per annum which was well within the initial Price Guidance set for this issuance.

Bank Muscat was the sole Omani bank appointed as a joint bookrunner, alongside a consortium of regional and international banks. The trust certificates of the transaction received credit ratings of BB+ from Fitch Ratings and Ba2 from Moody's Investors Service, and was listed on the Euronext Dublin Stock Exchange.

The proceeds of the issuance



were to be primarily used to refinance existing liabilities amounting to USD 460 million, with the remainder allocated for general corporate purposes.

Commenting on the successful transaction, Khalifa Abdullah Al Hatmi, Deputy General Manager - Investment Banking & Capital Markets at Bank Muscat, said: "We take pride in the successful collaboration with the Oman Telecommunication Company (Omantel). Bank Muscat's appointment as the joint bookrunner underscores the company's confidence in the Bank's capabilities, particularly in executing large-scale and complex deals. The issuance attracted considerable attention from both regional as well as global investors.

"Bank Muscat, represented through its Investment Banking division, brings deep expertise in capital markets, managing high-profile mandates across IPOs, debt issuances, merger and acquisitions and strategic advisory transactions. The Bank's specialized team is well-equipped to navigate market complexities and ensure smooth execution. The Bank upholds its commitment to supporting market growth by offering a comprehensive suite of banking and financial solutions. We would like to extend our appreciation and gratitude to all Bank Muscat's clients, both individuals and institutions, for their continued trust."

Bank Muscat continues to offer a wide range of financing solutions, reflecting its advisory capabilities and leadership in delivering tailored services to meet evolving customer needs. This includes corporate and project finance, debt refinancing and restructuring, IPOs, equity-linked financing, private placements, and advisory services for mergers and acquisitions in the Sultanate.



GREEN MOUNTAIN GETS GREENER

dusitD2 Naseem Jabal Akhdar launches ‘Own an Olive Tree’ sustainability drive



Times News Service

MUSCAT: A bold green vision is taking root high in the mountains of Oman. dusitD2 Naseem Resort in Al Jabal Al Akhdar has unveiled a unique sustainability initiative to plant 200 olive trees – each a living symbol of peace and renewal – transforming the ‘Green Mountain’ into an even greener, more meaningful retreat for guests and the environment alike.

Nestled over 2,000 metres above sea level, dusitD2 Naseem Resort is no stranger to crisp mountain air and immersive eco-experiences. But its latest initiative goes beyond luxury and landscape – it’s about legacy.

In a pioneering move to blend sustainability with guest participation, the resort has launched an “Own an Olive Tree” programme, inviting visitors to adopt olive trees for a donation. Each tree will carry the name of its donor, who will also receive a bottle of olive oil every year for five years.

“This mountain is called Al Jabal Al Akhdar, which literally means ‘The Green Mountain,’” said Jagdeip Thakral, General Manager of dusitD2 Naseem Resort. “Our vision is to honour that name not just in spirit, but in action – by making it even greener through this meaningful initiative.”

A symbol of peace and personal legacy

The olive tree has long been a universal symbol of peace and harmony. Thakral believes that empowering guests to personally ‘own’ such a tree will deepen their connection to the land and to the values of sustainability.

“This is more than just planting trees – it’s about planting hope, peace and purpose,” Thakral said. “Each tree will serve as a reminder that even as a traveller, you can leave behind something lasting and beautiful.”

Donors will receive regular updates on their tree’s growth and are welcome to visit the resort to check on it in person, take photos, and share their experience. Guests who contribute larger donations will also enjoy added perks – including complimentary stays or wellness experiences.

“The idea is to create emotional ownership,” Thakral added. “You’re not just a guest anymore – you’re a guardian of the mountain.”

From olives to significant impact

The project builds upon the resort’s existing grove of 37 olive trees, which currently yields around 600kg of olives annually. With 200 trees in place, the harvest is projected to exceed 4,000kg – a significant leap in both output and impact.

The initiative is part of Dusit Hotels & Resorts’ global Tree of Life programme, which encourages sustainable action and eco-friendly guest engagement at each of its properties. The Jabal Akhdar project is one of its most ambitious to date.

“We’re not just planting trees – we’re cultivating a legacy,” said Thakral. “We want our guests to leave a part of themselves here and return to see it thrive.”

Greening the grounds: More than just olives

The resort also plans to plant an additional 50 flowering and fruit-bearing trees, including bougainvillea, oleander, and the fragrant night queen, transforming the wadi that runs through the resort into a blossoming valley of colour and scent.

Large trees will be placed around concrete areas to improve shade and aesthetics, creating an all-season green environment throughout the property.

“These aren’t just landscaping decisions – they’re part of a larger



wellness ecosystem,” Thakral said. “The greenery, the scents, the colours – they all play a role in how our guests feel. Our goal is year-round shade, blooms, and life.”

When adventure meets wellness

Adding to its green goals, dusitD2 Naseem is launching Jabal Akhdar’s first-ever padel court, offering guests the chance to play one of the world’s fastest-growing sports at high altitude.

“At 2,000 metres above sea level, it’s a court with a view – and a statement,” said Thakral. “We’re promoting an active, healthy lifestyle, and padel is the perfect blend of social fun and fitness. Whether you’re a beginner or a seasoned player, playing padel at this altitude is something truly unique.”

The court adds to the resort’s 8,000 sqm adventure park, enhancing its reputation as a destination that combines wellness, play, and purpose in equal measure.

“We want to redefine what a mountain getaway can be,” Thakral added. “Whether it’s through wellness, adventure, or sustainability, our aim is to offer experiences that are fresh, engaging, and rooted in purpose.”

More to come

The resort is also working on developing a rose garden and offering eco-tours for guests to explore its green zones, from olive groves to fruit orchards. “Our vision is to make dusitD2 Naseem not just a place to stay, but a destination where guests connect – with nature, with community, and with themselves,” Thakral said.

As the olive trees take root and the padel court welcomes its first players, one thing is clear – the Green Mountain is thriving, and dusitD2 Naseem is setting a new benchmark for purposeful hospitality, where sustainability and guest experiences grow hand in hand.

SPORTS

CROSS-BORDER TENSIONS

IPL eyes May return as overseas players head home

NEW DELHI: Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad have been shortlisted to host the remaining 16 matches of IPL 2025, should the league resume in May following its suspension on Friday.

The BCCI halted the tournament for a week amid escalating cross-border tensions between India and Pakistan. While there is no official word yet on a cut-off date for resumption, the Indian board has begun preparatory work in case the government grants permission for a restart.

Franchise officials were informally notified about the developments, but BCCI insiders admit the challenges of an early resump-

tion remain significant. Several team representatives indicated the league could be pushed to a later date in the year.

A major hurdle for a May window is the availability of overseas players. Following the suspension, teams began disbanding, with most foreign players expected to depart India by Saturday evening.

While franchises remain hopeful that overseas players would return if the tournament resumes later this month, they concede that availability could be limited if the window extends beyond May 25 — the date originally set for the IPL final in Kolkata. Player commitments to bilateral series and the



upcoming World Test Championship final between Australia and South Africa, starting June 11 at Lord's, are likely to affect participation. A total of 57 matches were

completed before the suspension. The 58th match, between Punjab Kings and Delhi Capitals in Dharamsala, was called off on May 8 after just 10.1 overs. The BCCI

has not yet decided whether that match will be replayed.

Twelve league matches and four playoff fixtures remain. Hyderabad was originally scheduled to host the final stages of the tournament.

PSL 2025 postponed indefinitely

The remainder of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 2025 has been postponed indefinitely due to heightened tensions along the India-Pakistan border. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said the decision was taken following advice from Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and in light of the "worsening of the situation" in the region.

In a statement issued late Friday, the PCB said it had acted out of "sincere regard for the mental well-being of participating players and the sentiments of our foreign players," adding that the concerns of their families—many of whom had been urging the players to return home—had played a key role in the decision.

The announcement comes less than 24 hours after the PCB had declared its intent to move the remaining eight matches of the tournament to the UAE, though it had not yet confirmed venues or dates. The board had estimated that the league could resume within a week. - Agencies

CRICKET



Conrad to lead SA across formats as new white-ball coach

JOHANNESBURG: Shukri Conrad, currently South Africa's Test coach, has been appointed as the national white-ball coach in an expanded role that will see him oversee all three formats until the 2027 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup. The decision brings an end—at least for now—to Cricket South Africa's (CSA) experiment with split coaching responsibilities.

Conrad takes over the white-ball reins from Rob Walter, who stepped down in April, and becomes the central figure in South Africa's long-term strategy to build continuity across formats. While he will now be responsible for all coaching duties, a new selection convener—yet to be named—will work alongside him, in a notable change from the previous system where the head coach held sole authority on squad selection.

"I'm truly honoured to be entrusted with the responsibility of leading the national team across all three formats," Conrad said in a CSA statement. "Coaching the Test side has been the greatest privilege of my cricket journey, and to now oversee the white-ball teams as well is something unbelievably special. There's a strong foundation to build on, and I believe we have what it takes to achieve something special."

Conrad had originally applied for both red- and white-ball roles when CSA sought a replacement for Mark Boucher in 2022. At the time, CSA had abolished its formal selection panel, granting the head coaches selection responsibilities. That structure is now being re-

vised with a return to a dedicated selection convener—applications for the position closed on April 29, and an announcement is expected soon.

His credentials in white-ball cricket are already well established. Conrad stepped in for Walter in early 2023, guiding South Africa to a vital 2-1 ODI series win against England—securing automatic qualification for the 2023 ODI World Cup. It was during that series that he also named Temba Bavuma as Test captain, a move that restored confidence in Bavuma, who responded with a century in the second ODI.

Bavuma currently leads the Test and ODI squads, while Aiden Markram captains the T20 side.

Conrad's international coaching journey began with the Test team, but he brings a wealth of domestic experience to the role. He previously coached the Lions and Cobras under South Africa's former franchise system, winning four domestic titles, including three in white-ball formats.

More recently, he led South Africa to the ICC World Test Championship final, where they will face Australia. Under his stewardship, the Proteas have enjoyed a red-ball resurgence, stringing together seven consecutive Test victories—their second-longest streak after the nine-Test run of 2002-03.

With one coach now leading across formats, CSA hopes this unified approach will provide the stability and consistency needed to chart a successful path to the 2027 World Cup on home soil. - Agencies

Virat Kohli set to call time on Test career

Star India batter recently expressed his desire to BCCI to quit Test cricket

NEW DELHI: Virat Kohli has communicated to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) his desire to retire from Test cricket, just weeks before India's five-match series in England begins on June 20.

According to *ESPNcricinfo*, Kohli has been involved in ongoing discussions with senior BCCI officials over the past month. While a final decision is awaited, it is understood that he is seriously contemplating stepping away from the longest format.

If Kohli does go through with it, it will bring the curtain down on a stellar 14-year Test career — one that saw him represent India in 123 Tests, scoring 9,230 runs at an average of 46.85. He captained India in 68 of those matches, winning 40, the most by any Indian Test captain.



An era nears its end

Kohli's decision comes at a time of transition for Indian cricket. With Rohit Sharma retiring from Tests earlier this week and R Ashwin stepping away from all international formats earlier this year, the Indian side is entering a new phase. Shubman Gill is the leading candidate to take over the Test captaincy, and the selectors believe Kohli's experience will be critical during the tough English tour — especially with senior players like Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane no longer in the reckoning, and Mohammed Shami returning from injury.

While Kohli remains one of the most respected players in the world, his recent Test record has not reflected his early dominance. His unbeaten 100 in Perth in November 2024 was his first

Test hundred in over a year. Since scoring a career-best 254* in 2019, Kohli's average has dipped significantly — from a peak of 55.10 to 32.56 over the past 24 months.

Despite that, team management feels his temperament and match sense are irreplaceable — especially in English conditions, where his 2018 performance remains legendary.

Kohli's 2018 tour of England was a personal triumph. He had come into the series under pressure, having scored just 134 runs on the previous 2014 tour. But in 2018, he silenced critics with 583 runs across five Tests at an average of 59.30, including two centuries. It was also the year he amassed 1,322 runs — the highest in a calendar year for him in Tests.

From 2016 to 2018, Kohli pro-

duced one of the most dominant stretches in modern cricket, averaging 75.93 (2016), 75.64 (2017), and 55.08 (2018), with a total of 3,596 runs in 35 Tests at 66.59 — including 14 centuries and eight fifties.

Kohli, like Rohit, remains in the BCCI's top-tier A+ contract bracket, reserved for players active across all formats. However, both had announced their retirement from T20Is after India's World Cup win last year. If Kohli exits Tests as well, it will leave him available only for ODIs moving forward. The BCCI is expected to name India's squad for the England tour soon. Whether Kohli decides to play one last red-ball series or bows out before then will shape not just his legacy, but also the transition phase of Indian Test cricket. - Agencies

VIRAT KOHLI TEST CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Debut:	
June 20, 2011 vs West Indies (Kingston)	
Matches:	123
Innings:	211
Runs:	9,230
Average:	46.85
Centuries:	29
Half-Centuries:	30
Highest Score:	254*
vs South Africa, Pune (2019)	
Captaincy Record: Tests as captain: 68	
Wins: 40, Losses: 17, Draws: 11	

Awards:

ICC Cricketer of the Year (2017, 2018)

Ajinkya Award (2013), Padma Shri (2017), Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna (2018)

BILBAO TO HOST SUMMIT CLASH

United and Spurs set for epic Europa League final

LONDON: Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur are set to clash in an all-English Europa League final on 21 May, with both clubs desperate to salvage underwhelming domestic campaigns by lifting silverware in Bilbao.

Ruben Amorim's United stormed into the final with a dominant 7-1 aggregate win over Spain's Athletic Bilbao, while Ange Postecoglou's Spurs cruised past Norway's Bodo/Glimt 5-1 over two legs.

The final offers stark contrasts in history and hunger: United are chasing their second Europa League title in eight years, having last lifted the trophy under José Mourinho in 2017. Tottenham, on the other hand, are hoping to end a 41-year European drought and claim their first trophy of any kind since 2008.

It marks only the sixth time two English sides have met in a major European final—and notably, Spurs have featured in three



of them. Despite their domestic woes—United and Spurs currently languish in 15th and 16th in the Premier League—a European crown would bring much-needed redemption. Postecoglou brushed off criticism about league form, saying: "Who cares if we're struggling in the league? Both us and Manchester United have earned the right to be there."

Tottenham may enter the final with a psychological edge, having beaten United three times this season—3-0 at Old Trafford, 1-0 at

home in the Premier League, and a thrilling 4-3 win in the League Cup.

But United boss Amorim is refusing to accept the narrative. "If you think about the odds, it's hard for the club to lose four times in a row. We can think that way," he said.

Spurs have had the upper hand in recent meetings—winning four of the last six encounters. The stakes couldn't be higher—not just for a trophy, but for pride, redemption, and perhaps the chance to reframe a turbulent season as a triumphant one. - Agencies

FOOTBALL

Alonso to leave Leverkusen at the end of the season

MUNICH: Xabi Alonso will step down as head coach of Bayer Leverkusen at the end of the season, bringing an end to a remarkable chapter that saw the club claim their first-ever Bundesliga title and a domestic double under his leadership.

The 43-year-old Spaniard confirmed his decision on Friday, just days before Leverkusen's final home game of the season against Borussia Dortmund. Alonso's next move is widely expected to be a return to Real Madrid to succeed Carlo Ancelotti, though no formal announcement has been made.

"This week the club and I have agreed that these two games are going to be my last as Bayer Leverkusen coach," Alonso said. "It's not a moment to talk too much about the future. We want to have a proper farewell on Sunday – for some players, for myself. It's the right moment to announce it."

Alonso described his three-year journey with Leverkusen as "un-



believable" and "fantastic," expressing gratitude for the support he received from the players, staff and fans. "I've lived great emotions in this stadium and become what I am right now," he added.

Alonso's tenure at Leverkusen has been nothing short of transformational. Taking over in October 2022 with the club languishing near the bottom of the Bundes-

liga, he led them to a sixth-place finish that season. In his first full campaign, he masterminded an unbeaten run to the 2023-24 Bundesliga title—the first in the club's history—before adding the German Cup to complete a domestic double.

The only blemish on Leverkusen's otherwise stellar season was a 3-0 defeat to Atalanta in the Europa League final, their sole loss in 53 games across all competitions. Leverkusen were also eliminated from the Champions League in the last 16 and suffered a shock German Cup semi-final defeat to third-tier side Arminia Bielefeld.

Alonso's managerial rise has mirrored his illustrious playing career. After starting his coaching journey with Real Madrid's U14 team in 2018, he impressed with Real Sociedad B before taking the reins at Leverkusen. A former midfield maestro for Real Madrid, Liverpool, and Bayern Munich, Alonso retired as a player in 2017.

IN PICTURES



Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces

Villagers perform during an event marking the beginning of rice planting in the terraced fields in Jiayin Village of Honghe County of Honghe Hani and Yi Autonomous Prefecture, southwest China's Yunnan Province.

Xinhua



Ajay Devgn, Vaani Kapoor during the screening event of their film 'Raid 2'
Bollywood actors Ajay Devgn and Vaani Kapoor pose for a picture during the screening event of their film 'Raid 2', in Mumbai. ANI Photo



Europe Day celebration event held in Narva, Estonia
People watch a concert during a Europe Day celebration event in Narva, Estonia. Xinhua



China taps digital tech to save thousand-year-old cliff inscriptions
People visit Wuxi's digital museum in Yongzhou City, central China's Hunan Province. Xinhua



Pet Fest 2025 in Indonesia
A woman takes selfies with a baby monkey during Pet Fest 2025 in Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia. The event is held here featuring various activities including pet lover community sessions and pet product displays. Xinhua



El Eden Mine attracts large number of tourists in Zacatecas, Mexico
Visitors pose for photos at the entrance of El Eden Mine in Zacatecas, state of Zacatecas, Mexico. Once a major silver mining region in Latin America, Zacatecas had promoted the city's historical prosperity with its mineral wealth. As resources exhausted, the city shifted its focus on culture and tourism by preserving its rich colonial architecture and mining heritage, including the historic city centre, recognised as a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site, and the iconic El Eden Mine, and drawing numerous tourists from around the world. Xinhua



Highlight of South African Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2025
Models present creations during South African Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2025 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

ADVANCED FEATURES



Chery Arrizo 5: Smart and stylish companion for modern driver

MUSCAT: The Chery Arrizo 5 is more than just a sedan. It is a smart, modern driving companion packed with advanced features designed to make every journey smoother, safer and more enjoyable.

At the heart of the Arrizo 5 is a cutting-edge infotainment system with a crisp, high-resolution touchscreen, offering seamless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity. This allows drivers to integrate their smartphones effortlessly, making it easy to navigate with real-time maps, answer calls safely, send messages via voice commands, or stream music to set the perfect mood for the drive.

Step inside and you will be welcomed by a spacious, well-crafted cabin that prioritises passenger comfort. Premium materials, a leather-wrapped steering wheel and customisable ambient lighting enhance the interior ambience, giving it a refined and personal feel. The ergonomically designed seats provide excellent support for both short commutes and long drives, while the automatic climate control system maintains a pleasant temperature inside, regardless of the conditions outside.

Performance-wise, the Arrizo 5 is powered by a responsive 1.5L engine that delivers the ideal

mix of power and fuel economy. Whether navigating busy urban streets or cruising along open highways, the engine responds effortlessly. Paired with an intelligent CVT (Continuously Variable Transmission), it ensures smooth acceleration and efficient gear transitions, resulting in a quieter, more comfortable drive. The advanced suspension system further enhances ride quality by absorbing bumps and offering better control, making every trip more stable and relaxing.

As impressive as it is from the outside the Arrizo 5 also possesses a range of impressive safety features, leaving no room for compromise. It is loaded with intelligent safety technologies, including an Electronic Stability Program (ESP) and Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), which provide greater control during sudden stops or sharp turns. A full array of airbags ensures maximum protection for all occupants. Manoeuvring in tight spots becomes stress-free with the rearview camera and parking sensors, while driver-assist systems act like an extra pair of eyes on the road alerting and assisting drivers for a more confident driving experience.

In Oman, Chery vehicles are distributed by New World Autos.

MUSICAL JOURNEY

High quality musical extravaganza for music lovers of Muscat

MUSCAT: After a gap of 5 long years “Talent Hunters Oman” is back with “Musical Journey VI – Suhani Ruhani Shaam” continuing celebrating 100 years of Indian Cinema. It is a group of dedicated people having passion for “Performing Arts”.

All “Talent Hunters” are professionals with regular jobs in various fields. The passion & love for the performing arts make them to take up this, what they call a “social cause” & “a challenge” to work in their free time without any expectation. The aim of the group is to encourage the local talents, to give them a platform to perform & get them the recognition they deserve. We also train and groom the local talents, with the objective of bringing out the best in them.

The choicest songs of Music Maestros of Hindi Cinema O.P. Nayyar & Madan Mohan will be rendered by the Most Talented singers of Oman including 2 Omani singers. The event will be held at CBFS Hall – Bowsher on Friday, May 16.

The gates will open at 6.00 P.M. The high quality 2-hour Musical Extravaganza will start at 7 P.M.

The entry is free but with an invitation from the group & the sitting will be on first come first



serve basis.

There is already an overwhelming demand for the passes. Most popular Events organized by us are as follows....

Muscat Idol -2006 , Muscat Idol-Little Gems – 2007, Muscat Idol – Teen sensations – 2009, Muscat Icon 2012, Khafeef Youth Icon 2014, Muscat Icon – Singing Little Gems 2015& Oman Sports Icons Award Night 2019.

Musical Journey I Black & White, Musical Journey II –Golden Greats, Musical III – Mehfil, Musical Journey IV – Romance, Musical Journey V – Saare Jahan Se Achha

Dance Muscat Dance -2009, Khafeef International Dance Festival 2013.

Changan CS35 Plus Limited delivers comfort and smart technology

Now available with monthly instalments starting at just OMR 111, the CS35 Plus Limited offers exceptional value for those seeking a stylish and feature-rich compact SUV



MUSCAT: The Changan CS35 Plus Limited delivers a premium compact SUV experience that blends elegance, innovation and performance. As the most refined version in the CS35 Plus range, it is designed for individuals who appreciate thoughtful details and modern engineering without venturing into the high-end luxury segment features.

Now available with monthly instalments starting at just OMR 111, the CS35 Plus Limited offers exceptional value for those seeking a stylish and feature-rich compact SUV. With a 20% down payment, salaried individuals can avail of financing options for up to six years, subject to bank approvals. This

limited-time offer makes it easier than ever to own a smart, comfortable, and technology-driven SUV.

From the exterior, the CS35 Plus Limited makes a striking first impression. The bold grille, automatic LED headlights and 18-inch alloy wheels convey a sense of movement and strength. A panoramic sunroof adds an open, airy feel to the cabin, offering a more enjoyable atmosphere whether on long drives or short commutes.

Inside, the attention to detail continues with premium leather upholstery, a powered driver's seat, and rear reading lights. The interior feels both modern and welcoming. Drivers are greeted by a 7-inch LCD instrument cluster and a 10.25-inch infotainment touchscreen, forming a seamless digital hub. Technology highlights include built-in navigation, wireless phone charging, remote engine start, and keyless entry, mak-

ing every journey more convenient and connected.

Beneath the bonnet lies a responsive 1.4-litre turbocharged engine, paired with a seven-speed dual-clutch transmission. This combination delivers a smooth and efficient driving experience, ideal for navigating urban traffic as well as open roads. The refined suspension and tuned steering ensure that the CS35 Plus Limited handles every situation with poise and confidence.

Safety is another area where this model stands out. In addition to standard features such as dual front airbags, electronic stability control, anti-lock braking with electronic brakeforce distribution and hill hold control, the Limited variant includes curtain airbags, Automatic Emergency Brake, Front Collision Warning, and a 360-degree camera system. These additions provide greater peace of

mind and help create a more secure driving environment.

“Changan is redefining what drivers can expect from a compact SUV,” said a spokesperson for Changan Oman. “With the CS35 Plus Limited, we are offering a vehicle that goes beyond expectations, blending high-end features with everyday functionality and standout design.”

For those who appreciate modern design and dependable performance, the CS35 Plus 1.4L Trend is also a compelling choice. It features the same dynamic powertrain and advanced technology found in the Limited, while offering a well-balanced blend of practicality and everyday comfort.

Whether you are drawn to the luxurious appeal of the Limited or the reliable versatility of the Trend, the CS35 Plus series offers a smart and stylish way to elevate your everyday drive.

EMPOWERING VOICES

‘Limitless: Woman in Motion’ unveils stellar speaker lineup, exclusive workshop highlights

MUSCAT: Following the groundbreaking announcement of “Limitless: Woman in Motion”, *Times of Oman* and Elysium revealed the highly anticipated speaker roster and transformative workshop experiences awaiting attendees at the upcoming empowerment retreats in Barceló Mussanah Resort (June 26th to 28th).

The retreat will bring together an extraordinary assembly of thought leaders, industry disruptors, and change-makers, including:

Aneth Guerra de Arosemena – With 30 years of experience leading operations commercial strategy and innovation across Latin America, the US, and the Middle East, Aneth currently serve as the Chief Operation Officer at Vodafone Oman.

Saba Al Busaidi - A trailblazing leader in technology, communication, and public sector transformation. Starting her career as a civil engineer, Saba went on to become one of the youngest entrepreneurs in Oman, bringing innovation to the forefront of social media, digital strategy, and public affairs. In 2014, she was awarded the Omani Women's Excellence Award in Technology – a testament to her impact and pioneering spirit.

Farzeen Ashik– A powerful voice in executive coaching and HR leadership across the Middle East, and a ICF-certified professional coach with over 1,000 hours of coaching experience, Farzeen is known for guiding executives, mid-career professionals and entrepreneurs toward purpose-driven growth.

Tomoko Kojima– Tomoko is a 500-hour registered yoga teacher, offering a grounded and holistic



approach to mind-body well-being. Trained in Ashtanga Vinyasa, Hatha, Therapeutic and ODAKA Yoga, she brings over 11 years of international experience into her classes.

Daniela Gonçalves – Elysium Co-Founder, and global business developer with over 10 years of leadership experience, she is specialized in international relations and innovation. She brings a unique blend of strategic vision and operational excellence to the table with a distinguished career spanning Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Areej Al Shaibani – With over a decade of experience in Human Resources, organizational transformation and change leadership, Areej is known for her visionary aligning talent strategy with innovation and people-centric leadership.

Ana Luisa Cavaco – With a career spanning over three decades and nearly a decade of leadership experience, in the middle East, Ana has led multidisciplinary teams of 200+ professionals with focus on excellence, empathy and performance.

Cara Laing – With over 20 years

of leadership experience across risk, governance, resilience and sustainability, Cara brings a track record of transformative impact in highly regulated industries. Currently serving as a General Manager at Omantel, she is widely recognized for her ability to align operational excellence with long-term value through integrated risk and ESG strategies.

Bhavna Batra – A visionary entrepreneur, award-winning CEO, and creative powerhouse with over two decades of impact across business, leadership and media. Founder and CEO of Synerggie, Bhavna has reshaped Oman's business and events landscape through strategy, innovation and unwavering commitment to excellence.

Sarah Khaled - A seasoned marketing leader, strategist, and storyteller in the world of luxury hospitality and brand building with over 18 years of experience across top-tier hotel brands in the Middle East. Sarah has led iconic pre-openings and shaped the voice of luxury for names like Shangri-La, The Ritz-Carlton, and Marriott International.

- Shilpa Pawani - A Chartered Accountant, Wealth Advisor, and advocate for purposeful financial leadership. With over 25 years of experience across wealth advisory, ESG investing, and strategic financial planning, Shilpa currently serves as a Wealth Advisor at Ahli-bank, guiding high-net-worth individuals through their financial journeys with clarity, empathy, and long-term vision.

Additional surprise speakers from global brands and GCC-based success stories will be announced in the weeks ahead.

Unmissable Workshops & Certification

Attendees will engage in hands-on learning experiences, including:

- “Unleashing the Inner Leader” – Overcoming self-limiting beliefs to build confidence and leadership presence.
- “Mindfulness & Movement” – Guided meditation and yoga for holistic well-being.
- “Power Hour: Creative Brainstorming” – Collaborative problem-solving and innovative idea generation.
- “Design Thinking for Innovation” – A practical session on creative problem-solving and prototyping.

Exclusive Bonus: Participants will receive a Times of Oman Academy Certification, recognized for professional development.

With early-bird pricing ending May 31st, women across the GCC are encouraged to secure their seats at this landmark event. A limited number of 30 spots are available for emerging leaders.

Register now at <https://elysiummovement.com>

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