

Times

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TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Ambassadors forum
kicks off in Muscat

1 The inaugural Governors' Ambassadors Forum, held under the slogan "United by Purpose," began on Tuesday in Muscat Governorate. The event brings together specialists and professionals in project management and administrative governance from various governorates of Oman. **>A2**

OMAN

Role of museums in
tourism emphasised

2 The International Conference "Museums and Their Role in Tourism Development" concluded its deliberations yesterday in the Wilayat of Manah, under the patronage of Nasr Hamoud Al Kindi, Secretary General of the Royal Court Affairs. **>A6**

WORLD

Over 28,000 women,
girls killed in Gaza

3 UN Women estimated that over 28,000 women and girls have been killed in Gaza since the beginning of the war in October 2023 – that is one woman and one girl on average killed every hour in attacks by Israeli forces. **>B7**

PROUD SYMBOL

Oman's tallest flagpole to
be inaugurated on Thursday

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The tallest flagpole in the nation's history and a proud symbol soaring in the skies of Oman will be inaugurated on Thursday, announced Muscat Municipality.

Under the patronage of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Governor of Muscat and in the presence of Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, the inauguration ceremony will be held at Al Khuwair Square on Thursday at 5:45 pm.

The tallest flagpole covers an area of more than 18,000 square metres, reaching a height of 126 metres. The flagpole has been constructed of iron using 135 tonnes of steel.

The outer diameter of the flag-

pole at the base is 2,800 mm, while the diameter at its highest point is 900 mm.

The Omani flag measures 18 metres in length and 31.5 me-

tres in width. The flagpole is also equipped with an aircraft warning lighting system.

Spanning over an area of more than 21,000 square metres, Al Khuwair Square is envisioned as a vibrant public space designed to enhance tourism, promote development, and offer diverse recreational and sports facilities.

The surrounding area has been meticulously developed to include lush green spaces, inviting walkways, and dedicated bicycle paths, fostering a sense of community and well-being.

Beyond the iconic flagpole, Al Khuwair Square will offer a variety of recreational features including grass turf, palm trees, an outdoor exhibition area, and a skateboarding zone, promising a multifaceted space for residents and visitors alike.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a bid to strengthen national efforts against human trafficking, Oman authorities have urged the public to stay alert to early warning signs and report

suspected cases promptly.

With growing international scrutiny and the hidden nature of the crime, officials emphasised that raising awareness across all levels of society is critical to prevention and victim protection.

14,000 PILGRIMS

Pilgrims complete
Hajj requirements

MUSCAT: The number of pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman for 1446 AH reached 13,944, with 99.6% having completed all requirements for performing Hajj rituals, while 56 pilgrims are still finalising procedures.

This was announced during a press conference held by Oman's Hajj Mission at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, which reviewed the indicators, statistics, and improvements for this year's Hajj season.

Ahmed Saleh Al Rashdi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs and head of Oman's Hajj Mission, stated that Oman's Hajj quota for this year was 14,000 pilgrims, including 13,530 Omani citizens and 470 residents.

The total quota was distributed among the governorates

based on population density (number of residents) for those aged 18 and above.

He added that Muscat Governorate received the largest share at 24% of the total quota, followed by North Al Batinah Governorate at 19%, while Musandam Governorate received the smallest share, amounting to less than 1% of the approved quota. **>A6**

Experts at the Muscat workshop shared key indicators of trafficking and legal mechanisms to fight the scourge

A high-level workshop held in Muscat on Monday underscored the government's push to build a more informed and proactive community, with experts sharing key indicators of trafficking and legal mechanisms to fight the scourge.

Titled "Indicators of Human Trafficking, Raising Awareness of Its Dangers, and the Importance of Reporting It," the workshop brought together stakeholders from the Ministry of Social Development, the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, the Royal Oman Police, and child protection representatives. **>A6**

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Governors’ Ambassadors Forum to discuss best practices in contracts

Over three days, the forum will discuss challenges and innovative solutions while presenting work methodologies, contracts, and successful case studies



MUSCAT: The inaugural Governors’ Ambassadors Forum, held under the slogan “United by Purpose,” began on Tuesday in Muscat Governorate. The event brings together specialists and professionals in project management and administrative governance procedures from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. Over three days, the forum will discuss challenges and innovative solutions while presenting work methodologies, contracts, and successful case studies. The forum aims to enhance institutional integration and exchange best practices in contracts and tenders, supporting the government’s decentralisation efforts, empowering governorates, and achieving balanced development across Oman.

In his opening speech, Eng. Said Hamad Al-Amri, Director General of Tenders at the General Secretariat for Tenders, stated that the Governors’ Ambassadors Forum, launched on Tuesday in Muscat, strengthens integration between the Secretariat and governors’ offices. It seeks to focus on developmental goals and outcomes by enhancing communication channels and expertise exchange among specialists, as well as reviewing successful project implementation experiences in governorates. This contributes to improving government project efficiency and ensuring cohesive execution of policies and developmental initiatives. He added that the programme will be held periodically three times a year—once every four months—with each session hosted

in a different governorate selected based on geographic distribution and the number of projects implemented there. Each forum spans three days, featuring field activities, discussion sessions, and site visits to projects. Al Amri explained that the forum aims to share knowledge and experiences among governorates, highlighting key projects, challenges, and developmental opportunities in host governorates. It also seeks to improve communication efficiency between tender offices. Discussion topics include reviewing implemented projects and execution mechanisms, addressing challenges and innovative solutions, presenting work and contract methodologies, and exchanging successful experiences. Additionally, specialized workshops with government stakehold-

ers will be organised. He noted that the programme aims to establish a sustainable communication mechanism among stakeholders in different governorates, enhancing professional performance and contributing to an integrated system for managing projects and tenders—one that considers developmental disparities and economic opportunities in each governorate. Al Amri emphasised that the program is expected to significantly improve government spending efficiency by enhancing project monitoring, transparency, and accountability, aligning with Oman Vision 2040’s priorities in local governance and effective administration. In his turn, Ali Hamad Al Azki, Director General of Financial and Administrative Affairs in Muscat Governorate, stated that the forum is an opportunity to enhance capabilities and develop working tools for governors’ offices, in line with decentralisation efforts to broaden governorates’ authority. This contributes to balanced and sustainable development across all governorates. He added that the forum reflects a unified vision, starting in Muscat, to achieve institutional integration and build a comprehensive national system involving all governorates. This will help improve administrative governance and develop an integrated framework. Meanwhile, Rasha Mohammed Al Salti, Director of Development and Price Indicators at the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, stated that hosting the Governors’ Ambassadors Forum will have a tangible positive impact on supporting sustainable development in Oman. She added that the forum represents a key opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the Tender Board and governors’ offices, facilitating information and expertise exchange among various entities. It also serves as a platform to enhance government performance by showcasing successful experiences and best practices, positively reflecting on the quality of developmental project execution. She noted that the forum will develop specialists’ skills through discussion sessions and work-

shops, boosting their efficiency in managing projects and tenders. It will also encourage innovation by addressing developmental challenges and proposing solutions, fostering creative problem-solving. She emphasised that the forum will focus on developmental disparities and economic opportunities among governorates, reinforcing efforts toward balanced development that meets local community needs and supports Oman Vision 2040. The forum includes specialised sessions and workshops reviewing governorates’ experiences in project and contract management, focusing on key shared challenges and solutions. On the second day, participants will conduct field visits to vital projects in Muscat, including Oman Botanic Garden, Sultan Haitham City, the Al Ansab–Al Jifnain Road project, and the Green Walkway—bridging theory with practical application and promoting hands-on experience exchange. The forum concludes on the third day with specialized working papers presented by experts from Muscat Governorate and the Tender Board, discussing key trends and future opportunities in project management and government procurement. This first-of-its-kind forum is organized by the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in cooperation with governorates and will be held periodically on a rotating basis among governorates—a step toward unifying practices and developing institutional tools in contracts and tenders. -ONA

INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Oman to mark International Day for Cultural Diversity today

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will join nations worldwide on Wednesday in celebrating the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, observed annually on 21 May. The occasion aims to highlight the richness of global cultures and emphasise the vital role of intercultural dialogue in fostering peace and sustainable development. The Oman National Commission for Education, Culture, and Science, in collaboration with the working team of the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD) in Oman and the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), will organise a workshop on May 27-28. The session will focus on mech-



anisms for preparing cultural projects to secure support from the IFCD. Cultural diversity, as defined by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promo-

tion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), refers to “the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression, passed on within and

among groups and communities.” Oman joined the convention in 2007, which seeks to promote diverse forms of cultural expression, create conditions for cultures to

flourish and interact, encourage intercultural dialogue, strengthen cultural exchange among peoples, and foster respect for cultural diversity at local and global levels.

In this context, Oman formed a working team for the IFCD, comprising members from various cultural institutions. The team is tasked with identifying and analyzing cultural diversity initiatives, establishing a unified framework for related projects and programs, reviewing and approving proposals for IFCD funding, and preparing reports on the implementation of the UNESCO convention. This year’s celebration coincides with UNESCO’s commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the convention’s adoption in 2005. The event seeks to raise awareness of the convention’s key achievements and engage policymakers in addressing challenges and opportunities to safeguard and promote cultural diversity. -ONA

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AL DAKHILIYAH

Forum to boost skills of customer service staff

NIZWA: The Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah on Tuesday hosted the “Customer Service Employees Forum” to enhance the efficiency of personnel working in customer service and improving satisfaction levels among beneficiaries of government services. The forum was inaugurated by Sheikh Hilal Said Al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah. It was attended by representatives from various government entities and local departments in the governorate, and featured multiple working papers and interactive presentations highlighting best practices in customer service and tools for institutional performance improvement. The first day of the forum included four working papers presented by several government institutions. These covered the national platform for suggestions, complaints, and reports (Tajawob), mechanisms for handling beneficiary requests, and a paper on raising customer satisfaction indicators, which emphasized ethics in service delivery and the analysis of statistical metrics. Additionally, a success story in customer service was showcased, along with efforts to achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. -ONA

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Seminar discusses cyberattacks, ways to counter them

The workshop sought to familiarise participants with global best practices in institutional data protection, promote digital security culture within the business environment

MUSCAT: A seminar titled “Cybersecurity Risks and Digital Resilience Strategies” discussed the most prominent challenges facing institutions amid the rise in cyberattacks, ways to enhance their capacity to counter these threats, and ensuring continuity in a secure digital environment, along with the importance of cybersecurity insurance.

Organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in collaboration with Howden Insurance Brokers, the seminar aimed to raise awareness about the risks of cyberattacks and their impact on the business environment, as well as the importance of insurance.

It also sought to familiarise participants with global best practices in institutional data protection, promote digital security culture within the business environment, and establish communication



channels with experts and technicians to exchange solutions and consultations in cybersecurity.

The opening ceremony was held under the patronage of Eng. Ibrahim Abdullah Al Hosni, a member of the OCCI Board of Directors and Chairman of the Digital Economy and Artificial Intelligence Committee.

The forum featured several visual presentations on the latest developments in the cybersecu-

ity threat landscape, along with two real-world case studies from the finance and manufacturing sectors. It also addressed legal aspects related to personal data protection laws.

Additionally, the symposium included a panel discussion on the most pressing cybersecurity challenges across various sectors.

The event was attended by a number of cybersecurity specialists and business owners. -ONA

RAO Commander receives delegation from Saudi Arabia

MUSCAT: Maj. Gen Mattar Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman received in his office at Al Murtafa'a Camp a delegation from the Authority for Supplies of the Saudi Armed Forces.

During the meeting, the two sides explored areas of mutual military cooperation. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by several senior RAO officers. -ONA



Workshop on Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2024 held

MUSCAT: The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) yesterday organised a workshop to review the Sultanate of Oman's results in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2024 report.

The workshop was titled “Towards Empowering and Sustainable Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman”. It was attended by representatives of government units and private sector establishments.

The workshop was opened by Qais Rashid Al Toobi, ASMED Deputy Chairman for Finance and Investment, who explained that the workshop includes 15 working papers covering all areas of relevance to the sector of entrepreneurship and SMEs, the legislative environment and future plans in this field.

“ASMED joins hands with all partners—through initiatives, programmes and other events—to achieve partnerships to empower SMEs and the entrepreneurship sector,” said Al Toobi, noting that the Authority offers programmes in financing, investment, capacity building and marketing.

The workshop reviewed efforts to motivate SMEs and enhance

opportunities for partnerships and integration among the government and private sectors, to help empower SMEs, raise the sector's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) and augment Oman's rankings in the GEM report.

The workshop included papers that explored entrepreneurial ratios and indices, as well as the outcome of GEM report 2024.

The workshop also included specialised training sessions to empower the owners of SMEs and help them benefit from non-traditional financing platforms.

The workshop dealt with the index of entrepreneurship in vocational education, colleges and universities and highlighted efforts made to establish business centres in all governorates to empower SMEs and startups and to support technology-based and innovation-based startups through the Promising Omani Startup Programme.

It is worth noting that the Sultanate of Oman has achieved exceptional progress in the 2024-2025 GEM report, ranking eighth globally out of 56 countries covered by the report.

This is a three-spot improvement from Oman's 2023 ranking when it ranked eleventh. -ONA





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Shura approves ‘Real Estate Registry Law, amendment to Arbitration Law

Extensive discussions took place among the esteemed members of the council, resulting in their approval and referral to the State Council

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Shura Council approved on Tuesday the draft law amending certain provisions of the Arbitration Law in Civil and Commercial Disputes, as well as the draft ‘Real Estate Registry Law’, both referred by the government.

Extensive discussions took place among the esteemed members of the council, resulting in their approval and referral to the State Council to complete their legislative process.

This took place during the 10th regular session of the second ordinary session (2024-2025) of the 10th term (2023-2027), chaired by H.E.

Khalid bin Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council, and attended by the esteemed members of the council.

Opening remarks by the Chairman

The session began with a speech by the Chairman of the Shura Council, Khalid Al Maawali, who emphasised the council’s role in contributing to the formulation of plans for development projects



and programmes that are fundamental to the nation’s institutions.

These efforts aim to reflect positively on achieving optimal stability and prosperity across various developmental sectors.

He highlighted that one of the key items on the agenda was the discussion and approval of several bills referred by the government, which will continue to build upon and strengthen the comprehensive sustainable development process in the country.

Statement regarding hiring of Omanis

Mohammed Nasser Al Mahrouqi, Shura Council Member representing the Wilaya of Sinaw, presented an urgent statement regarding the Ministry of Labour’s decision to require commercial institutions established for over a year to hire at least one Omani citizen within thirty days from the notification date.

In his statement, Al Mahrouqi expressed that small, micro, and medium-sized businesses were taken by surprise with text messages from the Ministry, which imposed this new hiring requirement.

He indicated that the decision had caused widespread dissatisfaction within these businesses,

as it added a new burden to their already existing challenges and threatened the viability of many of them.

He warned that such decisions could lead to a rapid increase in the number of job seekers, which could potentially surpass previous records.

He clarified that many of these institutions, which are often located in rural and remote areas, provide essential services to local communities and are mostly owned and operated by Omanis with very limited resources.

Minimum wage

The new requirement to employ Omanis at the minimum wage of OMR 325, despite the lack of actual operational need, would impose a financial burden that is difficult to bear.

Al Mahrouqi stressed that while Omanisation is a noble national goal, it cannot be achieved through isolated, short-term decisions.

Instead, it requires a comprehensive national plan based on thorough studies.

He also emphasised the importance of evaluating past initiatives to identify successful and unsuccessful practices.

He concluded by urging an exemption for micro and small busi-

nesses from the current decision and called for supporting medium-sized enterprises both financially and knowledge-wise to enable them to gradually absorb national cadres in line with clear, feasible timelines.

Food security projects and call for immediate action

Mohammed Khamis Al Hussein, Shura Council Member representing the Wilaya of Samail, also presented an urgent statement regarding the failure of several food security projects.

He discussed how global changes had negatively impacted food security, with some food-producing countries imposing export restrictions to secure their own markets, underlining the importance of boosting local food production in Oman.

Al Hussein pointed out that despite the financial support provided to several companies under the Investment Authority, many of them had failed due to bureaucratic hurdles, inaccurate feasibility studies, weak management, and a lack of governance and effective oversight.

He emphasised that these companies, once intended to support food security, had instead become burdens on the state budget at a

time when every rial is needed for economic and social programmes.

In his statement, recommended conducting a comprehensive and transparent review of all government food security projects in terms of financial and technical performance.

He called for decisive action regarding the underperforming companies, either through revitalisation with strategic partners, sale to investors, or liquidation if they were deemed unfeasible.

Approval of the Amendment to the Arbitration Law in Civil and Commercial Disputes The council also reviewed the government’s draft law amending some provisions of the Arbitration Law in Civil and Commercial Disputes.

Dr. Ahmed Ali Al- Saadi, Chairman of the Legislative and Legal Committee, explained that the committee, during its study of the bill, held several meetings with specialists from the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs.

The draft amendment aims to enhance the effectiveness of arbitration procedures, ensuring speed and fairness while supporting Oman’s efforts to adopt international best practices in dispute resolution.

Following detailed discussions, the council approved the draft law with the committee’s proposed amendments and referred it to the State Council for further legislative proceedings.

nessed in recent years, particularly with the introduction of digital record-keeping systems and electronic ownership deeds.

The new law aims to establish a modern legislative framework that enhances the speed and accuracy of real estate transactions, ensures legal protection for all parties, and contributes to transparency in the real estate market.

Al-Saadi emphasised that the law aligns with international best practices in real estate record management and will further enhance institutional efficiency while integrating the real estate sector into the national digital ecosystem.

The bill was approved and referred to the State Council to complete its legislative process.

Approval of air transport agreement between Oman and Kyrgyzstan

The council also approved the Committee on Public Services and Utilities’ review of the air transport agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kyrgyz Republic, which was referred by the government.

Dr. Hamoud Ahmed Al- Yahyai, Chairman of the Committee, discussed the economic benefits of the agreement, which seeks to regulate and operate air services between the two countries, promoting cooperation in civil aviation, exchanging technical expertise, and encouraging trade and tourism exchanges.

The session also touched on several other bills referred by the government, including the National Spatial Data Law, the Unified Industrial Regulation for GCC countries, and the Sports Bodies Law.

The council will convene again on Wednesday for the 11th regular session, during which the draft Civil Society Institutions Law will be discussed.

Approval of the Real Estate Registry Law and referral to the State Council

The council also discussed the government’s draft Real Estate Registry Law, which was presented by Dr. Ahmed Ali Al-Saadi.

He explained that the current real estate registry system, established by Royal Decree No. 2/98, no longer meets the technological advancements Oman has wit-

RAISING AWARENESS

Sultanate of Oman marks World Bee Day

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman is celebrating World Bee Day, observed annually on 20 May, which aims to raise awareness about the importance of bees and pollinators in the ecosystem and their vital role in achieving food security and sustainable development.

The designation of this global day marks a significant step in promoting measures to protect bees and other pollinators, directly contributing to addressing challenges related to global food supplies and helping eliminate them, particularly in developing countries.

Oman has placed great emphasis on the beekeeping sector through the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources. The ministry has implemented numerous research, advisory, and developmental programs and projects across various governorates. Among these initiatives is organizing two annual honey markets—one in mid-year and another in December—in collaboration with the private sector. These markets aim to enhance food security, encourage beekeepers to improve product quality, and achieve sustainable economic returns.

To support the natural environment for bees, the ministry has propagated and distributed forage trees, known as Australian Acacia (Sumur), planted across several agricultural and pastoral sites. This initiative compensates for the loss of grazing areas caused by drought, overgrazing, and desertification, directly contributing to increased honey production during periods of scarce natural resources.

The ministry’s efforts also extend to other bee products, such as wax, royal jelly, and pollen—promising products that foster an entrepreneurial culture among beekeepers and open new horizons in value-added industries and public health.

According to 2024 statistics, Oman has approximately 5,352 beekeepers managing 178,069 bee-hives, with an annual honey production of 765,053 kilograms. The North A’Sharqiyah Governorate leads in honey production with



Oman has placed great emphasis on the beekeeping sector through the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources. The ministry has implemented numerous research, advisory, and developmental programs and projects across various governorates.

around 263,000 kilograms, followed by the A’Dakhiliyah Governorate with approximately 177,000 kilograms.

These figures reflect the sector’s growth compared to 2023 statistics, which recorded 623,313 kilograms of honey from 145,485 hives. This growth highlights the sector’s expansion, driven by continuous government support and beekeepers’ awareness of the importance of improving breeding and production methods.

Oman reaffirms its ongoing commitment to environmental conservation, biodiversity enhancement, and food security by supporting the beekeeping sector as a key economic element and a sustainable source of livelihood and production in rural communities. -ONA



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ORDER OF MARITIME MERIT

French honour for head of Maritime Security Centre



PARIS: The French government has bestowed the “Order of Maritime Merit” on Commodore Adil Hamoud Al Busaidi, Head of the Maritime Security Centre, in recognition of his efforts in enhancing bilateral cooperation in the field of maritime security between

Oman and France. The medal was conferred on Commodore Al Busaidi by Rear Admiral Hugues Laine, Commander of the French Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean. The ceremony took place at the headquarters of the Maritime Security Centre. -ONA

TWO-DAY EVENT

Omani-Saudi Knowledge Dialogue Forum to strengthen bilateral ties

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will host the Omani-Saudi Knowledge Dialogue Forum next Sunday, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation in cooperation with the Council of University Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The two-day event aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation in higher education and scientific research. Dr. Maryam Bilarab Al Nabhani, Director General of Private Universities and Colleges at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, emphasized that the forum serves as a strategic platform to enhance knowledge cooperation and expertise exchange between the two countries. She highlighted the forum’s pivotal role in fostering partnerships between higher education institutions in Oman and their counterparts in Saudi Arabia, promoting joint research programs, researcher exchanges, and academic collaboration. Additionally, the forum seeks to encourage the establishment of research and development centers, boost joint investments in education, research, and innovation, and strengthen communication channels between intellectual, educational, and research institutions.



These efforts align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030. Dr. Al Nabhani added that the event will bring together academics, researchers, and decision-makers from both countries to exchange insights, ideas, and expertise while exploring ways to enhance knowledge partnerships in various priority national fields. The forum will feature several dialogue sessions focusing on challenges and opportunities in building pioneering universities in the Gulf region, the role of the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions

in supporting education, smart learning, and digital campuses, as well as scientific research and innovation collaboration. The event will see participation from nearly 70 Saudi universities, several research centers, and all public and private higher education institutions in Oman.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
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كيمجي رامداس
KHIMJI RAMDAS

Museums vital for preserving heritage

The conference recommended boosting integrated management of cultural heritage through digital documentation

MANAH: The International Conference “Museums and Their Role in Tourism Development” concluded its deliberations yesterday in the Wilayat of Manah, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, under the patronage of Nasr Hamoud Al Kindi, Secretary General of the Royal Court Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Oman Across Ages Museum.

Regarding museum and heritage institutions, the conference recommended enhancing the integrated management of cultural heritage through digital documentation, oral narratives, and institutional partnerships.

This aims to establish museums as living memories and drivers of sustainable tourism and cultural development.

It also called for activating multilingual and multimedia museum programs to enrich visitor experiences, expanding participation in national and international tourism routes linked to cultural identity, and integrating museums into tourism policies through models such as archaeological and heritage site museums and intangible



museums. These efforts would bolster the community economy and preserve local cultural diversity.

In a statement delivered by Dr. Mohammed Ali Al Balushi, Chairman of the Scientific Committee, concerning museum economy and tourism, the conference emphasized consolidating the role of museums in urban and tourism planning as interactive creative hubs capable of stimulating local economies and creating educational and experiential tourism pathways.

It also recommended leveraging cultural entrepreneurship and digital transformation to develop smart museum models that generate sustainable income, support economic diversification within the cultural economy, and enhance participatory governance models and partnerships with the private sector and communities to improve museum investment efficiency and expand its tourism and social impact within the sustainable development agenda.

As for the cultural and educational role of museums, the conference recommended repurposing museums as interactive educational spaces that promote cultural citizenship and integrate multiculturalism into educational programs and local curricula with-

in a comprehensive societal vision.

It also advocated supporting mobile, scientific, and literary museums as alternative models to bridge learning gaps, connect visitors with knowledge and tourism experiences in marginalized environments and multicultural communities, and develop institutional partnerships between museums, educational institutions, and professional bodies to build technical capacities and produce quality cultural content that fosters integration between education and tourism.

As far as digital technologies in museum exhibitions and their tourism role are concerned, the conference recommended adopting integrated digital strategies based on artificial intelligence and other modern technologies to deepen visitor experiences and amplify the cultural and tourism impact of museum content.

It also called for using non-invasive analysis and documentation tools, such as multispectral imaging and digital modeling, to preserve collections and enhance museums’ research and educational appeal.

Additionally, it emphasized integrating interactive digital storytelling into museum marketing, transforming historical figures

into digital symbols that bridge memory and innovation while engaging the global digital-native audience.

Dr. Mohammed Ismail Al Nasrat, in his address on behalf of participants, highlighted Oman’s ancient history spanning thousands of years and its vibrant cultural treasures embodied in every museum, fort, and city. He noted that these institutions have proven not only to be guardians of memory but also key players in shaping the future of cultural tourism in the region and the world.

He emphasized Oman’s profound commitment to heritage and its relentless efforts to link heritage with development, serving as a model for transforming culture into an economic, social, and humanitarian asset.

The conference’s third theme, “The Cultural and Educational Role of Museums,” featured several working papers discussing the educational and interactive experiences of contemporary museums.

Meanwhile, the fourth theme, “Digital Technologies in Museum Exhibitions and Their Role in Tourism,” explored digital imaging, interactive guidance in museums, and artificial intelligence innovations.

Dr. Hashil Obaid Al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group and the keynote speaker on the final day of the conference, delivered a lecture titled “Museums as Strategic Drivers of Tourism Growth.”

He highlighted museums as one of the most important attractions for cultural and knowledge-seeking tourists, their role in boosting the tourism sector, and their connection to economic, social, and cultural development.

-ONA

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ROP wins Government Innovation Award

DUBAI: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has won the Arab Digital Economy Award 2025 in the Government Innovation category for its electronic customs system “Bayan” during the Digital Economy Conference and Exhibition (Seamless Middle East 2025), which opened yesterday at the Dubai World Trade Centre.

The event was held under the auspices of Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the United Arab Emirates. Representing the Royal Oman Police to receive the award were Brigadier Saeed bin Khamis Al Ghaithi, Director General of Customs, and Colonel Abdullah Said Al Kalbani, Director General of Information Technology.

The award aims to honour individuals, institutions, and initiatives that effectively contribute to building the digital economy, developing technical solutions, and supporting smart transformation systems in line with sustainable development goals and international standards.

This recognition comes in appreciation of the Royal Oman Police’s efforts in digital transfor-



mation and its active contribution to developing the technical system in the Sultanate of Oman in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

The Bayan system represents one of the best models of government digital integration in the region, having accelerated business processes and simplified customs procedures through the use of artificial intelligence technologies, while enhancing the efficiency of customs services and international trade movement between Oman and other countries. The system includes more than 495 electronic services with direct links to 74 government and private entities.

-ONA

OMR1,417 is the cost for land pilgrims

< FROM A1 He noted that eligibility was granted electronically through Oman’s Hajj registration system, using mathematical formulas based on Sharia principles and jurisprudential considerations that account for various aspects and objectives, including social factors.

Regarding the distribution of pilgrims by Hajj type, he explained that obligatory Hajj pilgrims constituted the largest group, totaling approximately 11,780 pilgrims (84% of the quota), followed by voluntary pilgrims, those performing Hajj on behalf of the incapacitated, executing wills, performing Hajj on behalf of the deceased, and finally, pilgrims with chronic illnesses.

As for age demographics, he reported that the 30–45 age group ranked first at 39%, followed by the 45–60 age group, then those over 60 (approximately 16%), and finally the youngest group (18–30) at 5%.

He further stated that most of Oman’s pilgrims chose air travel (over 63%), while 37% preferred land. The average cost for land pilgrims is OMR1,417, compared to OMR2,063 for air pilgrims.

He highlighted that Oman’s Hajj Mission launched several qualitative initiatives this season, including the Awqaf Beit Al-Ribat initiative to support eligible social



welfare recipients for Hajj 1446 AH, benefiting over 150 pilgrims with a total exceeding RO 150,000. Additionally, the first Hajj and Umrah Exhibition saw participation from more than 30 government and private entities.

He added that the mobile cart initiative for elderly pilgrims aims to provide carts for performing Tawaf and Sa’i rituals, with around 450 elderly and special needs pilgrims expected to benefit this season.

Meanwhile, the electronic wristband initiative provides wearable devices for elderly pilgrims and those with medical conditions to enhance safety, track-

ing, and reduce cases of loss.

He noted that the Hajj Company Readiness Assessment initiative seeks to ensure the highest standards of efficiency and quality while improving the performance of Hajj companies in line with future stages of managing Oman’s pilgrims based on specific performance indicators.

The expansion of land travel arrangements initiative aims to reduce the average waiting time for buses at land ports from four hours to approximately 45 minutes.

He explained that the Mission implemented several new improvements for this year’s

Hajj season (1446 AH) in Oman’s camps in the holy sites across key service sectors.

In Mina camp, 75 new restrooms were added, bringing the total to 267, along with 250 new ablution stations (total: 356). For air conditioning, 150 new split units were installed, raising the total to 900, in addition to other cooling systems.

In Arafat camp, 100 new restrooms were added (total: 320), along with 250 new ablution stations (total: 312). Air conditioning was also upgraded, with 60,000 cooling units now covering every 32 square metres, compared to 40 square metres last season.

-ONA

Workshop

Trafficking crimes

< FROM A1 The ROP presented a detailed overview of common indicators of trafficking crimes in Oman, including restriction of movement, withholding of official documents, non-payment of wages, signs of coercion, and the employment of minors outside legal bounds. Other red flags discussed were forced begging, physical violence, violations of Foreigners Residence Law, illegal immigration, money laundering, migrant smuggling, suspicious movement of women and children, and poor living or working conditions.

Another key presentation by the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking focused on the committee’s mandate to coordinate national response efforts, develop victim care programmes, and enhance border controls in line with international commitments. It also reviewed the local and international repercussions due to human trafficking.

The Ministry of Labour’s paper defined forced labour as any work or service imposed under threat, which the person did not willingly agree to perform. Among the indicators: confiscation of passports, abusive working conditions, and threats of dismissal or deportation.



The legal framework underpinning Oman’s anti-trafficking measures was also highlighted, including provisions under the Basic Law (Royal Decree No. 6/2021), the Anti-Human Trafficking Law (Royal Decree No. 126/2008), and a range of international agreements Oman has ratified.

These include the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Royal Decree No. 37/2005), the Arab Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Royal Decree No. 6/2015), and the Arab Charter on Human Rights (Royal Decree No. 16/2023).

Officials concluded the session by calling for broader public engagement, encouraging citizens and residents to speak up and report suspicious activity to help protect vulnerable individuals and dismantle trafficking networks.

PAKISTAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDER

Pakistan School Muscat (PSM) invites sealed bids from experienced and qualified contractors for the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Collection Period	Submission Deadline
2025/013	Ground Medical Insurance for Staff	May 21, 2025 to May 29, 2025 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM Working Days/Hours	On or before June 03, 2025

Eligibility Criteria:
 Contractors must have a minimum of three (3) years of relevant experience, preferably within the Sultanate of Oman, in providing similar services.

Tender Document Fee:
 RO 20,000 (non-refundable) per tender, payable at the time of document collection from the Admin Office, Pakistan School Muscat.

Submission Instructions:

- All tenders must be submitted in **original form**, complete with all required documents.
- Incomplete or non-compliant bids will not be considered.
- Tenders must be sealed in an envelope clearly marked with:
 - Tender Number & Title
 - Company Name
 - Name & Contact Number of the Point of Contact (POC)
- The sealed envelope should be dropped in the Tender Box available at the Admin Office by the submission deadline.

For queries, please contact: +968 93690691,
 Email: tulaib@pakistanschool.edu.om | bodschairman@gmail.com

Note: PSM reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason. The lowest bid will not necessarily be accepted.

Education Sector

Knowledge Oman founder joins strategic boards

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In line with its ongoing mission to empower Oman’s education sector through real-world industry engagement, Knowledge Oman is taking a significant step forward as its founder, Tariq Hilal Al Barwani, expands his strategic influence by joining key academic and financial institution boards.

Strategic move
 This strategic move enhances Knowledge Oman’s ability to connect classroom learning with industry practices, creating impactful opportunities for students, educators, and society at large.

“Serving on the boards of academic and financial institutions gives me a unique opportunity to understand how systems operate from within,” said Al Barwani.



“More importantly, it allows me to connect those insights to create real-world opportunities for youth, through internships, hands-on projects, and industry-academic collaboration. My goal is to bring the boardroom into the classroom — so students can learn from real-world decisions, not just textbooks.”

Wealth of experience
 Tariq brings a wealth of experience to his new roles.

He previously served as a Board of Trustees member at Muscat College for five years and currently holds a position on the Board of Directors at Muscat Finance.

He also serves as an advisor to Nortal, a leading international digital transformation organisation.

Most recently, he has been ap-

pointed as a Board of Trustees member at Majan University College, reinforcing his commitment to aligning education with industry evolution.

These appointments not only strengthen Knowledge Oman’s influence in shaping future-ready graduates but also reflect a growing national trend: integrating real-world expertise into academic governance to drive relevance, innovation, and long-term sustainability in education.

Knowledge Oman’s evolving role underscores its dedication to collaboration, innovation, and applied learning.

By bridging academic institutions with market needs, the organisation is actively contributing to Oman’s vision for economic development, graduate readiness, and societal advancement.

CONDOLENCES

The Board of Directors, Executive Management
and the employees of

**Oman Telecommunications
Company “Omantel”**

express their deepest condolences to

**His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
&
Her Highness Sayyida Ahad
bint Abdullah
on the sad demise of Her
Highness’s revered mother.**

*We pray that The Almighty will shower His mercy
upon her soul and grant her eternal peace in the
highest levels of Paradise.*

May her soul rest in peace.

SPORTS

All-round Oman register crucial win over Canada

Career-best knocks from Mohammad Nadeem and Hammad Mirza powered Duleep Mendis' men to a tense 15-run victory over Canada in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2 in Lauderhill, USA, on Monday



Times News Service
MUSCAT: A composed, unbeaten 76 from veteran all-rounder Mohammad Nadeem, complemented by a career-best 77 from Hammad Mirza, laid the foundation for Oman's 15-run triumph over Canada at Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium in Lauderhill, USA, on Monday, in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2.
The victory not only secured vital points for Duleep Mendis-coached Oman but also elevated them to fourth place in the standings, surpassing Canada on net run rate.
Oman's innings got off to a stuttering start, reduced to 10/2 inside five overs with Kaleem Sana striking twice. Aamir Kaleem and skipper Jatinder Singh fell cheaply, and Pruthvikumar Machhi's dismissal left the side wobbling at 31/3.
But Mirza, calm and composed,

anchored the innings with a gritty knock under pressure. Playing in only his eighth ODI, Mirza stitched a 72-run stand for the fifth wicket with Nadeem, who later accelerated superbly in the final ten overs. Mirza crafted a patient 77 off 103 deliveries, including three boundaries and two sixes.
Nadeem's unbeaten 76 – his highest score in ODIs – featured seven boundaries and two sixes off 77 balls, giving Oman much-needed momentum at the death.
Sufyan Mehmood's handy 20* ensured Oman finished strongly at 217/6, adding 50 runs in the final 55 balls without losing a wicket during their 65-run key partnership for the seventh wicket. Nadeem was later named Player of the Match.
Despite Canada's varied attack, Oman's calculated middle-overs recovery gave them a total that kept them firmly in the contest.



Kaleem Sana (2/37), Shivam Sharma (2/27), and Dilon Heyliger (2/36) were the pick of the Canadian bowlers.
Spinners stifle Canadian chase
In response, Canada's innings was anchored by Pargat Singh, who scored 85 off 104 balls, featuring 12 boundaries. However, Oman's spin attack, led by leg-spinner Samay Shrivastava and left-arm orthodox Shakeel Ahmed, applied consistent pressure.
Shrivastava claimed three wickets, including the crucial dismissal of Singh, while Ahmed also took three wickets, effectively dismantling Canada's middle order.
Singh was bowled by Shrivastava in the 38th over with Canada at 147 for seven.
Shivam Sharma and Dilon Heyliger, batting at No. 8 and 9, looked to be leading Canada to-

ward the victory target.
But Sharma, on 37, was caught at the boundary in the 46th over with Canada at 190 for eight. Heyliger followed in the 48th over, dismissed for 18 by debutant Mujibur Ali, who claimed his maiden international wicket.
Canada's chase ended on the last ball of the 49th over when No. 10 batter Kaleem Sana, on four, was caught at the boundary off Sufyan – leaving them all out for 202 with six balls remaining.
The win propels Oman to fourth in the League 2 standings, level on 20 points with Canada but ahead on net run rate.
Oman next face the United States on May 21, aiming to build on this victory and further solidify their standing in the league.
The World Cup League 2 features eight teams – also including Namibia, Nepal, the Netherlands, Scotland and the United Arab Emirates – with each side playing 36 ODIs spread across nine triangular series through December 2026.
The top four teams progress to a 10-nation World Cup Qualifier that will determine the final four entrants for the 2027 World Cup.
The Netherlands (12 wins, 6 defeats, 2 no-results) top the standings ahead of the USA (12 wins, 5 losses) and Scotland (9 wins, 5 losses, 2 no-results).
Monday's win moved Oman (9 wins, 6 defeats, 2 no-results) past Canada (9 wins, 7 losses, 2 no-results) into fourth.
Brief scores: Oman 217/6 (Hammad Mirza 77, Mohammed Nadeem 77*, Sufyan Mehmood 20*, Kaleem Sana 2/37, Shivam Sharma 2/27, Dilon Heyliger 2/36) **beat Canada 202 in 49 overs** (Pargat Singh 85, Harsh Thaker 33, Shivam Sharma 37; Shakeel Ahmed 3/41, Samay Shrivastava 3/31, Sufyan Mehmood 1/37, Aamir Kaleem 1/46, Mujibur Ali 1/1).



Empowering Businesses

PRESENTS



2025

FORUM

28TH MAY 2025

ST. REGIS AL MOUJ MUSCAT



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- Personalization at scale
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- Employee experience (EX)
- Measuring CX success

OMAN CX AWARDS 2025

Oman's top brands across 35 product and service categories—selected through extensive consumer voting—will be honoured with the 'Times of Oman Best Brand in Customer Experience Award', while select CX industry leaders will also be felicitated at the Oman CX Awards 2025.



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OMAN OIL PRICE RISES
The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by July 2025 reaching \$65.01, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 66 cents from the price of Monday, which was \$64.35. -**ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 4,457.34 points, up by 0.11% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.03% at 421.90 points. Muscat Gases, up 8.60%, was the top gainer while, Takaful Oman, down 4.55%, was the top loser.

Forum on energy and water opens to advance green economy goals

The forum’s agenda will feature several discussion sessions addressing multiple themes, such as smart grids, energy storage, digital technologies in utilities, water efficiency improvement, and green financing mechanisms

MUSCAT: The Omani-European Cooperation Forum in Energy and Water commenced yesterday under the patronage of Khalid Hashil Al Musalhi, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

The event is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman as part of its ongoing efforts to transition toward a green economy. It brings together an elite group of experts, investors, and decision-makers from Oman



and the European Union.

Ahmed Amer Al Mahrazi, CEO of Nama Group, stated that the Omani-European Forum seeks to build tangible bridges between nations, sectors, and ideas to explore practical and sustainable solutions for managing two of the most critical resources of our time: energy and water, which serve as pillars of economic development and foundations for societal well-being.

ties in Oman’s energy and water sectors, including demand-side management for smart meters and smart infrastructure.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, he noted that the forum’s expected outcomes include strengthening EU-Oman partnerships in sustainable development, exploring business and investment prospects in electricity and water, and formulating a roadmap for cooperation and implementation of methodologies to transition toward a green economy.

The forum’s agenda will feature several discussion sessions addressing multiple themes, such as smart grids, energy storage, digital technologies in utilities, water efficiency improvement, and green financing mechanisms. Successful European experiences and innovative models in energy and water will also be highlighted. It is worth noting that the forum is organized in partnership with the European Union Delegation to Oman, Nama Group, and the European-Gulf Cooperation Project for Green Transition. This event serves as a strategic platform aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation in energy and water while advancing the transition toward a low-carbon economy.

The forum seeks to achieve several key objectives, including strengthening Omani-EU partnerships in renewable energy and water, exchanging best practices and experiences in environmental policies, and attracting European investments in green infrastructure projects in Oman. -**ONA**

IN SAHAM REPORT

Sohar Aluminium celebrates completion of Falaj Al Rawdah maintenance project

MUSCAT: Sohar Aluminium and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, represented by the General Directorate of Agriculture Fisheries, Wealth and Water Resources in North Al Batinah Governorate, celebrated the completion of maintenance project of 350 metres of Falaj Al Rawdah in the Wilayat of Saham, funded by Sohar Aluminium.

Celebrating the project’s completion was held under the patronage of Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Abdullah Al Battashi, Wali of Saham and the presence of Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Nasser Al Kharusi, General Manager of HR and Corporate Affairs at Sohar Aluminium. The event was attended by Ali Al Nukhaili, the custodian



of Falaj Al Rawdah and officials from Sohar Aluminium and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources.

The maintenance works of Falaj Al Rawdah included the installation of a 350-metre covered channel in the damaged sections of the falaj, and the excavation of a trench

prevent future damage.

Sohar Aluminium’s support to fund the maintenance project of Falaj Al Rawdah reflects its dedication to preserving this vital water resource and ensures its sustainability. This project forms part of the company’s broader corporate social responsibility agenda, and its belief in safeguarding Oman’s cultural and environmental heritage.

Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Kharousi, General Manager of Human Resources and Corporate Affairs at Sohar Aluminium, stated: “We always strive to ensure our community contributions create a tangible impact. We are proud to have played a role in this key project that contributes to sustaining water resources, increasing green spaces and preserving the environment.”

Indian banks better prepared now to handle financial stress

NEW DELHI: Indian banks have shown a marked improvement in their risk profile and asset quality, according to a recent report by Fitch Ratings. The global rating agency noted that this progress has led to upgrades in the Viability Ratings (VRs) of several large Indian banks.

Fitch said the recent VR upgrades reflect stronger underwriting standards, better loan diversification, improved asset quality, and stronger buffers to absorb losses. The upgrades signal that Indian banks are better prepared to handle financial stress than in the past.

It said, “The recent upgrades of Indian banks, Viability Ratings (VRs) reflect improved risk profile and asset quality”.

In March 2025, Fitch upgraded the VRs of Punjab National Bank, Union Bank of India, and Bank of

India. All three banks are rated at BBB-/Stable for Issuer Default Rating (IDR) and bb- for Viability Rating. In April 2025, Bank of Maharashtra and ICICI Bank Limited also saw their VRs upgraded.

Bank of Maharashtra holds a BBB-/Stable IDR and a bb- VR, while ICICI Bank stands out with a BB+/Stable IDR and a bb+ VR—the highest among the nine large Indian banks rated by Fitch.

Despite these improvements, the report expects the Issuer Default Ratings of these banks to remain unchanged.

This is because these ratings are largely based on the expectation that the Indian government (rated BBB-/Stable) will provide extraordinary support if needed.

Therefore, the improvement in banks’ internal strength does not directly affect the IDRs. -**ANI**

REAL ESTATE CONFERENCE

Oman Housing Bank promotes homeownership opportunities in integrated residential cities

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to support national initiatives aimed at increasing homeownership opportunities for citizens—particularly within the integrated residential city projects overseen by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning — Oman Housing Bank (OHB) is participating in the Real Estate Conference organized by the Ministry at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The event is considered the largest of its kind in the real estate sector in the Sultanate.

Through its participation, the bank aims to highlight the housing finance solutions it offers and showcase the facilities that empower citizens to own modern housing units within these urban developments. In this context, the Bank announced an increase in the maximum housing loan amount to OMR 80,000 for those purchasing units in integrated city projects. These loans come with flexible terms and simplified procedures tailored to the needs of various income groups. To further promote transparency and speed of service, OHB has adopted a clear



policy whereby any applicant meeting the eligibility criteria will have their application processed immediately without being placed on a waiting list. This approach contributes to faster processing and a more convenient experience for beneficiaries.

Amid the digital transformation taking place in the financial sector,

the Bank has launched the “Iskan” digital platform (<https://iskan.ohb.co.om>), marking a significant leap in the delivery of housing services. The platform allows citizens to submit and track their applications electronically and to select their preferred bank for housing finance, including OHB, under the same standardized terms, helping

to streamline processes and reduce effort and time.

Demonstrating its commitment to public-private collaboration, the Bank also announced the signing of cooperation agreements with eight approved real estate developers. These partnerships aim to offer a diverse range of housing units within integrated cities,

providing citizens with broader options suited to their aspirations and financial capacities while reinforcing confidence between the Bank and private developers.

Regarding loan eligibility criteria, OHB clarified that applicants must be Omani nationals, married, and have a stable monthly income sufficient to cover regular installment payments. Applicants must not own a home in the Sultanate, nor should they—or their spouses—be beneficiaries of any social or government-supported housing program, or eligible for a housing grant funded by their employer.

In a special statement during the conference, Mr. Arif bin Maqbool Al Zaabi, General Manager of Oman Housing Bank, emphasized the Bank’s ongoing leadership in providing accessible and flexible housing finance solutions designed to enable Omani families to own their homes with ease. He noted that simple procedures and fast processing are among the most distinguished features of the Bank’s services, particularly with the implementation of a fully integrated digital journey.

He further remarked: “We be-

lieve that homeownership is a fundamental pillar of family stability in Oman. The Bank is constantly working to enhance its services and products in line with citizens’ needs, contributing to improved quality of life and supporting the government’s sustainable urban development efforts. We also seek to broaden the reach of housing finance by offering tailored packages that suit different income levels, with supported interest rates starting at 1% for low-income segments and reaching up to 4% for higher-income earners. All of this is delivered through fair and well-studied policies that reflect the socioeconomic diversity of our community.”

Al Zaabi concluded by affirming that the Bank’s participation in the conference goes beyond promoting its financing products. It also includes providing specialized application forms at the Bank’s booth for those interested in purchasing properties within the integrated residential cities. These forms clearly outline all eligibility criteria and required documentation, making it easier for citizens to begin the application process directly from the exhibition venue.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Muscat Gases, up 8.60%, was the top gainer while, Takaful Oman, down 4.55%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,457.34 points, up by 0.11% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.03% at 421.90 points. Muscat Gases, up 8.60%, was the top gainer while, Takaful Oman, down 4.55%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1827 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 9.72 million, with more than 65.64 million shares changing hands. Out of 51 traded securities, 25 advanced, 11 declined, and 15 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for RO 533K while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 468K, followed by foreign investors for RO 65K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,835.20 points, up 0.13%. Prices of Al Sharqia Investment, Oman United Insurance, Al Anwar In-

vestment, Bank Nizwa were up by 4.00%, 1.42%, 1.24%, 0.99% respectively. Prices of Takaful Oman, Al Madina Investments, Global Financial Investments were down by 4.55%, 4.26%, 2.13% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,133.53 points, up 1.28%. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics, Al Anwar Ceramics, Oman Cement, Voltamp Energy, Gulf International Chemicals were up by 8.58%, 3.93%, 1.82%, 1.56%, 1.37% respectively. Prices of Galfar Engineering were down by 1.67% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.18% before closing at 1,578.00 points. Prices of Muscat Gases, Majan College, National Gas, Al Jazeera Services, Dhofar Generating were up by 8.60%, 7.00%, 5.71%, 2.29%, 1.89% respectively. Prices of Al Suwadi Power, OQ Gas Networks, SMN Power Holding, Oman Telecom were down by 1.41%, 0.72%, 0.48%, 0.12% respectively.— **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff.	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,457.60	4,438.03	4,457.34	4,452.25	5.10	0.11
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,835.20	7,807.17	7,835.20	7,825.40	9.80	0.13
Industry Index	6,140.15	6,047.90	6,133.53	6,055.99	77.54	1.28
Services Index	1,579.28	1,570.25	1,578.00	1,575.14	2.85	0.18
MSX Shariah Index	421.90	417.41	421.90	417.58	4.31	1.03
MSX TR INDEX	6,589.00	6,560.07	6,588.62	6,581.08	7.54	0.11
FINANCIAL TR IDX	9,285.69	9,252.47	9,285.69	9,274.08	11.61	0.13
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	7,545.32	7,431.97	7,537.19	7,441.90	95.29	1.28
SERVICES TR IDX	2,008.59	1,997.11	2,006.96	2,003.33	3.63	0.18
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,166.89	1,166.89	1,166.89	1,166.89	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
65,644,385	9,723,842	1,827	27,774,239,622	25	11	15	51

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, MAY 20

REGULAR MARKET

SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST RD	LAST OFFER	P/B VALUE	MARKET CAP	
OM000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	184,853	14,225	14	0.076	0.078	0.076	0.078	0.075	0.003	4.000	0.078	0.074	0.079	0.100	7,020,000
OM000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	3,429,916	624,074	182	0.178	0.185	0.178	0.185	0.178	0.007	3.833	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.100	40,700,000
OM000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	484,729	85,848	56	0.175	0.179	0.175	0.179	0.175	0.004	2.286	0.179	0.179	0.179	0.100	7,658,895
OM000003869	QOEDPOO	281,659	52,443	17	0.184	0.189	0.184	0.189	0.185	0.004	1.822	0.188	0.185	0.187	0.100	122,377,515
OM000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	100,151	65,097	11	0.640	0.650	0.640	0.650	0.640	0.010	1.563	0.650	0.642	0.650	0.100	60,848,555
OM000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	500	108	1	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.212	0.003	1.415	0.215	0.212	0.215	0.100	21,500,000
OM000004420	BANK NIZWA	602,473	61,452	13	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.101	0.001	0.890	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.100	228,169,209
OM000001533	OMINVEST	86,125	19,022	12	0.223	0.223	0.222	0.223	0.223	0.000	0.000	0.222	0.222	0.222	0.100	208,665,586
OM000002796	BANK MUSCAT	5,678,694	1,567,959	132	0.273	0.275	0.273	0.275	0.275	0.000	0.000	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.100	2,064,259,192
OM000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	15,040	4,316	3	0.287	0.287	0.287	0.287	0.287	0.000	0.000	0.287	0.287	0.287	0.100	67,849,670
OM000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	5,667,022	764,023	51	0.134	0.135	0.134	0.135	0.135	0.000	0.000	0.135	0.137	0.135	0.100	893,328,246
OM000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	21,395	1,669	4	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.100	13,650,000
OM000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	283,726	18,685	15	0.071	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.100	47,917,008
OM000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	2,394,434	605,840	73	0.253	0.255	0.251	0.254	0.254	0.000	0.000	0.254	0.255	0.254	0.100	195,630,800
OM000003026	OMAN TELECOM	231,467	194,432	22	0.841	0.841	0.839	0.840	0.841	-0.001	-0.119	0.840	0.840	0.840	0.100	630,000,000
OM000009072	OQAS NETWORKS	6,024,681	834,540	183	0.137	0.139	0.137	0.138	0.139	-0.001	-0.719	0.138	0.138	0.138	0.100	597,628,101
OM000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	882,954	61,520	27	0.071	0.071	0.070	0.070	0.071	-0.001	-1.408	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.100	50,008,444
OM000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	63,900	5,755	9	0.091	0.092	0.090	0.092	0.094	-0.002	-2.128	0.092	0.090	0.093	0.100	18,400,000
Total	18	26,413,710	4,971,467	825												

Parallel Market

OM000001178	MUSCAT GASES	6,195	606	3	0.095	0.101	0.095	0.101	0.093	0.008	8.602	0.101	0.095	0.101	0.100	3,030,000
OM000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	165,973	39,633	60	0.237	0.253	0.232	0.253	0.233	0.020	8.584	0.253	0.253	0.253	0.100	13,915,000
OM000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	100	11	1	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.100	0.007	7.000	0.107	0.101	0.107	0.100	9,830,000
OM000001160	NATIONAL GAS	459,584	33,689	32	0.071	0.075	0.071	0.074	0.070	0.004	5.714	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.100	6,290,000
OM000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	16,450	1,322	7	0.080	0.082	0.080	0.082	0.080	0.002	2.500	0.082	0.073	0.087	0.100	41,707,766
OM000007407	DHOFAH GENERATING	100	5	1	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.053	0.001	1.887	0.054	0.053	0.054	0.100	12,000,960
OM000001749	OMAN CEMENT	800	358	1	0.447	0.447	0.447	0.447	0.439	0.008	1.822	0.447	0.441	0.447	0.100	147,900,101
OM000008908	QO BASE INDUSTRIES (SPZ)	20,932,782	2,315,651	433	0.109	0.112	0.108	0.112	0.110	0.002	1.818	0.112	0.100	0.112	0.040	387,462,975
OM000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	20,000	1,480	1	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.073	0.001	1.370	0.074	0.073	0.074	0.100	1,554,000
OM000001772	OLANWAR INVESTMENT	1,067,161	86,465	23	0.081	0.082	0.081	0.082	0.081	0.001	1.235	0.082	0.082	0.082	0.100	23,538,750
OM000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	1,820	470	1	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.255	0.003	1.176	0.258	0.248	0.258	0.100	18,160,620
OM000004735	SEMBICORP SALALAH	2,602,782	263,292	26	0.101	0.103	0.101	0.102	0.101	0.001	0.990	0.102	0.101	0.104	0.100	97,366,339
OM000001120	ASTAD SHIPPING	9,982,905	1,151,718	152	0.116	0.117	0.115	0.117	0.116	0.001	0.862	0.117	0.116	0.117	0.000	669,423,081
OM000002272	OMAN OIL MARKETING	6,371	4,258	4	0.667	0.670	0.667	0.670	0.665	0.005	0.752	0.670	0.670	0.670	0.100	41,054,250
OM000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	20,000	2,900	1	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.144	0.001	0.694	0.145	0.143	0.158	0.100	2,555,431
OM000009756	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	2,632,841	741,413	135	0.282	0.283	0.280	0.282	0.281	0.001	0.356	0.282	0.281	0.282	0.000	601,022,256,000,000
OM000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	4,000	1,765	3	0.442	0.442	0.441	0.441	0.440	0.001	0.227	0.441	0.441	0.442	0.100	72,930,375
OM000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	2,300	115	1	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.047	0.050	0.100	15,357,316
OM000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	120,948	8,104	9	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.065	0.067	0.100	8,165,625
OM000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	11,180	2,460	6	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.000	0.000	0.220	0.218	0.220	0.100	10,068,476
OM000003265	NATIONAL DETERGENT	7,075	4,846	2	0.685	0.685	0.685	0.685	0.685	0.000	0.000	0.685	0.000	0.685	0.100	13,700,000
OM000005963	PHOENIX POWER	397,909	25,445	14	0.064	0.064	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.000	0.000	0.063	0.060	0.066	0.100	92,143,892
OM000007043	LIVA GROUP	7,500	1,875	2	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.000	0.000	0.250	0.246	0.250	0.100	99,593,586
OM000004246	SMN POWER HOLDING	37,869	7,870	14	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	-0.001	-0.475	0.200	0.207	0.209	0.100	41,723,840
OM000008868	THE PEARL REIF	288,863	33,655	25	0.120	0.120	0.116	0.116	0.117	-0.001	-0.855	0.116	0.115	0.116	0.100	68,606,678
OM000009569	JABAL REIF	6,300	627	6	0.100	0.100	0.097	0.100	0.104	-0.004	-3.846	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.100	17,400,000
OM000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	140,600	6,240	14	0.048	0.048	0.043	0.048	0.047	-0.002	-4.255	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.100	3,825,000
OM000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	55,000	2,340	4	0.043	0.043	0.042	0.043	0.044	-0.002	-4.545	0.042	0.041	0.047	0.100	10,500,000
Total	28	38,995,528	4,736,642	981												



Shangri-La's Bait Al Bahr launches a breezy new Saturday tradition by the coast

BAB'S BRUNCH

WHERE THE SEA MEETS THE SIZZLE

Times News Service

There's a fresh reason to savour weekends in Muscat — and it comes with sea views, live grills, and a seafood spread fit for Oman. As Shangri-La Muscat celebrates 20 years of heartfelt hospitality in Oman this year, the iconic resort has unveiled 'BAB's Brunch' at Bait Al Bahr, turning Saturday afternoons into a celebration of flavour, rhythm, and relaxation.

The newly launched brunch promises more than just a meal — it's a three-hour escape into the world of coastal luxury and culinary theatre.

A feast by the waves

Few dining experiences match the charm of being seaside, where time slows down and every bite is savoured to the sound of crashing waves. At Shangri-La's Bait Al Bahr, that charm takes on new life with fresh lobster on the grill, platters brimming with seafood, and a breeze that carries both salt and sizzle.

I arrived just past noon, the sun glinting off the waters of Barr Al Jissah, and found myself stepping into a seaside sanctuary where brunch isn't just a meal — it's a celebration of coastal living, Omani flavours, and effortless elegance.

"As Shangri-La celebrates its 20 years in Oman, and Bait Al Bahr being at the heart of the local community, we wanted to have an experience where families and friends alike can join Shangri-La for laid-back Saturday afternoons — plus get free access for pool and beach on us," Sabrina Sobrayen, Director of Marketing and Communications, Shangri-La Al Husn, Muscat, told *Times of Oman*.



Shades of the sea on a platter

Bait Al Bahr — aptly named the 'House of the Sea' — has long been known for its shoreside seafood dining, with fresh catches and traditional Omani recipes at its core. For the first time, this beloved dinner venue has opened its doors during the day to host brunch lovers every Saturday from 1 pm to 4 pm.

Set in a temperature-controlled indoor space overlooking the water, BAB's Brunch is served family-style, with platters of shared appetisers arriving first — think

marinated seafood, zesty salads, and fragrant mezze. It's a laid-back start, perfect for sipping something chilled while gazing out at the endless blue.

Freshest catch

Then comes the action. From a display of the day's catch — lobster, king prawns, octopus, and seasonal fish — the chefs work their magic at live cooking stations, grilling everything to order. I watched as flames kissed a butter-brushed lobster tail, its scent mingling with rosemary and garlic.



Beef tenderloin, lamb chops, and juicy chicken also sizzled nearby, adding to the theatre of the afternoon.

This isn't buffet-style chaos — it's curated, served directly to your table in courses that allow you to savour each bite. The service is seamless, yet warm and unhurried, in true Shangri-La fashion.

The dessert selection is a coastal delight in itself. Apple and rhubarb crumble competes with creamy panna cotta, while passionfruit cheesecake and chocolate mud cake offer a rich finish.



Don't miss the cherry ginger crème brûlée or the made-to-order crêpes and pancakes—simple pleasures, done exquisitely well.

Sips and serenity

With brunch priced at OMR 30 net per person — including free-flow beverages and access to the resort's beach and pool — this is more than a meal. It's a weekend ritual waiting to be discovered. The vibe is relaxed, with live entertainment gently adding rhythm to the waves outside. Whether you're celebrating something special

or simply treating yourself to the good life, BAB's Brunch makes for an easy favourite.

At its heart, BAB's Brunch is about more than food. It's about pausing the week, connecting with the sea, and being immersed in a setting that's as indulgent as it is inviting. With Shangri-La Muscat marking two decades in Oman, this brunch feels like a fitting tribute to its legacy—fresh, refined, and full of flavour.

Reservations are essential, with limited seating available. To book your table, call 24776565.

SPORTS

ACTION SHIFTS TO LAHORE

Gladiators eye first final in six years as PSL playoffs begin today

LAHORE: With the group stages wrapped up in Rawalpindi, the 2025 Pakistan Super League (PSL) enters its business end as the action shifts to Lahore for the playoffs, culminating in the final on May 25. Quetta Gladiators and Islamabad United will face off in Qualifier 1 on Wednesday, while arch-rivals Lahore Qalandars and Karachi Kings clash in the high-stakes Eliminator on Thursday.

Gladiators on the charge
 Gladiators' resurgence has been nothing short of remarkable. After a shaky start — losing two of their first three games — they turned the tide in dramatic fashion against Karachi Kings, pulling off a five-run win from the brink of defeat. That moment sparked a dominant run that saw them win all their remaining completed matches, finishing top of the table with a three-point cushion.
 Key to their turnaround has been Abrar Ahmed, who has emerged as one of the season's standout bowlers, combining a high wicket tally with exceptional economy.

Mohammad Amir and Khurram



Shahzad have delivered at crucial moments, while Faheem Ashraf has shown flashes of his best all-round form. Though captain Saud Shakeel's opening position remains a weak spot, the return of power hitters Finn Allen and Rilee Rossouw for the playoffs, along with the firepower of Hasan Nawaz and Khawaja Nafay, makes Quetta a formidable unit. With two chances at reaching the final, they are strong contenders for a first title since 2019.

United's rollercoaster
 Defending champions Islamabad United had a rollercoaster ride. After five straight wins, a controversial decision to rest five players in their sixth game led to a dramatic collapse in form, with four consecutive losses threatening their playoff hopes.
 But the mid-season break seemed to reset their rhythm, and they stormed back with a commanding win over Kings, posting a tournament-high 251.



Alex Hales' inclusion has offset the absence of Colin Munro, and his partnership with Sahibzada Farhan now forms arguably the league's best opening pair.
 Shadab Khan continues to lead with bat and ball, while Imad Wasim's economy rate of 7.06 stands out. While United's fast bowling unit — Ben Dwarshuis, Tymal Mills and Salman Irshad — lacks a truly elite name, their all-round depth makes them a potent threat.

Kings progress
 Karachi Kings are back in the playoffs after a three-year gap, but their campaign has lacked consistency. Despite a strong top order featuring David Warner, James Vince (the second-highest run-scorer), and Tim Seifert, their domestic middle order remains vulnerable. That frailty has cost them dearly in key moments, including a dramatic collapse against Quetta and a capitulation against United where they lost 7 for 34.

While Abbas Afridi leads the wickets tally and Mohammad Nabi has been the most economical spinner, the Kings' inability to build sustained momentum could be their undoing in the Eliminator.

Qalandars survive
 Two-time defending champions Lahore Qalandars narrowly escaped an early exit with a clutch win in a rain-shortened game. Their top order, led by Fakhar Zaman and supported by Mohammad Naeem and Abdullah Shafique, has been explosive. However, their bowling — once their strength — has faltered. Haris Rauf's economy of 10.66 typifies their struggles.
 Compounding their woes is the absence of key overseas players like Sikandar Raza and Daryl Mitchell. Though replacements such as Kusal Perera and Shakib al Hasan have been drafted in, it remains to be seen whether Qalandars can rediscover their championship pedigree. As the playoffs begin, Quetta and Islamabad carry momentum, while Kings and Qalandars must dig deep to stay alive. (With inputs from ESPNcricinfo.com)

SWIMMING

Chinese swim 'sensation' Yu, 12, sets 200m record



BEIJING: Chinese schoolgirl Yu Zidi has been hailed a "sensation" after setting the fastest time ever for a 12-year-old in the 200m individual medley at China's national championships.
 Yu finished second in the event with a time of two minutes and 10.63 seconds, behind 2024 Olympic finalist Yu Yuting.
 The time, if achieved in the heats at last year's Paris Olympics, would have resulted in the youngster reaching the semi-finals.
 Global governing body World Aquatics posted "12-year-old sensation alert" on its official X account.
 Yu, who turns 13 in October, could earn a place in China's national squad for the World Championships in Singapore in July.
 The performance of elite Chinese swimmers has been in the spotlight since before the Paris Olympics.
 China selected 11 athletes for the Games in France from a group of 23 that had returned positive doping tests.
 As a result of the positives, the International Testing Agency (ITA) committed to testing Chinese athletes eight times - twice as often as standard - between the start of 2024 and the Games in Paris. - Agencies

LSG's playoff hopes end

Skipper Rishabh Pant pointed to 'gaps' created by injuries after their defeat to SRH on Monday



LUCKNOW: Injuries to key personnel created a "lot of gaps" that played a part in LSG's underwhelming IPL 2025. That was the captain Rishabh Pant's assessment soon after his team was officially knocked out of the playoffs race by Sunrisers Hyderabad in Lucknow on Monday.
 Put in to bat, LSG made 205 on the back of half-centuries from openers Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram, but saw that total - "at least 10 short", according to Pant - being razed down by SRH with 10 balls to spare courtesy Abhishek Sharma's six-laden 20-ball 59.
 "It couldn't be the best season for us," Pant said. "Getting into the tournament we knew a lot of gaps were there because of injuries. We decided we won't talk about that, but it became difficult to close out those gaps."
 Pant was seemingly referring to the prolonged absence of several core players. Left-arm pacer Mohsin Khan missed the entire season, while express quick Mayank Yadav, one of LSG's prized retentions, spent most of the tournament on the sidelines. Mayank briefly returned but looked undercooked and was ruled out again with another back injury. Other big-money signings Avesh Khan and Akash Deep also struggled with fitness issues and joined the

playing XI only midway through the season.
 "The way we planned the auction, if we had the same bowling [attack], the story would be different," Pant said. "At the same time, this is cricket, things can happen. Sometimes they go your way, sometimes they don't. Need to take pride in the way we're playing. Need to look at the positives other than discussing more on the negative side."
 When asked about the silver linings from LSG's campaign, Pant said, "there's enough firepower in the batting," he said. "That's the biggest positive. Even the bowlers, they were bowling in good areas but they were patchy, a little bit. We were trying to make the best of it."
 "We've been playing well in patches. In the first half of the season, the players did well, we tried to cover up all problems, but in the second half it became tougher and

RCB-SRH tie shifted to Lucknow; IPL playoffs in Mullanpur, Ahmedabad

MUMBAI: The IPL has relocated Royal Challengers Bengaluru's (RCB) final home fixture against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH), on May 23, from Bengaluru to Lucknow due to adverse weather conditions in South India. As a result, RCB will now play their last two matches - against SRH and their final fixture against Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) on May 27 - at the Ekana Stadium.
 SRH have been advised to stay put in Lucknow, where they had played against LSG on May 19. The late change has been necessitated due to a yellow alert issued by the meteorological department in Bengaluru that has predicted "heavy to very heavy rainfall" in the city until Thursday.
 RCB's previous home game, against Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) last Friday, was abandoned without a ball bowled after incessant rainfall lashed the city.
 The late switch gives RCB a clearer runway to finishing in the top two, which may have otherwise been on shaky grounds had their next fixture at home too been rained out. RCB are currently placed second on the points table, just one point behind Gujarat Titans' (GT) tally of 18.



The BCCI has finalised New Chandigarh and Ahmedabad as the two venues for the four playoff games of IPL 2025, as the schedule was revised after a brief suspension earlier this month. Mullanpur will host qualifier 1 on May 29 and the eliminator the next day, whereas Ahmedabad will host qualifier 2 and the final on June 1 and June 3, respectively. As per the original schedule, Hyderabad and Kolkata were slotted to host those four games at the end of this month. The change in venues was decided by the IPL Governing Council "keeping in mind the weather conditions and other parameters."
 Punjab Kings (PBKS), RCB and GT have confirmed their place in the playoffs, while Delhi Capitals (DC) and Mumbai Indians (MI) will fight it out for the fourth spot. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Brighton come from behind to stun Liverpool at Amex Stadium

LONDON: Premier League champions Liverpool twice let a lead slip as Brighton fought back in style to gain a 3-2 victory on Monday in their Premier League game that boosts their slim hopes of securing European football next season.
 Substitute Jack Hinshelwood proved to be the match-winner, as he made an instant impact and tapped in Matt O'Riley's cross in the 85th minute, with the goal being given following a check by the video assistant referee (VAR) after it had originally been ruled offside.
 The Reds led 1-0 and then 2-1 at half-time, before the Seagulls recovered well to move eighth in the table, three points above Brentford.
 In an entertaining match at Amex Stadium, Liverpool took a ninth-minute lead through Harvey Elliott following good work from Conor Bradley, before Yasin Ayari equalised with a low strike.
 But Dominik Szoboszlai restored the Reds' advantage in fortunate fashion.
 He and Elliott combined to take a quick free-kick, and from the right side of the penalty area



Szoboszlai seemingly attempted a cross into the box, only for the ball to fly over the head of home goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen into the net.
 Alisson produced a superb fingertip save to deny Danny Welbeck, but could do nothing about Kaoru Mitoma's strike when he showed great technique to make it 2-2 before Hinshelwood's winner.
 That goal from Hinshelwood

was the fourth quickest by a substitute in the Premier League this season after he came on with his 17-year-old cousin Harry Howell, who became the youngest Brighton player.
 The Seagulls travel to Tottenham on Sunday's final day of the season, and the team that finishes eighth may qualify for the UEFA Conference League.
 However, for that to happen,

Ex-Liverpool goalkeeper Reina to retire aged 42

MILAN: Former Spain and Liverpool keeper Pepe Reina will retire from playing at the end of this season. The 42-year-old is currently at Italian club Como, and will play his final game on Friday.
 Reina, who came through the Barcelona academy, was part of the Spain squad which won the 2010 World Cup and

the European Championship in 2008 and 2012. He joined Liverpool from Villarreal in 2005 and won the FA Cup and League Cup with the Reds.
 Reina made 394 appearances for Liverpool before leaving in 2014 and going on to have spells at Bayern Munich, Napoli, AC Milan, Aston Villa, Lazio, Villarreal and Como.

Chelsea would need to beat Real Betis in the 2025 final on Wednesday, 28 May and then finish seventh in the Premier League, or sixth as long as Newcastle then came seventh.
 Arne Slot's side won the title with four games to spare, but have now picked up only two points since. They become the first side in the Premier League era to not win

any of their next three matches in the same campaign after becoming champions. Just as Chelsea and Arsenal had done, Brighton's players gave Liverpool a guard of honour as the Reds ran on to the field.
 Slot gave game time to some fringe members of his squad. Virgil van Dijk, who had played every minute of Liverpool's league campaign, remained among the substi-

tutes, meaning Mohamed Salah, in his 400th game for the club, was named captain for the first time in a Premier League match.
 Salah only needs one goal or assist to match the Premier League-era record of 47 goal contributions in one season, currently held by Alan Shearer and Andrew Cole, although their totals came in 42-game campaigns. - Agencies

More than 28,000 women and girls killed in Gaza since October 2023

The entire population in Gaza is rapidly running out of food and essential supplies with increasing risks of famine. This means every woman and girl, (more than one million) is facing catastrophic levels of hunger

GAZA: UN Women estimated that more than 28,000 women and girls have been killed in Gaza since the beginning of the war in October 2023 – that is one woman and one girl on average killed every hour in attacks by Israeli forces.



Among those killed, thousands were mothers, leaving behind devastated children, families, and communities. “These figures underscore the shattering human toll of the conflict, and of lives and futures lost too soon.” “Since the ceasefire collapsed in March 2025, conditions have deteriorated further in Gaza, compounded by nearly nine weeks of an ongoing blockade on humanitarian aid. The entire population in Gaza is rapidly running out of food and essential supplies with increasing risks of famine. This means every woman and

girl, (more than 1 million) is facing catastrophic levels of hunger. Women and girls are trapped, facing displacement, rising maternal mortality rates, and a severe lack of safety and protection mechanisms,” said UN Women in a statement. The statement read: “Despite these dire circumstances, UN Women continues to work with women-led civil society organizations in Gaza, trying to deliver essential services and support to the affected populations. But the scale of the suffering far exceeds current capacity or resources. Without an

immediate significant surge in access to humanitarian aid, support and funding, countless lives hang in the balance.” The death toll from the Israeli military offensive on the Gaza Strip has risen to 53,573, since October 7, 2023. Around 121,688 others have also been injured. **UN warns 14,000 babies in Gaza could die within 48 hours without aid** The United Nations warned on Tuesday that approximately 14,000 babies in the Gaza Strip could die within 48 hours if life-

saving humanitarian aid does not reach them promptly. According to the official UN website, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Tom Fletcher, said that 14,000 babies are at risk of dying within 48 hours if humanitarian teams are unable to reach them in time. He emphasized that UN teams are actively working to save as many of these children as possible. The UN official emphasized the urgent need to flood Gaza with humanitarian aid, noting that many personnel remain on the ground in medical centers and schools, working to assess the needs.

Desperation reached tipping point, Israel must lift siege The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) called on the Israeli occupation authorities to lift their siege on the Gaza Strip, which has escalated since 2 March 2025, stressing that “desperation has reached a tipping point” in the Strip amid a dire humanitarian crisis. In a statement by UNRWA on X platform, UNRWA warned of the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza due to the siege, forced displacement orders, and intense Israeli bombardment. It noted that desperation has reached a tipping point as families are searching for food and essential supplies, while thousands are being forced to flee. The occupation continues its policy of systematic starvation against nearly 2.4 million people in Gaza by closing border crossings to humanitarian aid, which has been piling up at the borders since 2 March 2025. This has pushed the Strip into a state of famine and claimed many lives.

PNC welcomes calls by UK, France, Canada to end Gaza war, recognise Palestinian State The Palestinian National Council (PNC) welcomed the joint statement issued by the leaders of the United Kingdom, France, and Canada, which called for an end to the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, lifting the unjust siege, and recognizing the Palestinian people’s right to establish their independent state. The statement also hinted at the possibility of imposing sanctions on the occupation government for its refusal to allow essential humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip. – Agencies

AT LONDON SUMMIT

UK, EU agree on key deals

LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is hosting the leadership of the European Union (EU) at a summit in London on Monday, and has inked agreements calling for deepening defence and trade ties. Starmer’s office said on Monday that the agreements were aimed at slashing red tape and growing the British economy. “This is the first UK-EU summit,” Starmer told reporters on Monday. “It marks a new era in our relationship, and this deal is a win-win.” An agreement on fisheries allows EU fishermen to have access to British waters for an extended period of 12 years in exchange for the EU indefinitely easing red tape on food and drink imports and exports. The eased customs checks on food and plant products are expected to add “nearly 9 billion pounds” (\$12 billion/€10.7 billion) to the British economy by 2040, Starmer’s office said in a statement. – DW

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

US bans India agencies ‘facilitating illegal immigration’

WASHINGTON, DC: United States on Monday announced visa restrictions on owners, executives, and senior officials of travel agencies in India for “knowingly facilitating illegal immigration” to the US. “The Department of State is taking steps today to impose visa restrictions on owners, executives, and senior officials of travel agencies based and operating in India for knowingly facilitating illegal immigration to the United States,” the US State Department said in a statement. “Mission India’s Consular Affairs and Diplomatic Security Service work every day across our Embassy and Consulates to actively identify and target those engaged in facilitating illegal immigration and human smuggling and trafficking operations,” the statement added. Further, the statement noted that the US will continue to take steps to “impose visa restrictions against owners, executives, and senior officials of travel agencies to cut off alien smuggling networks.”



The statement emphasised that US immigration policy focuses on informing foreign nationals about the dangers of illegal immigration and holding accountable those who violate US laws. “Our immigration policy aims

not only to inform foreign nationals about the dangers of illegal immigration to the United States but also to hold accountable individuals who violate our laws, including facilitators of illegal immigration,” the State Department said.

Notably, more than 20,000 undocumented immigrants were arrested during Donald Trump’s first month as President, CNN reported, quoting the Department of Homeland Security. The Trump administration

launched an immigration crackdown in the moments after his inauguration and publicised daily arrest totals during his first couple of weeks in office, as per CNN. Last month, US Border Czar Tom Homan criticised former US President Joe Biden for deliberately unsecuring the US-Mexico border. Homan at a press briefing said that Biden inherited a secure border built under former President Donald Trump, but chose to undo it. “But Joe Biden was the first President in the history of the nation who came into office and unsecured the border on purpose. That is a fact. We handed the Biden administration the most secure border in my lifetime after President Trump’s first administration. And he unsecured it on purpose. Now, President Trump and this administration’s success is unprecedented. We beat Trump’s first administration on border success,” he said. Homan cited studies showing that Trump’s policies reduced illegal immigration by 96%, potentially saving countless women from abuses. – Agencies

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Can a gender bill bring political inclusion in Nigeria?

ABUJA: Women in Nigeria make up nearly half of the population, but they are almost invisible in parliament. The country’s senate has only four women compared to 109 men. In the House of Representatives, female lawmakers occupy only 16 of the 360 seats. Even more surprising is that all of Nigeria’s 36 governors are men. Gender rights advocates and civil society organisations are now throwing their weight behind new legislation known as the “Reserved Seat for Women bill,” which could force change by reserving a set number of seats for women in federal and state legislatures. “Only 4.3% of Nigeria’s federal lawmakers are women. That’s not representation, That’s exclusion,” Osasu Igbiniedion Ogwuche, a gender rights advocate in the Nigerian capital Abuja, who is promoting the passage of the new bill, told DW. “The current political landscape in Nigeria does not favour women’s entrance into politics and governance because it’s skewed from the very beginning,” Ogwuche said, adding that the new bill would allow more women to contest for political office. “Reserving seats for women, particularly those with disabilities, is a crucial step forward in promoting inclusivity and representation currently lacking in Nigeria,” Angelina Ugben, another proponent of the bill, told DW. Supporters of the bill say it could propel Nigeria towards a more



inclusive governance. Ogwuche believes that more women in government could lead to smarter policies and a more stable economy. “Rwanda has outpaced Nigeria in gender equality and has seen better economic outcomes,” she said. “We suffer from a healthcare emergency today; We suffer from an education crisis.” For her, more women in governance could help improve these situations. “It’s critical and the time is now to ensure that women get involved. When women rise, nations rise.”

Nigeria ranks poorly in women’s representation According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a Paris-based international organisation of national parliaments, Nigeria ranks 179 out of 183 in terms of women’s representation in national parliaments globally, despite being Africa’s most populous country. “You can’t claim to be a democracy when half the population is missing from the table,” Hamzat Lawal, a civil society coordinator and election observer, told DW.

He said it was unsurprising that Nigeria was in the position it was now because women had not played a prominent role in social and political development. “We need this bill. The bill gives equal playing ground to women.” Analysts such as Ogwuche agree that women are systemically excluded from the political process. “The party system does not allow women to emerge victorious,” she complained, stressing that even when the women aspirants win the ticket, it’s given to a fellow man or somebody with more



political clout, even when the constituents want women to represent them. “They are rigged out of the primary election, and even the few that make it to the general elections are beaten, are bulldozed, are shoved aside just so the male candidates of the political party in power, or whoever has the most thugs, or the most muscles, win the election.” **More women role models needed** Nigeria is home to famous women such as Amina Mohammed, the current Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, renowned author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the director-general of the World Trade Organisation. Yet, it lags in the political space. Supporters of the bill argue that

creating space for women in governance is not just about representation. It is about creating a more equitable and just society. “How do we solve complex problems like insecurity, unemployment, or failing infrastructure when we’re leaving half the population out of decision-making?” Ugben asked. “This bill has the potential to amplify the voices of women who are often being marginalised and excluded from decision making process. So by reserving these seats, we can ensure that women have a platform to share their prestige, prospective and experiences.” Civil society groups are calling for urgency, stressing that passing the bill would not only align Nigeria with global democratic norms but could also inspire a new generation of women to lead at every level, from local government councils to the presidency. – DW

ROUND-UP

Bestune T77 PRO redefines driving with style, innovation and comfort

Available in two refined variants, the Deluxe and the Limousine, the Bestune T77 brings together the best of innovation, comfort, and commanding road presence

MUSCAT: For those who believe that every journey should be a statement of style and intelligence, the Bestune T77 PRO offers an experience that goes beyond the ordinary. With its head-turning design and feature-packed cabin, this SUV makes every drive a moment to look forward to.

Available in two refined variants, the Deluxe and the Limousine, the Bestune T77 brings together the best of innovation, comfort, and commanding road presence.

Bestune T77 powered with 1.5-litre turbocharged engine delivering 158 hp and 258 Nm of torque, paired with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission, it of-



fers smooth driving performance that adapts seamlessly to both city drives and open highways.

The Deluxe variant brings a premium feel to everyday driving. Its exterior features include 18-inch dual-tone alloy wheels, LED headlamps, and distinctive front dynamic indicators.

Chrome door handles, a pano-

ramic sunroof, and heated, electrically folding side mirrors add a touch of elegance while enhancing practicality.

Inside the cabin, comfort meets connectivity with leather seats, electrically controlled driver's seat, a 8-inch instrument cluster for driving data, and a 12.3-inch digital screen for infotainment.

For those who seek an extra layer of indulgence, the Limousine variant builds upon the Deluxe with thoughtful enhancements. Ambient lighting, Safety and assistance technologies such as adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning, forward collision warning, automatic emergency braking, automatic parking, blind

spot monitoring, and a 360-degree camera system make the Limited a smart and secure choice.

A spokesperson from Gulf Great Sands, Bestune's official distributor in Oman, said, "The T77 PRO Deluxe and Limousine represent a bold step forward in delivering refined mobility solutions for our customers in Oman. These vari-

ants capture the spirit of modern driving by offering a perfect blend of advanced features, comfort, and distinctive style. We are confident they will set new benchmarks in the crossover segment."

Bestune T77 Deluxe starts from OMR 7150, invites you to redefine your driving expectations with every turn of the wheel.

WORLD CAR AWARDS



Kia EV3 wins 2025 World Car of Year title

MUSCAT: The Kia EV3 has been hailed the outright winner at the 2025 World Car Awards. Revealed during a live announcement at the World Car Awards ceremony at the 2025 New York International Auto Show, the Kia EV3 secured the prestigious title of 2025 World Car of the Year.

"It is an immense honor for everyone at Kia that the EV3 has been awarded the 2025 World Car of Year title. This award highlights Kia's global leadership in providing design-led, technologically advanced, sustainable mobility solutions and how the EV3's class-leading attributes redefine the user experience for customers worldwide," said Ho Sung Song, President and CEO at Kia.

The 2025 World Car Awards were judged by a panel of 96 highly respected international automotive journalists from 30 countries. The EV3's victory brings Kia's total of wins at the

World Car Awards to six since 2020. The Kia EV3 won '2025 World Car of the Year' Award at the ceremony.

Brings the cutting-edge innovation of Kia's flagship EV9 to a wider audience, the EV3 boasts a bold, progressive exterior and an innovative, practical interior that maximizes space, functionality, and comfort.

The EV3 has a segment-leading range of up to 605 km and can charge from 10-80 percent in 31 minutes*, delivering impressive usability. The vehicle's innovative interior design optimizes space, comfort, and accessibility, while Kia's AI Assistant, advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), and Over-the-Air (OTA) updates enhance the ownership experience with cutting-edge technology.

Reliable International Automotive, the official distributor for Kia in Oman, ensures an unforgettable ownership experience.

SUMMER CAMPAIGN

Beat the heat with cool offers from Mitsubishi Motors Oman



MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (GAC), the official distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, is bringing the heat down this season with its limited-time summer campaign, offering customers exceptional value and exclusive benefits across the Mitsubishi lineup.

This summer, owning a Mitsubishi comes with added ease and savings, thanks to low EMI options starting from just RO 89, making it the ideal time to upgrade your drive. Along with special financing, customers can enjoy a host of

complimentary benefits, including free service packages of up to 5 years or 100,000 km, free insurance and registration, Lllumar window tint, a gift voucher of RO 50, and Mitsubishi's 6-year unlimited kilometer warranty that ensures long-term peace of mind.

"This summer, our goal is to offer customers cool savings and unbeatable value on the Mitsubishi range," said Manoj Ranade, General Manager of GAC. "Whether you're planning road trips or everyday drives, this campaign pro-

vides the flexibility and support that customers need to make the most of their summer with confidence and comfort."

This exclusive offer is available across Mitsubishi's full range, allowing customers to choose the vehicle that suits their lifestyle best. From the sleek and spacious Outlander to the rugged Montero Sport built for adventure, each model combines reliability with refinement. The bold new XForce stands out in the compact SUV segment with its stylish design

and agility, while the Xpander offers space and practicality for families. The L200 continues to be a dependable partner for heavy-duty performance, and the ASX and Eclipse Cross deliver sporty, dynamic driving experiences for urban explorers.

Customers can explore the full lineup and take advantage of these limited-time summer offers by visiting their nearest Mitsubishi showroom in Athaiba, Mabela, Barka, Sohar, Nizwa, Ibri, Sur, Jalandhar Bani Bu Ali, or Salalah.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

Sarco appointed as sole authorised distributor for Samsung Consumer Electronics

MUSCAT: In a major development, Al Seeb Technical Establishment (Sarco), in partnership with Samsung, announced a significant strategic development.

As of 1 April, Sarco has assumed the role of sole authorised distributor for Samsung Consumer Electronics across all channels and product categories in the Sultanate of Oman. This includes independent retailers, indirect organized retailers, operators, B2B clients, and online platforms.

Under this new arrangement, Sarco now manages the full distribution of Samsung's extensive range of consumer electronics, including but not limited to: refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, microwaves, dishwashers, dryers, air purifiers, room air conditioners, televisions, audio systems, and commercial air



conditioning & B2B solutions.

This transition from a Fulfillment Distribution to a Full Distribution model enables Sarco to provide enhanced value-added services, greater

operational flexibility, and deeper engagement with channel partners and consumers across Oman. Any previously existing distributor arrangements with any other entity

for CE business, have been terminated with immediate effect.

The announcement was made during a joint press conference and Strategic Partner Convention

held at the Sheraton Hotel in Muscat. The event was attended by distinguished guests from organized and independent retail sectors, government ministries, corporate

clients, banking institutions, and media representatives, followed by a gala dinner.

Sanjeev Awasthi, CEO of Sarco, remarked: "This milestone reflects the deep trust Samsung has placed in Sarco's capabilities and market presence in Oman. Our partnership, which began over 40 years ago, enters a new era of collaboration and growth. We sincerely thank our customers and partners for their unwavering support, which has been instrumental in our continued success."

He added, "Samsung is a trailblazer in innovative and user-centric technology. With the commitment and passion of the Sarco team, we are confident in expanding the brand's reach across Oman and delivering an elevated customer experience that sets new standards in the industry."

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