

O M A N
Observer
D A I L Y



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AL ZUBAIR 1ST
IN CATEGORY N,
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SAUDI RALLY

HM, Algerian President hold talks

HIS MAJESTY BEGINS
TWO-DAY STATE VISIT
TO ALGERIA

PRESIDENT TEBBOUNE
LEADS WELCOMING
PARTY FOR HM

ARTILLERY FIRES 21-GUN
SALUTE TO HIS MAJESTY
THE SULTAN

HM AND PRESIDENT
TEBBOUNE HOLD
BILATERAL MEETING

TWO LEADERS
UNDERLINE
DISTINGUISHED
RELATIONS

AFFIRM KEENNESS
TO PROMOTE THESE
RELATIONS



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, held a bilateral meeting at His Majesty's place of residence in the capital Algiers. During the meeting, the two leaders underlined the distinguished relations between Oman and Algeria, and the fraternal ties between their peoples. They also affirmed the keenness to promote these relations in a manner that serves the joint interests.

ALGIERS: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik arrived in Algiers on Sunday on a two-day state visit to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria led the welcoming party for His Majesty the Sultan. The Algerian President received His Majesty at the foot of the ramp in Houari Boumediene International Airport.

His Majesty was also received by some senior officials in the Algerian government. After that, His Majesty and the Algerian President ascended the dais of honour as the Royal anthem of Oman and the national anthem of Algeria were played. Then, His Majesty inspected the guard of honour, while the artillery fired a 21-gun salute to His Majesty the Sultan. After that, His Majesty shook

hands with members of the welcoming party from the Algerian side and personnel of the Sultanate of Oman's Embassy in Algeria. On his turn, the Algerian President shook hands with members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan. Then, President Tebboune escorted His Majesty to the hall to hold a cordial meeting. Prior to the meeting, heads of the

diplomatic missions accredited to Algeria proceeded to shake hands with His Majesty and the Algerian President. At the outset of the meeting, the Algerian President reiterated his welcome to His Majesty the Sultan, who expressed his deep thanks and appreciation to the President for the warm reception and hospitality accorded to him. During the meeting, the two leaders exchanged cordial

conversations and reviewed the deep-rooted relations between the two countries. After that, the President of Algeria accompanied His Majesty the Sultan to the place of residency, where a contingent of cavalry from the Algerian Republican Guard lined both sides of the road at the entrance, in a manifestation of welcome and delight over His Majesty's visit to Algeria. — ONA

In honour of HM, President Tebboune hosts dinner



In honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, hosted an official dinner at the People's Palace in the Algerian capital. The dinner was attended by members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan, as well as senior officials from the Algerian side and a number of ambassadors accredited to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.



His Majesty in Algeria on a two-day state visit



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During the meeting, the two leaders exchanged cordial conversations and reviewed the deep-rooted relations between the two countries.

His Majesty the Sultan is accompanied during the visit by a high-ranking official delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, and Saif bin Nassir al Badaai, Ambassador of Oman to Algeria.

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His Majesty begins Algeria visit



HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik left here on Sunday heading to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria on a two-day state visit, during which he will meet with President Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

The visit, made in response to an invitation by the Algerian President, underlines the distinguished relations between Oman and Algeria. It aims to boost cooperation at various levels and open new vistas for partnership and investment in a manner that serves the joint interests.

His Majesty the Sultan was seen off at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the

Sultan, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs, Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, Lt Gen Said bin Ali al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman, Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman, Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman and Maj Gen

Musallam bin Mohammed Jaaboub, Commander of the Sultan's Special Force.

During the visit, His Majesty the Sultan is accompanied by a high-ranking official delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head of Private Office of His Majesty the Sultan, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health and Saif bin Nasser al Badaai, Ambassador of Oman to Algeria.



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Establishment of Algerian Culture Centre in Oman progressing well

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The culture of Algeria is rich and diverse, encompassing various aspects such as religion, literature, cuisine and music. These facets have evolved over time to create a unique national culture that is truly one-of-a-kind.

The culture of Algeria dates back to ancient times, with archaeological artefacts dating back millions of years. This rich history showcases the depth and complexity of Algerian culture.

In an effort to showcase the unique culture and traditions of Algeria, plans are underway to establish an Algerian Cultural Centre in Oman. This centre will serve as a gateway to the diverse culture of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, offering a glimpse into its history and traditions. The decision to establish this cultural centre was made by Abdelmadjid Tebboune, the President of Algeria, during a visit to Oman in 2024. The visit



aimed to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two nations.

"The centre would also give a kaleidoscopic view of the nation's history, culture and heritage while encouraging bilateral cultural exchanges and creating avenues for debates and understanding each other," an official from the Algerian embassy said.

For the Algerian community in Oman, the opening of the cultural centre symbolises the strong cultural ties between the two countries. It is seen as a

way to honour Algerian culture and promote cultural exchange and understanding.

The cultural centre will offer a comprehensive view of Algerian history, culture and heritage, fostering dialogue and mutual understanding between nations.

In regards to Algerian cuisine, it is a blend of traditional Arab, Amazigh, Turkish, and French influences. It features a variety of Mediterranean spices and chilli peppers, creating flavourful dishes that are enjoyed by people around the world. Couscous is a staple in

The decision to establish the cultural centre was made by Abdelmadjid Tebboune, President of Algeria, during a visit to Oman in 2024

Algerian cuisine, often served with stews and other dishes. Popular Algerian dishes include douлма, chakhchoukha and chthitha.

Algerian clothing is influenced by Islamic customs as well as the country's rich history and cultural heritage. Styles vary from region to region, with a mix of traditional and Western clothing. Traditional Algerian attire includes qashabiya, kaftan and karakou. Berber jewellery made of silver and beads is popular in Kabylia and the Aurès regions.

Most Algerians adhere to traditional Islamic dress codes, while visitors are encouraged to dress modestly out of respect for the culture and tradition.

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MOH 3347873/2025

SHORT TAKES



The visit is aimed at exploring avenues of cooperation and enhancing investments between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Dagestan. — ONA

PRIME MINISTER OF DAGESTAN VISITS AL SHARQIYAH NORTH

IBRA: Abdulmuslim Abdulmuslimov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Dagestan, and his accompanying delegation visited Al Sharqiyah North Governorate as part of an official visit aimed at exploring avenues of cooperation and enhancing investments between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Dagestan.

The visit began with an official meeting, during which Mahmoud bin Yahya al Thuhli, Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, emphasised the importance of opening new horizons for cooperation between the two countries. He highlighted the governorate's wealth of high-quality investment opportunities in various sectors, including agriculture, tourism, industry and education. On his turn, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Dagestan affirmed his government's commitment to strengthening economic and cultural relations with the Sultanate of Oman, particularly in light of the ambitious development visions shared by both nations. — ONA

Book Fair receives 650,000 visitors

THE MUSCAT International Book Fair 2025, which concluded on Saturday, received 649,589 visitors from across the Sultanate of Oman and abroad. The concluding ceremony of the 29th edition saw the honouring of a number of prominent cultural figures and institutions for their contributions to enriching the cultural scene in the Sultanate of Oman. The closing ceremony took place under the auspices of Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information, at Al Farahidi Hall at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, which saw the participation of 674 publishing houses from 35 countries, including 640 direct participants and 34 through agencies.

The exhibition showcased 681,041 Omani, Arab, and foreign titles, including 52,000 recent publications. The 28th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair, which received 394,172 visitors, saw the participation of 34 countries and 847 publishing houses, offering over 20,000 titles, including a remarkable collection of more than 19,000 Omani books.



The closing ceremony took place under the auspices of Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information, and saw the participation of 674 publishing houses from 35 countries.

The exhibition's cultural programme included 211 cultural events under the theme "Cultural Diversity: The Enrichment of Civilisations."

Ahmed al Rawahi, Director of the Muscat International Book Fair, said: "The contributions of the Muscat International Book Fair, since its inception, have demonstrated its impact in promoting cultural activity, promoting the values of reading, and making books available and disseminated throughout this beloved country."

This year's fair had Al Sharqiyah North Governorate

as the guest of honour as part of the efforts to highlight the cultural diversity and civilisational depth of the Sultanate of Oman. The governorate implemented a rich programme of diverse activities that reflected the governorate's rich cultural, intellectual and artistic heritage, which played a prominent role in enriching the exhibition's activities.

To strengthen cultural exchange efforts between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the exhibition hosted Saudi Cultural Days, which

represented an important addition to the exhibition's activities through their unique cultural programme. Al Rawahi congratulated the cultural figures and institutions for their constructive contributions and recognised role in advancing the cultural movement in the country.

These honorees included author Abdullah Habib, Al Dhamri Publishing and Distribution House and Library, and Dar Al Kitab Al Ahlia Public Library. The Al Wusta Governorate will be the guest of honour at the 30th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair.

The closing ceremony of the Muscat International Book Fair included a visual presentation of the daily coverage of the fair, a poetry segment, a visual presentation of the activities of Al Sharqiyah North Governorate's participation as the exhibition's guest of honour, and a poem recited by poet Hamoud al Aisri entitled "A Chant in the Name of Al Sharqiyah North Governorate."

During the ceremony, the winners of the first season of the National Reading Championship were announced.

CONFERENCE DISCUSSES ROLE OF AI IN REALISING DIGITAL TRANSITION



MUSCAT: The Students Research Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Cybersecurity was held at the Middle East College in Muscat. The 7th edition of the conference discussed the role of AI in promoting transition across various sectors and underscored the importance of involving youth in shaping the digital

future. It was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. The conference seeks to promote scholarly research and innovation and link educational outcomes (graduates) with labour market needs. — ONA

Event to promote reading culture among wider community

MUSCAT: The Directorate-General of Education in Muscat Governorate, represented by the Educational Supervision Department's Learning Resources Centre, in cooperation with the Omani Women's Association in Al Amerat and the Omani Sociologist Association (OSA), organised a community event under the theme "A Reading Society for an Aware Future."

The event was held in the presence of Dr Yousuf al Nadabi, Director of the Educational Supervision Department, and Younis al Hooti, Senior Learning Resources Supervisor, and it brought together students from schools across the wilayat, along with teachers, parents and representatives from the local community.

Organised by learning resources specialists from various schools in the governorate under the supervision of Nasra al Oufi, Learning Resources Supervisor, the initiative aimed to foster a culture of reading within both school environments and the wider community.

It also sought to enhance students' skills in knowledge acquisition and innovation, while highlighting the role of learning resources centres in supporting education in line with Oman Vision 2040. The event featured a range of educational and interactive corners designed to engage participants of all age groups, including the Young Reader's Corner, Omani Author's Corner, Omani Encyclopedia, Free Reading and Drawing, Educational Games, Creative Workshops, Special Needs,



The initiative aimed to foster a culture of reading within both school environments and the wider community.

Artificial Intelligence and Technology Corner, and E-Knowledge Corner.

Each corner offered enriching activities that combined learning with creativity and entertainment, contributing to the development of students' reading habits, critical thinking and independent learning skills. Nasra al Oufi noted that the initiative is part of ongoing efforts to create a dynamic and modern reading environment by positioning learning resource centres as key components of the educational process.

"We aim to connect students with knowledge through engaging and contemporary methods," she said. The event was well received by attendees, who commended the diversity of content and the overall quality of the event.





شركة ظفار لتوليد الكهرباء س.م.ع
Dhofar Generating Company SAOG

PO Box: 1571, PC: 211, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman.
www.dgcooman.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

The Board of Directors is pleased to present the performance of your company, Dhofar Generating Company SAOG ("DGC" or "Company") for the three months ended 31 March 2025.

At the core of our Company lies an unwavering commitment to safety. For over 9 years, we have maintained an impeccable safety track record with zero Lost Time Incidents (LTIs). Our team remains ever vigilant, never granting safety a day off. Under the guidance by the Board, we uphold safety principles and ambitious goals.

This dedication to safety directly impacts our operational performance. Our assets boast an extraordinary reliability factor of over 99.83%. This excellence ensures not only smooth operations but also enables us to meet our financial obligations.

Overview

The business achieved excellent commercial availability factors of 99.89% and 99.78% during the Three months period for the 273MW and 445MW power plants respectively. From a financial perspective, the contractual revenue is highly seasonal during the calendar year, with higher revenue in the summer period compared to the winter period. Summer months include April, May, June, September and October. The financial results are reflective of the business's contractual arrangement and are in line with expectations.

Plant performance during the period

	273MW		445MW	
31 March	2025	2024	2025	2024
Reliability Factor	98.89 %	98.81 %	99.78%	98.70 %
Load Factor	21.66%	15.59%	52.13%	47.87%
Energy Exported (GWh)	128	92	501	463

273MW OCGT Power Plant

The OCGT plant demonstrated exceptional performance. The forced outage factor was impressively low at 0.11%, significantly better than the 2024 figure of 1.89%. Additionally, the load factor exceeded the corresponding period in 2024, aligning with grid demand.

445MW CCGT Power Plant

The CCGT plant achieved a remarkable reliability factor of 99.78%, better than 2024 reliability factor of 98.70%. The load factor for this plant is closely tied to grid demand and follows instructions from the load dispatch centre.

Plant performance is a direct result of the operator's proficient approach towards operations, maintenance and HSE principles.

Maintenance activities during the period

The three months of the first quarter of the year are considered as winter months under the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) between the Company and the offtaker. The PPA allows a winter downtime of 15% is allowed for planned maintenance to ensure healthiness of the machines. The operator has utilized this downtime to conduct routine preventive and predictive maintenance activities such as boroscopic inspections, calibration and cleaning activities. One unit Combustion Inspection (CI) in 273 MW OCGT.

Financial highlights

	Three Months Ended	
Income Statement in OMR (Million)	31-Mar-25	31-Mar-24
Total revenues	11,896	10,662
Operating costs	(11,638)	(10,353)
Gross profit	258	309
Other costs	(1,873)	(2,092)
Loss after tax	(1,615)	(1,783)
Loss per share – B2/share	(7)	(8)

Revenues

The revenue for the three months has increased by OMR 1.2 m due to higher fuel revenue on account of higher load compared to the corresponding period in 2024 and finance lease amortization.

Operating Costs

Operating cost has increased by OMR 1.3 m mainly due to higher fuel cost on higher load and higher LTSA costs compared to the corresponding period in 2024.

Other Costs

Other costs are lower by OMR 0.2 m mainly due to lower finance cost.

Net profit after Tax

Net profit is reflective of the variances noted above.

Balance Sheet OMR (Million)	Period Ended 31-Mar-2025	Year Ended 2024
Total assets	185.8	191.3
Net shareholder's equity	52.5	54.7
Paid up capital	22.2	22.2
Cash	0.5	3.3
Current ratio	0.98	1.1
Gearing ratio	2.5	2.5
Net assets per share – OMR	0.236	0.246

Cash flows and Dividends

The Company has met its obligations to the lenders by the timely debt service of OMR 4.1 m during the period. Interest payments are monthly while principal payments are due in July and January of each year.

The Cash Sweep Mechanism under the financing agreements commenced from 31July 2021 impacted the ability of the Company to make any future dividend distributions.

The Cash Sweep Mechanism will remain effective until the balloon amount is fully prepaid, which is expected to continue for the remaining term of Power Purchase Agreement (i.e. expiring on 1 January 2033).

The above restricts the Company to make any dividend distributions unless the Cash Sweep Mechanism is reversed, which is subject to (1) arrangement of acceptable Backstop DSRA (L), and (2) unanimous approval of project lenders.

Future outlook

The Dhofar Grid is experiencing a substantial increase in demand due to emerging industries in the Dhofar region as seen throughout 2024. The demand is expected to continue in the future. This increase in demand has triggered a revision in the maintenance regime for the 273MW plant to ensure safe and reliable operations. The upcoming quarter will fall in the summer period under the PPA. The Company and operator will continue their proactive approach towards plant operations to ensure a high reliability factor which is of paramount importance for all stakeholders.

Acknowledgement

The Board would like to thank the entire team for its diligent efforts which has resulted in the excellent performance. Finally, the Board of Directors would like to conclude by expressing their immense gratitude for the privilege of the vision, guidance, wisdom and crucial support of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and His Government.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2025

	31-Mar-25	31-Dec-24
RO	RO	RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	133,078,518	134,059,390
Right of use assets	1,617,697	1,630,045
Finance lease receivable	30,830,943	31,674,585
Trade and other receivables	2,737,929	2,870,308
Prepayments of connection charges	962,475	932,551
Derivative financial instrument	877,627	1,366,552
Total non-current assets	170,104,288	172,533,431
Current assets		
Inventories	5,294,788	5,501,376
Finance lease receivable	3,272,431	3,205,488
Trade and other receivables	5,889,039	5,823,260
Advances and prepayments	404,322	483,858
Derivative financial instrument	247,536	385,438
Cash and cash equivalents	538,928	3,339,639
Total current assets	15,647,044	18,739,059
TOTAL ASSETS	185,751,332	191,272,490
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
EQUITY		
Share capital	22,224,000	22,224,000
Legal reserve	1,225,563	1,225,563
Retained earnings	28,123,318	29,738,366
Equity before hedging reserve	51,572,881	53,187,949
Hedging reserve	956,388	1,489,192
Total equity	52,529,269	54,677,141
LIABILITIES		
Non-current liabilities		
Term loan	97,296,709	100,368,951
Lease liabilities	1,969,280	1,941,257
Deferred tax liabilities	12,627,424	12,635,411
Provision for decommissioning costs	5,219,420	5,142,287
End of service benefits	73,459	67,401
Total non-current liabilities	117,186,292	120,155,307
Current liabilities		
Term loan	8,210,340	8,008,830
Lease liabilities	21,049	21,049
Trade and other payables	7,804,382	8,410,163
Total current liabilities	16,035,771	16,440,042
Total liabilities	133,222,063	136,595,349
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	185,751,332	191,272,490
Net assets per share (RO)	0.236	0.246

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For the period ended 31 March 2025

	31-Mar-25	31-Mar-24
RO	RO	RO
Revenue	11,896,090	10,662,609
Operating costs	(11,638,349)	(10,353,236)
Gross profit	257,741	309,373
General and administrative expenses	(357,941)	(298,429)
(Loss) / profit before interest and tax	(100,200)	10,944
Finance income	68,490	46,355
Finance cost	(1,497,321)	(1,659,264)
(Loss) before tax	(1,529,031)	(1,601,965)
Income tax expense	(86,037)	(181,067)
(Loss) for the period	(1,615,068)	(1,783,032)
Other comprehensive income:		
Items that are or may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:		
Fair value of cash flow hedge adjustments - gross	(357,600)	1,366,008
Reclassification to profit or loss - gross	(269,228)	(432,256)
Deferred tax on change in fair value of cash flow hedge	94,024	(140,063)
Other comprehensive (loss)/income for the period - net of tax	(532,804)	793,689
Total comprehensive (loss) for the period	(2,147,872)	(989,343)
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	(0.007)	(0.008)

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issuance in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors on 30th April 2025

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The programme aims to upgrade the standard of training courses

MOHERI INVITES INSTITUTIONS TO RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) on Sunday announced the opening of registration to the second edition of its programme to support research and innovation training courses at public and private higher education institutions across the Sultanate of Oman.

The programme, which will run until June 30, 2025, aims to upgrade the standard of training courses and promote the principle of partnership in funding training courses and ensuring their sustainability.

The programme also seeks to develop integrated, diversified and comprehensive packages of training courses in line with global standards, in addition to building and empowering national human resources to keep pace with rapid developments taking place worldwide. — ONA

Environment Authority announces hackathon winners



The hackathon addressed several environmental challenges

SUHAR: The Environment Authority on Sunday announced the winners of the Environmental Excellence Hackathon in Al Batinah North Governorate. The hackathon saw wide participation from innovative youth and technology enthusiasts across Oman over a two-day period.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation, and in the presence of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority. The project “Naqa for Active Carbon” secured first place, while “Stark” came in second and “Bio Power” took third place.

Nizar bin Salem Al Fannah al Araiimi, Director of the Environment Department in Al Batinah North, stated that the hackathon aimed to develop creative and technological solutions for environmental challenges, support and encourage youth and developers in the environmental field, and promote innovations to create smart solutions, platforms and applications to address environmental issues. He highlighted that the event attracted top programmers, leading companies, job-seekers and postgraduate students.

Al Araiimi explained that the hackathon addressed several environmental challenges, such as coastal erosion, climate change, cyclones, rising temperatures, invasive birds and plants, wildlife encroachment, desertification and overgrazing. — ONA

SAUDI DELEGATION VISITS NDC



MUSCAT: Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, received in his office at Bait Al Falaj on Sunday a delegation from the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The visiting delegation is headed by Dr Abdulmajeed Abdullah Albanyan, President of the University. — ONA



OMANI OFFICIALS RECEIVE PAKISTAN INTERIOR MINISTER

MUSCAT: Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, received on Sunday Mohsin Naqvi, Federal Minister of Interior and Narcotics Control of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. During the meeting, both sides reviewed areas of bilateral cooperation and means of enhancing them. They also

discussed several matters of mutual interest in a bid to enhance relations between the two countries. The two ministers underscored the importance of mutual coordination and consultation.

The meeting was attended by Maj Gen Abdullah bin Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector



General of Police and Customs for Operations, Eng Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, Syed Naveed Sajdar Bokhari, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Sultanate of Oman, and several officials from both sides.

Also, Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police

and Customs received on Sunday Mohsin Naqvi, Federal Minister of Interior and Narcotics Control of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest. They also explored means of enhancing cooperation between Royal Oman Police (ROP) and Pakistan’s Interior Ministry. — ONA

OHRC launches guide for workforce rights

OMAN HUMAN RIGHTS Commission on Sunday launched the ‘Private Sector Workforce Rights Guide’ in six languages, aimed at raising legal awareness among both workers and employers, promoting a culture of legal compliance, and fostering justice and respect in the workplace. The launch ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour.

This publication reinforces Oman’s positive record in human rights and affirms its commitment to relevant international conventions, while establishing a work environment based on principles of justice, equality and dignity.

Dr Rashid bin Hamad al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Human Rights Commission, stated that the launch of the Private Sector Workforce Rights Guide addresses a genuine need among labour stakeholders to understand the rights and obligations stipulated in Oman’s Labour Law.

He explained that the guide provides a comprehensive overview of key rights for private sector workers, including the requirement for a written employment contract (with a copy provided to the worker), the prohibition of employers retaining passports or personal documents without written consent, the ban on all forms of forced labour, and the guarantee of equality without discrimination based on gender, language, religion,



This publication affirms Oman’s commitment to relevant international conventions

The guide details regulations on working hours, annual/sick leave, weekly rest periods, overtime, end-of-service benefits, termination certificates, and occupational health and safety provisions — including first aid, medical care, housing, transportation and meals where applicable.

colour, or social status. It also outlines workers’ rights to file complaints and grievances through approved channels.

The guide details regulations on working hours, annual/sick leave, weekly rest periods, overtime, end-of-service benefits, termination certificates, and occupational health and safety provisions — including first aid, medical care, housing, transportation and meals where applicable.

Published in Arabic, English, Urdu, Hindi, Bangla and Filipino, the guide ensures accessibility for expatriate and resident workers of diverse nationalities. It also lists official communication channels for workers and employers to engage with relevant authorities.

The launch of the guide aligns

with Articles 10 and 11 of the Commission’s statute (promulgated by Royal Decree No 57/2022) to advance human rights protection in Oman, while serving as a vital tool to enhance workplace efficiency and community engagement.

The multilingual initiative reflects international standards such as Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights right to “just and favourable working conditions” and ILO Convention No 111 on Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation. Structured in three sections, the guide covers worker/ employer rights, obligations and prohibitions; General guidelines, and communication means with the Oman Human Rights Commission. — ONA

Study affirms resilience of frankincense trees

MUSCAT: A landmark scientific study has confirmed that Oman’s frankincense trees — renowned for producing an aromatic resin deeply woven into the nation’s historical and cultural legacy — do not face widespread decline in the southern reaches of the Sultanate of Oman, despite facing a variety of environmental and human-induced threats.

This encouraging discovery stems from the first-ever comprehensive conservation assessment of Boswellia sacra, the botanical name for these iconic trees, in their native mountainous habitats of Dhofar Governorate. The research initiative



was led by the Environment Society of Oman (ESO), in collaboration with the Environment Authority, Wageningen University & Research, FairSource Botanicals and Mendel University in Brno. The project received initial funding support from the British Foreign, Commonwealth

& Development Office (FCDO) in Oman. In a statement, Dr Amor al Matani, President of ESO’s Board of Directors, hailed the successful completion of the study as a pivotal step forward. “ESO’s role in driving this landmark study is a testament to its long-standing commitment to safeguarding Oman’s frankincense heritage, given the priceless cultural and ecological value associated with this aromatic resin. Our sincere thanks to the Environment Authority and all the international partners who helped bring this initiative to life.”

Ali bin Salem Bait Said, Director of the Office for the Conservation of

the Environment, at Environment Authority office in Dhofar, said: “This study has brought together local and international institutions in a first-of-its-kind collaboration to deliver science-based insights into the health of our frankincense populations.” These findings are an important step forward to protect frankincense trees not only as a cultural and spiritual symbol of Oman’s ancient incense trade, but also as the cornerstone of a thriving domestic industry centred around incense and related products.

Of the roughly 24 species in the Boswellia genus worldwide, Boswellia sacra Flick.

SHORT TAKES



Supporters of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) cheer on the party, in Singapore. — AFP

SINGAPORE RULING PARTY WINS ELECTION IN LANDSLIDE

SINGAPORE: Voters have handed Singapore's long-time ruling party a landslide election victory, offering Prime Minister Lawrence Wong a clear mandate to navigate the trade-orientated Southeast Asian nation through economic upheaval sparked by looming US tariffs. Wong's People's Action Party took all but 10 seats in the 97-seat unicameral legislature with a total of 65.57 per cent of the more than 2.4 million votes cast in the wealthy island state in Saturday's polls.

"Singaporeans gave the PAP a strong mandate to govern," Wong told a news conference hours after the official results were announced. "The results will put Singapore in a better position to face this turbulent world," he said, adding they were a "clear signal of trust, stability and confidence in your government".

Wong was facing his first major test against a rejuvenated opposition and had urged voters to offer him a strong show of support amid the global economic uncertainties brought on by US President Donald Trump's tough tariffs policy. The PAP was always expected to easily retain a clear majority in the legislature. — AFP

GERMAN MINISTER EXPECTS SHARP FALL IN ASYLUM SEEKERS



Outgoing German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser gives a statement in Wiesbaden. — Reuters

BERLIN: The number of asylum seekers in Germany is expected to hit its lowest level in more than a decade this year, outgoing Interior Minister Nancy Faeser told newspapers on Sunday.

"If irregular migration continues to be reduced as sharply as we have managed to do in the last two years, then the number of

asylum seekers in Germany could reach around 100,000 this year," Faeser told the newspapers of Funke media group.

According to the federal migration office, the last time there were fewer than 100,000 asylum applications was in 2012.

In 2024, there were just under 251,000 applications, compared with around 352,000 the previous year. Faeser's successor, Alexander Dobrindt of the conservative CSU, has promised to ramp up border controls and increase the number of people rejected at the border shortly after taking office next week.

"Illegal migration numbers must come down," Dobrindt told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper. Several thousand additional officials will be sent to support federal police at the borders, while monitoring of border regions, including from the air, will be stepped up as part of Dobrindt's planned measures. — Reuters

'MORE DAYS' NEEDED TO IDENTIFY SPAIN'S BLACKOUT ORIGIN: GOVERNMENT

MADRID: Spain's government said on Sunday it needed "several more days" to work out what caused its nationwide blackout on April 28, which also affected Portugal and parts of southwest France. Environment Minister Sara Aagesen told El Pais newspaper that "all hypotheses" were being looked at, including a possible cyberattack. She said the anomaly might possibly have come from solar panels set up in southeast Spain unbalancing the grid, as the network operator Red Electrica has already suggested. "We know that those installations stopped

working in the system," she said. But she added: "Talking about solar panels (as the cause) might be hasty" and said pointing the finger at renewable energy sources was "irresponsible and simplistic". The blackout cut electricity across all of Spain, knocking out mobile phone and Internet connections, paralysing the rail network and trapping hundreds of people in lifts. Experts have questioned whether the necessary balance between supply and demand in the electricity grid had been disrupted,

possibly through a sudden fluctuation from wind or solar sources. Aagesen said Spain has had renewables in its energy mix for a long time and discounted the theory that "a big amount of renewable energy" jolted the grid. She pointed out that there had been earlier days with higher solar power generation and lower demand, and the system "had functioned very well". "Renewable energy allows Spain to achieve a great deal of energy independence in a geopolitically vulnerable world," she said. — AFP

Putin stresses strength to finish Ukraine operation

PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN

PUTIN said in remarks published on Sunday that Russia had sufficient strength and resources to take the war in Ukraine to its logical conclusion, though he hoped that there would be no need to use nuclear weapons. In a film by state television about Putin's quarter of a century as Russia's paramount leader entitled "Russia, Kremlin, Putin, 25 years", Putin was asked by a reporter about the risk of nuclear escalation from the Ukraine war. "They wanted to provoke us so that we made mistakes," Putin said, speaking beside a portrait of Tsar Alexander III, a 19th century conservative who suppressed dissent. "There has been no need to use those weapons ... and I hope they will not be required." "We have enough strength and means to bring what was started in 2022 to a logical conclusion with the outcome Russia requires."

Trump has been signalling for weeks that he is frustrated by the failure of Moscow and Kyiv to reach terms to end the war, though the Kremlin has said that the conflict is so complicated that the rapid progress Washington wants is difficult. Former US President Joe Biden, Western European leaders and Ukraine cast the attack as an imperial-style land grab and repeatedly vowed to defeat Russian forces, which control about a fifth of Ukraine.

Putin portrays the war as a watershed moment in Moscow's relations with the West, which he says humiliated Russia after the



I don't feel like some kind of politician. I continue to breathe the very same air as millions of Russian citizens. It is very important. God willing that it continues as long as possible. And that it doesn't disappear.

VLADIMIR PUTIN



A Russian army convoy travels through central Moscow during a rehearsal for the Victory Day parade. — AFP

Berlin Wall fell in 1989 by enlarging Nato and encroaching on what he considers Moscow's sphere of influence. Trump has warned that the conflict could develop into World War Three. Former CIA Director William Burns has said there was a real risk in late 2022 that Russia could use nuclear weapons against Ukraine, an assertion dismissed by Moscow.

In the carefully choreographed state television film, which gave viewers a rare look behind the notoriously closed life of the Russian president, Putin was shown offering chocolates and a fermented Russian milk drink to Pavel Zarubin, a top Kremlin correspondent, in his private Kremlin kitchen. Putin said that he first knelt in prayer during the 2002 Nord-Ost Moscow theatre crisis when Chechen militants took over 900 people hostage. More than

130 hostages were killed. "I don't feel like some kind of politician," Putin said of his 25 years in power as president and prime minister. "I continue to breathe the very same air as millions of Russian citizens. It is very important. God willing that it continues as long as possible. And that it doesn't disappear."

Meanwhile, a Russian overnight drone attack on Ukraine's capital injured at least 11 people, including two children, and President Volodymyr Zelensky called on Sunday for a real ceasefire lasting at least a month in the more than three-year-old war. Russian President Vladimir Putin last week declared a three-day ceasefire for May 8-10 to mark the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union and its allies in World War Two, a move appeared aimed at signalling that Russia is still interested in peace. — Reuters

BRUTAL STRIKES CONTINUE IN GAZA

GAZA CITY: Gaza's civil defence agency on Sunday said Israeli strikes on the Palestinian territory killed 16 people, including at least three children. Six people were killed in overnight air strikes in Khan Yunis, in the south of the Gaza Strip, civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said. They included two boys aged five and two, in an apartment in Al Mawasi. The civil defence later said 10 more people were killed in a strike on a tent also in Al Mawasi, among them a child and seven women. UN agencies have urged Israel to lift restrictions, saying Gazans have been experiencing a humanitarian catastrophe and warning of famine. Israel resumed its military offensive in Gaza on March 18 after a two-month truce in its war against Hamas, which was triggered by the October 7, 2023 attack. The health ministry in Gaza on Sunday said at least 2,436 people have been killed since Israel resumed its campaign in Gaza. — AFP

REBUILDING ELECTIONS

Lebanon holds long-delayed local polls



Lebanon on Sunday began the first stage of long-delayed municipal elections, the first vote since a devastating war and after a new national government was formed. According to the interior ministry, 9,321 candidates including 1,179 women are running in the Mount Lebanon district. President Joseph Aoun emphasised the vote's importance to "give confidence to the people and internationally that Lebanon is rebuilding its institutions and is back on the right track". — AFP

INTENSIFIED FIRE

Yemeni missile lands near Israel's airport



A missile fired from Yemen towards Israel landed near Ben Gurion Airport, the country's main international airport, sending a plume of smoke into the air in the terminal building. A senior Israeli police commander, Yair Hetzroni, showed reporters a crater caused by the impact of the missile, which airport authorities said landed beside a road near a Terminal 3 parking lot. The airport lies near the major city of Tel Aviv. — Reuters

RARE STRIKES

First attack launched on Port Sudan



Sudanese paramilitaries struck Port Sudan, the army said, in the first attack on the seat of the army-aligned government in the country's two-year war. Army spokesman Nabil Abdullah said in a statement that the RSF "targeted Osman Digna Air Base, a goods warehouse and some civilian facilities in the city of Port Sudan with suicide drones". He reported no casualties but "limited damage" in the city, on Sudan's Red Sea coast. — AFP

OPINION

HM’s visit a major milestone in Oman-Algeria ties



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK’S state visit to Algeria marks a significant milestone in the diplomatic relations between Oman and Algeria. This visit is not only historic as it is the first bilateral state visit by His Majesty to Algeria, but it also serves as a catalyst for enhancing cooperation across various sectors.

The backdrop of this visit is characterised by a shared commitment to Arab solidarity and mutual respect between the two nations. Both Oman and Algeria have long-standing ties that span over 50 years, rooted in common stances on regional and global issues.

The recent increase in bilateral trade — evidenced by a 48-per cent rise from RO 41.417 million in 2023 to RO 62.988 million in 2024 — highlights the growing economic interdependence that this visit aims to further solidify.

This underscores the immense significance of this visit, which comes amid exceptional progress in bilateral relations. It will yield fruitful outcomes for future cooperation, guided by the vision and directives of both countries’ leaderships.

Oman has expressed strong commitment to strengthening ties at all levels through decisions made during President Tebboune’s state visit to Muscat last year, with efforts on to elevate collaboration to match the historical political relations between the two

nations.

During his stay, His Majesty will hold talks with Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune to discuss key areas of cooperation including renewable energy, petrochemicals, agriculture, technology and tourism. These discussions are anticipated to yield new agreements and initiatives that will enhance investment opportunities between the two countries.

Moreover, this visit comes on the heels of President Tebboune’s successful trip to Oman in October last year, during which eight memoranda of understanding were signed. This reciprocal engagement underscores a mutual desire for deeper collaboration and sets a positive tone for future interactions.

The significance of His Majesty’s visit extends beyond economic interests; it embodies a strategic approach towards strengthening diplomatic ties within Africa. As Oman seeks to expand its influence on the continent, fostering relationships with key nations like Algeria becomes paramount.

The Sultanate of Oman and Algeria are working to elevate the fraternal relations between the two nations, which have spanned over half a century and continue to witness remarkable growth across political, economic and cultural spheres. This includes renewable energy projects, petrochemicals, desert agriculture, technology, tourism and other promising sectors.

Oman has expressed strong commitment to strengthening ties at all levels through decisions made during President Tebboune’s state visit to Muscat last year, with efforts on to elevate collaboration to match the historical political relations between the two nations

To boost collaboration, there is a clear road map and ongoing negotiations between Omani and Algerian companies in promising sectors, with advanced discussions on partnerships under way. The number of registered companies with Algerian contributions reached 423 by the end of 2023, up from 251 in 2022 — a growth rate of 68.5 per cent.

In regards to trade relations between Oman and Algeria, both countries have seen significant growth in recent years and this visit represents a new phase of close and sustainable cooperation between the two nations, enabling both sides to explore further joint investment opportunities.

One such example is Suhar-based SOGEX Oman, an Omani company specialising in electricity and water, which became the first Omani firm to invest in Algeria through the development of power and desalination plants. This included the implementation of Algeria’s first power station, the Arzew Electricity and Water Plant, in 2004.

His Majesty’s visit is poised to boost Omani-Algerian relations significantly, paving the way for enhanced cooperation across multiple domains while reinforcing their shared commitment to peace and stability in the region. The outcomes of this visit are likely to resonate well into the future, establishing a framework for sustained collaboration that benefits both nations.

NORDICS HOPE TO ATTRACT RESEARCHERS LEAVING US

JOHANNES LEDEL

With US universities facing challenges to their independence and funding, Nordic countries hope their emphasis on academic freedom and strong welfare societies can lure researchers seeking to leave the United States.

“To researchers in the United States: welcome,” Sweden’s Education Minister Johan Pehrson said, reaching out to academics affected by a wave of measures under US President Donald Trump.

“We can offer trust and long-term investments. We’ve got academic freedom. If you are looking for a place to do your work and contribute to solving global challenges, we value your knowledge,” the minister said in a written statement. “Our aim is to make it easier for talented individuals to come to Sweden,” he added.

In late April, the American Association of Colleges and Universities published a statement condemning an “unprecedented government overreach and political interference now endangering American higher education”, which as of April 28 had gathered more than 500 signatures from leaders in the sector. “It’s a huge attack and most probably this will just increase,” Lars Strannegard, president of the Stockholm School of Economics, said. “It’s a battle actually, and probably the sort of real battle regarding how the US will develop as a country. A battlefield that will be at the universities,” he added.

Experts have voiced concerns that Trump’s cuts to American research threaten the United States’ standing as a global science leader, and that a loss of research and data could lead to a lack of fact-based information and growing disinformation.

An analysis of application data by science journal Nature in April found that the number of US scientists applying for jobs abroad between January and March had increased by 32 per cent, compared to the same period a year earlier.

Countries across Europe are now vying to recruit academics seeking to leave the United States. French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen are due to take part in a conference in Paris this week aimed at getting foreign researchers, especially Americans, to “Choose Europe”, the French presidency announced last week. — AFP

Election win strengthens Albanese’s hand with US

AUSTRALIAN

PRIME MINISTER Anthony Albanese is likely to work more closely with centre-left governments in Britain and Canada, as well as other democratic allies, after a resounding election win strengthened his hand in dealing with the US, analysts said.

Albanese’s Labor Party rode a voter backlash against the policies of US President Donald Trump to a come-from-behind victory that expanded his parliamentary majority, echoing the re-election win a week ago by Canada’s ruling party. After his cabinet is sworn in, Albanese is expected to visit Washington for discussions on US tariffs and defence matters, while also working with Asian and European nations to broaden export markets and defence cooperation, hedging against US reliance.

Albanese had presented himself to voters as a safe pair of hands amid global turmoil, in contrast to conservative opposition leader Peter Dutton, who was compared to Trump, former strategists for the opposition Liberal Party said in assessing their loss.

Treasurer Jim Chalmers said on Sunday there were global challenges ahead for the returned government.

“People recognised if you want stability while the global economy was going crazy then a majority Labor government was the best way to deliver that,” he said in an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Chalmers said his immediate focus was global economic uncertainty, particularly the impact of tariff tensions between the United States, Australia’s main security ally, and China, its largest trading partner.



Australia’s re-elected Prime Minister Anthony Albanese hands an ice cream order to a customer during a visit to a cafe in Sydney on Sunday. — AFP



KIRSTY NEEDHAM

The writer is Reuters Correspondent covering Australia and Pacific politics

The Labor Party is projected to increase its seats in parliament, strengthening Albanese’s position in dealing with the White House, analysts said.

“When the world’s most powerful country appears erratic and unreliable, it makes sense to diversify your relationships,” said Lowy Institute Executive Director Michael Fullilove, who expects Australia to strengthen ties with Canada, Britain, and other democracies in Europe and Asia.

“None of these countries can replace the United States as Australia’s great security ally, however,” he added.

While Trump’s policies are not popular in Australia, Lowy Institute polling showed 80 per cent of Australians regard the US alliance as important for security.

Noting that Albanese has not yet met Trump in person, Fullilove said:

“It’s hard to think of two leaders who are more different from each other.”

An Australian Electoral Commission count, which is continuing, shows Labor has won at least 82 seats out of 150 seats, increasing its majority in the House of Representatives.

“It’s important to have a majority government when dealing with Australia’s principal ally, the United States,” said Arthur Sinodinos, who was Australia’s ambassador in Washington when the AUKUS nuclear submarine treaty, Australia’s largest-ever defence project, was negotiated.

Albanese needs to travel to the United States soon to talk with Trump about trade and defence, said Sinodinos, now a Washington-based partner with The Asia Group think tank and a former Liberal minister.

“Trump works on the basis that he likes winners,” he added.

Albanese had not attended Trump’s inauguration because it was likely to draw criticism from voters for not putting domestic priorities first, and had been careful not to criticise Trump personally in the election campaign, Sinodinos said. “He talked more about the Americanisation of policy. That was clearly meant to send a coded message to the electorate,” he added.

Unlike the conservatives, Labor had resisted pledging to increase defence spending during the election to 3 per cent of gross domestic product after a request by Washington, saying it had already committed to A\$50 billion more over the next decade, reaching 2.33 per cent of GDP in 2033-34. Albanese said during the campaign that defence spending could increase if circumstances demanded.

Every role, every soul deserves gratitude



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and a communications professional

IN THE quiet of early morning, when the city is still yawning awake, a different kind of rhythm begins. It is the clang of hammers on steel, the vibration of tractors across golden fields, the steady sweep of brooms on tiled floors. It is the rhythm of labour, quiet, steady, and too often skipped.

These are our blue-collar champions; the hands that build, mend, clean and carry the weight of society’s progress. They work on scaffolds that kiss the sky and in fields that stretch beyond the horizon. They are the janitors who keep our spaces welcoming, the factory workers who keep the world running, the farmers whose mill becomes our daily bread.

They rise before the sun and often rest only when the moon is high, their work etched into every brick, every blade of grass, every functioning system we take for granted. Without their resolve, cities would stall, and comfort would fade. They are not just labourers; they are the architects of everyday life in this universe.

They are not to be undervalued, but to be treasured. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was asked what type of earning was best, and he replied, “A man’s work with his hands and every lawful business transaction.”

As our world leans more into the glow of

screens and the efficiency of automation, we must remember: it is still human hands, hard and strong, that hold it all together. With every drop of sweat and act of persistence, these individuals teach us what true dedication looks like indeed.

However, appreciation should not stop at the edge of the construction site or the end of the workday. Inside every office building, behind every goal achieved and every report completed, are employees giving their all. Some draft plans late into the night; others greet clients with warmth that sets the tone for the entire company. Too often, their efforts become routine, hidden.

True leadership is not just about vision or strategy. It is about seeing people, not just their roles, but their impact. It is about recognising that behind every graph that rises and every customer satisfied, there is a person who showed up, not just for a paycheck, but for purpose and passion.

Appreciation doesn’t need to be a grand stage or a corporate budget. Sometimes, the most powerful rewards are the simplest; a heartfelt “thank you”, a moment of genuine acknowledgment, a small celebration of a work anniversary or a kind word in front of workmates. These gestures create a culture where people feel seen, heard and valued — not just as employees, but as human beings.

True leadership is not just about vision or strategy. It is about seeing people, not just their roles, but their impact. It is about recognising that behind every graph that rises and every customer satisfied, there is a person who showed up, not just for a paycheck, but for purpose and passion

When appreciation flows not only from the top down, but across the team, it becomes more powerful. Stress eases, bonds grow and teams transform into communities. In such workplaces, people don’t just work, they belong and consider it home instead.

Recognition, when made part of a daily chore, it is contagious. It sparks pride, inspires loyalty and fuels innovation. People don’t need to be told to go the extra mile, but they want to because they know their efforts matter.

The truth is, most people don’t jump out of their beds everyday just for the paycheck. They show up for something deeper — meaning, connection, and yes, even a little bit of praise. Whether it is the designer refining a logo or the receptionist brightening someone’s day, everyone requires that emotional paycheck that says, “Your work matters.” Hence, at workplace, it is not always the paycheck or fancy job title, it is appreciation!

So let’s say it more often for colleagues and friends. Let’s say it louder. Let’s build workplaces — and communities — where appreciation is more than a policy; it is a practice. Because when we honour labour in all its forms, we honour the spirit of humanity itself. After all, appreciation costs nothing. But its value is absolutely priceless.

RESEARCHERS SEEK TO LEGITIMISE AI MENTAL HEALTHCARE

THOMAS URBAIN

Researchers at Dartmouth College believe artificial intelligence can deliver reliable psychotherapy, distinguishing their work from the unproven and sometimes dubious mental health apps flooding today’s market. Their application, Therabot, addresses the critical shortage of mental health professionals. According to Nick Jacobson, an assistant professor of data science and psychiatry at Dartmouth, even multiplying the current number of therapists tenfold would leave too few to meet demand.

“We need something different to meet this large need,” Jacobson said. The Dartmouth team recently published a clinical study demonstrating Therabot’s effectiveness in helping people with anxiety, depression and eating disorders. A new trial is planned to compare Therabot’s results with conventional therapies. The medical establishment appears receptive to such innovation.

Vaile Wright, senior director of healthcare innovation at the American Psychological Association (APA), described “a future where you will have an AI-generated chatbot rooted in science that is co-created by experts and developed for the purpose of addressing mental health.”

Wright noted these applications “have a lot of promise, particularly if they are done responsibly and ethically,” though she expressed concerns about potential harm to younger users.

Jacobson’s team has so far dedicated close to six years to developing Therabot, with safety and effectiveness as primary goals. Michael Heinz, psychiatrist and project co-leader, believes rushing for profit would compromise safety. The Dartmouth team is prioritising understanding how their digital therapist works and establishing trust. They are also contemplating the creation of a non-profit entity linked to Therabot to make digital therapy accessible to those who cannot afford conventional in-person help.

With the cautious approach of its developers, Therabot could potentially be a standout in a marketplace of untested apps that claim to address loneliness, sadness and other issues.

According to Wright, many apps appear designed more to capture attention and generate revenue than improve mental health.

Such models keep people engaged by telling them what they want to hear, but young users often lack the savvy to realise they are being manipulated. Darlene King, chair of the American Psychiatric Association’s committee on mental health technology, acknowledged AI’s potential for addressing mental health challenges but emphasises the need for more information before determining true benefits and risks.

“There are still a lot of questions,” King noted. To minimise unexpected outcomes, the Therabot team went beyond mining therapy transcripts and training videos to fuel its AI app by manually creating simulated patient-caregiver conversations. — AFP

Europe’s firefighters want more funds and staff

UNDERINVESTMENT in staff means Europe’s fire services are overstretched as climate change raises the risk of deadly blazes, firefighter unions in the world’s fastest warming-region have warned. Wildfires fuelled by hotter, drier weather and household fires, which unions say are sometimes caused by uncertified installations of solar technology, are straining fire services across the bloc.

Firefighters want more funding and better incentives for the millions of volunteers who prop up the system.

“We have volunteers doing over 1,000 hours a year,” said Pablo Sanchez, policy lead for the European Federation of Public Service Unions’ Firefighter’s Network (EPSU). “They are using volunteers like they are professionals. The system is not sustainable in the long run,” he said.

New analysis released by the EPSU ahead of International Firefighters’ Day on May 4 showed the number of professional firefighters dropped significantly in several European countries between 2021 and 2023.

In Sweden, Romania and Hungary, firefighter numbers shrank two years in a row, declining overall by more than 20 per cent between 2021 and 2023. Germany also experienced a year-on-year decline, with numbers dropping 7 per cent overall. Firefighter numbers in Belgium and Portugal fell 5 per cent and 2 per cent overall, respectively, despite both countries seeing a small boost in numbers between 2022 and 2023.

In some countries, the declines were driven by cuts to public services, while in others fire services struggled to replace staff as the profession has become less popular, said Sanchez.

Stephan Wevers, president of the Federation of European Fire Officers (FEU), said recruiting and retaining volunteers was becoming more difficult as training gets tougher and work-life balance has evolved.

“We have to be more active to get new people in the fire service,” he said. Across the bloc, government spending on fire services as a share of total expenditure has not increased since records began in 2001 - remaining roughly at 0.5 per cent - despite increased demand.

Revised European Union fiscal rules to prevent excessive



A firefighter handles a wildfire in Videmonte, Celorico da Beira, Portugal. — Reuters file photo

government borrowing that entered into force last year will require member states to make cuts, and the EPSU warned the public sector is likely to be hit hardest, further undermining emergency responses.

In 2024, the number of wildfires that raged across Europe was slightly below the average of recent years, but the total area burnt was higher, according to EU statistics.

Unions have been calling for more investment in equipment and staff since 2023, one of the worst years for wildfires in Europe. A dozen EU countries’ fire services shrunk between 2022 and 2023, despite the overall number of firefighters increasing across the bloc.

More than 360,000 firefighters served Europe in 2023, after numbers dropped by 2,800 between 2021 and 2022. The EPSU is also calling for upgraded protective equipment and mandatory decontamination procedures across services.

Volunteering has become less popular as people’s work and leisure commitments have evolved. Training is also becoming more intense in response to increasingly complex fire incidents, requiring greater commitment from volunteers, said

Wevers. EU legislation should be adapted to attract more volunteers, he added. Members of the European Parliament want firefighters to be exempted from the Working Time Directive that sets minimum health and safety standards for working hours and has affected volunteers’ ability to balance paid work with voluntary commitments. Lawmakers and union representatives will attend a public hearing on the effect of the directive and other challenges facing firefighters in May.

But more firefighters is not the only answer. Reports from the European Environment Agency, World Bank and independent advisers say EU policies and funding need to boost the bloc’s prevention and resilience to climate change.

A new EU preparedness strategy, launched in March, focuses on educating populations, improving early warnings and risk assessments and coordinating EU-wide responses, including uniting civil protection units such as firefighters. “We have to learn to live with wildfires,” said Wevers, who said the FEU want member states to implement better nature management and building restrictions in high-risk areas.



BEATRICE
TRIDIMAS

Beatrice Tridimas
The writer is a digital producer and journalist at the Thomson Reuters Foundation based in London

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Oman Military Equestrian team before travelling

OMAN TO COMPETE AT MILITARY SHOW JUMPING IN EGYPT

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MAY 4

The Sultanate of Oman’s military equestrian team has arrived Arab Republic of Egypt to participate in the 25th edition of Military World Equestrian Championship for show jumping.

The event is organised under the International Military Sports Council from May 3 to 9, at the Armed Forces Equestrian Club with participant of 25 countries around the globe.

Oman’s delegation is composed of riders from the Royal Court Affairs, to underscores ongoing commitment to excellence in military sports and international cooperation.

Ahead of the departure, senior military and sports officials observed the team’s final preparations at the Al Adiyat Royal Cavalry facility in Muscat.

These included Brigadier General (Pilot) Nasser bin Said al Saadi, Assistant Chief of Staff for Training and Joint Exercises at the Sultan’s Armed Forces; Salim bin Abdullah al Abri, Director General of Human Resources and Chairman of the Sports Committee at Royal Court Affairs; and Colonel (Air) Hamad bin Salim al Balushi, Director of Military Sports at the Sultan’s Armed Forces Headquarters.

Lieutenant Colonel Saud bin Mohammed al Harrasi, head of the Oman delegation, affirmed that “The team’s participation reflects Oman’s strategic efforts to strengthen its presence in military equestrian sports and to raise the performance levels of its riders and coaches.”

“The championship’s role in enhancing the technical and physical competencies of the athletes through exposure to global experiences and competition.”

Lt. Col. Al Harrasi concluded, “The team prepared well drawing on the momentum from last edition in Qatar. Where Oman secured a gold medal through rider Sergeant Medin bin Said al Yousfi from Royal Court Affairs.”

Seeb clinch Omantel League title, Sur relegated

Saham, Al Khabourah secure crucial win



Seeb players celebrate after winning the Omantel League for the 2024–2025 season.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 4

SEEB CLUB was crowned champions of the Omantel League for the 2024–2025 season after a 1 0 victory over Al Rustaq, in a match held at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex as part of the 21st round of the competition.

Seeb entered the match seeking the three points to seal the title, while Al Rustaq aimed to escape relegation. The match started cautiously, with the first notable chance being a shot from Musab al Maamari that went over the crossbar. Seeb responded with efforts from Arshad al Alawi and Zaher al Aghbari. In the 35th minute, Haroun Kamara opened the scoring with a header from a corner kick. Just before halftime, Al Rustaq goalkeeper Islam al Hinai received a red card for handling the ball outside his area, forcing his team to play the rest of the match with ten men.

In the second half, Al Rustaq tried to equalise despite being a man down, but Seeb’s solid defense prevented any breakthrough. Both goalkeepers made several crucial saves, and Seeb nearly added a second goal. However, the match ended 1-0, securing Seeb the league title before the final round, while Al Rustaq remained in a precarious position.

AL KHABOURAH DEFEAT AL NASR
Al Khabourah defeated Al Nasr 2-1 in a match played at Al Saada Sports Complex as part of the First Division League.

The first half saw Al Khabourah dominate possession without creating major threats, with highlights including a header by Rashid al Hosni and a shot from Ahmed al Riyami. The half ended goalless. In the second half, Amir Alaa scored for Al Khabourah in the 67th minute, followed by a second goal from Zakaria al Qartoubi two minutes later. Al Nasr managed to reduce the deficit with a penalty converted by Marwan Taib in the 81st minute, but their attempts to equalise were unsuccessful. With this win, Al Khabourah raised their tally to 28 points, climbing to fifth place, while Al Nasr stayed at 27 points and slipped to sixth.

SAHAM BEAT SOHAR
Saham earned a well deserved 2-0 win over Sohar in a match held on Saturday at Sohar Sports Complex.

Saham opened the scoring early in the 5th minute through a penalty taken by Baba Tunde, awarded after a mistake by goalkeeper Faiz al Rushaidi, who mispassed the ball to a defender. Marwan al Ghafri added the second goal in the 48th minute with a corner kick that found the net. Saham dominated the game and posed multiple threats to Sohar’s goal

but couldn’t extend the lead further. The match ended 2-0. With this victory, Saham climbed to seventh place with 26 points, while Sohar remained in 10th place with 21 points, just one point ahead of Ibri, the first team in the relegation zone.

SUR RELEGATED AFTER 3-3 DRAW WITH AL SHABAB
Sur officially relegated to the First Division League after a 3-3 draw with Al Shabab in a match held at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Al Shabab’s goals came from Mohammed al Ghafri, who scored a hat-trick, while Sur’s goals were scored by Mana Sbeit, Mohammed al Najashi, and Abdullah al Mashaikhi.

With this draw, Sur reached 18 points but remained at the bottom of the table and was officially relegated before the final round. They needed a win and favorable results from other matches to avoid the drop.

AL NAHDA & BAHLA GOALLESS DRAW
Al Nahda and Bahla played to a goalless draw in their match at Seeb Sports Stadium.

With this result, Al Nahda reached 44 points and secured second place in the league standings before the final round. Bahla, with 39 points, confirmed its position in third place.

Al Owaisi keeps Oman hope alive for knockout stage



Oman and El Salvador player in action

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 4

OMAN’S GOALKEEPER Younis al Owaisi delivered a crucial victory to his team as he saved El Salvador’s Elmer Robles’ spot-kick to earn a win from penalties after a 4-4 draw on Sunday in the second match of group D games at 2025 Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup in Seychelles. The victory meant, Oman team players revived their hopes to advance into the knockout stage after their loss against Italy by 7-4 in the opening match on Friday. Oman will meet Brazil on Tuesday in a tight clash which will decide the winner of one of the two group’s ticket to the next phase.

At Paradise Arena in Mahe Islands, Oman team players (the runners up of AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand



Oman players celebrate after winning the match

2025) began the match with more focus than the previous game as Musallam al Oraimi took the lead for Oman as he scored the opening goal in an early minute of the first period. Oman’s goalie Younis al Owaisi made a super save

of Jose Batres’ penalty. After few attempts, Emerson Cerna’s bicycle-kick gave the equaliser for El Salvador to made it 1-1 by the end of the first period.

In the following period, the opponent pressed hard as they managed to score second

goal through BATRES while Yahya al Murkhi equalised from the penalty spot to make it 2-2. Andersson Castro returned his team El Salvador for second lead as he netted the third goal to end the second period leading by 3-2. Frank Velasquez raised the scoring gap to two goals as he registered the fourth goal for El Salvador in the beginning of third period.

An outstanding show by Oman team players including Salim al Oraimi and Sami al Bulushi who broke the rivals defending line to score the third and fourth goal and send the match into extra-time which ended goalless. Oman team managed to earn the winning points from penalties as this victory kept Oman hopes alive to seal a berth in the knockout stage heading into their concluding group stage fixture against defending champions Brazil on Tuesday.

SHORTTAKES



SEEB TARGET
TREBLE, SALAM EYE
REDEMPTION IN
VOLLEYBALL FINAL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 4

All eyes will be on Sohar Sports Complex this evening as the curtain falls on the First Division Volleyball League season with a highly anticipated showdown between two giants of the sport in Oman Seeb and Al Salam. The final will kick off at 5 pm, under auspice of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North.

Seeb enter the clash eyeing a historic treble, having already secured the Super Cup title this season with a straight-sets win over Al Salam, and following it up by clinching the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Shield after defeating Majees, again in straight sets.

Jamal al Maamari, Seeb coach, commented, “Finals are a different kind of game; they’re not measured by previous results. Despite Super Cup win over Al Salam, we deeply respect them and recognise their strengths. This week we focused on mental preparation and maintaining high concentration. We’ll give everything we have to bring joy to Seeb’s fans.”

On the other side, Al Salam enter the final driven by a desire for revenge, aiming to end Seeb’s dominance and capture a long-awaited title. The team relies on a mix of youth and veteran players and hopes to capitalise on any opportunity to pressure the defending champions.

Player Ahmed al Toobi said, “We’re living an extraordinary season. We’ve won the Super Cup and the Shield, and now we aim to complete it with the league title. At Seeb, we’ve learned that titles are earned through effort, and we’ll give it our all to achieve the dream.”



Al Zubair 1st in category N, Al Amri 3rd in Saudi rally

CHAMPION Nasser al Attiyah won his third MERC rally championship this year after Oman and Qatar rallies, when he added Saudi International rally tittle to his treasure, the third round of the Middle East Rally Championship, after finishing the two-day race in first place, followed by Saudi Rakan al Rashed in second place, then Qatari Abdulaziz al Kuwari who gained the third place, meanwhile our young champion Abdullah al Rawahi finished fourth.

Abdullah al Zubair and his navigator Taha Soomar snatched the title of the (N) category, Zakaria al Amri and his co-driver Mohammed al Mazrui came in third place behind the Lebanese Shadi al Faqih.

The rally, which returned to the

Middle East calendar after a long absence, was described as a difficult and arduous rally, especially the first day’s stages. Three of the six stages were cancelled due various reasons, including safety issues and technical reasons. On the following day, six stages were held, and Al Attiyah was able to exchange the lead with the Finn, Juho Heinenen.

Omani rally driver Abdullah al Rawahi and his British co-driver Whittack tried to make up for their first-day deficit by putting in a strong race pace on the second day and more pressure, closing the gap to the leaders, especially in the final stages. However, this proved to be of little help, as he finished fourth in the Middle East Championship drivers’ standings.



Abdullah al Zubair after finishing the rally confirmed that, “My thanks to my assistant Taha Soomar, the technical team and everyone who stood behind us in this race and supported us. This race was really tiring for everyone and seven competitors left the rally due to

various breakdowns. We initially set a clear strategy and our goal was to win the category lead.”

Abdullah al Rawahi suffered from tire explosions on the first day and fell behind, however, he used his speed on the second day to improve his position and finished the race in fourth place, hoping to achieve a better result in the next race at the end of the month in the fourth round of the championship in Jordan.

On the other side, Zakaria al Amri explained that the stages were difficult and resulted in many tire blowouts, but he was pleased to have earned the additional points and third place in the category in this rally and hopes to deliver a better race in Jordan.



Oman team managed to win the match.

Oman to host 10th Asian
Beach Handball Torney

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 4

THE OMAN HANDBALL ASSOCIATION (OHA) is all set to kick off the actions of the 10th AHF Asian Men’s and Women’s Beach Handball championship which will begin in Muscat on Tuesday and will run until May 15. Moosa bin Khamis al Balushi, OHA Chairman, unveiled in a press meet all the relevant details for this major Asian hosting.

“We are thrilled to host this prestigious event for the second time in history following the great success of the 2015 edition. Hosting this event was one of the key plans for the new board directors and we have managed to host it in Oman. The Asian Handball Federation (AHF) has full confidence in Oman’s organisational capabilities and reinforces the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a leading destination for international sporting events. This continental event will build on the success of the 3rd Gulf Beach Games which concluded last month in Muscat as the national beach handball team had clinched the gold medal. This achievement serves as a strong motivation for the national team to compete for the Asian title for the first time in history, despite reaching the finals more than eight times previously. Now is the time to fulfill this dream. I am confident on the team players to deliver their outmost efforts in order to win the title ,” OHA chief added.

Responding to an inquiry on having

tournament in winter instead of summer season, Moosa said:” The dates and timing of this tournament is not in our control as AHF have set an agenda for the whole year. In addition, the Asian Championship will act as a valuable opportunity to promote tourism in Oman and enhance cultural exchange among participating countries. There were tough efforts made to ensure the tournament’s success starting from preparing main field and training venues according to international standards beside the logistical and accommodation services that meet the needs of all teams.

Special thanks goes to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) for their support in securing hosting rights and to private sector companies sponsoring this major event.

The championship will be a platform for showcasing Omani youth talents in organising major international events and enhancing the competitive spirit among participating Asian teams,” he ended.

Salim bin Khalfan al Saadi, Board Member and Tournament Director, said that there are three venues for the event including the main venue that will feature opening and concluding ceremony and the key matches of the tournament beside another additional venue for the rest of the games while third venue is for warm up sessions,”

“Many sub committees were formed for this event to provide the required efforts for all the teams. Public Relations Committee are busy in these days as they

are welcoming the participating teams and guests and ensure a comfortable stay in designated hotels. Jordan team were the first arrivals and rest of the teams will come accordingly. The Stadium Committee also played a vital role in preparing the courts to international standards, providing official match balls, and testing electronic scoring systems to ensure accuracy. The Medical Committee confirmed its full readiness to provide medical support throughout the tournament, with over 20 members from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Ministry of Health. Field medical teams were equipped with the latest emergency tools, and specialised medical teams were stationed at venues and hotels,” he added

“The Media Committee played a major role in promoting the event through social media and various media outlets. Matches will be broadcast live on Oman Sports TV and Al Kass Channel, which sponsors Asian Handball Federation tournaments,” he ended.

On the other side, Oman team managed to win their first friendly match against Jordan 2-1 on Saturday.

Both teams are gearing up for the tournament. Oman beach handball team is clubbed with Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong and Maldives in Group A.

Group B comprised of Iran, Philippines, Jordan, Pakistan and India. The women’s competition will feature only four teams in one group only including: Vietnam, Hong Kong, Philippines and India.

SPORTS



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka celebrates with the trophy after winning the women's singles final against Coco Gauff of the US. — Reuters

Sabalenka beats Gauff to win 3rd Madrid Open crown

WORLD NUMBER ONE Aryna Sabalenka defeated Coco Gauff 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) on Saturday to win her third Madrid Open title. Last year's runner-up cruised past the American, ranked fourth, in the first set before digging deep in the second to triumph in a tie-break, sealing victory as Gauff double faulted.

Sabalenka recorded her tour-leading 31st victory on Madrid clay, adding the WTA 1000 trophy to titles in Brisbane and Miami. It was the sixth final she has reached this year and the 37th of her career, the fourth in five years at Madrid. Last year Sabalenka was beaten by Iga Swiatek in the showpiece, whom Gauff thrashed in the semifinal on

Thursday. "I'm pretty sure we're gonna play many more times in the finals — although I hope I'm going to get all (the wins)," Sabalenka told Gauff, before addressing the fans.

"I'm always so excited to play in front of you... and I'm super happy to win this year." The three-time Grand Slam champion ripped through the first set after Gauff managed an initial hold.

Sabalenka won the next 17 points and racked up a 4-1 lead with breaks in the third and fifth games, as Gauff struggled to cope with her immense power.

The 21-year-old American, who won the US Open in 2023, managed a break of her own to slow down the 2021 and 2023 Madrid champion.

Sabalenka broke again



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka and Coco Gauff of the US pose with the winners and runners up trophies after the women's singles final. — Reuters

to wrap up the first set in 35 minutes with her second set point as Gauff sliced wide. The American came out reinforced in the second set, switching up her serve more and secured a break in the third game, consolidating for a 3-1 advantage. Gauff saved two break points as Sabalenka applied heavy pressure in the sixth game, holding for a 4-2 lead. At 5-4 up and serving for the set Gauff twice double faulted, handing her opponent three break points. Sabalenka dropped her racquet in a comical moment during a rally on the second of those, the Belarusian looking at the crowd in bemusement, as Gauff saved all three.

After squandering set point Gauff saved another break point but Sabalenka

eventually claimed the game at the fifth time of asking. The world number one battled through a tough hold for 6-5 but spurned a championship point as Gauff forced a tie-break. Sabalenka secured two mini-breaks before Gauff fought back on serve, but eventually the 26-year-old took control, opening up three more championship points.

Gauff handed victory to this year's Australian Open runner-up on a plate with a double fault. Sabalenka pulled level at 5-5 with Gauff head-to-head and matched Petra Kvitova's record of three women's Madrid Open titles.

"I think this is a step in the right direction," said Gauff, despite defeat, thanking her team and the Madrid Open organisers. — AFP

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Oman’s oil output to rise to 775K bpd

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 4

OMAN’S oil production is projected to rise to 775,000 barrels per day (bpd) in June 2025, up from the required production level of 768,000 bpd set for May 2025.

This follows a decision by eight Opec+ producers, including the Sultanate of Oman, to implement a production adjustment of 411,000 bpd in June 2025.

The decision was adopted on Saturday, May 3, 2025, during a virtual meeting of officials representing the eight producing nations. They also reviewed global market conditions and the outlook for oil demand.

In a statement, Opec said the decision by Oman, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, UAE, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, and Algeria reaffirmed their commitment to market stability based

The next Opec+ meeting is scheduled for June 1, 2025 to decide production targets for July 2025.

on current healthy oil market fundamentals, and to adjust production upward. The eight countries had previously announced

additional voluntary adjustments in April and November 2023.

“In view of the current healthy market fundamentals, as reflected in the low oil inventories and in accordance with the decision agreed upon on December 5, 2024 to start a gradual and flexible return of the 2.2 million barrels per day voluntary adjustments starting from April 1, 2025, the eight participating countries will implement a production adjustment of 411 thousand barrels per day in June 2025 from the May 2025 required production level,” said Opec, noting that the increase is equivalent to three monthly increments.

Opec added that the gradual increases may be paused or reversed depending on evolving market conditions, providing the group with flexibility to continue supporting market stability. The measure also offers participating countries an opportunity to accelerate their compensation.

Oman and its peers in the Opec+ alliance

have pledged to hold monthly meetings to review market conditions, conformity and compensation. The next meeting is scheduled for June 1, 2025, to decide on July production levels.

Expert reactions to the output increase have been mixed, with many warning it could potentially roil crude markets amidst ongoing geopolitical turmoil.

Well-known Omani expert Ali al Riyami, former Director-General of Marketing at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, commented: “In my view, this decision is likely to have a negative impact on oil markets, especially as the market remains affected by the consequences of tariff policies and the oversupply anticipated by oil experts, coupled with weak demand from China.”

“Will this increase persist in the coming periods? Or will the organisation revise its strategy? This is what we will find out in the coming weeks,” he added in a post.

البنك الوطني العماني
لدول مجلس التعاون الخليجي
National Bank of Oman GCC Fund

ملادوقا

Investment Manager Report
For Quarter 1 2025

The GCC equity markets had a flat performance over the first quarter of 2025 (Q1 2025). The quarter started well with markets rising in January and February due to the new US president being sworn in, expectations of interest rate cuts, stable crude prices, but lost momentum during March due to tariff-related developments, and volatile crude prices due to fears of increase in production by Saudi Arabia and Iran.

During the quarter, the Saudi Tadawul Index was flat (down 0.10%) while S&P GCC Total Return Index reported a gain of 1.97% primarily due to strong dividend announcements by index companies while the S&P GCC Price Index was up by 0.70%. Crude was flat in Q125 but has seen a major fall in the first two weeks of the month.

Kuwait was the best performing index and the only GCC market in the positive(up 9.66%) on the back of new debt and mortgage laws being implemented which should spur credit growth for banks. Oman (down 4.58%) and Qatar (down 3.20%) were the key underperforming markets due to lack of new triggers and volatile geopolitical scenario.

In terms of sectoral performance Financials and Real Estate were the biggest gainers while Utilities and Materials were the biggest underperformers.

Among financials, banks- Saudi National Bank and Al Rajhi Bank were the biggest gainers on the back of strong credit growth in Saudi, while Kuwait Finance House and National Bank of Kuwait rallied in Kuwait due to the new mortgage law being implemented. ACWA Power was the biggest loser in the Utilities sector while Saudi Arabian Mining company saw a negative tick in the materials sector.

In terms of return during the year 2025, the benchmark gained 0.77% while your portfolio value was down 1.72%, thereby underperforming the benchmark by 2.49%.

Overall, we believe that our portfolio is well positioned to benefit from the regional markets and is likely to deliver positive results to the unit holders.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD
ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	31 March 2025	31 March 2024	31 December 2024
	RO	RO	RO
ASSETS			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	10,902,635	11,398,290	11,565,847
Cash and cash equivalents	945,942	1,044,725	559,493
Dividends receivable	56,786	26,540	—
Total assets	11,905,363	12,469,555	12,125,340
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Dividend payable	659,918	—	—
Accruals and other payables	48,138	49,996	49,991
Total liabilities	708,056	49,996	49,991
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	11,197,307	12,419,559	12,075,349
Net asset value per unit	1.015	1.097	1.094

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

	31 March 2025	31 March 2024	31 December 2024
	RO	RO	RO
	(3 months)	(3 months)	(12 months)
INCOME			
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	(220,664)	495,591	1,133,688
Dividend income	105,763	115,518	337,636
Net realised (loss) / gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	(18,869)	7,341	(127,353)
Interest income	283	80	646
	(133,487)	618,530	1,344,617
EXPENSE			
Management fees	33,820	35,890	140,216
Fund Management Body fees	18,027	17,260	35,000
Brokerage expenses	5,318	14,668	45,951
Administrator fees	4,612	4,894	19,120
General and administration	3,714	4,402	24,443
Custodian fees	2,716	2,814	11,577
Foreign exchange loss	533	290	8,346
	68,740	80,218	284,653
Net (loss) / profit and total comprehensive income for the period / year	(202,227)	538,312	1,059,964
Net (loss) / profit per unit	(0.018)	0.048	0.094

Investment Manager & Administrator

البنك الوطني العماني

NBO

Note: The complete accounts, in Arabic or English as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholder within 7 days of a written request addressed to the Administrator, Investment Banking Operations, National Bank of Oman, P.O.Box 751, PC 112, Rawl, Sultanate of Oman. Tel: 24778757, Fax: 24778993 Email: C.C.Fund@nbo.co.om

Workers’ Day in Oman: A renewed commitment to labour reform

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 4

THE Sultanate of Oman marked International Workers’ Day on Sunday, May 4, 2025, with a national celebration underscoring the country’s strategic labour reforms and digital transformation.

Held under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, the event was organised by the General Federation of Oman Workers (GFW) and attended by senior officials, private sector leaders and trade union representatives.

In a keynote address, GFW Chairman Nabhan al Battashi outlined a forward-looking vision for Oman’s labour movement, announcing a series of new initiatives aimed at modernising union operations, expanding legal protections and promoting equitable employment.

“Uplifting the minimum wage is not just a demand — it is an economic and social imperative,” said Al Battashi, calling for evidence-based collaboration with national institutions to align wages with the cost of living.

Among the major announcements was the launch of the Digital Trade Union Data Management System, a nationwide platform designed to unify labour data, streamline internal processes and enhance union transparency.

GFW also unveiled I’tizaz, a new member benefits programme developed in partnership with Omani fintech company Thawani.

Dignitaries at International Workers’ Day ceremonies hosted by the General Federation of Oman Workers.

The initiative will offer exclusive discounts for registered union members through participating private-sector partners, supporting worker wellbeing beyond the workplace.

This year’s ceremony also saw the introduction of the Trade Union Excellence Award, a GFW initiative that recognises outstanding contributions by unions, public bodies and private entities in promoting workers’ rights and improving labour environments.

Awards were presented in six categories, including union leadership, sectoral coordination and institutional support.

A YEAR OF UNION GROWTH

GFW’s 2024 Annual Report highlighted significant gains in union formation and legal advocacy.

The number of registered unions rose to 335, with Muscat leading at 161 unions, followed by Al Batinah North Governorate and Al Wusta Governorate.

Sectoral federations expanded to eight, covering key fields such as oil

and gas, transport and education. The federation mediated 90 collective labour agreements across multiple sectors in 2024, achieving a resolution rate of nearly 89 per cent.

It also handled 2,473 dismissal cases related to economic layoffs, bankruptcy and delayed wages, with legal interventions resulting in a 100 per cent success rate in court rulings.

Women’s leadership within unions continued to strengthen, with 225 women participating in union committees and 32 involved in collective bargaining negotiations. GFW signed a partnership with Jibrean Academy to bolster leadership and legal training for female unionists.

Internationally, GFW extended its presence at 13 global conferences and signed cooperation agreements with the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions and the International Transport Workers’ Federation, cementing cross-border alliances and sharing best practices in labour representation.

ADVERTORIALS

BOLDDESIGN



Every detail inside the Nautilus speaks to thoughtful innovation.

ENJOY DISTINCTIVE LUXURY IN THE LINCOLN NAUTILUS

MUSCAT: The Lincoln Nautilus blends bold design with refined elegance. Its contemporary silhouette is instantly recognisable, featuring Lincoln’s signature grille, a sculpted rear fascia and an elegant full-width light bar complemented by refreshed tail lamps. A newly styled spoiler not only adds a touch of athleticism but also enhances aerodynamic performance, perfectly echoing the Nautilus’ confident, modern aesthetic.

The Reserve trim adds an extra layer of allure with head-turning 21” bright machined aluminium wheels with premium-painted pockets, adding a dynamic, upscale edge.

Open the doors and the Nautilus welcomes you into a world of quiet luxury. Ambient lighting gently illuminates the cabin and exterior, setting a serene tone for every journey. Acoustic side glass keeps the outside world at bay, creating a whisper-quiet environment inside.

Engineered for smoothness, the ride is free from road harshness and vibrations, allowing every drive to feel like a retreat. Plush materials invite you to sink into seats that do more than cradle, they comfort. Ventilated, massaging and highly adjustable, these seats are crafted to elevate both long and short drives. The redesigned steering wheel, wrapped in premium Wollsdorf leather and accented with precision European stitching, is ergonomically enhanced for a sportier grip and unmatched tactile pleasure.

At your fingertips sits an expansive 11.1-inch LCD Capacitive Touchscreen, delivering crisp visuals and intuitive swipe controls—putting vital information and entertainment right where you need it.

Every detail inside the Nautilus speaks to thoughtful innovation. The centre console departs from convention with a vertically-aligned Push-Button Shifter, integrated seamlessly into the instrument panel. Each button is uniquely textured for natural, intuitive control.

For those who demand peak comfort, the Ultra Comfort front seats, developed with input from orthopaedic specialists, offer 22-way adjustability and lumbar massage, helping to reduce fatigue and improve well-being on long drives. Available heated and cooled options in the Reserve trim ensure year-round comfort, regardless of the weather.

Underneath its sculpted frame, the Nautilus houses a performance-driven heart. The available 2.0-liter turbocharged engine produces an exhilarating 250 horsepower and 380 Nm of torque. Combined with Lincoln’s intelligent all-wheel-drive system, adaptive suspension and AWD disconnect capability, the Nautilus adapts effortlessly to road conditions, delivering poised handling and uncompromising control.

Additional features like Auto Start-Stop technology and an advanced 8-speed automatic transmission with SelectShift ensure a smooth, efficient, and responsive ride every time.

A THRIVING GLOBAL PRESENCE
Amouage’s momentum continues across all channels. Amouage boutiques posted an exceptional

growth of +75%, e-commerce maintained its strong ascent at +52%, and Travel Retail expanded by +51%. Distributor-led markets rose by +43%, with MEA shining at +75%.

Amouage proudly secured the number one position in ultra-luxury fragrance across all retailers where listed in the United Arab Emirates and in prestigious doors such as Laure and Harvey Nichols in Saudi Arabia.

In the Americas, sales rose by +41%, with Amouage now among the top 10 fragrance brands at



Amouage’s momentum continues across all channels.

NATIONAL FINANCE HONoured WITH EXCELLENCE AWARD

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its leadership within the nation’s finance sector, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, was recently honoured with the prestigious ‘Excellence in Innovation & Business Growth’ Award at the OER Business Excellence Awards 2025.

The ceremony took place in the esteemed presence of Chief Guest, HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Thuwaini al Said, and under the auspices of Shaikh Salim



bin Mustahail al Mashani. This recognition highlights National Finance’s remarkable growth journey, solidifying its position as the trusted Partner for Growth with

an impressive 49% market share. Ahmed al Mawali, AGM – Head of Retail and SME at National Finance, graciously accepted the award on behalf of the company.

The OER Business Excellence Awards, a highlight of the OER Business Summit 2025, is a platform that celebrates the outstanding achievements of businesses and corporations across various sectors, in the midst of senior government officials, industry leaders, and top executives.

Lulu’s Mango Mania: Feast of flavours for mango fans

IT’S mango season – and Lulu Hypermarket is going all out to celebrate the king of fruits with its much-awaited Mango Mania festival!

From now until May 10, 2025, all Lulu outlets across the Sultanate of Oman will be bursting with colour, flavour and the unmistakable aroma of ripe, juicy mangoes. Whether you like them sweet, tangy or somewhere in between, Mango Mania is your golden ticket to fruity indulgence.

The festival was officially inaugurated at Lulu Hypermarket Bausher by G V Srinivas, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, alongside government officials, Lulu executives and excited customers.

Speaking on the occasion, the Ambassador expressed his appreciation for being part of such a diverse and professionally managed promotional event by Lulu.

“Every layer of the entire mango value chain has been considered, right from the ‘farm to the fork’. Delighted to see that it is not only mangoes and mango products, but



The festival was officially inaugurated at Lulu Hypermarket Bausher by G V Srinivas, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman.

also culinary delicacies from different parts of India is included in this festival”, the Ambassador said.

His Excellency further highlighted the celebration of 70 years of India – Oman diplomatic relations and the role of such events in boosting the cultural as well as trade relations between the two countries

This year’s Mango Mania features over 100 mango varieties from around the world – including bite-sized sugar baby mangoes and the massive

‘Ammini’, each variety will be an explosion of sweetness to the taste buds.

The assortment of mango varieties featured in this year’s Mango Mania underscores Lulu’s commitment to bringing extraordinary global flavors to customers under one roof.

And it’s not just fresh fruit on offer. Customers can dive into a delicious spread of mango-infused dishes, including mango biryani, tangy pickles, soft mango cakes, smoothies, jams, juices, jellies, and much more across Lulu’s hot food, bakery

and sweet counters.

The tropical treasure trove includes mangoes flown in from 13 countries – including India, Yemen, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Colombia, Brazil, Sri Lanka and Uganda – alongside locally grown favorites.

“This isn’t just a fruit festival – it’s a full-on mango celebration!” said Shabeer K A, Director of Lulu Hypermarkets Oman.

“We’re showcasing mangoes across the full spectrum from the tiniest to the biggest and even some most luxurious fruits in the world. Mango Mania has become a summer staple for our customers, bringing together the best varieties from across the globe under one roof.”

Don’t miss your chance to savor the season’s juiciest delights – from the sweet and succulent to the tangy and tropical, Lulu’s Mango Mania boasts an impressive array of mango varieties that will leave customers craving for more.

This is an ideal occasion for customers to indulge in a delectable exploration of the finest mango varieties from around the globe, in a cost-efficient way.

AWASR LAUNCHES EXPANSION STRATEGY IN DHOFAR GOVERNORATE

MUSCAT: Under the esteemed auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, Awasr officially launched its new expansion strategy in Dhofar Governorate during a formal ceremony held on Wednesday, April 30, 2025, at Millennium Resort Salalah, in the presence of a number of officials from both the public and private sectors.

The launch of this strategy comes as part of Awasr’s commitment to expanding its service coverage and strengthening the digital infrastructure across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, contributing to the comprehensive developmental



The launch of this strategy comes as part of Awasr’s commitment to expanding its service coverage.

renaissance taking place in Oman, particularly in the fields of technology and digital

transformation.

During the ceremony, Eng Adnan bin Mohammed al Alawi,

Chief Executive Officer of Awasr, emphasised the importance of this milestone, stating:

“The launch of our expansion strategy in Dhofar Governorate marks a new chapter in Awasr’s journey towards realising our vision of delivering high-quality digital services that meet the aspirations of individuals and businesses across the Sultanate of Oman.

We believe that technology today is a key driver of development and with this belief, we are committed to providing high-speed and reliable internet and communication solutions to our customers in Dhofar, in alignment with the national digital transformation goals.”

Amouage retail sales surpass \$100 million in Q1, marking +48% growth

MUSCAT: Amouage is proud to share a remarkable start to 2025. In the first quarter, the House crossed a meaningful threshold, with retail sales exceeding \$100 million for the first time in its history. This achievement reflects an unwavering devotion to quality, creativity, and heritage, and above all by the loyalty and passion of its clients around the world.

Neiman Marcus. In APAC, the House claimed the number one fragrance position at SKP in China during Q1.

THE GROWING RESONANCE OF ITS CREATIONS

Guidance Eau de Parfum remains the House’s most beloved creation, with sales more than doubling year-on-year.

Amouage’s pursuit of excellence continues to bear fruit; the Exceptional Extraits Collection tripled versus 2024, with Guidance 46 and Purpose 50 Exceptional Extraits complementing, rather than eclipsing their Eaux de Parfum

counterparts.

Meanwhile, the Essences Collection captivated clients anew, with all three creations among the House’s top 15 bestsellers for the quarter.

ROOTED IN OMAN, CELEBRATED WORLDWIDE

Faithful to its origins, Amouage deepened its ties to its birthplace, Oman. The fifth Rose Harvest season blossomed once more in Jabal Akhdar, marked by the opening of the ‘Rose Edition’ of the Amouage Café.

BUSINESS

HIGHCAPACITY



The high-capacity plant produces 281,000 cubic metres of potable water daily — enough to serve more than one million people.

BARKA IV STRENGTHENS OMAN’S WATER RESILIENCE WITH SMART TECHNOLOGY

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 4

AMID increasing pressure on water resources caused by population growth, urbanisation, and climate change, the Barka IV Desalination Plant — Oman’s largest desalination plant — has positioned itself as a key pillar of Oman’s national water security strategy. Designed to align with Oman Vision 2040, the high-capacity plant produces 281,000 cubic metres of potable water daily—enough to serve more than one million people.

Operated under a 20-year build-own-operate agreement with Nama Power and Water Procurement Company, Barka IV has been operational since 2018. The plant is run by Veolia, which has integrated advanced reverse osmosis technology and artificial intelligence tools to optimise performance and reduce environmental impact.

In an interview with the Observer during a tour at the plant, Kirolos Sergyous, Plant Manager at Barka IV said, “The goal is to ensure clean, safe water reaches people efficiently and sustainably. Every system we’ve adopted is focused on reliability, environmental care, and long-term resilience for the Sultanate of Oman.”

Central to the plant’s efficiency is its reverse osmosis system, which includes 20,000 high-performance membranes operating at 60 bars. Energy recovery devices, which operate at a 97% efficiency rate, help significantly lower energy consumption during the desalination process.

“We have achieved one of the highest energy recovery rates in the region,” Sergyous noted

“This not only supports Oman’s sustainability goals but also makes the plant more economically viable over the long term.”

The Barka IV facility takes environmental protection seriously. Intake towers located 1.5 kilometres offshore reduce the impact on marine ecosystems by operating at low velocities. In addition, protective air bubble curtains are used to prevent jellyfish and debris from entering the system, ensuring both ecosystem preservation and operational reliability.

On the front end, the plant employs dissolved air flotation (DAF) and dual media gravity filters to remove algae and suspended solids. Fine cartridge filters trap particles as small as five microns before water enters the reverse osmosis phase.

The treated water then goes through a remineralisation process using limestone filters to meet international drinking water standards. This ensures that the water delivered to consumers is not only clean but also safe and stable for everyday use.

A standout feature of the plant is its digitally equipped smart control room, which connects over 3,000 individual components for real-time monitoring and diagnostics. Using AI-powered tools like Hubgrid, the plant can anticipate maintenance needs and fine-tune operations in real time.

CEO TALK: From hands-on work to high office

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 4

In the southern city of Salalah, long before titles and accolades, a young boy sat behind the counter of his father’s shop, textbooks open, mind focused and hands occasionally fixing bicycles. That boy — now Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality — would rise to become one of Oman’s most respected public servants. His journey, grounded in discipline and shaped by learning, is more than a success story — it is a case study in leadership, perseverance and national vision.

From an early age, Dr Al Ghassani learned the realities of responsibility. By the fourth grade, he was working after school in his family’s shop — a small but formative environment.

There, he developed the habits that would stay with him for life: structure, reliability and respect for effort.

By the sixth grade, he was assembling bicycles, not as a pastime but out of necessity. His evenings were devoted to studies at the shop, often until 9 pm, forming a routine of resilience that quietly defined his future. His secondary education years were a masterclass in commitment.

His day began with regular school and continued with intensive sessions at the British Council and the French Institute. After dusk, he attended Quran memorisation classes until 10 pm.

This intense schedule led many around him to assume he would eventually collapse from exhaustion — but instead, he rose.

In his final year, he made the strategic decision to pause language studies and focus entirely on the General Secondary Certificate, securing a place on the prestigious Sultan Qaboos Scholarship Programme to study civil engineering abroad. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Sultan Qaboos University in 1993. However, academic achievement was never his endpoint — it was his platform.

In 1998, he left for the UK to pursue advanced studies. He obtained a Master’s degree in Structural Engineering from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) in 1999.

Determined to deepen his expertise, he continued to Loughborough University, earning a PhD in Construction Management in 2003. His doctoral research focused on the integration of knowledge management



“*Opportunities do not come by accident. They are built through intention and hard work. Every young person must believe that the country is counting on them. The future begins the moment you choose to develop yourself.***”**

DR AHMED BIN MOHSIN AL GHASSANI
Chairman, Dhofar Municipality

later at the College of Banking and Financial Studies, where he aligned academic offerings with real-world market needs, championed student innovation and ensured graduates were job-ready.

In 2018, Dr Al Ghassani was appointed CEO of the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprise Development (Riyada). It was a pivotal period — Oman was seeking new engines for economic diversification and youth entrepreneurship was a central pillar. At Riyadh, he led with clarity and decisiveness: reworking the institutional structure, introducing targeted funding and support mechanisms; and fostering a startup ecosystem driven by Omani talent.

His leadership reasserted a simple truth: a single idea, when nurtured, can evolve into a national asset.

In October 2019, Dr Al Ghassani was appointed Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

The transition from academic reformer to urban executive was significant, yet seamless. In Dhofar — a region of rich culture and growing infrastructure needs — he faced the challenge of balancing development with preservation. He led projects that included the revitalisation of traditional markets, the redevelopment of coastal promenades, modern flood prevention infrastructure

and enhanced wastewater systems. His administration adopted a development model that was as strategic as it was sensitive — combining modern urban planning with cultural and environmental stewardship.

His leadership came into national focus in 2024, when he achieved three major distinctions:

- **Best Leader in Government Digital Excellence** — a title awarded in the inaugural edition of Oman’s national digital performance awards.
 - **Best Digital Transformation Team** — won by Dhofar Municipality under his chairmanship, recognising the integration of digital tools in public service delivery.
 - **“Excellent” Rating in Institutional Performance Evaluation** — the highest recognition in the national governance review for that year.
- Yet Dr Al Ghassani is quick to redirect praise. “These are not individual achievements,” he often says. “They reflect teamwork, accountability and a shared culture of results.”

Across all his roles, four core values stand out in his leadership approach:

1. A relentless commitment to lifelong learning — both personal and institutional.
 2. Community engagement — ensuring planning is informed by those it serves.
 3. Cultural realism — blending progress with respect for heritage.
 4. Results-focused governance — where policies are measured not by announcements but by public impact.
- Perhaps most importantly, Dr Al Ghassani has never lost sight of the next generation. In speeches and interviews, he consistently addresses young Omanis with conviction:
- “Opportunities do not come by accident. They are built through intention and hard work. Every young person must believe that the country is counting on them.

The future begins the moment you choose to develop yourself.”

His story — from the back room of a shop to the forefront of urban transformation — is not defined by luck or shortcuts. It is a testament to structure, vision and commitment over time. In an era that often favours visibility over value, Dr Ahmed Al Ghassani’s life is a reminder that leadership is not found in noise, but in quiet, consistent service.

For young Omanis, his path is both a mirror and a map: a reflection of what is possible — and a direction towards what can still be achieved.

Sembcorp’s Oman solar power plant goes commercial

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 4

Following its earlier announcements on March 13, 2023 and December 30, 2024, Sembcorp Utilities Pte Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sembcorp Industries (Sembcorp), has announced the start of commercial operations of the 588MWp Manah II Solar Independent Power Project (Manah II) in the Wilayat of Manah in the Sultanate of Oman. This milestone follows the successful completion of acceptance tests announced earlier.

It marks the commencement of power supply under a 20-year power purchase agreement for 500MW with Nama Power



Sembcorp’s Manah II solar power project.

and Water Procurement Company. Manah II is Sembcorp’s first greenfield renewables development in the Middle East and its largest utility-scale solar farm project to date.

It supports Oman Vision 2040 by contributing clean energy to the national grid and advancing the country’s goal of achieving 30% renewable energy in its electricity mix by 2030.

Headquartered in Singapore, Sembcorp delivers sustainable solutions to support energy transition and urban development by leveraging its sector expertise and global track record. Sembcorp has a balanced energy portfolio of 25.3GW, including 17.2GW of gross renewable energy capacity, across 11 countries.

NEAR CERTAINTY

Bank of England set to cut interest rates



UK interest rates are set to be cut to 4.25% as the Bank of England eases costs for borrowers while it digests the impact of US tariffs on the economy.

Most economists are expecting rates to be reduced by 0.25 percentage points. Sandra Horsfield, an economist, said it is a “near-certainty” that borrowing costs will be eased further, with most participants in the financial markets pricing in a cut. — *dpa*

HANDING REINS

Buffett to step down as Berkshire CEO



Warren Buffett is ending his career as perhaps the world’s most famous and revered investor, saying he will step down as chief executive of Berkshire Hathaway at the end of 2025 and hand over the reins to Greg Abel.

The move caps an era for Berkshire after Buffett’s extraordinary 60 years at the helm, which made him a household name, a multi-billionaire and an American success story. — *Reuters*

PURSUING BID

Shell is studying merits of buying BP



Shell Plc is working with advisers to evaluate a potential acquisition of rival BP Plc, though it is waiting for further stock and oil price declines before deciding whether to pursue a bid, Bloomberg News reported on Saturday.

The oil major has been more seriously discussing the feasibility and merits of a takeover, adding that any final decision will likely depend on whether the rival’s stock continues to slide. — *Reuters*

OPINION

A UK tariff deal with US may harm EU deal with UK



ANDY JALIL

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

UK Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, who was a fierce opponent of Brexit, has been seeking to improve the UK’s trading relationship with Europe since he came into office last July. He is also pursuing a US trade deal that lowers tariffs. The European Union has been in “constant contact” with the UK to warn against making trade concessions to the US that could harm Starmer’s Brexit reset. Insiders in Brussels and the UK said EU officials were discussing with their UK counterparts the “limits of what would be acceptable”. The US Vice President, JD Vance, said Washington was “working very hard” with the UK to negotiate a “great” trade deal, and that there was a “good chance” of an agreement – as Starmer attempts to bring down 25 per cent tariffs on British Steel, aluminium and cars, as well as a 10 per cent import tax on other goods. There are particular concerns in Brussels that UK concessions to the US on agri-food imports could harm Starmer’s goal of a deal to ease cross-border food trade with the EU and bring down costs for consumers. The EU is said to have concerns that Donald Trump could make demands of the UK to exempt American firms from carbon

taxes due to come into force in 2027, and that any concessions in this area could harm plans to link British and European emissions trading schemes to bring down costs for businesses. A Brussels insider said there was “constant contact between officials on the limits of what would be acceptable to the EU” and the “impact of any UK/US deal on the alleged Brexit ‘reset’ ”. The EU is also in constant dialogue with other allies such as Canada and Japan on Trump’s tariffs and how any deals with the US could impact relations. The Government will hold a landmark summit with UK and EU officials on 19 May. Regarding the EU warning, David Henig, a former British trade official and UK director of the European Centre For International Political Economy, said he has “every expectation that messages to that effect have been passed from the EU to the UK given that food and drink is on the UK-EU agenda for the summit”. Brussels’ warnings about planned sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) rules – regulations to protect animal and plant health – came after the Business Secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, was again forced to rule out any watering down of UK food standards to appease the

The European Union has been in “constant contact” with the UK to warn against making trade concessions to the US that could harm Starmer’s Brexit reset. Insiders in Brussels and the UK said EU officials were discussing with their UK counterparts the “limits of what would be acceptable”.

US, which has long coveted greater access to Britain for its agri-food exports. Reynolds, however, speaking on April 20, hinted there could be room to negotiate on agri-food by pointing out that parts of the US food industry do meet UK standards. The EU also has concerns over a mooted emissions trading deal, with Trump warning that he would hit countries that apply carbon taxes on shipping with tariffs. The Brussels insider said they believed the US is using the prospect of a UK trade deal to drive a wedge and “play a political game to damage the EU-UK reset”. Starmer’s Labour government has also been accused of seeking to undermine Brexit ‘by stealth’ as European hopes rose of a deal to allow young people to live and work in the UK. The German ambassador to the UK, Miguel Berger, said he was ‘really optimistic’ about the possibility of the Government agreeing a youth mobility scheme with Brussels. But Tory business spokesman Andrew Griffith said: “This Government, by stealth, is trying to take us back into freedom of movement. They may call it a youth mobility scheme but if no one ever gets removed at the end of their time (in UK), then it’s immigration by another name.”

GM’S FINANCIAL AUGURIES ECHO BEYOND WALL STREET

JONATHAN GUILFORD

General Motors is taking its financial show on the road. The \$44 billion automaker released updated estimates for full-year financial results on Thursday, after scrapping previous guesses undermined by President Donald Trump’s tariff twists. With some relief in hand, boss Mary Barra says import levies could cost up to \$5 billion. With more policy changes potentially in store, the bleak numbers should echo beyond Wall Street. Introduced in March, Trump’s auto tariffs were more severe than anticipated, reaching 25%, alongside complicated exemptions for components that comply with a free-trade agreement signed by the United States, Mexico and Canada. The White House touted \$100 billion in potential annual revenue, seemingly enough to wipe out the entire industry’s profit. GM had been conservatively optimistic in January, keeping its forecast without trying to calculate the impact of then-uncertain duties. After reporting strong results at the time, however, spooked investors erased 10% of the company’s market value. Facing such dire threats, GM sought relief from Team Trump. It got some on Tuesday, with the administration offering rebates on parts, albeit ones that shrink over time.

Even more important may be procedures set up around exemptions for North American movement of auto parts. Until that’s settled, or more lasting help is secured, it’s worth applying more pressure in Washington. Despite the tariff sticker shock, GM is expressing its appreciation. Barra thanked Trump in a letter to investors. Nevertheless, the expected \$5 billion hit, which excludes mitigation measures GM said could offset 30% of costs, already has spurred pointed questions to the administration. Motorcycle maker Harley-Davidson also on Thursday said the levies could take up to a \$175 million toll. CEO Jochen Zeitz wants “to make sure that we are part of the discussion” on any trade deals. What is especially notable about GM is that it issued projections at all. Many US companies, including Harley, are abandoning guidance, too bewildered by Trump’s tactics to give investors a steer. Barra, however, now has a bigger audience deciphering GM’s financial wonkery. — Reuters

In a world of uncertainty, how do tariffs work?

ACCORDING to the United Nations (UN), there are 195 countries worldwide and 166 countries are members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), representing 98% of the global trade and GDP. As per the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), global trade reached \$33 trillion in 2024. However, the outlook for 2025 remains uncertain.

Interestingly, 2/3 of international trade occurs without tariffs due to the Most Favored Nation treatment (MFN) and other trade agreements. The MFN (Article 1 of GATT) global rule of trade is that if one country gives another country a special deal, it must provide the same deal to all other countries with an MFN agreement and usually all members of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Most tariffs on remaining goods are very high. Developing countries face higher tariffs. South-South trade, which is between developing countries, still faces high tariffs. The United States of America, by imposing differential tariffs on member countries like 27% on India and 145% on China, has violated the Most Favored Nation (MFN) principle, which mandates that equal tariffs be imposed on all WTO members except WTO-sanctioned exemptions. The US trade actions of unilaterally raising tariffs without renegotiating or invoking valid exceptions directly breach WTO obligations, undermining the multilateral international trading system.

After Trump’s election and subsequent tariff announcement, not only is it making headlines, but the Google search of the word “tariff” has spiked by 1650%, showing that the world is rapt with the mercurial flux of tariff announcements and their impact on people, businesses and economies. The spike also reflects public confusion and heightened interest, necessitating more clarity on the nature and implications of tariffs. Tariffs are taxes on goods imported from other countries. Many people think that the



US President Donald Trump delivers remarks on tariffs in the Rose Garden at the White House in Washington, DC on April 2, 2025. Image for illustration only. — Reuters



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The writer is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies in Muscat

exporting nation pays tariffs. Contrary to this popular misconception, tariffs are paid by companies importing goods from abroad. These companies pay tariffs to their own country’s treasury. The most common tariff is Ad Valorem, which is a fixed percentage of the value of the imports. Special tariffs are also charged as a fixed amount on each imported good. The purpose is to protect the domestic producers from foreign competition. Tariffs are intended to make imports more expensive and drive consumers to domestic producers. They contribute to the government’s revenue like other taxes. However, many economists believe they are counterproductive, as they increase inflation by reducing consumption and making local supplies more expensive. Though importers pay tariffs to their governments, most economists believe that most tariffs are passed on to consumers and businesses. Another aspect of tariffs is that they are regressive taxes that disproportionately affect poorer consumers. This can often lead to a trade war, as other countries will introduce retaliatory tariffs in response to the tariffs imposed on

their country. Tariffs also break the flow of goods globally and cause business volatility. It fractures international trade and results in fewer benefits for everyone. 94% of economists predict further fragmentation of global trade in goods over the next three years, hurting the domestic and global economies. Understanding tariffs and their strategic implication is becoming very important. Tariffs are the new geopolitical tactics shaping worldwide trade and international relationships. In conclusion, tariffs are taxes on imports paid by the importing countries. They are a source of revenue; and a protectionist and political tactic, but they have significant repercussions that must be critically considered. Tariffs are a tactical and essential tool in international trade. However, they come with trade-offs, like increased government revenue, protecting some and simultaneously harming other industries, and rising prices for consumers. As tariffs continue to shape our grocery list, make headlines and affect international trade, know your tariffs before voicing your choice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ACCOUNTANT with 5 years expertise in Accounts Payable, Receivables, Financial Reporting, VAT, Payroll, and Bank & Cash Reconciliation. Actively looking for new opportunities. Contact: 79791746 Email: Ibrahimisaw52@gmail.com
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Mechanical Engineer – 4+ yrs exp. in CAD, GA/ fab drawings, BOMs. AutoCAD, SolidWorks, CATIA. Ready to join. Ph: +968 72807858

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

“Master’s graduate in MSc Global logistics, operations & supply chain management from London, seeking a full-time job in Oman. Possess 2 yrs of sales executive experience in London and 1 yr as a purchase executive in Oman. Holding a valid Oman D/L.Contact: 77231865, email: finan8157@gmail.com”

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MECHANICAL ENGINEER (8+ yrs exp, Indian Male) Planning, MEP, QA/QC certified. Elevator & construction industry background. Contact: 92712939, anwarmhdas@gmail.com

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

Draftsman ,Indian male, Arch, Civil, Infra, Marine.15+ years exp, CAD, Civil 3D, Revit. Contact: 98724049

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

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

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

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAPITAL REDUCTION
IN accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company Birds of Heaven Nursery (LLC), which is registered with the Commercial Registration No 1044057, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from Omani Rials 80,000.000 to 55,000.000. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.
.....
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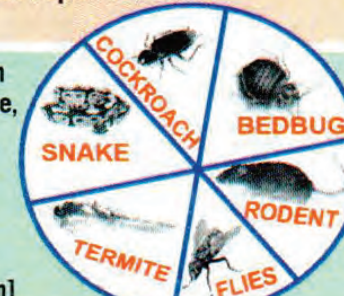
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ART/LIFE



MUSIC

‘Two million’ throng Lady Gaga concert at Rio’s Copacabana



LADY GAGA rocked Rio de Janeiro’s Copacabana Beach on Saturday with a free mega-concert that the Brazilian city said drew about two million fans.

“Brazil, I missed you so much,” screamed the American pop star — in her first Brazil gig since 2012 — before launching into “Poker Face” on a monumental chessboard, one of many grandiose backdrops in the two-hour extravaganza.

The 39-year-old singer kicked off the concert perched more than two metres (6.5 feet) above the stage, sporting a massive scarlet hoop gown which opened to reveal a vertical cage from which her dancers exited to a rendition of her 2011 song “Bloody Mary.”

She then moved on to “Abracadabra,” one of the highlights of her latest album, “Mayhem,” released in March.

In the middle of the song, Gaga removed the red dress, revealing another she was wearing underneath in the colors of Brazil’s national flag: green, blue and yellow.

All week, Gaga fans — known affectionately as “Little Monsters” — flocked to Rio, a city famous for its annual Carnival that attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists from around the world.

Rio officials had expected a turnout for the Gaga show of around 1.6 million people — which they estimated could bring \$100 million into the local economy — but City Hall said later that 2.1 million had attended.

The Gaga crowd was about half a million people more than was estimated to have attended a Madonna concert at the same venue last year.

Rio officials want to continue holding free mega-concerts in May in an effort to boost tourism during what is considered the low season.

Mayor Eduardo Paes has hinted that he plans to bring in Irish rock band U2, although no date has been given.

Local authorities deployed a massive security force for the concert on Saturday, including 5,000 officers, drones and both surveillance and facial recognition cameras. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



HERITAGE

A member of the Iraqi Kurdish group dances on stage in traditional dress during the third (Shal Shabek), Kurdish costume festival in the city of Zakho in Iraq’s northern autonomous Kurdistan region. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood actress Kajol attends a press conference for an upcoming film ‘Tanvi The Great’ in Mumbai. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A hot air balloon takes off during the Night Glow presentation of the 35th Hot Air Balloon International Festival, in Torres, Brazil. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



The Last of the Roses



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This Tree Wants to Be Struck by Lightning



WHEN LIGHTNING strikes a tree in tropical forests, the impact can be dramatic, often causing the surrounding area to resemble a battlefield, with dozens of trees electrocuted and a large portion of the forest dying back within months. However, some trees appear to thrive after such events. According to a recent study by forest ecologist Evan Gora, published in *New Phytologist*, certain large rainforest trees not only survive lightning strikes but actually flourish afterward. Gora’s research focused on whether individual trees benefit from being struck and if this enhances their species’ survival across the forest. His team developed a system to track lightning strikes via electromagnetic signals, recording 94 strikes on trees in Panama’s Barro Colorado Nature Monument between 2014 and 2019. They found that 85 species had been struck, but remarkably, seven species survived multiple strikes. Prominent among them was *Dipteryx oleifera*, a

towering tree species that had been hit nine times, including one tree that was struck twice and appeared healthier than before. These *Dipteryx oleifera* trees stood about 30% taller and possessed larger crowns — about 50% bigger — than neighboring trees, functioning as natural lightning rods. All struck *Dipteryx oleifera* trees survived, whereas 64% of other species died within two years of a lightning strike. Trees around *Dipteryx oleifera* also faced higher mortality rates, likely due to increased competition. The lightning-induced clearing around a struck *Dipteryx oleifera* reduces competition for light, facilitating its growth and seed production. The researchers estimate that being struck multiple times could prolong a *Dipteryx oleifera*’s lifespan by almost 300 years, showcasing how lightning may shape forest dynamics and promote survival of certain species. — REBECCA DZOMBAK / NYT



Bob Dylan to showcase ‘emotional’ paintings in London

BOB DYLAN will showcase paintings that were created with “emotional resonance” in London. The Nobel Prize for Literature winner, 83, will bring 97 original works featuring characters, objects and scenarios to the Halcyon Gallery. His solo show “Point Blank,” which captures people playing instruments, couples, sportsmen and women, along with rooms and places, is based on original sketches created between 2021 and 2022. These drawings were then painted over with colours, to create “living, breathing entities that have emotional resonance, colours used as weapons and mood setters, a means of storytelling,” Dylan says. “The idea was not only to observe the human condition, but to throw myself into it with great urgency,” he said. The drawing studies show a mirror which displays a set of lips, a saxophonist looking introspectively at his instrument, and a cowboy whose pistol hangs on his belt in front of a rising sun. Some of the drawings have been reworked as blue, red, and neutral monochromatic studies, which may hark back to Pablo Picasso’s early Blue Period. The “Point Blank” series started as a book of “quick studies” that

also includes accompanying prose. Kate Brown, creative director at Halcyon, said: “These works on paper feel like memories, intangible windows into the life and imagination of one of the greatest storytellers who ever lived. “People who attend the exhibition will discover that they provoke stories from our imagination. We consider the circumstances of the protagonists and ponder our movement through the spaces that the artist depicts.” Dylan previously had an exhibition at a Halcyon Gallery for his “Drawn Blank Series,” featuring graphite drawings he made while travelling between Europe and the Americas from 1989 to 1992 and later reworked with paint. He has said his works are a way to “relax and refocus a restless mind” amid busy touring schedules. Paul Green, president and founder of Halcyon, said: “It is nearly 18 years since Halcyon first started working with Bob Dylan and it has been an extraordinary experience to watch this cultural icon develop into such a critically revered and important visual artist so closely. “This latest body of paintings feels like a more intimate connection to the artist than in

any of his previous work, and it is a great privilege to share them with the public for the first time.” Dylan, who has won 10 Grammys and been nominated 38 times, is one of the most acclaimed songwriters and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988. His songs have been recorded more than 6,000 times, with artists as varied as The Byrds, Jimi Hendrix and Adele finding both commercial and critical success with covers. Dylan began his career in 1962 with the single “Mixed-Up Confusion,” which failed to chart in the UK or the US—before hitting stardom with a string of singles in 1965, including “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” “Subterranean Homesick Blues,” and “Like A Rolling Stone.” This period of his newfound fame was recently covered in the 2024 biopic “A Complete Unknown,” starring Timothée Chalamet as the influential folk singer. It follows Dylan’s early days in the 1960s, culminating in his controversial performance at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, after he had gone electric, and was nominated for eight Oscars and six BAFTAs. The free exhibition “Bob Dylan: Point Blank” will open at 148 New Bond Street on 9 May. — PA Media/dpa

FEATURES



WHY DIMANIYAT ISLANDS ARE THE PERFECT SUMMER DESTINATION



BY YERU EBUEN

THIS SUMMER,

don't miss the opportunity to discover the captivating beauty of the Dimaniyat Islands. As one of Oman's most spectacular natural treasures, it offers an escape from the hustle and bustle, immersing you in a world of colourful reefs and tranquil beaches. Whether you are an adventure seeker, a nature enthusiast, or simply looking for relaxation under the sun, the islands cater to all.

Bordering Oman's diverse landscapes, extending from karst cliffs to coral gardens, a trip here is a perfect way to connect with nature. For visitors from neighbouring countries, it's an accessible destination offering unforgettable experiences without the long flight. The islands' protected status means tourists are part of a conservation effort, helping preserve this unique habitat for future generations.

The Dimaniyat Islands are swiftly earning fame as Oman's own "Maldives," boasting pristine beaches, vibrant marine life, and untouched landscapes. Once a hidden gem reserved primarily for conservationists and researchers, this archipelago is now opening its arms to adventurous travellers seeking a paradisiacal escape. As of the latest survey, over 15,000 visitors have explored this protected haven, drawn by its crystal-clear waters and rich biodiversity. Its status as a protected area ensures that its natural beauty will be preserved for future generations, making every visit both a scalable adventure and a contribution to Oman's conservation efforts.

SEVEN THINGS TO DO AT DIMANIYAT ISLANDS

SNORKELLING

Experience marine magic just below the surface by snorkelling in the shallow reefs surrounding the islands. The colourful coral gardens host a kaleidoscope of fish, sea turtles, and rays. For best results, go during early mornings when water visibility peaks and avoid submerged seaweed to see the best marine life. Remember to wear reef-safe sunscreen and stay close to your guide to avoid damaging fragile corals.

ISLAND EXPLORATION

Wander around each island on foot to discover secluded beaches, dramatic cliffs, and untouched landscapes. Pack comfortable shoes and some water, and take time to enjoy breathtaking viewpoints. Respect local flora and fauna by sticking to designated paths, ensuring the islands remain pristine.

DOLPHIN WATCHING

Board a boat tour during early morning or late afternoon for the chance to spot playful dolphins in the wild. Watching pods leap and spin in the open sea provides awe-inspiring moments. Bring your camera, and remember to keep a respectful distance to avoid disturbing these intelligent creatures.

SCUBA DIVING

For experienced divers, the islands offer an unparalleled underwater experience. Dive into vibrant reefs packed with colourful fish, sea turtles, and even the elusive whale sharks during their seasonal migration. Ensure your certification is up-to-date and dive with environmentally conscious operators who follow responsible diving procedures.

SUNSET CRUISES

Cap off your day with a romantic sunset cruise around the islands. As the sky turns fiery, enjoy the spectacular colours reflected on the water. Bring a light jacket and your favourite snacks, and savour the tranquillity of Oman's natural beauty.

CAMPING UNDER THE STARS

Experience true immersion in nature by camping overnight on a designated beach. With tents set up on sandy shores, fall asleep to the lullaby of the waves under a blanket of stars. Remember to bring eco-friendly camping gear, and participate in organised cleanup drives to keep the beaches pristine.

BIRD WATCHING

The islands are a haven for seabirds like terns,

seagulls, and ospreys. Join guided birding walks early in the morning or late afternoon, carrying binoculars for better viewing. Respect bird colonies by observing quietly and staying a safe distance from nesting sites.

PROTECTED STATUS

The Dimaniyat Islands have been a protected marine reserve since 1996, thanks to their rich biodiversity and the importance of preserving their ecosystem. This status involves rigorous monitoring, strict regulations, and active community involvement. Visitors must obtain permits online, with access controlled to prevent overcrowding and environmental degradation. The islands are subject to regular clean-up drives and scientific research aimed at conserving fragile coral reefs and marine habitats. For instance, voluntary divers frequently remove harmful fishing nets and debris, helping restore vital coral reefs that face threats from rising sea temperatures, pollution, and illegal fishing. This ongoing effort safeguards the habitat of numerous species, from sea turtles and dolphins to a variety of colourful reef fish and invertebrates.

Oman's environmental authorities prioritise education and responsible tourism, ensuring that each visitor leaves only footprints and takes away unforgettable memories. These measures contribute to maintaining the islands' pristine condition, making Dimaniyat Islands not just a tourist hotspot but a critical conservation area serving as a model for ecological preservation across the region.



TIPS FOR ENSURING A MEMORABLE VISIT

Tourists planning to explore the pure beauty of Oman's Dimaniyat Islands are urged to prepare well to maximise their experience and contribute positively to conservation efforts. Experts and local operators recommend booking tours well in advance, particularly during the busy summer months, to secure a spot and avoid disappointment.

Visitors are advised to carry reef-safe sunscreens and stay well-hydrated throughout their trip, given the tropical climate and outdoor activities. Additionally, environmentally conscious travellers are encouraged to bring reusable items, such as water bottles and bags, to minimise plastic waste and support sustainable tourism.

Engagement with knowledgeable local guides can enrich the experience by offering valuable insights into the islands' fragile ecosystems. Respect for wildlife is essential—maintaining a safe distance from animals and refraining from disturbing nesting sites helps protect the island's vulnerable species, including seabirds and sea turtles.

To maximise wildlife sightings and enjoy cooler weather, experts recommend planning visits during early morning or late afternoon hours. These times often provide better opportunities for observing seabirds and marine life in their natural habitat.

Overall, a trip to the Dimaniyat Islands offers more than adventure; it presents an opportunity to support Oman's ongoing efforts to preserve this pristine environment. With its unspoiled beaches, vibrant marine ecosystems, and tranquil landscapes, the islands stand out as an exceptional summer getaway. Whether seeking exhilarating snorkelling, peaceful camping under the stars, or a quiet retreat in nature, visitors are encouraged to experience this natural wonder before the season ends.