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INBRIEF

HM CONDOLENCES TO IRAN PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Masoud Pezeshkian of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on victims of an explosion that took place at the Shahid Rajaei port in the city of Bandar Abbas. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to President Masoud Pezeshkian and the families of the victims, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

LATE SULTAN QABOOS COLLECTIBLES AT MUSCAT BOOK FAIR



The National Museum is participating in the 29th Muscat International Book Fair with a variety of cultural and museum activities. The museum’s participation includes a display of its most prominent publications as well as a rare collection of belongings of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and a number of artistic and educational activities.

Visitors to the National Museum’s corner will also have the opportunity to view two rare collections of the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The first is a copy of the Holy Quran penned by Muhammad bin Ali Haris, son of the prominent scholar Sayyid Abdul Salam Al Asmar Al Fituri Al Tarabulsi. This remarkable piece, crafted from leather, ink and gilded paper, dates back to March 16, 1926.

OMAN WELCOMES PALESTINE DECISION ON VICE-PRESIDENT

The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed a decision by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Executive Committee to initiate the position of Vice-President of the Executive Committee and Vice-President of the State of Palestine, and to appoint Hussein al Sheikh to this position.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Sunday, the Sultanate of Oman congratulated Al Sheikh on his new appointment, wishing him success in performing his duties.

The Sultanate of Oman expressed the hope that the step would consolidate the unity of Palestinians and serve their legitimate aspirations to gain all their rights and establish their independent state. — ONA

HM gives audience to UK Foreign Secretary

HISTORICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES REVIEWED

HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Sunday to David Lammy, the United Kingdom’s (UK) Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs.

The audience reviewed the historical and strategic relations between the two countries, as well as the Omani-British partnership that boosts economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman.

David Lammy, UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs lauded His Majesty the Sultan’s modern development policies and their tangible impact across the country, reaffirming the British government’s keenness to bolster cooperation and investment in various fields.

His Majesty the Sultan expressed his appreciation for the bilateral cooperation and coordination between the two countries’ governments, welcoming the current partnership pathways and their future prospects.

The UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs also touched on several regional and international developments, listening to His Majesty’s perspectives on these matters.

The visiting minister expressed interest in the ceasefire efforts in Gaza and the pursuit of peace and stability, as well as ongoing US-Iranian negotiations through



Omani mediation to reach a new agreement concerning Iran’s nuclear programme for peaceful purposes.

The meeting was attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister,

Sir Oliver Robbins, Permanent Under-Secretary at UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), and Dr Lianne Sanders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

GDP expected to grow by 3.4% this year

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, presided over the opening of the first international investment forum ‘Advantage Oman’, organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The two-day event, held at the St Regis Al Mouj Resort in Muscat, brings together over 250 prominent figures, including senior officials, decision-makers, and regional and international investors, highlighting Oman’s position as a promising investment destination.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, emphasised that this forum marks a first-of-its-kind strategic event for Oman, attracting top decision-makers,



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, presided over the opening of the forum Advantage Oman.

business leaders, and investors across key sectors. The forum comes as Oman experiences significant growth in economic and investment fields, supported by rising international indicators.

He noted that the forum coincides with a period of increasing momentum in Oman’s economic and investment sectors. Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows grew by 16.2 per cent in Q3 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. Additionally, Oman’s credit rating was upgraded to BBB with a stable outlook by Standard & Poor’s.

The minister said that Oman’s GDP is expected to grow by 3.4 per cent this year, outperforming many global economies - a testament to the resilience of the national economy and international market confidence. The first day of the forum featured five key sessions addressing major global economic trends. The first session explored future outlooks and transformative shifts, focusing on the impact of

advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, climate tech and hyper connectivity on the global economy, while stressing innovation and sustainability as pillars of competitiveness. The second session, “The Risk-Reward Equation in a Changing World,” highlighted the importance of calculated risks in institutional success, emphasising risk culture, psychological safety, and examples of bold decision-making during times of change.

The third session, “Business Decisions – Environmental Challenges and Corporate Responsibility,” discussed corporate accountability for climate change and biodiversity loss, proposing solutions like the circular economy and green technologies.

SEE ALSO P13

Oman-UK partnership seeks investments and regional stability

SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

The partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom (UK) has evolved into a multifaceted relationship that encompasses economic, security and cultural dimensions. This alliance is characterised by a shared commitment to regional stability, mutual investment opportunities and collaborative efforts in addressing regional challenges.

In an interview with the Observer, Hamish Falconer, UK Minister for

Middle East and North Africa, who was in Muscat recently, said Oman and UK have been working closely to address regional security challenges.

“We have a long history of working together to tackle the most pressing challenges the region faces. I am committed to ensuring that this continues. During our meeting, I discussed the need for Israel and Hamas to urgently return to the ceasefire deal, so that hostages can return to their families, much needed aid can be delivered, and we can move towards ending the violence. Our priority since day one has been



Hamish Falconer

a sustainable ceasefire in Gaza, and a lasting peace that will over time ensure security for both Palestinians and Israelis.”

“Oman has an important role to play in the region, as evidenced by their success in facilitating the release of the crew members aboard the ‘Galaxy Leader’ cargo ship detained by Ansar Allah in the Red Sea earlier this year. The UK government congratulated the Government of Oman for this, and continues to work alongside Oman, to support UN efforts in finding a political solution in Yemen,” he added. Falconer said

he welcome Oman’s efforts to broker talks between the US and Iran in Muscat. “This is an important step in finding a diplomatic solution to Iran’s nuclear issue, but time is short, and the UK continues to support this process,” he said.

BILATERAL TIES
On primary priorities for strengthening the UK-Oman bilateral relationship, Falconer said: “Let me begin by saying I was delighted to visit Oman and was struck by its stunning mountains, desert, and coast, as well as the warmth of its people. **TURN TO P2**

OMAN

OMAN, UK EXPLORE MEANS OF BOOSTING COOPERATION

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received in his office on Sunday David Lammy, UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Commonwealth and Development Affairs.

During the meeting, the two ministers affirmed the joint desire to follow up on all areas of cooperation and means of promoting them to serve the joint interests.

The two sides also emphasised the importance of continued consultation, coordination, and cooperation in all efforts that would strengthen the foundations of regional security, stability and peace. They also supported resolving issues through dialogue and diplomatic means, ensuring greater benefits for all countries and peoples.

The Foreign Minister underlined Oman's support for negotiations aimed at finalising a free trade agreement between the GCC countries and the United Kingdom.

The meeting was attended by Munthir bin Mahfoudh al Manthri, Sir Oliver Robbins, Permanent Under-Secretary at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Dr Lianne Sanders, UK Ambassador to Oman. — ONA

OMAN AND UNITED KINGDOM REVIEW HISTORICAL, STRATEGIC RELATIONS



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Sunday to David Lammy, the United Kingdom's (UK) Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs. The audience reviewed the historical and strategic relations between the two countries, as well as the Omani-British partnership that boosts economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Oman-Britain partnership seeks regional stability

FROM PAGE 1

It is a special country, and I am eager to return. The UK and Oman relationship is truly special. I feel honoured to have visited Muscat to experience its natural beauty and celebrate the 225th anniversary of the ‘Unshook treaty’. This treaty expresses our desire for our friendship to ‘remain unshook until the end of time.’ “That desire remains as strong today as it was 225 years ago. As long-standing friends, our co-operation now spans many fields, from business and trade to education, culture, defence and security.

“In our talks we set out our priorities for strengthening further the UK-Oman relationship,

including working together to enhance regional stability, boosting our shared economic growth, and supporting clean energy initiatives,” he said.

STRONG LINKS

Falconer said there were discussions on how to improve existing education cooperation, and the growing travel and tourism between our countries. “Our strong people-to-people links are the bedrock under all of these areas which are crucial for the delivery of the UK’s Plan for Change agenda and the realisation of Oman Vision 2040,” he said.

On how the UK and Oman can promote economic stability and address environmental concerns,

Falconer said: “The UK is Oman’s biggest investment partner, accounting for over 50 per cent of all foreign direct investment in the Sultanate of Oman. We continue to work together to support mutual economic growth, making it easier for both UK businesses in Oman and Omani businesses in the UK to thrive.”

“During our dialogue, I discussed promising progress on the UK/GCC FTA negotiations and how we are looking to finalise a deal, which could increase bilateral trade by up to 16 per cent, adding an extra £8.6 billion a year to trade between the UK and GCC countries in the long run, as well as supporting job creation,” he added.

HYDROGEN SECTOR

Falconer said UK businesses are investing heavily in Oman’s green hydrogen sector – with UK companies leading 5 of the 8 concessions agreed to date, supporting our shared green growth ambitions. “New partnerships in this area will not only benefit our economies but also contribute to global efforts to combat climate change,” he said.

In regards to the current humanitarian situation in Gaza following recent escalations, Falconer said, “I have repeatedly highlighted my horror at the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, both in my public statements and during my engagements with the Government

of Israel. Diplomacy, not more bloodshed, is how we will achieve a lasting peace.” “The blocking of aid into Gaza is undoing the vital progress made during the ceasefire, with food, fuel and medical supplies running out, causing immense suffering across Gaza. Humanitarian aid should never be contingent on a ceasefire or used as a political tool. We continue to call on Israel, including at the UN Security Council and in our meetings with Israeli ministers, to allow for a rapid and unhindered resurgence in the flow of aid into Gaza,” he added.

Falconer said the UK’s joint statement with France and Germany on March 21 called on Israel to allow the flow of aid, ensure civilians are protected.

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Royal Office Minister receives UK, US officials



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, holds talks with David Lammy



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, holds talks with Gen Michael E Kurilla

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Sunday David Lammy, the United Kingdom's (UK) Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and his accompanying delegation.

Al Numani reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them to serve joint interests.

For his part, the guest expressed his deep appreciation for the diplomatic efforts exerted by the Sultanate of Oman to bring closer the views of different parties on some regional and international issues.

The meriting was attended by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman.

Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al

Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, also received Gen Michael E Kurilla, Commander of the United States (US) Central Command.

The two sides explored ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in a bid to enhance the security of the two countries. They also underscored the depth of historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States. — ONA

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YOUNG READERS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AS SCHOOL STUDENTS LEAD THE WAY

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

THE first day for school students at the Muscat International Book Fair welcomed a vibrant and enthusiastic crowd, who turned out in large numbers to explore the wide array of books and activities on offer. The exhibition offered a special opportunity for morning school visits, recognising children as vital partners in shaping the future through knowledge and learning.

Students, whether visiting with their schools or families, formed a significant segment of the attendees. Many eagerly picked up a collection of books – some planned, others spontaneous – highlighting a growing culture of reading among the young generation. The Fair continues to nurture this connection through pavilions dedicated to children’s literature and interactive events.

Hamad bin Khamis al Abdeli of Dar Mostaqbal Al Raqmi (Saudi Arabia) noted that their ongoing participation has helped foster young readers with their range of educational tools, such as scientific encyclopedias, talking educational pens, and popular series like the Stories of the Prophets. “We aim to diversify educational and cultural methods to attract children to reading and build their knowledge,” he said.

This year’s 29th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair brings together 640 publishing houses from 34 countries, including strong representation from Oman, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and beyond. The event is a testament to the resilience and growth of book culture.

Mahdi Ammar, Marketing Director of Kashmash Publishing House (Kuwait), emphasised their focus on children’s behavioural and emotional development through literature: “The fair creates a beautiful cultural atmosphere where we connect with the Omani community.”

The Children’s Corner stands out with 252 engaging activities that



The first day for school students at the Book Fair welcomed an enthusiastic crowd

The Book Fair continues to foster a growing culture of reading through dedicated pavilions for children’s literature and engaging interactive events



blend education and entertainment, encouraging a lasting love of reading. Publications on offer promote both global knowledge and Omani identity, with titles like Omanis at Unesco, Omani Days and Great Men of Oman in high demand.

Yousef al Akhzami spoke about apps like Bustan which introduced students to new educational platforms, promoting Islamic values and skills development through

interactive games and cartoons, while Galaxy of Childhood’s educational boxes and sensory books attracted both students and parents alike.

Lujain al Harrasi from Galaxy of Childhood shared that their corner has seen a strong turnout from both school students and parents. The library offers specially curated educational boxes designed to provide parents with all the tools needed to enhance their child’s educational, interactive and life skills. In addition, the interactive books – creatively designed in the form of miniature houses – help develop children’s sensory abilities in an engaging and imaginative way.

According to Feda Shtia, Executive Director of Sununu Publishing House (Scotland), even gaming-inspired titles like the Minecraft series are playing a role in inspiring a new generation of readers.

By encouraging community engagement, supporting intellectual activity, and inspiring a lifelong love of reading, the Muscat International Book Fair continues to pave the way for a bright and informed future.

The Book Fair has grown as a beacon of the modern Omani Renaissance, advancing steadily in its mission to promote cultural literacy and intellectual growth.







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ahlibank's Social Initiatives

Leading with Purpose in Community Support and Humanitarian Impact

In the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan, ahlbank stood as a symbol of excellence and leadership in fostering cooperation and community engagement, embodying the values of generosity through its 'ahlicares' team. The bank's dedicated volunteer team, 'ahlicares', implemented a series of distinguished charitable initiatives throughout the blessed month, aiming to support the local community across all its segments while promoting the values of solidarity and mutual support that define this sacred time. Through these efforts, the bank demonstrated its firm commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its prominent role in enhancing community well-being, remaining at the forefront of initiatives that spread goodwill and contribute to a more prosperous future for all.



"Iftar Sayem": Sharing Blessings, Creating Impact

As part of its key Ramadan initiatives, ahlbank continued its 'Iftar Sayem' campaign for the second consecutive year, in collaboration with the Oman Food Bank. The campaign aimed to extend a helping hand to low-income families in Wilayat Bowsher by distributing complete Iftar boxes to meet their needs during the holy month. This year, the campaign saw the distribution of nearly 1,000 boxes containing a variety of food items, with active participation from over 35 members of the 'ahlicares' team. These volunteers dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to preparing and distributing meals, offering a noble example of community solidarity and reinforcing the bank's commitment to giving and social responsibility.

Alleviating Burdens, Enhancing Lives

As part of its ongoing support for families -the cornerstone of society- ahlbank partnered with the Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood to provide essential household appliances to low-income households. This initiative aimed to ensure a dignified standard of living by equipping families with necessities that enhance their quality of life. Through this effort, the bank supported 10 low-income households by supplying over 40 air conditioning units, thereby improving living conditions and easing financial burdens.



Nurturing Local Talent, Driving Sustainable Growth

ahlibank's support extended beyond individuals to include small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through the successful organization of the third edition of the 'ahlibank Ramadan Souq'. The event brought together over 60 Omani entrepreneurs and welcomed more than 2,000 visitors, offering a vibrant platform for local business promotion. It also featured a range of family-oriented activities, attracting over 250 children and creating a community-centered atmosphere. This initiative fostered an ideal business environment that strengthened social ties and created meaningful opportunities for economic and social advancement—reflecting the bank's commitment to local economic sustainability.



Fostering Social Inclusion Through the Joy of Eid

ahlibank also took the initiative to bring joy and warmth to the elderly residents of the Social Welfare Home by providing Eid al-Fitr clothing and covering tailoring costs for over 50 residents. This support extended beyond Eid al-Fitr, as the bank also ensured the provision of Eid al-Adha clothing for the same residents—reaffirming its ongoing commitment to supporting the most vulnerable groups in society. These initiatives reflect ahlbank's dedication to enhancing the emotional well-being of the elderly and fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging during festive occasions. Through such efforts, the bank contributes to building a more caring and inclusive environment for this valued segment of the community.



Strengthening Solidarity and Embracing Communities

ahlibank and ahli islamic continued their 'Kaswat Eid' campaign by distributing new clothes to low-income families through more than 25 conventional and Islamic branches across various regions of the Sultanate. Further initiatives under 'Kaswat Eid' were carried out in several governorates in collaboration with local charitable organizations. In Wilayat Bowsher, Eid clothing and gifts were distributed in partnership with the Nidaa Al-Khair team, benefiting over 100 orphaned children. Similarly, in Wilayat Al Seeb, the bank collaborated with the Al Rahma Association for Motherhood and Childhood to provide Eid clothing for 300 underprivileged families. This initiative embodied true compassion and solidarity, offering both material and emotional support to those in need—including orphans, children, and low-income families—bringing joy during Eid celebrations. It reflects ahlbank's commitment to strengthening community cohesion and alleviating the burdens of the most vulnerable, while providing meaningful support during significant occasions and times of hardship.



These meaningful initiatives were made possible through the dedication and proactive spirit of the 'ahlicares' team-comprising over 100 committed ahlbank employees- who went above and beyond to ensure that support reached those who needed it most. Their exceptional efforts stand as a shining example of cooperation and compassion in service to the community. ahlbank continues to strive for excellence in every initiative it undertakes, reaffirming its unwavering dedication to creating a lasting, positive impact on individuals and communities, in alignment with the national goals of Oman Vision 2040.

SHORT TAKE



The Saudi delegation visited the National Defence College

OMAN, SAUDI DISCUSS DEFENCE, ACADEMIC COOPERATION

MUSCAT: Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies (ASDS), received in his office at Bait Al Falaj on Sunday a delegation from King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz College for Command and Staff of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's National Guard.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a range of matters of common interest, notably in academic fields.

The meeting was attended by several senior officers from the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies.

Meanwhile, the visiting delegation also visited the Joint Command and Staff College at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

Upon the delegation's arrival at the college, they were received by Brigadier Saif bin Hamad al Yousefi, Commandant of the Joint Command and Staff College.

During the visit, the delegation watched a presentation on the college and its curricula, as well as its training and educational programmes. Moreover, the delegation toured the college's facilities and departments. — ONA

SPF marks World Safety Day with focus on AI

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

UNDER the theme 'Revolutionising Occupational Safety and Health: The Role of Artificial Intelligence and Digitalisation at Work', the Social Protection Fund (SPF) celebrated the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, observed annually on April 28. The event reaffirmed the Fund's ongoing commitment to fostering a safer, more advanced work environment in step with rapid technological advancements.

The celebration reflects the Fund's efforts to promote a culture of workplace safety through sustainable awareness programmes, specialised training, continuous risk assessments and the regular updating of operational procedures to align with international best practices.

Emphasising the significance of the occasion, the Fund highlighted that the World Day for Safety and Health at Work serves as a strategic opportunity to integrate social protection goals with digital transformation initiatives — ensuring safer, more efficient and sustainable workplaces. The 2024 theme underlines the role of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in enhancing occupational safety systems,



SHAMSA AL TAMIMI

The SPF has continuously upgraded digital infrastructure to support evaluation and oversight processes

such as real-time risk prediction, incident analysis and advanced workplace monitoring, all of which contribute to reducing workplace injuries and fostering a culture of sustainable safety.

Speaking at the event, Shamsa al Tamimi, Director of the Medical Affairs Department at SPF, spotlighted the Fund's ongoing initiatives in this critical field. She also outlined the current status and challenges facing occupational safety and health in Oman and elaborated on the transformative role of modern technologies.

"Ensuring human safety at work is not a choice — it is a fundamental right," Al Tamimi emphasised. "Oman is steadfast in its efforts to align workplace legislation and practices with international standards, striving to create safer and more dignified work environments that adapt to the technological transformations shaping today's workplaces."

Al Tamimi noted that technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics have become essential for detecting potential risks, enabling early interventions to prevent incidents, thereby enhancing productivity and sustainability in the workplace.

She elaborated on the key initiatives undertaken by the Fund, highlighting the continuous upgrading of digital infrastructure

to support evaluation and oversight processes. The Fund also regularly conducts employee training and awareness campaigns to foster a safety-first culture.

Further, she explained that the Fund uses advanced electronic systems to monitor and analyse occupational incidents, allowing for swift, data-driven corrective actions. Efforts are also underway to incorporate AI applications capable of predicting risks and identifying incident patterns, thus bolstering the Fund's ability to safeguard its workforce.

In her remarks, Al Tamimi emphasised the importance of addressing mental health as an integral part of occupational safety — adopting a holistic approach that prioritises both physical and psychological well-being.

She also pointed to emerging challenges, noting that the rapid digital transformation and the growing adoption of flexible and hybrid work models demand continuous innovation in safety strategies and a redefinition of workplace policies.

Concluding her address, Al Tamimi reaffirmed the Fund's unwavering dedication to enhancing workplace safety, embracing international best practices and aligning with Oman's broader vision of creating safer, more inclusive work environments.

SAF CHIEF OF STAFF RECEIVES US OFFICIAL

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Sunday Gen Michael E Kurilla, Commander of the United States (US) Central Command, and his accompanying delegation, currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.



The two sides exchanged views and discussed several military topics of mutual

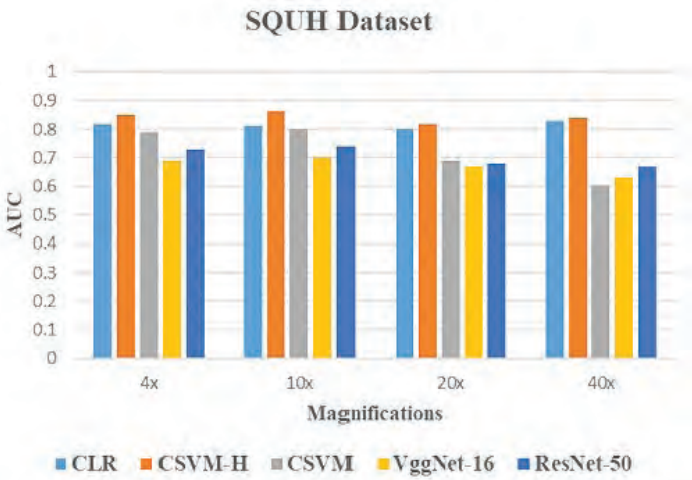
interest. The meeting was attended by Air Commodore Nasser bin Said al Saadi, Assistant Chief of Staff for Training and Joint Drills of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), Brigadier Badr bin Nasser al Kharousi, Director-General of the Joint Military Intelligence and Preventive Security at COSAF, and a number of senior COSAF officers. — ONA

Award-winning research advances breast cancer image classification

MUSCAT: Among the standout projects at the 11th National Research Award organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), the study titled 'Feed-forward networks using logistic regression and support vector machine for whole-slide breast cancer histopathology image classification' by Dr ArunaDevi Karuppasamy, Assistant Professor at the Department of Computing Sciences, Gulf College, received top honours in the Information and Communication Technologies field (PhD category).

Dr ArunaDevi's research addresses the critical challenge of histopathology image classification, essential for breast cancer diagnosis. While traditional methods rely on hand-crafted features, her study explores feed-forward approaches, proposing Convolutional Logistic Regression (CLR) and Convolutional Support Vector Machine (CSVM-H) networks.

These methods leverage



Comparing the performance of CLR and CSVM-H models over other models on SQUH dataset



DR ARUNADEVI KARUPPASAMY

predefined or externally learned filters, overcoming limitations of back-propagation techniques such as vanishing gradients and

heavy data requirements. Experiments showed that CLR and CSVM-H achieved superior accuracy and faster training times on small datasets from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) and BreakHis, outperforming traditional models like VggNet-16 and ResNet-50. Both models demonstrated high Area Under Curve (AUC) scores (0.83 and 0.84 on the SQUH dataset), highlighting their efficiency for small, labelled datasets with limited computational resources.

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OMAN

SHORT TAKES



MAHADHA SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CLUB INAUGURATED

MAHADHA: The Mahadha Science and Innovation Club was inaugurated on Sunday in the Wilayat of Mahadha, Al Buraimi Governorate, serving as a scientific incubator for students and a platform to unleash their creative potential while enhancing their skills across various fields. The club was established with support from OQ.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, in the presence of Shaikh Saif bin Abdullah al Maamari, Wali of Mahadha, alongside several officials.

Awad bin Mohammed al Hinai, Head of the Innovation and Science Olympiad Department at the General Directorate of Education in Al Buraimi Governorate, stated that the club features multiple specialised facilities and laboratories equipped with the latest technologies and modern scientific tools. These include an innovation hall, a robotics and artificial intelligence hall, a multipurpose hall, and a ‘Young Inventor’ hall. The club also houses an innovation and experimentation space, along with educational workshops supervised by a qualified team of teachers and trainers from Al Buraimi Science and Innovation Centre.

He added that the club will host diverse programmes and initiatives, with training halls already activated to conduct workshops on Microbit programming, Sumo robotics, drones and electronics, in addition to an exhibition for scientific innovations. — ONA

ONLINE CLASSES AT INDIAN SCHOOL DARSAIT TILL MAY 1

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

Online classes at Indian School Darsait (ISD) began on April 23 in the wake of many children reporting chickenpox, will continue till next week, and the school will resume regular classes once the cases are zeroed down, according to the school authorities.

In accordance with the instructions from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Ministry of Health, after it reported cases of chickenpox mostly among middle school students, the school authorities decided to go online until the cases are reduced.

In a circular, the principal of the school has informed parents that classes were shifted online from last Wednesday after students were reported to have contracted chickenpox, and this is applicable to all classes from kindergarten to 12 and will continue to be online till May 1.

The circular reads, “In view of the continuing spread of chickenpox cases among students, and as per the instructions received from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention at the Ministry of Health, we would like to inform you that online classes for Grades I to XII will continue till Thursday May 1.”

Students can attend online classes through their respective teachers’ Google Classrooms, following the regular class timetable.

APSR ISSUES BYLAW TO REGULATE TANKER OPERATIONS

MUSCAT: The Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) has issued a bylaw for regulating the operation of independent tankers in the water and wastewater sector.

The bylaw was issued in implementation of provisions of the Water and Wastewater Sector Regulation Law promulgated by Royal Decree No 40/2023. It was also in pursuance of legislative frameworks on upgrading performance efficiency and the standardisation of services within



this vital sector.

The bylaw regulates the tasks of independent tanker operators in the areas of water transport and supply.

It also streamlines wastewater collection and treated water transport and supply. As a result, the bylaw will enhance the quality of services and establish principles for technical and operational governance in accordance with clear-cut and approved standards.

The issuance of the bylaw reflects the efforts made by the APSR to develop the water and wastewater sector’s regulatory system and to ensure balance of interests among stakeholders. — ONA

Netherlands, Oman launch consortium for innovation

THE Netherlands and Oman, building on a longstanding history of successful collaboration, have embarked on a transformative new partnership with the establishment of the RENEW (Research and Education Network in Energy and Water) consortium.

Supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Muscat, this initiative brings together leading institutions from both countries to address pressing challenges in energy and water sustainability.

The initiative brings together leading institutions from both countries to address pressing challenges in energy and water sustainability



other Dutch higher education institutions and industries in the initiative.

Commenting on the launch, Stella Kloth, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Oman, said: “The embassy applauds the establishment of the RENEW partnership. We stand in support of knowledge exchange between our countries on today’s urgent challenges in energy and water. The RENEW agreement not only exemplifies this commitment, but also aligns with the objectives set out in the 2022 Memorandum of Understanding in the field of green energy.”

Dr Amir Raoof, Chair of the Sultan Qaboos Chair of Quantitative Water Management, emphasised: “This consortium will work towards bridging the gap between disciplines, which is essential for tackling water and energy

challenges.”

Prof Ghassan al Kindi, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation at Sohar University, added: “The parties in this consortium will join forces to accelerate the development of innovative and impactful solutions to the water and energy challenges.”

The RENEW consortium will focus on prioritised projects in the fields of energy and water, with expected outcomes including the development of new technologies and methodologies to address real-world challenges.

The partnership also aims to promote knowledge dissemination and raise awareness about sustainable practices, equipping the next generation with the skills and motivation needed to drive environmental innovation and sustainability.

Programme for gifted students begins

SUHAR: The first phase of the fourth edition of the National Programme for Identifying Gifted Students, ‘Tharwa 4’, has commenced on Sunday in Al Batinah North Governorate.

Hamad bin Saif al Maamari, Director of the Department of Special Education and Continuous Education at the Directorate-General of Education in Al Batinah North, stated that 31 schools in the governorate have been selected for the initial phase of the programme, targeting approximately 1,974 male



31 schools have targeted 1,974 students in the governorate

and female students. The implementation period will extend until May 8.

He explained that the

programme aims to identify students with high cognitive abilities linked to creativity and innovation by assessing their intelligence and creative potential. This will help determine the needs of gifted students and develop specialised enrichment programmes to nurture them both within and outside school settings. The initiative aligns with global trends emphasising the importance of supporting gifted students, harnessing their capabilities and building a comprehensive, updated digital

database to track their progress, classify their achievements and document their contributions.

Al Maamari further clarified that the identification and selection process follows clear, systematic criteria based on standardised tests and assessments. These tools measure students’ abilities across academic, skill-based and creative dimensions, ensuring accurate and realistic results. This approach contributes to providing integrated development and care for gifted students. — ONA

Oman to participate in regional traffic legislation workshop in Riyadh

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and two ministries, will participate in a major regional workshop aimed at strengthening traffic legislation and its enforcement within the framework of the Secure and Safety System approach in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The workshop will be held in Riyadh

from April 28 to 30, according to sources at the ROP.

A delegation of five officials — three from the ROP, one from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and one from the Ministry of Health — will attend the workshop, which seeks to introduce reforms and timely updates to existing traffic laws and regulations.

Organised by the General Secretariat of the Ministerial

Committee for Traffic Safety of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in cooperation with the World Health Organization’s Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, the workshop will identify gaps in current road safety legislation, explore implementation challenges and share evidence on risk factors and interventions. It will also highlight practices from the GCC countries, the European Union, and other global best practices to boost

regional cooperation.

“The workshop relies on in-depth consultations between national specialists from the traffic police, health and transportation sectors, along with international experts, to discuss traffic legislation and enforcement from a Gulf perspective. We are proud to represent Oman at this important event,” said Lieutenant Colonel Saif bin Ahmed al Ramadhani, Director, Executive Office, National Committee for Road

Safety, DG of Traffic Safety, ROP.

The six main strategic objectives of the workshop include: Legislation related to key risk factors, introduction of a graduated driving licence programme, vehicle safety standards aligned with UN regulations, enforcement of speeding traffic legislation, measures to deter other risky behaviours, and enhancement of assessment and monitoring processes.

SHORT TAKES



Ukraine's President Zelensky and US President Trump meet, at the Vatican. — Reuters

UKRAINE STILL FIGHTING IN KURSK, SAYS ZELENSKY

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Sunday said Ukraine's army was still fighting in Russia's Kursk a day after Moscow claimed the "full liberation" of its western region. "Our military continues to actively defend the designated areas of the Kursk and Belgorod regions," Zelensky said on Telegram, adding that the situation remained difficult in many areas including Kursk.

Russia said on Saturday that it had captured Gornal, the last settlement that was under Ukrainian control in its border Kursk region, where Kyiv launched a shock offensive in August 2024. Yet hours later Ukraine's army denied its forces had been forced out, branding Russia's claim as "propaganda tricks". "The situation on the front lines and the actual activities of the Russian army prove that the current pressure on Russia to end this war is not enough," Zelensky said, calling to increase pressure on Russia to create more opportunities for "real diplomacy". His comments come a day after Zelensky met US President Donald Trump on the sidelines of Pope Francis's funeral at the Vatican to discuss a potential ceasefire. — AFP

CARNEY DELAYS CAMPAIGN AFTER VANCOUVER TRAGEDY



An ambulance is parked at the site of the Lapu Lapu party, in Vancouver, Canada. — AFP

HAMILTON: Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney delayed election campaigning on Sunday after at least nine people were killed when a man drove through a crowd at a Filipino community festival in Vancouver, Carney's campaign said. It was too early to tell if the mass casualty event in Vancouver would have any impact on the election. Police said they had arrested a 30-year-old Vancouver man who was "known" to them. A number of people were injured in the incident.

At least nine people were killed when a man drove through a crowd at a Filipino community festival in the western Canadian city of vancouver on Saturday evening.

Police said they had arrested a 30-year-old vancouver man, who was "known" to them, at the scene. The suspect was initially chased down and held by festival-goers until police arrived. A number of people were also injured. In posts on social media, Carney offered condolences and Poilievre said his thoughts were with Vancouver's Filipino community after the "horrific" news coming out of the festival. — Reuters

BORDER SECURITY

Soldiers kill 54 crossing from Afghanistan



Pakistani soldiers killed 54 gunmen who had tried to enter the country by crossing its northwestern border with Afghanistan, the military said. "Movement of a large group... who were trying to infiltrate through Pakistan-Afghanistan border was detected by the security forces," the army said in a statement, adding that the gunmen were aiming "to undertake high profile terrorist activities inside Pakistan" and all 54 had been killed. — AFP

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

South Korea's oppn names candidate



South Korea's main opposition party named on Sunday its former leader Lee Jae-myung as its candidate for June presidential elections following the impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol over his martial law declaration. "The people have entrusted me with the mission to reclaim power by an overwhelming victory, to bring an end to the old era of insurrection and regression," Lee told a party convention in Goyang, northwest of the capital Seoul. — AFP

MILITARY EXERCISES

Philippines, US troops test air defences



Missiles fired off the coast of the northern Philippines on Sunday as US and Filipino forces conducted their first integrated defence drills. As many as 17,000 personnel are participating in the annual "Balikatan" exercises, which this year will simulate a "full-scale battle scenario". In coastal Zambales province, journalists watched as the US Marine Corp's new MADIS short-range air defence system knocked a pair of drones from the sky. — AFP

GREENLAND PM VISITS DENMARK AS TRUMP THREATS LOOM

COPENHAGEN: Greenland's new prime minister said on Sunday that the Arctic island would never be a "piece of property" to be bought, criticising US talk of seizing the Danish autonomous territory as lacking respect. "We will never, ever be a piece of property that can be bought by anyone, and that's the message I think is most important to understand," Jens-Frederik Nielsen told reporters alongside Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen as he visited Denmark for the first time

since taking office. Jens-Frederik Nielsen leads Greenland's new coalition government, after his centre-right Democrats party won a legislative election in March. It will be his first visit to Denmark since taking office. It also follows a visit to the Arctic territory by Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in early April, when she told the United States "You cannot annex another country". "First and foremost, I will resume

discussions with the Prime Minister about the geopolitical situation and cooperation," Nielsen said in a statement this week, referring to Frederiksen. "It is important that we make plans for our future cooperation in these times," he added. Tensions between the United States and Denmark have soared after Trump repeatedly said he wanted to take control of the resource-rich Arctic island. The US president has insisted Washington needs control of Greenland. — AFP

Fire blazes day after Iran blast kills 28, injures 1,000

IRAN'S president visited on Sunday the scene of a massive port blast that killed 28 people and injured more than 1,000, as fires still blazed more than 24 hours after the explosion. The blast occurred on Saturday at Shahid Rajaee Port in southern Iran, near the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of world oil output passes.

With choking smoke and air pollution spreading throughout the area, all schools and offices in Bandar Abbas, the nearby capital of Hormozgan province, were ordered closed on Sunday to allow authorities to focus on the emergency effort, state TV said. The health ministry urged residents to avoid going outside "until further notice" and to use protective masks.



Firefighters and rescuers work at the Shahid Rajaee port dock, southwest of Bandar Abbas. — AFP

With choking smoke and air pollution spreading throughout the area, all schools and offices in Bandar Abbas, the nearby capital of Hormozgan province, were ordered closed on Sunday to allow authorities to focus on the emergency effort

person with ties to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss security matters, as saying that what exploded was sodium perchlorate — a major ingredient in solid fuel for missiles.

Defence ministry spokesman Reza Talaee-Nik later told state TV that "there has been no imported or exported cargo for military fuel or military use in the area".

The port's customs office said in a statement carried by state television that the explosion probably resulted from a fire that broke out at the hazardous and chemical materials storage depot.

A regional emergency official said several containers had exploded. Red Crescent chief Pirhossein Koolivand, in a video shared on the government's official website, gave an updated toll on Sunday of 28

people killed and more than 1,000 injured. The ISNA news agency, citing the provincial judiciary, also put the number of dead at 28, with 1,242 injured. Some of the injured were transferred for treatment in the capital Tehran — more than 1,000 kilometres north — Koolivand said.

Beijing's foreign ministry said in a statement on Sunday that three Chinese victims were in a "stable" condition and that it had received no further reports of casualties.

The United Arab Emirates expressed "solidarity with Iran" over the explosion and Saudi Arabia sent condolences, as did Pakistan, India, Türkiye and the United Nations as well as Russia. Authorities declared a day of national mourning on Monday, and three days of mourning in Hormozgan province from Sunday. — AFP



QATAR SEES PROGRESS ON GAZA TRUCE

DOHA: Gaza mediator Qatar said on Sunday that there was some progress in talks in Doha this week aimed at securing a new truce in Gaza war. Speaking at a news conference, Qatari Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani reported "a bit of progress", in response to questions about reports of a Thursday meeting in Doha between Israel's Mossad spy agency chief David Barnea and the Qatari prime minister.

"We need to find an answer for the ultimate question: how to end this war. That's, that's basically, I think, the key point of the entire negotiations," Shaikh Mohammed added. — AFP

OPINION

Book fairs bring hope to a beleaguered world



SANDHYA
RAO MEHTA

The writer is
Associate Professor,
Sultan Qaboos
University

THE very cheerful spectacle of children rummaging through colourful books amidst crowded stalls is a very heartening one, considering that there is so much skepticism about youngsters not engaging with books anymore.

What accounts for this sustained interest in book fairs, which continue to be held in almost every country around the world? Does this go against the common belief about the power of digital media?

The ongoing 29th Muscat International Book Fair, with its traditional book stalls and innovative storytelling sessions for young kids and roundtable panel discussions about translation and emerging trends in Omani literature, sets the stage for involved discussions on the value of reading.

More than any other diversion, book reading remains essential to our world. Not only does it take us away from the harsh realities of our everyday world, it also offers us perspective, reason and ways of dealing with such realities.

We may think of Gen Z and Gen Alpha as

being digital natives whose entire existence is based on a digital screen, but this would be an injustice to them. Perhaps we are not doing enough to introduce them to the beauty of long-form reading. While accepting their short attention span, we are doing little to change it. Book fairs are an attempt to correct his wrong.

Nostalgia is a very powerful sentiment. The younger generation is discovering older fashions, music and cuisines. Perhaps reading is following the same trajectory. After all, almost nothing compares to cozying up with a strong cup of coffee and a book to spend a weekend.

One look at the world of social media is enough to prove this love for the past, imagined or real. Pictures of bookshelves fill the Internet. Propped with a plant or two, these make for the perfect icon or background for a virtual meeting. There are debates about whether all the books should actually be read or if it is enough to treasure them.

There is a reason for such nostalgia. It evokes a less stressful time when life was

Reading enables us to be aware of the past and prepare for a more fulfilling future. It is a joy and a skill that needs to be shared with successive generations

slower, but deeper and more engaging. There seems to be almost nothing to be cheerful about in our world today. From political confrontations, global warming and migration, the situation seems to be bleak wherever we look. But that is precisely why books are to be treasured. They, not only remind us of a time that we remember nostalgically, but they also prove that our world has survived.

Mark Twain said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes”. Being unaware of this history will only make us repeat it, with possibly harsher consequences. Reading enables us to be aware of the past and prepare for a more fulfilling future. It is a joy and a skill that needs to be shared with successive generations.

Book fairs are opportunities to experience the shared love for books or to inculcate this passion. Encouraging youngsters to engage with ideas, be involved with real-world problem solving and imagine the creation of a more secure future would go a long way towards ensuring that our world will remain in good hands.

AUSTRIA TRIALS DNA TESTING TO UNCOVER HONEY FRAUD

JULIA ZAPPEI

At a laboratory in Austria’s mountainous Tyrol province, scientists are DNA testing about 100 honey samples a month to learn about their composition -- and in some cases to determine whether they have been adulterated. With fake honey flooding markets, and only a few European laboratories running such analysis, the small Austrian company Sinsoma began offering the tests two years ago.

“It is really something new for the honey market,” said Corinna Wallinger, head of sales at Sinsoma.

It is essential that technology “always moves forward -- just as the counterfeiters” do, she added.

Honey cannot have ingredients such as water or inexpensive sugar syrups -- which might boost its volume -- added to it, according to EU legislation.

But tests have shown that is common practice. Between 2021 and 2022, 46 per cent of the honey tested under an EU investigation as it entered the bloc was flagged as potentially adulterated, up from 14 per cent in the 2015-17 period. Of the suspicious consignments, 74 per cent were of Chinese origin.

Seeking to better detect fraud, Austria’s health and food safety agency (AGES) used DNA testing for the first time this year and is still evaluating the results. European supermarket chain SPAR also ordered DNA tests for its honey.

The chain put its honeys -- taken off the shelves late last year in Austria for testing -- back after they passed DNA tests and another analysis.

Besides cheating consumers, fake honey threatens the livelihood of beekeepers, who struggle to compete with the far lower prices of imported honey -- often blended from various countries -- and are demanding more effective testing.

“We don’t have a chance at all,” said Matthias Kopetzky, owner of the Wiener Bezirksimkerei, which takes care of up to 350 hives in Vienna, as bees buzzed around him on a meadow overlooking the capital.

While the European Union is the world’s top honey producer after China, it is also the second-biggest importer after the United States.

Most of the bloc’s honey imports come from Ukraine, China and Argentina, according to EU data. An EU directive adopted last year stipulates that honey labels from mid-2026 must detail the countries of origin, as opposed to merely referencing a “blend of EU and non-EU honeys”.

Beekeepers like Kopetzky hope the new rule will raise consumer awareness.

Brussels also set up a group of experts, with a mandate, to “harmonise methods to detect adulteration in honey and trace the product back to the harvesting producer or importer”.— AFP

How I describe myself politically these days

I struggle these days whenever someone asks me for my political affiliation. But if you really force me, I’d describe myself as a ‘Waymo Democrat.’

Waymos are the self-driving electric taxis started by Google. My party’s bumper sticker would read, “A chicken in every pot and a Waymo in every city.” And our TV ads would say: “Trump is for he/ him — his grievances, his revenge, his corruption — and for bringing old stuff back ‘again,’ like coal and gasoline cars. Waymo Democrats are for ‘We the People’ and reinventing American industry anew.”

Why am I bringing this up now? It’s because, as my colleague David Brooks likes to say, Donald Trump is often the wrong answer to the right question. Trump today is offering America a spectacularly wrong answer — a tariff war against the whole world and a revival of 1960s assembly lines — to a very valid question: How do we get more Americans making stuff again?

So, then, what’s the right answer? I admire the fiery protest campaign of Sen Bernie Sanders, I-Vt, and Rep Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, DNY. I love their ability to get people out to push back on Trump’s destroy-America-in-100-days campaign.

But when I listen to AOC and Sanders, I don’t hear them solving for the future. So much of what they are about is lazily bashing billionaires, along with defending Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid from the Trump-Elon Musk chain saw. Please, save all of that.

But if Democrats are going to again be the party of the working class, and unify the country more, they need a strategy for expanding the pie of work by expanding new industries — not just protecting the pie of benefits. At a time when Trump Republicans have so given up on the future, Democrats should be for reinventing it. And that requires a strategy to push advanced manufacturing in America into



THOMAS L
FRIEDMAN

The writer is an
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commentator and
author

If Democrats aim to reclaim their role as the party of the working class and foster greater national unity, they must adopt a strategy that expands job opportunities by fostering the growth of new industries

wholly new realms. And that is why I am a Waymo Democrat. It is the right answer to the right question: How can we create more good jobs in advanced manufacturing?

I say this for three reasons. First, robotaxis are going to be a huge industry, not just because I use only Waymos whenever I am in San Francisco, but because I am not alone. In just San Francisco; Phoenix; Austin, Texas; and Los Angeles — the four cities where Waymo offers its fully autonomous ride-hailing service — it’s now racking up a whopping 200,000 paid rides a week. That’s a growth industry.

Second, as I have written based on two recent trips to China, if you want to see the future of manufacturing, you need to go to China, not America anymore. But not in every industry, and robotaxis are among the exceptions. A Chinese company does offer limited robotaxi service in a few cities, but it is an industry of the future in which American technology is still more than competitive and can become even more dominant.

And while I don’t enjoy seeing anyone put out of work, taxi drivers are not in a growth industry. Whereas the number of better-paying jobs supporting a robotaxi network — AI researchers, engineers, data scientists, chip designers, blue-collar mechanics, electrical engineers, marketers, maintenance workers, software designers, data-centre construction workers — constitute a growth industry, with good incomes for more people.

Finally, I can’t think of a more obvious moonshot project to spur advanced manufacturing in America generally than making it our goal to have Waymos or robo-Teslas — or any other brand of self-driving taxis that we can make — operating in every city in America.

Because if you look under the hood of any Waymo, it is made up of chips, batteries, sensors and other

components that also go into every part of the 21st-century industrial ecosystem — including robots, drones and flying cars — all infused with artificial intelligence.

Waymo uses its own proprietary artificial intelligence system for driving. That system runs on task-specific chips — GPUs (graphics processing units) and TPUs (tensor processing units) — designed in America but manufactured in Taiwan. There is no reason more could not be made here if the industry expands.

Let’s imagine that one day soon self-driving taxis were operating in every city in America, and we, not China, became the world’s biggest market for them. There would be a huge incentive to make more and more of their components here. And that is one place I would use tariffs and government investment to give this industry a leg up.

To accelerate this industry further, Waymo Democrats would do everything Trump is doing maliciously today — but do it productively.

We would insist that big law firms that want to do business with the federal government have to offer a certain number of pro bono hours to any startup building AI or other components for our robotaxi industry.

We would tell Harvard and every other Ivy League university that they can teach whatever they want, however they want. But ... any student graduating with a degree in math, biology, chemistry, physics, engineering or AI on commencement day should get handed a refund check for their entire tuition along with their diploma.

We would tell would-be immigrants, especially from China and Russia, that if they have a degree or expertise in fields related to artificial intelligence, they can have an “AI visa” and stay as long as they want.

— The New York Times

Discover a world within pages



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and a communications professional

In a world aggressively dominated by screens and technology, the silent, everlasting joy of reading books remains a valued and transformative experience. With its crisp turn of a new page, books possess a unique power to captivate, educate and connect people in ways few other mediums can. The love of reading stems from curiosity, a hunger for stories, knowledge and the ability to see the world through different eyes. A book is not merely paper and ink; it is a gateway to other times, places and lives. In fiction, readers walk alongside characters, feel their emotions, celebrate their moments and discover truths about themselves along the way. In non-fiction, they explore the different aspects of science, history, philosophy, and beyond. Reading also nurtures empathy. As readers immerse themselves in stories different from their own, they develop a deeper understanding of the world around them. This is why many passionate readers often possess strong emotional intelligence and a greater appreciation for diversity. Books break down barriers and remind us of our shared humanity. Moreover, reading invites us to slow down, to focus, and to be present with our thoughts and imaginations.

Ultimately, the love of reading is not just about entertainment, it is about connection to ideas, to emotions, to others and to ourselves. It reminds us that no matter how much the world changes, the simple act of getting lost in a good book will always hold a place in the human heart. True joy comes not from what we read, but from how we read. The real difference lies in our attitude towards reading. It has been said that there is a great difference between the eager person who wants to read a book and the tired one who simply wants a book to read. Books are more than just objects; they are whispered conversations between generations. To love reading is to live a thousand lives without ever leaving your chair. One day, you are chasing shadows across a foggy London street with Sherlock Holmes; the next day, you are drifting through galaxies aboard a starship, your heart tucked firmly between stars. Each chapter is a new heartbeat, and each story is a universe folded between two covers. For many bookworms, the love of reading began in childhood, sparked by bedtime stories or visits to the library. But it is a love that grows alongside them, evolving with their changing interests and needs. Even

A book is not merely paper and ink; it is a gateway to other times, places and lives. In fiction, readers walk alongside characters, feel their emotions, celebrate their moments and discover truths about themselves along the way

books evolve, offering new meanings and insights as readers grow older. It is said that the perfect sentence can stop time, and a single phrase can stay with you longer than a lifetime. Every word and sentence hold the potential to unlock new thoughts, offer solutions and ignite inspiration. Reading becomes a form of mental exploration, where each turned page is a step into the unknown and a hike towards discovery. To love books is to know you will never be truly lonely. You carry entire worlds in your bag or pocket. It is to believe in the quiet magic that lives between the lines, always waiting for you to return. As Ernest Hemingway, an American novelist and journalist, once said, “There is no friend as loyal as a book.” In a world that moves too fast and speaks too loudly, reading offers an invitation to slow down, to listen deeply and to dream. There is a kind of magic hidden in the quiet rustle of turning pages - a spell that requires no wand, only a willing heart and a curious mind. Reading enriches the soul and expands the mind. As Walt Disney, an American animator, film producer, wisely said, “There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate’s loot on Treasure Island.”

IN HIS FIRST 100 DAYS, TRUMP TELLS MIGRANTS TO LEAVE

TED HESSON AND KRISTINA COOKE

After Russia’s war on Ukraine, Taras Atamanchuk found safety for his family near Houston, Texas. The 32-year-old moved to the US with his wife and daughter in 2023 through former president Joe Biden’s “parole” programme for Ukrainians with US sponsors, landing a job as a software engineer with an annual salary of \$120,000. In February, he tried to renew his two-year work permit, but President Donald Trump’s administration had quietly stopped processing renewals or applications by Ukrainians. He now worries about how he will support his family, which includes a son born last year. “I can’t work and there’s no place to go,” he said. In his first hundred days in office, Trump has taken dramatic steps to strip legal immigration status from hundreds of thousands of people, increasing the pool of those who can potentially be deported as he tries to ramp up removals to historic levels. The Republican president has moved to end humanitarian legal entry programmes launched by his Democratic predecessor and revoked visas of thousands of students who took part in protests or had minor criminal charges, including traffic offenses. The breadth of the crackdown has stunned immigrants who lost their legal status. Some Democrats have criticised Trump’s strong-arm tactics as plainclothes and masked immigration officers have descended on homes, workplaces and university campuses. Americans are split on Trump’s immigration approach but he has a 45-per cent approval rating on immigration, better than other major issues, a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted in mid-April found. “The message that his campaign gave is, ‘We’re going to go after the criminals,’ but what he is doing is a much, much broader effort,” said Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, a senior fellow with the American Immigration Council, a pro-immigrant advocacy group. Trump said in March that he was weighing whether to strip the legal status of the 240,000 Ukrainians who entered under Biden’s parole programme. A similar move to revoke legal status from 530,000 Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans was blocked in federal court earlier this month. The Trump administration has paired the crackdown with a push to encourage migrants in the US illegally to “self deport” - threatening steep fines and highlighting efforts to send deportees to notorious prisons in El Salvador and Guantanamo Bay. Polina Hlova, 25, from the Ukrainian city of Dnipro, was working as a dental assistant in Florida when she and her husband lost their work permits in March. She constantly checks for updates on pending applications and said the stress has been overwhelming. “My emotions, I can’t control it,” she said. “I’m just crying every day.” White House spokesperson Kush Desai said the Trump administration was undoing what it views as unlawful Biden programmes that allowed migrants to enter the US. — Reuters

Diplomacy to the fore in choice of new pope

POPE Francis smashed the stereotypical profile for a pontiff, becoming the Catholic Church’s first leader from the Americas and the first non-European since the eighth century. Some hope his successor, to be chosen in a conclave of cardinals in the coming days or weeks, could come from Africa or Asia. The late Argentine pontiff championed far-flung regions long overlooked by the Church, whether in his cardinal appointments or in his travels that strayed off the beaten path, from Mongolia to Papua New Guinea. A non-European pope would make sense, given that Catholicism is growing in Africa and Asia, while church attendance is dropping and growth near-stagnant in Europe. But in today’s increasingly complex world, analysts say an inclusive outlook and diplomatic skills will be key factors in the choice of the next pope, rather than a particular passport.

The Church’s first pope, Saint Peter, came from Galilee, in today’s Israel, yet the long line of pontiffs in his wake have been chiefly Italian. Directly after being made pope on March 13, 2013, Francis joked that fellow cardinals had come “almost to the ends of the Earth” to find him. During his papacy, the former archbishop of Buenos Aires pushed the Church to be more inclusive of those from the so-called “peripheries”, whether geographical areas far from Rome, or long-ignored populations. Through his trips abroad and outspoken advocacy of excluded groups like migrants and the poor, Francis sought to bring new voices into the over 2,000-year-old institution. He actively sought out those “overlooked or under-represented in the universal Church”, R Scott Appleby, a US historian of global religion, said. But he warned “that doesn’t guarantee, of course, that the next pope will be from the margins, from a country that’s not as well-known, or is not Europe”. Appleby called it a “fool’s game” to try to predict the next pope’s nationality. Those betting on a non-European pope point to the fact that Francis



Faithful and members of the clergy attend Mass for the Vatican workers in St. Peter’s Square, at the Vatican, on Sunday. — Reuters



ALEXANDRIA
SAGE

The writer is AFP journalist covering Italy in Rome

has named the majority of the cardinals who will choose his successor, with many from under-represented regions. But Europe still has the largest voting bloc, with 53 cardinals, compared to 27 cardinal-electors from Asia and Oceania, 21 from South and Central America, 16 from North America and 18 from Africa, according to the Vatican. Some of those touted to succeed Francis also hail from outside the Church’s traditional bastions of power -- notably Manila’s Luis Antonio Tagle or Ghana’s cardinal, Peter Turkson. Cardinals from Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of Congo are also cited as contenders, in an admittedly wide field. A pope from a poorer country brings a different perspective that would stand out in a world of strong and vocal Western leaders. Such a pontiff would have “a first-hand experience of the poor... a country in a region that is not ‘in the game’”, Appleby said. “And that lends a counterpoint to what have been the power centres on the political front. It’s important for the Church to not simply replicate the power centres of the world.”

The conclave will be looking “for a cardinal capable of being a point of reference for many, according to different sensitivities”, added Roberto Regoli, an Italian historian at the Pontifical Gregorian University. But experts agree that a papal contender’s ability to unite the Church in an increasingly fractious geopolitical context may be the central deciding point. “The new pope will have to redesign the Church in a world on fire,” Alberto Melloni, an Italian professor of the history of Christianity, told the Corriere di Bologna newspaper this week. Francois Mabillet, director of France’s Geopolitical Observatory of Religion (IRIS), said if cardinals decide geopolitics is the “criterion of choice”, the Vatican’s current chief diplomat, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, “may fit the bill perfectly, even if European and Italian”. Appleby concurred: “It’s hard to imagine that the next pope can ignore the tumult and the challenges in the world. “They’ll be thinking: ‘Boy, the world’s in crisis... Who among us can emerge as someone of the proper charisma and talent to lead the Church at this point?’”

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



The tournament began on Sunday and will run until Thursday and featured wide participation

OMAN FACE BAHRAIN IN OPENER OF GULF SCHOOL CHAMPIONSHIP

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

The Oman school football team will commence their campaign at the Gulf School Sports Championship with a match against Bahrain on Monday. The match will kick off at 6:30 PM (Oman time) at Waad Academy Stadium in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The tournament began on Sunday and will run until Thursday and featured participation of Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, Oman and the hosts Saudi Arabia. The football event will be played by Round-robin tournament from single round with the team accumulating the highest number of points will be crowned as the tournament champion. Oman will participate in this tournament at two games including football and table tennis.

Oman's school team will face Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. In their second match they will take on UAE on Wednesday. The concluding match will be against Kuwait on Thursday. All of Oman's matches will be played at Waad Academy Stadium at the same time at 6:30 PM (Oman time). The football team is coached by Oman national football team head coach, Anwar al Habsi who opted 17 players for this event including Abdulrahman al Busaidy, Yazan al Khaldi, Al Hassan al Qasimi, Muzn al Hinai, Ibrahim al Tamimi, Suleiman al Kharousi, Ali al Owainy, Fahad Awaadh, Firas al Saadi, Al Waleed al Buraidi, Abdulaziz al Balushi, Ali al Askari, Al Waleed al Rushaidi, Osama al Maamari, Hussam al Naabi, Fahad al Mushaikhi and Mohammed al Sameen.

On the other side, Oman's school table tennis team will commence their competition with a match against Bahrain and UAE teams. The matches are scheduled to be played against Kuwait on Monday and then the team will conclude their group matches against Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. Oman's table tennis team comprised Moayed al Mutawa, Ziyad al Shehi and Ali al Awadi and the head coach Yasser al Nasri.



Oman's matches will be played at Waad Academy Stadium at the same timing at 6:30 pm (Oman time).



Oman's school team will face Saudi Arabia on Tuesday and in their 2nd match they will take on UAE on Wednesday

Hockey league 2nd round witnesses high scores

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

THE EXCITEMENT of the 2025 Under-18 Junior Hockey League continued with the start of the second round matches across all groups, featuring strong confrontations, impressive performances, and notable victories by the participating teams.

GROUP 1 RESULTS (Muscat Governorate): The matches for Group 1 were held at the Oman Club Hockey Field in Al Amerat. Seeb defeated Qurayat 4-1, while Ahli Sidab earned a well-deserved 3-0 win over Al Amerat. Ahli Sidab continued its winning streak with a close 3-2 victory over Qurayat, and Seeb wrapped up its matches with a valuable 3-0 win against Al Amerat.

GROUP 2 RESULTS (Al Batinah, Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates): Group 2 matches, held at the Sohar Sports Complex, witnessed wide-margin victories. Al Nahda "A" defeated Al Nahda "B" 3-1, while Sohar achieved a major 8-0 victory over Saham. Masirah shined with a sweeping 15-1 win over Al Nahda "B", and Al Nahda "A" secured a strong 7-1 win against Al Salam. Masirah concluded the day with a massive 16-0 win over Saham.

GROUP 3 RESULTS (Dhofar Governorate): Group 3 matches were played at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Salalah and witnessed thrilling encounters. Salalah "A" recorded a big 9-4 win over Salalah "B". Dhofar defeated Mirbat 5-2, while Al Nasr overcame Al Ittihad with an 8-1 victory. Salalah "A" returned to thrash Mirbat 16-0, and Al Nasr secured an important 10-2 win over Dhofar.

EXCITING RESULTS IN THE 2ND ROUND The 2025 Under-15 Cubs Hockey League continued showcasing strong performances and fierce competition among participating clubs. Matches for



Groups 1(A) and 1(B) were held at Al Amerat Club Field, while Group 2 matches were played at the Sohar Hockey Field. Group 1 (A): In Group 1(A), Al Amerat started their campaign with a deserved 5-1 win over Muscat "B". Ahli Sidab edged Qurayat "A" 6-4 in a tightly contested match filled with exchanged attacks. Nizwa "B" achieved a narrow 3-2 victory over Muscat "B". Al Amerat continued their winning streak with an important 2-0 victory over Qurayat "A", and Ahli Sidab completed their strong performance with another 5-2 win over Nizwa "B". Group 1 (B): Group 1(B) witnessed strong competition. Seeb achieved a crucial 1-0 win over Nizwa "A", benefiting from tactical discipline. Qurayat "B"

recorded a wide 4-0 victory against Oman Club. In an exciting match, Muscat "A" defeated Nizwa "A" 3-2. Seeb delivered a powerful offensive display against Oman Club with a 7-3 win, and Qurayat "B" concluded the round with a valuable 2-1 win over Muscat "A". Group 2: In Group 2 (clubs from Al Batinah and Al Buraimi governorates), top teams displayed clear dominance. Al Nahda "A" crushed Al Nahda "B" with a 10-0 victory. In a balanced match, Soham defeated Sohar 2-0. Masirah continued to achieve positive results with a 5-1 win over Al Nahda "B". Al Nahda "A" secured another 3-1 victory over Al Salam, and Masirah concluded the group matches with an important 4-1 win over Saham.

Omani Development Team hosts Bahrain in T20 series

MUSCAT: With youth cricket steadily gaining momentum across the Sultanate of Oman, Oman's Development Squad has taken centre stage this week in a historic bilateral T20 series against the visiting Bahrain national team. The three-match contest, which got underway on Friday, April 25, at the Oman Cricket Academy Grounds in Al Amerat, marks the first official series between two GCC nations featuring all-national players — an unprecedented milestone for the region's cricketing landscape. Led by experienced all-rounder Sufyan Mehmood, the Omani Development Team represents the country's growing pool of homegrown talent. The series is more than just a competitive fixture — it's a celebration of national representation and regional camaraderie. "It's an absolute honour to lead this talented group of Omani nationals," said Mehmood ahead of the opener. "Many of these players have been involved in the sport for several years, and their commitment and hunger for growth is truly inspiring. We've been working hard for nearly an entire season, preparing ourselves for key opportunities ahead — particularly global



Omani Development Team in practice.

multi-sport events like the Asian Games, which is a major milestone for us," he added. Mehmood, who has been a member of national senior team, said: "This bilateral series against the Bahraini Nationals is not just another contest—it's a historic moment. It marks the first-ever official series between two GCC nations featuring all-national players, and that is a proud occasion for both countries and for cricket in the region. Our preparations have been intense and focused, and I can genuinely see a lot of promise in this squad. The energy, the talent, and the passion among the boys is exactly what you want as a captain. We're looking forward to putting in our best

efforts, competing with pride, and hopefully bringing home a memorable series win for Oman." Two of the three games were played on the weekend with the final match on April 28 at 2 pm — all taking place on the pristine Turf 1 at Oman Cricket Academy. **OMANI DEVELOPMENT TEAM:** Sufyan Mehmood (Captain), Waheed bin Khalid al Balushi, Issa bin Abdulrahim al Balushi, Shoaib bin Ismail al Balushi, Mohammed bin Ali Akbar al Balushi, Majid bin Hussein al Balushi, Rashad bin Mohammed al Balushi, Sameer bin Othman al Balushi, Ahmed bin Mukhtar al Zadjali, Faris bin Khalid al Balushi, Arif bin Majeed al Balushi, Abbas bin Abdulaziz al Balushi, Muzaffar

Shiralkar, Waleed al Balushi. Coach: Prasanth Chandran, manager: Said bin Haidar al Balushi **BUSY TIMES FOR OMAN CRICKET** The Bahrain series comes amid a particularly hectic stretch for Oman Cricket, underscoring the board's deep commitment to nurturing talent across all age groups and genders. The senior national team hosted a high-profile four-match series against Kerala, India's Ranji Trophy runners-up, offering intense competition and valuable match exposure. On the age-group front, the U19 squad took part in the ICC Asia U19 Qualifier in Nepal, while the U16 team is competing in an ACC tournament hosted in Qatar. The women's national side also completed a promising tour to Dubai, continuing to build depth and experience within their ranks. Adding to the packed calendar, the Karnataka state team from India is set to arrive this week for another eagerly anticipated series. These matches will form a key part of the senior team's preparations for the upcoming ICC Cricket World Cup League 2 tri-series in the United States this May.

SHORT TAKES



MotoGP's Spanish rider Alex Marquez celebrates on the podium after winning the MotoGP Spanish Grand Prix . — AFP

MARQUEZ REIGNS IN SPAIN TO CLAIM FIRST GP VICTORY

JEREZ, SPAIN: Gresini Racing's Alex Marquez claimed his first MotoGP race victory at the Spanish Grand Prix on Sunday to snatch the championship lead from his elder brother Marc, who crashed early in the race and finished 12th.

After seven second-place finishes in sprints and races this season, Alex claimed a dream race win on home turf in front of over 100,000 fans, with the Spaniard imploring them to increase the volume even when he had a few corners left on the final lap. Fabio Quartararo finished second to give Yamaha their first podium since the 2023 Indonesian Grand Prix while Ducati's Francesco Bagnaia came in third. Marc squeezed his way through the crowd to embrace Alex in the winner's circle as the two Spaniards became the first brothers to win in MotoGP.

But the day belonged to the Gresini rider who leads his elder sibling by one point in the standings after taking the chequered flag, which was waved by Spanish tennis player Carlos Alcaraz.

"The best birthday present, amazing. The first one in Jerez is something amazing," said Alex, who celebrated his 29th birthday earlier this week.

"I cannot ask for more. It was a race where I was really clever in all the movements."

An action-packed opening lap had polesitter Quartararo get a perfect start off the line to take the lead into turn one while Saturday's sprint winner Marc fell behind to fourth place. Alex attempted to overtake three riders in front of him early on by threading the needle between bikes but he braked too late and fell behind while Marc and Bagnaia collided while jostling for position.

MARC CRASHES

With Marc running in third and looking to overtake his team-mate, the Spaniard then crashed at turn seven and rejoined in 22nd place with a damaged bike as thousands of fans around the circuit collectively groaned.

Bagnaia did not have time to relax, however, as Alex came up behind him and elbowed the Italian out of the way to move up to second and put Quartararo in his sights.

The Yamaha rider tried his best to keep Alex at bay but on lap 11, the pace of the Ducati bike proved far too superior as he overtook Quartararo to draw a roar from the Marquez Grandstand.

Once Alex was in the clear, he began to disappear into the distance while Bagnaia could not catch up as he struggled to overtake Quartararo, who doggedly held on to second place. — Reuters



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action during his round of 64 match against Italy's Matteo Arnaldi. — Reuters



Poland's Iga Swiatek in action during her round of 32 match against Czech Republic's Linda Noskova. — Reuters

Djokovic crashes out in Madrid opener

S w i a t e k a d v a n c e s

NOVAK DJOKOVIC admits he may have played his last-ever match at the Madrid Open after he crashed out in his opening round encounter on Saturday, while Iga Swiatek advanced to the last-16 on the women's side of the draw.

Djokovic's bid for a 100th career title was scuppered by Italian Matteo Arnaldi, who beat the Serb 6-3, 6-4 in the second round.

The fourth-seeded Djokovic suffered a second consecutive opening defeat, after losing his opener against Alejandro Tabilo in Monte Carlo two weeks ago.

Asked if this was his last on-court appearance in the Spanish capital, Djokovic said: "It could be. It could be. I'm not sure if I will come back. So, I don't know. I mean, I'll come back, maybe not as a player, of course. I hope it's not, but it could be."

Arnaldi, ranked 44th in the world, recorded just the second top-five win of his career.

The athletic 24-year-old squandered a 2-0 lead early in the contest but pounced again in the eighth game, breaking the Djokovic serve. The Italian wrapped up the opening set in 48 minutes.

Djokovic, a three-time champion in Madrid, fired 20 unforced errors in the first frame and finished the contest with a total of 32.

"He's my idol, he's always been. I was just glad that I could play him because I

never played him, I just practised once with him. So playing him on a stage like this was already a victory for me," said Arnaldi, who showcased an entertaining brand of all-court tennis.

"But, you know, he is not at his best right now, so I came on court to try to play my best tennis and win. It happened. So right now, I don't even know what to say."

The 37-year-old Djokovic conceded he is trying to accept a "new reality", where he is approaching tournaments with low expectations, given his recent subpar results.

"[My expectations were] Not big at all, to be honest. I was hoping I can play one more match than I played in Monte Carlo," said the 24-time Grand Slam champion.

"Kind of new reality for me, I have to say, trying to win a match or two, not really thinking about getting far in the tournament.

"But that's, I guess, the circle of life and the career; eventually it was going to happen."

Elsewhere, Lorenzo Musetti moved past Argentina's Tomas Etcheverry 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 to book a third-round meeting with Stefanos Tsitsipas. The Greek world number 18 beat Jan-Lennard Struff 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 to get through the round of 64.

Sixth seed Alex de Minaur eased past Lorenzo Sonego 6-2, 6-3, while fifth seed Jack Draper beat Tallon Griekspoor 6-3, 6-4.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

Defending champion Swiatek enjoyed a less stressful third-round win compared to her three-set opener against Filipina teenager Alexandra Eala, needing just one hour and 17 minutes to beat familiar foe Linda Noskova 6-4, 6-2.

"I'm happy with my focus and with the way I kept problem-solving until the end of the match," said Swiatek, who will face Russian Diana Shnaider in the round of 16.

Reigning Australian Open champion Madison Keys was broken while serving for her third-round victory at 5-4 in the second set against Anna Kalinskaya, but recovered to complete a 7-5, 7-6 (7/3) victory.

The fifth-seeded Keys lost to Kalinskaya earlier this month in Charleston. "I knew I had to raise my level after getting a bit of a spanking last time," said Keys.

American fourth seed Coco Gauff eased past compatriot Ann Li 6-2, 6-3 to set up a last-16 clash with Swiss Olympic gold medallist Belinda Bencic.

Seventh-seeded teenager Mirra Andreeva continued her impressive form at WTA 1000 tournaments this season by storming into the fourth round with a 7-5, 6-3 performance against Polish 27th-seed Magdalena Frech.

The 17-year-old Russian, who won back-to-back titles in Dubai and Indian Wells, will take on Ukrainian qualifier Yulia Starodubtseva for a shot at reaching a second consecutive Madrid quarterfinal. — AFP

Thunder sweep Grizzlies in NBA playoffs, Cavs on brink

LOS ANGELES, UNITED STATES: The Oklahoma City Thunder, fuelled by 38 points from Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, held off the Memphis Grizzlies 117-115 on Saturday to complete a 4-0 sweep in their NBA Western Conference playoff series and become the first team to reach the second round. The Cleveland Cavaliers were on the brink of advancing, taking a 3-0 stranglehold on their Eastern Conference series with a 124-87 blowout of the Miami Heat.

And the Denver Nuggets levelled their Western Conference series with a stunning 101-99 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers sealed by Aaron Gordon's put-back dunk at the final buzzer.

Jalen Williams added 23 points for

the Thunder, who were pushed to the wire in Memphis despite the absence of Grizzlies star Ja Morant, who was ruled out with a hip contusion suffered in game three.

Scotty Pippen Jr scored 30 points and Santi Aldama and Desmond Bane had 23 points each for the Grizzlies, who trailed by 12 with 3:37 to play but closed within two in the waning seconds only to come up short.

After the first three games featured a total of four lead changes, the teams traded the lead 15 times in the first three quarters.

Oklahoma City took the first double-digit lead of the game with less than six minutes remaining and, without Morant, Memphis just didn't have enough to extend the best-of-seven series. The Thunder, who led



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander (2) drives to the basket as Memphis Grizzlies guard Scotty Pippen Jr (1) defends. — Reuters

the league with 68 regular-season wins, next face either the Denver Nuggets or Los Angeles Clippers, who were tied at 2-2 after the Nuggets' sensational victory in Los Angeles.

Three-time NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic scored 36 points with 21 rebounds and eight assists for the Nuggets, who led by 22 early in the fourth quarter.

The Clippers, led by 24 points from Kawhi Leonard and 22 from Norman Powell, surged back to take their first lead of the game, 97-96, on Bogdan Bogdanovic's reverse layup with 1:11 to play.

Jokic spun through traffic for a basket that put Denver back on top, but Ivica Zubac tipped in a basket to tie it at 99-99 with eight seconds left.

With little more than a second

remaining Jokic unleashed a high-arching three-point attempt that missed, Gordon nabbing the rebound and thrusting the ball in the hoop for a game winner that required an agonisingly lengthy video review before officials confirmed he had, indeed, beaten the buzzer. "That's a crazy game," Gordon said.

CAVS PUMMEL HEAT

In Miami, the Cavs handed the Heat the worst playoff defeat in franchise history, despite the absence of All-Star guard Darius Garland and a relatively quiet 13-point game from Donovan Mitchell.

Jarrett Allen scored 22 points and De'Andre Hunter added 21 off the bench as six Cavs players scored in double figures. — AFP



FC Barcelona’s Marc-Andre ter Stegen and Ronald Araujo and team-mates celebrate with the trophy after winning the Copa del Rey. — Reuters

Barca edge Real Madrid to win Copa del Rey final

BARCELONA

DEFENDER Jules Kounde struck deep in extra-time to decide a gripping Copa del Rey Clasico final on Saturday in Seville, earning his side a 3-2 win over rivals Real Madrid.

The Catalans, aiming for a quadruple this season, won the first major trophy of Hansi Flick’s reign as coach and a record-extending 32nd Spanish cup in dramatic fashion.

Three Real Madrid players were sent off during and after a fiery conclusion to the game, including England international Jude Bellingham.

Pedri sent Barcelona ahead at La Cartuja but two Real Madrid goals in seven second-half minutes, from Kylian Mbappe and Aurelien Tchouameni, pulled the Spanish and European champions level.

However, Ferran Torres struck in the 84th minute to take the game to extra-time and Kounde drilled home to win it for the La Liga leaders.

“Madrid pushed us to our limits but we showed great character and pride,” said Kounde.

Barca host Inter Milan in the Champions League semifinals on Wednesday.

Substituted Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger was sent off in the final seconds for “throwing an object” onto the pitch towards referee Ricardo de Burgos Bengoetxea, according to the official’s report, and Lucas Vazquez, also replaced, was dismissed for further protest as Madrid unravelled. Bellingham was sent off after the final whistle for showing an “aggressive attitude” towards the referee, who wrote that the midfielder “had to be restrained by his team-mates”.

“I don’t want to talk about the referee,” said stone-faced Madrid

coach Ancelotti. Madrid had issued furious statements about the refereeing team on Friday after they criticised the club’s television channel for attacking Spanish officials this season, casting a shadow over the game. Controversy aside, the football was enthralling. Madrid started with top scorer Mbappe on the bench after an ankle injury and lost Ferland Mendy early on with a thigh issue.

Barcelona dazzling winger Lamine Yamal, 17, dyed his hair blond for the game and led the assault on Thibaut Courtois’ goal.

The Catalans, who also won the first two Clasicos this season in La Liga and the Spanish Super Cup, scoring nine goals in the process, controlled the ball.

They took the lead after 28 minutes, Pedri placing the ball into the top corner with precision and power from the edge of the box, a sensational goal set up by Yamal.

Barcelona’s opener brought

Madrid out of their shell — and also Mbappe off the bench to warm up.

Bellingham netted but was offside. Vinicius Junior would have won a penalty when hacked down but had also strayed off in the build-up. Barcelona could have doubled their lead, with Dani Olmo’s corner hitting the post and Cubarsi unable to turn home as Dani Ceballos held him back. The referee was lenient with some heated Madrid tackles, perhaps cowed by Friday’s drama as the Spanish champions seethed at his pre-match comments.

Madrid sent Mbappe on for Rodrygo Goes at half-time and soon he and Vinicius began to work Barcelona goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny.

Mbappe pulled Madrid level almost on his own in the 70th minute, brought down after surging forward and firing home the free-kick off the post.

Seven minutes later Madrid took the lead, Tchouameni heading in

Arda Guler’s corner.

Barcelona responded when Yamal played a delicious pass over the top for Torres, which drew both Rudiger and Courtois, but the Spaniard beat both and rolled home.

Controversy unsurprisingly reared its head before the match headed to extra-time.

Barcelona clamoured for a penalty when Rudiger tripped Torres, and then were awarded one deep in stoppage time as Raphinha tumbled under pressure — but the decision was overturned after a VAR review.

In extra-time Barcelona were ascendant. They found their winner when Kounde intercepted an uncharacteristically loose Luka Modric pass and beat Courtois from range, sparking wild celebrations. The trio of dismissals and Madrid’s pre-match histrionics regarding the officials will ensure the repercussions run on. The teams meet again in La Liga in May in a potential title decider. — AFP



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SAYYID BELARAB VISITS THAWANI TECHNOLOGIES

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Honorary President of the Promising Omani Startups Programme, on Sunday visited Thawani Technologies, the first licensed financial technology company in the Sultanate of Oman.

During the visit, HH Sayyid Bilarab was briefed on the company's specialised and smart digital financial services and solutions. The visit comes as part of a series of visits aimed at spurring promising startups, listening to their aspirations and boosting their contribution to the national economy.

Established in 2016, Thawani Technologies has provided innovative payment solutions that meet the needs of the local market and support the national drive towards digital transformation, a key goal of Oman Vision 2040.

During the visit, the company reviewed its most prominent achievements in utilising advanced technologies, such as smartphone solutions, payment technologies using facial recognition and palm print (biometrics), the use of artificial intelligence, deep learning as well as secure payment cards.

It also reviewed its most prominent local and international achievements which include the Innovation Unit Award for Entrepreneurship in 2020 and the Best FinTech Company in the Middle East Award for 2024. — ONA

Renaissance 2.0: Oman’s new era of growth

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

OMAN'S sweeping economic transformation, dubbed “Renaissance 2.0,” took centre stage as Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, welcomed delegates from more than 30 countries to the inaugural Advantage Oman Forum in Muscat.

In his opening remarks, Al Yousef positioned Oman as a resurgent force in the global economy, offering an inviting mix of traditional strengths and bold new strategies.

Against a backdrop of volatile global markets and shifting economic power centres, Oman, he stressed, is charting a path of resilience and innovation underpinned by the ambitious Oman Vision 2040.

“We have reimagined the economic possibilities, streamlined and digitised procedures; and built an enterprise-driven environment underpinned by strong legislation,” said Al Yousef.

“This ensures that businesses are empowered to prosper, grow and expand.”

Describing Oman's strategy as “bold but calculated,” Al Yousef introduced Renaissance 2.0 as a sweeping renewal of the Sultanate of Oman's economic foundations. Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the

HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, (centre) chief guest at the Advantage Oman Forum.

government has unleashed major reforms, particularly targeting infrastructure, trade, finance and emerging industries.

The Minister pointed to Oman's significant investments in national infrastructure — modern highways, deep-water ports, airports, free zones and industrial estates — which together position the country as a gateway connecting Africa, Asia and global markets.

Oman's network of free trade agreements with the United States, Singapore and others further strengthens this advantage, offering investors access to over one billion consumers.

“Our strategic location, exceptional infrastructure and private-public partnership culture are designed to offer a compelling value proposition to global investors,” Al Yousef added.

A major highlight of the forum was Oman's green

hydrogen ambitions. Thanks to its abundant natural resources — solar radiation, wind and available land — Oman aims to become a top global exporter of green hydrogen. According to Al Yousef, production is forecast to reach one million tonnes annually by 2030, scaling up to 8.5 million tonnes by 2050.

“This positions Oman among the world's top five hydrogen producers by 2030,” Qais said.

“We are embracing the future with open arms, building new industries that are not only sustainable but also highly competitive.”

The forum also spotlighted the Sultanate of Oman's macroeconomic resilience.

Qais cited the projected GDP growth of 3.4% for 2025 — outpacing many major economies — and foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows that have surged to between \$77 billion and \$80 billion by the end of 2024, representing a

17% increase over the past two years.

Global rating agencies have taken notice. S&P Global Ratings upgraded Oman's sovereign credit rating to BBB- with a stable outlook last September, marking the sixth upgrade in just two years.

Supporting the investment environment, the government has launched initiatives like the Oman Investment Authority's Future Fund Oman and expanded financing solutions through the Development Bank, offering highly competitive rates to entrepreneurs and enterprises alike.

Capping his remarks, Qais reflected on the spirit of exploration that has long defined Oman, invoking the boldness of ancient Omani navigators who ventured into uncharted waters.

“As our ancestors taught us, success lies in embracing innovation and taking calculated risks,” Al Yousef said.

“Through this Advantage Oman Forum, we offer a splendid showcase for the opportunities flourishing in this New and Renewed Renaissance — our Renaissance 2.0.”

The Advantage Oman Forum marks a milestone moment for Oman's positioning on the global investment map, signaling the country's readiness to lead in a world shaped by resilience, sustainability and innovation.

Oman to continue oil and gas production with cleaner approach

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

OMAN'S Minister of Energy and Minerals, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, emphasised the Sultanate of Oman's continued commitment to producing oil and gas as long as there is a global need for these resources, but with a key distinction: the nation will adopt cleaner, more sustainable methods for their production.

Taking part in a panel discussion at the Advantage Oman Forum on Sunday, Al Aufi explained that Oman will balance its ambitious energy transition targets with a commitment to producing oil and gas in an environmentally responsible manner.

“While we are not stopping or slowing down hydrocarbon production, we will do so in a much cleaner way,” Al Aufi remarked. “For instance, we have set a target to eliminate routine flaring by 2030 and we are working

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, with fellow panelists, deliberating on Oman's decarbonisation commitments and achievements on Sunday.

to reduce methane emissions in the same timeframe.”

Al Aufi also shared details of Oman's ongoing energy transition, highlighting the integration of renewable energy solutions into the oil and gas sector.

As part of this effort, oil and gas companies are being encouraged to adopt renewables to power their hydrocarbon operations, transitioning away from

traditional electricity sources.

Solar thermal energy is also being harnessed to support enhanced oil recovery (EOR) operations in some parts of the country, he added.

Methanation — the process of converting carbon dioxide into methane through hydrogenation — is another area under active exploration.

An initial pilot project will

focus on using CO₂ collected from industries and combining it with hydrogen to create synthetic natural gas for potential use in LNG production, Al Aufi explained.

In his comments, Al Aufi also reaffirmed Oman's commitment to greener mobility solutions. The country is actively pursuing hydrogen-powered and electric vehicles to reduce the carbon impact of transport within the oil and gas sector.

The government is in the final stages of assessing hydrogen trucking, while electric vehicles are being introduced for short-distance travel. Significantly, the government is also focusing on CO₂ capture and sequestration to reduce emissions from industries that are difficult to decarbonise.

Through advanced projects, Oman is capturing CO₂ and storing it underground, with initial pilots showing that 60-70 per cent of the CO₂ injected stays sequestered, further advancing the country's

climate goals.

These initiatives are part of Oman's broader circular economy approach, where waste is minimised and existing resources are re-used to create additional value.

For example, gas that was once flared is now being used to generate electricity, cutting emissions while increasing efficiency across industrial operations.

“We are not just reducing waste; we are creating new economic opportunities for Oman,” Al Aufi concluded, underscoring the importance of balancing economic growth with sustainability.

Also taking part in the panel discussion were Dr Abdullah al Amri, Chairman — Environment Authority, Hilmi Panigoro, President-Director — MedcoEnergi and Luigi Di Maio, EU Special Representative for the GCC; and Najla al Jamali, Chief Executive — OQ Alternative Energy, moderated the session.

ADVERTORIALS



This confirmation comes following a series of specialised technical workshops organised by OETC.

OETC ENSURES
READINESS AND
PREPAREDNESS
OF ITS SYSTEMS

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to enhance the reliability and sustainability of the electricity transmission network, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), a member of the Nama Group, has confirmed its full readiness and the preparedness of its technical teams and operational systems to respond to the expected increase in energy demand during the summer of 2025, which is anticipated to see a significant rise in loads by more than 10%.

This confirmation comes following a series of specialised technical workshops organised by OETC, aimed at reviewing summer load forecasts, discussing best practices for economically efficient operation of generation units and showcasing innovative technical solutions that can support the efficiency of operations and enhance the stability of the electrical network across the Sultanate of Oman’s governorates.

The workshops included reviews of key new projects and Grid Stations that have recently entered or are expected to enter service before the summer.

Notably, the 400 kV overhead lines project connecting Ibri and Al Rustaq to Al Jafnayn in Muscat Governorate was highlighted for its role in improving network performance. The sessions also covered the condition of assets that underwent meticulous maintenance, discussed the challenges faced by technical teams during maintenance operations and explored the effective solutions implemented to overcome them.

Additionally, the workshops addressed topics related to OETC’s five-year plans to develop the network and strengthen its infrastructure.

Eng Sultan al Rawahi, General Manager of the Load Dispatch Center (LDC) at OETC, stated regarding the readiness of teams and electrical systems: “All vital systems and technical teams at the company are fully prepared to operate with high efficiency during the upcoming period.

With more than 1000 megawatts of clean solar energy added, the production capacity from renewable sources has increased to over 1550 megawatts. This will significantly impact power distribution operations, diversify energy sources and address the challenges of integrating them into the network.

This ensures continued service at the highest levels of quality and reliability throughout the summer, a season that typically witnesses a marked increase in power demand across all sectors”.

Al Rawahi added: “OETC is committed to reviewing and monitoring all operational processes to ensure they are implemented according to the highest standards of quality and efficiency, with the goal of enhancing the sustainability of the electricity network across Oman.

These efforts include training campaigns, field visits and development studies aimed at improving the capabilities of technical teams, increasing the adoption of modern technologies and embracing innovative, smart solutions aligned with sector developments”.

AWASR
TELECOM
SPONSOR AT
29TH
MUSCAT
INTERNATIONAL
BOOK FAIR
2025

MUSCAT: Awasr, the leading fiber-optic broadband service provider in Oman, is proud to announce its participation as the official Telecom Sponsor of the highly anticipated 29th Muscat International Book Fair, taking place from April 24 to May 3, 2025 at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre.

While Awasr’s sponsorship focuses on supporting the infrastructure and overall experience of the book fair, the company is particularly excited to highlight Ashal, its complimentary educational platform available to all Awasr customers.

This initiative underscores Awasr’s deep commitment to fostering education and providing

valuable resources to families across the Sultanate of Oman.

“Awasr is delighted to be the Telecom Sponsor of the 29th Muscat International Book Fair,” said Eng Adnan al Alawi, CEO of Awasr. “We believe that providing access to quality education is paramount. Ashal represents our commitment to going beyond just providing internet connectivity.

We want to empower our customers with tools that support their growth and development, and we are proud to offer this platform completely free of charge.”

Visitors to Awasr’s booth, located at the book fair, will have the opportunity to learn more about Awasr’s cutting-edge fiber-optic

technology and its wide range of internet packages designed to meet the diverse needs of homes and businesses across Oman.

Awasr team will be on hand to answer questions, provide demonstrations, and offer exclusive promotions during the book fair.

“We believe that access to information and knowledge is crucial in today’s digital age,” added Eugen Comendant, Awasr’s Chief Commercial Officer. “Our partnership with the Muscat International Book Fair reflects our dedication to empowering individuals through connectivity and supporting initiatives that promote learning and cultural enrichment.”

Lexus introduces all-new
and powerful LX 700h

BUILT TO TACKLE rough terrains, Lexus is pleased to announce a new addition to the flagship LX SUV series: the all-new LX 700h, featuring an advanced hybrid system.

The introduction of this new LX trim highlights Lexus’ commitment to bringing the best-in-class innovative and luxury products for enriching the ownership experience for its customers. As powerful as ever, the LX features a twin turbocharged 3.5L V6 engine, producing 341 horsepower and 790 Nm of torque, paired with a 10-speed automatic transmission.

The new hybrid system increases fuel efficiency to 10.6 km/l and reduces carbon emissions to 213 g/km. The hybrid control system intelligently manages the transition between engine-only and motor-only modes, optimising performance based on driving conditions.

The new Lexus LX 700h prioritises reliability and durability, ensuring excellent performance both on-road and off-road. In line with Lexus’ brand



The introduction of this new LX trim highlights Lexus’ commitment to bringing the best-in-class innovative and luxury products.

philosophy and its efforts towards achieving a net-zero carbon future, this was the only model in the Lexus lineup that did not have a hybrid option.

Marking the start of its electrification journey in the Middle East as part of the Lexus Overtrail project, the LX hybrid combines signature comfort with a range of lifestyle-enhancing

options. The driver-focused cockpit features a Panoramic View Monitor with Multi-Terrain Mode, four cameras, rain-sensing front and rear intermittent wipers, a smart entry system and a head-up display to provide confidence and control.

Immerse into elevated luxury with ambient lighting, an illuminated entry system,

premium leather seats and ventilated sporty front seats for all passengers with USB Chargers.

Additional features include a wireless charger for the front row and a 10-speaker premium surround sound system with Apple and Android compatibility for seamless connectivity.

Safety remains a top priority at Lexus, thanks to its advanced safety system and Lexus Safety Sense 3.0, which consists of a Pre-Collision System, Lane Departure Alert, Lane Tracing Assist, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Auto High Beam and other notable features.

Beloved in over 90 countries worldwide, the LX also offers a variety of exhilarating trim levels, including the 7-seater LX Turbo Sport, 5-seater LX Sports Edition and the confidence-inspiring 4-seater Lexus Granduer or Kuro, each meticulously crafted to provide a refined driving experience.

Lexus’ LX series is known for its compelling blend of luxury, power and rugged capability — the 2025 LX models continue that legacy.

MHD AUTOMOBILES BRINGS ALFA ROMEO EXPERIENCE WITHIN REACH

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles, the exclusive distributor of Alfa Romeo in the Sultanate of Oman, is proud to announce limited-time special pricing on select Alfa Romeo models. This exclusive offer presents a rare opportunity for automotive enthusiasts to own a piece of Italian performance and design excellence at exceptional value.

The Alfa Romeo Tonale Ti, a compact SUV blending everyday practicality with signature Italian flair, is now available from RO 13,995. Built for urban living and inspired by Alfa Romeo’s racing heritage, the Tonale is the perfect introduction to the brand.

The Alfa Romeo Giulia Veloce, a sports sedan that strikes a perfect balance between elegance and athleticism, is now priced from RO 18,995. With rear-wheel drive and a driver-centric



cockpit, it offers a dynamic, engaging driving experience.

The Alfa Romeo Stelvio Veloce, known for its commanding road presence and precision handling, is now available from RO 21,995.

Equipped with all-wheel drive, it delivers refined performance with confidence and comfort.

For enthusiasts seeking uncompromising performance, the Giulia Quadrifoglio delivers pure driving exhilaration with its 2.9L twin-turbocharged V6 engine — a true sports sedan starting from RO 33,995.

For those who desire the same racing DNA with the versatility of an SUV, the Stelvio Quadrifoglio combines commanding road presence with precision handling, starting from RO 36,995.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles LLC, commented: “Alfa Romeo is more than a brand — it’s a symbol of passion, performance and timeless design. With these special prices, we’re inviting more customers in Oman to experience the thrill and prestige of Alfa Romeo ownership.”

Sohar International wins ‘Bank of the Year in Digital Innovation’ award

MUSCAT: In recognition of its outstanding contributions to advancing digital banking through the use of cutting-edge technology to enhance customer experience, streamline operations and drive transformation across its services, Sohar International was honoured with the prestigious ‘Bank of the Year in Digital Innovation’ Award at the DLive Awards 2025.

The accolade was presented during the exclusive DLive Conference held at the JW Marriott Hotel. Under the compelling theme “The Next in Digital Innovation”, the event brought together more than 150 influential C-level executives, government dignitaries,



The bank reflects the bank’s unwavering dedication to spearheading transformative digital solutions within Oman’s banking sector.

technology innovators, industry specialists and digital transformation professionals.

Ahmed bin Ja’afar al Musallami, Governor of the Central Bank of Oman, graced the occasion as Chief Guest and delivered the keynote address. Representing Sohar International at the ceremony were Khalil Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Government and Private Banking Officer and Sajeel Bashiruddin, Chief Digital Officer — reflecting the bank’s unwavering dedication to spearheading transformative digital solutions within Oman’s banking sector.

Abdulwahid al Murshidi, CEO of Sohar International, said, “This recognition highlights

Sohar International’s strategic commitment to digital innovation — integrated across every function of our organisation. We strive to anticipate evolving customer expectations and respond with intelligent, user-centric solutions that drive both efficiency and experience.

By embedding advanced digital capabilities into our framework, we’ve fostered a culture of continuous improvement and agility.

Our transformation journey extends beyond systems and platforms; it delivers tangible impact for individuals, businesses and society at large, while contributing meaningfully to Oman’s economic development.

BUSINESS

SPACEFIELD



Rendered image of the Horus 4 rocket.

ETLAQ TO LAUNCH FIRST ROCKET OF THE YEAR THIS WEEK

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

ETLAQ, the first spaceport in Oman and the MENA region, is set to conduct its first launch of the year, as part of a series of experimental rocket launches from its site in Al Duqm on Wednesday, April 30, 2025.

The mission, **UNITY-1**, will debut UK-based Advanced Rocket Technologies’ (ART) Horus 4, a reusable rocket designed to reach about 75m in altitude and a top speed of 24 metres per second, powered by solid motors and targeting a soft, propulsive landing.

Speaking at Spacetech Gulf earlier this month, the CEO of ART, Saif Zaharan, shared the company’s enthusiasm of being the first public mission in Oman.

He added that the mission represents the company’s inaugural launch, which aims to demonstrate reusability while garnering operational experience.

Beyond the technical test however, the launch represents a showcase that aims to spark interest in the space field regionally, he noted.

The launch of the mission will also coincide with Etlaq’s launch of the fan zone experience, which will allow members of the public to participate in activities for three days prior to the expected launch.

According to officials from Etlaq, the experience, dubbed as “Etlaq Fx” will include hospitality tents, a live broadcast area, merchandise stands, outdoor viewing spaces and activities for different age groups.

The expected launch of **UNITY-1** is part of Etlaq’s recently announced experimental rocket launching programme, Genesis. The programme aims to “develop Oman’s space launch culture before full-scale commercial operations in 2027.”

The spaceport is expected to launch five missions in total this year.

TRA ISSUES NEW BILLING REGULATIONS

MUSCAT: The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued new Billing Regulations aimed at standardising billing practices across Oman’s telecom sector, ensuring greater accuracy,

transparency and compliance with international standards.

Divided into five chapters, the regulations cover definitions and general provisions; licensee obligations; tariffs, cost rates and payment; auditing and

performance measurement; and administrative penalties.

Key provisions require telecom operators to:

1. Establish accurate billing procedures and retain usage records for at least two years.
2. Maintain a register of key risks to billing systems and implement measures to address them.
3. Integrate billing systems effectively with related systems.

4. Apply technical and information security controls based on best practices.
5. Develop and document billing system test plans, address any errors found and conduct independent audits under specified guidelines.

The TRA said the regulations are designed to protect consumer rights, promote fair competition, enhance service quality and increase transparency in the telecom sector. — ONA

New initiatives strengthen financial management

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 27

THE Ministry of Finance hosted a meeting in Dhofar Governorate on Sunday, April 27, 2025, to showcase its latest projects and programmes, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen communication with regional directorates and local government entities.

The session witnessed the participation of a number of officials representing regional departments across the governorate.

Speaking during the event, Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, stressed the importance of institutional communication and the integration of government efforts.

He highlighted that the Ministry’s projects and initiatives are closely aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, supporting the drive towards effective, accountable and sustainable financial governance.

“This meeting is part of our ongoing commitment to strengthening coordination with regional authorities and ensuring that the Ministry’s objectives are well understood across all levels of government,” said Al Harthy. “Our projects aim to provide a strong foundation for public financial management that is resilient, transparent and geared towards national development priorities.”

Reflecting on recent achievements, he pointed out that the Ministry has made tangible progress in advancing the financial work system over the past few years through the launch of several strategic initiatives.

These efforts, he noted, have resulted in a significant reduction in the ratio of public debt to GDP, a lowered dependence



The Dhofar meeting was part of a broader strategy to raise awareness of financial governance initiatives, promote transparency and foster best practices across all levels of government administration.

on external financing and the realisation of direct financial savings that have allowed for greater investment in development projects.

“We have witnessed positive outcomes as a result of these reforms,” he said.

“The reduction in public debt relative to GDP and the lower reliance on foreign borrowing reflect our commitment to sustainable fiscal practices.

Furthermore, the financial savings we achieved have been channelled towards supporting key development priorities and enhancing public services.”

He highlighted the importance of the next phase, particularly given the volatility seen in global financial markets.

He stressed that the Ministry is determined to continue efforts to diversify Oman’s sources of income beyond oil

revenues, maintain prudent expenditure management and safeguard the delivery of essential services without disruption.

“We are fully aware of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead,” he said. “Strengthening non-oil revenue streams and maintaining strict expenditure control will remain at the heart of our financial management strategy to ensure that essential public services continue to be provided efficiently and sustainably.”

The meeting served as a platform to review several of the Ministry’s strategic initiatives that seek to reinforce the effectiveness and sustainability of public financial management.

Among the projects and programmes presented were the Confirmed Government Financial System, designed to standardise and improve financial operations across government entities; and the Confirmed Treasury Account, aimed at ensuring greater control and efficiency over public funds.

In addition, the Ministry introduced the National Registry for Government Assets, which seeks to consolidate and better manage the state’s assets; and outlined its efforts in implementing Programme and Performance Budgeting to link public spending more directly to measurable results and policy objectives.

Officials also discussed the updated frameworks for the Pricing of Government Services, efforts to tighten the Control of Public Expenditure, the ongoing Update of the Executive Regulation of the Financial Law; and the rollout of the new Beneficiary Services System intended to improve service delivery and responsiveness to citizens’ needs.

Officials affirm strength of US-Oman FTA despite customs duties

MUSCAT: Omani and US officials have reaffirmed the continued strength and benefits of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the Sultanate of Oman and the United States, despite the recent imposition of a 10% customs duty on some Omani exports.

Signed in 2006 and in force since 2009, the FTA has significantly bolstered trade and investment ties between the two countries, providing Omani products easier access to the US market.

Pankaj Khimji, Advisor for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce,

Industry and Investment Promotion, highlighted that both sides are committed to enhancing bilateral trade without barriers.

“Dialogue remains crucial to resolving any trade issues,” he said, noting that Omani exports to the US in 2024 exceeded RO 463 million, while American imports into Oman totaled more than RO 506 million.

US Ambassador to Oman, Anna Escrohema, described the FTA as “a strategic asset that must be continuously renewed and expanded.” She pointed out that US direct investment in Oman had surpassed \$16 billion by the



The FTA has significantly bolstered trade and investment ties between the two countries, providing Omani products easier access to the US market.

third quarter of 2024, making the US the second-largest investor in the Sultanate of Oman.

Khalid bin Saeed al Shuaibi, Chairman of the National Programme for Private Sector Development and Foreign Trade (Nazdaher), clarified that the FTA remains valid.

He explained that Omani products exported to the US are not subject to standard customs duties, except for the additional 10% applied across all imports. Negotiations are ongoing to address and potentially ease these charges.

Meanwhile, Saud bin Ahmed al Nahari, a board member of the Oman Chamber of

Commerce and Industry (OCCI), acknowledged that although the duties have had some impact on Omani exporters, they are “not worrisome at present.”

He emphasized that the Chamber’s newly established trade office in the United States is actively supporting Omani businesses in navigating the US market.

Al Nahari also announced that an Omani trade delegation will participate in the “Choose the American Market” exhibition in the US this May. The initiative aims to explore export opportunities and promote Oman as an attractive investment destination. — ONA

WORSE EXPECTATIONS

Britons’ confidence in economy falls to lowest



Confidence among people in Britain about the economy over the next 12 months has fallen to the lowest on record, polling firm Ipsos MORI said.

75% of Britons expect the economy to get worse over the next 12 months, up 8 percentage points since March, Ipsos said. Just 7% of Britons think the economy will improve over the next year, while 13% thought it would stay the same. — Reuters

GOOD START

‘Approach trade talks with US cautiously’



South Korea’s Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun said on Saturday that South Korea plans to approach trade talks with the United States “calmly and cautiously.”

The negotiations were off to a good start but South Korea will closely monitor the progress in trade talks between the US and other countries, Ahn said after returning from Washington. — Reuters

LENDER PLANS

World Bank eyes energy financing options



The World Bank endorsed the lender’s plans to explore options to expand energy access, including potential financing for nuclear energy, in a move in line with its directives to broaden energy financing by United States President Donald Trump’s administration.

The group’s statement also endorsed the development lender’s gender and equality strategy. — Reuters

OPINION

Listing in the US would cost double, warns LSE



ANDY JALIL

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

THE London Stock Exchange (LSE) is upping its campaign to attract more floats, warning IPO candidates that a US listing could prove expensive. In a document shared with bankers and IPO hopefuls, the LSE said underwriting fees for LSE listings can be more than double those levied by advisors in the UK. US fees typically range between 6pc and 7pc, while cost in the UK are normally between 3pc and 5pc, the LSE’s analysis found. It added that companies face a “lower litigation risk” if they are listed in London. The LSE said 3.3pc of all US-listed firms were sued in 2023, with 215 new securities class action lawsuits over the year. In comparison, the LSE found there have been just five UK class actions against London-listed firms since 2008. The LSE analysis, ‘Mythbusting – UK vs US’, marks the bourse’s latest attempt to challenge perceptions that companies get higher valuations and better liquidity floating in New York rather than in London. A slew of big names have snubbed the LSE to debut on the New York stock exchange and Nasdaq in recent years, while several large firms already trading in London are considering moving their listings overseas. Shares in Cambridge-based chip designer Arm have surged 96pc since it listed in

Nasdaq in spite of UK government lobbying efforts in September 2023. Its market capitalisation of \$125.1bn would make Arm the fifth-biggest company on the FTSE 100 if it were listed in London. While acknowledging the success of Arm and London-based trading services provider Marex, the LSE found that most of the 20 UK companies that have raised more than \$100m through US listings since 2014 have struggled to boost their share prices. It said four of the companies are trading higher, nine have delisted and the remaining seven are trading lower by an average of 85pc as of the end of February. The LSE analysed four large firms that have switched their primary listing from London to New York in recent years. It said it found that movements seen in discounts or premiums to peers have largely been “moderate”. It added that this suggested any changes in valuation are due to “industry trends rather than the change in listing”. Other findings include that London has a more diverse range of investors than the US, inclusion in Britain’s FTSE indices is more likely than America’s S&P 500, and liquidity is broadly the same in both countries. Last year was the worst period for London IPOs since the financial crisis,

A slew of big names have snubbed the LSE to debut on the New York stock exchange and Nasdaq in recent years, while several large firms already trading in London are considering moving their listings overseas.

and policymakers have introduced urgent reforms designed to shore up the market. Nevertheless, despite the changes just four companies have listed in London so far this year. Singapore-based fast fashion retailer Shein and Swiss security group Verisure are among the largest companies looking to IPO this year, in what will be a test for London’s allure compared to other venues. It was reported in TheTimes last month, that recent market volatility could derail Santander-backed payments firm Ebury’s plans for a £2bn listing in London. LSE has added a former equities boss at Barclays to its board as it looks to quell fears about its health. Todd Sandoz has joined LSE as a non-executive director, a spokesperson for the London Stock Exchange Group confirmed. His appointment follows ex-Morgan Stanley banker Stephen O’Connor’s departure at the end of last year after 11 years on the LSE board. Sandoz was chief risk officer at Hurricane Capital, a New York based multi-manager hedge fund. He joined Hurricane in August 2023 after stepping down as global co-head of equities at Barclays that February. The UK bank hired Sandoz to lead its Americas equities unit in 2018 before putting him in charge of its wider stock trading operation in 2020.

OBESITY DRUG BOOM HAS A NEW PECKING ORDER

BY AIMEE DONNELLAN

THE pecking order of the obesity drug market is shifting. Eli Lilly, the \$815 billion maker of blockbuster weight-loss drugs Mounjaro and Zepbound, is trading at more than double the valuation multiple of Wegovy maker Novo Nordisk, whereas once the two were equally richly valued. It will be hard for the Danish group to close the gap. The companies run by David Ricks and Lars Fruergaard Jorgensen are long-standing rivals in diabetes. They have lately benefitted from the boom in GLP-1 drugs, which numb users’ food cravings and enable rapid weight loss. As recently as April 2023, both were roughly equally valued at over 30 times forward earnings, as per LSEG data. Novo Nordisk’s fortunes turned last December when its hotly anticipated treatment CagriSema failed to meet expectations on weight loss and tolerability. The drugmaker’s share price has since collapsed, and it is worth just \$269 billion, a third of Lilly’s market value. Eli Lilly has also faced challenges. Its sales have been slower than expected due to shortages and its forward earnings multiple has fallen from the peak of 57 to 35 times, as per LSEG data. But the US group is trading at a significant premium to Novo Nordisk: the latter now has just a humdrum 14 times multiple, in line with ordinary pharma group AstraZeneca. This gap between the two is down to Eli Lilly’s superior treatments. In head-to-head trials, users lost more weight using the US drugmaker’s obesity medication. This year, Eli Lilly’s diabetes division, which includes obesity sales, is expected to grow by 41%, as per Visible Alpha forecasts, versus 25% for Novo Nordisk’s comparable business. Eli Lilly has also had some big wins. Earlier this month, the US drug giant revealed details of a trial of its obesity pill orforglipron which added \$100 billion to its market value. This year it will release trial data for new medication retatrutide, known as “triple G” because it targets three hormones instead of just one. Users lost 24% of their weight in an earlier trial, potentially making it the most promising weight-loss drug to date. Novo Nordisk is fighting back. It’s looking to get regulatory approval to sell a weight-loss pill in the US this year and is also hoping GLP-1 drugs can help treat Alzheimer’s. Yet the obesity market will also see new entrants like Roche join the fray soon. And Novo Nordisk may be more vulnerable given its drugs’ lower efficacy, which may dent its valuation further. As competition bites, Jorgensen will come under pressure to find new revenue streams beyond obesity and diabetes, which accounted for over 90% of last year’s \$44 billion of sales. The risk of expensive M&A may be one more thing for investors to worry about. — Reuters

The emerging global labour market landscape

GLOBAL developments and disruptions in the world’s technological, economic and geopolitical sectors present ramifications for industry and corporations and significantly impact the global labour market. Increased cost of living, rising unemployment rates and inflation affect job creation. The sluggish global growth, which is now exacerbated by the trade war, is expected to displace 1.6 million jobs. According to the World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report 2025, the pivotal factors that shape, influence and transform the global labour market by 2030, individually and in combination, are technological advancements, economic uncertainty, demographic shifts, geopolitical escalations and the green transition. The global changes are expected to create 78 million new jobs after accounting for 170 million new jobs and displacing 92 million. The global job market has a few surprises in store for the fastest-growing and fastest-declining roles; for instance, there will be an increase in the demand for frontline job roles, care economy roles, technology-related roles; and green and energy-related jobs. Clerical, administrative and secretarial will experience the most significant decline in jobs. There will also be a decline in bank tellers, postal and data entry roles. It is estimated that, on average, the working class can expect two-fifths (39%) of their existing skill sets to be modified or outdated between 2025 and 2030. Delivery drivers, building construction workers, salespersons and food processing workers are among the fastest-growing job types in the next five years. The education sector will experience an increase; and university and higher education teachers; and secondary education teachers are also predicted to be among the biggest job creators. In addition, there will be an increase in software and applications developers, general and operations managers and project



People wait in line to enter a job fair at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Uniondale, New York, in this illustration photo. — 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.

managers, who are among the job categories driving the most net job growth. Technological advancements in artificial intelligence, analytics, robotics and automation are predicted to have a divergent effect on rising and declining jobs in the global labour market over the next five years. The technological developments are associated with three fast-growing skills: AI, big data networks, cybersecurity and technological literacy. It is predicted that technology will have the most immensely divergent impact. Technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics and automation will simultaneously create and displace jobs. Geopolitical and geoeconomic trends; and increased trade restrictions will move businesses to re-shoring, regionalisation and de-globalisation. The ever-evolving landscape of global supply chains and international trade will influence the labour market. These developments will increase the demand for business intelligence and analytics professionals, strategic advisors; and supply chain and logistics specialists. Climate change mitigation and green transition will also transform businesses in the next five years. This transformative trend will push the demand for roles like renewable energy engineers, environmental engineers and electric and autonomous vehicle specialists. The global labour market also

witnessed two opposite trends across economies. Higher-income and advanced economies will witness an ageing and declining workforce. However, income groups in emerging economies will witness expanding economies, necessitating teaching, coaching, mentoring and talent management skills. There will be growth in healthcare jobs like nursing and old-age care. Moving into the future, work tasks will be a function of humans, machines and algorithms. The proportion of how a task will be executed will undergo a sea of change. For instance, a task will be completed 47% by human involvement, 23% by machines and 30% by combinations of human-centric and machine approaches. Addressing this skill gap is one of the biggest challenges businesses face in the ever-changing global labour market. The gap requires both upskilling and reskilling. In the current context, along with technology skills, analytical thinking, resilience, flexibility, agility and leadership will not only remain essential skills but will also gain in importance and popularity in the years to come. The landscape of jobs and skills is transforming year by year. Businesses, industries, governments and workers worldwide must develop a nuanced approach to workforce and talent strategies to make informed decisions on managing the transforming global labour market and skills landscape.

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A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, BSc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet). Contact: +968 98510880.

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

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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

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: Ibrahimsaw52@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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ART/LIFE



A R T

OMANI ARTIST EXPLORES IMPACT OF INHERITED NARRATIVES AMIDST REGION'S BIGGEST ART FAIR^{>20}

LIFESTYLE

Crumbs! Should French bakeries open on May 1?



BUYING A CRUSTY, freshly baked baguette should be one of the simplest and most satisfying daily rituals in France. However, this tradition is complicated on May 1, a national holiday when bakers face unannounced labour inspections, fines and even prosecution if they choose to open on this traditional workers' day off. Legal confusion surrounds whether bakeries can operate on May 1, with inconsistent rulings and various loopholes.

Recently, five bakers from the western Vendee region were taken to court for violating these rules on May 1, 2024, after a labour inspection caught them in the act. This case gained significant media attention in France, but the bakers were acquitted last week. In response, the government is now backing legislation to clarify that bakeries and other essential businesses, like florists, can open on May 1 as long as employees come to work voluntarily. Labour and Health Minister Catherine Vautrin emphasised that an employee's presence on this day needed to be "voluntary." She noted, "This text is not limited to bakers; it will bring clarity and legal certainty for all professions concerned."

Centrist senators in the Senate are introducing the bill, aiming to adapt "the law to the realities on the ground." It would permit essential businesses to operate on May 1, similar to existing Sunday openings. Supporters of the bill, including senators Annick Billon and Herve Marseille, argue that while the holiday's non-working status remains intact, certain activities — like those of bakers and florists — are integral to daily life and cultural heritage.

Conversely, the hardline CGT trade union opposes any challenge to May 1's status as a public holiday and supports labour inspectors in enforcing it. Some bakeries have managed to open on May 1 thanks to loopholes, such as supplying institutions like prisons or care homes. However, inspections can lead to fines that are crippling for small businesses — ranging from 750 euros for regular employees to 1,500 euros for minors. Fabrice Collet, owner of Maison Collet bakery in Paris, faces this dilemma each year, noting that sales significantly increase on May 1 despite the associated risks. — AFP

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



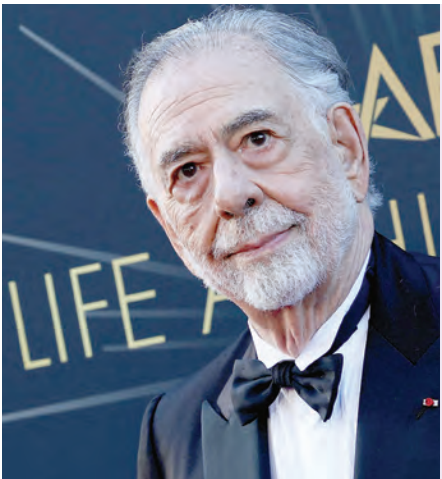
HERITAGE

A piece of a fresco painting showing head of a man is on display at the National Museum of Afghanistan in Kabul. — AFP



MUSIC

Colombian singer Maluma performs on stage during a concert of his 'Medallo in the Map' tour in Medellin, Colombia. — AFP



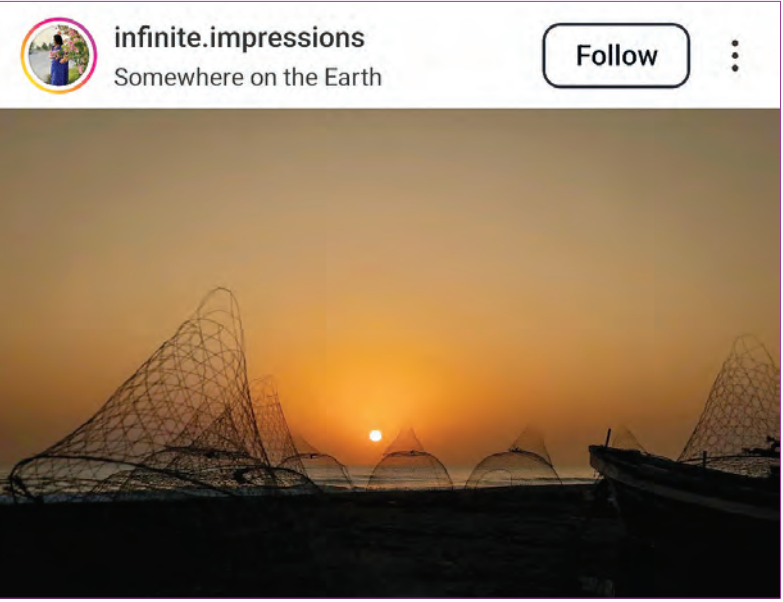
FILM

US filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola attends the 50th American Film Institute (AFI) Life Achievement Award ceremony at The Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



The Watcher

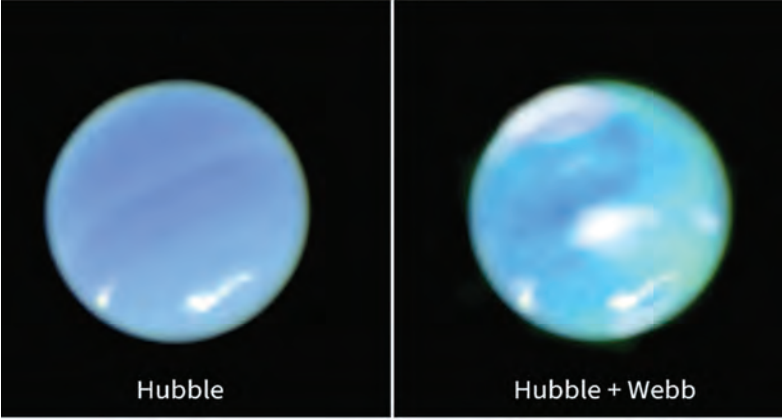


Beauty of Remote Places

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Auroras Are Spotted on Neptune for the First Time and Lead to a New Mystery



The vermilion, amethyst and jade ribbons of the northern and southern lights are some of Earth's most distinctive features. But our planet has no monopoly on auroras. Scientists have spied them throughout the solar system, weaving through the skies of Mars, Saturn, Jupiter and even on some of Jupiter's fiery and icy moons. Lights glow in the skies of Uranus, too. But auroras around our sun's most distant planet, Neptune, have long eluded astronomers. That has changed with the powerful infrared instruments aboard the James Webb Space Telescope. In a study in the journal Nature Astronomy, scientists reveal unique auroras that spill over either side of Neptune's equator, a contrast with the glowing gossamer seen arcing over other worlds' poles. Astronomers are thrilled to see the completion of an aurora-hunting quest

decades in the making. "Everyone is very excited to prove that it's there, just like we thought," said Rosie Johnson, a space physics researcher at Aberystwyth University in Wales who wasn't involved with the new study. This discovery will also allow scientists to study aspects of Neptune that have previously been out of reach. "They're using aurora to understand the shape of the planet's magnetic field, which is seeing the unseen," said Carl Schmidt, a planetary astronomer at Boston University who wasn't involved with the new study. "Astronomers have been trying to detect the aurora of Neptune for decades and each attempt has failed," said Henrik Melin, a planetary scientist at Northumbria University in England and one of the study's authors. — ROBIN GEORGE ANDREWS / NYT



A marvellous taste of La Traviata to come at ROHM this week

BY GEORGINA BENISON
PHOTOS KHALID AL BUSAIDI

THIS MONTH'S lunch music in the Opera Galleria — the final for this season — was a delightful romp through the well-known songs of Verdi's "La Traviata", inspired by Alexandre Dumas' "La Dame aux Camélias". The Royal Opera House Muscat Outreach team is hosting a series of pre-performance events this week to deepen understanding of the music and narrative of Giuseppe Verdi's iconic opera. Saturday's performance marked the first of these events. This free lunchtime recital featured just three understudies from Teatro Carlo Felice di Genova as soloists, providing a genuine treat for all in attendance.

The occasion was further enhanced by a stunning black dress created by Omani fashion design student Nehal al Khizairi, who secured second place in the ROHM "Violetta Project" Costume Sketch Competition. The dress was modelled by soprano Ana Oniani with flair. Celebrating Verdi's beloved score, one could not overlook the hearty rendition of the drinking song "Brindisi". To underscore the spirit of the celebration, Richoux Café provided both singers and the audience with glasses of juice to toast the occasion. Tenor Dario Prola emerged from the back of the atrium, delivering a robust introduction as Alfredo, harmonising with Ana Oniani's sweet soprano and the chorus — four men and one soprano — at the front with their rousing refrain. The love song 'Un di, felice, eterea' (one day, happy, ethereal) was movingly performed by Prola as Alfredo in a sincere declaration of love, the melody serving as a delicate theme throughout the opera. Ana, portraying Violetta, responded with youthful innocence in an amusing encounter, later blending their voices in a passionate duet.

Ana followed with the extended "E strano... Follie... Sempre Libera," showcasing dark, brooding colours in her voice alongside tender lyricism. She sang of her beating heart, echoing Alfredo's theme, demonstrating the impressive versatility and range of her voice. The 'La Follie' section displayed her remarkable coloratura technique, transitioning into an amused, jovial quality. Alfredo's voice, almost

Zingarelle e Mattadori". Two dancers from the Antonio Gades Company, Alvaro Madrid and Elena Ros, took centre stage as the gypsy and the matador, captivating the audience with their exquisite flamenco moves. Returning to the drama, Ana Oniani's recitative in "Addio del passato" was half spoken through plaintive tears, leading into the slow Aria she delivered with restrained sadness. Her acting skill matches her



mocking as it drifted from the gallery, was met with Ana's regained composure and light, playful tone. A striking contrast was provided by South Korean Byung Jun's rich, warm baritone as Violetta's father, Germont. In "Pura siccome un Angelo" (Yes, God gave me a daughter, pure as an angel), he extolled her beauty and youth with clear enunciation, imploring her to forsake Alfredo and return home. An emotional dialogue ensued between Ana and Jun, infused with anguish, yet their still posture lent a chilling dramatic intensity. Later, Jun exhibited his confident stage presence in Germont's famous "Di Provenza del mar" (Of Provence the sea, the soil that erased from your heart). An unaccompanied section near the end was beautifully poised and well placed. Joyously, this was followed by the quintet presenting a rousing "Coro di

vocal range in versatility. Violetta and Alfredo dream of far-off Paris in "Parigi o cara", a heartfelt duet which melted listeners' hearts. Prola's strong tenor complemented Ana's lyrical agility, leading to a perfectly matched acapella conclusion. Violetta's final Aria, "E' strano... Che! — Cessarono gli spasimi" (Strange; the painful spasms have ceased), was swift yet dramatic in her high tessitura, as she died in Alfredo's arms. There could be no better encore for this splendid matinée than a reprise of "Brindisi". Pianist Andrea Dindo returned to the Yamaha Grand after an hour of continuous accompaniment and all took a well-earned bow. The event concluded with an opportunity to join "Violetta and her friends" for lunch, courtesy of the generous invitation from Richoux Café, complimentary for ten lucky early birds.

FEATURES



Omani artist explores impact of inherited narratives amidst region’s biggest art fair

BY YERU EBUE

AS ARTISTS from around the globe gather for one of the region’s most significant art fairs, artist Mays al Moosawi emerges with a special preview of her artwork, embodying the spirit of creativity. With deep-rooted Omani and Iraqi heritage, Al Moosawi’s artistic journey is both personal and vibrant, weaving emotional narratives into her captivating pieces.

As Art Dubai continues to evolve as a preeminent venue for contemporary art, it has become a vital stage for showcasing a myriad of voices, including those of women artists. This year, while Mays al Moosawi’s solo exhibition runs concurrently with the fair, it highlights the opportunity for emerging talents to shine amidst one of the art world’s largest events.



Raised in a family steeped in artistry and creativity, Al Moosawi’s path to becoming a visual artist felt entirely organic. “Art was always the most natural way for me to make sense of the world,” she reflects. Initially, she pursued a degree in Illustration and Animation, but it was her decision to attend the Chelsea College of Arts in London for her Master’s degree in Fine Art that ignited a deeper exploration of her artistic identity.

The themes Al Moosawi explores are profoundly personal, often reflecting her current life experiences. Her latest body of work, showcased in a solo exhibition inspired by her connection with her inner child, consists of playful yet emotional pieces that feature female figures, animals and symbolic objects set against dreamlike backdrops. This series captures the essence of freedom and joy, inviting audiences to observe the dance of vulnerability and rediscovery. Incorporating threads and fabrics not only adds texture but also connects her work to cherished memories of home and the influential women in her life.

“My upbringing in Oman plays a significant role in my art,” Al Moosawi shares, highlighting how local colours, symbols and rituals inspire her creations. The exhibition reflects her journey through various countries, with pieces crafted during a residency in Germany, all



The dynamic setting provides an excellent chance for new artists to be seen by curators, organisers and art enthusiasts alike. Al Moosawi’s presence during the Art Dubai season underscores the significance of facilitating visibility for innovative and diverse perspectives within the creative community, amplifying the voices that contribute to the rich tapestry of global art.

As Al Moosawi prepared for the event, she found the process both exhilarating and daunting. The intimate nature of her work led to moments of self-doubt as she contemplated whether her pieces felt “finished.” However, she learned to embrace the rawness, understanding that not everything must conform to a conventional sense of completion. The reception has been overwhelmingly positive, with viewers resonating with her experiences of childhood and inherited narratives.

“I was touched by how connected people felt to the work,” she says, recounting interactions with collectors who expressed the emotional impact her art had on their lives. One poignant remark from an admirer echoed the essence of her work: it felt rare, authentic and deeply personal — an affirmation that reverberated within Al Moosawi’s artistic journey.

Looking ahead, Al Moosawi plans to embark on a residency in Failaka Island, Kuwait, an opportunity she

eagerly anticipates. For emerging artists eyeing the international stage, she offers a simple yet profound piece of advice: patience and persistence. Applying for residencies and engaging with communities are key to unlocking new avenues and opportunities.

In a world where comparative pressures can weigh heavily on artists, Al Moosawi has learned to appreciate the creative process’s complexity. “Not every piece will be perfect and that’s okay,” she wisely shares. Every stage, even the imperfect ones, contributes to the meaningful journey of being an artist.

REDEFINING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

As Art Dubai approaches its milestone 20th anniversary, the fair has made a landmark announcement with the appointment of two women to senior leadership positions, reinforcing the pivotal role of women in shaping the region’s cultural landscape. Alexie Glass-Kantor, previously of Artspace in Sydney, will assume the newly created role of Executive Director Curatorial, while Dunja Gottweis, a veteran of Art Basel, takes on the position of Director.

This year, Art Dubai featured around 120 exhibitors from over 60 cities, spotlighting artists and galleries from the Middle East, as well as underrepresented regions such as India, Iran and Morocco. The fair serves as a dynamic gathering for artists, collectors and enthusiasts alike, facilitating



conversations through a robust programme of talks, workshops and panels.

During a conversation on the sidelines of Art Dubai, both Alexie and Dunja expressed their enthusiasm for bringing their unique perspectives to the regional art scene. They are committed to finding innovative ways to connect with a more diverse array of talent and aim to enhance the visibility of Middle Eastern art through engaging programmes.

Alexie particularly highlighted her eagerness to forge partnerships, especially with Oman. She is keen to engage with art advocates in the country to explore new collaborative opportunities that could strengthen ties within the regional art community.

The Art Dubai Group’s expansion aims to bolster global partnerships and institutional growth. Glass-Kantor’s expertise in developing cultural programmes will contribute to this vision, while Gottweis will oversee the fair’s operations starting in 2026. Meanwhile, current executive director Benedetta Ghione and del Val will continue to enhance business development strategies.

This transformative leadership change underscores women’s growing influence in the art world, as they guide the future of Dubai’s thriving cultural scene amidst increasing international interest and investment.