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Observer

SUNRISE 05:23 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 03:58 AM

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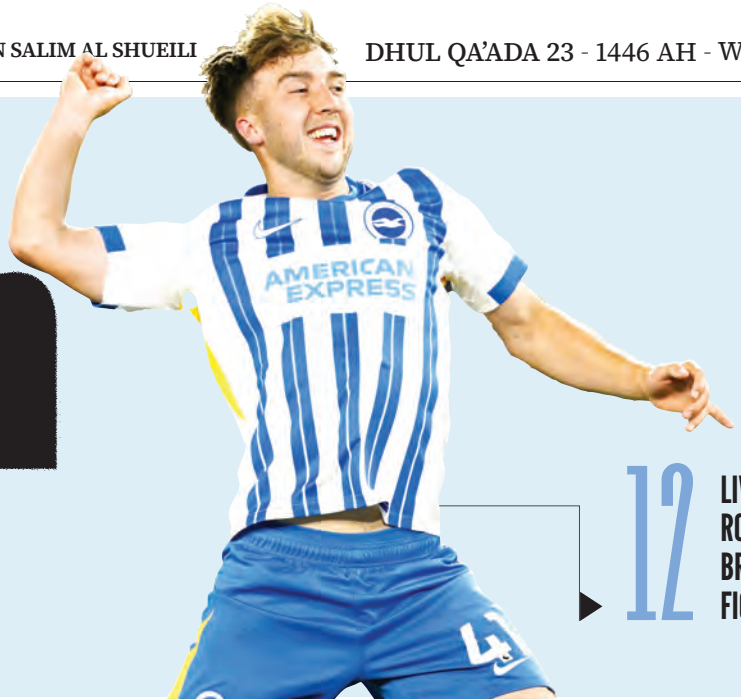
ASR 03:30 PM

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ISHA 08:09 PM



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PAGES 20 BAISAS 200



12

LIVERPOOL
ROCKED BY
BRIGHTON'S LATE
FIGHTBACK

INBRIEF

HM GREET'S NEW ROMANIA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Nicusor Dan on his victory in the Romanian presidential elections. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Dan to realise further progress and prosperity for his country's peoples. His Majesty also wished the relations of cooperation between Oman and Romania further growth.

ROYAL CAVALRY IN ROYAL WINDSOR HORSE SHOW



The Royal Cavalry of the Royal Court Affairs (RCA) concluded its participation in the Royal Windsor Horse Show, held at the grounds of the British Royal Windsor Castle, with the involvement of equestrian teams from several countries worldwide. The Royal Cavalry participated under the theme 'The Sultanate of Oman: Jewel of Arabia', during which its male and female riders presented diverse displays of traditional Omani equestrian arts, such as 'Ardha' galloping and horse hypnosis show, accompanied by Omani, Arabic and international musical pieces performed by the Royal Cavalry Band.

DETAILS ON P12

TROPICAL SYSTEM LIKELY IN WEEKEND

Weather forecasts indicate the formation of a tropical system over the eastern Arabian Sea on the weekend but there will be no direct or indirect impact on the Sultanate of Oman over the next five days, according to the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre. The centre's specialists are closely monitoring the developments of the weather system. The Sultanate of Oman has witnessed high temperatures and humidity in recent days, with temperatures above 45 degrees Celsius and an 85 per cent humidity level recorded. Weather forecasts indicate the possibility of low clouds forming on the coasts with chances of scattered thunderstorms over Al Hajar Mountains.

14,000 PILGRIMS TO PERFORM HAJ

As many as 14,000 pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman will perform the holy Haj this year and 13,944 of them have already completed the requirements for Haj, while 56 are still completing their procedures, according to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. This was announced during a press conference held by the Omani Haj Mission to unveil a number of indicators, statistics and improvements for this year's Haj season under the auspices of Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and the Head of the Omani Haj Mission. "The Haj quota for the Sultanate of Oman this year has been maintained at 14,000 pilgrims, with 13,530 Omani and 470 resident pilgrims. The total quota has been distributed among the governorates based on population density (number of residents) of each governorate aged 18 and above," said Al Rashdi. DETAILS ON P5

Majlis approves draft real estate registry law

MUSCAT: The Majlis Ash'shura approved the amendments of the Law of Arbitration in Civil and Commercial Disputes and the draft Real Estate Registry Law and referred them to the State Council, at its tenth regular meeting held under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, on Tuesday. The council discussed the

amendments to some provisions of the Law of Arbitration in Civil and Commercial Disputes, which was referred by the government. Dr Ahmed bin Ali al Saadi, Chairman of the Legislative and Legal Committee, explained that the amendments aim to enhance the effectiveness of arbitration procedures to support the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to adopt

international best practices in the field of dispute resolution. The council also discussed the draft real estate registry law referred by the government. Dr Ahmed bin Ali al Saadi, Chairman of the Legislative and Legal Committee, reviewed the committee's report on the draft law, which includes 40 articles distributed across five chapters.

Al Saadi explained that the current real estate registry system no longer keeps pace with the technological boom the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed over the past decades in terms of real estate documentation and registration particularly after the introduction of digital registry systems, electronic title deeds and remote documentation services.

Air strikes kill dozens in Gaza as criticism grows

U K s u s p e n d s t r a d e t a l k s w i t h I s r a e l o v e r n e w o f f e n s i v e

ISRAELI AIR STRIKES killed at least 55 Palestinians in Gaza on Tuesday, local medics said, as Israel continued its bombardment of the strip despite mounting international pressure to stop military operations and allow unimpeded deliveries of aid. Britain's government announced it was suspending trade talks with Israel and summoning the ambassador over "egregious policies" in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, while France signalled possible European action affecting trade ties. The war, now in its 20th month, has left Gaza in ruins and its population facing worsening hunger. It has strained Israel's relations with much of the international community and those with its closest ally, the United States, now appear to be wavering.

On Tuesday Israel conducted strikes across the densely populated coastal territory and medics said the sites hit included two homes where women and children were among the 18 dead and a school housing displaced families. Israel's military, which on Monday warned those in the southern Gazan city of Khan Yunis to evacuate to the coast as it prepared for an "unprecedented attack", had no comment. In Gaza City, a footage showed men, women and children sifting through the rubble of the Daraj neighbourhood school where they had been sheltering and where charred pieces of clothing and a red teddy bear lay among scattered belongings. At the nearby Al Ahli Hospital men performed prayers over bodies wrapped in white shrouds, before carrying them to their graves. "What is our fault? What is the fault of children? What is the fault of the women we found on the stairs with their hair and clothes torn and burned?" said Omar Ahel, who had been sheltering at the school.



Children look at the closed UN agency for Palestinian refugees headquarters in Gaza City. — AFP

"By God, this is injustice." Outside a Khan Yunis hospital, Younis Abu Sahloul said his brother, sister-in-law and their four children were killed in an air strike that hit a nearby camp sheltering displaced Palestinians without warning. Israeli strikes have killed more than 500 people in the past eight days as the military campaign has intensified, medics in Gaza say. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer

told parliament he, along with the leaders of France and Canada, was "horrified" by Israel's military escalation, repeating calls for a ceasefire. Louise Wateridge, a spokesperson for the UN. Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA, said on Tuesday there was little food left. "Everything's empty. The warehouses, the distribution centres, they've been empty for weeks," she said. — AFP

RO 9m deals to boost food security and sports

MUSCAT: As part of ongoing efforts to promote investment and optimise the use of government land, the second day of the 20th edition of the Oman Real Estate Conference and Exhibition witnessed the signing of 46 usufruct contracts worth over RO 9 million. These agreements cover a variety of sectors that support the national economy. The agreements were signed by Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing,



The second day of the 20th edition of the Oman Real Estate Conference and Exhibition witnessed the signing of 46 usufruct contracts worth over RO 9m.

in the presence of several representatives from relevant entities and investment partners. Among the agreements, 33 contracts were in the food security sector, covering an area exceeding 1,325 acres and 12 contracts were allocated to small and medium-sized enterprises in the industrial sector, spanning over 10,000 square metres. Additionally, a contract was signed to establish a specialised sports academy on an area exceeding 26,000 square metres. DETAILS ON P2

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



ROP WINS ‘GOVERNMENT INNOVATION’ AWARD

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

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

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

NDC COMMANDANT RECEIVES FRENCH OFFICIAL



MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC), received in his office at Bait Al Falaj on Tuesday Rear Admiral Hugues Laine, Commander of the French Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest.

During the visit, the Commander of the French Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean delivered a lecture on strategic issues in the Indian Ocean and their implications on various countries.

The meeting was attended by the several senior officers of SAF and other military and security units. — ONA

OMAN, CUBA SIGN MOC IN HEALTH FIELDS

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Cuba signed, in Geneva, a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) in the fields of health and medical sciences. The MoC seeks to enhance cooperation, exchange expertise and ameliorate health systems in both countries. The MoC will contribute to the utilisation of capabilities and opportunities in a tangible and comprehensive manner.

The MoC was signed by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, and Dr José Angel Portal Miranda, Minister of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba. — ONA



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Minister of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba.

The memorandum of cooperation provides for exchanging medical personnel, conducting specialised training programmes and holding joint research in the fields of medicine and health sciences.

The MoC was signed on the sidelines of the 78th World Health Assembly, currently being held at the headquarters of World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland. — ONA

Tallest flagpole to be unveiled on Thursday

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

THE tallest flagpole in the country will be unveiled on Thursday, May 22, at Al Khuwair Square under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat.

The national flag of the Sultanate of Oman will be raised on top of the tallest flagpole in the nation’s history, a proud symbol soaring in the skies of Oman. The moment will be graced by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, along with other top officials.

Standing at a height of 126 metres into the sky, this flagpole is already known for its architectural brilliance, symbolising Oman’s aspirations for progress and success in line with Vision 2040.

The Al Khuwair Square project is the result of a successful public-private partnership, fostering collaboration between



the Muscat Municipality and Jindal Shaded Iron and Steel.

“In the future, this area will be developed

into an 18,000-square-metre multipurpose project with a large space dedicated for business activities,” he said.

The national flag will measure some 18 metres in length and 31.5 metres in width, adorning the top of the flagpole which has already grabbed international attention as ‘Oman’s tallest man-made structure’. The huge edifice is constructed using 135 tonnes of steel with an outer diameter of 2,800mm at its base and 900mm at the top. The flagpole is equipped with a warning light system for aircraft using this airspace and has already been credited as a pioneering model for synergising efforts and achieving multifaceted impacts.

The Al Khuweir Square project will also have, according to the Muscat Municipality sources, a plaza, large lawn, walkways, a skate park, a cycle path and a cafeteria, along with a variety of entertainment and sports facilities, transforming it into a vibrant community hub.

Governors’ Ambassadors Forum kicks off

MUSCAT: The inaugural Governors’ Ambassadors Forum, held under the slogan “United by Purpose”, began on Tuesday in Muscat. The event brings together specialists and professionals in project management and administrative governance procedures from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. Over three days, the forum will discuss challenges and innovative solutions while presenting work methodologies, contracts and successful case studies.

The forum aims to enhance institutional integration and exchange best practices in contracts and tenders, supporting the government’s decentralisation efforts, empowering governorates and achieving balanced development across Oman.

Eng Said bin Hamed al Amri,



Director-General of Tenders at the General Secretariat for Tenders, stated that the forum strengthens integration between the Secretariat and governors’ offices. It seeks to focus on developmental goals and outcomes by enhancing communication channels and expertise exchange among specialists, as well as reviewing successful project implementation experiences in governorates. This contributes

to improving government project efficiency and ensuring cohesive execution of policies and developmental initiatives.

He added that the programme will be held periodically three times a year — once every four months — with each session hosted in a different governorate selected based on geographic distribution and the number of projects implemented there. Each forum spans three days, featuring field

activities, discussion sessions and site visits to projects.

Al Amri explained that the forum aims to share knowledge and experiences among governorates, highlighting key projects, challenges and developmental opportunities in host governorates. It also seeks to improve communication efficiency between tender offices.

Ali bin Hamed al Azki, Director-General of Financial and Administrative Affairs in Muscat Governorate, stated that the forum is an opportunity to enhance capabilities and develop working tools for governors’ offices, in line with decentralisation efforts to broaden governorates’ authority. This contributes to balanced and sustainable development across all governorates. — ONA

Oman boosts food security, industry with new land deals

AHMED AL KAABI MUSCAT, MAY 20

As part of the ongoing efforts to promote investment and optimise the use of government land, the second day of the 20th edition of the Oman Real Estate Conference and Exhibition witnessed the signing of 46 usufruct contracts worth over RO 9 million. These agreements cover a variety of sectors that support the national economy.

The agreements were signed by Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing, in the presence of several representatives from relevant entities and investment partners.

Among the agreements, 33 contracts were in the food security sector, covering an area exceeding



A total of 28 architecture students from the University of Nizwa and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Muscat took part.

1,325 acres, and 12 contracts were allocated to small and medium-sized enterprises in the industrial sector, spanning over 10,000 square metres. Additionally, a contract was signed to establish a specialised sports academy on an area exceeding 26,000 square metres, reflecting support for sports infrastructure and youth sector investment.

YOUTH FORUM

On Tuesday, A Youth Forum was organised with the participation of a group of young Omani professionals who played a significant role in shaping and implementing the National Urban Development Strategy projects.

The forum provided an opportunity to highlight achievements in recent years

and reaffirm the importance of empowering youth and involving them in planning future cities in ways that reflect the aspirations of the new generation and ensure sustainable development across all governorates.

During the event, the ministry honoured the three winning teams from the Housing Design Innovation Lab for their effective

contributions in developing innovative housing designs that meet sustainability standards and reflect a deep understanding of Oman’s geographic diversity. The lab is one of the ministry’s initiatives aimed at strengthening collaboration between the government and academic institutions by involving university and college students specialising in architecture and civil engineering. The goal is to develop advanced design solutions for social housing projects tailored to coastal, mountainous and desert environments, integrating artificial intelligence concepts into urban planning and analysis processes.

A total of 28 architecture students from the University of Nizwa and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Muscat took part in the lab.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الطَّيِّبَةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً وَأَدْخِلِي عِبَادِي وَأَهْلِي
«صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ»

The **Khimji Ramdas Group** extends
its deepest condolences to
His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,
The Honourable Lady
Sayyida Ahad bint Abdullah Al Busaidiyah
on the demise of Her Highness
The Honourable Lady's mother

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَعُوذُ بِكَ

KR كيمجي رامداس
KHIMJI RAMDAS

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
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«صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ»

Deepest Respect and Heartfelt Condolences

We extend our sincere condolences to

His Majesty
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik,

to Her Highness
Sayyida Ahad bint Abdullah Al Busaidiyah

on the passing of the
beloved mother of Her Highness.

Her grace and admirable wisdom touched many lives and will long
be remembered with deep appreciation and respect.

May Allah grant her the highest place in heaven
and comfort the hearts of all who grieve her loss.



SAUD BAHWAN Group

CONDOLENCE

The Board of Directors,
Executive Management and
the employees of

Oman Telecommunications Company
“Omantel”
express their deepest condolences to

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik
and
Her Highness Sayyida Ahad bint Abdullah

on the sad demise of Her Highness's
revered mother.

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

May her soul rest in peace.

SHORT TAKES

WORKSHOP
HIGHLIGHTS HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
INDICATORS



MARWA AL
BALUSHI

Legal researcher

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

A workshop was held on Tuesday titled “Indicators of Human Trafficking, Raising Awareness of Its Dangers, and the Importance of Reporting It”. The event aimed to enhance public awareness of the signs

of human trafficking, mechanisms for handling victims, fostering a culture of reporting among individuals, and strengthening community partnerships to combat this phenomenon.

Marwa al Balushi, a legal researcher at the Family Protection Department, Ministry of Social Development, stated, “The Ministry of Social Development contributes to raising community awareness of the harms of abuse, violence, and encouraging families to report. The beneficiaries of the protection house services include victims of human trafficking, women at risk of abuse and children at risk. The Sultanate of Oman also continues its tireless and ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking in line with the Basic Law, which guarantees justice and equality for all segments of society. It is important to involve all governmental and non-governmental entities in providing protection to victims of human trafficking. Cooperation is ongoing with private sector institutions and civil society to support victims of human trafficking.”

The workshop, organised by the Ministry of Social Development in collaboration with the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, saw the participation of several child protection delegates, supervisors from the Protection House, and representatives from the Royal Oman Police working on human trafficking crime indicators.

OMAN AT GLOBAL
RESEARCH COUNCIL
MEETING



Oman’s delegation to the meeting is headed by Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi. — ONA

RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the 13th annual meeting of the Global Research Council, held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia until May 22. Oman’s delegation to the meeting is headed by Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation. The meeting, attended by over 50 delegations of heads of national research councils and government funding agencies from various world countries, aims to strengthen international scientific cooperation, facilitate the exchange of expertise and knowledge among research and funding institutions globally, and focus on global ambitions in research, development and innovation, which many countries seek to achieve. — ONA

AMAL AL RIYAMI
MANAH, MAY 20

The International Conference on Museums concluded on Tuesday at the Oman Across Ages Museum under the auspices of Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Museum.

In its final statement, the conference provided a series of key recommendations aimed

at reinforcing the integrated management of cultural heritage that includes advancing digital documentation, oral storytelling, and institutional partnerships to solidify the role of museums as living memory hubs and sustainable drivers of cultural and tourism development.

Dr Mohammed bin Ali al Balushi, Head of the Scientific Committee, delivered the closing statement emphasising the importance of developing



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multilingual and multimedia museum programmes to enhance visitor experience, expanding participation in both national and international cultural

tourism routes, and integrating museums into tourism strategies through innovative models such as archaeological site museums and intangible heritage

museums. These approaches aim to safeguard cultural diversity and stimulate local economies.

The conference recommended anchoring museums within urban and tourism planning frameworks as creative, interactive centres capable of supporting local economic activity. It also called for leveraging cultural entrepreneurship and digital transformation to create smart museum models that generate

sustainable income, support economic diversification and encourage participatory governance and stronger public and private community partnerships.

In the cultural and educational sphere, the conference highlighted the need to repurpose museums as interactive learning spaces that promote cultural citizenship and link cultural diversity with local curricula and educational programmes.

OMAN MARKS WORLD BEE DAY

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

The designation of this global day marks a significant step in



promoting measures to protect bees and other pollinators, directly contributing to addressing challenges related to global food supplies, particularly in developing countries.

To support the natural environment for bees, forage trees, known as Australian Acacia (Sumur) were distributed and planted across several agricultural and pastoral sites. This initiative compensates for the loss of grazing areas caused by drought, overgrazing and desertification, directly contributing

to increased honey production during periods of scarce natural resources.

According to 2024 statistics, Oman has approximately 5,352 beekeepers managing 178,069 beehives, with an annual honey production of 765,053 kilogrammes. Al Sharqiyah North Governorate leads in honey production with around 263,000 kilogrammes, followed by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate with approximately 177,000 kilogrammes. — ONA

13,530 Omanis, 470 expats
from Oman to perform Haj

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

AS MANY AS 14,000 pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman will perform Haj this year and 13,944 of them have already completed the requirements for Haj while 56 pilgrims are still completing their Haj procedures, according to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA).

This was announced during a press conference held by the Oman Haj Mission to unveil a number of indicators, statistics and improvements for this year’s Haj season under the auspices of Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and Head of the Oman Haj Mission.

“The Haj quota for the Sultanate of Oman this year has been maintained to be 14,000 pilgrims, with 13,530 Omani and 470 resident pilgrims. The total quota has been distributed among the governorates based on the population density (number of residents) of each governorate aged 18 and above,” said Al Rashdi.

The Governorate of Muscat topped the governorates’ quotas, accounting for 24 per cent of the



The eligibility was granted electronically through the online registration system for pilgrims, using mathematical equations based on Sharia principles.

The Haj quota for the Sultanate of Oman this year has been maintained to be 14,000 pilgrims, with 13,530 Omani and 470 resident pilgrims.

AHMED
BIN SALEH
AL RASHDI

total quota, followed by Al Batinah North Governorate with 19 per cent. Musandam Governorate received the lowest percentage, less than 1 per cent of the total approved quota.

He said that the eligibility was granted electronically through the online registration system for pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman, using mathematical equations based on Sharia principles and jurisprudential considerations that take into account various aspects and objectives, including the social aspect.

Indicators showing the

distribution of pilgrims by type of Haj show that obligatory Haj pilgrims accounted for the largest proportion, with a total of approximately 11,780 pilgrims, representing 84 per cent of the total quota. These were followed by voluntary pilgrims, those performing Haj on behalf of the disabled, those performing Haj as a will, those performing Haj on behalf of the deceased, and finally, those with terminal illnesses.

Pilgrims in the age group 30-45 led the way with 39 per cent, followed by the 45-60 group with a slight difference of no more than 0.1 per cent. Those over 60 years old represented approximately 16 per cent, and finally, the 18-30 age group represented 5 per cent.

Regarding the Haj routes, the head of the mission said, “We find that most of the pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman chose to perform Haj by air, representing over 63 per cent, while the percentage of land pilgrims reached 37 per cent.”

He emphasised that the Oman Haj Mission this year has launched a number of unique initiatives for this season, including the Beit Al Rabat Endowments Initiative to support those eligible for Haj for the 1446 AH season from social security categories.

Initiative to support visually impaired

NIZWA: Al Noor Association for the Blind, in partnership with Oman Refreshment Company (REFCO), has launched a new initiative to support individuals with visual impairments in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The community initiative includes the distribution of key assistive tools such as white canes, Braille paper, tactile watches, specialised sports balls and glucose monitors — resources that can help people lead more independent lives.

The equipment was distributed during a community gathering hosted at Al Noor’s centre in Nizwa, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, bringing together members of the blind and low-vision community, volunteers, supporters and representatives from Oman REFCO.

Sultan bin Ahmed al Sabahi, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Al Noor Association for the Blind, said: “This collaboration reflects our shared commitment with Oman



This initiative falls within the ongoing collaboration reflecting both entities’ commitment to supporting and empowering individuals with visual impairments.

REFCO to social responsibility and inclusion. Together, we’re helping more people across Oman access the tools they need to pursue education, employment, and fuller participation in society.”

Sulaiman bin Abdullah al Salmi, Director of People, Culture and Corporate Services at

Oman REFCO, added: “As a company deeply connected to the communities we serve, we are grateful to support Al Noor Association for the Blind, whose work addresses real needs with care and consistency. As a company with deep roots in Oman, we’re glad to contribute to efforts that strengthen our local communities.”

This initiative falls within the ongoing collaboration between Al Noor Association for the Blind and Oman Refreshment Company (REFCO), reflecting both entities’ commitment to supporting and empowering individuals with visual impairments, and enhancing their role in society by providing tools that improve quality of life and promote meaningful inclusion across all aspects of daily life. Globally, visual impairment remains a major challenge. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 2 billion people live with vision impairment.

International conference on museum concludes with recommendations

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



RAO COMMANDER RECEIVES SAUDI DELEGATION

MUSCAT: Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa a delegation from the Authority for Supplies of the Saudi Armed Forces. During the meeting, the two sides explored areas of mutual military cooperation. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by several senior RAO officers. — ONA

‘ORDER OF MARITIME MERIT’ BESTOWED ON OMANI OFFICIAL



PARIS: The French government has bestowed the ‘Order of Maritime Merit’ on Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the Maritime Security Centre (MSC), in recognition of his efforts in enhancing bilateral cooperation in the field of maritime security between Oman and France. The medal was conferred on Commodore Al Busaidy by Rear Admiral Hugues Laine, Commander of the French Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean. The ceremony took place at the headquarters of the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). — ONA

AWARENESS PROGRAMME LOOKS AT GEOSPATIAL REQUIREMENTS

IBRI: The National Survey and Geospatial Information Authority at the Ministry of Defence organised an awareness programme in the Al Dhahirah Governorate as part of its series of introductory visits. The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Najeeb bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah. The programme, which took place at the Al Dhahirah Governor’s Office in the Wilayat of Ibri, included presentations on



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the roles and responsibilities of the National Survey and Geospatial Information Authority, as well as the services it provides to various entities. An accompanying exhibition showcasing the authority’s work was also held. Specialised discussion sessions were conducted on geospatial requirements, exploring ways to enhance integration and cooperation between the authority and different stakeholders. — ONA

Oman achieves exceptional progress in GEM report

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

THE Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) on Tuesday organised a workshop to review the Sultanate of Oman’s results in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2024 report. The Sultanate of Oman has achieved exceptional progress in the 2024-2025 GEM report, ranking eighth globally out of 56 countries covered by the report. Sayyid Mazin bin Saif al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of ASMED, presented a number of themes that the authority has focused on implementing to empower and develop the SME sector, including a number of services and programmes provided to entrepreneurs. He also reviewed the most prominent results achieved by the Authority since its establishment and its efforts to enhance local added value programmes for SMEs by implementing the Enterprise Escalation Programme and the Supplier Development Programme, to increase investment opportunities for SMEs and support them in accessing local and global markets with their services and products. The workshop was titled “Towards Empowering and Sustainable Growth of Small and Medium Enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman”. It was attended by representatives of government units and private sector establishments. Qais bin Rashid al Toobi, ASMED Deputy Chairman for Finance and Investment, explained that the workshop includes 15 working



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The workshop reviewed efforts to motivate SMEs and enhance opportunities for partnerships and integration among the government and private sectors, to help empower SMEs, raise the sector’s contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) and augment Oman’s rankings in the GEM report

papers covering all areas of relevance to the sector of entrepreneurship and SMEs, the legislative environment and future plans in this field. “ASMED joins hands with all partners — through initiatives, programmes and other events — to achieve partnerships to empower SMEs and the entrepreneurship sector,” said Al Toobi, noting that the Authority offers programmes in financing, investment, capacity building and marketing. The workshop reviewed efforts to motivate SMEs and enhance opportunities for partnerships and integration among the government and private sectors, to help empower SMEs, raise the sector’s contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) and augment Oman’s rankings in the GEM report. The workshop included papers that explored entrepreneurial ratios and indices, as well as the outcome of GEM report 2024. The workshop also included specialised training sessions to empower the owners of SMEs and help them benefit from non-traditional financing platforms. The workshop dealt with the index of entrepreneurship in vocational education, colleges and universities;

and highlighted efforts made to establish business centres in all governorates to empower SMEs and startups; and to support technology-based and innovation-based startups through the Promising Omani Startup Programme. This is a three-spot improvement from Oman’s 2023 ranking when it ranked eleventh. This reflects ongoing efforts to enhance the entrepreneurship business environment; and support small and medium enterprises. Dr Abdullah al Shukaili from the University of Nizwa explained the improvement in the results of the sub-indicators of GEM for the Sultanate of Oman for the year 2024, which led to an improvement in the level of entrepreneurship. He also stated that the GEM is an important and reliable resource that assists decision-makers and contributes to improving entrepreneurship outcomes, both qualitatively and quantitatively, worldwide by providing comprehensive indicators and valuable information on entrepreneurship and mechanisms for improving and developing it, contributing to its continuity and sustainability.

Oman to join world in celebrating day for cultural diversity

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



The occasion aims to highlight the richness of global cultures and emphasise the vital role of intercultural dialogue in fostering peace and sustainable development. — ONA

Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), refers to “the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and

societies find expression, passed on within and among groups and communities.” Oman joined the

convention in 2007, which seeks to promote diverse forms of cultural expression, create conditions for

cultures to flourish and interact, encourage intercultural dialogue, strengthen cultural exchange among peoples and foster respect for cultural diversity at local and global levels. In this context, Oman formed a working team for the IFCD, comprising members from various cultural institutions. The team is tasked with identifying and analysing cultural diversity initiatives, establishing a unified framework for related projects and programmes, reviewing and approving proposals for IFCD funding; and preparing reports on the implementation of the Unesco convention. This year’s celebration coincides with Unesco’s commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the convention’s adoption in 2005. The event seeks to raise awareness of the convention’s key achievements and engage policymakers in addressing challenges and opportunities to safeguard and promote cultural diversity. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



US President Donald Trump speaks to reporters as he arrives for a House Republican meeting at the US Capitol in Washington, DC, on Tuesday. — AFP

TRUMP URGES REPUBLICANS TO BACK BUDGET BILL

US President Donald Trump rallied Republicans on Capitol Hill on Tuesday to back a so-called “big, beautiful bill” that is likely to increase the yawning budget deficit and cut healthcare for millions of Americans.

Sharp divisions in the party have slowed the progress through Congress of Trump’s budget bill, which pairs an extension of the billionaire’s signature tax cuts from his first term with a series of savings.

But conservatives are angling for much deeper spending cuts to tackle the ballooning deficit, while moderates say the savings would mean millions of the poorest Americans lose health coverage under the Medicaid programme. Trump said as he was greeted by Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson that there were “one or two grandstanders” blocking the bill but that he was confident of a deal. He warned that without the bill the United States would face huge tax increases. “I think we’re going to have a very good discussion. There are one or two points that some people feel strongly about, but maybe not so strong,” Trump told reporters as he went in to meet lawmakers.

Trump has been eager to present the bill as a significant legislative accomplishment early in his second term, after a frenzied first few months where he has governed largely through presidential orders.

Fiscal hawks oppose the bill on the grounds that it would pile on to the already huge US budget deficit.

Independent congressional analysts calculate that the mega-bill’s tax provisions would add more than \$4.8 trillion over the coming decade. Trump insisted that he was “not touching” Medicaid but just cutting “waste, fraud and abuse” — the slogan of the administration’s cost-slashing drive led by tech tycoon Elon Musk. — AFP

PAKISTAN, INDIA AGREE TO PULL BACK TROOPS



Indian army soldiers demonstrate their artillery near the Line of Control in Indian-administered Kashmir on Tuesday. — AFP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and India have agreed to withdraw troops deployed during their recent clash to peacetime positions, in a step towards de-escalation following a ceasefire deal, Pakistani intelligence sources said on Tuesday.

The withdrawal was agreed during the latest round of “hotline” communication between senior military officials from both sides. According to sources, the two countries will return to peacetime deployment positions along their border and the Line of Control by the end of May.

On May 10, the nuclear-armed neighbours agreed to the ceasefire after days of tit-for-tat drone, missile and airstrikes, targeting each other’s military installations and airbases.

The trigger for the latest tensions was the militant attack on April 22 in Indian-administered Kashmir, which killed 26 people, mostly Indian tourists. — dpa

WHO MEMBERS ADOPT GLOBAL PANDEMIC ACCORD

GENEVA: Members of the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted an agreement on Tuesday to better prepare for future pandemics following the disjointed global response to Covid-19, but the absence of the US cast doubt on the treaty’s effectiveness.

After three years of negotiations, the legally binding pact was adopted by the World Health Assembly in Geneva. WHO member countries welcomed its passing with applause.

The pact was touted as a victory for members of the global health agency at a time when multilateral organisations like the WHO have been battered by sharp cuts in US foreign funding.

“The agreement is a victory for public health, science and multilateral action. It will ensure we, collectively, can better protect the world from future pandemic threats,” said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The pact would ensure that drugs, therapeutics and vaccines

are globally accessible when the next pandemic hits. It requires participating manufacturers to allocate a target of 20 per cent of their vaccines, medicines, and tests to the WHO during a pandemic to ensure poorer countries have access.

However, US negotiators left discussions about the accord after President Donald Trump began a 12-month process of withdrawing the US — by far the WHO’s largest financial backer — from the agency when he took office in January.

EU, Britain go ahead with new Russia sanctions

THE EU and Britain announced new sanctions against Russia on Tuesday without waiting for the United States to join them, a day after President Donald Trump spoke to Vladimir Putin without winning a promise for a ceasefire in Ukraine.

London and Brussels said their new measures would zero in on Moscow’s “shadow fleet” of oil tankers and financial companies that have helped it avoid the impact of other sanctions imposed over the war. “Sanctions matter, and I am grateful to everyone who makes them more tangible for the perpetrators of the war,” Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on Telegram.

But the new measures were unveiled without an immediate announcement of corresponding steps from Washington, despite intense public lobbying from leaders of European countries for the Trump administration to join them.

“We have repeatedly made it clear that we expect one thing from Russia — an immediate ceasefire without preconditions,” German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said on the sidelines of a meeting with his EU counterparts in Brussels. As Russia had not accepted a ceasefire, “we will have to react,” he said. “We also expect our US allies not to tolerate this.”

Russia and Ukraine held their first direct talks in more than three years last Friday at Trump’s behest, but failed to agree a truce after Moscow presented conditions that a member of the Ukrainian delegation called “non-starters”.

Ukraine says it is ready for an immediate ceasefire proposed by Trump, while Russia says it wants talks first. The Europeans say this is proof that Putin, who started the war in 2022, is not prepared to end it.

“Putin is clearly playing for time, unfortunately we have to say Putin is not really interested in peace,” Germany’s Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said.

Reacting to the new sanctions, Russian



A volunteer sells Ukrainian flags as he sits on a fragment of a missile in the open-air museum in Kyiv on Tuesday. — AFP

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told reporters that Russia would never bow to what she called ultimatums.

Putin, after his call with Trump, said that Moscow was ready to work with Ukraine on a memorandum about a future peace accord. “Now, accordingly, the ball is in Kyiv’s court,” Zakharova said.

Europeans have been working hard in public to persuade the Trump administration to join them in imposing sanctions. The leaders of Britain, France, Germany and Poland jointly travelled to Kyiv earlier this month and were filmed speaking to Trump on speakerphone with Zelensky.

Several European leaders phoned Trump again on the eve of Monday’s call with Putin, urging him to join them in imposing new sanctions if Russia rejected a ceasefire.

Brussels and London both suggested that more sanctions could still follow, making clear they have not given up hope of persuading Washington to act.

“Let us push Vladimir Putin to put an end to his imperialist fantasy,” France’s Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said.

Britain’s Foreign Minister David Lammy said “delaying peace efforts will only redouble our resolve to help Ukraine to defend itself and use our sanctions to restrict Putin’s war machine”.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said more sanctions were “in the works”. But she made clear that action was needed from the United States.

“We all agreed and said... that if they don’t agree to unconditional ceasefire, like Ukraine has agreed over 60 days ago, there will be strong action,” Kallas said. “And that is what we want to see from all the parties who have said that they will act in accordance.”

The latest sanctions are aimed mainly at cracking down on a shipping fleet that Russia uses to export oil, circumventing a \$60 a barrel price cap imposed by the G7 group of industrialised countries to limit Russia’s income.

Britain and the EU said they would also work to lower the cap, which imposes far less of a discount on Russian oil now that global prices have fallen this year. — Reuters

Rubio set to face tough questions in Congress

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will testify this week before his former colleagues in the US Congress, some of whom have said they regret voting to confirm the ex-senator because he has not stood up to President Donald Trump. The Senate voted 99-0 to confirm the Florida Republican senator as the nation’s highest diplomat on January 20, as Democrats joined Trump’s Republicans in giving the president his first permanent second-term cabinet member just hours after Trump was sworn in. During his friendly Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearing on January 15, Rubio promised a robust foreign policy focused on American interests, echoing Trump’s “America First” approach to global affairs. Some Democrats who backed Rubio in January have said they regret their votes, as Trump has seized more control of the federal government than any



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio

modern president, including cutting funding plans that had been approved by Congress. At the hearing, Rubio is likely to face tough questions about the decimation of foreign aid — Rubio was an advocate of such aid during his 14 years in the Senate - while slashing staff

at the State Department and US Agency for International Development, which is being folded into the State Department.

Senators are also likely to grill Rubio on Trump’s plans to unwind Syria sanctions, Rubio’s role in the administration’s

immigration crackdown, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza and efforts to end the war in Ukraine. He may also face some questions over Trump’s suggestions that Canada could become the 51st US state and that the US could acquire Greenland, which have angered some close US allies.

US Senator Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, the top Democrat on the foreign relations committee, said the administration’s policies had made it more difficult to compete with China, noting that Beijing is increasing its spending on diplomacy and providing humanitarian aid in areas where the US abruptly terminated programmes.

“Beijing is making the case that they are a more reliable, supportive partner than the US,” Shaheen said in remarks prepared for the hearing. Rubio has long been known as a China hawk. — Reuters

OPINION

From humiliation to a Century of Justice



**KHALID ALSAFI
AL HURAIBI**

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

BETWEEN 1842 and 1945, eight foreign powers conspired to strip China of its sovereignty, wealth and dignity in what the Chinese people call as the “Century of Humiliation”. Great Britain’s Opium Wars forced millions into addiction and ceded Hong Kong; France imposed unequal treaties and seized territories in Guangxi and Guangdong; Japan’s incursions into Taiwan, Manchuria, and coastal provinces inflicted decades of occupation; Russia pressed deep into Manchuria and the Amur region; Germany established a naval base at Qingdao after leasing Jiaozhou Bay; Austria-Hungary coerced minor concessions following the Siege of Beijing in 1900; Italy extracted extraterritorial rights and treaty ports; and the United States enforced the Open Door policy to guarantee its merchants unfettered access and immunity from local law.

These powers treated China as a quarry for opium, territory and raw materials, bringing an end to the Qing dynasty’s power and prestige for good, plunging Chinese families into poverty, igniting uprisings and freezing China’s development.

Today, that same arrogance and appetite for control resurfaces across the globe, especially against the so called Global South. In just the past weeks, the 47th President of the United States visited Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to sign almost RO 1.5 trillion in technology, energy

and defence agreements. Yet while headlines glorified the size of these deals, parents in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are picking body parts of the dead children from the rubble, the hospitals of Gaza lie in ruins, humanitarian supplies are blocked, and Palestinians endure what countless observers describe as a campaign of collective punishment, starvation, bombardment and forced displacement. The contrast is stark: transactional diplomacy on one hand, and systemic violence on the other. These are not isolated tragedies but echoes of histories we refuse to learn from.

To break this cycle of impunity, we must adopt a “Century of Justice” Roadmap: A concise, hard-edged framework to replace the old world’s greed-driven systems with one that centres actual human dignity and sustainable cooperation.

The first element is the Shared Ethical Code, a binding compact that defines non-negotiable standards for state and non-state actors alike.

Under this code, no government may employ killer Artificial Intelligence - AI technology, collective punishment, use starvation as a weapon, or seize territory by force. An independent council of jurists and civil-society representatives would monitor compliance in real time. Violators would incur targeted sanctions, asset freezes and travel bans. This is not idealism; it is deterrence through accountability.

Second, we prepare Leaders of Conviction. From my own experience, elections

While headlines glorified the size of the deals, parents in the Occupied Palestinian Territories are picking body parts of the dead children from the rubble, the hospitals of Gaza lie in ruins, humanitarian supplies are blocked, and Palestinians endure collective punishment, starvation, bombardment and forced displacement

become popularity contests driven by fear and factionalism instead of just common, interests. Under this pledge, every candidate, local, regional, or national commits to transparency in decision-making, to resolving disputes through dialogue rather than proxy wars, and to refusing to outsource violence to militias or private armies.

Should any signatory authorise bombing of civilian infrastructure or the demolition of homes, that leader’s regime automatically triggers diplomatic isolation and suspension from multilateral forums. Citizens and parliaments, empowered by this pledge, can hold their leaders to account even in emergencies.

Third, the roadmap establishes Justice Alliances - practical coalitions pairing governments with civil-society groups, faith communities and the private sector to confront war’s aftermath. In Palestine, for instance, these alliances would comply with the UN resolutions and International Court of Justice - ICJ decisions to coordinate humanitarian corridors in Gaza and other Occupied Territories, document and prosecute war crimes and design long-term reconstruction plans.

Funding would come from reparations levied on aggressor states and corporations that profit from conflict, creating a direct link between wrongdoing and responsibility for rebuilding. By working in coordinated task forces rather than scattered NGOs, resources are pooled, expertise shared and survivors supported with dignity.

TRADE ON AGENDA AS MACRON VISITS VIETNAM ON MAY 25

FRANCESCO GUARASCIO AND ELIZABETH PINEAU

Infrastructure and energy are among issues President Emmanuel Macron is expected to discuss with Vietnam’s leaders next week during a state visit to the former colony when dozens of deals may be signed, officials said.

The first trip to Vietnam by a French president in nearly a decade is part of a larger tour of Southeast Asia. Macron is set to arrive in Hanoi on May 25, move to Indonesia on May 27 and finish in Singapore, where he will speak at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia’s top defence conference, starting on May 30.

Macron’s Elysee office said dozens of deals were being prepared and could be signed during the visit. One official with knowledge of the talks said about 30 pacts were under discussion ahead of a signing ceremony on Monday.

Vietnam’s foreign affairs ministry did not reply to a request for comment. Caught off-guard by the threat of high tariffs from the United States, export-reliant Vietnam is trying to readjust its growth model to focus more on government spending, with massive investments planned in transport, communications and energy.

Macron is following leaders of China, Japan and other European countries in visiting the region in recent weeks, in a sign of Southeast Asia’s strategic importance amid uncertainties on global supply chains and trade. One agreement under negotiation is for the replacement of an earth-observation satellite, built by Airbus Defence’s predecessor and launched in 2013.

A non-binding memorandum of understanding on that could be signed during Macron’s visit, one official said. A second official said other satellite discussions were under way.

Airbus did not reply to a request for comment but has said in the past it was working on the replacement of Vietnam’s satellite. The Elysee did not comment about this specific agreement.

Nuclear energy will also be on the table, although no deals were expected, one of the sources said. Vietnam has decided to relaunch its nuclear power programme as it struggles to meet growing energy needs from its expanding economy.

— Reuters

Cultural diversity and AI

SINCE Claude Lévi-Strauss penned his influential essay Race and History in 1952, commissioned by Unesco to explore the foundations of cultural diversity, the global conversation has steadily evolved to recognise the value of diversity as a cornerstone of development and human interaction. Lévi-Strauss argued that it is not merely the outward appearances of diversity that must be preserved, but the concept itself - diversity as a generative force capable of driving societal growth and intercultural understanding.

In today’s rapidly transforming world, cultural diversity is more than a historical legacy - it is an active ingredient in economic vitality, educational innovation and creative industries. It includes inherited traditions and evolving cultural forms shaped by modern societal shifts and digital connectivity. Cultural diversity enables dialogue, drives innovation and opens economic opportunities, making it a strategic asset rather than a sentimental ideal.

Unesco’s designation of May 21 as the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development reflects this understanding. The occasion serves not only to celebrate the world’s cultural richness but to advocate for its role in achieving sustainable development. Cultural diversity can offer new models of inclusion, inspire technological innovation and foster global collaboration across sectors.

The growing influence of artificial intelligence has given new urgency to this perspective. A recent study titled How Does Cultural Diversity Impact the Development of AI in Companies?, published in the Journal of Financial Research Studies, confirms a direct correlation



The growing influence of artificial intelligence has given new urgency to this perspective.



AISHA AL DARMAKI

The writer is a researcher specialising in semiotics and a member of the State Council

between diversity and innovation in AI. The presence of diverse cultural perspectives enhances creativity, improves product development and opens broader pathways for adaptation to complex social and commercial realities.

In this context, cultural diversity becomes part of a nation’s strategic infrastructure. It influences the formation of institutional identities, corporate branding and consumer engagement. China’s economic rise, for instance, has been supported by its investment in cultural diversity. The country’s vast linguistic heritage, despite the dominance of Mandarin, has played a role in shaping a multifaceted national identity that fuels creativity, facilitates internal cohesion and strengthens external competitiveness.

Languages and dialects, in this view, are not just tools of communication; they are vessels of historical experience and social knowledge. They bridge communities, support trade and enrich innovation ecosystems. When applied to AI development, cultural diversity enhances systems’ ability to interpret nuance, respond to varied user needs and reflect a more

complete human experience.

As AI applications become more deeply integrated into governance, education and industry, cultural diversity is proving critical. It enriches the training data on which AI relies, ensuring that algorithms do not reproduce bias or exclude minority experiences. More broadly, diversity improves performance by generating alternative viewpoints, creative solutions and inclusive technologies. It is increasingly viewed as a competitive advantage in AI development, not a peripheral concern. Oman, with its deep-rooted multicultural identity, is uniquely positioned to benefit from this emerging landscape. The Sultanate of Oman’s long history of intercultural engagement, shaped by its geography and maritime legacy, has produced a cultural mosaic that remains central to national identity. Oman’s commitment to preserving this diversity through heritage protection and social investment has been matched by efforts to integrate cultural sectors into economic planning, particularly through support for small and medium enterprises and innovation hubs.

As the country advances its ambitions in AI and digital transformation, cultural diversity should be seen not only as a social asset but as a driver of innovation. By nurturing this diversity and embedding it into the design and deployment of AI systems, Oman can ensure its digital future is inclusive, creative and competitive. Protecting culture must go beyond documentation and archiving; it must involve developing frameworks for growth, and positioning culture as a renewable resource.

(Translated by Badr al Dhafari and the original version of this article was published in Arabic in the print edition of the Oman newspaper on May 18)

Redefining life after retirement...



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

RETIREMENT is, for many, a time to embark on a new journey after bidding farewell to the fast-paced lives they have led in previous years. It is an opportunity to live a stress-free life filled with choices, allowing individuals to reinvent their lives according to their own preferences.

The truth is that, regardless of how eagerly you anticipate it, retiring from work represents a significant life change that can lead to stress and depression, in addition to its benefits. In fact, some studies have associated retirement with a decline in health.

Although it is an inevitable part of life, coping with change is rarely easy. As we grow older, life can seem to change at an increasingly rapid pace.

Last week, I attended a conference focused on the lives of retired individuals. A key issue that emerged was the profound impact of retirement on one's sense of identity and purpose, especially in the initial stages.

In fact, the conference provided an opportunity for me to reflect on the various ways in which the human mind perceives retirement and time. I reconnected with many old friends and acquaintances while also making connections with several new people.

When one participant was asked what he missed after his retirement, he replied that he missed absolutely nothing about the work

itself, but he did miss the people and the friendships. In normal sense, a retired life refers to the stage in a person's life when they have permanently ceased working, typically due to age or health considerations. This period represents a time of transition and change, providing an opportunity to explore personal interests, spend more time with loved ones and engage in leisure activities.

From my own experience and conversations with many individuals who still hold regular jobs, I believe we often fall into a routine where each week resembles the one before it, each month mirrors the previous month and before we know it, years have passed, each one looking much like the last.

Retirement can completely transform your life. It's akin to receiving a second chance at living. Therefore, it is essential to approach retirement in good health, with a positive mind-set, mental clarity and financial stability. I believe the key to a fulfilling life is to keep it active and varied while celebrating each day along the way. One must live with awareness; otherwise, before you know it, you may find yourself wondering where all the time has gone. Life is a long series of millions of moments.

According to studies, one significant change in retirement life is the increase in life expectancy, attributed to advancements in healthcare. Individuals over the age of 60 are living longer and enjoying healthier lives compared to previous generations.

A recent Pulse Poll conducted by Mercer in

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partnership with the World Economic Forum found that “a 100-year life is now within reach for many people, with children born today in middle-income countries having over a 50 per cent chance of living for more than a century.”

Life expectancy is increasing globally, according to the report. Between 2000 and 2019, it rose from 66.8 years to 73.4 years, as found by the Pulse Poll.

This extended lifespan means that retirement is no longer merely a few years of rest; instead, it often encompasses a two- to three-decade phase of active living, thanks to improved healthcare management. This allows retirees to stay physically and mentally engaged, prompting many to pursue new hobbies, travel, or even embark on second careers, challenging the traditional notion of retirement as a period of inactivity.

However, the Pulse Poll revealed that while individuals value longevity, they also have significant concerns. For example, four out of ten respondents expressed a desire for a clearer understanding of their financial situation in retirement. Additionally, only 45 per cent of those surveyed believe they have saved enough for their future.

If we consider the insights of Richard Nuzum, Executive Director of Investments and Global Chief Investment Strategist at Mercer, as he states, “Ultimately, what’s needed is longevity literacy that extends beyond financial planning to empower individuals to lead healthy, resilient and sustainable lives.”

US IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN NOW TARGETS RESTAURANTS

VICTORIA LAVELLE

When armed immigration agents made a surprise visit earlier this month to Pupatella, a trendy pizzeria in the US capital's Dupont neighbourhood, they may not have made any arrests, but they delivered a clear message.

The show of force, part of an “enhanced operation” by President Donald Trump’s hardline administration, has had ripple effects through an industry reliant on immigrant labour, owners and others in the sector say.

The agents asked to see employment eligibility forms known as I-9s, said Natasha Neely, vice president of Pupatella, which has several locations in the Washington area. “They did not have a warrant and they did not have any form of paperwork, so they were turned away,” she said.

A few hours later, agents showed up at Pupatella’s Capitol Hill location, this time with a “notice of inspection,” Neely said. The manager referred them to the restaurant’s corporate office.

The Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency said it had arrested 189 undocumented migrants after handing out 187 such notices in the Washington area between May 6 and May 9. In a press release, it described the activity as an “enhanced targeted immigration enforcement operation focusing on criminal alien offenders.”

While the inspection notices are not unusual, Neely said, they are normally delivered by e-mail due to their administrative nature. “We have never experienced anything like this,” she said, expressing confusion about why the restaurant had been targeted. Trump has made deporting undocumented immigrants a key priority for his second term, after successfully campaigning against an alleged “infiltration” by criminals.

So far, his administration has deported tens of thousands of migrants, with US courts hearing cases on allegations that the government violated due process in certain cases.

Undocumented migrants are “the backbone of our industry. From top to bottom,” Shawn Townsend, president of the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington (RAMW), said.

In addition to the restaurant industry, immigrant labour plays a crucial role in many sectors of the economy, including agriculture and construction. Before Trump’s inauguration in January, RAMW knew immigration enforcement “was going to be a priority of the incoming administration and so we held our first I-9 training workshop,” said Townsend.

One restaurant owner, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he felt threatened when immigration agents recently visited his establishment. — AFP

The future of American soft power in the world

POWER is the ability to get others to do what you want. That can be accomplished by coercion (sticks), payment (carrots) and attraction (honey). The first two methods are forms of hard power, whereas attraction is soft power. Soft power grows out of a country’s culture, its political values and its foreign policies. In the short term, hard power usually trumps soft power. But over the long term, soft power often prevails. Joseph Stalin once mockingly asked, “How many divisions does the Pope have?” But the papacy continues today, while Stalin’s Soviet Union is long gone.

When you are attractive, you can economise on carrots and sticks. If allies see you as benign and trustworthy, they are more likely to be open to persuasion and follow your lead. If they see you as an unreliable bully, they are more likely to drag their feet and reduce their interdependence when they can. Cold War Europe is a good example. A Norwegian historian described Europe as divided into a Soviet and an American empire. But there was a crucial difference: the American side was “an empire by invitation.” That became clear when the Soviets had to deploy troops to Budapest in 1956 and to Prague in 1968. In contrast, Nato has not only survived but voluntarily increased its membership.

A proper understanding of power must include both its hard and soft aspects. Machiavelli said it was better for a prince to be feared than to be loved. But it is best to be both. Because soft power is rarely sufficient by itself and because its effects take longer to realise, political leaders are often tempted to resort to the hard power of coercion or payment. When wielded alone, however, hard power can involve higher costs than when it is combined with the soft power of attraction. The Berlin Wall did not succumb to an artillery barrage; it was felled by hammers and



JOSEPH S NYE, JR

The writer was Dean of Harvard Kennedy School, a US assistant secretary of defence, and the author of Do Morals Matter? Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump and the memoir A Life in the American Century

bulldozers wielded by people who had lost faith in Communism and were drawn to Western values.

After World War II, the United States was by far the most powerful country and it attempted to enshrine its values in what became known as “the liberal international order” — a framework comprising the United Nations, the Bretton Woods economic institutions and other multilateral bodies. Of course, the US did not always live up to its liberal values and Cold War bipolarity limited this order to only half the world’s people. But the postwar system would have looked very different if the Axis powers had won WWII and imposed their values.

While prior US presidents have violated aspects of the liberal order, Donald Trump is the first to reject the idea that soft power has any value in foreign policy. Among his first actions upon returning to office was to withdraw from the Paris climate agreement and the World Health Organization, despite the obvious threats that climate change and pandemics pose.

The effects of a US administration surrendering soft power are all too predictable. Coercing democratic allies like Denmark or Canada weakens trust in our alliances. Threatening Panama reawakens fears of imperialism throughout Latin America. Crippling the US Agency for International Development (USAID) — created by President John F Kennedy in 1961 — undercuts our reputation for benevolence. Silencing Voice of America is a gift to authoritarian rivals. Slapping tariffs on friends makes us appear unreliable. Trying to chill free speech at home undermines our credibility. This list could go on.

Trump has defined China as America’s great challenge and China itself has been investing in soft power since 2007, when then-Chinese President Hu Jintao told the Communist Party of China that the country needs to make itself



The US did not always live up to its liberal values.

more attractive to others. But China has long faced two major obstacles in this respect. First, it maintains territorial disputes with multiple neighbours. Second, the CPC insists on maintaining tight control over civil society. The costs of such policies have been confirmed by public opinion polls that ask people around the world which countries they find attractive. But one can only wonder what these surveys will show in future years if Trump keeps undercutting American soft power.

To be sure, American soft power has had its ups and downs over the years. The US was unpopular in many countries during the Vietnam and Iraq wars. But soft power derives from a country’s society and culture as well as from government actions. Even during the Vietnam War, when crowds marched through streets around the world to protest US policies, they sang the American civil-rights anthem “We Shall Overcome.” An open society that allows protest can be a soft-power asset. But will America’s cultural soft power survive a downturn in the government’s soft power over the next four years?

American democracy is likely to survive four years of Trump. The country has a resilient political culture and a federal constitution that encourages checks and balances. There is a reasonable chance that Democrats will regain control of the House of Representatives in the elections.

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SPORTS

FOOTBALLFRIENDLY



The under-23 team is currently busy in a domestic camp in Muscat.

OMAN OLYMPIC TEAM TO TAKE ON RUSSIA IN MOSCOW

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

The Oman Olympic Under-23 team will meet Russia in Moscow twice as part of the external preparatory camp which will take place in June. Oman team, coached by Bader al Maimani, will eye to claim maximum technical output from the abroad camp in Moscow which will feature two friendly matches against Russian Olympic team and one more match against local Russian team. The camp in Russia will act as a key stage for the team's preparations for the AFC U23 Asian Cup qualifiers which will begin in September. Oman, who were crowned as West Asian champions in last March in Muscat, will eye another achievement in Asian qualifiers and secure spot to the finals. The team won three matches in the last West Asian event against Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Jordan to claim their first title after re-formation of Olympic team earlier this year under supervision of the former Oman national team player Bader al Maimani and his assistant Said al Shoon. The team currently is busy in a domestic camp in Muscat and they will play two friendly matches against Royal Court Affairs (RCA) team on Wednesday and another warm-up fixture against Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) on May 30 before heading off to Moscow on June 1 for the external camp. The team featured many new names as seven fresh faces from several clubs joined the national Olympic team squad. Oman coach Bader al Maimani affirmed in his media statement that the team doors are open for the best and top players across the Sultanate of Oman. "We are very pleased that the team is back in action with some new players. I am looking for more support from some of the government entities to release the national players to attend the training sessions and camps as some players did not get the permission from their work offices to join the training. This is a national call and I hope to get the positive response as we are working on particular age of the players and they need full supervision in this stage of their career," he said. "The three matches in Russia will shape the players readiness and will give better technical and tactical ideas on the team's capabilities for the upcoming events including the main Asian assignment," he added.



The camp in Russia will act as a key preparation for Oman's AFC U23 Asian Cup qualifiers which will begin in September.

All-round Oman register crucial win over Canada

ACCOMPOSED, unbeaten 76 from veteran all-rounder Mohammad Nadeem, complemented by a career-best 77 from Hammad Mirza, laid the foundation for Oman's 15-run triumph over Canada at Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium in Lauderhill, USA, on Monday, in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup League 2. The victory not only secured vital points for Duleep Mendis-coached Oman but also elevated them to fourth place in the standings, surpassing Canada on net run rate. Oman's innings got off to a stuttering start, reduced to 10/2 inside five overs with Kaleem Sana striking twice. Aamir Kaleem and skipper Jatinder Singh fell cheaply, and Pruthvikumar Machhi's dismissal left the side wobbling at 31/3. But Mirza, calm and composed, anchored the innings with a gritty knock under pressure. Playing in only his eighth ODI, Mirza stitched a 72-run stand for the fifth wicket with Nadeem, who later accelerated superbly in the final 10 overs. Mirza crafted a patient 77 off 103 deliveries, including three boundaries and two sixes.

Nadeem's unbeaten 76 – his highest score in ODIs – featured seven boundaries and two sixes off 77 balls, giving Oman much-needed momentum at the death. Sufyan Mehmood's handy 20 not out ensured Oman finished strongly at 217/6, adding 50 runs in the final 55 balls without losing a wicket during their 65-run key partnership for the seventh wicket. Nadeem was named Player of the Match. Despite Canada's varied attack, Oman's calculated middle-over recovery gave them a total that kept them firmly in the contest. Kaleem Sana (2/37), Shivam Sharma (2/27), and Dilon Heyliger (2/36) were the pick of the Canadian bowlers.

SPINNERS STIFLE CANADIAN CHASE In response, Canada's innings was anchored by Pargat Singh, who scored 85 off 104 balls, featuring 12 boundaries. However, Oman's spin attack, led by leg-spinner Samay Shrivastava and left-arm orthodox Shakeel Ahmed, applied consistent pressure. Shrivastava claimed three wickets, including the crucial dismissal of Singh, while Ahmed also took three wickets, effectively dismantling Canada's middle order.



Oman players celebrate a wicket against Canada.



Mohammed Nadeem won the man of the match.

BRIEF SCORES: Oman 217/6 (Hammad Mirza 77, Mohammed Nadeem 77*, Sufyan Mehmood 20*; Kaleem Sana 2/37, Shivam Sharma 2/27, Dilon Heyliger 2/36) beat Canada 202 in 49 overs (Pargat Singh 85, Harsh Thaker 33, Shivam Sharma 37, Shakeel Ahmed 3/41, Samay Shrivastava 3/31, Sufyan Mehmood 1/37, Aamir Kaleem 1/46, Mujibur Ali 1/1).

Singh was bowled by Shrivastava in the 38th over with Canada at 147 for seven. Shivam Sharma and Dilon Heyliger, batting at No 8 and 9, looked to be leading Canada toward the victory target. But Sharma, on 37, was caught at the boundary in the 46th over with Canada at 190 for eight. Heyliger followed in the 48th over, dismissed for 18 by debutant Mujibur

Barcelo Musannah Resort to support Oman Sail team

MUSCAT: Oman Sail has welcomed the Barcelo Musannah Resort as its Official Hotel Partner for the Oman Sail High Performance Team. The partnership will run until December 31, 2025, during which time members of the 49er team will train at the resort ahead of major events. The team comprises four Omani sailors, two international sailors and professional coach. Taking part in the Oman Sail High Performance Team are Waleed al Kindi, Musab al Hadi, Zakariya al Wahabi and Abdulmajeed al Mujaini alongside, Hashim al Rashdi, head coach and Ahmed al Hassani, 49er coach. David Faull, General Manager of the Barcelo Musannah Resort, said, "Barcelo Musannah Resort is delighted to welcome the sailors from Oman Sail's High-Performance team to the stunning property and offer complete access to the state-of-the-art facilities to help them prepare for the challenges



David Faull

ahead. We have been long-time supporters of sailing in Oman and wish the sailors the very best of luck as they proudly represent the nation and continue their journey to the very top of the sport." "We are very pleased to renew our relationship with Barcelo Musannah Resort for the coming 49er campaign. It has become the home of sailing in Oman by successfully hosting numerous high profile national,



AbdulAziz al Shiedi

regional and international events, and supporting our teams at all levels," added Abdulaziz al Shidi, Acting Director of Sailing at Oman Sail. "It is a privilege for our sailors to train in the waters of Musannah and stay at the Barcelo Musannah Resort. Oman Sail is committed to always providing the High-Performance team with the best conditions to succeed and achieve their goals. This

is the start of a new campaign and partnering with Barcelo Musannah Resort is a key component in supporting our sailors to fulfil their potential." The partnership supports the ongoing development of Oman Sail's High-Performance team in line with the established sailing strategy. Oman Sail's ultimate aim is to win an Olympic medal in sailing for the nation. During 2025, the team will stay at the resort to prepare for the 49er European Championships in Greece, taking place from June 1-8, and Kieler Woche in Germany from June 21-29. The period also includes the 49er World Championship in Italy from October 7-13 and the Asian Sailing Championship from November 10-18. Looking to the future, the team will aim to develop in preparation for major events including the 20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026 and qualification for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

150PLAYERS



British Business Forum (BBF) Oman

BBF ANNUAL GOLF EVENT TO RAISE FUNDS FOR AUTISM

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The first British Business Forum (BBF) annual golf event will be conducted in partnership with the Milly’s Golf Society to raise funds for autistic children under the Oman Autism Society on Friday May 23rd at the La Vie Golf Course at the Muscat Hills, according to the organisers.

“We have invited players from BBF groups around the Gulf and this is the first time that the BBF has ventured into this territory. The event is also very beneficial as it highlights Oman as a golfing destination,” said Mitul Patel, BBF Treasurer, who is organising this event.

There will be 150 players largely from corporates, 50 spectators from the BBF and 25 sponsors in support of the Oman Autism Society and the awards ceremony will be between 6 and 6.30 pm, followed by post event networking and dinner.

The British Business Forum, established over 25 years ago, primarily for British businesses and community in Oman under the auspices of the British Embassy with monthly meetings and other events, has been organising events of networking as well as art and sports sectors.

Similar groups have been formed throughout the GCC countries with similar activities.

“With a strong social media presence and a post-golf networking event, this is a fantastic opportunity to connect with professionals and support a great cause and entry to the event is free.”

One can register their interest with the BBF by registering their name, company name, Whatsapp number, preferred tee time, whether am or pm.

Al Mouj Golf, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility, has organised the annual Golf Fore Autism Corporate Charity Golf Day, empowered to raise awareness about autism in the Sultanate of Oman last year.

The Golf Fore Autism Corporate Charity Golf Day has grown every year since inception and this year raised a sum of RO 12,700 for the Association of Early Intervention for Children with Disability to help provide educational initiatives on autism in Muscat.



La Vie Golf Course - Muscat

FORT LAUDERDALE, United States: Lionel Messi’s frustration grew as Inter Miami’s miserable run continued with a 3-0 loss at home to Orlando City in Major League Soccer on Sunday.

The Florida derby defeat leaves Miami with one win from their last seven games in all competitions and they slip to sixth in the Eastern Conference with Orlando leapfrogging them.

Messi had just two shots on target and scuffed a free-kick as his own form slumped with that of his team.

“Now we’ll truly see if we’re a team in difficult times, because when everything’s going well it’s very easy,” Messi told Apple TV.

“When difficult times come, that’s when we have to be more united

than ever, be a true team, and pull ourselves together,” he added.

Messi questioned the refereeing but in truth the loss had little to do with officiating and much to do with shamolic defending, a disjointed midfield and punchless attack led by the rapidly fading Luis Suarez.

Orlando grabbed the lead in the 43rd minute with a goal of absurd simplicity. Goalkeeper Pedro Gallese launched the ball down field and Luis Muriel ran clear and slotted past Oscar Ustari.

The visitors were getting plenty of joy from going direct against a Miami back-line which was all at sea and Argentine Martin Ojeda should have done better when he found himself clear on goal but blasted over.

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Abhishek blitz knocks Lucknow out of playoffs

OPENER

Abhishek Sharma struck 59 off 20 balls as Sunrisers Hyderabad beat Lucknow Super Giants by six wickets on Monday to end their opponents’ chances of reaching the IPL playoffs.

Chasing 206 for victory, Abhishek set up the chase with his blitz laced with four fours and six sixes as Hyderabad achieved the target with 10 balls to spare in Lucknow.

Abhishek departed in the eighth over before Heinrich Klaasen, who hit 47, and Kamindu Mendis, who retired hurt on 32, guided the team to the brink of victory with their fourth-wicket partnership of 55.

Lucknow became the fifth team to bow out of the play-off contention leaving five-time champions Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals to battle for one remaining spot.

“Definitely it could have been one of our best seasons but coming into the tournament we had a lot of gaps, injuries,” said disappointed Lucknow skipper Rishabh Pant. “As a team we decided to not talk about that but it became difficult to fill those gaps.”

Gujarat Titans, Punjab Kings and Royal Challengers Bengaluru are already through to the playoffs starting May 29.

It was a consolation win for Hyderabad, who were already out of the playoffs although captain Pat Cummins said the win “gives (us) a lot of confidence for next year”.

The left-handed Abhishek took on the attack after he lost his opening partner Atharva Taide, who became New Zealand quick Will O’Rourke’s first wicket on his IPL debut.

Abhishek hit five sixes, including three in succession off Ravi Bishnoi, to reach his fifty in 18 balls and followed it up with another hit over the fence.

Leg-spinner Digvesh Rathi cut short Abhishek’s knock and Hyderabad lost another left-hander Ishan Kishan on 35 before South Africa’s Klaasen and Sri Lankan left-hander Mendis controlled the chase.

Shardul Thakur denied Klaasen his fifty and Mendis hobbled off with a foot injury before Nitish Reddy and Aniket Verma sealed the win.

PANT’S FLOP AND GAPS

Earlier, Mitchell Marsh and Aiden Markram laid the foundations for Lucknow’s 205-7 in their opening stand of 115.

Marsh top-scored with 65 in a knock laced with six fours and four sixes and Markram hit 61 before Nicholas Pooran contributed with his 26-ball 45 to boost the total.

The rest of the batters failed to get into double figures including another flop for Pant, who fell caught and bowled for seven off Sri Lanka seam bowler Eshan Malinga.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Pant has failed to fire since Lucknow splashed a record \$3.21 million on him at the November auction, scoring just 135 runs from 11 innings this IPL season.

Lucknow pace bowlers including Avesh Khan and Mayank Yadav struggled with



Sunrisers Hyderabad’s Abhishek Sharma in action. — Reuters

injuries leading into the tournament and during the season as well.

Malinga stood out with figures of 2-28 in his four overs. Pooran missed out on his fifty in an attempt to steal a single in the 20th over which witnessed two run outs and another wicket.

The IPL is into its final phase and restarted on Saturday after it was paused due to a conflict between India and Pakistan.

Since the pause in the IPL, the tournament has been rescheduled with the final now set to take place on June 3. — AFP

More misery for Messi, Miami with Florida derby defeat



Inter Miami’s Lionel Messi reacts during the tie against Orlando City SC. — AFP

COACHES ‘FAILING’ TEAM

Miami’s veteran keeper Ustari made a fine double save but then the 38-year-old found himself to blame for Orlando’s second goal.

The ball fell to Marco Pasalic on the edge of the box and his low shot went through the hands and legs of Ustari.

Miami coach Javier Mascherano threw on attacking players in a bid to retrieve something from the game but it was in vain.

In the fourth minute of stoppage time Duncan McGuire broke down the left and his low cross was slotted home by Icelandic forward Dagur Thorhallsson to wrap up an impressive performance from the visitors.

Miami have conceded 20 goals

in their last seven games with their only victory coming against the New York Red Bulls on May 3.

Mascherano said the first goal changed the game.

“I’d say for 25 or 30 minutes we had it completely under control playing in the opponent’s half, but this is how it is, clearly. I’m not going to deny what the result is,” he said.

“Unfortunately, we can’t afford the mistakes we make, that’s clear. But it’s pointless for me to come here and tell this story because it keeps happening.

“So, clearly, we as a coaching staff are failing in many of these ways and we have to try to find a way around them so we don’t continue failing and so the team starts getting results,” he added. — AFP

SPORTS

JEWEL OF ARABIA



The Royal Cavalry Band performs in Windsor.

ROYAL CAVALRY CONCLUDES PARTICIPATION IN ROYAL WINDSOR HORSE SHOW

LONDON: The Royal Cavalry of the Royal Court Affairs (RCA) concluded its participation in the Royal Windsor Horse Show, held at the grounds of the British Royal Windsor Castle, with the involvement of specialised equestrian teams from several countries worldwide.

The Royal Cavalry participated under the theme ‘The Sultanate of Oman: Jewel of Arabia’, during which its male and female riders presented diverse displays of traditional Omani equestrian arts, such as ‘Ardha’ galloping and horse hypnosis show, accompanied by Omani, Arabic and international musical pieces performed by the Royal Cavalry Band.

Eng Hilal Mohammed al Wa’eli, Head of the Royal Horses, Camels, Farms and Gardens Affairs at the Royal Court Affairs, stated that the Royal Cavalry’s participation in the Royal Windsor Horse Show featured various traditional equestrian performances accompanied by diverse musical pieces played by the Royal Cavalry Band, which were highly praised by the audience.

He emphasised that the Royal Cavalry’s participation in such global events underscores Oman’s dedication to horses and equestrianism, highlighting the prestigious status it has achieved in this field.

On his turn, Dr Sarhan Salim al Zidi, Director-General of the Royal Cavalry, noted that the Royal Cavalry’s participation in the Royal Windsor Horse Show reaffirms the advanced ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom. He added that it was an excellent opportunity for the Royal Cavalry’s riders to exchange expertise with participants from various world countries.

Al Zidi stressed that such events serve as a platform to promote Oman’s rich cultural and civilisational heritage, as well as its tourism. During the show, the Royal Cavalry presented a visual display showcasing Oman’s most prominent heritage and natural tourist attractions.

The Royal Windsor Horse Show is one of the world’s most prestigious equestrian events, first held in 1943. The 82nd edition featured numerous international competitions in show jumping, dressage, carriage driving, and endurance, alongside the main show in which specialised global equestrian teams performed at the grounds of Britain’s Royal Windsor Castle. — ONA



The Royal Cavalry riders during a performance.



Brighton & Hove Albion's Yankuba Minteh and Jack Hinshelwood celebrate after the match. — Reuters

Liverpool rocked by Brighton’s late fightback

BRIGHTON'S Jack Hinshelwood sealed a dramatic 3-2 victory against Liverpool on Monday to leave the Premier League champions without a win since clinching the title.

Arne Slot’s side took the lead through Harvey Elliott’s early opener before Yasin Ayari equalised at the Amex Stadium.

Dominik Szoboszlai restored Liverpool’s advantage just before the interval, but Brighton staged a late fightback as Kaoru Mitoma levelled before Hinshelwood came off the bench to net with his first touch.

Liverpool have taken just one point from their three matches following the title-clinching rout of Tottenham on April 27.

The Reds have lost at Brighton and Chelsea and squandered a two-goal lead in a draw with Arsenal since their record-equalling 20th English crown was confirmed.

They can now look forward to receiving the Premier League trophy in Sunday’s season finale against FA cup winners Crystal Palace at Anfield before an open-top bus parade through the city 24 hours later.

“Great game of football but not the result we wanted,” said Slot.

“If you don’t score the third goal then it’s hard to win at this level, especially away from home. We cannot miss chances like we did if you want to win.

“I know these players already for 10 months, so it’s not the first time I’m judging them, but it’s nice to see Harvey score a goal and have an assist.

“Federico Chiesa had some nice moments as well considering how long he’s not been playing.”

Slot had admitted that motivating the champions for the final two matches of the season was a tricky task and his fears were confirmed by this sloppy display.

Slot’s players had a celebratory trip to Dubai this week and only returned to training on Friday, while the Reds boss was seen partying in Ibiza for several days, as they soaked in a title victory secured in April.

“Did you see me on social media!” Slot said with a laugh in reply to a question about how focused he had been on the Brighton game.

Ahead of his widely-expected move to Real Madrid when his contract expires in the close-season, Trent Alexander-Arnold was left on the bench for a second successive game.



Brighton & Hove Albion's Kaoru Mitoma celebrates scoring their second goal with Jan Paul van Hecke.

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE RESULTS
ON MONDAY:
Brighton 3 (Ayari 32, Mitoma 69, Hinshelwood 85) Liverpool 2 (Elliott 9, Szoboszlai 45+1)
PLAYED SUNDAY
Everton 2 (Ndiaye 6, 45+2) Southampton 0
West Ham 1 (Bowen 86) Nottingham Forest 2 (Gibbs-White 11, Milenkovic 61)
Brentford 2 (Mbeumo 22, Wissa 43) Fulham 3 (Jimenez 16, Cairney 68, Wilson 70)
Leicester 2 (Vardy 28, McAteer 69) Ipswich 0
Arsenal 1 (Rice 55) Newcastle 0

LIVERPOOL CRUMBLE

Conor Bradley featured at right-back instead and showed why he is a contender to replace Alexander-Arnold with his role in Liverpool’s ninth minute opener.

When Mohamed Salah rolled a pass to Bradley, he shifted gears with a dynamic burst into the Brighton area before clipping a precise pass towards Elliott, who slotted home from close-range.

The goal meant Liverpool had scored in every away game of a league season for the first time in their history.

Bradley’s attacking runs had more than a touch of Alexander-Arnold about them, but

his finishing wasn’t up to scratch when he took Federico Chiesa’s pass and fired wide from 10 yards.

Ayari grabbed Brighton’s eye-catching equaliser in the 32nd minute.

The Sweden midfielder eluded Bradley and drilled a fine low finish past Alisson Becker from the edge of the area after Brajan Gruda’s lofted pass prised open the Liverpool defence.

Liverpool regained the lead on the stroke of half-time when Szoboszlai caught out Brighton keeper Bart Verbruggen with a swerving strike from wide on the right flank that whistled into the top corner.

Szoboszlai’s bemused grin as he celebrated suggested the midfielder’s effort might have been a miscued cross rather than a shot.

Salah was captaining Liverpool for the first time in the Premier League to mark his 300th appearance in the competition.

But the Egypt forward missed an open goal when he flicked Cody Gakpo’s cross wide from five yards.

It was a costly mistake from Salah as Brighton equalised in the 69th minute.

Welbeck’s shot was pushed out by Alisson and Japan winger Mitoma hammered in the rebound. Hinshelwood completed Brighton’s thrilling comeback in the 85th minute, the substitute slotting home from Matt O’Riley’s cross. — AFP



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NAMA ELECTRICITY
INVESTS RO 154M IN
SMART NETWORK



NEDC's RO 154 million investment is designed to strengthen Oman's power grid for the future.

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

NAMA Electricity Distribution Company (NEDC) – part of Nama Group – invested RO 154.49 million in 2024 to upgrade and expand its power distribution network across Oman, according to its latest annual report.

The investment covered key infrastructure priorities including RO 93.54 million for 11kV projects – both load-related and non-load under the Asset Rehabilitation Programme – and RO 49.76 million for 33kV network enhancements.

An additional RO 9.08 million was allocated to advanced metering infrastructure (AMI), while RO 2.11 million supported shared asset upgrades.

The capital spending aims to boost system reliability, improve energy efficiency and support the continued rollout of smart technologies.

By the end of 2024, over 1 million smart meters had been deployed, helping reduce system losses to 7.95 per cent, down from 8.23 per cent the previous year.

“These upgrades are critical to ensuring long-term network resilience and preparing Oman’s grid for future digital and renewable integration,” the report stated.

The company’s infrastructure now includes 105 grid stations, 738 primary substations and over 100,000 kilometres of circuit length. NEDC is the largest electricity distributor in the country, serving 1.35 million customers across all governorates except Dhofar.

Oman unveils new national
AI safety and ethics policy

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

THE Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, has officially launched its Public Policy for Safe and Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence Systems.

Unveiled earlier this week, the policy “aims to govern the use and development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems in the Sultanate of Oman by establishing a comprehensive framework that combines technical controls and ethical principles”. The policy will apply to all government bodies and private sector organisations which are involved in the development or use of AI Systems across stages including data collection, system design, training, operation and ongoing evaluation.

According to the document, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology will be responsible for monitoring the overall compliance of government administrative units and report to the Council of Ministers, while sectoral regulatory bodies will be responsible for enforcement within their domains.



The new national policy aims to ensure the safe and ethical use of AI systems in Oman.

The policy underscores three main ethical principles for the use and development of AI Systems.

These include Humanity and Society, Inclusivity and Justice, and Responsibility and Accountability.

According to the policy, users and developers must respect human dignity and ensure the right to human intervention in sensitive decisions, in addition to promoting the use of AI technologies in establishing societal well-being and sustainability.

They must also ensure that the benefits achieved through AI are distributed fairly across different social groups, and that these technologies do not contribute to increasing

economic disparities.

Furthermore, users and developers must design systems that ensure no bias occurs based on race, gender, religion, or any other personal characteristic, in alignment with Islamic principles and ethical values.

This includes using a wide, diverse set of data in training systems that represents different societal groups, including minorities and individuals with disabilities.

In addition, the policy calls for ensuring that technologies are accessible to everyone through public and private sector collaboration, in order to provide technologies at affordable and equitable prices, while focusing on enhancing access for low-

income groups.

Moreover, the policy mandates the creation of secure systems free from any breaches, in addition to providing clear effective mechanisms for accountability when errors or damages occur, in addition to ensuring the audit-ability of systems to guarantee compliance with ethical standards.

The policy represents a major step in regulating Oman’s AI sector, which has been identified as a key sector to achieve economic diversification under the country’s digital economy programme, which aims to boost the contribution of the digital economy from current 2% to 5% by 2030 and 10% by 2040.

Oman fights water system losses with tech, data and EU expertise

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 20

TACKLING rising water scarcity and costly system inefficiencies, Oman is ramping up efforts to cut water losses by turning to data-driven innovations, decentralised wastewater solutions and lessons learned from European best practices.

This was the key focus of a high-level discussion during the “EU-Oman Energy & Water Collaboration Forum”, where experts shed light on practical solutions for managing non-revenue water and modernising national water infrastructure.

The session, titled “Tackling Water Losses & Improving Efficiency – The Role of Technology & Economic Solutions”, explored Oman’s roadmap to reducing technical losses and enhancing water reuse.

FROM CLASSIC METERS TO SMART WATER NETWORKS

Khalil bin Sulaiman al Adawi, Technical Losses Engineer for Operation and Maintenance at



The session explored Oman's roadmap to reducing losses and enhancing water reuse.

Nama Water Services, highlighted the utility’s strategic pivot from traditional water metering to smart, data-integrated systems.

“We are now using classical water meters equipped with liquidation systems, but the future lies in building integrated layers of digital tools that allow for daily data collection and predictive maintenance,” he said.

Al Adawi outlined Nama Water’s four-stage roadmap, launched in 2021, to address water losses. The first phase, already completed, involved mapping losses across the

network using analytics and GIS to pinpoint high-loss areas.

In the second phase, over 600 pressure-reducing devices (PRDs) were installed nationwide over three years, significantly cutting leakage and pipeline stress. Current efforts include expanding pressure management and building capacity across 30 leakage detection teams.

THE DECENTRALISED ADVANTAGE

Angelo de Mul, CEO of Dutch firm PureBlue Water, advocated

for decentralised wastewater treatment as a more energy-efficient and scalable alternative to conventional sewer networks.

“Decentralised systems allow you to reuse water at the source, for irrigation or even within communities, reducing reliance on costly centralised infrastructure. It’s cost-effective and sustainable,” he said.

He pointed to successful applications in the Netherlands and other European countries, where compact, decentralised treatment plants operate seamlessly within built environments. “People often don’t even know there’s a wastewater plant right beside them – that’s the level of integration and reliability we aim for,” he added.

Angelo de Mul also stressed the importance of standardising water treatment systems and connecting them to data management platforms.

“Innovation is sharper and more effective when combined with reliable data. In the Netherlands, we’ve developed standardised machines with low

carbon footprints to remove toxic substances and recycle water safely for agriculture and even human use,” he noted.

VEOLIA BACKS INTEGRATED, RESILIENT SOLUTION

Nicolas Le Goff, Chief Operating Officer of Veolia Oman, called for a systemic view of water management.

“The challenge in Oman is not only about reducing leaks, but also about managing wastewater reuse and ensuring energy efficiency throughout the cycle,” he said.

“We believe smart grids, AI-driven asset management and cross-sector collaboration are essential to solving water losses while delivering sustainable services.”

Veolia, a global leader in water and environmental services, has long advocated for circular water strategies, particularly in arid regions like Oman. Le Goff added that Oman’s geography makes it a prime candidate for testing scalable solutions in decentralised reuse and smart grid applications.

ADVERTORIALS

NEWROLE



SARCO now manages the full distribution of Samsung’s extensive range of consumer electronics.

SARCO NOW SOLE AUTHORISED DISTRIBUTOR FOR SAMSUNG CONSUMER ELECTRONICS IN OMAN

MUSCAT: In a major development, Al Seeb Technical Establishment (SARCO) LLC, in partnership with Samsung, announced a significant strategic development. As of April 1, 2025, SARCO has assumed the role of sole authorised distributor for Samsung Consumer Electronics across all channels and product categories in the Sultanate of Oman. This includes independent retailers, indirect organised retailers, operators, B2B clients and online platforms.

Under this new arrangement, SARCO now manages the full distribution of Samsung’s extensive range of consumer electronics, including but not limited to: refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, microwaves, dishwashers, dryers, air purifiers, room air conditioners, televisions, audio systems and commercial air conditioning & B2B solutions.

This transition from a Fulfilment Distribution to a Full Distribution model enables SARCO to provide enhanced value-added services, greater operational flexibility and deeper engagement with channel partners and consumers across Oman. Any previously existing distributor arrangements with any other entity for CE business, have been terminated with immediate effect.

The announcement was made during a joint press conference and Strategic Partner Convention held at the Sheraton Hotel in Muscat. The event was attended by distinguished guests from organised and independent retail sectors, government ministries, corporate clients, banking institutions and media representatives, followed by a gala dinner.

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

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

AHLIBANK HONOURS 8TH BATCH OF GRADUATES OF ‘HIMAM’ PROGRAMME

MUSCAT: ahlibank recently held a ceremony to honour the 8th batch of graduates from its flagship programme, “Himam,” one of the bank’s key initiatives aimed at developing national talent. The event was held at the bank’s head office in Al Wattayah, attended by several employees and members of senior management.

The programme reflects ahlibank’s commitment to supporting and empowering Omani youth by enhancing their practical and professional skills, thus improving their readiness for the job market. The programme also contributes to Oman’s efforts in employment



and capacity-building by adopting the highest standards in training and developing national talent. The ceremony began with a welcome speech, followed by an address delivered by

ahlibank’s CEO, Said Abdullah al Hatmi, in which he highlighted the objectives of the Himam programme and its impact on empowering national talent.

The event also included an introductory presentation about the programme and the introduction of the 8th batch of participants. A short video was showcased, highlighting key milestones and achievements of the programme. The ceremony concluded with congratulations and a recognition segment honouring the graduates for their dedication and perseverance throughout the programme.

Kia EV3 wins 2025 world car of the year

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

“It is an immense honour for everyone at Kia that the EV3 has been awarded the 2025 World Car of Year title.

This award highlights Kia’s global leadership in providing design-led, technologically advanced and sustainable mobility solutions; and how the EV3’s class-leading attributes redefine the user experience for customers worldwide,” said Ho Sung Song, President and CEO at Kia.

The 2025 World Car Awards



The victory brings Kia’s total of wins at the World Car Awards to six since 2020.

were judged by a panel of 96 highly respected international automotive journalists from 30 countries. The EV3’s victory brings Kia’s total of wins at the World Car Awards to six since 2020.

The Kia EV3 won ‘2025 World Car of the Year’ Award at the ceremony.

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

EV3 has a segment-leading range of up to 605 km and can charge from 10-80 per cent in 31 minutes, delivering impressive usability.

The vehicle’s innovative interior design optimises space, comfort and accessibility, while Kia’s AI Assistant, advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) and Over-the-Air (OTA) updates enhance the ownership experience with cutting-edge technology.

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

With Kia ranked #1 for Sales Customer Satisfaction in 2024 in the Middle East and Africa, RIA offers not just cars, but a lifetime of satisfaction and excellence on every mile of your journey.

OAB wins best cybersecurity & risk excellence award

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has been awarded Best Cybersecurity and Risk Management Implementation in Oman by MEA Finance at the 2025 Banking Technology Awards.

The award recognises the Bank’s outstanding achievements in securing its digital operations while meeting the highest standards of regulatory compliance and customer trust.

At the core of this achievement, OAB ensures that its cybersecurity practices are not only robust but fully compliant with national governance frameworks.

Through its risk-aware security architecture, the Bank dynamically monitors, assesses and mitigates cyber risks in real time — demonstrating operational integrity across all channels.

In recent years, OAB has implemented an advanced threat detection and response



The bank dynamically monitors, assesses and mitigates cyber risks in real time.

platform with extended detection and response (XDR) and security orchestration, automation and response (SOAR) capabilities.

This has enhanced the Bank’s ability to identify threats in real-time, analyse security

events across multiple layers and respond more effectively to incidents.

Additionally, participation in a global vulnerability research initiative has further reinforced the Bank’s defences against advanced persistent threats and zero-day vulnerabilities.

These technology investments have yielded measurable results, with the Bank achieving its lowest-ever Cyber Risk Exposure Management (CREM) percentage. This translates to fewer incidents, faster response times and consistent success in cybersecurity audits.

Beyond technology, Oman Arab Bank continues to foster a cyber-resilient culture through targeted staff training, phishing simulations and executive-level cybersecurity drills, reinforcing the human layer of defence and building long-term organisational resilience.

Oxy Oman signs agreement to extend Block 53 operations

MUSCAT: Occidental Mukhaizna LLC (Oxy Oman), the leading independent oil and gas producer in Oman and subsidiary of Occidental (Oxy), has signed a 15-year extension of its Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) for the onshore Block 53 in south-central Oman, where it operates the world-class Mukhaizna heavy oil field.

Under the terms of the amended EPSA, Oxy Oman and its partners believe they can potentially grow resources by more than 800 million gross barrels through drilling activities and enhanced oil recovery projects across various reservoirs, as well as using AI applications to optimise steam flood patterns to boost hydrocarbon recovery.

The signing ceremony was held in Muscat in May 18, 2025. Eng



Oxy Oman and its partners believe they can potentially grow resources by more than 800 million gross barrels in this field.

Salim bin Nasser al Aufo, Minister of Energy and Minerals (MoEM) and Vicki Hollub, President and Chief Executive Officer of Oxy signed the

amendment to the EPSA on behalf of their respective organisations.

The signing event was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Energy and Minerals; and senior executives from Oxy including Kenneth Dillion, Senior Vice President and President, International Oil and Gas Operations; and Steven Lauver, President and General Manager for Oxy Oman.

“I am pleased to be here in Oman with the Minister Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufo to sign this 15-year extension, which we believe will continue to deliver a significant value to all stakeholders while closely supporting Oman’s national objectives,” said President and Chief Executive Officer Vicki Hollub.

“We’re proud of the deep roots,

strong relationships and mutually beneficial partnerships we’ve built in Oman over the past several decades. These partnerships have been central to our shared success, including recent exploration achievements and that momentum continues to build.” Since assuming operations in 2005, Oxy has substantially increased production in the Mukhaizna field while maintaining a strong commitment to operational excellence, environmental stewardship and community engagement.

To date, Oxy Oman produced over 640 million barrels and operates 3,500 wells in the block. The Block 53 consortium consists of Oxy Oman as the designated operator, OQEP, Indian Oil Corporation, Liwa Energy Limited and PTTEP.

BUSINESS



The crackdown helped with the recovery of more than 228 GWh of electricity, and over RO 2 million in revenue.

CRACKDOWN ON ILLEGAL POWER CONNECTIONS UNCOVERS 3,557 CASES IN OMAN

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 20

Nama Electricity Distribution Company (NEDC), the country’s national distribution utility with coverage of all governorates with the exception of Dhofar, has announced that it has busted a total of 3,557 illegal electricity connections during 2024, helping contribute to the reduction of system losses.

The crackdown encompassed, among other measures, the intensive inspection of connections and metres aimed at identifying and rectifying instances of tampering, unauthorised connections, and defective metres, the state-owned utility said.

“These efforts led to the detection of over 3,557 cases of illegal connections and the recovery of more than 228 GWh and over RO 2 million of revenue,” the company stated in its newly published 2024 Annual Report.

Additionally, metre reading operations were intensified during the year, according to NEDC.

“The company implemented enhanced oversight measures for manual metre reading, including the establishment of a dedicated validation team to verify reading and ensure data accuracy.”

Furthermore, the transition to Automated Meter Reading (AMR) technology helped enhance the accuracy of metre readings and enable real-time monitoring of meter performance, thereby reducing errors and inefficiencies, it noted.

“These initiatives reflect the company’s commitment to operational excellence, improved revenue assurance, and enhanced distribution efficiency. Moving forward, the company remains focused on further optimising its loss-reduction strategies through continued technological advancements and process improvements.”

As a result of these and other measures, system losses dipped 0.27 per cent to 7.95 per cent in 2024, down from 8.23 per cent a year earlier.

“This improvement is the result of strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing distribution efficiency and minimising losses,” the company added. NEDC, part of Nama Group, is licensed to carry out electricity distribution management and related activities across all governments excluding Dhofar, has a portfolio of 1.35 million customers. Overseeing Dhofar is Nama Dhofar Services, an integrated provider of electricity, water and wastewater services in the southern governorate of Oman.

FTA offers Omani exports competitive advantage

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

THE Omani Economic Association (OEA) convened a session of its Economic Council under the theme “International Customs Policies and Their Impact on the Omani Economy,” focusing on the implications of global tariffs and the benefits of the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement.

The session, held at Omantel’s headquarters, featured HH Sayyid Dr Adham bin Turki al Said, Chairman of the Economic Committee at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and Khalid bin Said al Shuaibi, Head of the National Programme for Investment and Export Development (Nazdaher); and was moderated by Dr Khalid bin Said al Amri, Chairman of the OEA Board.

Speaking first at the session, HH Sayyid Dr Adham said, “Today’s global developments are not spontaneous; they are the result of accumulated trends, accelerated post-Covid-19. The response came as a reaction to globalisation, industrial nations began subsidising their exports. The US perceived Chinese export-driven production as a threat, prompting Trump to introduce a wave of tariffs, which ultimately hurt American consumers and companies.

Still, there were positive outcomes, such as new free trade agreements with the US, understandings with the UK, and the reshaping of NAFTA, from which the US now benefits, despite spending more than it produces. These tariffs have attracted some industries back to the US.” He described Trump’s



The OEA session focused on the theme, ‘International Customs Policies and Their Impact on the Omani Economy’.

approach as a “shock policy”, stressing that the American market remains attractive.

“The US and China are clearly diverging. Despite the friction, the US remains reliant on Chinese investments. Tariffs are likely to remain, with Trump’s main goal being economic recovery and job creation in the US,” he added.

Speaking to the Observer, Khalid bin Said al Shuaibi, Head of the National Programme for Investment and Export Development (Nazdaher), affirmed that the FTA between Oman and the United States remains in effect, ensuring that Omani products are exempt from standard customs duties.

However, he clarified that the additional 10 per cent customs duty currently applied across all imports does affect Omani exports. “The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) remains valid.

Omani products exported to the US are not subject to standard customs duties, except for the additional 10 per cent applied across all imports. Negotiations are ongoing to address and potentially ease these charges,” he stated.

Al Shuaibi emphasised that, despite this added tariff, the FTA continues to offer Omani exporters a competitive advantage in the US market, and discussions are underway to mitigate the impact of these new duties. Dr Khalid bin Said al Amri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of OEA, remarked, “Ongoing economic disputes between the US and China continue to cast a shadow over the global economy. Former President Trump’s decision to impose tariffs on over 60 countries, though delayed briefly, still impacts the global economy. With economic

uncertainty prevailing, many countries are using tariffs as economic tools, a form of tax on imports.”

He argued that such economic challenges can be viewed as opportunities rather than obstacles. “They offer a chance to support national industries and encourage innovation, building a more resilient domestic economy capable of withstanding global fluctuations,” he said.

He acknowledged the recent decline in oil prices and the drop in the Muscat Stock Exchange Index, but said, “That doesn’t mean we should stand idle. These global shifts must be used to facilitate trade in target markets, create new supply chains, expand and diversify markets, and develop new products. From such challenges, opportunities are born.”

Energy shift must balance business, climate

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

THE energy transition must strike a pragmatic balance between climate ambitions and business sustainability, said Emry Hisham Yusoff, Senior General Manager of the Carbon Management Division, Upstream at Malaysia’s Petronas.

Speaking at a panel session during the Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES), Yusoff addressed growing concerns among industry stakeholders about the economic viability of decarbonisation pathways, especially in the context of carbon capture and storage (CCS) and other capital-intensive interventions.

“Yes, there is pressure in investor and stakeholder meetings,” he acknowledged. “But we must ensure that alignment remains between long-term climate targets and the realities of running viable energy businesses.” Yusoff noted that natural gas



Emry Hisham Yusoff, Senior General Manager of Carbon Management Division at Petronas, during a panel at the Oman Petroleum & Energy Show (OPES) 2025.

continues to play a critical role in Malaysia’s energy mix, not just as a transition fuel but also as a core product in global markets.

“Gas demand is still growing — especially in Asia. We continue to see interest in LNG and related projects. It’s not about stopping activity, but about transforming it responsibly.” On CCS, Yusoff was cautious

but optimistic. “In places like the US, where the government supports CCS through incentives such as the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), projects are moving. But for us in Southeast Asia, the economics are different. The CO₂ concentration in our emissions streams is often below 4%, which makes capture much more energy- and cost-intensive,” he explained.

He added that Petronas is now reassessing how best to approach energy efficiency and emissions reduction. “We are working to reduce our own energy use and emissions intensity across upstream operations. But we also need to consider whether investments are achieving meaningful impact or just adding operational complexity.”

Yusoff emphasised that energy transition strategies must be tailored to regional and operational contexts. “This is not a copy-paste exercise. We must understand what works locally and where we need to refocus efforts.”

REVENUE DECLINE

US tariffs dampen mood of global exporters



The wave of new US tariffs has severely dampened the mood among exporters and 42% of companies now expect their export revenues to decline markedly, according to a global survey by Allianz Trade published on Tuesday.

The credit insurer surveyed exporters in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Britain, the United States, Singapore and China about global trade in March and April. — Reuters

BUFFER PRIORITIES

Saudi ready for multiple oil price scenarios



Saudi Arabia is always ready for multiple oil price scenarios, and budgets are driven by priorities, the kingdom’s economy minister said on Tuesday.

“We’re always ready for scenarios — multiple scenarios, and we have buffers,” Faisal Alibrahim said in Doha.

“We have the long-term fiscal planning and medium-term frameworks that help us adjust depending on what scenario actually plays out,” he said. — Reuters

BENCHMARK LENDING

China cuts key rates to aid economy



China cut benchmark lending rates for the first time since October on Tuesday, while major state banks lowered deposit rates as authorities work to ease monetary policy to help buffer the economy from the impact of the Sino-US trade war.

The widely expected rate cuts are aimed at stimulating consumption and loan growth as the world’s number 2 economy softens. — Reuters

OPINION

Is your smart device camera spying on you?



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The writer is the founder of Knowledge Oman.

ABOUT 25 years ago, cameras were introduced on mobile phones. At first, it was scary, and I vividly remember when many people thought it would not be successful and they would most probably be banned in many countries too. Today, this is a normal affair, and in fact, every smart mobile phone comes with a camera embedded in them by default. Not just one; in fact, two or more on the front and on the back of the phone.

What more? Almost every computer desktop, tablet and laptop at home or in the office has them too. Many TVs have them, and soon you will be wearing smart glasses that have cameras embedded in them.

Though this has become a norm at home, work and in schools as well, the initial worry about the use and intrusion of a camera continues. The question is, can the camera on these gadgets spy on you? Let me try and shed some light for your kind perusal via my article today.

According to a report published in 2023 by one of the reputed cybersecurity institutions (Norton Cyber Safety Insights), nearly 1 in 3 people worldwide are concerned that their smartphone cameras are being used to spy on them.

Another study released by CyberNews

analysed that over 30 Android camera applications were found to be suspicious, in which they were found sending user data to unknown servers and/or requesting excessive permissions from their users.

Finally, it has been reported that hundreds of apps were removed from the Google Play Store between 2019 and 2023 due to privacy violations, many of which were due to unauthorised access to cameras.

Yikes, numbers don't lie, especially when they are reported from the heavyweight international industry cyber security players.

What can one learn from these reports? Yes, and clearly that the embedded cameras on these smart gadgets can spy on you.

Nevertheless, it's not as common as one would think. Let me explain why and how.

One can technically access smart gadgets' cameras (phone, tablet, laptop and TV) remotely through apps that are either buggy or have allowed permission to do so.

By default, the heavyweights, Apple, Google and Huawei, do not allow third-party apps to access unless the user allows them to do so, hence the removal of the hundreds of apps from the Play Store as mentioned earlier.

So what can you do? The short answer is to remove access to the apps, always update the devices in question, block the apps if need

According to a report published in 2023 by one of the reputed cybersecurity institutions (Norton Cyber Safety Insights), nearly 1 in 3 people worldwide are concerned that their smartphone cameras are being used to spy on them.

be, or even better, just cover the cameras altogether (and only uncover them when required to use them). To remove access for Apple iOS devices (iPhone, iPad, etc.), go to "Settings", scroll to the "Privacy" section and select "Camera".

For Android devices (including TVs), go to "Settings", then scroll down to "App", click on "App Permissions", and you will finally find the "Camera".

Turn off camera access for apps that don't really need it. I promise you will find plenty as I did already. For example, your camera app would need it, but I don't see a reason why the notes or even calculator app would need it. I am sure you got the idea.

Lastly, ensure you always update the software of your smart device (be it the individual app or the operating system entirely). The regular updates fix bugs and patch security holes. Do not ignore them, as you will be at the mercy of hackers and the like, mischief users.

To conclude my article this week, I would like to emphasise the importance of keeping oneself updated by reading and watching the news as well as following the weekly articles, for knowledge is power, and attaining it would keep you ahead of the game.

Until we catch up again next week, stay safe and be vigilant.

HOW BP TOP BRASS CAN GET AN ELLIOTT-BACKED REVAMP

YAWEN CHEN

ELLIOTT Investment Management's next big move at BP is installing board leadership it likes. The US activist, which now holds 5% of the struggling \$78 billion oil major, understandably wants a swift replacement for departing Chair Helge Lund. While suitable candidates aren't exactly abundant, some exist. The sooner a new chair is in place, the sooner BP can push for more drastic changes – including identifying a new chief executive.

Lund and incumbent CEO Murray Auchincloss were key figures in a five-year diversion into low-carbon energy, now comprehensively ditched. Rightly or wrongly, the group now wants to be fossil fuel-focused again.

Regaining credibility with investors means appointing leaders with experience in the extractive industries – fossil fuels or mining. The ideal new chair would be available right now, apply themselves to BP solely – unlike Lund, who also chairs pharma giant Novo Nordisk – and be someone Elliott can work with.

That person could be John Manzoni, who used to run BP's refining operations and now chairs the board at Johnnie Walker maker Diageo. It could also be former Anglo American CEO Mark Cutifani, now chair at Vale's base metals unit. Given BP's strategic troubles, Cutifani would bring a valuable outsider's perspective.

Yet Ken MacKenzie would offer that too, and more. The 61-year-old, who retired as BHP's chair in March, had Elliott's blessing, opens new tab on taking up his position at the \$123 billion mining giant in 2017 after a decent record as CEO at packaging firm Amcor. During his tenure BHP's returns bested rival Rio Tinto and the group largely followed through on the activist's main demands, including selling its US shale assets – coincidentally, to BP – and dissolving a dual listing structure.

The Canadian-Australian would have to be tempted to relocate to London from Melbourne. Yet his near-namesake Andrew Mackenzie, who served as BHP CEO during his tenure, has repositioned BP's crosstown rival Shell with some success. Investors would likely greet a Ken MacKenzie-chaired BP positively, giving confidence that it could complete Elliott's requirements for disposals of non-core assets and more aggressive cost cuts.

A new chair is only half the revamp challenge, though. BP may also need a CEO who knows the company but isn't implicated in its recent missteps. One appealing candidate is Rolls-Royce Chief Executive Tufan Erginbilgic, a two-decade veteran in the fuels, lubricants and petrochemicals segment of BP before his exit in 2020. Since announcing his appointment in July 2022, \$91 billion Rolls' shares have risen tenfold.

Erginbilgic is already 65, and may not want to check out of a winning situation. But BP is a similar turnaround challenge to Rolls. A company run by Erginbilgic, and overseen by MacKenzie, would at least give investors greater confidence a revamp is possible. — Reuters

Investing in clean energy bolsters EU security

THE United States has, at least for the time being, relinquished its role as the leader of the global energy transition. In addition to abandoning the clean-energy goals laid out by his predecessor, Joe Biden, US President Donald Trump has refused to acknowledge the profound health, economic, and security risks climate change poses to Americans, much less to traditional US allies and partners around the world.

The Trump administration has instead turned its focus to revitalising the coal industry and increasing oil and gas exports in an attempt to achieve "energy dominance" over friends and foes alike.

The fallout has been swift. In March 2025, the US intelligence community failed to mention climate change in its annual threat assessment for the first time in over a decade, and the White House recently did away with the congressionally mandated national climate assessment, produced every four years since 1990. The US Environmental Protection Agency, for its part, is attempting to overturn the long-held scientific finding that greenhouse gases (GHGs) harm human health, which is the basis for US emissions regulations.

With the US turning its back on climate action, and China still heavily dependent on coal, it falls to Europe to lead the global decarbonisation agenda.

To be sure, the European Union and its member states are also under immense pressure to increase defence spending, which some European politicians believe should take precedence over green investments.

But this is a false choice. For Europe, continued investment in clean energy is an investment in security.

The EU has made considerable progress in increasing renewable energy as a share of its energy mix since adopting the 2021 European Climate Law, which formalised the goals of the European Green Deal and set the intermediate target of reducing GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030.

These decarbonisation efforts



For Europe, continued investment in clean energy is an investment in security.



GREG POLLOCK

The writer is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.



JOSHUA BUSBY

The writer is Professor of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, formerly served as a senior climate adviser to the US Department of Defence.

were temporarily sidetracked by Russia's full-scale attack of Ukraine in February 2022, when Europe had to scramble to replace imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Russia.

Despite (or perhaps because of) this challenge, nearly 50% of the electricity generated in the EU in 2024 was from renewables, with gas declining for the fifth year in a row and solar surpassing coal for the first time. Nuclear and wind have become the bloc's leading energy sources.

What the EU has achieved is impressive. The bloc reduced its dependence not only on fossil fuels, which now account for only 29% of electricity generation, but also on its belligerent neighbour: its gas imports from Russia declined from 150 billion cubic metres in 2021 to less than 52 bcm in 2024.

The problem now is that Europe risks becoming reliant on two increasingly unreliable partners: the US and China.

Both the Biden and Trump administrations were more than happy to compensate for the shortfall in Russian gas supplies: Europe's LNG imports from the US have more than doubled since 2021, from 18.9 to 45.1 bcm in 2024.

But given Trump's obvious disregard for America's traditional allies, as illustrated by his capricious tariff policies, his administration might be willing to

weaponise US energy resources – much like Russia has – to get his way on, say, how to end the Ukraine War, or how many US-made weapons Europe should buy.

Similarly, the EU's decarbonisation drive has made the bloc increasingly dependent on China, which dominates the processing and supply of the critical minerals essential for clean-energy technologies.

The Chinese government has amply demonstrated its willingness – most recently in response to the imposition of US tariffs – to restrict foreign access to critical minerals and rare-earth elements to advance its economic and foreign-policy goals.

The recent Summit on the Future of Energy Security, organised by the International Energy Agency and the United Kingdom, offered an opportunity for policymakers to assess how Europe might advance both its security and climate objectives in this shifting geopolitical landscape.

Despite efforts by the Trump administration to scupper support for the clean-energy transition, organisers of the recent summit held firm, reasserting that renewables and battery storage are crucial for energy security.

Investments in fighter jets and missile systems are important to deter high-end threats.

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ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male (MBA Fin) having more than 19 years of experience in Oman accounts & finance looking for suitable placement, NOC available and can join immediately. Contact: 92076716

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

PASSPORT LOST

SALHA HAIDARI KIGONGO has lost Tanzanian Passport No TAE678076. Finder please handover to ROP.

SIT. WANTED

B.E Electrical Engineer (14yrs Exp) 6yrs in Oman with Oman D/L GSM:77405954 Email: michaelmathu@gmail.com

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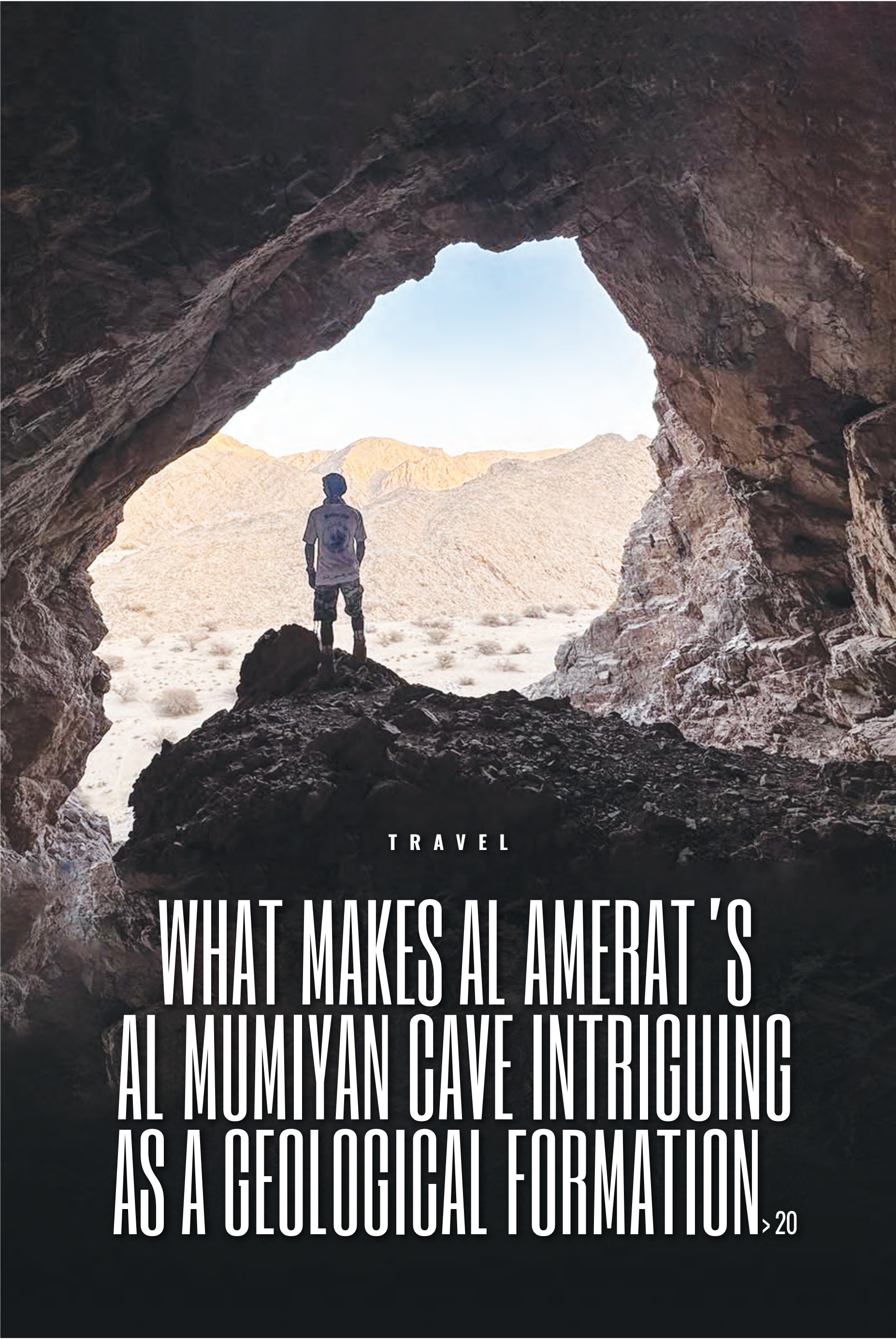
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T R A V E L

WHAT MAKES AL AMERAT'S AL MUMIYAN CAVE INTRIGUING AS A GEOLOGICAL FORMATION

20

ENTERTAINMENT

‘Criminal’: Elton John condemns UK’s AI copyright plans



ELTON JOHN on Sunday accused the British government of “committing theft” by proposing that tech firms could train artificial intelligence models on the UK’s music and creative output without guaranteeing proper recompense.

Creative industries globally are grappling with the legal and ethical implications of AI models that can produce their own work after being trained on existing material.

Britain, which Prime Minister Keir Starmer wants to become an AI superpower, has proposed relaxing copyright laws to allow AI developers to train their models on any material to which they have lawful access. The proposal would require creators to proactively opt out to stop their work from being used.

The biggest names in the industry, including John, Paul McCartney, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Ed Sheeran and others, have urged the government to change course, saying the proposal will make it even harder for young people to make a living in the creative industries.

“The danger is for young artists, they haven’t got the resources to keep checking or fight big tech,” John told the BBC. “It’s criminal and I feel incredibly betrayed.”

“A machine ... doesn’t have a soul, doesn’t have a heart, it doesn’t have human feeling, it doesn’t have passion. Human beings, when they create something, are doing it ... to bring pleasure to lots of people,” he said.

John has sold more than 300 million records over a six-decade career. A supporter of Starmer’s Labour Party, he said he had always sought to support young artists and would continue to fight against the changes.

The government says it is seeking a solution that will enable creative industries and AI companies to flourish.

It said on Sunday it was consulting on measures, would publish an assessment on the economic impact of any move and would not sign off on anything unless it is “completely satisfied they work for creators”.

Britain has long outperformed in the creative industries, with thousands employed in sectors including theatre, film, advertising, publishing and music. — Reuters

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



LIFESTYLE

DJ Rose performs at a “Clean Party”, an electro dance party without drugs or alcohol at Dock B in Pantin, on the outskirts of Paris. —AFP



FILM

French-Italian model and musician Carla Bruni poses on the photocall prior to the 2025 Kering Women In Motion Awards and Cannes Film Festival Presidential Dinner on the sidelines of the festival. —AFP



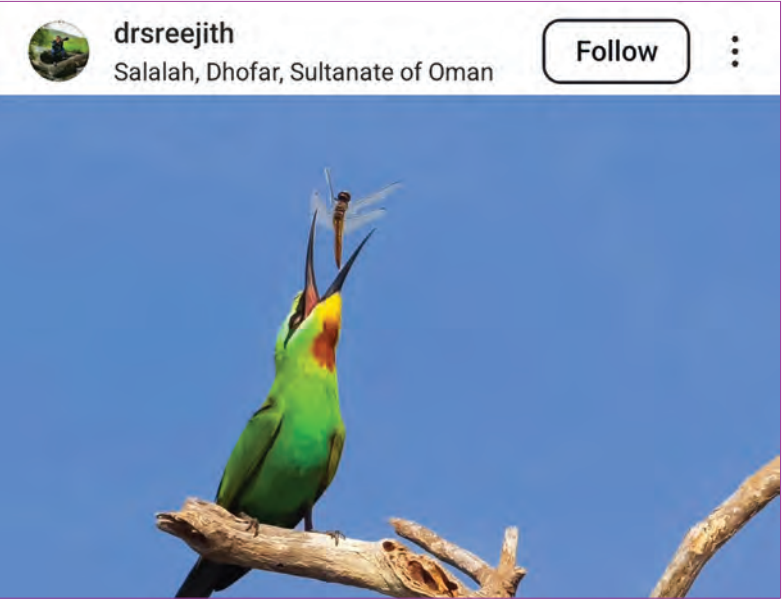
HERITAGE

A Tunisian potter shapes clay at an 800-year-old pottery workshop in Guellala in the southern Mediterranean resort island of Djerba. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Caught in the Moment



Circle of Life

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Magna Carta ‘copy’ wrongly catalogued in 1940s found to be original



A RARE, centuries-old original Magna Carta has been rediscovered after being mistakenly catalogued as a copy during a 1940s auction. The historic document, an early version of the iconic royal charter of rights, was purchased by Harvard Law School Library in 1946 for just \$27.50 — unaware it was an original. It was only recently, while exploring digitised copies online, that British medieval history professor David Carpenter recognised it as authentic. Subsequent testing confirmed the document’s provenance as a 1300 issue from King Edward I’s reign — making it the 25th known surviving original of this particular version. In contrast, a Magna Carta sold by Sotheby’s in New York in 2007 fetched over \$21 million. Professor Carpenter, working alongside Nicholas Vincent of the University of East Anglia, explained the significance of the find. Vincent highlighted that only a handful of these 1300 originals are known to

exist globally. “It’s akin to owning one of Vermeer’s rarest paintings,” he said. “There are just 25 of these Magna Carta originals remaining — a truly extraordinary discovery.” The Magna Carta of 1215 was the first document to confirm rights under common law, fundamentally shaping modern legal systems. The 1300 version, issued as a formal endorsement by King Edward I, is notable for being the last issued as a single-sheet document bearing the king’s seal. Originally connected to the town of Appleby in Westmorland, the document’s journey to Harvard’s archives begins with its auction sale from the estate of WWII flying ace Air Vice-Marshall Sammy Maynard, who inherited it from anti-slavery campaigners Thomas and John Clarkson. Vincent speculated that the document’s mistaken cataloguing might have resulted from post-war exhaustion and a misreading of the date and monarch. — dpa



Cannes film festival: highlights from week 1

THIS YEAR’S Cannes film festival has all the usual glitz and glamour but is also heavy on politics. AFP looks at some of the topics, films, and fashion moments that have made a splash during week one. The festival wraps up on May 24, when the winner of the prestigious Palme d’Or for best film will be announced.

RED CARPET DRESS CODE

Hollywood star Halle Berry was the most high-profile victim of the festival’s dress code, which bans extravagantly large dresses on the red carpet. The “Monster’s Ball” star, who is on the jury this year, was forced into a last-minute wardrobe change on opening night after she judged her dress by Indian designer Gaurav Gupta to be too long. Others appeared to flout the rules, including German model Heidi Klum, who turned up in a frilly pink evening gown with a train that was at least three metres (10 feet) long.

NEW #METOO RULES

The festival announced it had barred an actor in a prominent French film from the red carpet because of misconduct allegations. Theo Navarro-Mussy, who plays a police officer in a supporting role in the film “Dossier 137”, became the first person affected by the new policy. He denies the allegations and an initial police investigation was closed last month without charges.

CRUISE SHOW

Tom Cruise swept into Cannes on a steamroller of hype around “Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning” which premiered to mixed reviews

on Wednesday. Director Christopher McQuarrie revealed that Cruise — who does his own stunts — took his risk-taking a little far during a shoot in South Africa and could have died. Cruise pushed himself to the point of exhaustion after climbing out on the wing of a stunt biplane that he was piloting alone. “He was lying on the wing of the plane. His arms were hanging over the front of the wing. We could not tell if he was conscious or not,” said the US film-maker

EARLY FAVOURITES

A total of 22 films are up for the Palme d’Or, with early favourites being German-language drama “The Sound of Falling” about inter-generational trauma, and experimental rave road-trip thriller “Sirat”. According to an analysis of critics’ scores by film magazine Screen, the frontrunner is a contemplative drama about justice and cruelty in the Soviet Union called “Two Prosecutors” by Ukrainian director Sergei Loznitsa. “Russian society today is different from Soviet society in the 20th century but the essence is the same,” the 60-year-old director said.

ACTORS-TURNED-DIRECTORS

This year’s festival features a trio of highly anticipated directorial debuts from actors. Harris Dickinson, the 28-year-old actor, drew praise for his first film “Urchin”, while “Twilight” star Kristen Stewart, 35, demonstrated her talent behind the camera in “The Chronology of Water”. “Be gentle with me... It’s my first film so if you don’t like it, break it to me nicely,” Dickinson said about “Urchin”, which tells the story of a homeless man in London.

American A-lister Scarlett Johansson is set to unveil her debut film “Eleanor the Great” to audiences on Monday.

GAZA WAR

The war in Gaza has been a constant topic of conversation after nearly 400 top film figures signed an open letter on the eve of festival condemning Israel for committing “genocide” in Gaza and the film industry for its “passivity”. The head of the Cannes jury Juliette Binoche added her signature this week to that of at least four Palme d’Or-winning directors in Cannes as well as actors Ralph Fiennes and Richard Gere. A wrenching documentary about Palestinian photojournalist Fatima Hassouna, killed in an Israeli air strike on her home in Gaza, left its audience in stunned silence when it premiered on Thursday and its director Sepideh Farsi in tears.

BOB’S MOMENT

Robert De Niro was visibly emotional on the opening night when his friend and frequent co-star Leonardo DiCaprio handed him a life-time achievement award. He then composed himself to tear strips off his old enemy, Donald Trump.

TRUMP ERA

Trump has been one of the main talking points in Cannes after announcing on May 5 that he wanted 100-per cent tariffs on movies “produced in foreign lands”. Actors, directors and producers have lined up to denounce the idea as bad and self-defeating. Others have joined De Niro’s calls to resist Trump, including Chilean-American actor Pedro Pascal.

FEATURES



BY ARWA AL HASHIMI
PHOTOS BY MOHAMMED AL MASHARI

IMAGINE standing at the edge of a rugged cliff or deep within a dense woodland, heart pounding with anticipation. In front of you, a faint opening in the rocks or undergrowth hints at a secret beneath the surface. You draw closer, feeling a chill in the air that carries the scent of earth and moss. The dark entrance seems to beckon you, whispering promises of mystery and adventure. As you step forward, a surge of excitement builds — what could be hidden just beyond? An ancient chamber, a forgotten passage, or a treasure waiting to be discovered? Completely immersed in curiosity, you feel a sense of wonder that only uncovers when exploring nature's underground worlds.

This thrill — the experience of entering a cave for the very first time — is simply unlike anything else. Caves are nature's silent archives, holding stories etched in stone about Earth's geological evolution, biological history, and rare mineral deposits. For adventure seekers, spelunking provides a unique opportunity not just for excitement but to connect with one of nature's most mysterious environments. And nowhere is this

material that has intrigued healers and scientists for generations. This natural deposit seeps from cracks in high-altitude rocks, forming from the slow decomposition of plant matter and biological material over thousands of years under rare environmental conditions like specific humidity, pressure and temperature ranges.

What sets Oman's Al Mumiyan apart is its remarkable purity. Because the substance remains in a secluded part of the cave, it remains free from environmental pollutants and impurities, unlike other sources worldwide. For centuries, Al Mumiyan has been a vital part of traditional healing practices in Oman. It is believed to accelerate bone healing, reduce joint pain and serve as a natural anti-inflammatory. When applied topically, it is used to treat wounds and bolster the immune response, with some healers recommending dissolving small amounts in warm water to assist with digestive issues and boost overall vitality.

Although scientific research into Oman's Al Mumiyan is limited, studies on Shilajit in the Himalayas and across Central Asia suggest that the substance contains fulvic acids and a broad spectrum of organic minerals. These elements are thought to underlie its reputed health benefits. The similarities between the environments of Oman's Al Amerat mountains and Asia's Shilajit-producing regions strengthen the hypothesis that they share comparable properties and therapeutic potential.

Despite its fascinating qualities, the Al Mumiyan Cave remains relatively unknown beyond local circles due to its difficult accessibility and limited

WHAT MAKES AL AMERAT'S AL MUMIYAN CAVE INTRIGUING AS A GEOLOGICAL FORMATION



more evident than in Oman, a country renowned for its dramatic landscapes and diverse subterranean terrain, making it a prime destination for explorers and nature enthusiasts.

Oman boasts an impressive and varied cave system, scattered across its landscape — from lush areas around Al Amerat to the rugged mountains of Dhofar and the expansive, rocky plains of Ibri. Its caves come in many forms, featuring intricate tunnel networks, vast underground chambers, and stunning stalactite and stalagmite formations. Each cave is a world of its own, offering a glimpse into the country's geological history.

Deep within the mountains of Al Amerat lies Al Mumiyan Cave, a site of both natural beauty and scientific significance. Inside, a fascinating substance called Al Mumiyan is found — a dark, sticky organic

infrastructure. Nonetheless, growing interest from explorers and conservationists is shining a light on this geological treasure. Many hope that increased scientific attention and eco-tourism will help protect the site, fostering further research into the properties and potential applications of Al Mumiyan — unlocking even more of the cave's secrets.

For those seeking adventure during the warmer months, exploring Oman's caves offers a blend of thrill, natural beauty and the chance to uncover the country's hidden treasures. The country's diverse environment offers numerous caves in cooler mountain regions and shaded gorges, providing perfect escape routes from the daytime heat. Oman's extensive limestone formations create natural passages, underground halls and subterranean wonders that beckon explorers.