

Times

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50

YEARS OF
LEGACY

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HIS MAJESTY, ALGERIAN PRESIDENT AFFIRM TO DEEPEN TIES AND FOCUS ON MUTUAL INTERESTS



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik holds bilateral meeting with Abdelamdjid Tebboune in Algiers

ALGIERS: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Abdelamdjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria yesterday held a bilateral meeting at His Majesty's place of residence in the capital Algiers. During the meeting, the two leaders underlined the distin-

guished relations between Oman and Algeria, and the fraternal ties between their peoples. They also affirmed the keenness to promote these relations in a manner that serves the joint interests. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik arrived in Algiers yesterday on a two-day state visit to the People's

Democratic Republic of Algeria. President Abdelamdjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria led the welcoming party for His Majesty the Sultan. The Algerian President received His Majesty at the foot of the ramp in Houari Boumediene International Airport. His Majesty was also received by some senior officials in the Algerian government. After that, His Majesty and the Algerian President ascended the dais of honour as the Royal anthem of Oman and the national anthem of Algeria were played. Then, His Majesty inspected the guard of honour, while the artillery fired a 21-gun salute to His Majesty. After that, His Majesty shook hands with members of the welcoming party from the Algerian side and personnel of the Sultanate of Oman's Embassy in Algeria. On his turn, the Algerian President shook hands with members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan. Then, President Tebboune escorted His Majesty to the hall to hold a cordial meeting. Prior to the meeting, heads of the diplomatic missions accredited to Algeria proceeded to shake hands with His Majesty and the Algerian President. At the outset of the meeting, the Algerian President reiterated his welcome to His Majesty the Sul-

tan, who expressed his deep thanks and appreciation to the President for the warm reception and hospitality accorded to him. During the meeting, the two leaders exchanged cordial conversations and reviewed the deep-rooted relations between the two countries. His Majesty the Sultan is accompanied during the visit by a high-ranking official delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nuamani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Hamad bin Said Al Aafi, Head of the Private Office, Abdussalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Dr. Saud bin Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Dr. Hilal bin Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health and Saif bin Nassir Al Badaai, Ambassador of Oman to Algeria. After that, the President of Algeria accompanied His Majesty the Sultan to the place of residency, where a contingent of cavalry from the Algerian Republican Guard lined both sides of the road at the entrance, in a manifestation of welcome and delight over His Majesty's visit to Algeria. -OMA

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MINISTERIAL DECISION

New regulations for fuel stations issued

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion has issued Ministerial Decision No. (/2025) regarding the regulatory framework governing the conditions and requirements for issuing licenses to establish and operate fuel filling stations. The decision stipulates that all concerned parties must rectify their status within one year from the date the regulation comes into effect. It also emphasises that the activity of establishing and operating fuel filling stations may not be

carried out without obtaining a license in accordance with the provisions of this regulation. Furthermore, the decision prohibits the sale of fuel outside the designated site, with the exception of mobile fuel stations. The Ministry affirmed that co-ordination is underway with the relevant authorities to identify locations designated for the establishment of integrated fuel stations under usufruct agreements prior to offering them for public bidding, with the requirement that all specified conditions and procedures be met.

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IMPORTANCE OF LABOUR UNION

International Workers Day celebrations held in Muscat

MUSCAT: The General Federation of Oman Workers (GFW) on Sunday marked the International Workers Day, which falls on 1 May every year.

The celebration, held in Muscat, was aimed to highlight the importance of the labour union movement in the Sultanate of Oman and its role in improving working conditions in private sector establishments.

The ceremony, held under the auspices of Dr. Mahad Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour, was attended by senior government officials, representatives of some private sector establishments, civil society institutions and labour syndicates in the Sultanate of Oman.

A "Labour Syndicates Data Management Programme" was launched on the sidelines of the ceremony. The programme seeks to facilitate labour syndicate procedures, improve communication among labour syndicates, provide a unified database for all and achieve transparency in labour union action.

A programme on "Privileges of GFW Affiliate Members" was also launched in cooperation with the local firm Thawani Technologies.

The ceremony saw the felicitation of various labour syndicates,



government departments, private establishments and civil society institutions that won the "Labour Syndicate Action Award 2025". The gesture was made in appreciation for the award winners' role in supporting labour action and developing it in a manner that

achieves balance in the labour market and securing economic and social stability.

The award aims to encourage all target groups to keep up efforts to develop labour movement action in the Sultanate of Oman.

— ONA

NORTH AL BATINAH

Pact signed to equip Liwa Science and Innovation Centre with robots

SOHAR: The Directorate General of Education in North Al Batinah Governorate on Sunday signed a cooperation agreement with Ooredoo to supply Liwa Science and Innovation Centre with a set of robots, supporting educational objectives and their application in teaching and training.

The agreement was signed by Dr. Walid Talib Al Hashmi, Director General of the Directorate General of Education in North Al Batinah, and Aisha Salem Al Shuali, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Ooredoo.

Al Hashmi emphasised that this agreement represents a significant step in supporting educational initiatives, effectively contributing to the development of students' skills in programming and AI. He added that these robotics will provide a practical and stimulating training environment, enabling students to compete in local, regional, and international robotics and AI competitions, thereby enhancing the governorate's students' presence in scientific and innovative forums. — ONA

ACADEMY FOR STRATEGIC AND DEFENCE STUDIES

Oman-Saudi Arabia sign key MoU

MUSCAT: Maj. Gen Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies received in his office at Bait Al Falaj Camp on Sunday a delegation from the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

The visiting delegation is headed by Dr. Abdulmajeed Abdullah Albanyan, President of

the University.

Several matters discussed
During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest, notably in academic fields.

Within the framework of the visit, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the two sides pertaining to academic and scientific aspects.

The MoU was signed by Maj. Gen Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies and Dr. Abdulmajeed Abdullah Albanyan, President of Naif Arab University for Security Sciences.

The meeting and the signing ceremony were attended by several senior officers of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies. — ONA

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following auctions:

Auction No.	Auction title	Last date for bid submission	Document's Fee
01/2025	Managing and operating the outdoor coffee shop at the Ministry's General Office	Sunday 25/05/2025 At 10 a.m.	RO 25/-
02/2025	Renting out a mobile cart for selling snacks and drinks inside the Vocational College building in Al Khaburah	Sunday 25/05/2025 At 10 a.m.	RO 25/-
03/2025	Renting out a mobile cart for selling snacks and drinks inside the Vocational College building in Ibri	Sunday 25/05/2025 At 10 a.m.	RO 25/-
04/2025	Renting out a mobile cart for selling snacks and drinks inside the Vocational College building in Shinas	Sunday 25/05/2025 At 10 a.m.	RO 25/-

- Specialized establishments may obtain the auctions' documents from the Treasury Section of the Directorate General of Administrative Affairs in the Ministry's main building at the Airport Heights, as of **Monday 05/05/2025**.
- Bids shall be opened at **11 am on Sunday 25/05/2025**.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

labour_OMAN

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
32/2025	Providing maintenance services to the building of the Directorate General of Labour at Al Dakhileyah Governorate, Samael Labour Department and the office of the joint inspection team	Sunday 25/05/2025 2:00 p.m.	Thursday 12/06/2025 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tenders' documents online through the following link, starting from **Monday 05/05/2025 at 08:00 a.m.:** <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Bids shall be submitted online.
- Bids shall be opened at **11:00 am on Thursday 12/06/2025**.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

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COMMENTARY

The invisible images in our minds



Sometimes, we walk around and we never see what is in front of us but only the images that stroll across the imaginary visions in our minds. We smile giving an impression to people who are walking around us that we really smile at them when we are not. For children, they use the streets to run around as part of their play. But for some us, our minds are the platforms to do the same. Grown-ups use the mental force when their thoughts fly high in the sky, climb the ragged mountains, cross the hot deserts and even swim in a cool lake. It is just a distraction to keep ourselves entertain. The older we get, the more is the need to get ourselves occupied.

The good thing is that, as the old bones start to creak, we do not have to be as physical as we have been in our younger days. The mind takes over the physical force. Yes, some of you may argue that we may use the electronics devices to keep ourselves occupied. But it is not the same thing. There are many disadvantages. You need to bend over the devices and strain your eyes. That leaves you with a bad neck and perhaps change your glasses regularly. But with the power of imagination, your body does not have to move anywhere. The biggest advantage of getting deep inside the annals of your mind is the removal of stress. You may argue that you get yourself into an imaginary world by getting detached from the real one. But which is worse? Getting yourself into arguments or discussions with people who are not in the same wavelength as you or take a step back into the 'not so real world'? Yes, there will always be someone accusing you of being 'mad' when you are in the 'mental' mode. But the 'physical' mode of interaction can get you into heated debates to spoil your moods. But we

may have to blame the medical world who coined the word 'mental' the wrong way. They associate it with a psychological disorders. Yes, it is a state of mind but not always in a negative way. It all depends how we use it or see it. Some would call the 'day dreaming' world. But it is really about sensations, feelings and thoughts. It is how we perceive the world. It is never about escaping reality. If I say that most of us are already in that mode, whether we like it or not, then it is not an exaggeration. All you have to do is think about one new technology, called 'Artificial Intelligence' or simply, AI. It is about 'virtual reality' when the computers, guided by cyber technology, takes us out of the physical mode. But AI cuts down a lot of hours by solving our problems without moving away from the comforts of our chairs. AI does the thinking for us and all the research work to remove the physical burden of doing tasks. In conclusion, I already made my point, that, either you use your imaginary world in your mind to get your day to day life manageable or use the technology in question.

**INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR POLICE AND CUSTOMS
RECEIVES PAKISTAN INTERIOR MINISTER**

Lt. Gen Hassan Muhsin Al Shuraiqi, Inspector General for Police and Customs received on Sunday Mohsin Naqvi, Federal Minister of Interior and Narcotics Control of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest. They also explored means of enhancing cooperation between Royal Oman Police (ROP) and Pakistan's Interior Ministry – **ONA**



NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE

Saudi delegation visits Oman's NDC, Joint Command and Staff College

MUSCAT: A delegation from the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) on Sunday visited the National Defence College (NDC). The Saudi delegation is headed by Dr. Abdulmajeed Abdullah Albanyan, President of the University. Upon their arrival at the NDC, they were greeted by Rear Admiral Ali Abdullah Al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College. The guests were briefed about the college and its strategic curricula. They also toured the NDC's departments and various facilities.



Meanwhile, the delegation of the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences also visited the Joint Command and Staff College. Upon arrival at the college, they guests were received by Brigadier Saif Hamad Al Yousefi, Commandant of the Joint Command and Staff College. The guests watched a presentation about the college, its curricula and educational and training programmes. They also toured the college's facilities and departments. – **ONA**

**Project management
training programme
for employees starts**



The programme reflects the governorate's effort to develop the human resources' abilities and their efficiency to implement projects



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The weeklong professional projects management training programme conducted by Muscat Governorate kicked off on Sunday. It aims to improve its employees' skills including projects managers, workers in the planning and wilayats' development departments, participants in planning teams and people who require working on projects in other administrative divisions. Engineer Salih Al Khalidi, an expert in projects management and digital transformation delivered it. The Professional Projects

Management Programme reflects Muscat Governorate's effort to develop the human resources' abilities and their efficiency to implement projects according to professional scientific foundations. This programme provides participants with the knowledge and skills required to plan, implement and manage projects efficiently through introducing the basic concepts of project management. They include strategic planning, resource management, quality control, and performance monitoring, ensuring consistent with Muscat Governorate's devel-

opment strategy. This programme also develops the technical and administrative skills for project success. As well as, enhancing the participants' personal skills such as leadership, communication, and issues resolution, empowering them to fulfil their roles in flexible and changing work environments. This programme marks a professional development programme that Muscat Governorate implements to improve its employees' proficiencies to contribute to achieving the Oman 2040 Vision,



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IN PICTURES



His Majesty accorded rousing reception



His Majesty the Sultan leaves for Algeria on a two-day visit

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

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

His Majesty the Sultan was seen off at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan Al Busaidi, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, Nasr bin Hamoud Al Kindi, Secretary General of the Royal Court Affairs, Sheikh Al Fadl bin Mohammed Al Harthy, Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Lt. Gen Hassan bin Mohsin Al

Shuraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, Lt. Gen Said bin Ali Al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service, Dr. Mohammed bin Said Al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, Maj. Gen Mattar bin Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman, Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad Al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman, Rear Admiral Saif bin Nassir Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman and Maj. Gen Musallam bin Mohammed Jaaboub, Commander of the Sultan's Special Force.

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





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Muscat International Book Fair attracts over 64,000 visitors

This year's fair hosted 674 publishing houses from 35 countries—640 participating directly and 34 through agents—offering a total of 681,041 titles

MUSCAT: The 29th edition of the Muscat International Book Fair recorded a 64.81% increase in visitors, attracting 649,589 attendees compared to 394,172 in the previous edition. This significant turnout reflects the fair's leading cultural stature and prominent position on the global events map.

Ahmed Saud Al Rawahi, Director of Muscat International Book Fair, told Oman News Agency (ONA): "With each edition, we strive to offer programmes that align with the aspirations and interests of all groups across various fields of knowledge. This year's 29th edition was notably more diverse and vibrant on multiple levels—local, Arab, and international—featuring the North A'Sharqiyah Governorate as the guest of honor, Saudi cultural days, and participants from Asia, Europe, and South America."

He added that the fair's diversity was evident through dialogue sessions, lectures, workshops, and an expanded children's programme, all contributing to the overarching theme of the 29th edition: "Cultural Diversity: Enriching Global Civilizations." These efforts helped attract a broader audience.

Al Rawahi emphasised that the organising committee aims to build on this momentum through careful planning and continuous



improvement, delivering human knowledge in all its forms and for all age groups. This approach serves books, readers, and publishers while aligning with humanity's cultural and intellectual progress and benefiting Omani society.

He noted that the surge in attendance resulted from enhanced organisational efforts and a diversified programme, reflecting lessons learned from past editions and audience interests. The fair's improved structure and varied events were well-received by visitors.

The participation of prominent cultural figures and extensive media coverage further highlighted the fair's significance, drawing more visitors despite its unusual early summer timing.

This year's fair introduced several changes and improvements, including a more diverse program and international participation in exhibitions and events.

The guest of honour pavilion, dedicated to North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, showcased the region's history and scenic beauty through an innovative and visually striking design, blending tradition and modernity.

Additionally, the arts corner featured exhibitions honouring late Omani artists and poets, celebrating their contributions to poetry and art, which further captivated visitors.

Regarding the most engaging cultural activities, Al Rawahi pointed out that the fair's accompanying programme included

366 diverse events, with specialised and children's workshops receiving particularly strong participation.

Muscat International Book Fair received extensive local and international media coverage, with 70 journalists representing 37 foreign media outlets, underscoring its role in promoting culture and knowledge.

This year's fair hosted 674 publishing houses from 35 countries—640 participating directly and 34 through agents—offering a total of 681,041 titles.

These included approximately 467,413 Arabic books, 213,610 foreign titles, and 27,464 Omani publications. Around 52,205 newly printed books (2024–2025) were also featured. — ONA



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PM of Dagestan visits North Al Sharqiyah

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

The visit began with an official meeting, during which Mahmoud Yahya Al Dhuhli, Governor of North A'Sharqiyah, emphasised the importance of opening new horizons for cooperation between the two countries.

He highlighted the governorate's wealth of high-quality investment opportunities in various sectors, including agriculture, tourism, industry, and education.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Dagestan affirmed his government's commitment to strengthening economic and cultural relations with the Sultanate of Oman, particularly in light of the ambitious development vi-

sions shared by both nations.

The visit included a visual presentation showcasing the key features of North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, along with specialised working papers on agriculture, tourism, mining, higher education, and manufacturing. The discussions focused on prominent current projects and future investment opportunities.

A dialogue session was also held to discuss mechanisms for joint cooperation and exchange perspectives on developing investment opportunities and knowledge-sharing initiatives.

The delegation toured Bidiyah Sands, where they explored the governorate's diverse tourism potential, reflecting the integration of its economic and tourism infrastructure.

The meeting was attended by some members of the State Council and the Shura Council, walis, and officials from the public and private sectors in the governorate, alongside a delegation from Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry – Ibra Branch. — ONA

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION

<FROM A1> New regulation outlines several administrative penalties

The Ministry is also responsible for overseeing and monitoring the activities of licenced marketing companies to ensure compliance with the provisions of the regulation, detect violations, and take the necessary corrective actions.

Requirements for establishing fuel stations

The decision stipulates that the distance between any proposed fuel filling station and an existing, under-construction, or approved station must not be less than five kilometres, whether in the same or opposite direction, if the road is not dual carriageway, and this applies across all governorates and wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman. Exceptions are made for the Governorate of Muscat and the Wilayats of Salalah and Sohar. A feasibility study is required, along with the fulfillment of security, technical, and planning considerations.

Additionally, the decision requires that the distance between two integrated fuel stations must not be less than fifty kilometres in the same direction. However, the committee may grant exceptions to this requirement if justified by economic and technical considerations.

The regulation emphasises that the proposed site must be supported by a title deed, lease agreement, or usufruct right, and must be designated for commercial, mixed-use residential-commercial, tourism, or industrial purposes. This requirement excludes elevated, marine, and mobile fuel stations. The decision further affirms that the establishment of an integrated fuel station under a usufruct agreement is only permitted at locations specifically designated by the Ministry.

Commercial fuel stations

The regulation stipulates that the site area for a commercial fuel sta-

tion shall not be less than 3,000 square meters, excluding existing stations. Licensing applications for private fuel stations must include details such as the type of fuel, the number of designated vehicles and equipment, and the distance to the nearest existing station. Additionally, applicants must submit a copy of the project agreement or provide clear justifications in the absence of a public or private project.

For marine fuel stations, the regulation requires the submission of a feasibility study along with documentation proving that the site has been allocated by the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources for fishing ports or by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for commercial ports.

For above-ground fuel stations, a feasibility study must also be submitted. The site must be designated for commercial or industrial use and located within industrial zones. Additionally, there must be full compliance with standard specifications for fuel transport containers, including tanks, barrels, or designated packaging.

For mobile fuel stations, the regulation requires the submission of a feasibility study and approval from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority.

The Ministry clarified that any party wishing to establish and operate a fuel station must submit an application to the licensed fuel marketing company, ensuring that all specified requirements are met. The marketing company evaluates the proposed site and, if the project is deemed economically viable, forwards the request to the relevant department. This department is responsible for registering the application and issuing a preliminary approval form valid for six months, during which all necessary approvals must be completed.

If this timeframe or any extension period expires without completion, the application is canceled.

A temporary one-year licence is issued to commence construction upon payment of the required fee. If the project is not completed within that period, the licence is cancelled, and the application cannot be reconsidered for a period of two years.

Terms and conditions

Upon completion of the station's facilities, the licensed company must notify the relevant department and submit a final approval certificate from the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority. The final license will then be issued within thirty days and will be valid for three years, renewable under the same terms and conditions.

The regulation allows applicants whose requests are rejected to file a grievance with the Minister within thirty days of being notified. Failure to respond within this period is considered a rejection of the grievance.

The Ministry emphasised that the license may not be waived without its written approval. Additionally, changing the name of the marketing company requires an official clearance document or a final court judgment.

The Ministry has established a specialised committee, chaired by the Ministry itself and including representatives from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and the Royal Oman Police. This committee is responsible for reviewing license applications that do not meet the minimum distance requirement. The committee must issue a decision within thirty days, and applicants have the right to file a grievance with the Minister in the event of a rejection.

The regulation also imposes

several obligations on licensed marketing companies and operators. These include registering submitted applications, evaluating proposed sites, ensuring the implementation of safety measures in coordination with the Royal Oman Police, providing essential services and electric vehicle charging facilities, maintaining a 24/7 security surveillance system, and complying with approved technical standards. Companies must also ensure staff training and provide inspection access to regulatory authorities.

The Ministry emphasised that fuel sales are strictly limited to vehicle, equipment, and boat fuel tanks. Refuelling into tanks or barrels exceeding 100 litres per vehicle per day is prohibited. All such transactions must be recorded, and monthly reports must be submitted to the relevant department.

Administrative penalties

The regulation outlines several administrative penalties, including a written warning, a fine ranging from OMR1,000 to OMR3,000 with the possibility of doubling in case of repeat violations or suspension or revocation of the licence.

A monthly fine of OMR500 is imposed on those who continue operations after the expiration of their licence. Additionally, a fine of OMR5,000 is levied on a marketing company that delays payment of the annual fee.

The licence will be revoked if the activity is not carried out for a period of six months without a valid excuse, or if false information is provided.

Any party subject to a penalty has the right to submit a grievance to the Minister within sixty days from the date of notification or awareness of the decision. A lack of response within thirty days will be considered a rejection of the grievance.

Improving the business environment

The update of the regulatory framework governing the conditions and requirements for issuing licenses to establish fuel filling stations is one of the key steps taken by the Ministry to improve the business environment and regulate the sector.

The primary objective of this update is to establish a comprehensive regulatory framework that clearly defines the conditions and requirements for the establishment and operation of all types of fuel filling stations. This includes stations that provide gasoline and diesel services, as well as those offering alternative fuels such as natural gas or hydrogen.

The Ministry continuously reviews these conditions to ensure alignment with modern technical standards, including environmental and safety requirements, in order to provide the highest levels of protection for both citizens and station workers.

Enhancing institutional integration

The updated regulation also aims to strengthen coordination among key stakeholders, such as the Civil Defence Authority, the Environment Authority, and the Ambulance Authority, to ensure effective implementation of the regulations. The Ministry seeks to encourage investment in this vital sector by creating a regulatory environment that supports the expansion of fuel stations and offers investors well-considered opportunities within a fair legal framework that ensures competitiveness. One of the main goals of these updates is to enhance the quality of services provided at fuel stations. This includes the addition of user-friendly amenities such as ATMs, maintenance centers, restaurants, mosques, and dedicated services for people with

disabilities. The new regulations will also introduce mandatory licensing requirements, including clearly defined criteria for station size, geographic location, and the range of services to be provided.

Technical and safety requirements

The regulation will also include stringent technical and safety requirements aimed at upholding public safety standards and protecting the environment. These requirements will be established in coordination with relevant authorities such as the Civil Defence Authority and the Environment Authority, to ensure alignment with international standards in this field. Furthermore, the regulation will promote the adoption of modern technologies at fuel stations, including the provision of electric vehicle charging points and hydrogen refueling stations. It will also emphasize the use of solar energy as part of sustainable energy solutions for power generation at fuel stations.

The regulation will also work towards improving market organisation by allocating fuel station sites under usufruct agreements based on precise and transparent criteria, including organising bidding processes to select the most suitable locations. This step aims to increase investment opportunities and provide a favorable environment for both local and international investors in the sector.

These updates will include a transitional period that allows existing station owners sufficient time to adjust their operations in accordance with the new requirements, ensuring business continuity and easy adaptation to the updated standards. Existing stations will also receive support from the Ministry to facilitate the transition in line with the new safety and quality standards.

ARRIVALS DEPARTURES SUSPENDED

First Houthi missile lands near Israeli airport

TEL AVIV: A Houthi missile landed in a grove near a Ben-Gurion International Airport access road on Sunday morning, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) confirmed on Sunday morning. The attack marked the first time a missile had landed inside the airport complex.

At least one man was injured in

a nearby parking lot. “There is an injured person from the fall near Terminal 3, near the planes,” said the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority Employees’ Committee following this morning’s Houthi missile attack.

Arrivals and departures were suspended while workers



checked the runways. The attack triggered sirens across central Israel, including Jerusalem, the Tel Aviv and Haifa areas, and as far north as the coastal city of Nahariya.

Sharing a post on X, the IDF wrote, “Sirens sounded across Israel due to a projectile launch from Yemen.”

SECRETARY-GENERAL

GCC concerned over security situation in South Asia

RIYADH : Jassim Al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), expressed the Council’s deep concern over the deteriorating security situation in South Asia, urging restraint, prioritisation of dialogue, and the urgent resumption of negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of India.

He condemned the terrorist attack targeting tourists in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, which resulted in the death and injury of numerous innocent civilians, stressing the importance of peaceful means to resolve disputes in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations to safeguard security, peace and stability in the region.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed the GCC’s principled and consistent stance in rejecting all forms and manifestations of terrorism.

He also reiterated the GCC states’ call for the international community to intensify efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the Jammu and Kashmir issue in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions. -ANI

CONDOLENCES

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

((يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً

مَادُخِلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي))

Board of Directors of Pakistan Schools in the

Sultanate of Oman extends its deepest condolences and

heartfelt sympathy to

Her Excellency

Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shaibaniyah

Minister of Education,

on the passing of her respected mother —

may Allah have mercy on her soul.

We pray that Almighty Allah envelopes the departed in His vast

mercy, grants her the highest

place in Paradise, and blesses Her Excellency and her esteemed

family with patience and solace.

Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him we shall return.

Ph: 24726000 VISION AL KHAIR GCC FUND CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MARCH 2025			
The Vision Al Khair Fund (VAKF) was down by 1.8% for Q1 2025. The NAV of the fund was RO 1.232 as on 31 March 2025.			
In the First quarter of 2025, global markets were largely driven by escalating concerns over US trade policy and its potential impact on growth and inflation. The Federal Reserve maintained interest rates, citing the need for clearer signs of disinflation amid the heightened policy uncertainty. Much of the pressure came from heightened tariff uncertainty, which rattled investor sentiment and pushed tech stocks, into bear market territory with losses exceeding 20% from their December peak. Overall, the first quarter reflected a shift from initial optimism to caution, as volatility and geopolitical tension weighed heavily on global risk appetite. In contrast, European equities outperformed US counterparts as stronger-than-expected fiscal responses helped support sentiment. Emerging markets also fared better, particularly in China and Korea.			
GCC equity markets faced pressure throughout the first quarter, with the S&P GCC Composite Index giving back early gains to finish only slightly higher, up 0.77%. This performance reflected broader global market weakness amid rising policy uncertainty. Kuwait stood out as the sole positive performer, gaining 9.7% for the quarter. In contrast, all other GCC markets posted losses, with Oman falling the most at 4.6%, followed by Qatar (down 3.2%), Dubai (down 1.2%), and smaller declines in Abu Dhabi (0.5%) and Saudi Arabia (0.1%).			
Trade policies uncertainties and concerns around reversal of inflation lingers but the fundamentals that have driven the market higher remain. Corporate profits continue to rise, consumers remain employed and are continuing to spend which remains positive. Reduced interest rates, along with the incentive of tax cuts and deregulation proposed by Trump, are expected to bolster asset prices. GCC markets are not immune to these global uncertainties, facing additional pressure from the potential oversupply stemming from the unwinding of OPEC+ production cuts and their knock-on effects on oil prices. As regional markets proceed cautiously ahead of the Q1 earnings season, uncertainty remains elevated amid rapidly shifting global policy landscapes. The upcoming earnings season will be key in shaping investor expectations and identifying potential drivers of economic momentum moving forward.			
On behalf of the Board of Directors, we extend our sincere appreciation to our esteemed unit holders for their ongoing support and participation. We also wish to regard His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his exemplary leadership and visionary guidance, which ensures Oman’s continued journey towards prosperity and development.			
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2025			
	31 Mar 2025 RO	31 Mar 2024 RO	31 Dec. 2024 RO
ASSETS			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	4,541,883	4,817,941	4,749,719
Dividend receivables	25,718	-	-
Due from broker	238,187	-	123,250
Other receivables	-	15,555	-
Cash and cash equivalents	10,126	102,847	14,661
Total Asset	4,815,914	4,936,343	4,887,630
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Dividend payable	221,046	213,356	--
Accruals and other payables	56,876	80,335	75,315
Total liabilities	277,922	293,691	75,315
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	4,537,992	4,642,652	4,812,315
Net asset value per unit	1.232	1.306	1.316
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	30 Sept 2024 RO (3 months)	30 Sept 2023 RO (3 months)	31 Dec. 2023 RO (12 months)
INCOME			
Dividend income	41,139	39,907	122,871
Profit on call accounts	6	55	211
Net realized gain on investments at FVTPL	11,416	71,786	390,059
Fair value changes in investments at FVTPL	(109,157)	265,796	40,835
Foreign exchange gain (net)	--	--	(12,923)
Other income	8,085	--	71
Total income	(48,511)	377,544	541,124
Expenses			
Management fees	18,067	19,230	75,409
Fund Management body fee 8,630 8,726 35,080			
Custodian service fees	2,710	4,450	16,708
Brokerage expenses 2,955 3,551 8,777			
Shariah board fees 1,899 2,493 9,639			
General and administration	6,622	7,067	28,055
Performance fee	--	--	--
Foreign exchange loss (net)	246	1,474	--
Total expenses	41,129	46,991	173,668
Net (Loss)/Profit and total comprehensive income for the period / year	(89,640)	330,553	367,456
Net profit per unit	(0.024)	0.093	0.102

Ph: 24760000 VISION REAL ECONOMY GCC FUND CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2024			
The Vision Real Economy GCC Fund (VREGF) was down by 1.7% for Q1 2025. The NAV of the fund was RO 1.334 as on 31 March 2025.			
Global markets in the first quarter were primarily influenced by growing concerns over US trade policy and its potential effects on growth and inflation. The Federal Reserve kept interest rates unchanged, citing the need for clearer signs of disinflation amid the ongoing policy uncertainty. A significant source of pressure also came in from tariff-related concerns, which negatively impacted investor sentiment and pushed technology stocks into bear market territory, with losses surpassing 20% from their December highs. Overall, the quarter marked a shift from initial optimism to caution, as volatility and geopolitical tensions weighed heavily on global risk appetite. In contrast, European equities outperformed US stocks, supported by stronger-than-expected fiscal measures. Emerging markets, particularly in China and Korea, also performed better.			
GCC equity markets struggled in the first quarter mirroring the global market concerns, with the S&P GCC Composite Index erasing early gains to close just 0.77% higher for the first quarter 2025. This outcome reflected broader global market weakness driven by rising policy uncertainty and potential trade wars that could potentially reignite inflation fears. Kuwait was the only market to post a gain, rising 9.7% for the quarter. Meanwhile, all other GCC markets saw declines, with Oman experiencing the largest drop at 4.6%, followed by Qatar (-3.2%), Dubai (-1.2%), and smaller losses in Abu Dhabi (-0.5%) and Saudi Arabia (-0.1%).			
Trade policies and monetary easing by the central continue to remain defining factors in global markets, weighing on investor sentiment and prompting a shift toward safe-haven assets. Historical data from the Federal Reserve indicates that previous tariff hikes modestly increased inflation and slowed US economic growth. One factor we believe could support markets amid ongoing trade policy uncertainty is the ability of central banks to lower interest rates. GCC markets are not immune to these global headwinds, facing additional pressure from the potential oversupply stemming from the unwinding of OPEC+ production cuts and their knock-on effects on oil prices. As regional markets proceed cautiously ahead of the Q1 earnings season, uncertainty remains elevated amid rapidly shifting global policy landscapes. The upcoming earnings season will be key in shaping investor expectations and identifying potential drivers of economic momentum moving forward.			
On behalf of the Board of Directors, we extend our sincere appreciation to our esteemed unit holders for their ongoing support and participation. We also wish to regard His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his exemplary leadership and visionary guidance, which ensures Oman’s continued journey towards prosperity and development.			
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2025			
Statement of financial position	31 Mar 2025 RO	31 Mar 2024 RO	31 Dec. 2024 RO
ASSETS			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	5,666,566	5,847,293	5,977,172
Cash and cash equivalents	44,902	132,636	6,381
Due from brokers	159,034	--	8,867
Divident recievables	23,499	14,359	-
Total assets	5,894,001	5,994,288	5,992,420
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Dividend payable	211,323	206,329	--
Accruals and other payables	42,807	52,858	60,331
Total liabilities	254,130	259,187	60,331
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	5,639,870	5,735,101	5,932,089
Net asset value per unit	1.334	1.390	1.409
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	31 Mar 2025 RO (3 months)	31 Mar 2024 RO (3 months)	31 Dec. 2024 RO (12 months)
INCOME			
Dividend income	45,839	50,609	159,246
Interest income	17	105	321
Net realised gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	(6)	85,870	300,501
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	(120,397)	190,274	120,400
Other Income	10,896	-	98
Foreign exchange gain (net)	5,035	-	-
	(58,617)	326,858	580,556
Expenses			
Management fees	22,219	23,563	95,033
Fund Management Body fees	12,082	12,216	49,112
Brokerage expenses	3,082	4,836	11,160
General and administration	4,413	5,206	23,091
Custodian fees	3,333	3,927	16,843
Foreign exchange loss (net)	--	777	18,757
Performance fees	--	--	--
	45,129	50,525	213,996
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the period / year	(103,745)	276,333	366,570
Net profit / (loss) per unit	(0.025)	0.067	0.086

Ph: 24760000 صندوق إبكيور الرؤية EPICURE VISION FUND CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MARCH 2025		
The Epicure Vision GCC Growth Fund (EVGF) is up 4.0% on a YTD basis. The NAV of the fund closed at RO 1.042 as of 31 March 2025.		
MSCI World index fell 2.1% during the same period after increased market uncertainty related to US trade policies and forecasted slowdown in US economy affecting global investor sentiment. Brent crude oil was flatish during the period, declining by 0.1%, to USD 74.7/barrel. Demand concerns related to US trade policies too weighed on Brent crude prices during the latter half of the quarter. S&P GCC Index gained 2.0% during the same period, mainly due to Kuwait (up 9.7%). The rest of the GCC markets were weak mainly led lower by Oman and Qatar.		
Strong growth of the GCC economies looks attractive to effectively navigate through decelerating global economy. The continuous government investment to diversify away from dependence on hydrocarbons and favorable demographics (young populations), further aids to its appeal. As per the latest IMF’s report, GCC’s real GDP is expected to grow by 1.8% (2024) and 4.2% (2025). Solid credit ratings and low debt to GDP enable GCC countries to manage any short-term uncertainties.		
With Mega Projects being the major market driver, the spillover effect would be positive for various sectors including materials, real estate, financials, tourism, and consumer goods & services. We continue to see strong momentum in the GCC contract awards with 2024 setting a record high for GCC project awards. IPO activity in the region continues to be strong across multiple sectors.		
On behalf of the Board of Directors, we extend our sincere appreciation to our esteemed unit holders for their ongoing support and participation. We also wish to regard His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his exemplary leadership and visionary guidance, which ensures Oman’s continued journey towards prosperity and development.		
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2025		
	31 March 2025 (Unaudited) RO	31 December 2024 (Audited) RO
Assets		
Cash at bank	54,752	20,926
Due from broker	4,431	66,103
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	8,362,671	8,045,081
Cash Dividends Receivables	32,351	20,926
Total assets	8,454,206	8,132,110
Liabilities and unitholders' funds		
Liabilities		
Accruals, account and other liability	12,040	16,130
Total liabilities	12,040	16,130
Net assets attributable to redeemable participatory unitholders	8,442,166	8,115,980
Total unit holders' units	8,100,000	8,100,000
Net assets value per unit	1.042	1.002
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AS AT 31 MARCH 2025		
		As at 31 March 2025 RO (Unaudited)
Income		
Dividend income		122,118
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss		
• realized gain / (losses)		81,055
• unrealized gain / (losses)		154,685
Interest income		-
Total Income		357,858
Expense		
Management fees		(12,349)
General and administrative expenses		(19,374)
Total expenses		(31,723)
Decrease/increase in net assets attributable to the redeemable participatory unitholders		326,136
Basic (loss)/gain per unit		0.040

Ph: 24760000 VISION FOCUSED FUND CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – MARCH 2025			
The Vision Focused Fund (VFF) was down by 0.1% for Q1 2025. The NAV of the fund was RO 1.175 as on 31 March 2025.			
In the first quarter, declining valuations—driven by weaker sentiment and concerns over tariffs, slower growth, and policy uncertainty—led to a market sell-off. Investors priced stocks more conservatively, reversing the previous year’s optimism. Market leadership also changed, as the Magnificent 7 tech stocks, which had driven 2024’s strong returns, lost momentum. This shift highlighted the disparity between the market-cap-weighted S&P 500’s 23% gain and the equal-weight S&P 500’s more modest 11% increase. On the other hand, European equities outperformed those in the US, buoyed by unexpectedly strong fiscal measures that lifted investor confidence.			
Emerging markets, especially China and Korea, also showed relatively stronger performance. GCC equity markets came under pressure in the first quarter, with the S&P GCC Composite Index erasing early gains to close the period just 0.77% higher. This muted performance aligned with global market weakness driven by increased policy uncertainty. Kuwait was the only market to post a gain, rising 9.7%, while the rest of the regional markets saw declines—Oman led the losses with a 4.6% drop, followed by Qatar (-3.2%), Dubai (-1.2%), and modest decreases in Abu Dhabi (-0.5%) and Saudi Arabia (-0.1%).			
Tariffs and trade policies remain a central concern in global markets, negatively impacting investor sentiment and driving a shift toward safer assets. Historical data from the Federal Reserve shows that past tariff hikes have led to modest inflation increases and slowed US economic growth. GCC markets are also feeling the pressure from these global challenges, compounded by the risk of oversupply as OPEC+ production cuts are unwound, potentially affecting oil prices. As regional markets tread carefully before the Q1 earnings season, uncertainty remains high due to rapidly changing global policies. The upcoming earnings season will be crucial in shaping investor expectations and identifying potential drivers of future economic momentum.			
On behalf of the Board of Directors, we extend our sincere appreciation to our esteemed unit holders for their ongoing support and participation. We also wish to regard His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for his exemplary leadership and visionary guidance, which ensures Oman’s continued journey towards prosperity and development.			
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2025			
	31 Mar 2025 RO	31 Mar 2024 RO	31 Dec. 2024 RO
ASSETS			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	2,467,889	2,390,588	2,676,606
Due from broker	182,764	209,469	14,312
Cash and cash equivalents	58,853	216,276	31,527
Other receivables	8,341	0	0
Total Assets	2,717,848	2,816,333	2,722,445
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Dividend payable	110,122	108,959	--
Accruals and other payables	19,717	23,883	19,264
Total liabilities	129,839	132,842	19,264
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	2,588,009	2,683,491	2,703,181
Net asset value per unit	1.175	1.224	1.226
STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME			
	30 Sept 2024 RO (3 months)	30 Sept 2023 RO (3 months)	31 Dec. 2023 RO (12 months)
INCOME			
Dividend income	24,289	13,851	49,895
Profit on call accounts	69	78	181
Net realised gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	55,193	209,569	375,712
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	(62,033)	(8,441)	(120,317)
Foreign exchange gain (net)	428	--	--
Other income	4,608	--	0.544
Total income	22,555	215,057	305,471
Expenses			
Management fees	10,124	11,177	42,905
Fund Management body fee	2,991	1,870	--
Brokerage expenses	8,999	9,591	25,452
Custodian service fees	1,519	2,235	5,732
Foreign exchange loss (net)	--	578	8,409
Performance fees	--	--	--
General and administration	2,357	7,222	36,303
	25,990	32,673	118,800
Net (Loss)/Profit and total comprehensive income for the period / year	(3,435)	182,384	186,671
Net loss per unit	(0.002)	0.082	0.83

Seeb crowned champions

Holders retain Oman Professional League title in style with a round to spare after a hard-fought win over 10-man Al Rustaq on Saturday

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Seeb Club sealed their dominance in the 2024-25 Oman Professional League (OPL) by clinching the title with a round to spare, following a gritty 1-0 victory over 10-man Al Rustaq on Saturday night at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Coached by Serbia's Nikola Djurovic, the win handed Seeb their fourth top-flight domestic crown and confirmed their status as Oman's premier football force this season. The decisive moment for Seeb came in the 35th minute when Liberian striker Abu Kamara rose highest to head home from a corner, sealing all three points for the Muscat-based club.

Al Rustaq's hopes were dented further when goalkeeper Islam Al Hinai was sent off just before halftime. Despite a spirited effort with ten men, Rustaq could not find an equaliser.

The victory pushed Seeb six points clear of nearest rivals Al Nahda with just one round remaining, rendering the final day of action academic in the title race.

Seeb will now host Al Nasr at the Seeb Sports Stadium on May 8 in what promises to be a celebratory home fixture capped with the official title presentation in front of their fans.

A season of character and class

Seeb's championship campaign was defined by consistency and resilience.

The Yellow and Green Brigade



racked up 16 wins from 21 matches, with just three defeats and two draws.

Two of those losses came in back-to-back games last month against Sohar and Oman Club,

raising alarm bells among their supporters. However, the team bounced back in emphatic fashion to retain the title.

The league triumph was especially sweet for Seeb after the

heartbreak of losing the His Majesty's Cup final to Al Shabab in February. That setback became a rallying point, with the team regrouping to mount an unshakable title charge.

Saturday's triumph marks Seeb's fourth Omantel League title, adding to previous wins in 2019-20, 2021-22, and 2023-24.

With four crowns, Seeb are now on par with Al Nahda, Al Arouba,

OMAN PROFESSIONAL LEAGUE TITLES

Dhofar	12
Fanja	9
Al Nasr	5
Al Nahda	4
Al Suwaiq	4
Al Arouba	4
Al Seeb	4
Muscat	3
Sur	2
Ahli-Sidab	1
Oman	1

and Al Suwaiq in terms of title count, still trailing traditional powerhouses Dhofar (12 titles) and Fanja (9).

Battle for top-four

While Seeb and Al Nahda (44 points) have locked up first and second place respectively, Oman Club (39) are secure in third. The battle for the fourth spot remains fierce between Al Shabab and Al Khabourah (28 points each), Al Nasr (27), Saham (26), and Bahla (25).

At the other end of the table, Sur's 3-3 draw against Al Shabab sealed their relegation on Saturday, as they sit bottom with 18 points and no mathematical route to safety.

Elsewhere on Saturday, Al Khabourah defeated Al Nasr 2-1. Amir Alaa and Zakaria Al Qartubi struck in quick succession in the second half to secure a vital win for Al Khabourah. Marwan Taib pulled one back from the spot, but Al Nasr's search for an equaliser fell short.

Also, goals from Baba Tunde (penalty) and Marwan Al Ghafri gave Saham a well-deserved 2-0 victory over Sohar. And in a thriller that sealed their fate, Sur failed to hold on to a lead despite goals from Mana Sbeit, Mohammed Al Najashi, and Abdullah Al Mashaihi. A hat-trick from Al Shabab's Mohammed Al Ghafri denied Sur the win, ensuring their relegation.

A goalless draw ensured Al Nahda's second-place finish and kept Bahla in contention for a top-four finish.

MIDDLE EAST RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP



Rally Saudi Arabia: Al Zubair clinches Group N title, Al Amri takes third spot

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omani rally driver Abdullah Al Zubair delivered a stellar performance at the inaugural Rally Saudi Arabia in Jeddah on Saturday, clinching first place in the Group N (MERC2) category and strengthening his position in the FIA Middle East Rally Championship (MERC) standings.

Fellow Omani driver Zakaria Al Amri also impressed, finishing third in the same category despite facing multiple challenges.

Driving his trusted Subaru Impreza alongside co-driver Taha Soomar, Al Zubair dominated the Group N field from the outset of the demanding two-day rally, which marked the third round of the MERC. The event returned to the Middle East calendar after a long hiatus and was widely regarded as one of the most gruelling legs of the championship due to rocky terrain, high temperatures, and multiple stage cancellations.



"First of all, thank God we succeeded in this rally," Al Zubair said after the finish. "My thanks to my co-driver Taha Soomar, the technical team and everyone who supported us. This race was really tiring - seven competitors were forced to retire. We set a clear strategy from the start, and our goal was to lead the category. Thankfully, we achieved it," he added.

Despite tyre issues on several stages, Al Zubair not only maintained his lead throughout the rally

but also recorded times that challenged cars from the faster Rally2 category. The win marked his second major Group N victory of the season after topping the MERC2 class at the 28th Oman International Rally in Sohar, where he also secured a sixth-place overall finish.

"This rally was very nice, very fast," Al Zubair added. "It's been challenging - you really have to trust your pace notes here. I'm happy with the performance and we'll build on this momentum."

Meanwhile, Zakaria Al Amri, also representing Oman in the same category, showed resilience after battling car issues and tyre blowouts that slowed his pace. Driving with co-driver Mohammed Al Marzui, Al Amri secured a valuable third place in Group N, which allowed him to retain his lead in the championship points table.

"The stages were difficult and resulted in many tyre punctures," said Al Amri. "I had hoped for a better pace, but I'm happy with the additional points and the third-place finish. I appreciate the team's support and look forward to improving in the next round in Jordan."

Qatar's legendary driver Nasser Al Attiyah won the overall rally and extended his own dominant run in the MERC, having previously triumphed in Oman and Qatar.

With their performances in Jeddah, both Al Zubair and Al Amri have kept Omani hopes alive in the MERC2 title race as the championship heads into its final rounds.

12 NATIONS TO PARTICIPATE

Oman to compete at Pan Arab Junior and Ladies Golf Championship in Egypt

Times News Service

MUSCAT: An eight-member squad of talented young golfers will represent Oman at the 2025 Pan Arab Junior and Ladies Golf Championship, to be held from May 7 to 10 in Cairo, Egypt.

The prestigious event, hosted by the Arab Golf Federation (AGF) in collaboration with the Egyptian Golf Federation, will be staged across two of Cairo's premier courses - Madinaty Golf Club and Katameya Dunes Golf Club.

Oman will join 12 other nations including Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the UAE, and hosts Egypt - a strong lineup that reflects the growing competitiveness and appeal of golf in the Arab region.

The Oman Golf Association (OGA) has fielded a promising squad across four categories. The ladies team comprises Huwaida Al Barwani, Sheikhha Al Ghaithi, Wafa Al Hadhrami while the U16 girls team include Miraeri Sampat and Yasmin Al Kathiri. The boys U18 squad is represented by Pransh Jagwani while the boys' U13 team consists of Yusuf Al Rumhi and Taimur Al Busaidi.

The Omani squad will be accompanied by Ahmed Al Jhdhamy and Nikhil Sampat, both OGA



board members.

In conjunction with the championship, a Golf Festival will be held at Madinaty Golf Club to mark the 50th AGF anniversary.

The festival aims to increase public interest in the sport through a blend of entertainment and education, including:

Oman's participation not only highlights the nation's growing investment in golf development but also offers valuable international experience for its emerging players.

The championship provides a vital platform for junior and female golfers to compete at a high level, gain exposure, and build camaraderie with peers from across the Arab world.



EU PROPOSES €50 BILLION

The European Union (EU) is considering a solution to its ongoing trade dispute with the United States by proposing an increase in purchases of American products worth €50 billion. -WAM

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



WWW.TIMESOFOMAN.COM
MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,342.43 points, up by 0.3% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 1.23% at 407.71 points. Al Maha Ceramics, up 6.32%, was the top gainer while, Salalah Mills, down 9.46%, was the top loser.



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Asyad reinforces its position as global logistics services provider

During the Logistics Day 2025 event, Asyad presented a paper highlighting the pillars of its comprehensive strategy to develop a globally connected logistics network, expand its footprint across international markets, empower local private-sector players, and unlock opportunities for Omani talent

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Asyad Group, global integrated logistics provider, reaffirmed its pivotal role in shaping the Sultanate of Oman's logistics future through its active participation in the Logistics Day 2025 organised by the Ministry of



Transport, Communications, and Information Technology. The group continues to deliver on its mandate to enhance Oman's global competitiveness, leveraging its integrated solutions, sustainable initiatives, and strategic partnerships to create a resilient, investor-friendly logistics ecosystem aligned with Oman Vision 2040. During the event, Asyad presented a paper titled "Asyad's Role in Empowering Oman's Logistics Sector: Growth, Resilience, and Opportunities," highlighting the pillars of its comprehensive strategy to develop a globally connected logistics network, expand its footprint across international markets, empower local private-sector

players, and unlock opportunities for Omani talent. The presentation also shed light on the group's 2024 milestones: a pivotal year marked by its first international acquisition. This move expanded Asyad's operational presence to over 90 locations worldwide and underscored its sustained financial and operational growth driven by innovation and excellence. Further supporting port development and value-added services, Asyad Ports and Freezones signed an agreement with O Bunkring Company to deliver bunker fuel services at Sultan Qaboos Port, enhancing Oman's maritime readiness and attracting new commercial activities.

Reinforcing its commitment to growth and innovation, Sohar Port and Freezone signed three major agreements to support the development of its LNG terminal. The port partnered with WSP Middle East – Oman for engineering consultancy and project management services, Boskalis for dredging 3.8 million cubic meters of marine material, and Six Construct for constructing the LNG jetty and coastal protection infrastructure. **National recognition** Sohar Port and Freezone also earned national recognition at the Ministry's Logistics Best Practices Awards. The "Marasi" Port Management System won first

place in the Continuous Improvement and Innovation category after achieving 90% digitalization in maritime operations and reducing paperwork by 85% through smart operating tools. The port also secured second place in the Net Zero category for pioneering the use of biodiesel produced from recycled cooking oil, in marine tugboats, a first for any port in the Middle East. Demonstrating its commitment to enhancing urban mobility integration, Mwasalat signed two strategic agreements. These included a first-and-last-mile service development initiative connecting micro-mobility to public transport in select higher education institu-

tions Muscat and Salalah in partnership with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences; and an agreement to develop an integrated public transport station in North Al Batinah in coordination with the Office of the Governor of North Al Batinah. These efforts aim to boost urban mobility efficiency and contribute to broader sustainability objectives. These projects reflect Asyad Group's holistic vision to build a connected, sustainable logistics network powered by local capabilities and world-class partnerships. Asyad remains steadfast in its mission to position Oman at the heart of global trade routes through innovation, infrastructure, and talent.

ARABIAN TRAVEL MARKET

Omran showcases strategic projects and sustainable tourism initiatives at ATM

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) concluded its dynamic participation in the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2025, which was hosted by the Dubai World Trade Centre from April 28 to May 1, within the Sultanate of Oman's official pavilion overseen by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. This participation demonstrated the group's commitment to supporting national efforts aimed at promoting the tourism assets of the Sultanate of Oman and enhancing its presence on the international stage. During its participation, Omran Group highlighted its portfolio of leading projects and its initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism, reflecting its role in supporting the implementation of the National Tourism Strategy and contributing to the achievement of economic diversification goals in accordance with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. The participation contributed to showcasing the strategic projects that the Group is developing and promoting the tourism products and experiences offered by the owned hotels and resorts, within the framework of efforts aimed at contributing to enhancing the Sultanate of Oman's position in the global travel and tourism markets. On the sidelines of its participation, Omran Group announced the signing of a strategic agreement with Mohsin Haider Darwish Group to develop the 'ALIÉ NI-



VAS' resort—an exceptional addition to the evolving tourism landscape of Musandam Governorate. The Group also revealed that 16 of its hotels have been awarded the 'Hotel Sustainability Basics' verification by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), positioning Omran as the first hotel group in the Sultanate of Oman to achieve this esteemed global recognition. In a move to bolster Omani tourism on the global stage, Visit Oman, a subsidiary of Omran Group, signed two strategic cooperation agreements with TBO Holidays and Trip.com. These partnerships aim to expand market reach and increase inbound tourism to the Sultanate by connecting Omani travel and tourism service providers with international trade partners in key source markets. As part of its commitment to nurturing national talent, 48 students from Oman Tourism College – also an Omran Group subsidiary – participated in ATM, gaining valuable exposure to global

tourism stakeholders and engaging in workshops and panel sessions highlighting investment opportunities in the sector. Commenting on the Group's participation, Shabib Mohammed Al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, said: "Our participation in the Arabian Travel Market 2025 reflects Omran Group's firm commitment to supporting efforts aimed at developing and advancing the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman, and comes within the framework of efforts to enhance the Sultanate of Oman's position as a leading tourist destination on the global tourism map. This participation has provided us with the opportunity to showcase our promising tourism projects, expand our network of relationships with international partners, and explore new areas of cooperation that contribute to enhancing the sustainable growth of the tourism sector". As part of the event, Omran Group participated in a dialogue

session titled 'Destination Development' organized by the Resilience Council, which included a selection of leaders and officials in the tourism sector with the participation of the Group's CEO. The session addressed perspectives on ways to achieve balanced and sustainable tourism development. In addition, the CEO participated in a panel discussion titled 'Enhancing Competitiveness through the Circular Economy,' during which he highlighted the Group's commitment to adopting the principles of the circular economy in the development of tourism projects. This participation demonstrates Omran Group's keenness to move forward with its efforts to promote sustainable tourism development in the Sultanate of Oman, establish constructive international partnerships, and support the Sultanate of Oman's ambitious vision towards building a thriving, integrated, and globally connected tourism sector.

OFFICIAL DATA

India's forex reserves climb for 8th straight week, rise by \$1.98bn to \$688.13bn: RBI data

MUMBAI: India's foreign exchange reserves (Forex) rose by USD 1.983 billion to USD 688.129 billion in the week that ended on April 25, extending gains for the eighth straight week, official data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) this week showed. Despite eight consecutive rises in the Forex the reserve remained below the all time high of USD 704.885 billion which was achieved in the last September previous year. The RBI data shows that foreign currency assets (FCAs) witnessed an uptick of USD 2.168 billion reaching at USD 580.663 billion. The FCAs are the largest components of the foreign exchange reserves which reflects the valuation impact of non-US currencies like euro, pound, and yen kept in the reserves. They are written in the dollar terms. **Gold reserves** In the reported week, the gold reserves with the RBI declined by USD 207 million, standing at USD 84.365 billion. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), which are kept with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), witnessed a rise reaching USD 18.589 billion, up USD 21 million in the reporting week. India's foreign exchange reserves rose USD 8.310 billion to

USD 686.145 billion in the week that ended on April 18. The forex reserves started falling after reaching an all-time high of USD 704.89 billion in September, only to recover afterwards. The decline in reserves was most likely due to RBI intervention, aimed at preventing a sharp depreciation of the Rupee. The Indian Rupee is now at or near its all-time low against the US dollar. An estimate by the apex bank suggests that India's foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to cover approximately 10-12 months of projected imports. In 2023, India added around USD 58 billion to its foreign exchange reserves, contrasting with a cumulative decline of USD 71 billion in 2022. In 2024, the reserves rose by a little over USD 20 billion. Foreign exchange reserves, or FX reserves, are assets held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority, primarily in reserve currencies such as the US Dollar, with smaller portions in the Euro, Japanese Yen, and Pound Sterling. The RBI often intervenes by managing liquidity, including selling dollars, to prevent steep Rupee depreciation. The Central bank strategically buys dollars when the Rupee is strong and sells when it weakens. -ANI



OMAN FOOTBALL ACADEMY LEAGUE
دوري للأكاديميات الكروية



استدراج



البرنام

The Under-16 category produced a thrilling finale as **Star (Hamdan Said) Football Academy** triumphed over Al Gharafa Academy 3-1 in a match decided by penalties.

Iron Academy etched its name in gold with a stunning double — winning both the Under-10 and Under-14 categories.

In the Under-12 age group, **Seeb Academy**, guided by coach Sami Al Dhamri, lived up to expectations by lifting the shield after a 5-4 penalty win over Future Pulse Academy.

5,000

Players from more than 200 academy teams across the Sultanate of Oman took part in the inaugural edition of the tournament.

OFAL makes history



MUSCAT: In a momentous conclusion to a tournament of firsts, the inaugural Oman Football Academy League (OFAL) wrapped up with a glittering finale at Seeb Sports Stadium recently that saw nearly 2,000 young footballers from 72 teams take part in the final phase — a culmination of a nationwide qualification process that had engaged over 5,000 players from more than 200 academy teams across the Sultanate.

Held under the patronage of HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Salim Al Said, the OFAL finale brought together top academies, football legends of the Gulf, and a capacity crowd to celebrate youth football in a vibrant, carnival-like atmosphere.

Sayyid Mohammed, who also inaugurated OFAL's launch in May 2024, led the honours ceremony alongside dignitaries including Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali, CEO of Muscat Media Group; Eng. Abdulrahman Al Yahyai, CEO of Integrated Gas Company (IGC); Abdulbasit Al Abri, former president of Al Hamra Club; and Fadi Kattar, Chairman of the OFAL Organising Committee.

The final night turned into a festival of football and memories, celebrating both the stars of tomorrow and the icons of yesterday.

Crowning the champions
The Under-16 category produced a thrilling finale as Star (Hamdan Said) Football Academy triumphed over Al Gharafa Academy 3-1 in a match decided by penalties.

Star Academy completed a flawless campaign, going unbeaten through the qualifiers in South Al Batinah, where they topped their group with 10 points and scored 18 goals while conceding just three.

Iron Academy etched its name in gold with a stunning double — winning both the Under-10 and Under-14 categories. In the U10 final, Iron Academy, coached by Rashid Al Hina, edged Promising Generation Academy 6-5 on penalties.

They repeated their nerveless composure in the U14 final, defeating Al Rumais Academy 5-4, again in a shootout.

In the Under-12 age group, Seeb Academy, guided by coach Sami Al Dhamri, lived up to expectations by lifting the shield after a 5-4 penalty win over Future Pulse Academy.

Each of the finals were tightly contested, with three of the four championship matches being decided via penalty shootouts — a testament to the high level of competitiveness and determination shown by the participating academies.

A ceremony of stars
The finale wasn't just about young champions. It was a stirring reunion of Gulf football's golden era as legendary players from across the region graced the evening, adding sparkle and nostalgia to an already emotional occasion.

As HH Sayyid Mohammed made his way to the podium, the mood shifted to one of reverence. Standing beside him were football royalty — Qatari legend Adel Khamis and Bahrain's charismatic goalkeeper Hamoud Sultan — along with some of Oman's finest: Yusris Aman, Nasser Hamdan, Ahmed Hadid, Hani Al Dhabbi, Saif Al Habsi, Dawood Salim, Sultan Al Toqi, Ibrahim Al Mayahi and Haroon Amour.

These legends, who once electrified crowds across the Gulf, now stood united to inspire the new generation.

The 'Legends Match' played before the finals was a heart-

warming prelude to the awards — showcasing old magic, rekindling cherished memories and delighting the crowd.

Led by former national team assistant coach Ali Al Khanbashi, the veterans moved with grace and joy, reminding all that football is not just a game, but a life-long bond.

Honours bestowed, dreams ignited

The prize distribution was a grand affair, perfectly staged to match the scale and spirit of the competition.

Medals and shields were awarded by HH Sayyid Mohammed, joined by Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali, Eng. Abdulrahman Al Yahyai, Abdulbasit Al Abri, and Fadi Kattar.

The evening concluded with a formal dinner hosted at Seeb Stadium in honour of the Gulf legends, sponsors, team representatives, and members of the media. The OFAL Organising Committee, chaired by Fadi Kattar and supported by the Salsal Organising team, under the leadership of Manie Al Sultani, ensured every detail — from the technical execution to the celebratory arrangements — reflected the ambition and vision behind OFAL.

Refereeing duties throughout the tournament were efficiently led by Khalil Al Balushi and his team of ten referees, who managed the high-stakes games with professionalism and fairness.

With its grand finale, OFAL has written a new chapter in Omani football — one that bridges generations, nurtures grassroots talent, and celebrates the beautiful game in all its glory.

The success of this first edition sets a powerful precedent for future seasons, as Oman continues to build pathways for its footballing future.

T

SPORTS

Verstappen clinches Miami pole



MIAMI: Red Bull's Max Verstappen beat McLaren's Lando Norris to pole position at the Miami Grand Prix on Saturday. Verstappen headed Norris, who won the sprint race earlier on Saturday, by 0.065 seconds. Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli, on pole for the sprint, grabbed third ahead of the second McLaren of Oscar Piastri. Mercedes' George Russell was fifth ahead of the Williams of Carlos Sainz and Alex Albon, as Ferrari struggled, with Charles Leclerc eighth and Lewis Hamilton down in 12th.

Verstappen's pole, in a car with an upgraded floor this weekend, was won with a blistering first sector of the lap. The Red Bull's speed in the fast sweepers was too much for McLaren to claw back in the remainder of the lap.

"It's been a great qualifying," Verstappen said. "We improved the car a tiny amount, which helped me rotate it a bit better."

"Q1, Q2, Q3 improving every run. Trying to find the limit. I had a tiny moment into Turn One trying to find more time there but it's very tricky here with the tyres. It's qualifying, try to correct it and floor it out of the corner."

It was the second piece of good news for the four-time champion this week, after the birth of his first child, a daughter called Lily.

Norris said: "Congrats to Max, especially being a dad now. I was hoping it would slow him down a bit but it clearly didn't."

"Max did a Max lap again and I'm happy for him. The pace is there. I have been feeling good. It is what it is, I'm P2, Max on pole, ready to see what I can do into Turn One."

Antonelli's third place proved his pole in the sprint on Friday was not a flash in the pan, on a weekend where he is showing the spark of prodigious talent that convinced Mercedes to put the 18-year-old straight into their team in his debut season. He beat team-mate George Russell by 0.114secs.

Piastri, winner of the last two races to put him into the championship lead, said his fourth place was down to "poor execution - there was quite a bit left on the table".

A strong showing for Williams in sixth and seventh underlined the troubles of Ferrari, where Leclerc was 0.483secs off the pace and Hamilton failed to make it into the top 10 shootout.

He was just 0.058secs off Leclerc in the second session, but that was enough for four places, and it left him ruining a decision not to use an extra set of new tyres that he had available. - Agencies

SPANISH LA LIGA

Barca go seven points clear at the top

BARCELONA: Barcelona came from behind to beat Real Valladolid 2-1 and pull seven points clear of Real Madrid at the top of Spanish La Liga on Saturday.

Substitute Raphinha and Fermin Lopez scored in the space of six second-half minutes after Ivan Sanchez had given Valladolid a surprise early lead at Estadio Jose Zorrilla.

Hansi Flick sent out a weakened side, making nine changes to the line-up that drew 3-3 with Inter Milan in the first-leg of their Champions League semi-final on Wednesday, with Tuesday's second-leg in Italy on his mind.

Sanchez scored with a heavily-deflected shot from a tight angle, but that was as good as it got for the already-relegated Valladolid.

Despite trailing, Barcelona were dominant throughout and the introduction of Lamine Yamal on 38 minutes, replacing injured debutant Dani Rodriguez, took them up another level.

Raphinha's 16th La Liga goal of the season, a drilled shot from the edge of the area, sparked the comeback before Lopez swept home to put the league leaders in front.

Right-back Hector Fort was denied by the base of the post as Barcelona pushed for a third, while Yamal saw an effort cleared off the line.

Barcelona are unbeaten in 15 league outings, winning 13, and have won 17 of their past 19 against Valladolid.

Real Madrid, who travel to Barcelona on 11 May, have the opportunity to close the gap at the top of the table to four points when they host Celta Vigo. - Agencies

FORMULA ONE

Norris wins Miami sprint with help from safety car

MIAMI: Lando Norris beat McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri to win a chaotic wet-dry Miami Grand Prix sprint race with help from the safety car on Saturday.

Piastri led from lap one after passing pole-sitter Kimi Antonelli's Mercedes at the first corner of the race but the safety car cost the Australian the race win.

The championship leader pitted one lap before Norris as the track dried out but the safety car was sent out while Norris was pitting for his slick tyres.

That slowed the cars on track and gave Norris enough time to rejoin in the lead.

The safety car was caused by a crash between Fernando Alonso's Aston Martin and Liam Lawson's Racing Bull at Turn Two but that was not the only drama in the race. Max Verstappen finished fourth on the road behind Ferrari's Lewis Hamilton, who benefited from an early pit stop for dry-weather slick tyres, but was penalised 10 seconds for an unsafe release from his pit stop, which caused him to collide with Antonelli. Verstappen, whose front wing was damaged in the collision, was demoted to 17th and last by the penalty.

The incident was a major blow to Antonelli's hopes of a good result. It prevented him making his pit stop and he had to rejoin the track and do another lap before pitting again. Antonelli ended up finishing seventh after penalties for Alex Albon, Lawson and Oliver Bearman.

The race started on a wet track, after a 28-minute delay because of the poor conditions.

It was almost a carbon-copy of Norris' maiden win in the grand prix here last year, when a safety car vaulted him into the lead ahead of Verstappen.

The madcap events of the pit-stop period, safety car and Verstappen's penalty helped Williams' Albon, seventh in the early laps, vault to fourth in the results, ahead of George Russell's Mercedes. Albon was later penalised five seconds for speeding under the safety car, dropping him out of the points. Lance Stroll's Aston Martin took sixth ahead of Lawson, who was later dropped out of the points by a penalty for causing the collision with Alonso.

Haas' Bearman drove an excellent race to finish eighth from 19th on the grid but was another to be given a five-second penalty, his for an unsafe release in the pits. The penalties for Albon, Lawson and Bearman moved Red Bull's Yuki Tsunoda, Antonelli and Alpine's Pierre Gasly into the points. It was the first time in this race's four-year history that rain had affected the running. - Agencies



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PREMIER LEAGUE

Bournemouth stun Arsenal

LONDON: Arsenal's hopes of building momentum before their crucial Champions League tie with Paris Saint-Germain in midweek were hit as Bournemouth came from behind to win 2-1 at Emirates Stadium and boost their own European ambitions on Saturday.

The Gunners head to France on Wednesday looking to overturn a 1-0 loss in the first leg and reach the final of Europe's premier club competition.

Mikel Arteta named a strong Arsenal side against the Cherries, but were undone by a second-half fightback by the visitors.

Declan Rice had marked his 100th appearance for the Gunners with the opener in the first half, rounding Kepa in the Bournemouth goal before firing in. But the visitors turned the game on its head after the break.

First, Dean Huijsen equalised in the 67th minute when he headed in from Antoine Semenyo's long throw. The visitors then took the lead eight minutes later as Evanilson bundled in from a corner to seal a first-ever win at the Emirates for Bournemouth.

Arsenal remain second despite the loss but third-placed Manchester City are just three points behind.

Elsewhere, Ipswich came from two goals down to secure a draw at Everton in the hosts' penultimate game at Goodison Park.

The Toffees leave the stadium they have called home since 1892 at the end of the season to move to Bramley-Moore Dock.

In their final Saturday kick-off at Goodison Park - the first was 48,293 days ago when Everton beat Preston 6-0 in February 1893 - Beto and Dwight McNeil scored in the space of nine first-half minutes for the hosts.

However, a moment of individual brilliance from Julio Enciso offered Ipswich a route back into proceedings shortly before the break. Ipswich struck again when George Hirst equalised.

Other results: Aston Villa 1 Fulham 0, Leicester 2 Southampton 0.



TAC hosts keys handover ceremony for Mazda Ramadan raffle winners

The winners, Ruqaiya Ahmed, Omar Nadeem, Wissal T and Serap Yildirim, were each presented with the keys to their new sedans during the joyful occasion

MUSCAT: Towell Auto Centre concluded its Mazda Ramadan Raffle with keys handover ceremony on 30 April 2025, awarding four lucky winners with brand-new Mazda 6 sedans.

The prize was given through a lucky draw for existing customers who had bought their cars from Mazda Oman through Ramadan promotion. The event brought together customers, representatives and guests in a celebration that highlighted Mazda's ongoing commitment to rewarding loyalty



and strengthening community engagement. The winners, Ruqaiya Ahmed, Omar Nadeem, Wissal T and Serap Yildirim, were each presented with the keys to their new sedans during the joyful occasion. The atmosphere was filled with excitement and heartfelt appreciation as the winners shared their happiness and pride in receiving a Mazda 6. Many described the experience as unforgettable, a

special moment made even more meaningful by its timing during the holy month of Ramadan.

The Mazda 6, one of the brand's flagship sedans, stood at the heart of the celebration. Recognized for its refined KODO design, the Mazda 6 combines elegant lines with aerodynamic performance. Under the hood, its Skyactiv-G engine delivers spirited power and efficiency, making every drive both

responsive and smooth. Inside, the sedan features a driver-focused cabin with premium materials, leather-trimmed seating, Mazda Connect infotainment and a Bose audio system offering both sophistication and connectivity. Safety remains a priority with i-Activsense technologies, including adaptive cruise control, lane-keep assist and blind-spot monitoring for a confident driving experience.

Speaking on the occasion, Riyadh Ali Sultan, Director of Towell Auto Group, said: "The Ramadan Raffle reflects Mazda Oman's deep commitment to building lasting relationships with our customers. We are truly honored to celebrate the success of our winners and extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who participated. We believe that every interaction is an opportunity to deliver not just outstanding

products, but memorable experiences that reinforce our connection with the community.

As we move forward, our focus remains on enriching the customer journey through exciting initiatives, exclusive rewards and ongoing customer initiatives. We look forward to introducing more innovative events that embody the spirit of Mazda, a spirit defined by excellence, trust and a passion for driving."

The Ramadan Raffle received an overwhelming response from customers across Oman, reflecting the strong trust and engagement Mazda continues to cultivate within its growing customer base.

While the Ramadan Raffle has concluded, Mazda Oman remains committed to delivering outstanding experiences. Stay connected for future events, exclusive benefits and opportunities to discover Mazda's latest models.

Towell Auto Centre, a trusted name in Oman's automotive landscape, continues to lead with a strong customer-first philosophy. Known for delivering exceptional service, dependable after-sales support and a deep-rooted commitment to quality, TAC, in partnership with Mazda, is redefining the ownership experience through care, innovation, and lasting value.

GREEN SPORTS



Bank Muscat participates in inauguration of Al Raheeb Sports and Cultural Team's project

MUSCAT: In line with the bank's commitment to community development and promoting Oman as a sporting nation, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to hand over green sports fields across the Sultanate of Oman.

Recently, the bank participated in the inauguration of the Al Raheeb Sports and Cultural Team's project in Qalhat in the Wilayat of Sur. The event was held under the patronage of Sheikh Ahmed Mohammed Al Busaidi, Deputy Wali of Sur and in the presence of Abdullah Juma Al Araiimi, Senior Regional Manager of Bank Muscat's Sharqiyah and Dhakhiliyah branches and team members.

On this occasion, Abdullah Juma Al Araiimi, Senior Regional Manager of Bank Muscat's Sharqiyah and Dhakhiliyah branches, said: "The bank's landmark CSR programme, Green Sports, continues to achieve great success in creating sustainable green spaces across the Sultanate. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Al Raheeb Sports Team in the Wilayat of Sur for the inauguration of their project, wishing them the best of luck. The Bank has participated recently in the inauguration of new sports fields' projects across the Sultanate. More teams have been added to the list of local sports fields inaugurated since the inception of the programme."

Yasir Hamdon Al Shuaibi, Head of Al Raheeb Sports Team, said: "We are pleased to celebrate today the completion of the team's project. We affirm our commitment to maintain this project to maximize the benefit for all team members and the surrounding community in general. The Bank's "Green Sports" initiative contributed positively in supporting local sports teams and youth and we hope such initiatives continue in the future."

A number of Al Raheeb Sports and Cultural Team members also expressed their happiness

The bank's landmark CSR programme, Green Sports, continues to achieve great success in creating sustainable green spaces

over the team field project's inauguration. Rashid Abdullah Al Saadi, Team Coach, said: "The implementation of the synthetic turf project for the team's field will be of an added value as it will help the team members develop their skills and talents. With this project, the members will get a suitable place to practice and strengthen their skills and organise various sporting activities."

On his part, Abdullah Hashil Al Shuaibi, Team Secretary said: "We are pleased to thank Bank Muscat for this initiative as they continue to achieve positive results in supporting local sports teams in the Sultanate. Al Raheeb Team's project will provide a suitable environment to support youth and the community by benefitting from the space to hold various social activities and events."

Muscat Bank has been keen to expand its social responsibility activities through its well-received and prosperous sustainable initiatives. Every year, there is intense competition among sports teams to take advantage of the areas of support offered by the Green Sports program, which is one of the most significant initiatives of sustainable social responsibility. Since its establishment, 203 teams have benefited from it, and there are roughly 70,000 beneficiaries overall. The Bank will keep working together and improving communication with stakeholders in order to maximise the utilisation of community-serving green areas and reap the long-term benefits of the Green Sports programme.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

BankDhofar launches programme to empower future-ready Omani leaders

MUSCAT: Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, BankDhofar — Oman's second-largest bank in branch network — has launched a transformative "Leadership Development Programme" in partnership with the Indian School of Business (ISB), a globally elite institution affiliated with Wharton, Kellogg, and London Business School.

This initiative empowers Omani talent with world-class expertise, fostering visionary leaders to propel Oman's economy forward. By blending local ambition with global excellence, BankDhofar reinforces its commitment to sustainable growth and national progress, ensuring Oman's future is led by capable, innovative minds. A bold investment in people—and in Oman's tomorrow.

The program aims to enhance the leadership skills of participants in several aspects, including strategic thinking, problem solving, digitization, change management, and innovation and it is designed to enhance participants' leadership capabilities in key areas such as strategic thinking, problem-solving, digitization, change management, and innovation.

Dr. Khalid bin Salem Al Hamdani, Head of Human Resources at BankDhofar, remarked: "This six-month program is part of our commitment to developing national talent and empowering them with access to global leadership models and experiences. It hones both their cognitive and professional skills in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040."

The "Leadership Development" program features a mix of inten-



sive educational sessions, interactive workshops, and practical training. Participants will tackle real-world challenges, particularly those arising from the rapid changes shaping the global economy and the banking sector.

Dr. Khalid added that the program will equip participants with strategies for effective problem-solving and team leadership, aimed at enhancing organizational productivity and performance.

Usama bin Ismail Al Farsi, Head of Organizational Development and Career Planning, further emphasized: "The Leadership Development program is a vital step towards strengthening national initiatives across the Sultanate

to build highly competent, transformative leaders who can drive positive change at both the organizational and social levels."

This new program adds to BankDhofar's growing suite of initiatives aimed at building the skills and capabilities of its workforce. Notably, eight years ago, the bank launched the "Ruwad" program to equip fresh graduates from various disciplines with essential skills, including leadership, finance, communication, and digital competencies. "Ruwad" continues to contribute to workforce Omanization and talent development at the bank.

In addition, BankDhofar has forged strategic partnerships with

several government entities—including the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Office, the Central Bank of Oman, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation—to strengthen collaboration and share expertise in national capacity building.

Since 2017, BankDhofar's Performance Academy has served as a cornerstone for employee education and development. The Academy features state-of-the-art training facilities, including a virtual branch that provides trainees with realistic, hands-on experience before they begin working at actual bank branches.

PERFORMANCE

Amouage achieves record first quarter in 2025: Retail sales surpass \$100mn

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

A thriving global presence
Amouage's momentum continues across all channels. Amouage boutiques posted an exceptional growth of +75%, e-commerce maintained its strong ascent at +52%, and Travel Retail expanded by +51%. Distributor-led markets rose by +43%, with MEA shining at +75%.

Amouage proudly secured the



number one position in ultra-luxury fragrance across all retailers—where listed in the United Arab Emirates and in prestigious doors such as Laure and Harvey Nichols in Saudi Arabia. In the Americas, sales rose by +41%, with Amouage now among the top 10 fragrance

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

The growing resonance of its creations
Guidance Eau de Parfum remains the House's most beloved creation, with sales more than doubling year-on-year. Amouage's pursuit of excellence continues to bear fruit; the Exceptional Extraits Collection tripled versus 2024, with Guidance 46 and Purpose 50 Exceptional Extraits complementing, rather than eclipsing their Eau de Parfum counterparts.

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

Rooted in Oman, celebrated worldwide

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

Omani Frankincense, the soul of the House, was honoured globally, showcased at Paris Perfume Week and Milan Design Week through the "Oman Collection" by artist Gaetano Pesce, bringing the ancient treasures of Wadi Dawkah to the world's stage. In the months to come, Amouage will continue to cultivate its momentum with the international unveiling of Chapter IV of the Odyssey Collection, introducing Decision and Existence to clients across key markets.

ROUND-UP

Lincoln Nautilus combines bold design with refined elegance

A newly styled spoiler not only adds a touch of athleticism but also enhances aerodynamic performance, perfectly echoing the Nautilus’ confident, modern aesthetic

MUSCAT: The Lincoln Nautilus blends bold design with refined elegance. Its contemporary silhouette is instantly recognisable, featuring Lincoln’s signature grille, a sculpted rear fascia and an elegant full-width light bar complemented by refreshed tail lamps.

A newly styled spoiler not only adds a touch of athleticism but also enhances aerodynamic performance, perfectly echoing the Nautilus’ confident, modern aesthetic. The Reserve trim adds an extra layer of allure with head-turning 21” bright machined aluminium wheels with premium-painted pockets, adding a dynamic, upscale edge.

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



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

At your fingertips sits an expansive 11.1-inch LCD Capac-

itive Touchscreen, delivering crisp visuals and intuitive swipe controls—putting vital information and entertainment right where you need it.

Thoughtful innovation

Every detail inside the Nautilus speaks to thoughtful innovation. The centre console departs from convention with a vertically-aligned Push-Button Shifter, integrated seamlessly into the instrument panel. Each button is uniquely textured for natural, intuitive control. For those who demand peak comfort, the Ultra Comfort front seats, developed

with input from orthopaedic specialists, offer 22-way adjustability and lumbar massage, helping to reduce fatigue and improve well-being on long drives. Available heated and cooled options in the Reserve trim ensure year-round comfort, regardless of the weather. Underneath its sculpted frame, the Nautilus houses a performance-driven heart. The available 2.0-liter turbocharged engine produces an exhilarating 250 horsepower and 380 Nm of torque.

Combined with Lincoln’s intelligent all-wheel-drive system, adaptive suspension and AWD disconnect capability, the Nautilus adapts

effortlessly to road conditions, delivering poised handling and uncompromising control. Additional features like Auto Start-Stop technology and an advanced 8-speed automatic transmission with SelectShift ensure a smooth, efficient, and responsive ride every time.

Safety is at the core of the Lincoln Nautilus, thanks to the comprehensive Lincoln Co-Pilot360 suite. This intelligent array of driver-assist technologies includes Blind Spot Information System (BLIS), Cross-Traffic Alert, Pre-Collision Assist with Pedestrian Detection, Lane-Keeping System and Auto High Beams—all de-

signed to elevate awareness and prevent potential collisions. A high-resolution rear-view camera enhances visibility while parking and manoeuvring.

For long-distance drives, Adaptive Cruise Control with Stop-and-Go and Lane Centering technology takes the pressure off. These systems work together to maintain safe spacing, gently steer the vehicle within its lane and even bring it to a complete stop when needed, offering peace of mind and effortless control on every journey.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.

SPORTSMANSHIP



Indian Social Club Oman concludes successful badminton tournament

MUSCAT: The Indian Social Club Oman announced the successful conclusion of the badminton tournament held at the Falcon Badminton Academy, Qurum. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Falcon Badminton Academy for their excellent facility and support in making this event a grand success.

The tournament witnessed overwhelming participation from all badminton enthusiasts within the ISC family, leading to an extremely smooth conduct and enthralling matches between all teams and the sprawling venue of Falcon Badminton Academy, for which we would like to express our sincere gratitude to Kutty, the Badminton Coordinator, and Manoj Ranade, the Sports Secretary of the Indian Social Club Oman, for their exceptional efforts in organizing the tournament.

The final match was a memorable event, featuring two formidable teams: Jyothilal & Sabir on one side, and Kutty & Shanavas on the other. After a highly competitive and thrilling encounter, the team of Jyothilal & Sabir emerged victorious.

The tournament was marked by notable moments of sportsmanship. During the final, an injury to a team member was met with kindness and generosity from the opposing team, who graciously agreed to continue the match the next day, rather than claiming the title by default. This gesture exemplified the true spirit of sportsmanship that the ISC aims to cultivate.

The tournament witnessed overwhelming participation from all badminton enthusiasts within the ISC family, leading to an extremely smooth conduct and enthralling matches

The prize distribution ceremony was graced by Ajmal of Falcon Badminton Academy, Shakeel K M, General Secretary of ISC, Suhail Khan, Vice Chairman of ISC, and Manoj Ranade, Sports Secretary of ISC. Their presence added to the significance of the occasion and underscored the importance of sports in fostering general fitness, team spirit, and camaraderie.

Indian Social Club is also pleased to announce that a Tennis League tournament is currently in progress.

The finals of the tennis tournament, as well as the rank gradings of the Karate Coaching Camp, are scheduled to take place in the second quarter of this year. A free Table Tennis camp is also currently going on, which would run till end-May 2025.

The Indian Social Club Oman remains committed to promoting sports and physical activities within the Indian diaspora and looks forward to many more such successful events.

MUSCAT GRAND MALL

MGM in partnership with SRED launches Little India cultural and retail hub

MUSCAT: Muscat Grand Mall, a flagship destination of Tilal Development Company, in collaboration with SRED, announced the launch of “Little India” as its new social anchor — a vibrant cultural and retail hub designed to celebrate and showcase the diversity of Indian lifestyle, cuisine, fashion, and heritage.

The launch of “Little India” is also endorsed by Amitabh Taneja, chairman & managing director, editor in chief, Images Group further strengthening the trust and value of the launch.

This landmark announcement comes ahead of the Phygital Retail Convention 2025, India’s largest and most influential retail industry gathering, taking place on May 7–8, 2025 at Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai. The initiative positions Muscat Grand Mall as the gateway for Indian brands to enter the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) region, leveraging Oman’s strategic location and growing demand for curated international retail experiences.

Ali Hosni, Acting CEO/ General



Manager of Muscat Grand Mall, will be addressing the gathering with a keynote at Phygital Retail Convention 2025, sighting,

“Muscat Grand Mall has always been a canvas for innovation and cultural expression. With ‘Little India’, we are not just creating a retail space—we are creating a bridge between India and the GCC. This is an invitation for Indian brands to be part of a regional success story, backed by strong foot-

fall, premium infrastructure, and a rising consumer base in Oman.”

Also speaking on the collaboration, Shriram PM Monga, Co-founder of SRED, said: “‘Little India’ is more than a commercial concept—it’s a social ecosystem designed to serve the large Indian community in Oman and the wider Gulf. It’s a unique opportunity for Indian brands to plug into a culturally aligned audience, celebrate India abroad, and grow in a region that

values authenticity and diversity.”

“We invite all visionary Indian brands at PRC 2025 to join us in building this cultural and commercial landmark.”

Little India will serve as a permanent cultural anchor within Muscat Grand Mall, offering Indian brands a purpose-built platform to connect with both resident and tourist consumers in the Sultanate. Fashion labels, food concepts, home décor brands, and artisanal businesses from India will find a receptive and growing market with high engagement potential.

SRED’s strategic vision and regional retail expertise will guide the onboarding of Indian brands into Muscat Grand Mall, supported by tailored leasing programs, cultural programming, and integrated marketing to ensure long-term success.

Indian brands and retail leaders attending Phygital Retail Convention 2025 are invited to connect with representatives from Muscat Grand Mall and SRED at the event to explore expansion opportunities.

TRIBUTE TO OMAN’S LANDSCAPE

‘Kiki Goes to Corniche’ children’s travelogue launched



MUSCAT: The beloved children’s travelogue “Kiki Goes to Corniche” was officially launched by Dr. Siham Al Harthy, board member of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Chairperson of their Tourism Committee, at the 29th Muscat International Book Fair, being held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), in a celebration of storytelling, art, and cultural exploration.

Crafted by Elizabeth Davis, a notable figure in Oman’s art scene and a resident in Muscat since 1992, the book invites young readers to discover the charm of Oman through the eyes of Little Kiki, who journeys through the iconic Corniche with her grandmother, fondly known as Ammu. The book includes engaging pop-ups, activity-based cutouts, and delicately illustrated pages created with pen and watercolour, making it a vibrant, interactive experience for children and the young at heart.

“This book is not only a tribute to our landscapes, but also a joyful

celebration of learning and exploration,” said Dr. Siham Al Harthy at the launch. “It was truly a pleasure and an honour to be part of the launch of Kiki Goes to Corniche. Elizabeth’s sketchbook is a beautiful celebration of culture and creativity, and I’m so pleased to see it gaining such wonderful recognition. Knowing that the original is housed at the special collection wing of Shiekh Mohammed Bin Rashid Library, Dubai makes it all the more special,” added Dr Siham.

The book is proudly showcased by Al Bhaj Books, a respected local bookstore in Muscat, dedicated to promoting Omani literature and artistic voices.

The event drew families, educators, and art lovers alike, all eager to explore Oman through the imaginative lens of young Kiara and the heartfelt storytelling of Elizabeth Davis. The book, was earlier displayed in the Oman pavilion at the ITB Berlin 2024 and also at the road show in the US by the OCCI tourism dept.



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