

INBRIEF

HIS MAJESTY GREETSPOLISH PRESIDENT

RENEWED WAR WITH US‘LIKELY’: IRAN OFFICIAL

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Dr Karol Nawrocki, President of the friendly Republic of Poland, on the occasion of his country's National Day. His Majesty expressed his best wishes to the present for continued success in achieving further accomplishments to serve the interests of the friendly Polish people, hoping for continued development of cooperation and partnership relations between the two countries in all fields. — ONA

AQUACULTURE INVESTMENT HITS RO 349 MILLION

MUSCAT: Oman's aquaculture sector is gaining momentum, underpinned by rising investment flows and steady gains in output as the Sultanate advances its blue economy and food security agenda. Data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources show that cumulative investments in existing aquaculture projects reached around RO 349 million by the end of 2025, signalling sustained investor confidence in the sector's long-term prospects.

Additional agreements worth more than RO 50 million have also been signed, set to deliver over 15,000 tonnes of new annual production capacity, largely focused on shrimp and marine fish farming. This pipeline reflects a broader shift towards scaling up high-value aquaculture segments while strengthening domestic supply chains.

Production has continued to expand at a measured pace, reaching approximately 9,240 tonnes by end-2025. Of this total, commercial aquaculture accounted for 7,970 tonnes, while integrated aquaculture contributed 605 tonnes, highlighting incremental efficiency gains and a widening operational base. — DETAILS ON P13

RIA PRESERVES BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES



The Research and Innovation Authority (RIA), represented by the Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre (Mawarid), continues its scientific efforts in collecting, preserving, and studying organisms in Oman within an advanced national system aimed at conserving biodiversity and promoting innovation and sustainable investment in biological resources. — DETAILS ON P2

Stranded whale ‘Timmy’ released into sea in dramatic rescue

FRANKFURT: A humpback whale that had been struggling to survive after beaching near the German coast was released on Saturday into the North Sea off Denmark, after being transported in a barge in a last-ditch rescue operation.

The whale, dubbed “Timmy” in Germany — where its ordeal captured hearts and sparked a media frenzy — exited the barge, blew air through its blowhole and swam off, said Karin Walter-Mommert, one of the wealthy entrepreneurs who

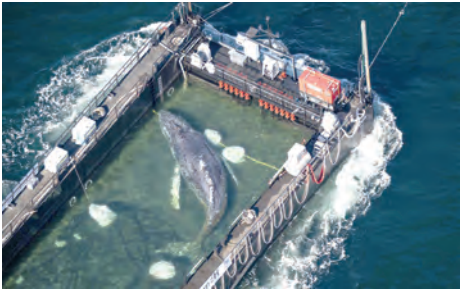
financed the rescue initiative.

It was now swimming on its own and, at least for the time being, in the right direction, she said.

The whale “has some small injuries — probably from being transported in rough seas — but they are superficial”, said Walter-Mommert.

It “should now swim up the Norwegian coast toward the Arctic”, added the entrepreneur, who made her fortune in horse racing.

The whale was first spotted stuck on a sandbank on March 23 near



Aerial photo shows the rescued humpback whale in a special barge along the Danish coastline enroute back to the North Sea after it beached on a sandbank near the city of Luebeck, in late March.

the city of Luebeck, on Germany's Baltic Sea coast, before freeing itself and then becoming stuck again several times.

Various attempts to save it had failed, and authorities had announced they were giving up — prompting Walter-Mommert and another wealthy entrepreneur to step in.

They came up with what many saw as a long-shot plan: coax the whale into the water-filled hold of a special barge and tow it back to its natural habitat.

Some experts criticised the privately financed rescue plan, saying it would only cause the animal more distress.

But the plan appeared to have succeeded against the odds, as the whale left the barge from Wismar Bay on the Baltic coast at around 8:45 am (0645 GMT), organisers said.

To get the whale onto the barge, rescuers had attached straps to it and heaved it down a channel that had been specially dug in the sand to allow it to reach the vessel. — AFP



A woman walks past an anti-US billboard referring to President Donald Trump and the Strait of Hormuz, installed on a building at the Valiasr Square in Tehran on Saturday. — AFP

submitted amendments to a previous one putting Tehran's nuclear programme back on the negotiating table. The changes reportedly include demands that Iran not move enriched uranium from bombed sites or resume activity there during talks. News of the Iranian proposal briefly pushed oil prices down nearly five per cent, though they remain about 50 per cent above pre-war levels amid the ongoing closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has maintained a stranglehold on the strait since the war began, choking off major flows of oil, gas and fertiliser to the world economy, while the United States has imposed a counter-blockade on Iranian ports.

Despite the ceasefire in the Gulf, fighting has continued in Lebanon, where Israel has carried out deadly strikes despite a separate truce with the Iran-backed armed group Hezbollah. Lebanon's health ministry said 13 people were killed in strikes in

the south, including in the town of Habboush, where the Israeli military had issued an evacuation warning. In Washington, lawmakers were wrestling with a legal dispute over whether Trump had breached a deadline to seek congressional approval for the war. Administration officials argue that the ceasefire pauses for a 60-day limit, after which congressional authorisation would be required — a claim disputed by opposition Democrats. — AFP

Registration opens for admission to universities

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC), has opened registration for admission to higher education institutions for the 2026-2027 academic year. Registration will continue until June 4, through an upgraded admission system with modern technology as part of a comprehensive digital transformation aimed at providing a more user-friendly, intelligent, and efficient experience for students.

The system allows students holding the General Education Diploma (GED) or its equivalent



for the 2025-2026 academic year to apply electronically via the HEAC's website.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Azri, Director-General of the HEAC at the Ministry of Education, stated that the HEAC's admission system has seen a significant redesign reflecting a commitment to building a sophisticated digital platform that meets the latest technological standards and addresses students' needs. He noted that the new system offers a seamless user experience through a modern design for the registration screens and accompanying services. FULL REPORT ON P2

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The RIA plays a pivotal role in preserving animal genetic resources, having preserved 1,500 frozen semen samples from purebred Arabian horses.

RIA STRIVES TO PRESERVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

MUSCAT: The Research and Innovation Authority (RIA), represented by the Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre (Mawarid), continues its scientific efforts in collecting, preserving, and studying organisms in Oman within an advanced national system aimed at conserving biodiversity and promoting innovation and sustainable investment in biological resources.

These efforts enhance Oman’s ability to confront environmental challenges such as climate change, pollution and human pressures on natural resources, in addition to enhancing the role of scientific research in finding innovative solutions for the sustainable use of biodiversity.

The RIA plays a pivotal role in preserving animal genetic resources, having preserved 1,500 frozen semen samples from purebred Arabian horses.

The centre also maintains around 100 DNA samples from these horses, as well as 1,000 frozen semen samples from local cattle, which contributes to preserving genetic diversity and enhancing the sustainability of livestock. In addition, 400 specimens from 18 wild animal species have been documented, including the Arabian oryx, Arabian gazelle, Nubian ibex, and Arabian lynx.

Regarding marine organisms, the RIA maintains genetic and tissue samples from 68 fish species and 40 samples of seaweed species.

In the microbiology sector, the centre houses important scientific collections, including 224 bacterial samples and 330 macrofungi.

In the plant sector, the RIA preserves more than 350 seed collections, including 100 collections of strategic crop seeds such as wheat and barley, in addition to 250 collections of wild plant seeds, particularly medicinal, aromatic, endemic, rare and endangered species. — ONA



REGISTRATION OPENS FOR ADMISSION TO UNIVERSITIES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC), has opened registration for admission to higher education institutions for the 2026-2027 academic year.

Registration will continue until June 4, through an upgraded admission system with modern technology as part of a comprehensive digital transformation aimed at providing a more user-friendly, intelligent, and efficient experience for students.

The system allows students holding the General Education Diploma (GED) or its equivalent for



AHMED BIN MOHAMMED AL AZRI

the 2025-2026 academic year to apply electronically via the HEAC’s website.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Azri, Director-General of the HEAC at the Ministry of Education, stated that the HEAC’s admission system has seen a significant redesign reflecting a commitment to building

a sophisticated digital platform that meets the latest technological standards and addresses students’ needs. He noted that the new system offers a seamless user experience through a modern design for the registration screens and accompanying services.

He pointed out that the system has an enhanced login screen that allows users to create an account by entering basic information such as the civil ID number, email address, phone number and candidate number. They then immediately receive their login credentials. The homepage has also been redesigned into a comprehensive central dashboard, enabling students

to quickly access their personal data and grades, view academic programmes.

He added that the system provides smart tools for selecting programmes, allowing students to search by institution or major.

It automatically displays programmes that match their requirements, along with suggested programmes based on their academic data.

The system also offers three flexible ways to arrange preferences: drag and drop, use side arrows as well as manually enter the order. This enhances ease of use and provides students with a more personalised experience. — ONA

Oman expands vegetation cover under Vision 2040

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 2

DESPITE ITS arid landscape, vegetation cover in Oman remains a vital environmental asset. In recent years, the country has intensified efforts to expand and protect green cover as part of a broader sustainability agenda aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

The Environment Authority continues to roll out ambitious programmes to increase green spaces, supporting national strategies aimed at combating climate change and promoting environmental resilience.

According to the Authority’s final report on the National Initiative to Plant Ten Million Trees (2020-2025), approximately 856,142 wild trees have been planted, alongside the distribution of 652,241 trees across various governorates. In addition, more than 59.1 million seeds have been sown as part of vegetation rehabilitation efforts.

Mangrove cultivation has seen significant expansion, with around 11.38 million mangrove trees planted. This plays a crucial role in protecting coastlines, enhancing biodiversity and increasing carbon absorption capacity.



EA has held nationwide environmental campaigns focused on planting native species.

As part of these efforts, the Authority has conducted nationwide environmental campaigns focused on planting native species.

These initiatives have contributed to restoring natural habitats while also raising environmental awareness among communities.

The campaigns aim to mitigate environmental challenges, restore ecological balance and promote the cultivation of indigenous plants — key to sustaining natural resources and improving quality of life.

Dr Mohammed bin Rashid al Maamari, Director of the Cultivation and Nurseries Department at the Environment Authority, said these initiatives reflect the Authority’s commitment to strengthening

Mangrove cultivation has seen significant expansion, with around 11.38 million mangrove trees planted.

plantation efforts across all governorates.

He highlighted the importance of coordinated institutional and community engagement to achieve the initiative’s goals.

Data from the report shows varying sustainability rates across planting methods.

Mangroves recorded a 76-per cent success rate, compared to 60 per cent for wild trees and 86 per cent for distributed trees. Seeds, however, showed a lower sustainability rate of around 2 per cent, underscoring the environmental challenges associated with direct seeding.

In terms of environmental impact, the annual carbon reduction from these initiatives is estimated to range between 108,000 and 520,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, with an average of approximately 314,000 tonnes annually.

This highlights the initiative’s contribution to Oman’s long-term carbon neutrality goals.

Looking ahead, Oman is preparing to implement a series of strategic projects aimed at further enhancing vegetation cover.

These include expanding urban afforestation using native, water-efficient species, developing green corridors in cities and along road networks, and increasing mangrove plantations in coastal areas.

Gulf Traffic Week 2026 begins today with focus on pedestrian safety

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MAY 2

The Sultanate of Oman will join other GCC countries in marking the 38th edition of Gulf Traffic Week 2026, held under the theme ‘Cross Safely’, from May 3 to May 7.

This year’s campaign places a strong emphasis on reducing pedestrian-related accidents and enhancing overall road safety, with key activities centred at the Mall of Oman.

Organised by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) in coordination with traffic authorities across the region, the initiative will feature educational exhibitions, school workshops, and the deployment of advanced AI-based monitoring systems. The campaign particularly targets pedestrian behaviour and safe road usage practices.

Eng Ahmed bin Said al



Amri, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, will inaugurate the main awareness exhibition organised by the General Directorate of Traffic at the Mall of Oman on Sunday.

Speaking to Observer, Lieutenant Colonel Saif bin Ahmed al Ramadhani, Director of the Executive Office at the National Committee for Road Safety, said a wide range of educational and interactive activities have been planned

throughout the week.

“The focus of this year’s campaign is on safe road crossing. In Oman’s context, we are also highlighting the dangers of crossing wadis during rainfall.

Reckless crossings have resulted in loss of life and property during such conditions,” he said.

A series of traffic exhibitions will be held across various governorates,

alongside a discussion session at the General-Directorate of Traffic next Tuesday.

The session will bring together government entities and private sector stakeholders involved in traffic safety.

Special displays by the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Guard are also planned, offering broader perspectives on pedestrian safety and traffic management.

Key highlights of the campaign include promoting the use of designated pedestrian crossings and adherence to traffic signals.

The week will also feature lectures, media engagements, and a participatory seminar.

Meanwhile, the ROP has activated AI-powered cameras to detect violations such as failure to wear seat belts and the use of mobile phones while driving.

SALE

20% - 70%

Terms & Conditions apply

Clarks

SHOEMAKERS SINCE 1825

Al Khamis Plaza, Qurum - Tel. 24560992 | Muscat Grand Mall - Tel. 24399930 | Al Hail South - Tel. 24558148
Al Khamis Shoes, Sohar - Tel. 26841178 | Al Khamis Shoes, Al Hail - Tel. 24543045 | 938994474

SHORT TAKES

UTAS NIZWA TO HOST ‘INNOVATION BRIDGE’ FORUM ON MAY 4-5

STAFF REPORTER
NIZWA, MAY 2

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) in Nizwa will launch the first edition of the ‘Innovation Bridge’ Forum on May 4-5, marking a strategic step to empower students to transform creative ideas into practical, real-world solutions while strengthening a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

The forum underscores the university’s commitment to aligning education outcomes and research with market needs.

It will provide an interactive platform bringing together students, academics, entrepreneurs, investors, and representatives from both public and private sectors — opening new avenues for collaboration and fostering long-term partnerships that support a knowledge-based economy. A key highlight of the forum is a two-day innovation hackathon, where participants will work intensively to develop ideas into prototypes and viable solutions under the guidance of experts in innovation and technology transfer. The event will also feature an accompanying exhibition showcasing student projects and team outputs, creating opportunities for knowledge exchange and potential investment. Around 12 teams, comprising nearly 60 students from various UTAS branches, are expected to participate, alongside teams from vocational colleges and the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences.

This broad participation reflects a collaborative academic environment that encourages the exchange of expertise across institutions.

MoARA urges pilgrims to adhere to Haj permit system

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MAY 2

THE MINISTRY of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA) has urged all pilgrims to strictly adhere to the Haj permit system, emphasising that it is essential for ensuring the smooth movement of both vehicles and pedestrians.

Performing Haj without an official permit is strictly prohibited, with violators facing stringent statutory penalties.

The ministry stated that Haj permits are a critical requirement for maintaining orderly movement and enabling pilgrims to perform their religious duties with ease and comfort. It underscored that collective cooperation remains key to ensuring a safe and successful Haj season.

Speaking to the Observer, a ministry spokesperson, citing the Saudi Ministry of Haj and Umrah, said the permit system ensures a fair and organised distribution of pilgrims across designated camps and locations. This helps prevent overcrowding and maintains balance amid the large influx of pilgrims.

“Compliance with these regulations reflects a high level of civic responsibility that enhances the safety and security of all participants. Conversely, violations disrupt operational plans and affect the quality of services on the ground,” the spokesperson said.



Pilgrims have been advised to verify the authenticity of their Haj permits before making any financial commitments or travel arrangements.

Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashidi, Head of the Omani Haj Mission, will lead the official delegation comprising representatives from various ministries and the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

The first flight carrying Omani pilgrims is scheduled to depart on May 23, with return flights set for June 12, according to the ministry.

The ministry also cautioned against unlicensed Haj campaigns that exploit the sentiments of prospective pilgrims. It confirmed ongoing international coordination efforts to ensure that accurate information and guidance reach pilgrims in their respective countries.

Pilgrims have been advised to verify the authenticity of their Haj permits before making any financial commitments or travel arrangements.

The spokesperson further warned against fraudulent advertisements on social media offering Haj services at suspiciously low prices without valid permits.

“These campaigns are deceptive and designed to defraud individuals seeking to fulfil their religious obligations,” the spokesperson added.

A total of 42,000 applicants registered online for 14,000 available slots for this year’s Haj, including 13,500 Omanis, 250 Arab residents and 250 non-Arab residents.

Al Madina Takaful Announces the Joining of His Eminence Sheikh Dr. Aflah bin Ahmed Al Khalili as Chairman of the Sharia Supervisory Committee



Al Madina Insurance Company SAOG (Al Madina Takaful) has announced that His Eminence Sheikh Dr. Aflah bin Ahmed Al Khalili has joined the company as Chairman of its Sharia Supervisory Committee.

This reflects the company’s commitment to strengthening its Sharia governance framework and reinforcing the principles of Islamic Insurance in line with established Sharia and professional standards, supporting its growth and enhancing the confidence of customers and partners.

His Eminence Sheikh Dr. Aflah bin Ahmed Al Khalili brings with him extensive knowledge and experience in the field. Commenting on this, Mr. Usama Al Barwani, Chief Executive Officer, said: “We are pleased to welcome His Eminence Sheikh Dr. Aflah bin Ahmed Al Khalili as Chairman of the Sharia Supervisory Committee. His joining supports our continued focus on strengthening our

Sharia governance framework in line with established principles and standards.”

Mr. Shakaib Mahmood, Deputy CEO, commented: “We continue to focus on strengthening governance practices and ensuring alignment with established principles and standards. This joining adds further depth to the oversight guiding our Sharia governance framework.”

Mr. Aneesh Varghese, Head of Operations, added: “This development represents an addition to the company’s governance structure, with relevance to how these frameworks are reflected across operational processes.”

The company expressed its best wishes for his success in his role and looks forward to a new phase of excellence and leadership.

The company reaffirms its commitment to upholding the principles of insurance and maintaining high standards of Sharia compliance across its operations, supporting its growth and strengthening the confidence of its customers and partners.

Arabia Falcon Insurance التأمين العربية فالكون			
CONDENSED UNAUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER 2026			
DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2026			
Dear Shareholders, On behalf of the Board of Directors of Arabia Falcon Insurance SAOG, I am pleased to present the financial results of the company for the first quarter ending March 31, 2026. Business overview Macroeconomic conditions weakened during the first quarter, driven by regional geopolitical tensions and rising oil prices, which contributed to higher inflation expectations and volatility in investment markets. Against this backdrop, the insurance sector recorded modest growth. Total gross written premiums increased by 4% to 185 million in Q1 2026, compared to 179 million in Q1 2025 (source: Financial Services Authority portal). The industry is expected to continue growing at an average annual rate of approximately 5% over the coming years. However, claims inflation remains a key concern, placing sustained pressure on underwriting margins and reinforcing the need for disciplined pricing and effective claims management. Elevated claims have historically led to technical losses across several insurers in Oman. Within this context, the Company's Q1 2026 performance was below expectations. Results were primarily impacted by higher claims frequency and value due to inflation, in addition to lower investment income during the period. Management has initiated corrective actions focused on restoring portfolio profitability and enhancing investment returns, with the objective of improving overall performance during the remaining part of the year. Income and Technical Results a. Gross written Premium decreased by 26% from 9.7 million in Q1 2025 to 7.1 million in Q1 2026. The decrease was due mainly to stopping writing medical business in the second half of 2025 which accounted for 1.9 million in Q1 2025. b. Insurance revenue decreased by 2% from 6.2 million in Q1 2025 to 6.1 million in Q1 2026 c. Net insurance service results inclusive of net insurance finance expense decreased from 109k profit in Q1 2025 to 421k loss in Q1 2026. d. Investment income decreased by 13% from 574k in Q1 2025 to 502k in Q1 2026. e. The net loss for the year was 80k compared with 490k profit in the previous year, due to the drop in both technical results and investment income. f. The shareholder's Equity was 22.178 million on March 31, 2026, compared with 21.590 million on March 31, 2025. Dividend of 1,239,620 (12 baiza per share) approved by AGM held on March 31, 2026, compared with 1,033,017 (10 baiza per share) in the previous year. Outlook for 2026 Overall, the year is expected to be challenging. Improvements in both technical profitability and investment income are expected in the remaining part of the year. Over the past few years, management has implemented necessary measures to address rising claims and has continuously reviewed pricing strategies to restore claims ratios to acceptable levels. Property and casualty lines are expected to sustain steady growth and profitability, life segment to continue a strong growth trajectory. Management remains committed to growing the insurance portfolio in a disciplined and profitable manner, while maintaining tight control over expenses, with the primary objective of delivering improved technical profitability by year-end. The Company also continues to advance its digital transformation strategy, with significant investments planned for the coming year to strengthen market leadership, enhance digital capabilities, and elevate service excellence. Acknowledgements I take this opportunity to wish success to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik bin Taimur towards further development and prosperity of the country. We would like to thank the Financial Service Authority and all other regulatory bodies for their continuous guidance and support. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would also like to thank the management team and the employees of the company for an outstanding year. We sincerely thank our shareholders for their continued confidence, support and trust in the company over the years. For & on behalf of the Board of Directors of Arabia Falcon Insurance SAOG Elie Khoury Chairman of the Board			
Unaudited condensed interim statement of financial position as at 31 March 2026			
	Unaudited 31 Mar 2026	Unaudited 31 Mar 2025	Audited 31 Dec 2025
ASSETS			
Property and equipment	93,219	109,344	85,564
Goodwill	555,883	555,883	555,883
Intangible assets	91,672	146,595	105,423
Investments fair value through other comprehensive income	24,372,905	14,621,426	22,185,486
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	6,698,792	8,012,084	5,533,143
Deferred tax asset	204,445	230,825	204,446
Reinsurance contract assets	21,848,549	14,048,785	27,575,583
Other receivables	1,998,096	1,153,384	1,910,011
Term deposits	16,108,889	24,650,456	19,643,738
Cash and bank balances	4,668,894	2,161,286	3,907,179
Total Assets	76,641,344	65,690,068	81,706,456
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
EQUITY			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital	10,330,166	10,330,166	10,330,166
Legal reserve	3,443,388	3,367,915	3,443,388
Contingency reserve	7,275,501	6,760,424	7,161,523
Investment fair value reserve	803,969	583,144	1,038,744
Investment finance reserve	21,076	120,798	(16,305)
Retained earnings	304,077	427,358	1,737,925
Total shareholders' equity	22,178,177	21,589,805	23,695,441
LIABILITIES			
Insurance contract liabilities	49,928,680	41,116,431	50,839,475
Reinsurance contract liabilities	1,661,602	411,232	5,203,523
End of service benefits	185,712	193,277	185,711
Other payables	849,462	738,024	1,184,215
Dividend payable	1,239,620	1,033,017	0
Provision for taxation	598,091	608,282	598,091
Total liabilities	54,463,167	44,100,263	58,011,015
Total Equity and liabilities	76,641,344	65,690,068	81,706,456
Net Assets per share	0.215	0.209	0.229

Unaudited condensed interim statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the three-months period ended 31 March 2026		
	31 March 2026	31 March 2025
Insurance revenue	6,056,991	6,191,808
Insurance service expenses	(3,239,301)	(2,232,303)
Insurance service result before reinsurance contracts held	2,817,690	3,959,505
Net income or expense from reinsurance contracts held	(3,084,025)	(3,690,030)
Insurance service result	(266,335)	269,475
Finance expenses from insurance contract held	(430,146)	(373,474)
Finance income from reinsurance contract held	275,173	213,095
Net Insurance finance expenses	(154,973)	(160,379)
Investment income	502,332	574,460
Other income	120,226	120,607
Net investment and other income	622,558	695,067
Non attributable general and administrative expenses	(281,500)	(229,882)
Net profit before tax	(80,250)	574,281
Income tax	-	(84,658)
Net profit after tax for the period	(80,250)	489,623
Net Finance expense from insurance and reinsurance contracts	(234,775)	(155,320)
Changes in fair value of investments through other comprehensive income	37,381	77,175
Total comprehensive income for the period	(277,644)	411,478
Basic and diluted earnings per share	(0.0008)	0.005

SPOTLIGHT

SIHAM AL SAIDI

IN MANY households, especially small families with both parents working, children are surrounded by comfort, toys and digital devices, yet deprived of meaningful human interaction! This often accounts for delayed speech in kids, raising serious concerns about their long-term learning and development.

Speech is not simply a biological milestone, well it is nurtured through daily conversations, emotional exchanges, and responsive caregiving.

When these elements are missing, children may struggle to develop language skills at the expected pace. Increasingly, specialists are observing that children who spend long hours with caregivers who provide basic needs but limited verbal engagement are at higher risk of delayed speech.

Dr Samah Yusuf, special education specialist (Autism), explains: "Language develops through interaction, not isolation. When a child does not receive consistent verbal stimulation, such as storytelling, questioning, or simple conversation with older family members, the brain pathways responsible for language remain underdeveloped. This delay can later affect attention, comprehension and even social confidence."

DOMESTIC WORKERS

One of the underlying causes, she adds, is the demanding work schedules of parents. With both mother and father often working long hours, many children spend most of their day with domestic workers.

While these caregivers may provide safety and care, they may not always engage the child in rich, developmentally appropriate communication, especially if there are language barriers.



When a child does not receive consistent verbal stimulation, such as storytelling, questioning, or simple conversation with older family members, the brain pathways responsible for language remain underdeveloped.

DR SAMAH YUSUF
Special education specialist

HIDDEN CAUSE OF SPEECH DELAY



Speech is nurtured through daily conversations, emotional exchanges, and responsive caregiving

Early years are critical, and missed opportunities during this stage are difficult to fully compensate for later

In a fast paced world, the challenge for families is not just what to provide for their children, but to truly connect with them

Dr Hajar Ibrahim, a speech and language therapist, highlights the long-term risks saying, "A delay in speech is rarely just about talking. It can impact reading readiness, academic performance, and even emotional expression. Children who cannot express themselves clearly may become frustrated or withdrawn. Early years are critical, and missed opportunities during this stage are difficult to fully compensate for later."

Parents themselves are beginning to notice the consequences. Fatma al Hosni, a mother of a four-year old, shares her concern: "My son spends most of the day with our housemaid while I'm at work. I started noticing that he uses very few words and prefers pointing instead of speaking or grabbing my hand when they need something. I didn't realise how serious it was until his teacher mentioned it."

Another parent, Ahmed al Balushi shares his experience too: "We thought providing a comfortable life was enough. But now, my daughter struggles to form sentences, and we've had to seek therapy. I wish we had spent more time talking and engaging with her."

Experts emphasise that the solution is not to eliminate external caregiving, but to balance it with intentional parental involvement. Simple practices, such as daily storytelling, asking open-ended questions, limiting screen time and engaging in face-to-face conversation, can significantly enhance a child's language development.

The impact of lack of meaningful interactions is not always visible, but its effects can echo throughout a child's academic journey and emotional well-being. In a fast paced world, the challenge for families is not just what to provide for their children, but to truly connect with them.

SHORTTAKES



Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal, addressing the event.

LABOUR AWARENESS, INVESTMENT PROMO EVENT HELD

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Nepal in Muscat organised a Labour Awareness, Trade, Export, and Investment Promotion event marking the 2570th Buddha Jayanti and International Labour Day.

The programme brought together 78 participants, including representatives of the Nepali Social Club, members of expert groups, Nepali businesspersons, rescue team members, and wider community members. The event served as a platform for information sharing and interactive engagement on community-led initiatives to promote Nepal’s export potential, investment opportunities, labour awareness, and the significance of both Buddha Jayanti and International Labour Day.

Reaffirming the Embassy’s commitment to economic diplomacy, Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal to Oman, emphasised ongoing efforts to explore investment opportunities while safeguarding the welfare of Nepali workers in Oman. He also highlighted the universal teachings of Lord Buddha and their continued relevance in promoting peace and harmony.

Bishesh Kumar Sah, First Secretary, delivered a presentation on trade, export, and investment opportunities, emphasising the role of the community in advancing Nepal’s economic interests. He elaborated on practical avenues through which the community can actively contribute to promoting exports and encouraged investment initiatives.

The handbook ‘Shramik ko Saathi (Labour’s Friend)’ was also launched. The publication aims to provide guidance to Nepali workers, promoting safe and dignified employment in Oman.

Damodar Gnawali, Labour Attaché, delivered an informative presentation on labour awareness, covering workers’ rights and responsibilities under ILO guidelines, relevant provisions of local labour laws, and practical guidance for Nepali workers in Oman.

The Embassy also organised a Facebook Live session to address queries from Nepali workers in Oman and provide relevant information.

ROYAL HOSPITAL LAUNCHES ADVANCED THORACOSCOPY SERVICE FOR CHEST DISEASES

MUSCAT: The Royal Hospital has launched a medical thoracoscopy service as an advanced diagnostic and therapeutic procedure to enhance the management of respiratory diseases and improve precision in chest care.

Dr Yaqoub bin Salam al Hadhrami, Senior Consultant and Head of the Respiratory Diseases Unit at the Royal Hospital, said the service is being performed at a rate of two to four cases per week, all of which have been successful so far.



The procedure is an endoscopic alternative to traditional surgery.

He explained that the procedure is an endoscopic alternative to traditional surgery, allowing for shorter hospital stays of only a few hours, minimal anaesthesia, and a small incision of 2–3 cm, compared to conventional surgical methods that require longer recovery and general anaesthesia. The service is primarily used for diagnosing lung and pleural diseases of unknown origin and is especially beneficial for patients for whom surgery poses higher risks. — ONA

Insurance innovation urged as sector faces new risks

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, MAY 2

RECENT GLOBAL developments have underscored the growing importance of marine insurance and war-risk coverage, placing new pressures on the insurance sector.

Before the conflict, an average of 120 to 140 ships crossed the Strait of Hormuz daily. That number has now dropped sharply — by as much as 95 per cent — with current figures indicating just five vessels, highlighting the scale of disruption.

“This is one of the main challenges we are facing today as an insurance sector, and it is impacting economic activity,” said Maali bint Salim al Majarfi, Acting Director of the Issues and Financial Instruments Department at the Financial Services Authority (FSA), speaking at the Oman Insurance Summit and Awards 2026 organised by OER.

She noted that war-risk coverage, once priced at minimal levels, is now undergoing a significant shift. “This unexpected risk has changed the landscape. Things may never be the same, even decades from now, because we have seen how real these risks are,” she said.

The summit, held under the theme of enhancing insurance penetration, GDP contribution, and Omanisation, also explored opportunities and challenges in Takaful insurance and the role of digital transformation in shaping the sector under Oman Vision 2040.

A key concern highlighted was



The Oman Insurance Summit and Awards 2026 was held recently.

The summit also explored opportunities and challenges in Takaful insurance and the role of digital transformation in shaping the sector under Oman Vision 2040

Oman’s low insurance penetration rate, reflecting a gap across individuals and businesses.

“Insurance is not just a financial product — it is an economic enabler,” Al Majarfi said, explaining that higher penetration supports GDP growth, strengthens financial stability, ensures business continuity, and enhances the country’s attractiveness to investors.

Over the past three to four years, Oman’s insurance penetration has ranged between 1.2 and 1.4 per cent — below both GCC and global averages — indicating significant untapped potential.

However, several challenges persist, including limited public awareness, product relevance, price sensitivity, and issues of trust and perceived value.

“Our products do not always address the real needs of customers,” she noted, adding that cost remains a primary concern for many. Looking ahead, digital accessibility is expected to play a central role in driving growth.

“Improving access and convenience

through digital solutions can enhance awareness and build a stronger insurance culture,” she said.

Strengthening market capacity and resilience is also critical to reducing reliance on international insurers — an issue brought into sharp focus by recent global events.

“The role of government is evolving from regulator to market enabler,” Al Majarfi said, pointing to initiatives such as the Dhamani insurance platform, updated regulations, and efforts to develop actuarial expertise within Oman.

The sector is also witnessing the introduction of new insurance products tailored to emerging needs.

These include motor natural catastrophe coverage, third-party motor insurance enhancements, and proposed defect liability insurance, expected to be launched by early 2027.

Additional initiatives are under way in agriculture, livestock, artisanal fishing, and domestic worker protection, alongside specialised coverage for adventure tourism activities developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

Efforts are also ongoing with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, reflecting a broader push to align insurance solutions with evolving economic sectors.

“This is a shared responsibility,” she emphasised. “Regulation alone cannot drive change. The market must innovate, anticipate risks and develop proactive solutions rather than reacting after risks occur.”

Nizwa magazine issue examines power of conflict narratives, language and literature

MUSCAT: Nizwa magazine has released its 126th issue, featuring a wide range of articles covering literature, poetry, novels, studies, cinema, interviews and translated works.

The issue opens with an editorial by Editor-in-Chief Dr Aisha al Darmaki titled ‘The Power of Language and the Authority of Achievement,’ which explores the relationship between language, meaning and reality in the context of contemporary transformations.

A special section titled ‘Language and Genocide’ examines genocidal rhetoric used by Israeli occupation authorities during the war on Gaza, analysing language as a tool of domination, justification, and normalisation of violence. Contributors include Emad Abdel Latif, Youssef Rahaimi, Yasser Fathi, Saeed Bakkar, Mohammed al Mahfali, Ahmed Abdel Hamid, and Ibrahim Abdel Tawwab Hamza, who collectively explore linguistic manipulation, digital discourse, and media framing of the conflict.



The poetry section presents works by several Arab and international poets.

The issue also honours Prof Ahmed Shams El Din El Hajjaji, with essays by Tariq al Numan, Saeed al Masri, Giris Shukri, and Muhammad Abu Al Fadl Badran, reflecting on his contributions to theatre, popular literature, and fiction.

In the Studies section, Hamoud al Daghishi examines sacrifice and violence in religious history, while other research includes a translated study on neo-colonialism by Byron Caminero and comparative literary analysis by Mohamed Ait Laamim.

The Interviews section features

Tunisian translator Adam Fathi in a discussion on translation, alongside conversations with Chinese novelist Yu Hua and writer Marie NDiaye, translated into Arabic.

The Cinema section includes essays on visual aesthetics from Aristotle to modern theorists, as well as readings of contemporary film and television works, including Vince Gilligan’s Pluribus and Romanian director Cristian Mungiu’s cinema.

The poetry section presents works by several Arab and international poets, including translated selections from Belgian poet Philippe Lux and Spanish poet Marina Oyez Monreal.

The issue also features translated narrative texts by Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Waddle Chestnut, Patricia Highsmith, and Fengji Tsai, alongside original Arabic short stories and literary pieces.

Additional sections explore philosophical themes, translation, historical documents such as Sultan Said bin Taimur’s 1955 visit to Iraq, and reflections on Omani folk heritage. — ONA

THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN

Tender Advertisement

The Royal Guard of Oman, invites tender for the following:-

Tender Reference	Subject	Grade	Tender Document Fee (Non-refundable)	Submission Date
02/2026	CONVERSION OF EXISTING BULDING	III & above	SME R.O 10/- L.O R.O. 25/-	08 th June 2026

Specialized companies registered in the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority with the above-mentioned Grade and the Procurement and Contracts Directorate of the General Directorate of Finance, Royal Guard of Oman, can collect the tender document from the Tender Committee Secretariat, Royal Guard of Oman, Seeb during working hours from **Sunday 03rd to Thursday 07th May 2026.**

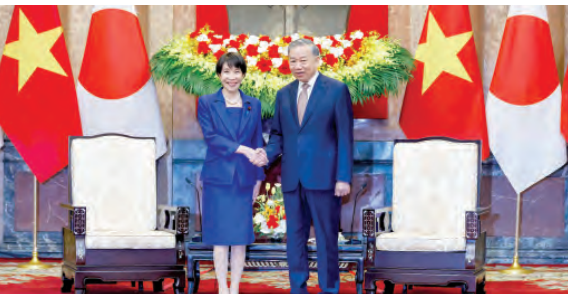
Wax-sealed Tenders addressed to the Chairman - Tender Committee should be submitted to RGO before 1200 hours on the submission date along with a Tender Bond the name of the Royal Guard of Oman equivalent to 1% (One Percent) of the value of the Tender from any registered Bank in the Sultanate of Oman, The tenderer shall not reveal his identity other than the tender title and the address mentioned below.

No Tender will be accepted after the submission date. The Royal Guard of Oman reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender without giving reasons.

Tender Committee
P.O Box 381, C.P.O
Postal Code 111

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Vietnamese President and General Secretary of the Communist Party To Lam (R) and Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi (L) shake hands at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi. — AFP

JAPAN PM VOWS TO KEEP ASIA ‘FREE AND OPEN’

HANOI: Japan’s prime minister vowed on Saturday to do more to ensure a “free and open Indo-Pacific”, using a speech in communist Vietnam to tout a regional strategy that has long rankled neighbouring China. “I am renewing my determination to fulfil Japan’s responsibilities and... to play an even more proactive role than ever before in building an international order based on freedom, openness, diversity, inclusiveness, and the rule of law,” Sanae Takaichi said in an address at a Hanoi university. In an era of “intensifying geopolitical competition, accelerating technological innovation”, the Japanese premier called for Asian countries to cultivate “resilience” and the ability to “determine their own future”.

In her address on Saturday, Takaichi said she was updating the diplomatic vision for a “challenging” new era. Without naming Beijing directly, she warned against “excessive dependence on a single country for critical goods”, saying this often results from “unduly low prices” and calling for a “level playing field”.

Takaichi met on Saturday with Prime Minister Le Minh Hung as well as top leader To Lam, the Communist Party boss who last month became president as well. They agreed to advance their high-level strategic partnership to a “new phase of development”, Hung said, and inked six agreements spanning technology, climate preparedness and information and communication. — AFP

TANKER HIJACKED OFF YEMEN COAST, DIVERTED TOWARDS SOMALIA

DUBAI: Unidentified attackers hijacked an oil tanker on Saturday off the coast of Yemen in the Gulf of Aden and directed it towards Somalia, the Yemeni coast guard said. According to the agency, the tanker EUREKA was seized off Yemen’s Shabwa province by a group who “boarded, took control of it, then steered it... in the direction of the Somali coast”. The coast guard, which is affiliated with Yemen’s internationally recognised government, vowed to investigate the attack.

“The location of the tanker has been determined, and work is under way to monitor it and take the necessary measures in an attempt to recover it and ensure the safety of its crew,” it said, without identifying the crew’s numbers or nationality. According to the website Marine Traffic, the EUREKA is a Togolese-flagged oil products tanker that was reported to have been in the UAE port of Fujairah in late March.

Piracy was rampant off the coast of Somalia in the 2000s, peaking in 2011 with hundreds of attacks, but was significantly reduced by international naval deployments and new tactics by commercial shipping. But in recent weeks attacks have increased again, according to a report by the European Union naval mission deployed off the shores of the troubled east African country.

— AFP

HALTING OPERATIONS

US Spirit Airlines cancels all flights



Low-cost US carrier Spirit Airlines said on Saturday that all of its flights have been cancelled as it started an “orderly wind-down of operations,” citing spiking fuel prices in recent weeks as a key factor. The troubled carrier announced it was ceasing operations after a potential White House bailout fell through. Spirit Airlines’ parent company, Spirit Aviation Holdings, said in an early Saturday press release that it has “started an orderly wind-down of operations, effective immediately.” — AFP

MASSIVE RALLIES

Türkiye releases arrested May 1 protesters



Turkish authorities have released more than 500 protesters arrested at May Day rallies in Istanbul, a lawyers’ association said. Police cracked down on Friday’s demonstrations, firing tear gas to break them up and arresting hundreds of people. All 576 people arrested were released by Saturday morning, including union official Basaran Aksu, the lawyers’ association CHD said. The association’s Istanbul branch had deployed members into the city’s streets to document arrests and aid those detained. — AFP

ONGOING FIGHTING

Drone strike kills five in Sudan capital



A paramilitary drone killed five civilians when it hit a vehicle in greater Khartoum, a rights group said, the second such attack in the Sudanese capital this week. Emergency Lawyers, a Sudanese legal advocacy group documenting abuses during the conflict, said an RSF drone struck a civilian vehicle on the Jammouiya Triangle road Saturday morning in southern Omdurman — just across the Nile from Khartoum proper — killing all those on board. — AFP

CHINA REJECTS US SANCTIONS ON REFINERIES OVER IRAN OIL LINKS

BEIJING: China will not comply with US sanctions against five firms targeted for purchasing Iranian oil, Beijing’s commerce ministry said on Saturday.

China is a key customer for Iranian oil, mainly through independent “teapot” refineries that rely on discounted crude from the Islamic republic.

The United States, seeking to choke off revenue to Tehran, has ramped up sanctions on such refineries.

The commerce ministry’s injunction, relating to sanctions

announced separately since last year, states that the US measures “shall not be recognised, implemented, or complied with”. The sanctions “improperly prohibit or restrict Chinese enterprises from conducting normal economic, trade and related activities with third countries... and violate international law and the basic norms governing international relations,” the ministry said in a statement.

“The Chinese government has consistently opposed unilateral

sanctions lacking UN authorisation and a basis in international law.”

The injunction applies to three companies in Shandong province — Shandong Jincheng Petrochemical Group, Shandong Shouguang Luqing Petrochemical and Shandong Shengxing Chemical — and two others based elsewhere in China, Hengli Petrochemical (Dalian) Refinery and Hebei Xinhai Chemical Group.

Washington imposed on Friday sanctions on yet another Chinese firm which it said had imported

“tens of millions of barrels” of Iranian crude oil, generating billions of dollars in revenue for Tehran.

The firm, Qingdao Haiye Oil Terminal Co., Ltd., was not mentioned in the commerce ministry’s injunction.

The latest sanctions come as Washington and Tehran have been locked in a diplomatic standoff, with no permanent resolution in sight for the conflict that erupted with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February. — AFP

Spain demands Israel release citizen from flotilla

SPANISH

FOREIGN Minister José Manuel Albares

on Saturday demanded that Israel release a Spanish national detained during the interception of the Gaza aid flotilla. “This is an unlawful detention in international waters outside the jurisdiction of the Israeli authorities,” he told Spanish broadcaster RAC1. When asked whether Saif Abukeshk’s transfer to Israel constituted kidnapping, Albares replied, “If this is carried out by authorities that have no legal jurisdiction whatsoever, then yes, definitely.”

Israel makes serious allegations against Spaniard and Brazilian Israel accuses Abukeshk, who has Palestinian roots, of having links to the extremist organisation Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli Foreign Ministry said he was a leading member of the Palestinian National Conference Abroad. The US authorities have said the group is “secretly controlled by Hamas.”

A further activist, Brazilian Thiago Ávila, is accused of “illegal activities.” Both have since been taken to Israel, where they will be handed over to the law enforcement authorities for questioning, the Foreign Ministry said in a post on X. Both are receiving visits from consular staff from their respective home countries.

Albares said the Spanish judiciary would have jurisdiction if Abukeshk were found guilty, but



Activists from the Global Sumud Flotilla supporters shout slogans outside the airport of Heraklion, on the island of Crete, Greece. — Reuters

This is an unlawful detention in international waters outside the jurisdiction of the Israeli. If this is carried out by authorities that have no legal jurisdiction whatsoever, then yes, definitely.

José Manuel Albares

added that he had no information establishing any link between Abukeshk and Hamas.

Earlier this week, the Israeli navy intercepted 21 ships from the Global Sumud Flotilla in international waters west of Crete and detained 175 people. Greece agreed to receive those detained by the Israeli navy and facilitate their return to their countries of origin.

According to consistent reports in the Greek media, all but the Spaniard and the Brazilian were taken to Crete on Friday.

Aid flotilla intends to continue journey to Gaza Strip Around 30 vessels from the Gaza-bound aid flotilla entered the port of Ierapetra in south-eastern Crete following

the Israeli military operation. Organisers said the flotilla was regrouping and would continue its course “to break the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip.” Data from an online tracker run by the organisers, as well as MarineTraffic, showed the boats were still in port on Saturday, likely due to strong winds.

The flotilla of more than 50 vessels had set sail from ports in France, Spain and Italy with the aim of breaking an Israeli blockade of Gaza and bringing supplies to the devastated Palestinian territory. They were intercepted by Israeli forces. Israel said it had removed around 175 activists from the flotilla, but organisers accused Israel of “kidnapping” 211 people. — AFP



LEBANON SAYS 13 KILLED IN ISRAELI STRIKES

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s health ministry said 13 people were killed in Israeli strikes in the south, including in a town where Israel’s army had issued an evacuation order despite a ceasefire. The strikes in Habboush killed eight people, including a child and two women, and wounded 21 others, the ministry said, raising an earlier toll. Other strikes in Zrariyeh killed four people, two of them women, and wounded four more, it said.

The ministry also reported a strike in Ain Baal near the coastal city of Tyre killed one person and wounded seven others. In Habboush, where the Israeli evacuation warning was issued, a photographer saw clouds of smoke rising after the raids. The state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported that Israeli warplanes “launched a series of heavy strikes... less than an hour after” the warning.

The NNA also reported Israeli strikes and artillery fire on other south Lebanon locations, including Tyre. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Firefighters arrive to the site of a fuel station which was hit by a Russian drone strike, in Kharkiv, Ukraine. — Reuters

Ukraine’s Zelensky pledges to strengthen air defences

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has pledged to strengthen air defences in the major cities of Odessa and Dnipro following heavy Russian aerial attacks. “For Dnipro, there will be additional radar systems, electronic jamming equipment and more personnel,” Zelensky said in a video address. He added that solutions were also being implemented for Odesa and that interception rates were already rising.

“But they must be higher,” he said, adding that Russia’s frequent and large-scale attacks were aimed at overwhelming Ukraine’s air defence systems. The southeastern industrial city of Dnipro has come under repeated missile and drone attacks in recent days. The wider area around the Black Sea port of Odessa is regularly targeted by Russian combat drones. Ukraine has been defending itself against a Russian attack for more than four years. Since then, the country’s outdated Soviet-era air defence systems have been increasingly replaced with modern Western equipment.

Meanwhile, a man and a woman were killed, and seven others were injured in a Russian drone attack on a minibus in the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson, Kherson military governor Oleksandr Prokudin reported on Saturday. Those injured in the early morning attack included six men and a woman who were taken to hospital, Prokudin posted on his Telegram channel. — dpa

SENIOR JUDGE SHOT IN BOLIVIA



A senior Bolivian judge was fatally shot by hitmen while riding in a taxi in the eastern city of Santa Cruz, police said. The shooting of Victor Hugo Claure, the most senior judge on Bolivia’s highest agro-environmental court, took place on Thursday night, and is under investigation. The United Nations in Bolivia condemned the killing and called for a “prompt and thorough investigation.” — AFP

EU SUSPENDS FUNDS FOR SERBIA OVER LAW REFORMS

BELGRADE: The European Union has frozen funds earmarked for Serbia under a special aid project for six Balkan countries over controversial judicial reforms, the bloc’s enlargement commissioner has said. The EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans provides six billion euros (\$7.06 billion) in funding for 2024-2027 to boost the economies

of these countries and accelerate EU integration of the region.

“For the time being, we have stopped all payments from the Growth Plan because it was backsliding in the judiciary,” EU commissioner Marta Kos said in Switzerland. “As long as this is not repaired, they will not be able to get European financial support,” she told an event at the

University of Fribourg. Her remarks came after Serbia’s parliament passed judicial reforms without consulting prosecutors, judges, the European Union or other expert bodies.

Critics say the amendments, passed in January, give court presidents greater powers over judges and remove safeguards guaranteeing prosecutors’ independence. — AFP

Nato seeks details as US to pull troops from Germany

NATO said on Saturday it was working with the United States to understand Washington’s decision to withdraw 5,000 troops from Germany as a rift in transatlantic ties deepens over the Middle East war. The Pentagon’s announcement of the troop withdrawal follows a spat between US President Donald Trump and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who said on Monday Iran was “humiliating” Washington at the negotiating table. Trump fired back by saying that Merz “doesn’t know what he’s talking about.” It also came as Trump announced that tariffs on cars and trucks from the European Union will increase to 25 per cent next week over accusations that the bloc did not comply with a trade deal signed last summer.



Combat aircrafts stand in front of a hangar at the American military’s Ramstein Air Base, Germany. — Reuters

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said on Friday the withdrawal of around 5,000 troops from Germany was expected “to be completed over the next six to twelve months.” “This decision follows a thorough review of the Department’s force posture in Europe and is in recognition of theatre requirements and conditions on the ground,” Parnell said in a statement.

There were 36,436 active-duty US troops in Nato ally Germany as of December 31, 2025, compared to 12,662 in Italy and 3,814 in Spain. German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said on Saturday the US troop withdrawal “from Europe and also from Germany was to be expected.” Nato said it was “working with the US to understand the details of their decision on force posture in Germany.” “This adjustment underscores the need for Europe to continue to invest more in defence and take on a greater share of the responsibility for our shared security,” Nato spokeswoman Allison Hart wrote on X.

Trump has made a number of threats to slash US troop numbers in Germany and other European allies during both his terms in office, saying he wants Europe to

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said the withdrawal of around 5,000 troops from Germany was expected to be completed over the next six to twelve months. This decision follows a thorough review of the Department’s force posture in Europe and is in recognition of theater requirements and conditions on the ground

take on greater responsibility for its defence rather than depending on Washington. He now appears determined to punish allies who have failed to back the Middle East war or contribute to a peacekeeping force in the crucial Strait of Hormuz waterway, which Tehran’s forces have effectively closed.

Trump also accused German automakers such as Mercedes-Benz and BMW of ripping off Americans, saying on Friday that Germany and “other European nations have not adhered to our trade deal.” Germany would likely be hit hard by a sharp vehicle tariff because it is responsible for a significant portion of EU auto exports. Such tariffs would impose “enormous costs on the Germany and European automobile industry,” the head of Germany’s VDA lobby group for the sector, Hildegard Mueller, said in a statement. She called for an “urgent” de-escalation and speedy negotiations on the issue.

Trump said on Thursday he might pull US troops from Italy and Spain due to their opposition to the war. “Italy has not been of any help to us and Spain has been horrible, absolutely horrible,” he told reporters in the Oval Office. “Yeah, probably, I probably will. Why shouldn’t I?” Trump said. German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said on Thursday during a visit to Morocco that Germany was “prepared” for a reduction in US troops and was “discussing it closely and in a spirit of trust in all Nato bodies.” However, Wadephul said large American bases in Germany are “not up for discussion at all” and cited the example of Ramstein Air Base, which he said has “an irreplaceable function for the United States and for us alike.

The EU said the deployment of US troops was in Washington’s interest, and that the US was “a vital partner in contributing to Europe’s security and defence.” — AFP

Charles to end Bermuda trip by launching UK space project

BERMUDA: Britain’s King Charles III will end his visit to Bermuda by officially launching the UK Space Agency’s (UKSA) Project Nova to help track space debris. Charles will visit the site of a new UKSA observatory on the island to hear about the initiative to oversee the installation of a global network of telescopes, across five sites, to help track old satellites, rocket stages, and other objects.

During his final day in Bermuda the king will also open the new Great Bay Coast Guard Station where he will hear about the Royal Bermuda Regiment’s Coast Guard’s critical work in protecting the island’s territorial waters and safeguarding its marine environment. He will view two new pieces of technology being used by the regiment- unmanned underwater vehicles and

unmanned aerial vehicles. Young people from the Junior Leader programme will discuss their involvement with the scheme and before leaving the King will award operational service medals to five members of the regiment for their commitment to the protection of the island.

On Friday evening the king attended a garden party and said to guests: “I am told to my amazement it is also the first time in Bermuda’s four-hundred-year history that the islands have received a reigning King. “I am terribly sorry it has taken so long!”

The event was staged at Government House, where the king has been staying during his three-day visit and which has been refurbished so recently he told guests that it still smells of fresh



Britain’s King Charles III delivers remarks during a garden party at the Government House in Hamilton, Bermuda. — AFP

paint. Raising a toast to Bermuda at the garden party, the king said: “I need hardly say that Bermuda, like all the Overseas Territories, is a most cherished and important member of the British family - with a friendship as solid as this so-called ‘Rock’.”

King Charles III spent a day in the British island territory of Bermuda after a high-stakes visit to the United States where he sought to heal strained ties between Washington and London. It was the first visit by a British king to Bermuda in its 400-year history, Charles said — a history that involved making the archipelago a maritime hub of Britain’s transatlantic slave trade, which the monarchy has been pressured to address.

The king toured a museum exhibit on the slave trade and

watched a dance with roots in the era. Charles was visiting the archipelago without Queen Camilla, who had accompanied him to the United States. Early in the day the British monarch greeted a line of schoolchildren, pausing to chat with them, on the steps of the whitewashed St Peter’s Church in St George’s, the Atlantic Ocean territory’s first English settlement.

Charles received a Royal Salute and the Royal Bermuda Regiment’s band played the national anthem before setting a more relaxed tone with Bob Marley and the Wailers’ song “Jamming.”

In Sandys Parish, the royal party was treated to a performance by Gombeys — dancers who maintain a folklore tradition with African, Caribbean and Native American influences. — AFP

Recognising emotional instability in relationships



DR HAMED AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

MISS A is a psychologist who is very passionate about her job. She was in her mid-thirties when a young man proposed to marry her. He had a stable job and came from a decent family, yet when they first met, she felt a little unease about him that she could not explain.

When she expressed her feelings to her friend, she was told that she is an overthinker and that she is letting her job interfere with her ability to form a healthy relationship. She was also reminded that, as a woman in her mid-thirties, her chances of getting married might gradually decline.

Miss A agreed to marry him, but the more they talked, the more uneasy she felt. He would text her constantly, expressing his love in intense and overwhelming ways. At first, it felt flattering, but soon, the tone shifted. If she did not respond quickly, his messages turned anxious, then accusatory. “Are you ignoring me?” “Did I do something wrong?” “You don’t. You don’t care about me the way I care about you.

Miss A began to notice a pattern. His emotions seemed to swing rapidly. One moment, he idealised her, describing

her as ‘perfect’ and ‘the only person who understands me.’ Next, he would become distant or irritable over minor misunderstandings. A delayed reply, a change in tone, or even her need for personal space could trigger intense reactions.

As a psychologist, she found herself trying to sense it. She wondered whether this was simply insecurity, perhaps shaped by past experiences, but another part of her felt that something deeper was at play.

Their conversations became emotional. When she tried to set boundaries, he experienced them as rejection. When she reassured him, the relief was brief, soon replaced by a new wave of doubt. She noticed herself choosing her words carefully, anticipating his reactions, and sometimes even avoiding honest communication to prevent conflict.

The relationship, though not yet formalised, was already shaping her behaviour.

At this point, Miss A faced a dilemma familiar to many professionals: when knowledge meets personal life. Was she “over-analysing,” as her friend suggested? Or was she recognising early warning signs?

Relationships with individuals who exhibit traits of emotional instability such as those with borderline personality patterns can be deeply complex

Relationships with individuals who exhibit traits of emotional instability, such as those with borderline personality patterns, can be deeply complex. They are often characterised by intense emotional connections, fear of abandonment, and fluctuating perceptions of others. The partner may be seen as all-good one day and disappointing the next. Love, in such contexts, can feel both powerful and precarious.

It is important to note that individuals with these traits are not ‘difficult’ by choice. Their emotional world is often shaped by deep-seated vulnerabilities and past experiences. They may love intensely, but also fear loss intensely. This combination can make relationships feel like an emotional rollercoaster. However, understanding does not mean ignoring one’s own emotional needs.

The question, then, is not whether the young man was ‘good’ or ‘bad.’ It is whether the relationship, as it stood, was sustainable and healthy for both of them.

Sometimes, the most important skill in relationships is not analysis, but awareness. Not the ability to diagnose, but the courage to acknowledge what we feel.

COWS OFFER BIOGAS SOLUTION TO MIDDLE EAST ENERGY CRUNCH

UZMI ATHAR

Across much of India, an energy crunch caused by the Iran war has prompted long queues for cooking gas cylinders. That’s not a problem for Gauri Devi.

On a stove with blue flames, she flips a chapati flatbread, burning biogas produced from cow dung - an alternative fuel helping ease pressure on supplies.

“It cooks everything,” the 25-year-old said in her courtyard kitchen in Nekpur, a village in Uttar Pradesh, about 90 kilometres from New Delhi. “If the pressure goes down, we let it rest for half an hour and it works again.”

India consumes more than 30 million tonnes of LPG annually, importing over half its needs. The government insists there is no shortage of cooking gas, but supply delays, panic buying and black marketeers have created long queues for cylinders.

However, since the 1980s, India has also promoted biogas as a low-cost rural energy source, subsidising more than five million ‘digester’ units that convert farm waste into methane for cooking, and nitrogen-rich slurry for fertiliser.

For Gauri, it requires mixing a couple of buckets of dung with water, then pouring the mixture into a car-sized underground tank topped with a storage balloon.

It provides a piped methane supply so regular that she only uses an LPG cylinder for emergencies or large gatherings.

The biogas works for everything - ‘vegetables, tea, lentils’, she said.

The residual slurry is later spread on fields as fertiliser. It has better nitrogen availability for plants compared with raw dung, farmers say.

“The manure is so good,” said farmer Pramod Singh, who installed a larger unit in 2025, enough for six people, fuelled by 30-45 kilogrammes of dung daily from four cows.

And he said the slurry fertiliser is particularly valuable at a time when global supplies of artificial fertilisers have been hit by trade disruptions due to the war.

“The real benefit is not just the gas - that is like a bonus,” local farmer leader Pritam Singh said. “The slurry is ‘black gold.’”

India has pushed large-scale biogas production to achieve the goal of carbon neutrality by 2070. The government last year required that biogas account for at least one per cent of liquid gas fuelling both vehicles and for domestic use - rising to five per cent by 2028.

Dozens of multi-million dollar production plants are now in the pipeline.

— AFP

The enduring value of family in Oman

IN THE UK, suicide rates have not risen simply because the population has grown. Over the past century, the population increased steadily while suicide rates rose and fell with social change.

From the late 1970s onwards, rates climbed even as national wealth grew. The same pattern appears in the United States. This tells you something important: economic growth on its own does not protect people. Social conditions matter more. One of the biggest changes in Western societies has been the move from extended families to nuclear families.

A nuclear family usually means parents and their children living alone. An extended family includes grandparents, adult children and close relatives living together or in regular daily contact. Extended families were once common in the UK. Today, smaller households, mobility for work and distance between relatives are the norm. That change has consequences.

Extended families offered constant emotional, practical and financial support. If someone was struggling, it was noticed. Help came quickly. Older men often kept a clear role within the family, even after retirement.

As extended families declined, isolation increased. Many men lost their daily purpose and support at the same time.

Research repeatedly shows that isolation raises suicide risk. Living alone, divorce, widowhood and weak contact with relatives are all linked to higher suicide rates, especially among middle-aged and older men. These situations are now common in nuclear-family societies. While this does not prove a direct cause, the pattern is hard to ignore.

When you look beyond the West, the contrast is clear. In Oman, extended family life is still normal.



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

Older people are rarely left alone. Financial strain is shared. Changes in mood or behaviour are more likely to be noticed early. While this does not mean life is free of hardship, it does mean fewer people face that hardship alone.

Strong family cohesion reduces the kind of isolation that often comes before suicide. Wealth has not replaced this support in the UK or the US.

Rising GDP has sometimes gone hand in hand with insecure work, frequent relocation and weaker community ties. Many people are expected to cope privately, even during long periods of distress. Mental illness sits at the centre of this problem.

Many people who die by suicide suffer from clinical depression, an illness linked to a chemical imbalance in the brain.

My own life reflects this. Depression did not lift through willpower or improved circumstances. Medication helped. And today, living in Oman, supported by my Omani wife’s extended family, I am happy and stable.

Suicide is rarely the result of one event. Relationship breakdown, debt, illness, retirement and substance misuse often build up slowly. Without extended family support, these pressures can stay hidden. The shift from extended to nuclear families does not explain everything, but it does increase vulnerability. The value of family support in Oman is something I have come to understand not just intellectually, but personally.

When I was younger and living in the UK, suicidal thoughts came more than once. What changed my life was treatment. Newer antidepressants, particularly SSRIs, brought balance back and may well have saved my life. That experience shapes how I see suicide, not only as a medical condition but as something deeply shaped by how we live together.

Depression is treatable. If you feel persistently low for more than two weeks, seek medical help and reach out to your family.

Depression is not a sign of weakness any more than any other serious illness. Connection, support and treatment save lives.

Predatory sharks too tough for Toothless Tigers!



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

REFLECTION UPON global events and personalities is debilitating, isn't it? It's alarming, depressing, and just so difficult to get your head around, isn't it?

The current Middle Eastern reality, the anxiety for the nations on the doorstep of the Iranian-American conflict, including Oman, is so surreal, because they are all the 'meat in someone else's sandwich,' with so little influence upon what happens next, in their own 'backyard,' sleeping uneasily, while the architect of it all, President Trump, sleeps like a baby, safe as houses, snug as a bug, half a world, 10,600 km away...

It is political, social and philosophical madness, but maybe demonstrates how irrelevant the United Nations has become? Although founded with the objective of world peace and giving itself a charter that would enable third party peacekeeping to reduce conflict, it hasn't covered itself in glory, and is usually seen as a 'toothless tiger,' certainly by this cynical generation.

Opinion about the UN has always been diverse, with Iraq's Mohammed Saeed Al Sahaf during the Iraqi conflict, ranting that

the UN sought only to prostrate itself before America, while Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former president of Iran (2005-13), blames the UN for contributing to the issue of Palestinian rights in Gaza not being resolved.

Surprisingly, a former US ambassador to the UN (1999-2001), Richard Holbrooke, from a different perspective, supports reform, feeling that it is "indispensable, but deeply flawed," due to its reliance on America.

The UN, however, emasculated itself within Article 27 (3) of its original charter, which enables any one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council's ten nations, being China, France, Russia, the USA and the UK, to veto resolutions being sought demanding action against miscreants.

In doing so, 'friendly' nations can, and do, veto sanctions if they have an overriding self-interest. Also, incredibly, those same paragons of security can veto action to prevent punitive action against themselves, as Russia did in 2022, when they were attacking Ukraine.

The UK sought, through First Secretary Phillip Reed, speaking to the UN on April 26, 2023, for them to use the veto "responsibly, to avoid and resolve conflict."

The UN must genuinely desire change; its purpose becomes meaningless, leaving the hopes of billions hanging by a thread, subject in perpetuity to the whims of tyrants and despots

He also pointed to China and Russia vetoing North Korea's May 22, 2022, launch of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and on July 22, 2022, when Russia again flexed its veto, this time to deny humanitarian aid to four million starving Syrians, in demanding responsibility and accountability from the Security Council. Nepotism, however, in international politics, is a card played cynically by the 'sharks' of the 'top table.'

Otherwise, Emperor Haile Selassie, who led Ethiopia's emergence until overthrown in 1974, exhorted the UN for expressing "the noblest ambitions of man," while Kofi Annan, its secretary-general from 1997 to 2006, said that mankind, needing "a common destiny," was the reason for the UN. Maybe the current leader of the UN, Antonio Guterres, has the right attitude, agreeing that the world faces conflict, inequality and intolerance, says, "we have the tools, and the wealth... all we need is the will."

And that is where I find myself.

The United Nations must genuinely desire change; its purpose becomes meaningless, leaving the hopes of billions hanging by a thread, subject in perpetuity to the whims of tyrants and despots.

SUDAN’S CRISIS WORSENS AMID CONFLICT



SADIQ MOHAMMED SAID AL LAWATI

The writer is a Retd PDO Training Manager

Three years after the outbreak of war, Sudan is facing the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with 34 million people in urgent need of assistance, including millions lacking basic healthcare.

The situation is further compounded by the fact that over 4 million people are suffering from acute malnutrition, while 37 per cent of the country's

health facilities are non-functional.

Diseases and epidemics, such as malaria, measles and cholera, are spreading like wildfire amidst the collapse of services.

Hospitals have not been spared from attacks, with 217 verified armed assaults on health facilities, resulting in thousands of deaths from both disease and direct attacks.

Families are forced to undertake long and perilous journeys in search of a glimmer of hope for treatment.

Who is responsible for this tragic situation? The answer is clear and requires no further explanation: the responsibility lies with three parties: first and second, the ruling general and the opposition general. Both seek to control Sudan and monopolise its resources.

It is not a civil war, as some claim, but rather a 'war of greed' par excellence. Thirdly, there are the external powers that are fuelling the flames and supplying the warring parties with money and weapons instead of seeking peace.

Where is the role of the Arab League? Has it reached a point of weakness that prevents it from resolving a conflict between two generals? And why do we see a complete absence of effective Arab medication to end this devastating war?

This conflict is not based on sectarian grounds, as both generals represent the same sect.

So why all this indifference towards the blood and resources of Muslims? Perhaps one of the readers has an answer to what we do not know.



Displaced Sudanese students at an elementary school run by the Sudanese Coalition for Education in partnership with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef), south of Port Sudan. — AFP

As Iranians face war, there’s still solace in a cafe

THREE WEEKS into a fragile ceasefire with the US, Iranians are seeking to reclaim fragments of normal life. For many eager to connect with one another, cafes have emerged as the focal point of social gatherings in Tehran and many other Iranian cities.

Men and women, young and old, pack the coffee shops that dot the sprawling capital. Friends, families and colleagues crowd tables and bar stools and spill onto the sidewalks. They gather at all hours of the day and late into the night.

They sip espressos, cappuccinos and Persian tea infused with cardamom. Sometimes they share a piece of cake. These are tough economic times and many people have been laid off. Many say they are running through their savings as they struggle with a collapsing currency and rampant inflation.

But a cup of coffee is still affordable and cafes provide escape, if only for a few fleeting hours, said a dozen Iranians who frequent them. Cafes allow Iranians a place to collectively process the five weeks of war with the US and Israel and the wreckage in its wake.

"Cafes are the place I feel connected to society," said Nassim, a 40-year-old writer, in an interview over the telephone from Tehran. "Everyone is trying to get through the day and not think too far ahead," she added.

Nassim said she went to cafes in central Tehran at least three times a week to meet with friends. She lives at home with her parents, like many adult Iranians who can't afford to live on their own, and seeing friends at cafes, she said, gives a sense of independence.

As everyone interviewed for this article, Nassim asked that her surname not be published out of fear of retribution for talking to foreign media.

Nassim said the conversations she was having and overhearing were almost all about the war. "You hear people talking about not having hope, and about struggling financially because they have lost their jobs."

Iranians don't know if the US and Israeli air strikes are over for good or if more are on the horizon. They



Patrons outside one of the many cafes of Tehran, where windows were taped up as a precaution against airstrike pressure waves causing shattered glass.



FARNAZ FASSIHI

The writer is an Iranian-American journalist who has worked for NYT

Cafes allow Iranians a place to collectively process the five weeks of war with the US and Israel and the wreckage in its wake

don't know whether the ceasefire will lead to a permanent peace. It's also unclear whether the country's Revolutionary Guard leaders can reach a deal with the United States or whether sanctions and, now, a sea blockade will cause even more economic hardship.

The government has restricted Internet access since the start of the war, and for the many Iranians who used to pass the time scrolling through social media, that diversion has been disrupted as well.

Mehran, a 37-year-old businessman, said he met his friends at a cafe every night after dinner with his wife and son. "Going to the cafe every night has become my coping mechanism. It's the place I can let loose from all the pressures," Mehran said in a telephone interview.

Options for casual gatherings are limited. And hosting at home has become too pricey as a culture that expects maximum hospitality confronts inflation hovering at 60 per cent.

So cafes have become all the rage. In leafy upscale neighbourhoods in northern Tehran, coffee is served amid colourful modern sculptures and art pieces hanging on the walls. In central Tehran, small cafes line the streets with stools and tables on the sidewalks. In downtown, tables are set in the gardens of old historical homes under fruit trees.

Cafe culture's popularity

transcends political, economic and social demographics. Hassan, 28, is a loyal supporter of the Islamic Republic government. He has attended rallies in support of the war, waving flags and chanting slogans. But almost always, before and after the rallies, he and his friends end up in a cafe.

"I go to the cafes all the time. After work, you want to meet friends and drink something and chat," said Hassan in an interview. "Where else are we going to go? Cafes are the most popular place right now." He said sometimes they played backgammon and chess at cafes while other people played cards.

The tradition of socialising in coffeehouses in Iran dates back to the 16th century, when qhaves-khaneh or 'coffeehouse,' provided a resting place for pilgrims returning from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, or tradesmen travelling the Silk Road. Coffeehouses in ancient cities, like Isfahan, Tabriz and Shiraz, also served as intellectual and social gathering places for mostly men. Often, a storyteller recited fables from the Shahnameh, the Book of Kings, with dramatic theatrical performances to entertain audiences sipping rich dark coffee.

These days, the storytellers are the people themselves, sharing their woes, hopes and anxieties with one another.

— The New York Times

SPORTS

THIRDEDITION



AGNI - Cricket4Her Outdoor Champions 2025.

OMAN CRICKET CROWNS CRICKET4HER 2025 CHAMPIONS

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket recently concluded the Cricket4Her Indoor & Outdoor Cup 2025, marking the third successful year of its development initiative aimed at developing and promoting women’s cricket across the Sultanate of Oman.

The programme continues to build a strong foundation for the women’s game by introducing participants to the sport through engaging softball formats, while creating clear pathways toward competitive hardball cricket.

This year’s edition witnessed over 300 participants competing across both indoor and outdoor tournaments, reflecting a rise in interest and participation. The initiative has not only strengthened the existing talent pool but also led to the emergence of several new community teams, further expanding the reach of women’s cricket in Oman.

CRICKET4HER OUTDOOR CUP 2025
The Cricket4Her Outdoor Cup 2025 showcased competitive and spirited performances from all participating teams. AGNI emerged as champions after a dominant campaign, while Women’s Cricket Sohar (WCS) finished as worthy runners-up. The semifinal stage featured four strong teams such as Women’s Cricket Sohar vs Oman Cricket Academy Blue and ISC Manglorean Konkani Wing vs AGNI.

CRICKET4HER INDOOR CUP 2025
In the indoor competition, Kool Knight Riders claimed the championship title with a series of impressive performances, while AGNI once again showcased their consistency by finishing as runners-up.

The indoor format continued to play a crucial role in introducing new participants to cricket in an accessible and comfortable environment, encouraging skill development and confidence among players. The Outdoor tournament highlighted the growing standard of women’s cricket, with players demonstrating improved skills and teamwork along with comradery amongst the opponents.

The tournaments concluded with a closing ceremony graced by Paul Sheridan, Vice-Chairman of Oman Cricket and Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer of Oman Cricket, underscoring Oman Cricket’s commitment to the growth and sustainability of women’s cricket.

Speaking on the continued success of the initiative, Duleep Mendis said: “The Cricket4Her initiative has reaped rewards for Oman Cricket in many ways than one. The increase in the number of participants year on year is very encouraging. We are also delighted to see the formation of new community teams, which has maximised participation and broaden the playing base.”

He further added: “Oman Cricket supports and encourages every participant to progress through this initiative with the aim of transitioning into the hardball format, excelling further, and ultimately representing Oman at the national level.”



Kool Knight Riders emerged as Cricket4Her Indoor Champions 2025.

Nizwa on top as Seeb move to 2nd in Centres League

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 2

NIZWA CONTINUED their strong run in the Athletes’ Development Centres Basketball League after pulling off a spirited comeback win over Al Amerat 50-40, while Seeb secured a solid 66-54 victory against Salalah at the sub-hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Muscat.

The latest results kept Nizwa at the top of the standings with six points, while Seeb moved into second place with five points. Al Amerat reached four points, while Salalah remained on three points.

In the opening match, Nizwa produced one of the strongest second-half responses of the competition to overcome Al Amerat. The match began in favour of Al Amerat, who looked sharper in transition and more composed in finishing their attacks. They ended the first quarter ahead 10-6 before stretching their lead in the second period, scoring 16 points against Nizwa’s nine to take a 26-15 advantage into half-time.

Nizwa, however, returned with greater defensive discipline after the break. Their zone defence reduced Al Amerat’s scoring options and allowed them to close the gap gradually. Nizwa scored 13 points in the third quarter while limiting Al Amerat to only five, although Al Amerat still led 37-28 at the end of the period.

The final quarter changed the complexion of the game completely. Nizwa increased their intensity at both ends of the court, forced mistakes and converted their chances with confidence. They scored 22 points in the last quarter while holding Al Amerat to nine, completing the turnaround and sealing a valuable 50-40 win.

Raid al Busaidy led Nizwa’s scoring with 24 points, while Hamza al Sabri added 18 and Ammar Ambosaidi contributed six. For Al Amerat, Abdulrahman Shamis scored 10 points, while Mulham al Owaisi and Nawar al Bahlawi added six points each.

SEEB SECURE WIN
In the second match, Seeb delivered a composed performance to defeat Salalah 66-54. Seeb controlled most of the contest, particularly during the first half, where their defensive organisation and accurate



Nizwa and Al Amerat players in action at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. — Ammar al Musafir

shooting helped them build a decisive lead. Seeb ended the first quarter ahead 16-11 before producing their best spell in the second quarter, scoring 21 points and restricting Salalah to only five. That strong period gave Seeb a 37-16 half-time lead and placed them firmly in control.

Salalah improved after the break, with Fahad Majid leading their scoring effort. They won the third quarter offensively, scoring 18 points to Seeb’s 12, but Seeb remained ahead 49-34 heading into the

final period. Salalah continued to push in the last quarter and added 20 points, but Seeb’s earlier advantage proved enough to secure the win.

Al Farooq al Hasani was Seeb’s top scorer with 19 points, followed by Ahmed al Maskari with 16 and Saif al Mughairi with 14, while Sam al Balushi added seven. For Salalah, Fahad Majid produced an impressive individual display with 30 points, while Mohammed al Ghafri scored nine and Salim al Dhahab added eight.

Rising stars impress in Junior Tennis Championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 2

The Junior Tennis Championship 2026 continued at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex courts in Bausher, with young players producing strong contests across several age groups as they competed for results and local ranking points.

Organised by the Oman Tennis Association, the championship runs until May 6 and forms part of the association’s domestic programme to give junior players greater match exposure, expand the base of the game and support future national team selection.

The second day featured matches in the Under-10 and Under-9 boys categories. In the Under-10 event, Hood al Hashmi defeated Fayadh al Hilali 6-0, Saeed beat Savannah 6-2, and Omar recorded a 6-0 win over Savannah. In the Under-9 boys competition, Ali beat Muhammad 6-0, while Lakshya



The championship, organised by the Oman Tennis Association, runs until May 6. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

defeated Muhammad 6-3 and later overcame Saeed 6-2. Julian beat Ahmed 6-4, while Fayadh edged Jacoppo 6-4 in one of the closer matches.

The third day saw the entry of more age groups, including Under-12 boys and girls and Under-14 boys. In Under-12 boys, Hatim al Rahbi defeated

Esposito Alexander 9-8, Omar al Shaibani beat Vad Mistry 9-1 and Kabir Chopra overcame Rudraansh 9-5. Ali al Riyami continued his good form in Under-9 boys with a 7-5 win over Saeed al Marjibi.

GIRLS CATEGORY
The girls’ Under-12 category also produced strong performances, with Salima Sadykova claiming more than one win, while Jocelyan Belford, Sarah al Maskari and Hiti Mistry also registered victories. In Under-14 boys, Abdulrahman defeated Rayaana Tyagi 9-1, Richard beat Munther al Amri 9-6 and Vihaan overcame Emad 9-2.

Friday’s matches brought further intensity in the Under-12 and Under-14 categories, alongside mini tennis action for the Under-8 group. In Under-12 boys, Aadhya Bhat defeated Hatim al Rahbi 9-3, Rayaana Tyagi beat Chris Ji 9-5, and Adhiraj Singh overcame Kabir Chopra 9-2.

In Under-12 girls, Sarah

defeated Yara al Yafai 9-0, while Aaminah Khazadah beat Yara 9-2. In Under-14 girls, Talya al Busaidy defeated Jigisha Deori 9-4 and later beat Serena Varghese by the same score, while Hiti Mistry overcame Serena 9-1. In the Under-14 boys semifinals, Abdulrahman defeated Vihaan 9-2, while Richard beat Arush Pandey 9-4.

Ping Ji, father of player Chris Ji, praised the tournament’s level and organisation, saying the event gave his son an important opportunity to test his progress against familiar and new opponents. He noted that the Under-10 matches featured strong rallies, consistent serves and tactical play, reflecting the improving standard of junior tennis.

The championship continues under the technical follow-up of the national team coaching staff and the Oman Tennis Association, with player development monitored through the local ranking points system.

TENNIS DUO YOUNIS-MUNEER

Their move to padel marked a significant shift, driven by passion and the rising popularity of the sport in the region. For Younis al Rawahi, the transition came unexpectedly during a visit to Bahrain, where padel was gaining strong momentum. “It was purely by chance. I took part in a major tournament there with a friend from Kuwait, and we had managed to finish second. That result created a strong passion in me to continue in padel,” he said. Younis enjoyed a distinguished tennis career, highlighted by reaching the finals of the Davis Cup in the Asia/Oceania zone four times, winning the title once in Muscat in 2018. He also claimed several medals at Gulf and West Asian levels and was ranked among the top players in Oman across different age categories. In padel, Younis quickly established himself as a competitive player, winning multiple titles including the Wilo Championship in Saudi Arabia and topping the Oman ranking tournaments. Among his key achievements was winning the Al Wali Open Padel Championship, which featured players ranked among the world’s top 60, in addition to strong performances in the Saudi Padel League.

OMANI BROTHERS TASTE SUCCESS IN PADEL

Meanwhile, Muneer al Rawahi followed a similar path into padel after being introduced to the sport by friends. “The game was growing fast, with frequent tournaments and strong competition. That motivated me to continue and develop my level,” he clarified.

Muneer also built an impressive tennis resume, including reaching the Davis Cup finals once and winning Gulf titles across various age groups, in addition to securing the Oman Open title and club championships. His transition to padel has been equally successful, as he had claimed titles in Qatar and Oman alongside his brother, including the Mohammed Al Barwani Gulf Padel Championship.

Both players emphasised that daily training and consistent participation in tournaments are key to their continued progress.

However, they highlighted several challenges facing padel in Oman, particularly the absence of official clubs and a structured national league. “The private sector is doing a great job, but we need more tournaments and a stronger system to increase competition and develop players,” the Omani pair noted.

Looking ahead, the Al Rawahi brothers are planning further international presence in the top padel events including potential overseas training camps, as they will continue to represent Oman through the World Padel Academy (WPA Oman). Despite some delays in regional tournaments especially in the Gulf and West Asian region due to the current security situation, their focus will remain on building form and achieving new milestones in the sport.

EMBRACE NEW CHAPTER IN PADEL

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 2

The Al Rawahi brothers were among Oman’s top tennis players for many years in various regional and international competitions and achieving many remarkable results particularly in team and age-group events. Their move to padel marked a significant shift, driven by passion and the rising popularity of the sport in the region.



Younis al Rawahi and Muneer al Rawahi with the title after winning a tournament.

SPORTS

PARAICON



Former racing driver and paracyclist, Italian Alex Zanardi takes part in the 23rd Marathon of Rome on April 2, 2017. — AFP

FORMER F1 DRIVER
TURNED PARALYMPIC
STAR ZANARDI DIES

ROME: Alex Zanardi, the Italian Formula One driver who became a Paralympic champion after losing both legs in an accident, has died aged 59, his family announced Saturday.

Zanardi was one of his country’s most loved and respected sportsmen, credited with helping transform the perception of disability in Italy.

In a statement issued through the charity he founded, Obiettivo3, his family said he died “suddenly” on Friday evening, without giving any further details. But they said he died “peacefully, surrounded by the love of his family and friends”.

Zanardi had both his legs amputated in a motor racing accident in 2001, but went on to become a Paralympic champion with his handbike, wining four gold medals.

He had been out of the public eye since a second horror crash in June 2020, when his handbike crashed into an oncoming truck during a race in Tuscany. Zanardi, who was married with a son, suffered serious head injuries and only returned home 18 months later.

“Alex was a pioneer, icon and legend of the Paralympic Movement,” a spokesman for the International Paralympic Committee said.

“His performances were truly out of this world, engaged new fans to the Games, and showed the world that anything is possible.

“The iconic picture of him raising his handcyle above his head in victory at London 2012 will go down in history as one of the great sporting images. “He will be remembered forever.”

Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff said that what Zanardi achieved after his accident was even more impressive than his not insignificant skills behind the wheel. “Adversity can be overcome with humility, humour and optimism,” he said.

“In motor racing, we talk a lot about courage. Every now and then you meet someone who truly defines what that means. Alex Zanardi was that person.”

Zanardi raced for Jordan, Minardi and Lotus in F1 in the early 1990s before switching to the CART championship in the United States where he was series champion in 1997 and 1998.

He returned to F1 with Williams in 1999 before heading back to CART. But then came the horrific accident in 2001 at the Lausitzring track in Germany. His car stalled in the middle of the track after a spin and was struck by another car at a speed of over 300 km/h (186 mph).

The impact tore off his two legs and Zanardi lost a lot of blood, with a chaplain giving him the last rites. His heart stopped beating several times and he underwent 15 operations in a Berlin hospital.

“When I woke up, I didn’t think about my legs. I thought about the half of me that remained,” Zanardi recalled. — AFP



Italy’s Jannik Sinner celebrates beating France’s Arthur Fils during their 2026 ATP Tour Madrid Open semifinal at the Caja Magica in Madrid. — AFP



Germany’s Alexander Zverev celebrates beating Belgium’s Alexander Blockx during their 2026 ATP Tour Madrid Open semifinal in Madrid. — AFP

Top seeds Sinner, Zverev reach Madrid Open final

WORLD

NUMBER ONE Jannik Sinner downed Arthur Fils 6-2, 6-4 on Friday to reach the Madrid Open final, where he will face Alexander Zverev.

The second seed dispatched promising Belgian Alexander Blockx 6-2, 7-5 later on.

Sinner won his 22nd straight match to book a place in Sunday’s final, where he will aim to win a record fifth consecutive Masters 1000 title.

With his chief rival Carlos Alcaraz out injured, Sinner is firm favourite to triumph at the Caja Magica and add to recent titles at Indian Wells, Miami and Monte Carlo.

“I played at a very high level, but I focus on always raising my level a little,” Sinner told Movistar.

“Especially when the tournament gets serious... You have to raise your level if you want to keep going.”

The Italian admitted he was feeling a little tired after playing so many matches of late.

“Obviously there’s a bit of fatigue,” said Sinner.

“Mentally I feel good but there is some physical tiredness. My body isn’t completely fresh but that’s normal and I think it’s a very positive thing for me because it means I’m playing a lot of matches.

“Of course, on Sunday we’ll try to do even better but whatever happens, I’ve reached another final in a very important

tournament,” the Italian added.

Beating Sinner right now seems a near-impossible feat and the four-time Grand Slam winner started superbly against Barcelona Open winner Fils, who has impressed since returning from injury in February. The Italian broke in the third game when Fils went long to lead 2-1.

Sinner broke again in the fifth game with Fils, ranked 25th in the world, unable to cope with his sheer power.

The Frenchman has not yet reached a Masters 1000 final and with Sinner in sumptuous form it quickly became clear he would have to wait a little longer.

Sinner wrapped up the first set on his serve after Fils found some fighting spirit to prevent a third break.

The second set was far closer, with Fils rising in confidence and belief.

The 21-year-old saved two break points for a 3-2 lead, and put pressure on Sinner’s next serve, although the Italian produced two aces to hold.

Sinner broke with a down-the-line backhand winner to end an excellent rally for a 5-4 lead and served it out to triumph.

BLOCKX RESISTANCE

World number three Zverev, in strong form, claimed the first set against Blockx comfortably but struggled to break the Belgian in the second, before eventually finding a way through.

“I’m very happy of course to be in a final,” said Zverev, who lifted the trophy in Madrid in 2018 and 2021.

“There were a lot of tough matches, a lot of tough battles... and I’m looking forward to playing Jannik again.

“Tennis is very very easy for him right now, the way he is playing. Maybe on Sunday I will make it a bit more difficult for him.

“He’s the best player in the world for sure and I’m just trying to give him a tough battle.” The 29-year-old broke in the first and fifth games to surge into a 5-1 lead against his unseeded opponent.

Underdog Blockx, ranked 69th in the world, resisted strong pressure on his next service game, saving three set points to hold.

However the dominant Zverev made no mistake with his fourth chance to wrap up the fourth stanza, laying down an ace.

Blockx survived two break points in the first game of the second set and another in the third as Zverev worked him hard.

The Belgian, who defeated Casper Ruud in the quarterfinals, put up a brave display as he saved two more break points in each of the seventh and ninth games.

Eventually Zverev took his eighth break point of the second set to nose 6-5 ahead, with a fortuitous net cord that broke Blockx’s resistance. The German, who has suffered a string of semifinal defeats this season, made it to his first final with a powerful overhead winner. — AFP

Al Darmaki wins singles title; Al Mashani, Abdullatif claim doubles

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 2

The Omani Players Badminton Championship concluded at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher after two days of competition, held on April 30 and May 1, with strong contests in both the men’s singles and doubles events.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Abdulrahim al Daroushi, Chairman of the Oman Racket Sports Committee, in the presence of badminton officials and followers of the game in the Sultanate of Oman.

The men’s doubles competition was played in a group-stage

format, giving pairs the opportunity to contest several matches before the final standings were decided. The singles event, meanwhile, followed a knockout system, adding greater intensity to each round as players competed for a place on the podium.

In the men’s doubles final, Ali al Maashani and Salah Abdullatif secured the title after a hard-fought 2-1 victory, underlining their consistency and coordination throughout the competition. Marwan al Ajili and Mohammed Moslem finished second after a strong run to the final. The third-place honours in the doubles category were shared by two pairs: Mohammed al Muqrashi and



Winners and officials during the closing ceremony of the Omani Players Badminton Championship at the SQSC in Bausher.

Abdulaziz al Hinai, alongside Sultan al Shaibani and Yaarub al Shaibani, who both delivered solid performances during the tournament.

Following his men’s doubles

title victory, Salah Abdullatif expressed his delight with the achievement, praising the strong competitive atmosphere and the high level of organisation throughout the championship.

GOOD MIX OF PLAYERS

He said the tournament brought together a good mix of experienced players, young talents and members of Oman’s junior national teams, which added to the technical value of the event. “It was a strong and competitive championship, with fair contests between all participating teams. The presence of players from different age groups, including junior national team players, gave the event a special character”, Salah said.

He added that the title was the result of focused work and strong support from Taqah Club, which he represented during the tournament.

“The level of the participating

players was high, and that always pushes every player to give more. We faced strong opponents on our way to the final, but we managed to maintain our focus and win the title. I am pleased with this achievement, and I hope such tournaments will continue to support the wider development and spread of badminton in Oman,” he added.

In the men’s singles category, Khalil al Darmaki was crowned champion after winning the final 2-0 by walkover. Sultan al Shaibani finished runner-up, adding a singles silver medal to his doubles podium finish.

The third-place positions in the singles event went to Nasser al Jabri and Salem al Maqbali.

BUSINESS

Merger forms marine logistics firm

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 2

IN a significant development for Oman's maritime and logistics sector, Omani firms O Bunkering and Marafi Services have announced the completion of their merger, leading to the establishment of a unified national entity under the name O Bunkering.

This move represents a qualitative shift in the sector's structure and enhances its ability to achieve higher levels of operational efficiency and service integration.

The merger, formalised on Omani Logistics Day on April 30, 2026, aims to boost competitiveness and build a national entity capable of competing in global markets.

It comes in response to the rapidly evolving requirements of maritime supply chains, focusing on improving operational efficiency, unifying capabilities and expanding the range of services offered. This will support the sustainability of the maritime sector and strengthen its contribution to the national economy.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, affirmed that the

The merger comes in response to the rapidly evolving requirements of maritime supply chains, focusing on improving operational efficiency, unifying capabilities and expanding the range of services offered. This will support the sustainability of the maritime sector and strengthen its contribution to the national economy.



The merger combines O Bunkering's marine bunkering and supply chain capabilities with Marafi's port infrastructure and service logistics services.

merger represents a qualitative leap in the institutional maturity of Omani companies operating in the logistics sector.

He said it contributes to the unification of assets, resources, capabilities and expertise, enabling the new company to evolve into a large commercial entity with enhanced operational efficiency, advanced service levels and increased capacity – thereby strengthening

its competitiveness at both local and regional levels.

Ali bin Amer al Shaibani, CEO of O Bunkering, said the merger aligns with the government's aspirations and reflects a well-considered executive step based on sector needs.

He noted that it aims to build an integrated national system in the ship bunkering segment, enhancing competitiveness and sustainability in a sector that is a vital artery of the

maritime logistics system. Suleiman bin Ali al Hadrami, CEO of Marafi Services, said the merger marks the beginning of a new phase of growth and expansion. The unified company will continue delivering services to the highest standards of efficiency and reliability, while supporting operational integration and improving maritime supply chain performance.

He added that this will be achieved by aligning capabilities, standardising processes using data-driven approaches, enhancing performance indicators, adopting innovative solutions to boost sustainability and expanding service offerings to meet demand both within and beyond the Sultanate of Oman.

Latest indicators point to strong growth in the transport and logistics sector, with its contribution to GDP reaching approximately RO 2.23 billion in 2024 and rising to RO 2.35 billion in 2025, reflecting growth of 5.4%. The sector is projected to reach RO 3 billion by 2026.

Data also shows a sharp increase in investment, with the value of investments in the transport and storage sector rising from RO 2.32 billion in 2024 to RO 3.4 billion in 2025 – an increase of around 46.6%. Investments are expected to reach RO 3.57 billion by 2026.

Aquaculture investment in Oman hits **﷌**349 million



Production has continued to expand at a measured pace, reaching approximately 9,240 tonnes by end-2025.

MUSCAT: Oman's aquaculture sector is gaining momentum, underpinned by rising investment flows and steady gains in output as the Sultanate of Oman advances its blue economy and food security agenda.

Data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources show that cumulative investments in existing aquaculture projects reached around RO 349 million by the end of 2025, signalling sustained investor confidence in the sector's long-term prospects.

Additional agreements worth more than RO 50 million have also been signed, set to deliver over 15,000 tonnes of new annual production capacity, largely focused on shrimp and marine fish farming.

This pipeline reflects a broader shift towards scaling up high-value aquaculture segments while strengthening domestic supply chains.

Production has continued to expand at a measured pace, reaching approximately 9,240 tonnes by end-2025. Of this total, commercial aquaculture accounted for 7,970 tonnes, while integrated aquaculture contributed 605 tonnes, highlighting incremental

efficiency gains and a widening operational base.

Dr Abdulaziz bin Saeed al Marzouqi, Director General of Fisheries Development, said the sector is undergoing a qualitative transformation driven by investment expansion and improved productivity, enhancing its contribution to the national economy.

He noted that production is becoming increasingly diversified, spanning shrimp, marine fish, oysters and abalone, alongside emerging activities such as seaweed and algae cultivation.

Integrated aquaculture is also gaining traction as a resource-efficient model, combining aquaculture with agricultural or aquatic systems to optimise water and input use. This approach is expected to play a supporting role in improving overall sector sustainability.

Looking ahead, Oman is targeting aquaculture output of around 252,000 tonnes by 2030, reflecting an ambitious expansion strategy aligned with broader economic diversification goals.

With investment inflows accelerating and production systems evolving, the sector is positioning itself as a key pillar of future non-oil growth. — ONA



شركة
تاجير للتصويل
Taageer Finance
Co. S.A.O.G

Board of Directors’ Report for the period ended 31 March 2026

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Taageer Finance Company SAOG, I am pleased to present the un-audited financial statements for the period ended 31 March, 2026.

Performance Summary

The Company commenced the year with steady growth in its core business, reflected in an increase in expansion of its loan portfolio during the first quarter of 2026. The gross loan book of the Company reached **﷌ 462.72** million as of March 31, 2026, representing a growth of 8% over March 2025 (**﷌ 426.55** million).

Total borrowings as of March 31, 2026 were **﷌ 226.49** million in comparison with **﷌ 217.0** million as of March 31, 2025. The Company's borrowings comprise bank loans, corporate deposits and unsecured non-convertible bonds. The corporate deposit portfolio stood at **﷌ 75.11** million as of reporting date (Q1 2025: **﷌ 64.22** million). The Tier 1 perpetual bond issued in 2024 was classified under equity.

Finance income for the first quarter of 2026 was **﷌ 8.72** million (Q1 2025: **﷌ 8.17** million), reflecting a growth of 7% due to increase in portfolio. Interest expense for the period was **﷌ 3.48** million (Q1 2025: **﷌ 3.54** million), a decrease of 2% due to decrease in interest rates.

Staff cost for the period was **﷌ 1.36** million, 6.3% higher than similar period last year due to staff increments and higher staff numbers (Q1 2025: **﷌ 1.28** million). Other overhead expenses at **﷌ 0.53** million were 3.7% higher than last year (Q1 2025: **﷌ 0.51** million).

The Company continued its prudent approach towards risk management by strengthening its provision coverage. The expected credit losses (ECL) charge increased by 45% during the period to **﷌ 2.92** million as compared to **﷌ 2.01** million in Q1 2025.

Operating profit for Q1 2026 stood at **﷌ 3.92** million, an increase of 9% from the same period last year (Q1 2025: **﷌ 3.59** million). Profit after tax for the period was **﷌ 0.85** million as compared to **﷌ 1.34** million in Q1 2025.

Market Outlook

The economic outlook for the Sultanate of Oman remains positive, supported by continued diversification efforts under Vision 2040. Growth in non-oil sectors, infrastructure investments, and improving business sentiment are expected to sustain credit demand across key segments.

The current geopolitical situation is expected to challenge the local business environment, however, the financial sector in Oman is expected to remain resilient. The Company is carefully evaluating the current business environment and is taking cautious approach in writing new business and focusing on risk management and portfolio quality.

Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish to express sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his vision and wise leadership. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and acknowledgement for the guidance and support from the Central Bank of Oman, Financial Services Authority and Muscat Stock Exchange. We are also grateful to our shareholders, bankers, dealers and customers for their continued trust, confidence and support. Finally, the Board would like to appreciate and thank the management and the staff for all their hard work and efforts.

On Behalf of the Board of Directors

Issa Al Balushi
Chairman

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them in Arabic or English as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.

CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2026			
	Mar-2026 Un-Audited ﷌ 000	Mar-2025 Un-Audited ﷌ 000	Dec-2025 Audited ﷌ 000
ASSETS			
Cash and bank balances	13,683	17,167	19,435
Net investment in finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	300,710	283,111	296,135
Other receivables and prepayments	1,157	480	166
Vehicles, equipment and right-of-use assets	915	695	899
Intangible assets	21	55	23
Deferred tax asset – net	79	79	79
Statutory deposit	250	250	250
Total assets	316,815	301,837	316,987
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
LIABILITIES			
Creditors, accruals and other liabilities	11,090	5,253	5,576
Short-term loans	61,218	58,900	65,111
Tax payable	904	1,220	755
Unsecured non-convertible bonds	15,280	15,231	15,004
Corporate and security deposits	75,110	64,220	72,506
Long-term loans	74,884	78,653	78,715
Provision for employees' end of service benefits	282	326	331
Total liabilities	238,768	223,803	237,998
EQUITY			
Share capital	28,369	27,922	27,922
Legal reserve	7,185	6,768	7,185
Impairment reserve	2,222	2,222	2,222
Fair value reserve	(441)	(441)	(441)
General reserve	915	727	915
Retained earnings	14,797	15,836	16,186
Total shareholders' equity attributable to the equity holders of the Company	53,047	53,034	53,989
Perpetual bonds	25,000	25,000	25,000
Total equity	78,047	78,034	78,989
Total equity and liabilities	316,815	301,837	316,987
Net assets per share (baizas)	187	190	193

CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH 2026			
	Mar-2026 Un-Audited ﷌ 000	Mar-2025 Un-Audited ﷌ 000	
Income			
Finance income	8,723	8,171	
Interest expense	(3,482)	(3,544)	
Net finance income	5,241	4,627	
Other operating income	674	869	
	5,915	5,496	
Expenses			
Staff costs	(1,364)	(1,283)	
Other expenses	(531)	(512)	
Depreciation and amortization	(104)	(114)	
Impairment on net investment in finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	(2,922)	(2,010)	
	(4,921)	(3,919)	
Profit before tax	994	1,577	
Income tax expense	(149)	(237)	
Profit for the period	845	1,340	
Basic and diluted earnings per share (baizas)	11.91	19.20	

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Tariq Sulaiman al Farsi, CEO at National Finance.

National Finance posts strong Q1 results, reinforces market leadership

MUSCAT: Demonstrating resilience and reaffirming the strength of its strategic direction, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance and leasing company, has delivered a strong financial performance for the three-month period ended March 31, 2026.

The results underscore the company’s ability to navigate an evolving global landscape shaped by geopolitical uncertainties. Anchored in robust business fundamentals, a disciplined growth strategy, and a clear focus on long-term value creation, National Finance continues to demonstrate agility and sustained performance in a dynamic operating environment.

For the period ended March 31, 2026, National Finance reported an operating profit (profit before provision and tax) of RO 7.96 million, compared to RO 5.96 million during the same period in 2025, reflecting a significant increase of 33.42%.

Profit after tax stood at RO 3.83 million, up from RO 3.31 million in March 2025, marking a growth of 15.76%.

The company’s Net Investment in Lease reached RO 664.00 million, registering a growth of 1.73% compared to December 2025.

Reflecting on the company’s performance, Tariq Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, said, “Our Q1 performance reflects our continued ability to strengthen market leadership while maintaining a disciplined approach to risk and financial resilience. At the heart of these achievements is the unwavering commitment of our people.

Their expertise, dedication, and pursuit of excellence continue to differentiate National Finance across innovation, service quality, and excellence in customer experience. As we move forward, we remain focused on delivering enduring value to our stakeholders while contributing meaningfully to the Sultanate of Oman’s long-term economic progress.”

National Finance continues to hold the highest regulatory capital among finance and leasing companies (FLCs) in the country at RO 144.13 million, reinforcing its position as the sector’s largest player by assets, branch network, revenues, and profitability.

With 24 branches nationwide and a comprehensive product suite for retail and SME segments, the company remains well positioned to meet evolving customer needs and enhance service delivery through ongoing digital innovation.

Amouage reports \$190 million retail sales in Q1 2026

MUSCAT: Amouage announces its strongest quarter on record, with first-quarter estimated retail sales reaching \$190 million, representing a +90% increase year-on-year.

Following a historically successful 2025, this performance was driven by two structural forces: the highly successful global rollout of Essences Chapter II, an industry-defining double-ageing innovation and sustained demand across the House’s existing creations.

This momentum reflects the strength of a model rooted in craftsmanship, technical mastery and cultural depth.

Growth remained broad-based and balanced across all regions and channels, each delivering double- or triple-digit performance.

■ The strongest growth was recorded in the Americas, increasing by 135%, while Asia-Pacific grew by +124% driven by China which



Growth remained broad-based and balanced across all regions and channels, each delivering double- or triple-digit performance.

expanded tenfold year-on-year.

■ In Europe, growth was led by the UK quadrupling sales revenue (+308%) and Italy doubling the business versus last year.

■ Amouage maintained very strong momentum in Saudi Arabia, growing by 170% and reaching leading positions with key retail partners.

The sustained strength highlights the House’s ability to operate with agility and resilience in a complex regional environment.

■ The Amouage.com online platform more than doubled at +137%, while the direct-to-retail channel grew by +152%.

Globally sustained demand for creations continues to be supported by the House’s long-term investment in craftsmanship and production capabilities. Amouage has expanded capacity and invested in advanced ageing techniques, while continuing

to train and develop its craftswomen and craftsmen.

This deliberate approach allows the House to scale without compromise, preserving the integrity of its creations while meeting growing global demand.

■ In Q1, Exceptional Extraits became the House’s most demanded product category, representing 28% of the business, led by Guidance 46 and Purpose 50.

■ The Guidance franchise continues to have increasing demand by clients globally, now representing 25% of total business and doubling in Q1 vs last year, with nearly 1,000 bottles sold per day.

■ The Essences Collection became the second largest pillar of the portfolio, growing fivefold year-on-year.

Its momentum was reinforced by the launch of The Essences Chapter II and the GCC Ramadhan-exclusive

Oud Zuhul, which sold out within one week, while Outlands emerged as the most demanded creation of the collection growing at +276%.

Amouage continues to reinforce its position on the global stage through a combination of cultural presence and ingredient leadership.

The House expanded its visibility across key industry platforms, while deepening its commitment to natural ingredient expertise through participation in the Agriculture Summit in Oman.

This momentum coincided with the international recognition of Omani frankincense at WIPO and the sixth edition of the Omani Rock Rose harvest in Jabal Akhdar, celebrated through the latest iteration of the Amouage Café, reaffirming Amouage’s role as a cultural ambassador of Oman, shaping the future of high perfumery.

Kia Carnival: Elevating the standard of luxury

THE Kia Carnival continues to reinforce its position as the premier choice for families in the Sultanate of Oman, offering a sophisticated blend of space, innovation and refinement.

Designed specifically to cater to the needs of large families who prioritise both style and substance, the Carnival transforms every journey – whether a daily school run in Muscat or a long-distance expedition to Salalah – into a first-class travel experience.

By combining the presence of an SUV with the unparalleled utility of a multi-purpose vehicle, the Carnival stands as a benchmark for luxury family transport in Oman.

A SANCTUARY OF SPACE AND VERSATILE DESIGN

At the heart of the Kia Carnival’s appeal is its ability to accommodate up to seven occupants without compromising on comfort or cargo.

Built on a refined mid-size platform, the interior provides best-in-class passenger space and a generous luggage capacity of up to 627 litres. For those requiring even more versatility for adventures or heavy gear, the second-row seats can be removed and the third row folded to create an expansive cargo area.

The exterior design further emphasises this premium status through a bold, commanding presence. Details like the symphonic matte radiator grille, LED headlamps, sleek roof rails and striking 19-inch alloy wheels give the Carnival a powerful identity on the road.

UNPARALLELED INTERIOR LUXURY AND WELLNESS

The cabin of the Carnival is crafted to



The Carnival stands as a benchmark for luxury family transport in Oman.

function as a mobile lounge, featuring premium finishes and customer-focused technology.

The atmosphere is further elevated by customisable ambient lighting and double-laminated sound-insulating glass, ensuring the cabin remains a quiet, peaceful retreat regardless of the road conditions outside.

SMART INNOVATION FOR EVERYDAY CONVENIENCE

Kia has integrated a suite of “Smart Power” features into the Carnival to make family life effortless.

The world’s first smart power sliding doors and the power tailgate can open or close automatically simply by the user standing nearby with the smart key.

Inside, the panoramic curved display and the digital centre mirror provide the driver with high-definition clarity and intuitive

control over the vehicle’s systems.

Innovation extends to security and personalisation through a fingerprint authentication system, allowing drivers to start the engine and load personalised profiles without a physical key.

REFINED PERFORMANCE AND ADVANCED HANDLING

Powering the Carnival is a robust 3.5-litre V6 engine that produces 268 horsepower and 33.8 kg m of torque. Paired with a smooth 8-speed automatic transmission, this powertrain provides the confident acceleration needed for Oman’s diverse terrain.

The inclusion of a high-definition Head-Up Display allows the driver to keep their eyes on the road while staying informed of speed and navigation cues, further smoothing the long-distance driving experience.

NBO, Sharakah sign MoU to launch Afaq programme

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has signed an agreement with the Fund for Development of Youth Projects (Sharakah) to launch the Afaq programme, an initiative designed to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs), youth-led ventures and capacity-building efforts across the Sultanate of Oman.

The agreement was signed by Abdullah bin Zahrán al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO and Ali bin Ahmed Muqáibal, Chief Executive Officer of Sharakah, at NBO’s Head Office in Al Athaiba.

Commenting on the partnership, Mohamed bin Abdullah al Dhahab, Assistant General Manager, Large Corporate and SME at NBO, said:“This collaboration reflects our commitment to support the national development priorities. Through our partnership with Sharakah, we aim to empower ambitious entrepreneurs and



The agreement was signed by Abdullah bin Zahrán al Hinai, CEO of NBO and Ali bin Ahmed Muqáibal, CEO of Sharakah

emerging businesses through the Afaq Programme and other initiatives designed to help them build stronger, more resilient and sustainable enterprises. Today, SMEs continue to play a vital role in Oman’s economic development, job creation and long-term diversification”.

The Afaq programme aims to transform innovative entrepreneurial ideas into successful projects by providing practical support, enhancing skills and connecting entrepreneurs with opportunities for growth and expansion. The partnership further reinforces NBO’s role as an active supporter of Oman’s SME sector.

By working with Sharakah, the bank aims to contribute to broader national efforts to encourage entrepreneurship, strengthen private-sector participation and support the development of a more competitive and diversified economy.

SHORTTAKES



On the demand side, consumption trends were mixed but generally upwards.

GAS OUTPUT IN OMAN TOPS 13.7 BM³

MUSCAT: Oman’s natural gas production, including imports, rose by 2.5 per cent to 13.744 billion cubic metres by the end of March 2026, up from 13.4076 billion cubic metres a year earlier, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information. The increase reflects stronger supply availability amidst rising demand from key consuming sectors.

Consumption by power generation plants rose more sharply, up 12.9 per cent to 3.5308 billion cubic metres, underscoring higher electricity demand.

Associated gas output declined by 2.2 per cent to 2.975 billion cubic metres, compared with 3.0368 billion cubic metres in the same period of 2025. In contrast, non-associated gas — including imports — recorded growth, supporting overall supply expansion.

On the demand side, consumption trends were mixed but generally upwards. Gas use in industrial projects increased by 3.1 per cent to 7.3674 billion cubic metres, indicating continued activity across manufacturing and processing industries.

Consumption by power generation plants rose more sharply, up 12.9 per cent to 3.5308 billion cubic metres, underscoring higher electricity demand.

By contrast, gas consumption in oil fields — including losses and operational factors such as shrinkage — declined by 8.8 per cent to 2.7984 billion cubic metres, suggesting improved efficiency or reduced operational requirements.

Meanwhile, gas use in industrial areas, including industrial zones and the Oman Cement Company, fell significantly by 31.6 per cent to 47.2 million cubic metres, down from 69.1 million cubic metres a year earlier.

Overall, the data point to a gas market shaped by rising power and industrial demand, offset by efficiency gains in upstream operations and softer consumption in select industrial clusters. — ONA

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 2

In a first for Oman’s ports and maritime sector, Hutchison Ports Sohar — the operator of the Container Terminal at Sohar Port — has taken delivery of a fleet of electric terminal trucks (eTTs), marking the latest in a series of initiatives supporting the decarbonisation of operations at the hub.

Built and supplied by Westwell, a Chinese technology company specialising in AI-powered autonomous and electric logistics vehicles, the fleet represents a new generation of zero-emission, intelligent vehicles purpose-built for container handling in ports and logistics hubs.

“The new eTTs arrived at the right time and were rolled out for



Electric Terminal Trucks (eTT) in operation at Sohar Port’s Container Terminal.

operations today (April 30, 2026) to celebrate Logistics Day 2026, further enhancing our service to customers and supporting the terminal’s sustainable development”,

Hutchison Ports Sohar announced in a post. Deployed in the first phase is a batch of 15 electric terminal trucks, designed to help accelerate

OIL POLICY

Opec+ plans modest output increase



Opec+ agreed in principle to raise oil output by about 188,000 barrels per day in June, maintaining its planned increases despite the United Arab Emirates’ exit.

The move reflects a business-as-usual approach, although actual supply gains remain limited as disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz continue to constrain shipments amidst ongoing regional tensions. — Reuters

DEFENCE DEALS

US approves arms sales bypassing review



The United States approved over \$8.6 billion in military sales to Middle East allies, including United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait, bypassing congressional review.

United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio cited reason as emergency conditions, allowing expedited approval amidst sustained regional tensions and ongoing conflict involving Iran and its neighbours. — Reuters

AVIATION CRISIS

Airline collapses amidst fuel surge



Low-cost carrier Spirit Airlines ceased operations after failing to secure creditor backing for a government-supported rescue plan.

Surging jet fuel costs linked to the Iran conflict severely impacted its finances. The shutdown marks a rare collapse of a major US carrier, leading to significant job losses and reducing competition in the low-cost aviation segment. — Reuters

Oman-Phils labour ties deepen on welfare, skills

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 2

LABOUR cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Philippines is entering a more dynamic phase, underpinned by strong institutional coordination, shared policy priorities and a renewed focus on worker welfare and skills development, according to Hans Leo J Cacdac, Secretary of the Department of Migrant Workers of the Philippines.

In an exclusive interview with the Observer during his visit to Muscat, Cacdac described bilateral engagement as “very strong” and increasingly “vibrant”, citing continuous dialogue between both governments and close day-to-day coordination through diplomatic and labour channels.

“This is a relationship built on constant communication and goodwill. On a daily basis, our migrant workers office and embassy are in touch with the Omani government, particularly the Ministry of Labour”, he said.

“At the leadership level, there is clear recognition of the support extended by the Omani side to Filipino workers”.

The visit forms part of sustained high-level engagement between the two countries, including recent interactions with Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Oman’s Minister of Labour, across regional platforms such as the Global Labour Market Conference and the World Government Summit.

Both sides have also worked closely within the framework of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue, where Oman recently handed over its chairmanship to the Philippines.

Cacdac noted that these engagements are translating into concrete outcomes, particularly in strengthening labour governance frameworks and aligning bilateral priorities with broader regional initiatives.

“We have been in constant touch



At the leadership level, there is clear recognition of the support extended by the Omani side to Filipino workers. We have been in constant touch in terms of enhancing our labour cooperative measures, both bilaterally and through multilateral platforms.

HANS LEO J. CACDAC
Secretary of the Department of Migrant Workers of the Philippines

in terms of enhancing our labour cooperative measures, both bilaterally and through multilateral platforms”, he said.

A central pillar of the partnership is Oman’s evolving policy environment on migrant worker protection. Cacdac pointed to Oman’s regulatory measures and leadership commitment to welfare as key factors reinforcing confidence among overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

“His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has consistently emphasised protection and welfare, not just for Filipino workers but for all migrant workers in Oman”, he said. “This is something we want to highlight and further strengthen in our discussions”.

Looking ahead, both countries are expected to deepen collaboration in areas such as welfare protection, social safeguards and skills development. As the Philippines assumes chairmanship of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue until 2028, it plans to advance an agenda that includes upskilling initiatives and stronger social protection systems — areas where Oman’s support is seen as critical.

“Upskilling is a key priority. We want to ensure that workers are not only protected but are also able to progress to higher-value roles through certification and training”, Cacdac said.

“This is being discussed not only at the multilateral level but also in our bilateral engagements with Oman”.

The economic dimension of labour mobility remains significant, with remittances continuing to provide resilience for Filipino households.

While Oman accounts for a smaller share compared to other Gulf markets, Cacdac underscored the broader value of overseas

employment.

“Remittances remain vital, particularly during periods of global uncertainty. Beyond financial flows, there are also social remittances — skills, knowledge and experience — that returning workers bring back to the Philippines”, he explained.

He added that reintegration programmes are being strengthened under the administration of Ferdinand Marcos Jr, with a focus on recognising skills gained abroad and facilitating re-employment across sectors such as healthcare and education.

On the ground, Filipino workers in Oman continue to be valued for their adaptability, communication skills and professionalism, attributes that contribute to sustained demand despite evolving labour market dynamics.

“Filipino workers are recognised for their quality of service, their ability to communicate effectively and their willingness to go beyond defined roles”, Cacdac said. “These are strengths that support long-term employability and mutual benefit”.

He also highlighted ongoing discussions on standardising employment contracts to enhance transparency and prevent disputes, alongside measures to ensure fair compensation aligned with experience and skill levels.

Concluding his visit, Cacdac reaffirmed the Philippine government’s commitment to supporting its nationals in Oman, particularly amidst global economic uncertainties.

“We are here to stand with our workers, especially during challenging times”, he said. “Our objective is to ensure that they feel the full support of government programmes and services, wherever they are”.

AI cities and their role in supporting the national economy



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

CITIES are rapidly changing due to Artificial intelligence (AI) which is creating “AI-powered” cities or “smart” cities. These cities incorporate machine learning, data analytics and automation into the city’s infrastructure and public utility services. The benefit for city residents is improved efficiency and the benefit for national economies is exponential growth.

AI cities are dependent on data. Sensors, monitors and internet-connected devices collect data on the daily consumption of energy, infrastructure safety and many event types of utilisation data.

AI analyses the data and makes decisions that optimise the operation of these resources to reduce congestion and safely distribute resources. This AI provides the infrastructure and a national economy a safe and reliable way to become less expensive and more productive.

AI cities also provide important economic resources, including efficiencies. A “smart” energy grid employs AI to reduce the distribution of services. This goal of the “smart” grid is to eliminate the loss of services and increase the affordability of services.

In a “smart” water management system, savings of lost resources, of high value, provide for positive economic growth of the nation to be funded by other services. Of particular importance are the positive results

provided to the community of healthcare and educational services.

AI cities draw investment and foster innovation ecosystems. Digital infrastructure attracts technology companies, startups and research institutions.

As innovation hubs develop, new products, services and business models are created. Startups, in turn, grow, scale and create jobs while raising exports and contributing to GDP growth.

Employment also changes. AI and automation improve the nature of work and replace jobs. New fields of work, like data science, cybersecurity and software engineering, emerge.

Increased demand for skilled professionals also cultivates improvements in education, paving the way for a future-ready workforce. System improvements also raise the competitive nature of a national labour market.

AI cities also enhance the economic impact of the transportation network, the most highly visible part of the city. Smart design systems raise the efficiency of logistics and supply chain systems. Commutes and operations to and from strategic zones are further enabled by both autonomous and AI systems.

The quicker, more systematic operation of the transportation network raises the economic impact of a city.

AI systems also improve public safety and the management of city operations. The

AI cities also provide important economic resources, including efficiencies. A “smart” energy grid employs AI to reduce the distribution of services.

predictive nature of emergency systems and crisis management discerns safer alternatives to commutes, making a well-managed, safer city also more appealing to tourists and contributing to economic growth.

Furthermore, AI cities support development in fields associated with economic sustainability, primarily via sustainable carbon footprints, smart waste prioritisation and optimised economic sustainability.

This development ultimately aims to meet sustainability goals in various fields. The cities of the future support the green economy and contribute to the improvement of the economy.

The development of AI cities has positive effects on the economy, but the challenges of developing AI cities still exist. These challenges relate to the cost of initial investment, data protection and various regulatory frameworks. Such challenges require the involvement of the civil sector.

If these AI cities are to fully support the economy, the development of AI technologies will have to be fully integrated and made available to all civil structures.

AI cities are essential to the development of any economy, as they support investment in all economic and AI innovation.

The transformation of cities will happen soon as AI technology continues to be implemented across the globe and becomes central drivers of economic growth and global competitiveness.

Hydrogen with CCS: Bridging today’s energy system to a lower-carbon future

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

As pressure mounts to reduce emissions without disrupting industrial output, hydrogen is emerging as a central solution. Among its pathways, hydrogen produced with Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), often called blue hydrogen, is gaining attention as a practical, near-term option for decarbonising energy systems that still rely on fossil fuels.

The principle is simple but impactful. Hydrogen is produced using conventional processes, typically from natural gas, but the carbon dioxide generated during production is captured before it is released. This CO₂ is then transported and stored deep underground in geological formations.

By preventing emissions from entering the atmosphere, hydrogen becomes a significantly lower-carbon energy carrier, even when fossil fuels remain part of the upstream mix.

This approach is particularly relevant for sectors where electrification is not easily achievable. Heavy industry, shipping and long-haul transport require dense, reliable energy sources and hydrogen offers a viable alternative.

It acts as an energy vector, capable of storing and delivering energy across systems, rather than being a primary source itself. With CCS in place, its environmental footprint is reduced, making it suitable for early-stage decarbonisation efforts.

A key advantage of hydrogen with CCS lies in its ability to scale using existing infrastructure. Countries with established oil and gas industries already possess many of the technical capabilities required, from processing facilities to subsurface expertise.

This reduces the time needed to deploy solutions at scale, allowing emissions reductions to begin sooner rather than later. However, the model is not without its constraints. The effectiveness of CCS depends on high capture rates and reliable long-term storage. Infrastructure for transporting and storing CO₂ must be carefully developed and costs remain a consideration.

While not a zero-carbon solution, hydrogen with CCS can significantly cut direct emissions and provide a transition pathway as renewable-based hydrogen continues to grow.

For Oman, this pathway presents a strategic opportunity. As the country advances its ambitions to become a global hydrogen hub, particularly through large-scale green hydrogen projects in Al Duqm and Dhofar, hydrogen with CCS could play a complementary role in the near term.

Leveraging existing energy infrastructure and geological storage potential, Oman can accelerate emissions reduction while building capacity for a longer-term shift towards fully renewable hydrogen.

Oman’s AI zone is not just tech — it is about speed

OMAN'S move to establish a dedicated artificial intelligence (AI) zone in Muscat is being read as a technology play. It is not. It is a response to a deeper shift in the global economy, one that is redefining competitiveness not by resources or scale, but by speed.

Artificial intelligence is compressing time. Decisions are faster, systems are more responsive and inefficiencies are exposed almost instantly. The advantage is no longer with those who have more, but with those who can act sooner.

For decades, Oman’s strength has been stability: predictable policy, measured reform and institutional continuity. These remain assets, particularly in a volatile region.

But in an AI-driven economy, stability without speed becomes a constraint.

The new zone should therefore be understood as a controlled attempt to operate differently: not bigger, but faster. It is about faster approvals, faster integration and faster execution. That shift is subtle, but structural.

Over the past year, this direction has already begun to take shape. Partnerships linked to semiconductors and advanced connectivity, alongside pilot AI deployments in healthcare diagnostics, government services and procurement systems, signal a shift from theory to application.

Oman is not approaching artificial intelligence as a standalone sector, but as a system that will influence how the economy functions. The zone gives that shift a defined space.

The risk is not failure. It is containment. If the zone functions as a high-performing enclave while the wider economy continues at a slower pace, its impact will be limited.

Oman does not need a smart island. It needs a system that learns from it.



Oman is not approaching AI as a standalone sector, but as a system that will influence how the economy functions.



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics department at Oman Observer

This is where most countries fall short. Technology zones attract companies. Few transform economies.

The difference lies in diffusion: whether new ways of working extend beyond the zone into logistics, energy, industry and government; whether decisions begin to rely on data rather than process; and whether local firms become more competitive, not just more connected.

Without that, value flows outwards.

Oman’s advantage is that it does not need to compete on scale. Its position rests on reliability, neutrality, energy and location. In an AI economy that depends on stable infrastructure and continuous power, these are not secondary strengths. But they are not enough. Execution is.

In artificial intelligence, delay is not a pause. It is a loss of position.

Companies are placing infrastructure where deployment is fastest, regulation is clearest and operations are uninterrupted.

The competition is no longer about who builds more, but who moves sooner.

This is the test: not whether the zone attracts investment, but whether it changes how the economy functions. Can processes accelerate? Can institutions adapt? Can talent keep pace?

If the answer is yes, the impact will extend far beyond technology. If not, Oman risks doing what many others have done: building capability without capturing control.

The country has already shown it can take difficult decisions to preserve long-term stability. The next phase demands something different: the ability to move faster without losing that stability. That balance will define the outcome.

In the emerging economy, the dividing line will not be between those who adopt artificial intelligence and those who do not. It will be between those who can operate at its speed — and those who cannot.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

SALES professional with 5 yrs Experience in Medical sector. Graduate, Available in Muscat. akhilmanu777@gmail.com Contact: 76323324

INDIAN male, 10 year experience in Oman as Coordinator have Driving licence. 90789282

LOGISTICS Documentation Executive. Indian male, 25 years, BBA, PG Diploma in Logistics & SCM and have 2 years of experience in this field. Seeking a position in Logistics field Mob: +968 7506 9882 Mail: shafazhussain18@gmail.com

ACCOUNTS/ SALES Indian male (b com) having 2+ years of experience in India accounts sales looking for suitable placement, join immediately. Contact: 76324360

15+ experience in building material, project sales & Trade market, deal with corporate project customers, looking for a suitable job. Contact 78384283

INDIAN male MBA Graduate with 15yrs experience in Oman seek suitable senior position in finance office admin., sales DTC. Contact: 94158080

OPERATIONS Support / Tendering / Contract Management / Procurement professional with 18+ years' Oil & Gas experience. NOC & driving license available. 96227272, jjjilmathew@gmail.com

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job. Contact: 92919281

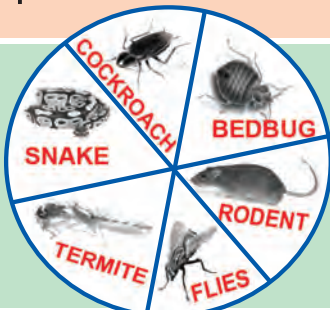
INDIAN male civil engineer with more than 30 years experience in different ministers, seek immediate suitable position. CONTACT: 94158080

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



Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches), Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]



Tel: 24787606, 24787503 Direct Line: 24786077 GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

LOGISTICS

Indian male 24 years, graduate in BBA,PG diploma in logistics and SCM ,6 months of warehouse experience seeking a position in logistics and warehouse fields Contact: +96896161349 Mail: nadanmathew2000@gmail.com

LOOKING for warehouse manager role. Indian male, 14 years GCC experience with driving licence. Available to join immediately. Please contact: 92991621

LOOKING for Pipeline Engineer with 8 Years Experience offer salary: 200 OMR Phone : +9689665333 Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

SALES Executive required For working in oil and gas / building materials industry Vehicle Driving license preferred Email: kirit@bustaninternational.com Mobile: 95544641

14 yrs experience in Store In-charge, site coordination works, seeking suitable position. Available to join immediately with valid Oman driving licence. Contact : 79994705

LOOKING for SUPPLY CHAIN / SALES jobs Indian male 24 years. Commerce graduate, Experience in logistics, procurement and sales in reputed company in Oman.Valid Oman D/L. Contact +96891121694, issacantony2002@gmail.com

FOR SALE

PEUGEOT Traveller, 2019 model, in excellent condition. Interested buyers may visit the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to inspect the vehicle and submit their offers. For inquiries, please contact: 95041480.

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com



WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684 Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325 www.orbit-oman.com

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease



SIT. WANTED

PROJECT management professional with 20+ years' experience in tendering, business development, business systemisation, ISO QMS, planning and procurement. Possesses managerial and team lead skills. Seeking an opportunity. Contact: 91799438

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

FOR RENT

10000 sqm plus area of open yard fully blacktop with compound wall, wide gate & CCTV for immediate rent in Jifnain. Contact: 99853040

4 Ready made office space for rent in Bank Melli Iran building MBD area Ruwi, opposite Centre point. Contact: 99011352.

SIT. WANTED

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

14 years experience in warehouse in-charge furniture field site installation work in Oman. Valid driving licence. Suitable position required Contact: 79994705

PASSPORT LOST

BAITA Yasini Kanji has lost Tanzanian Passport No TAE941705. Finder please handover to ROP.

FOR RENT

STORE, shop and studio room for immediate rent in Barka saqsuq. contact: 93368865 94900612

SIT. VACANT

A CONSUMER goods distribution company FMCG headquartered in Muscat with several branches across the Sultanate of Oman is seeking qualified candidates for the following positions:

- National Sales Manger
 - Marketing Manager
 - Sales Representative
 - Product Display Specialist (Merchandiser).
- Please send your CV to the email address below. ssagriculture25@gmail.com

OMAN DAILY

Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

*** NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY**

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdihar_info izdihar.info



ART/LIFE



STAGEODYSSEY

ZIGGY STARDUST LIVES ON AT LONDON IMMERSIVE



People attend the multimedia show 'David Bowie: You're Not Alone', showcasing work from the British musical legend, at the Lightroom venue in Kings Cross in London. — AFP

Silhouetted against the light on stage in 1990, David Bowie belts out a deafening rendition of “Rebel Rebel” as a rapturous audience claps along with arms raised.

Rewind to 1973 and the iconic star is at London’s Hammersmith Odeon singing “Rock ‘n’ Roll Suicide” in his final performance as Ziggy Stardust.

A decade after Bowie died in 2016 in New York at the age of 69, these moments are among the highlights captured in a new immersive multimedia show at London’s Lightroom venue, which opened this week. The production blends live performance footage, including previously unseen material, with rarely heard interviews, offering a vivid portrait of the artist’s career and personality.

The experience is the latest tribute to Bowie, widely regarded as one of the most influential artists of the 20th century. At the “cathedral-like” Lightroom, images and footage are projected onto 11-metre-high screens across all four walls and the floor, accompanied by a 360-degree sound system. The setup creates an enveloping environment that places audiences inside the performance.

Writer and director Mark Grimmer said the aim was to recreate Bowie’s “genius as a live performer” while preserving the communal atmosphere of a concert. “It’s a social event. It’s a crowd of people, you’re there with other human beings”, he said.

Grimmer and co-director Tom Wexler sifted through extensive archival material to shape the show, titled “David Bowie: You’re Not Alone”. Highlights include the Hammersmith Odeon concert immortalised in DA Pennebaker’s 1983 film, as well as a powerful 1978 performance of “Heroes” at Earl’s Court, when Bowie was “at the peak of his power”, according to Grimmer.

Other sequences feature Bowie at Live Aid in 1985 and his 1972 Top of the Pops appearance performing “Starman” in a striking rainbow jumpsuit. Interwoven with these performances are clips of Bowie speaking candidly about his life. He reflects on the bleakness of his London childhood and his search for “colour” and “exhilaration”.

Through interviews, he emerges as humorous and self-deprecating, describing himself as an “unlikely” rock star and comparing himself to an “emperor penguin”.

Despite his flamboyant stage personas, Bowie described himself as essentially a writer who gravitated towards outsiders. He acknowledged early struggles with performing, overcoming them by inhabiting characters such as the androgynous Ziggy Stardust.

The hour-long production, running until at least October, features around 40 tracks. It concludes with Bowie reflecting on ageing and existence, expressing comfort with uncertainty. “I’m quite happy in chaos”, he says, describing life and the universe as “really untidy”. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



STAGE

US trumpet player and composer Terence Blanchard performs on the stage of the Impart jazz club in Wroclaw. — AFP



MUSIC

Kels McGriff skates to music in Venice Beach, Los Angeles, California. — AFP



DANCE

Competitors perform during a traditional Balinese dance competition in Denpasar on Indonesia’s resort island of Bali. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Mosque door in Suroor Village



Shining Sea star

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

JACKSON BIOPIC DEBUTS ATOP N AMERICA BOX OFFICE

“Michael”, the much-anticipated biopic about late superstar Michael Jackson, debuted atop the North American box office this weekend with a thriller-ing \$97 million, industry estimates showed on Sunday, marking one of the strongest openings of the year and reaffirming the enduring appeal of the King of Pop.

The film, directed by Antoine Fuqua and distributed by Lionsgate, chronicles Jackson’s rise from a child performer in the Jackson 5 to one of the most influential figures in modern music. In the lead role is Jaafar Jackson, whose portrayal has generated significant attention for closely mirroring his uncle’s voice, dance style and stage presence.

“This is a record-shattering opening for a musical biography”, said analyst David A Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research. He noted that audience response has been strong, describing the film as “a feel-good, nostalgic appreciation”, even as critical reception has been more mixed.

“Most critics feel the film is superficial and avoids the complicated parts of the performer’s life, including allegations of misbehaviour”, Gross said, while adding that a second instalment is already in development, suggesting the story will continue beyond the first film.

With the film already released in Europe, it has taken in nearly \$220 million worldwide,



Jaafar Jackson portrays his uncle in the biopic ‘Michael’. — AFP

according to Exhibitor Relations, highlighting the continued global fascination with Jackson’s life and legacy years after his death.

In second place at the US and Canadian box office was The Super Mario Galaxy Movie, which added \$21.2 million. The animated sequel from Universal Pictures and Illumination Studios has now grossed more than \$775 million globally, maintaining strong momentum after three weeks at the top and continuing to draw family audiences worldwide.

Third place went to Project Hail Mary, an Amazon MGM sci-fi adventure starring Ryan Gosling. The film, which follows a teacher-turned-astronaut tasked with saving Earth from a dimming sun, earned \$13.2 million over the weekend and has brought in nearly \$600 million worldwide during an extended theatrical run.

— AFP



Members of an expedition team hike through Khumbu Icefall, as the route to Mount Everest Camp One has not yet been opened for the season in Solukhumbu district, also known as the Everest region, Nepal. — Reuters

GOPAL SHARMA

A group of Sherpa climbers have opened the route to Mount Everest that had been blocked for two weeks by chunks of ice and a giant serac, allowing mountaineers to make attempts to reach the summit, officials said on Tuesday. The annual climbing season for the 8,849-m peak runs from April to May, months which offer the best weather conditions in which to reach the windswept summit.

But a massive 100-ft serac, or column of ice, had blocked the path above base camp this month.

Parts of it have now melted and broken away, allowing Sherpa climbers, called the icefall doctors, to fix ropes, place ladders and carve a safe route through the treacherous Khumbu icefall to Camp I located at 6,060 metres.

Lhakpa Sherpa of the 8K Expedition hiking company, who is coordinating the opening of the route, said 19 Sherpa climbers had crossed the difficult portion of the icefall and reached the site of Camp I. “They are expected to fix ropes to Camp II, which is not difficult”, Sherpa said from the base camp. Camp II is located at about 6,400 metres (21,000 ft). Hundreds of mountaineers from different countries have been stranded at the Everest base camp for more than two weeks ahead of making summit attempts next month.

Department of Tourism official Nisha Thapa Rawal said climbers could now begin to climb from the base camp.

Some climbers said they hoped to



Kami Rita Sherpa, a Nepali mountaineer who has climbed Mount Everest 31 times and holds the record for the most summits of the world’s highest mountain, speaks with a friend at Everest Base Camp as he prepares to climb Everest for the 32nd time to break his own record, in the Solukhumbu district, also known as the Everest region, Nepal. — Reuters

complete their expedition in time despite the delay.

“I think there is some hope... But such a delay will push summits back and possibly create crowding in the icefall and maybe the summit as teams try to make up for lost time”, said British climber Kenton Cool, who is trying to climb the peak for the 20th time, the most by any foreigner.

Authorities have issued 425 Everest permits so far this season, at a cost of \$15,000 each. Another 153 climbers to neighbouring Lhotse and Nuptse peaks also share part of the same route.

There is no limit on how many permits are issued, which has led to criticism in the past from mountaineering experts about the risk of long queues forming in what is known as the death zone because the air is dangerously thin.

American climber Garrett Madison of the Madison Mountaineering company said despite the opening of the route the area was still challenging.

“It’s not easy going around the serac and perhaps a little bit dangerous”, said Madison, 47, who is trying to make his 16th ascent.

— Reuters

FEATURES

OMAN CELEBRATES
INTERNATIONAL JAZZ DAY

jazz

COMES ALIVE IN MUSCAT

*The Jazz night event signalled something local and forward-looking.
The night also highlighted the growing confidence of national
musicians engaging with global forms while
preserving their own character*



Pictures by **Hussain Al Maqbali & Yahya Al Buraiki**



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

AS night settled over Muscat, the stage at the Oman Music Centre seemed to inhale, then exhale music older than borders and younger than the moment itself. It became a meeting point between continents, eras and moods, as Oman marked International Jazz Day 2026 with a performance that carried the language of improvisation into the heart of the capital.

Organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Directorate General of Arts and the Oman Music Centre, the celebration welcomed music enthusiasts and members of the public for a night dedicated to

one of the world’s most borderless art forms. Jazz, long associated with freedom, conversation and reinvention, found a distinctly Omani voice.

There was something fitting about hearing these melodies in Muscat, a city shaped for centuries by exchange. Outside, roads hummed and sea air drifted through the evening. Inside, another current moved through the hall, brass tones, brushed rhythms, piano runs and the warm pulse of bass lines that seemed to travel directly through the seats.

The programme moved gracefully across styles and generations. Moondance arrived with velvet ease. Autumn Leaves carried a wistful elegance. The Girl From Ipanema brought sunlight

into the room, while Cantaloupe Island and Watermelon Man added playful grooves that turned heads and tapped feet. When Take Five entered with its famous unusual rhythm, listeners leaned in with recognition.

Later came the lift of Fly Me to the Moon and the dazzling complexity of Spain, a finale that seemed to gather every colour of the night into one flourish. At the centre of it all were the musicians, artists who demonstrated not only technical skill, but trust in one another, the true currency of jazz.

Issa al Busaidy, on vocals and keyboard, guided the evening with poise and presence. Khalid al Rahbi’s guitar lines moved between tenderness and fire. Ashraf Dahab

Ahmed Khairy’s saxophone gave the room its smoky heartbeat. Mohammed al Balushi on drums drove the momentum with precision and personality, while Mohammed al Raisi on percussion layered texture and movement into every piece.

What made the evening memorable was not simply the repertoire, but the spirit behind it. Jazz is built on listening as much as playing. One instrument speaks, another responds. A melody bends, returns, and becomes something new. In that sense, the concert mirrored the purpose of International Jazz Day itself: to celebrate dialogue, creativity and shared humanity.

For Oman, the event also signalled something local and forward-

looking. It highlighted the growing confidence of national musicians engaging with global forms while preserving their own character. These were not borrowed sounds performed from a distance, but living music interpreted through Omani hands, ears and sensibilities.

As the final notes faded and applause filled the theatre, the audience had witnessed more than a concert. They had seen how a global tradition can root itself in local soil and how a nation’s cultural story continues to widen through openness, talent and exchange.

For one evening in Muscat, jazz did what it has always done best: it turned strangers into listeners, listeners into a community and rhythm into connection.