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Times OF OMAN

GOLDEN JUBILEE

50 YEARS OF LEGACY

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SUSTAINABLE INSURANCE COVERAGE

Sayyid Shihab chairs Social Protection Committee meeting

MUSCAT: The ministerial committee entrusted with the Social Protection Scheme held a meeting yesterday under the chairmanship of HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs and Chairman of the Committee. The committee began its meeting by reviewing the implementation status of the decisions issued in its first meeting this year. It discussed several agenda items and examined proposals submitted by relevant authorities regarding the social protection system, deliberating on all aspects and taking appropriate decisions.

It is worth noting that among the main objectives of the Social Protection Committee is evaluating and monitoring the performance of the social protection system to ensure fair, effective, and sustainable insurance coverage for all segments of society, in line with the outlined goals of the social protection system. — ONA

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS AND YOUTH

HH Sayyid Theyazin issues decision to form team for 'Omani Cultural Laboratories' project

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, has issued a decision to form the "Omani Cultural Laboratories" (OCL) project team.

The initiative constitutes a collaborative effort undertaken by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Cultural Club and Bait Al Zubair Foundation. The project seeks to encourage initiatives, partnerships and cooperation among various sectors to promote cultural action locally and internationally.

The OCL project keeps pace with the Sultanate of Oman's cultural strategy's objectives, notably in terms of promoting innovation, studies and research that enhance creativity and development, and the extent to which these are linked to the pillar of cultural communication.

This is envisaged through the exchange of expertise (in Oman and abroad), cultural dialogue with countries around the world, partnership and integration with relevant local and international institutions.

The OCL aims to strengthen the bonds of cultural and civilizational collaboration and highlight Omani people's efforts and accumulated knowledge through the implementation of research projects, cultural programmes, exhibitions, meetings and other events that explore shared cognitive values with nations through cooperation with cultural and academic institutions abroad.

Direct supervision

Through its direct supervision of the OCL project, the Ministry affirms its commitment to support joint cultural initiatives, integrate institutional efforts and contribute to the effective representation of Omani identity and consolidation of the Sultanate of Oman's presence in the regional and international cultural arenas, based on the concept of cultural diplomacy as a strategic tool for communicating with the world. — ONA

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN
Oman participates in ATM expo in Dubai

1 With the participation of the Sultanate of Oman, the 32nd edition of the Arabian Travel Market exhibition kicked off yesterday in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). >A2

OMAN
Oman, Brunei sign MoU in media field

2 Oman and Brunei signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the media field. >A4

WORLD
Military spending exceeds $2.7 trillion

3 Global military spending reached a new peak in 2024, totalling just over $2.7 trillion. Military spending has been rising steadily over the past 10 years. >A7

OMAN TO SET UP $565 MILLION SOLAR MANUFACTURING PLANT

Oman signed the agreement with JA Solar Energy at the Advantage Oman Forum to set up the plant in SOHAR Freezone

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman has taken a major leap toward expanding its renewable energy landscape with the signing of a $565 million agreement to establish a state-of-the-art solar manufacturing plant in SOHAR Freezone.

Announced during the Advantage Oman Forum in Muscat, the landmark project, facilitated by Invest Oman, underscores the Sultanate's commitment to clean energy and industrial diversification under Oman Vision 2040.

The agreement was signed between JA Solar Energy — one of the world's top four manufacturers and suppliers of high-efficiency solar cells and modules — and key Omani entities including Invest Oman, SOHAR Port and Freezone, and Majis Industrial Services.

With operations scheduled to commence in 2025, the facility will cover 32.8 hectares in the second phase of the SOHAR Freezone.

It will boast an annual production capacity of 6 gigawatts of solar cells and 3 gigawatts of solar modules, serving major markets across Europe, the United States, and the region. The project represents a coordinated effort between multiple government bodies, including the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), the Authority for Public Services Regulation, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), NAMA Supply, and Majis Industrial Services, with Invest Oman playing a central enabling role.

Ibtisam Al Farooji, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, said: "The signing of these landmark agreements underscores Oman's commitment to fostering a competitive and sustainable investment environment.

"This project aligns with Oman Vision 2040 by enhancing renewable energy capabilities, creating economic value, and driving innovation in clean energy technologies. >A2

OMAN

‘Oman puts investors in direct contact with decision-makers’

Advantage Oman Forum 2025 concludes on a high note

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman underscored its commitment to accelerating private sector growth and simplifying investment procedures on Monday during the second day of the Advantage Oman Forum 2025, organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MOCIIP) through Invest Oman.

Addressing international investors and delegates, Ibtisam Al Farooji, Undersecretary for Investment Promotion at MOCIIP, highlighted the government's drive to open up strategic sectors through transparency, fast-tracked facilitation, and direct engagement with policymakers.

“We open the doors to Oman's most strategic and future-focused sectors, and you will meet the senior government officials directly shaping their development,” Al Farooji said.

“From renewable energy and green hydrogen to advanced manufacturing, logistics, digital technologies, sustainable tourism, and fisheries —you'll discover where Oman's priorities meet global demand. Each of these sectors is underpinned by strong fundamentals — whether it's natural endowment, competitive cost structures, or long-term national planning through Oman Vision 2040,” she added.

She further emphasised the government's reform-driven approach.

“Through the efforts of Invest Oman and our network of partners, we have streamlined procedures, cut red tape, and introduced targeted incentives designed to move from interest to investment — swiftly and transparently. We understand that certainty and access are essential. That is why today's format is direct. You are meeting the decision-makers. This includes officials from our free and special economic zones, our development funds, and line ministries — alongside key representatives from the private sector,” she said.

The day featured focused Government-to-Business (G2B) sessions, giving investors unprecedented access to senior officials and industry leaders across Oman's most promising sectors, including clean energy, logistics, digital innovation, tourism, and fisheries.

The signing of a $565 million clean energy manufacturing agreement with JA Solar further demonstrated the Forum's ability to translate discussions into tangible outcomes, reinforcing Oman's proactive strategy to attract high-impact global investments.

As the Forum's official sessions concluded, many visiting CEOs and delegates are set to embark on site visits across Oman, exploring key investment hubs and cultural landmarks to experience firsthand the country's unique blend of economic opportunity and heritage.

‘Project will set a new sustainability benchmark’

< FROM A1

“Through Invest Oman's collaborative efforts, the Sultanate continues to position itself as a global hub for strategic, sustainable investments.”

She added, “As the government's dedicated gateway for investment promotion, Invest Oman played a pivotal role in realising this project. The plant's advanced technology and large-scale production will significantly boost the country's renewable energy potential and contribute to global sustainability efforts.”

Mohammed Al Shizawi, Acting CEO of SOHAR Freezone, highlighted the project's broader significance. He said: “The expansion of SOHAR Freezone highlights our strong appeal to investors and our key role in driving economic growth. With its strategic advantages and advanced infrastructure, the freezone is the perfect foundation for innovative projects like this one. By localising solar panel production, we reduce our carbon footprint and set a new sustainability benchmark, while strengthening the renewable energy cluster and downstream industries.”

Victor Yang, President of JA Solar's Investment and Financing Center, said the plant would strengthen the regional and global solar supply chain. “Our facility marks a significant advancement in the solar PV supply chain. The strategic location within SOHAR Freezone offers essential logistics and positions us in a rapidly growing renewable energy hub. By utilising cutting-edge technologies, we aim to produce high-quality, affordable solar cells and panels that enhance accessibility and attract global investment, while expanding our presence in key markets,” he said.

Fan Jingchao, General Manager of JA Solar OM (FZC) SPC, said: “This facility integrates all key components from polysilicon to modules, and will accelerate the clean energy transition. Our investment strengthens Oman's renewable infrastructure and contributes meaningfully to global sustainability goals.”

With Phase 1 of SOHAR Freezone already 85% leased, Phase 2 — where the new facility will be located — is actively expanding to meet rising demand across its 675 hectares of land. The establishment of this manufacturing plant further solidifies SOHAR Freezone's growing reputation as a strategic hub for sustainable industrial development and global trade.

The solar manufacturing project is poised to play a transformative role in advancing Oman's clean energy transition, driving industrial diversification, and reinforcing the Sultanate's emergence as a regional leader in renewable technologies.

AL BURAIMI GOVERNORATE

Investment in natural resources to boost tourism discussed

AL BURAIMI: The Municipal Council of Al Buraimi Governorate discussed several developmental and service-related topics, most notably the investment in natural resources to promote ecotourism and updates on key infrastructure projects in the governorate.

The discussions took place during a meeting chaired by Sayyid Dr. Hamad Ahmed Al Busaidi, Governor of Al Buraimi and Chairman of the Council.

Visual presentations were given during the meeting, highlighting the environmental investment opportunities and the importance of leveraging natural assets to support sustainable tourism in the governorate.

The meeting reviewed the key achievements of the Directorate General of Agriculture and Water Resources in Al Buraimi during 2024.

Updates were also provided on the ongoing consultancy study for the rainwater drainage project in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi, being carried out by a specialized company. The council stressed the importance of improving the drainage system to safeguard public property and mitigate risks caused by rainfall.

The Chairman of the Municipal Council spoke about the Recreational Centre in Al Buraimi, noting that it will provide recreational facilities for all segments of society, enhancing quality of life and attracting tourism from within and outside the governorate.

He added that these projects will create opportunities for small and medium enterprises to expand their operations, as well as generating job opportunities for local residents, thereby boosting the local economy and serving the community at large.

— ONA

ARABIAN TRAVEL MARKET EXHIBITION

Minister highlights Oman as a leading tourist destination at ATM in Dubai

DUBAI: With the participation of the Sultanate of Oman, the 32nd edition of the Arabian Travel Market exhibition kicked off on Monday in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The 4-day event is themed “Global Travel: Developing Tomorrow's Tourism Through Enhanced Connectivity.”

Oman delegations to the exhibition is headed by Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

Al Mahrouqi stated that the ministry is participating with 37 tourism and hospitality companies and institutions representing the sector, including several small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, the Minister emphasised that Oman's participation in the Arabian Travel Market 2025 in Dubai aligns with its ongoing efforts to strengthen its position on the global tourism map as a leading destination offering experiences that meet the expectations of travellers worldwide.

Omani tourism companies

He noted that this year's participation aims to enhance the presence of Omani tourism companies and institutions in global markets, covering various tourism sectors, including SMEs.

This reflects the ministry's commitment to providing new opportunities for these businesses to expand and boost their international competitiveness.

The Minister added that Oman seeks to attract more investors and international partners through the participation in the exhibition.

The Omani pavilion will host diverse activities, including the signing of strategic partnership agreements with global tourism institutions and the announcement of Khareef Dohfar 2025 season, one of the region's most prominent seasonal tourism events.

Al Mahrouqi further highlighted that the exhibition provides an opportunity to enhance cooperation with regional and international airlines to increase tourist inflows to Oman, alongside tourism promotion and showcasing the ministry's future vision for developing the sector with diverse offerings in line with Oman Vision 2040.

He affirmed that these efforts will reinforce Oman's status as a distinguished global tourism destination rooted in its heritage.

Oman's participation includes several activities, such as meetings between ministers, CEOs, and global and regional airlines, a press conference announcing Khareef Dohfar 2025 events, and the signing of multiple agreements with international tourism entities for promotional partnerships with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

dditionally, direct meetings will be held with travel and tourism operators and service providers.

The Arabian Travel Market 2025 serves as a key platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration among travel and tourism stakeholders, including hotels, airlines, travel agencies, and tour operators, with participation from 161 countries and 2,800 exhibitors.

Statistics indicate that the number of air travellers from the GCC tourism market to Oman reached 1,506,688 by the end of 2024. — ONA

RECOMMENDATIONS OUTLINED

Al Dhahira Municipal Council reviews service-related topics

IBRI: The Municipal Council in Al Dhahira Governorate reviewed the topic of service centres for remote villages through a visual presentation delivered by the Directorate General of Housing and Urban Planning in the governorate, along with a proposal to develop the facades of some commercial districts in the governorate's wilayats.

During its meeting yesterday, chaired by Najib Ali Al Rowas, Governor of Al Dhahira, the council also discussed several recommendations outlined in the minutes of the Social Affairs Committee meeting.

Additionally, the council reviewed a visual presentation from the Directorate General of Labour in Al Dhahira Governorate regarding job opportunities and the number of job seekers in the Governorate.

This meeting is part of the Municipal Council's ongoing efforts to achieve sustainable development and improve service standards in the Governorate.

— ONA

COOPERATION AGREEMENT

Medical City for Military signs pact with JoAnn Medical Group

SHANGHAI: The Medical City for Military and Security Services yesterday signed a cooperation agreement with JoAnn Medical Group in Shanghai, China, to enhance cooperation and coordination with health institutions in the People's Republic of China.

The agreement covers research, transfer of medical technology, development of health services and exchange of expertise and training programmes.

The agreement was signed by Brig. Dr. Abdul Malik Sulaiman Al Kharousi, Assistant Chairman of the Medical City for Supplies and Support Affairs and Joanna Jiang, CEO of JoAnn Medical Group.

The agreement enhances the Medical City's objectives by expanding its network of international partnerships and attracting the best global practices to support the City's system of healthcare for military and security services.

The signing ceremony was attended by Eng. Uday Hilal Al Maawali, Head of the Medical City for Military and Security Services, Nasser Mohammed Al Busaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Republic of China, senior officers from the Medical City, diplomatic staff from the embassy and a number of senior officials from JoAnn Medical Group.

A forum on the future of healthcare and strategic cooperation was held on the sidelines of the ceremony. The forum discussed the most prominent modern trends in healthcare innovation, digital transition and opportunities to boost partnerships in the healthcare sector. — ONA

COMMENTARY

Muscat quietly builds trust: Will experts have the final say?

MOOSA AL FAREI*

Muscat, forever bathed in the light of peace, has once again drawn the world's gaze. A third round of indirect talks between Iran and the United States has just concluded in the Omani capital, reaffirming Oman's rare talent for softening hard positions, narrowing distances and persuading both sides that trust, not discord, will ultimately decide whether hands clasp before official cameras and ink dries on a final accord.

A fourth high-level meeting is tentatively set for 3 May, possibly in Rome for logistical convenience yet still under Omani auspices. Its purpose is to build on hard-won momentum, dispel the remaining fears harboured by each side and remind all parties that, as the Qur'an counsels, leaning toward peace is safer for the region and the wider world than a conflict whose first spark could race far beyond anyone's control.

At the very heart of the tunnel now lies the most sensitive file of all: Iran's nuclear programme. Tehran insists on its sovereign right to peaceful nuclear energy, while Washington fears any path that could lead to a weapon. The coming round may include specialists from the International Atomic Energy Agency, opening the door for Iran to accept rigorous inspections and cap enrichment at internationally acceptable levels. The road ahead is neither easy nor strewn with roses, yet Oman advances with its trademark calm, deep understanding and patience, just as its geography bridges East and West. By shelving side issues, focusing dialogue and stacking bricks of confidence one upon another, Muscat has already melted ice that had thickened over years. Now that a wall of trust has begun to rise, both delegations have agreed, in Qur'anic words, "so ask about Him one well informed." The discerning eyes of technical experts could help diplomats reach their strategic goals, crafting an agreement born of peace rather than hostility and carried on the optimism the world so urgently needs.

To be continued...

** The writeris a media personality and a visiting lecturer at the University of Cambridge*

BAIT AL FALAJ CAMP

Chairman of Academy for Strategic, Defence Studies receives Iranian delegation

MUSCAT: Maj. Gen Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies received in his office at Bait Al Falaj Camp on Monday a delegation from the Supreme National Defence University of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Several matters discussed

The two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest, notably in academic fields.

The meeting was attended by Commodore Khalid Amir Al Salti, Director General of Studies and Academic Affairs and the Military Attaché at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Muscat.

Iranian military delegation visits NDC

A delegation from the Supreme National Defense University of the Islamic Republic of Iran yesterday visited the National Defence College (NDC) at Bait Al Falaj Camp.

The guests were greeted upon their arrival at the college by Brigadier Mansoor Ali Al Amri, Acting Commandant of the NDC.

Strategic curricula

Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the college's facilities and its strategic curricula, which focuses on preparing national competencies capable of taking strategic decisions at various levels.

They also toured the NDC's departments and various halls. — ONA

END OF HIS TOUR OF DUTY

Minister of Royal Office receives UAE Ambassador

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office received in his office on Monday Mohammed Nakhira Al Dhaheri, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the Sultanate of Oman to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty as his country's ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman.

Joint cooperation

Al Nu'amani expressed his appreciation to the ambassador for the efforts he exerted in enhancing bilateral relations and areas of joint cooperation between the two countries, wishing the ambassador success in his future endeavours.

On his turn, the ambassador expressed his appreciation for the cooperation extended to him. He also lauded the strength of relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

— ONA

TWO-DAY EVENT

Foundation for a national urban air mobility ecosystem sought

MUSCAT: The activities of the Urban Air Mobility Forum, organized by the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, commenced on Monday with broad participation from government and private entities, academic institutions, and international organisations specialising in aviation, aerospace, and advanced technologies.

The event was inaugurated by Hamoud Musabah Al Alawi, Acting CEO of Oman Airports.

A professional dialogue

The two-day forum aims to launch a strategic and professional dialogue on developing urban air mobility systems in Oman—a key component of the integrated transportation framework—to enhance innovation, employment, and quality of life in Omani cities.

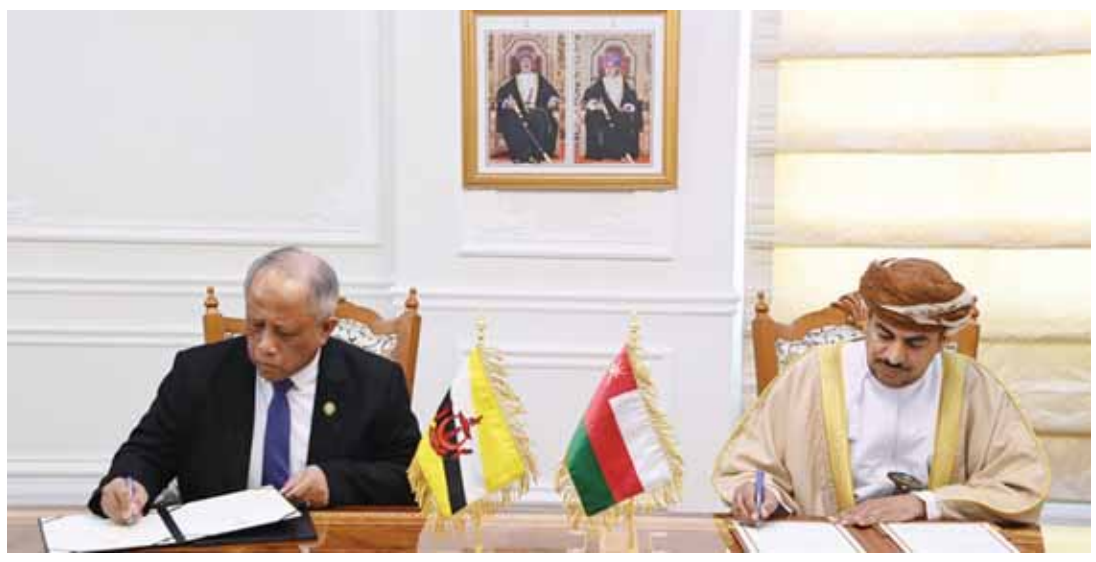
Additionally, the forum seeks to establish the foundation for a national urban air mobility ecosystem by engaging stakeholders, aligning visions on investment priorities, infrastructure, regulations, and drafting a live-testing programme.

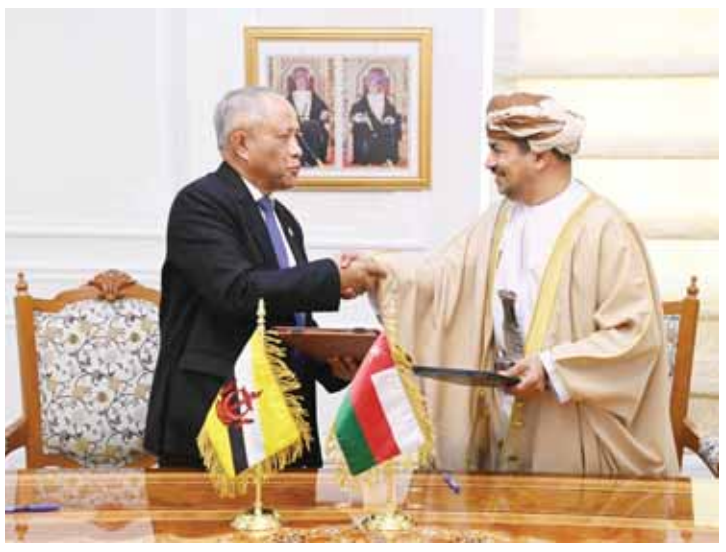
It will explore investment opportunities in this emerging sector, develop advanced mobility products and services, and outline key directions for the national urban air mobility strategy, covering regulatory, technical, and economic frameworks. — ONA

OMAN

Oman, Brunei Darussalam sign MoU to enhance cooperation in media field

The MoU includes provisions for the exchange of radio, television, and news materials and programmes, sharing expertise in various media fields, training, and exchange visits





MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and Brunei Darussalam on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the media field. The MoU was signed at the general Diwan of the Ministry of Information in Muscat.

The MoU includes provisions for the exchange of radio, television, and news materials and programmes, sharing expertise in various media fields, training, and exchange visits. The agreement was signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, and on behalf of Brunei Darussalam by Yang Berhormat Pehin Dato Lailaraja Major General (Retired) Dato Paduka Seri Awang Haji Halbi bin Haji Mohammad Yussof, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister of Defence of Brunei Darussalam.

The visiting minister toured the Digital Studios Complex at the Ministry of Information. During his tour, he was briefed on the media and news services provided by the Ministry. He also observed the advanced tools and cutting-edge technical programmes that meet the requirements of modern media work.

In a press statement, the Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister of Defence of Brunei Darussalam lauded the advanced technologies and modern digital means that reflect the comprehensive media development in the Sultanate of Oman. This advancement, he affirmed, is a qualitative leap in producing media content that aligns with the highest global standards.

He expressed his hope that the MoU signed on Monday between the two sides would further enhance joint cooperation in media, training, and the exchange of expertise. – ONA

AYN FOR KIDS INTERFACE

Kid-friendly content in comprehensive learning environment

MUSCAT: Amid the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution and the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence—coupled with the evolution of media content delivery technologies such as smartphones and tablets, modern parenting faces genuine challenges in many societies. These challenges revolve around preserving principles, identity, and ethical values in the face of child-targeted content from various satellite and digital channels carrying foreign cultures, customs, and values.

The Ministry of Information launched last Thursday "Ayn for Kids", a kid's interface on Ayn platform, designed to enrich content tailored for this age group. The initiative aims to provide children with knowledge resources that shape their awareness, develop their personalities, and strengthen their national identity, aligning with the Royal vision and directives, as well as the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Noura Mohammed Al Zadjali, a parent, expressed her joy at the launch, stating: "The newly-launched interface will serve as a vital model connecting generations to the authentic values of Omani society through content rooted in our culture and reinforcing our national identity—all via easily accessible programs for our children."

Speaking to Oman News Agency (ONA), she noted that what sets this interface apart is its alignment with the rapid developments in life and the dominance of technology across all fields. "Our children cannot remain isolated from it; they engage with what platforms broadcast, and we cannot deny the valuable content that enriches them with information and skills." She added that these platforms have replaced traditional TV channels for several reasons, including content diversity, choices, and flexible viewing schedules.

"As parents, we highly value anything that contributes to raising children soundly, ensuring their exposure to safe content. The 'Kids Interface' on Ayn platform will significantly ease our selection of secure, thought-provoking content that enriches their free time," she added.

Dr. Maamar Ali Al Toubi, an AI specialist, told Oman News Agency that the launch represents a qualitative shift in Oman's media landscape. "This initiative should not be viewed merely as additional children's content but as a milestone in the national transition toward interactive digital media—a strategic step responding to technological changes reshaping humanity's relationship with knowledge, especially among younger generations," affirmed Dr. Maamar.

"In a world where smart screens surpass paper and a 'click' is faster than flipping pages, media institutions must reformulate their tools to align with new consumption patterns," he said. He described "Aynfor Kids" as a conscious response to this challenge, offering not just traditional child-oriented content but a holistic vision where knowledge is framed in contemporary language and media literacy begins in childhood—when cognitive perceptions and identity are formed.

He emphasised that the interface's significance lies in transitioning Omani children from passive consumers of globalized digital content—often influenced by unregulated digital globalization—to active participants in a culturally and ethically tailored digital environment.

"This shifts media from one-way broadcasting to interactive engagement, granting children the right to explore and experiment within a safe space." He stressed that "Ayn for Kids" is not an imitation of foreign models but an Omani-designed framework merging educational messaging with technical appeal.

From another technical perspective, he noted that the interface reflects a deep understanding of digital security needs, providing children with curated content that shields their awareness from misinformation. "It offers an attractive alternative to the randomness of globalized content, which often lacks alignment with our Arab and Islamic cultures," he further noted.

He regarded Ayn for Kids as a digital incubator for Omani identity, explaining that the Ministry of Information launched it not merely as a technical solution but as part of a national project transitioning from traditional media to an interactive, inclusive, and innovative media environment—proactively shaping the new generation's consciousness.

Dr. Ahoud Said Al Balushi, member of the State Council told Oman News Agency that the launch of a dedicated digital platform for children in the Sultanate of Oman holds significant educational, cultural, and social value—especially amid the vast digital exposure children face today.

The platform will provide a safe online environment, mitigating risks associated with children accessing age-inappropriate or culturally unsuitable websites and applications, she affirmed.

She added that the platform will also help bridge the digital gap in Arabic child-oriented content by offering interactive, enriching educational material aligned with Oman's core values and principles, while reinforcing national identity. The initiative considers the diverse needs of different age groups, particularly in promoting digital inclusion for children with visual and hearing impairments.

Additionally, allocating space for child content creators will directly nurture their creativity in content production and foster future media talents, enhancing Oman's media landscape, she further added.

Dr. Al Balushi emphasised that shaping young minds requires collaborative efforts across societal institutions. This child-centric platform will undoubtedly serve as a key educational tool, strengthening Omani culture and values—integral elements in all its programmes—though the primary guidance must still come from the child's immediate environment.

As a digital platform tailored to this generation's interests, she noted, it will have a direct impact by delivering knowledge through engaging, enjoyable experiences. However, its success hinges on effective content curation by creators and administrators, as well as strategic marketing amid the vast competition in the virtual space.

Meanwhile, Abdullah Hamad Al Harthy, Head of the Media, Tourism, and Culture Committee at the Shura Council, stresses to Oman News Agency the importance of the launch, which seeks to foster a generation equipped with knowledge, values, and ethics—capable of navigating change while preserving identity. "The platform steers the course correctly with its Omani-centric values and ethics, directly engaging Omani society, especially children," he said.

He stressed the need for collaboration with child literature specialists to develop captivating scientific content aligned with Oman's nature, values, and heritage—rooted in religion, civilization, and timeless traditions. "Content must match children's ambitions and goals, focusing on science paired with games and entertainment," he affirmed.

He highlighted that the launch comes amid rapid technological acceleration, serving as an essential alternative for children—ensuring their future safety, behavioral correction, and habit formation. "The interface provides a safe environment combining diverse ideas, activities, and fields." He urged partnerships between the platform, the Ministry of Education, and other institutions to encourage student engagement.

"Delivering information in an engaging manner is among the platform's core tasks—to nurture and showcase children's talents, establishing a base for gifted contributors," added Al Harthy.

He noted that interacting with digital content is now an inevitable reality, necessitating child awareness and monitoring. "Self-regulation must be reinforced through values instilled at home, school, and society, highlighting the dangers of global digital content."

He underscored the importance of encouraging children to embrace scientific and technological advancements while fostering creativity in producing content aligned with Omani values—protecting society from disruptive influences that alter behaviors and attitudes.

Dr. Wafa Salim Al Shamsi, a child literature specialist, told Oman News Agency that the kids interface in Ayn platform is a strategic step toward building a safe, rich digital knowledge environment for Omani children—bridging cultural authenticity and technological modernity.

She added that the interface can deliver literary content respecting local cultural context, promoting Arabic reading to strengthen linguistic and national identity. It also provides opportunities for Omani writers and illustrators to contribute to high-quality digital literary content, fostering internal cultural movement and regional collaboration.

On how the content enhances children's awareness, she said: "Awareness isn't built solely on information but through stories, examples, and internal dialogue. When content is presented intelligently, it cultivates critical thinking, discernment, empathy, and imagination via enjoyable, interactive texts—simplifying complex concepts like environmental protection, tolerance, and digital security in developmentally appropriate ways.

Values should be woven into dramatic contexts where children empathize with characters, not just receive lessons."

She suggested parents use the interface for shared daily reading, strengthening family bonds and developing language and listening skills. "The platform can offer audiobooks and visual content, suitable even for preschoolers, while allowing parents to track interests and engage in post-reading discussions—transforming stories into dialogue gateways." A parental guide on maximizing content for value reinforcement would be essential.

On the importance of child interaction with digital content, she stressed: "Interaction is key in the digital age. Passive consumption is insufficient—today's children crave touch, choice, and influence. The interface can enhance this through interactive stories, literary-based educational games, and creative competitions, fostering not just language skills but creativity, artistry, and decision-making—vital 21st-century competencies."

The kids interface in Ayn platform offers multifaceted content—educational, entertaining, and cultural—including cartoons, programs, audio content, audiobooks, and more for ages 4–18. It delivers a carefully designed digital edutainment experience with a visually appealing, child-friendly interface featuring vibrant colors inspired by Ayn. Accessibility for children with hearing or visual impairments is prioritised.

The key features include safe content reinforcing national identity and ethics; Exclusive Ayn platform content; Personalized child accounts with cartoon avatars; Offline content download; Search functionality for audio/visual materials; Resume-watching/listening features; And a space for child content creators, showcasing young innovators and fostering future media models. – ONA

ACADEMIC DELEGATION

Oman, India explore ways to boost strategic partnership in higher education, research

MUSCAT: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences on Monday received an academic delegation from the Republic of India, represented by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

The visit aims to explore avenues of cooperation in higher education and scientific research, as well as to strengthen strategic partnerships between academic institutions in both countries.

Dr. Said Hamad Al Rubaie, Vice Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, emphasised the importance of enhancing academic relations and expanding cooperation between the two sides to support efforts aimed at building knowledge-based societies founded on scientific research, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

During the visit, several key topics were discussed, including opportunities for joint research projects in energy transition, decarbonisation, emerging technologies, and artificial intelligence.

The discussions also covered capacity-building through specialised workshops and training programmes, student and faculty exchange programmes, the establishment of joint research centers of excellence, and the sharing of research infrastructure such as laboratories and scientific testing facilities.

Additionally, mechanisms to support entrepreneurship through business incubators and accelerators were reviewed, along with the importance of integrating academic and industrial sectors to strengthen the innovation ecosystem. The visiting delegation watched a presentation outlining the University of Technology and Applied Sciences' journey, its key strategic priorities focused on innovation, research, and entrepreneurship, and the existing programmes and initiatives supporting these objectives. — ONA

MAKING A POINT: The visit also aims to explore avenues of cooperation in scientific research, as well as to strengthen partnerships between academic institutions in both countries. — ONA

SMARTEN UP DRIVE SAFE

A TIMES OF OMAN HANDS-FREE DRIVING INITIATIVE

Asset Management
Bank Muscat Oryx Fund

Investing in stocks on MENA markets
(Daily subscription and redemption)

10 years*: 130.58%
*absolute

Unaudited Statement of Comprehensive Income for 3 months ended 31st March 2025

	31-Mar-25 RO'000	31-Mar-24 RO'000
Income		
Dividends	529	512
	529	**512**
Expenses:		
Management fees	(289)	(287)
General and administrative	(148)	(171)
	(437)	**(458)**
Net Investment Income	**92**	**54**
Fair value Gain or (Loss)	543	2,185
Realised Gain or (Loss) on sale	(693)	(64)
Net (Loss)/Profit for the period	**(58)**	**2,175**
Earnings per unit	**(0.003)**	**0.113**

Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as at 31st March 2025

	31-Mar-25 RO'000	31-Mar-24 RO'000
Assets		
Investments - at Fair Value	60,630	61,184
Dividend Receivables	292	214
Bank Balances	1,203	1,057
Total Assets	**62,125**	**62,455**
Liabilities:		
Accruals	(116)	(127)
	(116)	**(127)**
Net Assets	**62,009**	**62,328**
Composition of net assets:		
Units issued	19,496	19,244
Retained Earnings	42,513	43,084
Net Assets Value (NAV)	**62,009**	**62,328**
Net Asset Value (NAV) per unit (Rial)	**3.181**	**3.239**

Note: Due to figures displayed in 000's, immaterial variance is likely with actual numbers. The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any Unitholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of request.

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MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of Ministry of Social Development hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					small and Medium companies	local companies
86/2025 (Resubmission)	Supply of a paper recycling machine (for workshops) to Al Wafa Center for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities at Salalah	Companies specialized in supplying office and educational tools, materials and supplies, information and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Tuesday 13-05-2025 02:00 PM	Tuesday 27-05-2025 10:00 AM	**10 R.O**	**25 R.O**
170/2025	Construction work on a warehouse in the Department of Social Development at the Wilayat of Bahla	Companies specialized in construction contracting and maintenance and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the fourth degree	Tuesday 13-05-2025 02:00 PM	Tuesday 27-05-2025 10:00 AM	**10 R.O**	**25 R.O**
171/2025	Project to establish a water therapy unit at the Association for the Care of Children with Disabilities at Jalan Bani Bu Hassan	Companies specialized in construction contracting and maintenance and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Sunday 11-05-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 22-05-2025 10:00 AM	**10 R.O**	**25 R.O**
172/2025	Project to establish a hydrotherapy unit at the Association for the Care of Children with Disabilities at Al-Mudhaibi	Companies specialized in construction contracting and maintenance and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Sunday 11-05-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 22-05-2025 10:00 AM	**10 R.O**	**25 R.O**
173/2025	Project to establish a hydrotherapy unit at the Association for the Care of Children with Disabilities at Sur	Companies specialized in construction contracting and maintenance and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board first degree	Sunday 11-05-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 22-05-2025 10:00 AM	**10 R.O**	**25 R.O**
174/2025	Consulting services for the expansion of the Al-Wafa Center at Al-Mudhaibi	Companies specialized in construction contracting and maintenance and registered with the General Secretariat of the the Tender Board with an excellent or first degree	Monday 19-05-2025 02:00 PM	Tuesday 03-06-2025 10:00 AM	**10 R.O**	**25 R.O**
175/2025	Supplying building materials for the maintenan ce of the Ministry's General Diwan building	Companies specialized in construction contracting and maintenance and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the fourth degree	Tuesday 06-05-2025 02:00 PM	Tuesday 13-05-2025 10:00 AM	**10 R.O**	**25 R.O**

- Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link **(https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)**, on Tuesday 22/04/2025
- For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website **(reg@tenderboard.gov.om)** Tel. (24402200)

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry "

www.mosd.gov.om

OMAN

REVIEWED THE FACILITIES

Sayyid Badr and Saudi counterpart visit Empty Quarter border crossing

IBRI: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, yesterday visited the the Empty Quarter border crossing linking the two countries.

During the visit, the two ministers reviewed the facilities and the services provided by the crossing boarder to enhance commercial, tourist, and transit traffic.

This comes as part of the ongoing cooperation and integration between the two countries across various fields, reflecting the distinguished fraternal ties between their peoples.

The visit underscores the mutual commitment to bolstering logistical and economic cooperation, in line with the aspirations of both countries' leadership under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Oman's Vision 2040.

Earlier in the day, Sayyid Badr had received Prince Faisal bin Farhan in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar, A'Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The two sides discussed avenues of bilateral cooperation and joint initiatives within the context of the Omani-Saudi Coordination Council, aimed at serving the interests of their two peoples.

On the political front, the two ministers touched the most significant regional and international developments and the ongoing efforts to address them through political and diplomatic means.

The two ministers emphasised the importance of sustaining coordination and consultation, as well as enhancing joint cooperation to bring further benefits to the two countries and other nations in the region. They also stressed that such efforts would bolster regional security and stability and support sustainable development initiatives. — ONA

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MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Meeting reviews early childhood development centres project

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development yesterday held a high-level meeting to discuss the national project for integrated early childhood development centres.

Chaired by Dr. Laila Ahmed Al-Najjar, Minister of Social Development, the meeting reviewed the final study results of the integrated early childhood development centres project. Discussions also covered the project's legal framework and its national rollout plan. — ONA

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TENDER NOTICE

REF: ISD/ADMIN/TENDER/2025-26/001

Indian School Darsait is seeking bids from suitably qualified vendors who have experience in the execution of the following services:

1	Enhancement of Primary School Playground
2	Refurbishment of Admin. Office, Principal's Office, Meeting Room and Reception
3	Refurbishment of Staff Room (2 Nos.) - Primary Section

Interested parties shall collect the Tender documents from the school admin office against the payment of **RO 10/-** each as a non-refundable Tender fee from **29 April 2025 to 04 May 2025** during the working days **(Sunday to Thursday)** of the school between **07:30 a.m. and 02:00 p.m**.
The completed Tender shall be dropped in the Tender Box kept in the school office on or before **08 May 2025 by 2.00 p.m.**
The school reserves the right to reject any tender without providing any reason and does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.
The Tender document should be submitted in a sealed envelope , addressed to **The Head Purchase Subcommittee, Indian School Darsait,** PO Box 1551,PC114, Darsait, Muscat.

Principal

PUBLIC HEALTH LAW

Comprehensive framework to protect community well-being

MUSCAT: The Public Health Law, issued under Royal Decree No. 44/2025, establishes an integrated system of scientific and practical regulations aimed at enhancing the health and safety of society.

As a national priority within Oman Vision 2040, the law seeks to provide comprehensive health services that ensure universal healthcare access while improving the quality of care through collaborative efforts between health sectors and relevant stakeholders.

The legislation encompasses all aspects of public health, setting forth general principles to safeguard individuals' physical, mental, psychological, and social well-being.

It focuses on disease prevention and maintaining a healthy environment free from pollutants that could harm public health. The law serves as a unified reference for standardising public health concepts, defining the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, and strengthening coordination mechanisms. It also promotes the development of health programs for disease prevention, control, and treatment, while enhancing public immunity and outlining legal and operational frameworks for public health.

Among its key provisions, the law defines preventive, curative, and rehabilitative health services for citizens, residents, and visitors in Oman. It guarantees patient rights, protects vulnerable groups, and enhances cross-sector coordination in public health initiatives.

The law also addresses infectious disease control, border health measures, environmental health policies, and bioethical issues such as cloning, organ transplantation, and reproductive health.

A central objective of the Public Health Law is to create a robust regulatory system that strengthens health protection and fosters local and international cooperation in addressing public health challenges. It also aims to raise public awareness about health risks and preventive measures.

The first chapter of the law ensures equitable access to healthcare services for all individuals through public, private, and public-private partnership institutions, with explicit protections against discrimination in healthcare provision. The second chapter safeguards physical and mental health by prohibiting any actions that could harm an individual's well-being.

Meanwhile, the third chapter mandates coordinated strategies to combat infectious diseases and epidemics, while the fourth chapter establishes policies for food safety, occupational health, and environmental protection, including standardised regulations for food production. — ONA

IN 2024

Military spending tops $2.7tn; US, Russia, China, India and Germany lead

STOCKHOLM: Amid the major global conflicts, including the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Israel-Palestine conflict, world military expenditure reached USD2718 billion in 2024, an increase of 9.4 per cent in real terms from 2023 and the steepest year-on-year rise since at least the end of the cold war, according to new data by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Military spending increased in all world regions, with particularly rapid growth in both Europe and the Middle East. The top five military spenders--the United States, China, Russia, Germany and India--accounted for 60 per cent of the global total, with combined spending of $1635 billion.

SIPRI, an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament, in its report on Monday, stated that military spending in Europe (including Russia) rose by 17 per cent to USD 693 billion and was the main contributor to the global increase in 2024. All European countries increased their military spending in 2024 except Malta.

Russia's military expenditure reached an estimated USD 149 billion in 2024, a 38 per cent increase from 2023 and double the level in 2015. This represented 7.1 per cent of Russia's GDP and 19 per cent of all Russian government spending. Ukraine's total military expenditure grew by 2.9 per cent to reach USD 64.7 billion, equivalent to 43 per cent of Russia's spending. At 34 per cent of GDP, Ukraine had the largest military burden of any country in 2024.

Several countries in Central and Western Europe saw unprecedented rises in their military expenditure in 2024 as they implemented new spending pledges and large-scale procurement plans. Germany's military expenditure increased by 28 per cent to reach USD 88.5 billion, making it the biggest spender in Central and Western Europe and the fourth biggest in the world. Poland's military spending grew by 31 per cent to USD 38.0 billion in 2024, representing 4.2 per cent of Poland's GDP, SIPRI noted.

All NATO members also raised their military expenditure in 2024. Total military spending by NATO members amounted to USD 1506 billion, or 55 per cent of global military expenditure. Of the 32 NATO members, 18 spent at least 2.0 per cent of GDP on their militaries, up from 11 in 2023 and the highest number since NATO adopted the spending guideline in 2014.

Military spending by the US rose by 5.7 per cent to reach USD 997 billion, which was 66 per cent of total NATO spending and 37 per cent of world military spending in 2024.

Military expenditure in the Middle East reached an estimated $243 billion in 2024, an increase of 15 per cent from 2023 and 19 per cent more than in 2015. -ANI

MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT

Several injured in Florida ferry collision

CLEARWATER : Several people were injured after a ferry carrying more than 40 passengers collided with another boat near Clearwater, Florida, police said on Saturday, CBS News reported.

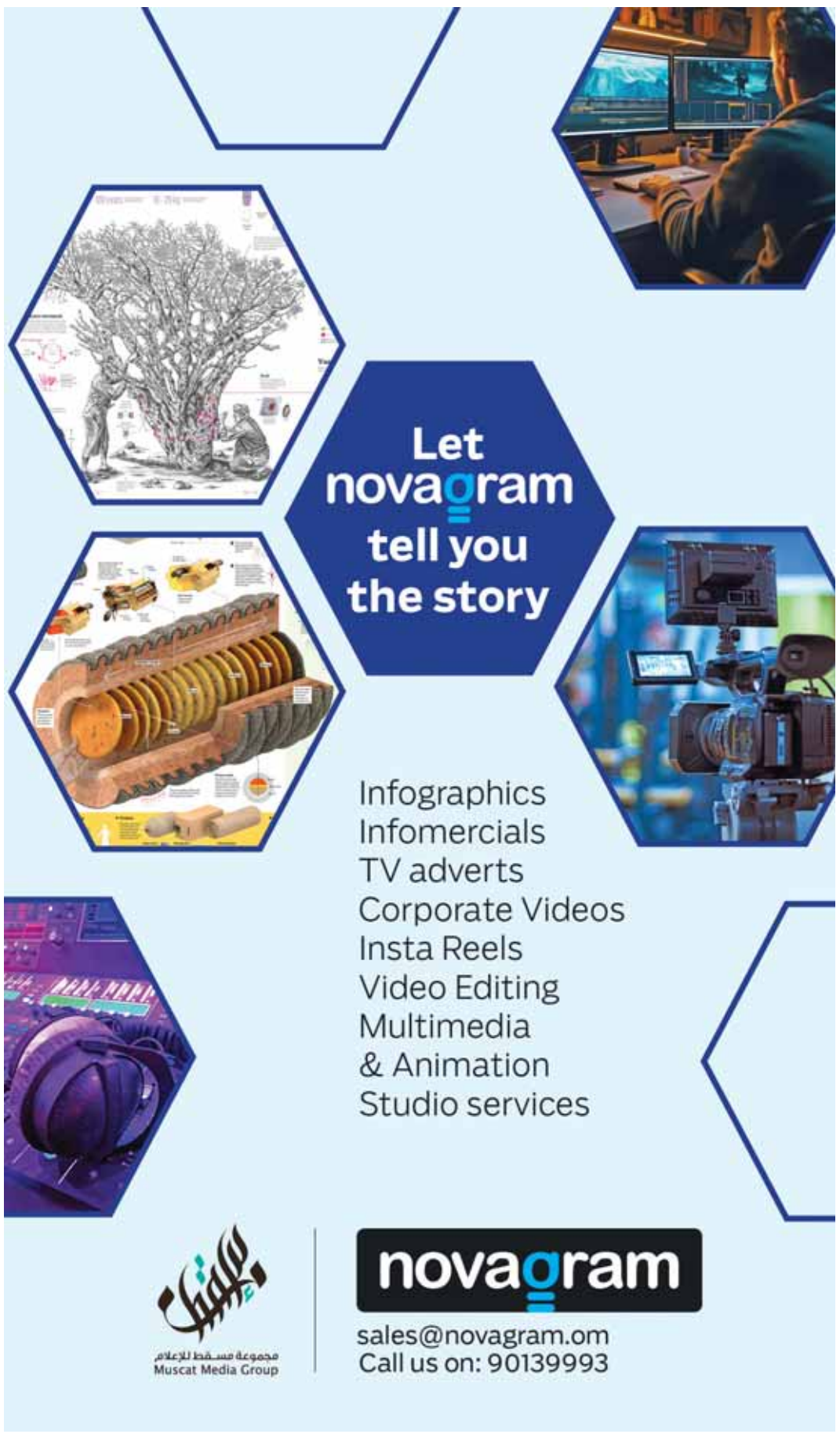
Emergency crews declared the situation a mass casualty incident as police and fire teams rushed to the scene.

According to the Clearwater Police Department, six individuals were classified as "trauma alerts," with two of the more seriously injured passengers transported by helicopter for medical treatment. Authorities did not immediately release the total number of injuries.

The collision involved a Clearwater Ferry and another boat, which authorities said fled the scene after the crash. All those who sustained injuries were passengers aboard the ferry, which came to a stop on a sandbar just south of the Memorial Causeway bridge, reported CBS News.

Police confirmed that all passengers, including those injured, were safely removed from the vessel.

The U.S. Coast Guard stated that the boat which left the scene was a recreational vehicle, but no further details about it were available. The Clearwater Memorial Causeway bridge, near where the incident occurred, connects Clearwater to Clearwater Beach, a popular area for tourists and locals, CBS News reported. Authorities are continuing their investigation to locate the second vessel involved in the crash.



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Born in Oman, Heard Everywhere

SPORTS

Oman seal historic win at AHF Cup

Oman defeated Chinese Taipei in the final to win their first-ever title at the 2025 Men's AHF Cup in Jakarta on Sunday

MUSCAT: Oman's national hockey team made history on Sunday when it lifted the 2025 Men's AHF Cup, organised by the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF), for the first time.

In a thrilling final played in Jakarta, Indonesia, Oman edged past Chinese Taipei 4-3 to stamp their authority in the event in style.

The win marked a milestone in the country's sporting history and served as a double delight, as Oman had earlier qualified for the upcoming 2025 Asia Cup, which will be held in India later this year.

The 2025 Men's AHF Cup, a quadrennial tournament held since 1997, saw the participation of ten national teams.

For Oman, coached by former Oman skipper Mohammed Hubais, the win is a testament of hard work put in by the boys and the coaching staff along with the support of the Oman Hockey Association (OHA).

Previously, Oman had come close to victory on four occasions, finishing as the runner-up in 1997, 2008, 2012, and 2022. Barring the first edition in 1997, when Oman lost to hosts Hong Kong, the other three occasions, Oman had lost to Bangladesh in the respective finals.

The Men in Red, however, got the better of their regular nemesis in the semi-final, winning 5-4.

The final against Chinese Taipei was an intense and action-packed affair. Chinese Taipei took the lead early in the match when Wei Cheng-Zi scored in the 4th minute, capitalising on a fast-paced counterattack. However, Oman quickly equalised in the 12th minute, with Rashad Al Fazari scoring from a penalty corner to bring the score to 1–1 by the end of the first quarter.

Oman started to dominate possession in the second quarter, and Shafi Al Shafari gave the team a 2–1 lead in the 22nd minute. Five minutes later, Elias Al Noufali extended the advantage to 3–1 with a well-placed goal. Despite some defensive lapses, Oman maintained their edge, and although Chinese Taipei pulled one back with a goal from Tsung-Yu Hsieh, Oman ended the second quarter with a 3–2 lead.

In the third quarter, Chinese Taipei equalised again through Huang Lin-Yu in the 43rd minute, but Oman did not let the momentum slip.

In the 45th minute, Ayman Madheet scored a crucial fourth goal, giving Oman the lead once more. The final quarter was a tense battle, but Oman's defence held firm, and the team successfully repelled repeated attacks from Chinese Taipei.

Oman's performance in Jakarta was a showcase of resilience, discipline, and tactical brilliance, with each player contributing to the collective success. Throughout the tournament, Oman displayed their superiority, staying unbeaten in their group-stage matches.

They were placed in Group A alongside Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Uzbekistan, and Singapore.

Oman began their campaign with a 3-1 win over Singapore and then defeated Hong Kong by a similar scoreline. They beat Uzbekistan 4-2 and drew with Chinese Taipei 4-4 in their concluding league match.

Omani-led coaching staff

A notable aspect of the latest title victory is the fact that Oman's coaching team is an all-Omani setup.

Led by former national team captain Hubais, this is a maiden and major success for the all-Omani technical team. The success has proven that local leadership and expertise can guide the team to encouraging results.

Hubais expressed immense pride and satisfaction with the team's performance, highlighting the dedication of his staff and players.

"Winning the AHF Cup for the first time in the history is a moment of great pride for every Omani. This achievement carries even greater significance thanks to the pure national leadership of both the technical and administrative staff, who demonstrated their competence and ability to achieve continental success," Hubais said.

The Men's AHF Cup 2025 saw intense action in the classification matches as teams fought for their final rankings. Bangladesh took the bronze with a 3-0 win over Kazakhstan. In the 5th/6th place playoff, Hong Kong edged out Uzbekistan with a narrow 4-3 victory while Sri Lanka wrapped up their tournament with a 6-4 win over Thailand in the 7th/8th place playoff. Meanwhile, Indonesia triumphed 5-3 over Singapore in the battle for 9th place.

OHA chief lauds team's resilience

MUSCAT: Dr. Marwan Al Juma, President of the Oman Hockey Association (OHA), praised the team's resilience and strategic planning after the national team won gold at the 2025 AHF Cup.

Al Juma noted that the success was built on lessons learned from past near-misses. "At last, we were able to break Bangladesh's streak. It was the result of dedication and strategic planning after the finals in 2022, where we lost to Bangladesh in a shootout," he said.

Al Juma added: "Prior to the 2022 finals in Jakarta, we had also lost to Bangladesh in the final in 2012 in Bangkok and also in 2008, played in Singapore.

Speaking from Jakarta, Al Juma said: "We are proud to say that we dominated this tournament and won gold with our own 100% Omani technical team, which is a first."

Shakir Munir, OHA Technical Director, expressed his delight in the team's accomplishment, calling it a "dream come true".

"Witnessing our team clinch the first-ever AHF Cup is nothing short of a dream come true," he told Times of Oman from Jakarta. "This victory is not just a testament to our players' hard work and dedication but also a reflection of our hockey association's growing prowess in the world of hockey."

Dr. Marwan Al Juma

Shakir Munir

Munir credited the team's preparations, emphasising the importance of the intense training and strategic planning that led to the victory. He said: "From the intense training sessions to a pre-tournament camp in Pakistan, careful planning has led us to this historic achievement."

"This triumph ignites a new era for Hockey Oman, inspiring the next generation and heralding Oman's potential in the global hockey family."

With the victory now in the books, Oman's focus shifts to the upcoming Asia Cup in India.

Mohammed Al Gharabi, the administrative supervisor of the team, outlined the future plans for the team. "We will continue to intensify training in the coming period to prepare for the Asia Cup. The focus will be on refining individual skills, tactical drills, and further enhancing physical readiness," he said.

"We are confident these preparations will significantly raise our performance level."

IPL 2025

Kohli stresses importance of partnerships and rotating strike

NEW DELHI: Virat Kohli believes that modern-day T20 cricket is losing sight of the importance of taking the game deep and building partnerships, especially in a season where batters are finding it difficult to hit from the outset.

Kohli, a seasoned campaigner for Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB), has been instrumental in guiding his side through tricky chases in IPL 2025. Notably, he has scored half-centuries in all four successful chases, including a crucial knock (51) against Delhi Capitals on Sunday night, where RCB was set a challenging target of 163 and they won by six wickets with nine balls to spare.

Against a slow pitch, Kohli played a supporting role to Krunal Pandya (73*) in their 119-run partnership, with the latter taking on the acceleration.

While Pandya raced to 73 off 47 balls, Kohli anchored the chase with a steady 51 off 47 balls, before being dismissed while attempting a six off Dushmantha Chameera.

Reflecting on his approach, Kohli explained the value of partnerships and maintaining a steady rhythm during chases, even in challenging conditions.

"In T20s, people are forgetting the importance of stitching together partnerships or taking the innings deep," Kohli said during the post-match interview.

"This season, you can see that it's not easy for batters to come out and start hitting from ball one. It requires professionalism, the ability to read the situation, and to get yourself into a position where you can dominate later on."

Kohli also highlighted the key aspects he considers when chasing a target: the total on the board, pitch conditions, the bowlers to come, and how to read the game.

"I focus on rotating the strike with singles and doubles to keep the game moving, while trying to hit an occasional boundary. The game shouldn't stagnate," Kohli said.

"Understanding what the situation demands and having the skills to rotate the strike is crucial, especially on slower pitches."

Chasing 163, RCB faced early adversity, reducing them to a precarious 26 for 3 after just four overs. Despite the early setback, Kohli's composure ensured that RCB stayed on course, allowing Krunal to gain momentum. Kohli's innings, coupled with the duo's 100-run partnership, helped RCB recover and eventually win the match.

"Whenever there's a chase or a situation, I check with the dugout about our progress and what role I need to play," Kohli added. "It was a top win, especially with the pressure at 3 for 26, and Krunal and I contributing with a crucial 100-run partnership."

With 245 runs from four successful chases this season, Kohli has been in exceptional form. His consistency has led him to be the season's leading run-scorer, with 443 runs from 10 matches — an impressive feat, particularly since his knock against Delhi was the first time he was dismissed while batting second in IPL 2025.

Brief scores: Royal Challengers Bengaluru 165 for 4 (Krunal Pandya 73*, Virat Kohli 51; Axar Patel 2-19) beat Delhi Capitals 162 for 8 (KL Rahul 41, Tristian Stubbs 34; Bhuvneshwar Kumar 3-33, Josh Hazlewood 2-36) by six wickets

OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by June 2025 reaching $67.34, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 43 Cents from the price of Friday, which was $67.77. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,292.01 points, up by 0.3% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended up by 1.57% at 403.96 points. National Aluminium, up 20.00%, was the top gainer while, SMN Power Holding, down 5.68%, was the top loser.

Lending by listed GCC banks reaches new record of $2.17tn

Although the q-o-q growth dropped to a three-quarter low level of 2.4% in Q4-2024 against 3.1% during the previous quarter. The y-o-y growth continued to remain steady in double digits at 10.4%

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Aggregate lending by listed banks in the GCC continued to show quarter-on-quarter (q-o-q) growth during the fourth quarter of 2024, according to a new study.

This was backed by growth in all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) markets, barring Qatar that registered a marginal decline during the quarter, the Kuwait-based Kamco Invest said in its latest GCC Banking Sector Report – Q4-2024 April-2025.

"Aggregate gross loans at the GCC level reached a new record high of $2.17 trillion, although the q-o-q growth dropped to a three-quarter low level of 2.4% in Q4-2024 against 3.1% during the previous quarter. The y-o-y growth continued to remain steady in double digits at 10.4%," the report said. "Banks in Saudi Arabia reported the biggest absolute q-o-q gross loan growth in the GCC during Q4-2024 mainly led by healthy lending in almost all sectors. Gross loans growth for Saudi-listed banks came in at $22.3 billion or 3% to reach $759.6 billion during Q4-2024," the report further added.

UAE and Kuwaiti banks were next with lending growth of $15 billion (+2.5% q-o-q) and $8.9 billion (+3.6% q-o-q), respectively, while Qatari banks registered a marginal decline of 0.1% in outstanding gross loans at the end of Q4-2024. In terms of type of banks, Islamic banks registered a relatively healthy growth in lending during the quarter with gross loan growth of 4.9% to reach $662.3 billion while growth in conventional bank lending came in at 1.3% to reach an outstanding gross loan of $1.51 trillion at the end of the quarter.

A report from Bloomberg showed that the lending mix of banks listed in Saudi Arabia has shifted more toward floating-rate corporate loans in 2024 from fixed rate retail credit. This shift was mainly led by a healthy growth in mortgage loans during the last five years. The report also showed that banks in the Kingdom have a greater share of fixed-rate credit and investment could perform better when interest rates are falling as they reprice new lower rates more slowly than lenders with low fixed-rate exposure. However, a decline in oil price is expected to lower low-cost deposits but the banks' high fixed-rate exposure should protect asset yields. In terms of liquidity, banks in the Kingdom are forecasted to see a liquidity gap of $137 billion and may need to issue debt of around $16 billion a year until 2030, as per Bloomberg. This also reflects a strong projects pipeline in the Kingdom that would require a funding of $456 billion over the next five years to fund 60% of the expected pipeline of projects.

Profits see marginal decline

The Kamco Invest report further said that quarterly net income for banks in the GCC region registered a sequential decline during Q4-2024 mainly reflecting the recent rate cuts implemented by global central banks as well as central banks in the GCC. Total profits reached $14.6 billion during the quarter, a decline of 1.8% as compared to $14.9 billion during Q3-2024, although y-o-y growth in profits remained robust at 12.8%. At the country level, the q-o-q trend remained mixed with three countries reporting sequential declines while the remaining three registering growth in net profits. Banks in Qatar reported the biggest decline in profits with a q-o-q fall of 13.5% to reach $1.9 billion. Oman and UAE-listed banks also reported decline in profits during the quarter. On the other hand, Bahraini banks registered the strongest q-o-q growth in profits at 8.2% reaching $219.5 million during Q4-2024 followed by aggregates for Kuwait and Saudi Arabia with profit growth of 3.8% and 1.9%, respectively.

In terms of topline performance, aggregate banking sector revenues reached a new record high during the quarter at $34.5 billion led by healthy growth in both net interest income and non-interest income. Aggregates for all countries in the GCC showed q-o-q growth in total bank revenue during Q4-2024, barring Qatari banks that reported a marginal decline. Banks in Kuwait and Bahrain registered double-digit growth in revenues during the quarter while UAE-listed banks reported the biggest absolute q-o-q growth in profits with an increase of $646.4 million or 5.4% during Q4-2024.

Factors that weighed on the bottom-line performance were a q-o-q increase in operating expenses as well as higher loan impairments booked during the quarter that partially offset the healthy topline growth during Q4-2024. Total operating expenses registered the biggest sequential growth in five quarters during Q4-2024 with an increase of 8.9% to reach $14.2 billion led by growth in almost all markets in the GCC. Aggregate impairments also continued to show growth for the second consecutive quarter to reach a four-quarter high level of $3.2 billion during Q4-2024. The increase in impairments was led by double-digit growth in impairments booked by banks in UAE, Qatar and Kuwait. Saudi-listed banks, on the other hand, reported a 7.0% q-o-q decline in impairments during Q4-2024.

DESTINATION WHERE WORLD COMES TOGETHER

Record setting first quarter sees over 1mn visitors to Al Mouj Muscat

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat, Oman's premier lifestyle destination welcomed over 1 million visitors this season, drawn by a rich calendar of cultural celebrations at Al Mouj Walk. From international festivals to rich local traditions and engaging community attractions, the events underscored the destination's commitment to creating memorable experiences that connect cultures, celebrate diversity and bring people together.

"At Al Mouj Muscat, we believe in the power of shared experiences," said Nasser Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat. "Starting 2025 on such a high note, we are very proud of what we have been able to deliver. Its moments like these that highlight the responsibility we carry, not just to design well, but to create spaces that are inviting, enticing and inspiring for our residents and visitors alike."

As the first quarter unfolded, Al Mouj Muscat embraced the spirit of renewal with a grand Chinese New Year celebration in partnership with the Chinese Embassy, inaugurated by His Excellency Mr. Lyu Jian, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Oman. Guests enjoyed traditional dragon and lion dances, the soothing strains of guzheng music, and an engaging bazaar featuring authentic delicacies and artisanal crafts.

The festive calendar also featured Russia's Maslenitsa Festival, organized in collaboration with Russian House Oman and under the patronage of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. Interactive workshops, spirited folk performances, and the inviting aroma of freshly made bliny offered visitors a taste of enduring Slavic traditions.

As part of its celebrated Ramadan initiative, Layali Al Mouj brought Qaranqasho to life, honoring Omani customs by gathering families over traditional cuisine from local food stalls, nostalgic folk music, and engaging games that revived cherished local traditions.

In addition to the cultural festivities, a concurrent car show featuring an "extra drive experience" added a contemporary twist. This innovative showcase captivated automotive enthusiasts with an impressive display of supercars, sports cars, classics, and 4x4s, broadening the season's appeal.

Looking ahead, Al Mouj Muscat remains dedicated to delivering experiences that bridge heritage with innovation, continually strengthening community connections and celebrating cultural diversity.

IN MIDDLE EAST & CENTRAL ASIA

Toyota honours Saud Bahwan Automotive with gold distributor award for excellence

MUSCAT: In a distinctive achievement, Toyota Motor Corporation recently conferred the prestigious Gold Distributor Award on Saud Bahwan Automotive, for regional excellence in the Middle East and Central Asia. This honour celebrates SBA's outstanding performance across core areas including Sales & After-Sales excellence, Customer-Centric Initiatives, Carbon Neutrality efforts and engaging community activities that reflect the true spirit of Toyota.

At a special function, the Award was formally presented by Nobuyuki Takemura, Chief Representative T-LOSA/Middle East & Central Asia, Toyota Motor Corporation to Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, CEO, Saud Bahwan Group.

Accepting the honour, Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan shared his heartfelt thoughts, "We are deeply honoured to receive the Gold Distributor Award from Toyota Motor Corporation. This recognition is a tribute to the trust and support of our valued customers, whose continued patronage inspires us every single day. Our teams across Oman share a deep-rooted passion for delivering experiences that go beyond expectations. We remain committed to enriching every stage of the Toyota ownership journey."

Thanking Toyota Motor Corporation for their support and guidance he further added, "We also extend our sincere gratitude to Toyota Motor Corporation for their enduring partnership and support. Their guidance has always been a beacon, helping us navigate forward with confidence and clarity."

Toyota enjoys a special place in the hearts of customers in Oman, an enduring bond built on decades of reliability, innovation and high levels of customer care. Saud Bahwan Automotive has made sustained investments in advanced infrastructure and digital integration, establishing a robust and wide-reaching presence across Oman. No matter where customers are, they are always close to a Toyota facility powered by SBA's customer-first philosophy. Saud Bahwan Automotive's deep understanding of evolving customer needs and expectations has been instrumental in shaping its operational strategies. From offering quick service processes to integrating advanced customer feedback mechanisms, the brand has gone the extra mile to ensure that customer delight is not just promised, but consistently delivered. Through dedicated teams trained to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, SBA ensures that each interaction with the Toyota brand is memorable and meaningful.

Over the years, Saud Bahwan Automotive has proactively expanded its footprint with strategically located sales and service facilities across Oman. These expansions are more than just physical locations; they represent a passionate commitment to being present wherever customers need them. Toyota owners in Oman enjoy convenient access to world-class support backed by expert technicians, cutting-edge tools and a well-stocked inventory of genuine parts.

REPORT

India's path to $8tn economy faces challenges, but digital transformation shows strong promise

NEW DELHI: India is moving towards becoming an $8 trillion economy by 2035, but it faces several big challenges along the way, according to The Great Unlock: India in 2035 report by Nandan Nilekani, Co-Founder and Chairman of Infosys and Arkam Ventures.

The report highlighted four main hurdles: income disparity, lack of formalisation, market access issues, and low productivity.

It mentioned that India's growth has been unequal, with just 13 of 788 districts contributing to half of the country's GDP. Huge income gaps exist, with the top 10 per cent earning nearly 60 per cent of India's total income. Approximately 200 million workers migrate from poorer regions to more affluent states in search of employment.

> The report highlighted four main hurdles: income disparity, lack of formalisation, market access issues, and low productivity

Low productivity is another concern. India's labour productivity is one tenth of USA, only $7 per hour. A large part of the workforce still remains in the informal sector. Only about 15 per cent of workers in India are formally employed, much lower than countries like Brazil and China. Most small businesses (MSMEs) are also not formalized, making it harder for them to access credit and grow.

Despite these challenges, the report is optimistic about India's future, mainly because of its digital transformation. Digital infrastructure like Aadhaar, UPI, and the Account Aggregator system has created a strong base. Monthly digital transactions have grown from zero to 16 billion in just a few years. Aadhaar-enabled services have reduced the cost of verifying identity from $23 to just 50 cents.

New technology combined with AI and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) is expected to connect the next billion Indians. AI models in Indian languages are being built to keep costs low and make digital tools more accessible. Farmers, students, and MSMEs are seeing major benefits from AI-driven solutions, helping them improve productivity and access markets.

By 2035, half of India's workforce is expected to be AI-native, and women's participation in the workforce is projected to rise from 25 to 47 per cent. India's digital journey is not just creating jobs but also offering new ways to earn, formalizing work across cities and rural areas alike.

The report stressed that India must focus on accelerating capital access, supporting small businesses, boosting AI usage, and making land and property assets easier to monetize. If these steps are taken, the digital economy could unlock massive growth and lead India into a bright future. -ANI

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

National Aluminium, up 20.00%, was the top gainer while, SMN Power Holding, down 5.68%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,292.01 points, up by 0.3% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended up by 1.57% at 403.96 points. National Aluminium, up 20.00%, was the top gainer while, SMN Power Holding, down 5.68%, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1520 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 5.63 million, with more than 39.66 million shares changing hands. Out of 61 traded securities, 25 advanced, 13 declined, and 23 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 551K while domestic investors were net buyers for RO 480K, followed by foreign investors for RO 71K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,561.66 points, up 0.57%. Prices of Oman Arab Bank, Muscat Finance, Oman United Insurance, Sohar International Bank, Al Sharqia Investment were up by 5.26%, 2.13%, 1.90%, 1.54%, 1.39% respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Oman & Emirates Investment, Ominvest, Global Financial Investments were down by 4.35%, 3.08%, 1.83%, 1.24% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,879.53 points, up 2.1%. Prices of National Aluminium, Al Maha Ceramics, Al Anwar Ceramics, Oman Flour Mills, Gulf International Chemicals were up by 20.00%, 9.89%, 9.35%, 5.26%, 4.62% respectively. Prices of A'Saffa Foods, Oman Cement, Oman Cables Industry were down by 5.25%, 0.26%, 0.24% respectively.

Services Index was down by 0% before closing at 1,532.82 points. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,299.53	4,281.50	4,292.01	4,279.21	12.80	0.30
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,561.66	7,518.93	7,561.66	7,518.93	42.73	0.57
Industry Index	5,882.40	5,815.21	5,879.53	5,758.63	120.90	2.10
Services Index	1,534.71	1,529.09	1,532.82	1,532.89	-0.08	0.00
MSX Shariah Index	404.70	397.70	403.96	397.70	6.26	1.57
MSX TR INDEX	6,355.34	6,328.69	6,344.23	6,325.31	18.92	0.30
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,961.52	8,910.87	8,961.52	8,910.87	50.64	0.57
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	7,228.59	7,146.02	7,225.06	7,076.49	148.57	2.10
SERVICES TR IDX	1,951.43	1,944.29	1,949.03	1,949.13	-0.10	0.00
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,166.89	1,166.89	1,166.89	1,166.89	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
39,661,037	5,629,682	1,520	27,082,095,387	25	13	23	61

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, APRIL 28

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	5,479,442	832,322	119	0.152	0.152	0.150	0.152	0.139	0.013	9.353	0.152	0.152	0.150	0.100	33,440,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	12,606	2,660	7	0.211	0.215	0.211	0.215	0.211	0.004	1.896	0.215	0.211	0.215	0.100	21,500,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	9,158,760	1,208,387	67	0.130	0.133	0.130	0.132	0.130	0.002	1.538	0.132	0.132	0.132	0.100	873,476,508
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	202,488	13,567	16	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.067	0.066	0.001	1.515	0.067	0.066	0.067	0.100	47,865,225
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	25,100	1,727	3	0.068	0.069	0.068	0.069	0.068	0.001	1.471	0.069	0.067	0.069	0.100	46,567,233
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	662,375	48,606	30	0.072	0.075	0.071	0.073	0.072	0.001	1.389	0.073	0.072	0.073	0.100	6,570,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	868,296	199,923	66	0.230	0.233	0.230	0.233	0.230	0.003	1.304	0.233	0.231	0.253	0.100	179,456,600
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	1,347,777	173,361	84	0.128	0.129	0.128	0.129	0.128	0.001	0.781	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.100	558,650,486
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	121,476	20,137	21	0.165	0.168	0.165	0.168	0.167	0.001	0.599	0.168	0.167	0.168	0.100	109,358,631
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,965,645	497,942	73	0.255	0.255	0.253	0.254	0.253	0.001	0.395	0.254	0.254	0.254	0.100	1,906,624,854
OM0000001152	OMAN NATL ENGG & INVESTMENT	12,916	1,496	4	0.115	0.116	0.115	0.116	0.116	0.000	0.000	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.100	17,400,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	4,545	255	1	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.056	0.057	0.100	19,943,129
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	1,149	332	1	0.289	0.289	0.289	0.289	0.289	0.000	0.000	0.289	0.281	0.289	0.100	68,322,490
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	63,280	6,020	11	0.095	0.096	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.095	0.096	0.100	90,684,335
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	5,000	380	1	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.000	0.000	0.076	0.075	0.083	0.100	13,300,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	620	160	1	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.258	0.000	0.000	0.258	0.000	0.258	0.100	18,160,620
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	13,242	10,808	8	0.817	0.817	0.815	0.815	0.817	-0.002	-0.245	0.815	0.814	0.817	0.100	611,250,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	3,000	1,149	4	0.384	0.384	0.383	0.383	0.384	-0.001	-0.260	0.383	0.382	0.383	0.100	126,724,248
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	496,878	39,838	18	0.081	0.081	0.080	0.080	0.081	-0.001	-1.235	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.100	16,000,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	582,522	126,197	40	0.220	0.220	0.215	0.215	0.219	-0.004	-1.826	0.215	0.215	0.215	0.100	201,177,993
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	245,497	15,466	17	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.065	-0.002	-3.077	0.063	0.063	0.064	0.100	7,678,125
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	4,231	1,661	8	0.390	0.400	0.379	0.379	0.400	-0.021	-5.250	0.379	0.379	0.400	0.100	45,480,000
Total	22	21,276,845	3,202,391	600												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	119,470	23,894	24	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.182	0.018	9.890	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.100	11,000,000
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	81,240	35,582	16	0.434	0.460	0.434	0.460	0.437	0.023	5.263	0.460	0.441	0.454	0.100	76,072,500
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	4,170,672	558,436	59	0.133	0.140	0.133	0.140	0.133	0.007	5.263	0.140	0.140	0.140	0.100	233,717,400
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	215,408	14,754	11	0.071	0.071	0.068	0.068	0.065	0.003	4.615	0.068	0.068	0.070	0.100	1,428,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	3,139,745	508,272	222	0.168	0.168	0.158	0.165	0.158	0.007	4.430	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.100	7,069,094
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	26,510	3,489	8	0.130	0.133	0.130	0.133	0.130	0.003	2.308	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.100	13,007,687
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	16,000	10,325	12	0.645	0.646	0.645	0.645	0.631	0.014	2.219	0.645	0.630	0.660	0.100	60,380,489
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	605,708	28,487	14	0.047	0.048	0.047	0.048	0.047	0.001	2.128	0.048	0.047	0.049	0.100	14,743,024
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGG & CONTRACTING	457,956	31,137	28	0.068	0.068	0.067	0.068	0.067	0.001	1.493	0.068	0.067	0.068	0.100	13,803,078
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	3,080	450	1	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.144	0.002	1.389	0.146	0.146	0.148	0.100	2,573,055
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SFZ)	3,850,420	395,445	188	0.102	0.103	0.102	0.103	0.102	0.001	0.980	0.103	0.099	0.103	0.040	356,327,558
OM0000010120	ASYAD SHIPPING	300,023	31,446	27	0.104	0.106	0.104	0.105	0.104	0.001	0.962	0.105	0.102	0.105	0.000	546,918,149
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	479	105	1	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.220	0.218	0.002	0.917	0.220	0.217	0.220	0.100	10,068,476
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	3,906	463	3	0.119	0.119	0.118	0.118	0.117	0.001	0.855	0.118	0.118	0.119	0.100	69,789,552
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	2,897	8,865	1	3.060	3.060	3.060	3.060	3.060	0.000	0.000	3.060	3.060	3.060	1.000	10,098,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	43,480	3,107	9	0.073	0.073	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.071	0.071	0.072	0.100	6,035,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	2,316,794	185,546	59	0.080	0.081	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.080	0.087	0.100	22,965,610
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	4,971	736	1	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.000	0.000	0.148	0.000	0.149	0.100	449,890,183
OM0000003000	Al MAHA PETROLEUM PROD MARKING	100	104	1	1.040	1.040	1.040	1.040	1.040	0.000	0.000	1.040	0.000	1.040	0.100	71,760,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	19,180	1,880	1	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.089	0.099	0.100	219,221,397
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	15,619	937	4	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.057	0.060	0.100	87,756,088
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	30,658	2,070	6	0.066	0.068	0.066	0.067	0.067	0.000	0.000	0.068	0.067	0.068	0.100	10,421,877
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	136,544	10,514	12	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.080	0.100	39,164,610
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	493	1,016	2	2.060	2.060	2.060	2.060	2.065	-0.005	-0.242	2.060	2.000	2.060	0.100	184,782,000
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	1,819,233	496,515	149	0.273	0.275	0.271	0.271	0.274	-0.003	-1.095	0.271	0.271	0.271	0.010	2,168,000,000
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	1,320	69	1	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.052	0.053	-0.001	-1.887	0.052	0.053	0.054	0.100	11,556,480
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	14,995	1,242	5	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.083	0.085	-0.002	-2.353	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.100	2,490,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	16,745	4,354	4	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.270	-0.010	-3.704	0.260	0.245	0.270	0.100	41,600,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	107,280	4,725	14	0.044	0.045	0.044	0.044	0.046	-0.002	-4.348	0.044	0.045	0.044	0.100	3,740,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	1,747	378	3	0.216	0.219	0.216	0.216	0.229	-0.013	-5.677	0.219	0.219	0.219	0.100	43,121,290
Total	30	17,522,673	2,364,342	886												

OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

Sharakah Ventures to empower Oman's startup ecosystem

MUSCAT: Sharakah, Oman's leading SME development organisation, has officially launched Sharakah Ventures, a pioneering financial solution designed to nurture and empower startups in their earliest stages. Focused on pre-seed and seed-stage businesses, Sharakah Ventures provides crucial financial support, mentorship, and strategic guidance to cultivate an entrepreneurial ecosystem, advancing Oman's economic diversification and innovation.

Ali Ahmed Muqaibal, CEO of Sharakah, expressed the significance of this solution, stating, "Launching Sharakah Ventures is a proud moment for us. Our strength lies in connecting startups with a robust network of industry leaders, investors, and stakeholders, enabling entrepreneurs to scale their ideas into thriving enterprises. These connections are fundamental to transforming early-stage startups into market leaders."

Sharakah Ventures transcends traditional funding models, prioritising sustainable and impactful business ideas over immediate profits. By addressing challenges such as limited resources, mentorship gaps, and networking barriers, the initiative offers tailored solutions and expert support. Its approach aligns with Oman's vision for a diversified economy.

The spirit of Sharakah Ventures is rooted in the belief that startups need more than just capital to succeed. Entrepreneurs often face obstacles such as limited access to resources, strategic networks, and mentorship, which can hinder their growth. Sharakah Ventures aims to bridge these gaps by providing a comprehensive framework tailored to the unique needs of each startup.

This framework includes personalised financial solutions for various stages of a startup's journey, like funding for product development, market entry and scaling operations. Startups can also benefit from expert guidance, operational insights, and access to a network of stakeholders, including industry leaders and potential investors.

STRATEGIC AGREEMENT

Oman Data Park partners with Bug Bounty Oman to strengthen national cybersecurity

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In a significant move aimed at enhancing Oman's cybersecurity infrastructure, Oman Data Park (ODP), a leading provider of cloud solutions and managed services in Oman, has entered into a strategic teaming agreement with the Omani Vulnerability Hunters Reward Platform, known as Bug Bounty Oman, the nation's premier platform offering Bug Bounty as a Service to organizations across Oman.

This landmark agreement aims to establish a robust, trusted, and secure channel for responsible vulnerability disclosure. By doing so, it enables both public and private sector institutions to take a proactive approach in identifying and addressing cybersecurity risks before they escalate.

The partnership also plays a pivotal role in strengthening Oman's growing cybersecurity ecosystem by fostering local talent, promoting a culture of ethical hacking, and instilling a sense of digital responsibility throughout the nation.

Maqbool Al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park, stated, "This collaboration marks a crucial step forward in our commitment to safeguarding Oman's digital infrastructure. As digital transformation accelerates across all sectors, the need for secure, resilient systems becomes increasingly critical. Our approach to cybersecurity transcends the conventional focus on technology alone. It is about forging strategic partnerships built on trust, collaboration, and a shared responsibility to enhance the nation's digital landscape."

He further added, "Our engagement with Bug Bounty Oman further underscores our confidence in the capabilities of Omani talent and our commitment to fostering community-driven security solutions. By creating an environment where skilled individuals can contribute meaningfully and ethically to Oman's digital advancement, we are building a cybersecurity framework that not only protects but also empowers. This collaboration enables institutions to operate with confidence while preparing the next generation of cybersecurity leaders to meet the challenges of an increasingly connected world."

Bug Bounty Oman plays a critical role in empowering highly skilled Omani security researchers, providing them with a structured platform to identify and report security vulnerabilities. This collaboration will further promote a culture of innovation and excellence within the cybersecurity community, offering a meaningful opportunity for researchers to contribute directly to the country's digital defense.

Moreover, the agreement facilitates deeper cooperation between government entities, critical sectors, and the broader cybersecurity community. This alignment is essential in addressing the rapidly evolving landscape of cybersecurity threats and ensuring that the nation's digital infrastructure remains secure and resilient.

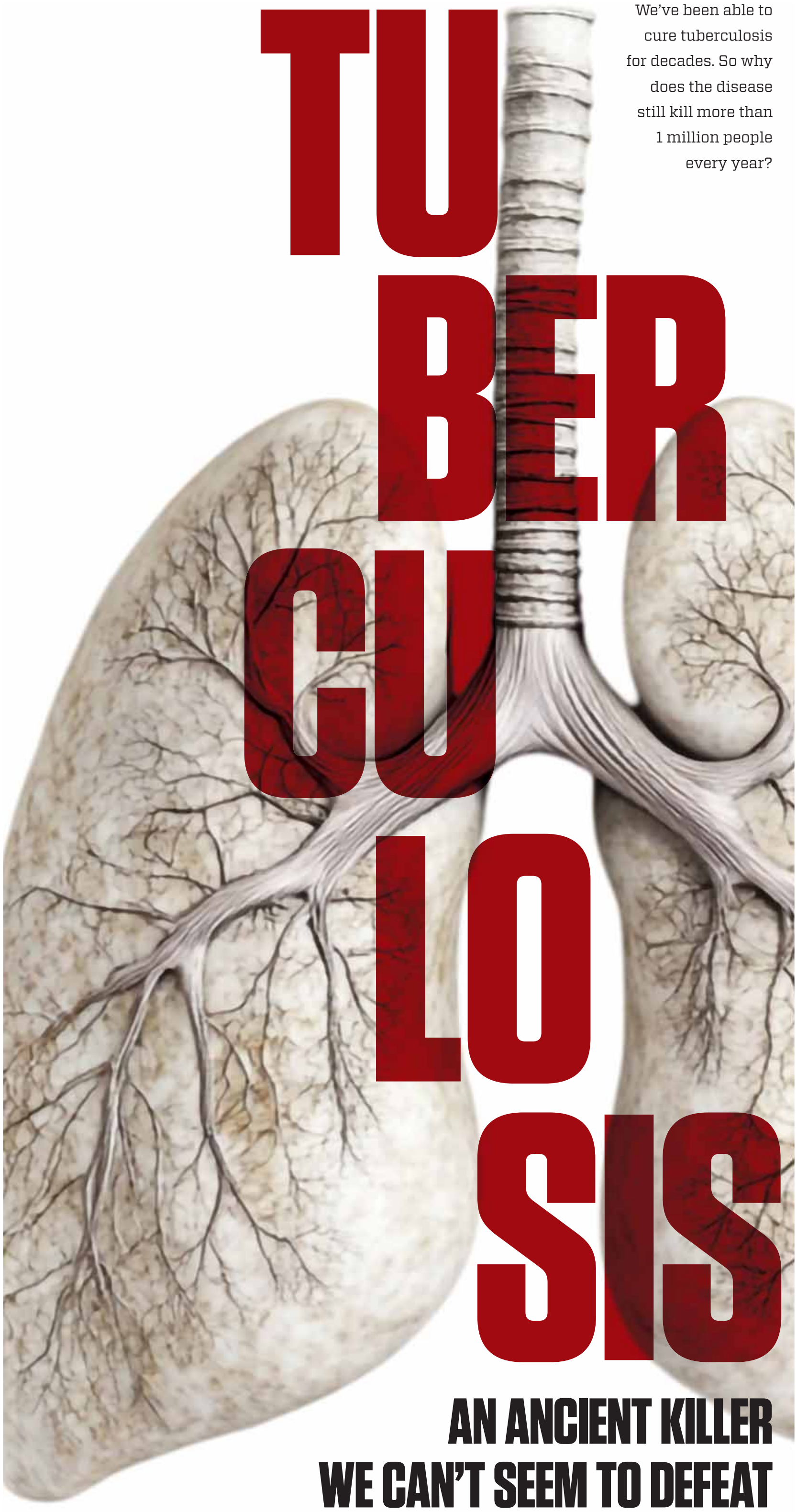
The partnership aligns with Oman's strategic vision under Vision 2040, which seeks to accelerate digital transformation, foster innovation, and ensure national security in the digital age. Together, Oman Data Park and Bug Bounty Oman are setting a new benchmark for collaborative cybersecurity efforts in the region, reinforcing Oman's position as a leader in the evolving digital ecosystem.

LIFESTYLE

TUBERCULOSIS

AN ANCIENT KILLER WE CAN'T SEEM TO DEFEAT

We've been able to cure tuberculosis for decades. So why does the disease still kill more than 1 million people every year?



An estimated quarter of the world's population — about 2 billion people — unknowingly carries a dormant tuberculosis infection.

It's a disease we've known how to treat since the 1950s, and yet tuberculosis (TB) continues to infect some 10 million people and kill a million more every year.

The World Health Organization (WHO) aims to reduce TB cases by 80% by 2030. But control efforts were dealt a blow by COVID-19, which reversed years of progress as attention shifted to addressing the pandemic.

Now TB is again the world's deadliest infectious disease.

While TB disproportionately affects lower-income countries, wealthy nations aren't immune. The United Kingdom reported a 13% rise in TB cases in 2024, threatening its "low TB" status, with one-third of patients experiencing treatment delays.

In January 2025, the US recorded its largest ever outbreak.

What is TB?

Skeletal records from 4,000 BC show TB has been infecting humans for thousands of years, spreading through airborne droplets when infected people cough or speak. It's caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis; a bacterium first identified in the 1880s by German scientist Robert Koch.

But unlike many disease-causing microbes, TB can lie dormant in a person's body for decades without causing symptoms.

When it becomes active — often triggered by weak immunity — it attacks the lungs and can also spread throughout the body. Typical symptoms include a cough producing blood-containing mucus, fever and weight loss.

'Missing millions' continue to transmit TB

TB has proven remarkably resilient and difficult to contain.

While there are ways to diagnose and treat the disease, several critical barriers continue to prevent its elimination.

"The price of effective TB tests remains too high," said Jasmin Behrends, an advocacy officer at Doctors Without Borders.

The WHO estimates nearly 3 million TB cases are never diagnosed or reported every year, creating a reservoir for continued transmission. These cases are known as the "missing millions."

"We need to shift from passive to proactive case finding, including intensified case finding, among those who visit health facilities," said Dr. Mohammed Yassin, a senior adviser on tuberculosis at the Global Fund.

"[We also need to take these] services to where people are, especially to reach those with high risk and limited access — homes, workplaces, prisons, urban slums and remote communities."

"Children at risk of having TB are often overlooked, either going undiagnosed or facing delays in diagnosis," said Behrends.

TB can develop antibiotic resistance

TB bacteria can develop resistance to antibiotics, especially when treatments are interrupted or incomplete.

Standard TB treatment requires multiple antibiotics taken consistently for six months — a regimen many patients struggle to complete due to side effects, stigma or limited access to health care.

Multidrug-resistant TB requires longer, more toxic and more expensive treatment courses. The WHO estimated 400,000 new cases of drug-resistant TB in 2023 alone.

"Shorter regiments to treat resistant forms of TB have to be implemented worldwide to treat patients with less severe side effects in a much shorter time," said Behrends.

Meanwhile, the first and only TB vaccine, known as the BCG, was developed over a century ago. While it protects children from the most severe forms of TB, it offers minimal protection to adults.

But meaningful opportunities for better vaccines have been limited by funding.

While COVID-19 vaccines received $90 billion (€79.1 billion) in development funding, TB vaccine research has secured just $1.1 billion (€967 million) over the last 11 years.

Dwindling support for TB measures, but hope remains

Recent funding decisions have also raised concerns. The US government's recent move to slash USAID funding, and other nations' cuts to foreign aid, have threatened to undermine progress in high-burden countries at a critical moment.

"[Doctors Without Borders] is gravely concerned about the recent United States funding cuts," said Behrends, "We are already seeing disruptions due to shortages of medical supplies and staff not being paid."

"Sustained international financing is essential to the global fight against TB. Any reduction in funding — whether temporary or long term — can have real and immediate effects on people's lives," said Yassin.

Can tuberculosis be eradicated?

New molecular diagnostic tools can detect TB in hours rather than weeks, allowing for faster treatment. Meanwhile, several candidates for TB vaccines are in late-stage clinical trials.

The Tuberculosis Vaccine Accelerator Council, launched in 2023, aims to speed up development by applying lessons from the COVID-19 response.

But ending TB will require multi-sector action: strengthening health care systems, addressing poverty and malnutrition, improving housing conditions to reduce transmission and ensuring universal access to diagnosis and treatment.

A UN high-level meeting on TB in 2023 renewed these commitments, but translating promises into action remains the critical challenge.

"TB is no longer a silent epidemic," said Yassin.

"Advocates, survivors, scientists and donors are coming together to demand change. The momentum from the 2023 UN high-level meeting on TB shows that global leaders recognise the urgency — and the opportunity — to end TB within our lifetime." - DW

SPORTS

Slot hails Klopp's lasting legacy

Liverpool manager paid an emotional tribute to his predecessor soon after guiding the Reds to their record-equalling 20th Premier League title

LONDON: Liverpool manager Arne Slot paid tribute to his predecessor Jurgen Klopp moments after his side won the Premier League title.

The Reds defeated Tottenham Hotspur 5-1 at Anfield on Sunday to clinch a record-equalling 20th top-flight title, with Slot becoming the first Dutch coach to win the Premier League.

"It feels great. I don't think I want to say a lot. The only thing now is to send my appreciation to Jurgen Klopp," Slot, who replaced Klopp as Liverpool manager last summer, told LFCTV.

The 46-year-old Dutchman immediately launched into a rendition of the song Klopp asked Liverpool fans to sing after his final game last May, but replaced the lyrics 'Arne Slot' with 'Jurgen Klopp'. "I am 99.9% sure that if I pick up my phone there will be a message from Jurgen," he told BBC Match of the Day.

"So many moments in the season the two of us have had contact. I think he showed last season what a wonderful human being he is by introducing me.

"But what mattered most is the team he left behind that was able to win the trophy."

Slot, speaking to Sky Sports, added: "The work Jurgen and Pep [Lijnders] did - the culture, work-rate, quality - was outstanding,"

Few expected Slot to oversee a successful title charge in his first season at Anfield, not least the man himself.

"We started really well and maybe it helped that [Manchester] City had a difficult spell that they have not had in five years," he said.

"When the season started, we would have been happy with top four. But I don't think that is fair on the players as they are much better than that and they have shown it this season."

Dominic Solanke gave Spurs a surprise lead at Anfield, but Slot had no doubts his side would turn things around.

"I think from the moment we arrived on the bus everyone could feel that we were never going to lose this game," he said.

"The fans were so supportive before and during the game. Even at 1-0 down you felt this team and the fans could get it over the line."

He told LFCTV: "They always find a way to win. I'm incredibly proud, not only of the players but the people standing here, sport directors, my staff members, we should give them a big round of applause. "Let's forget it's the second title in 35 years... it's the second in five years."

Liverpool last won the Premier League five years ago, but the Coronavirus pandemic meant there were no fans inside Anfield to witness it.

For fans and players alike, a first title win in front of supporters since 1990 is something special.

"It's special to win it at Anfield - it's very difficult to describe," Mohamed Salah told BBC Sport.

"Everyone wanted Palace to finish it [at Arsenal on Wednesday], but I know what Anfield is like, so I'm glad we did it here.

"It's completely different [to the title in 2020]. The feeling is unbelievable. The first time was lockdown and the pandemic, but to be here five years later is incredible."

Salah told Sky Sports: "This is 100% better than last time."

"For me, this [title] feels more special. Jurgen [Klopp] is not here and other players I respect a lot are not here, but to do it with a new manager and a new team shows what I'm capable of."

Virgil van Dijk - the first non-British captain to lead Liverpool to a top flight title - dedicated the triumph to the club's supporters.

"I was desperate to win it for them [the fans] and all the fans around the world, and for us as well," Van Dijk told Sky Sports.

"This is the most beautiful club in the world. We deserve this. We are going to enjoy the next couple of weeks and take it in."

Left-back Andy Robertson was also a member of the 2019-20 title-winning team, and he has now become just the third Scotsman to win multiple Premier League titles after Darren Fletcher and Brian McClair.

"Last time [we won the league in 2020] was a strange time," he told Sky Sports.

"It was unique the way we did it. We enjoyed it of course but you cannot beat what we experienced today. Nothing compares to that.

"It is special. For me, when I came to this club I quickly realised how good Scottish players have been here. There is a bit of pressure with that. I am glad I managed to continue that and hopefully can carry that forward."

It has been a remarkable few years for midfielder Alexis Mac Allister, who won the 2022 World Cup with Argentina before joining Liverpool in 2023.

"To win a World Cup and now a Premier League is really special," he said. "But it would not be possible without my team-mates. I am just one part of the puzzle. This team has been really good the last two years.

"It wasn't enough last year but this year we made a big difference. Hopefully we can enjoy this week."

Liverpool owner John W. Henry made one of his rare Anfield visits for the coronation, while tickets were reportedly selling at £3,000 on the black market. - Agencies

Liverpool's victory parade on May 26

LONDON: Liverpool have confirmed that a Premier League victory parade will take place on Monday 26 May, the day after the final game of the season.

The parade will begin at 14:30 BST and follow a 15km route, and is anticipated the parade will last between three and five hours.

Premier League champions Liverpool will parade through the city on an open-top bus.

The bus will set off from Allerton Maze before travelling along a nine-mile route including Queens Drive and The Strand before finishing on Blundell Street.

Hundreds of thousands of fans are expected to line the route to celebrate with Arne Slot and his title-winning squad.

The parade is expected to last between three and five hours.

Liverpool City Council Leader Liam Robinson said: "We're delighted to officially invite Liverpool Football Club to parade around the city on 26 May.

"A Liverpool victory parade is more than football – it's a celebration of our city's pride, passion and community spirit." Robinson said it was going to be a "bumper weekend in Liverpool".

Liverpool will end their Premier League campaign on 25 May when Crystal Palace visit Anfield. - Agencies

FA CUP SEMIS

Palace stun Villa to secure place in final

LONDON: Crystal Palace reached the FA Cup final in spectacular style as Eberechi Eze and Ismaila Sarr fired them to a fully deserved victory against Aston Villa 3-0 at Wembley on Sunday.

Eze unlocked a tense semi-final after 31 minutes when he rifled a magnificent drive high past helpless Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez from the edge of the penalty area.

Palace's Tyrick Mitchell miskicked in front of an open goal before the break, then Jean-Philippe Mateta failed from the spot when his penalty glanced off the post.

But the Eagles kept pushing to increase their lead and Sarr hit another stunning goal after 58 minutes, advancing powerfully before drilling a low shot from 22 yards into the bottom left corner with Martinez stretching in vain.

Between the two opening goals, Palace were grateful to the outstanding work of goalkeeper Dean Henderson, who saved superbly from John McGinn and Lucas Digne as Villa chased an equaliser.

Villa pressed but could not break down Palace's superbly organised defence, and Sarr wrapped up the win deep in stoppage time when he raced clear to beat Martinez.

This victory means manager Oliver Glasner takes Palace to their third FA Cup final, their first since 2016. They have never lifted the trophy and will face Manchester City.

Palace fans celebrated noisily and justifiably. On this evidence they will provide a serious threat to City in the final here on 17 May. - Agencies

FA CUP SEMI-FINALS

Man City breeze past Forest

LONDON: Manchester City displayed their big-game experience by brushing aside a luckless Nottingham Forest 2-0 to reach a third successive FA Cup final on Sunday night.

Pep Guardiola's side set up a Wembley showpiece on 17 May against Crystal Palace at the same time as they relinquished a four-year hold on the Premier League trophy after Liverpool beat Tottenham Hotspur to become champions on Sunday.

City were in control from the first whistle on a balmy day in London and will now aim to end a disappointing season on a high by lifting the famous cup trophy for the eighth time in their history.

With their supporters outnumbered in the stands, the City players silenced the Forest following inside just two minutes as the impressive Mateo Kovacic found Rico Lewis on the edge of the box and the 20-year-old drilled an unerring finish into the bottom corner. Forest found it difficult to settle in the opening period and City sniffed more opportunities - Omar Marmoush exchanging passes with Jack Grealish before firing over, while Nico O'Reilly dragged an effort wide after showcasing some neat footwork in the build-up.

Nuno Espirito Santo's men should have levelled seconds after the restart, though, when Callum Hudson-Odoi rolled a pass across the box, but Anthony Elanga, on his 23rd birthday, sent his first-time effort wide of the post from eight yards.

City made the former Manchester United winger pay dearly for that miss as six minutes into the second half they doubled their lead - centre-back Josko Gvardiol rising highest to power home a header from Marmoush's corner.

Forest attempted to claw themselves back into the contest and struck the woodwork an incredible three times. Morgan Gibbs-White rattled the crossbar with a stunning volley, before hitting the post from a tight angle after going round goalkeeper Stefan Ortega.

Substitute Taiwo Awoniyi also clipped an effort against the post and once Ortega kept out Nicolas Dominguez's header at full stretch from another opportunity, Forest knew it was not going to be their day as City booked a Wembley return. In the build-up to the semi-final, Guardiola admitted the campaign has not been good enough, regardless of his side claiming a top-five league finish and an FA Cup final triumph.

But City and their fans will head back to the capital for a 29th time since 2007 next month - one shy of Chelsea's record tally - with the opportunity of salvaging a poor domestic and Champions League season by ending it on a high with silverware. - Agencies

WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION TO BE DECIDED

Dubois to fight Usyk at Wembley Stadium on 19 July

LONDON: Daniel Dubois and Oleksandr Usyk will fight to become the undisputed world heavyweight champion at Wembley Stadium on 19 July.

Briton Dubois is the IBF champion, with Usyk holding the WBA (Super), WBO and WBC belts.

Usyk is undefeated in 23 fights and beat Dubois, 27, via a ninth-round stoppage in August 2023.

The 38-year-old Ukrainian made history in May 2024 when he beat Tyson Fury to become the first undisputed heavyweight champion of the four-belt era.

Usyk, who was also undisputed at cruiserweight, vacated the IBF belt prior to his rematch with Fury in December.

Dubois was upgraded to IBF champion as a result and successfully defended the belt against Anthony Joshua last September.

He was set to make a second defence against Joseph Parker in February but illness forced him to withdraw from the bout in fight week. "This is the fight I wanted and demanded and now I get my chance for revenge," said Dubois.

"I should have won the first fight and was denied by the judgement of the referee, so I will make no mistake this time around in front of my people at the national stadium in my home city.

"I am a superior and more dangerous fighter now and Usyk will find this out for himself."

No British boxer has held the undisputed heavyweight title in the four-belt era, and the last Briton to be undisputed heavyweight champion was Lennox Lewis in 1999. Usyk last competed in December when he earned a second win against Fury. "I'm grateful to God for the opportunity to once again fight for the undisputed championship," said Usyk.

"Thank you, Daniel, for taking care of my IBF belt - now I want it back."

Eubank discharged from hospital

Chris Eubank Jr has been discharged from hospital after he was admitted as a precaution following his victory over Conor Benn on Saturday.

Eubank was admitted as part of a standard procedure for boxers after a gruelling bout, with promoter Ben Shalom saying he was having "precautionary checks".

The 35-year-old left hospital on Monday.

Eubank beat Benn by unanimous decision in a thrilling 12-round middleweight fight at London's Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. Posting on social media on Monday, Eubank said: "Well it took nearly three years but we finally got the job done.

"Big shout out to everyone that supported the fight on Saturday and made it the once-in-a-lifetime event that it was. Without the fans none of this is possible, thank you."

All three judges scored the contest 116-112 following a bout featuring wild aggression from both fighters, albeit with neither landing the telling blow.

Chris Eubank Sr unexpectedly arrived at the venue alongside his son on Saturday. The pair had supposedly been estranged for years and Eubank Sr had criticised the match-up. Eubank Sr beat Conor Benn's father, Nigel Benn, in 1990, before a contentious draw three years later. - Agencies

MCBS, GUST sign MoU to strengthen Gulf higher education cooperation

This collaboration symbolises a shared commitment to advancing educational excellence and global academic cooperation

MUSCAT: Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) announced that it has officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), marking the beginning of a transformative partnership.

The signing ceremony took place during the 2025 QS Higher Ed Summit: Middle East, hosted by GUST in Kuwait from April 20-22. This collaboration symbolises a shared commitment to advancing educational excellence and global academic cooperation.

Through this MoU, both institutions have committed to working together on several initiatives that will enhance academic experiences for students and faculty. The collaboration will focus on Erasmus programs, student symposiums, joint research initiatives, and other academic projects that aim to foster innovation and promote a culture of knowledge sharing. These efforts will provide both students and faculty with enhanced opportunities to engage in high-level research, participate in global discussions, and contribute to the evolving needs of the academic world.

"I am pleased to announce the signing of four new Memoranda of Understanding between Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) and a group of exceptional institutions from across the region, each led by distinguished academic leaders committed to advancing higher education and cross-border collaboration," shared Professor Bassam Alameddine, President, Gulf University for Science and Technology.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Aisha Al-Kharusi, Deputy Executive Chairperson of MCBS, emphasized the importance of this partnership, saying, "This MoU is a significant step in our ongoing efforts to provide world-class educational opportunities. By partnering with GUST, an institution renowned for its academic excellence and innovative approach to education, we are creating a platform that will benefit our students and faculty and benefit our students and faculty and contribute to the development of higher education in the region. This collaboration will enable us to share knowledge, exchange ideas, and work together to shape the future of academia."

The collaboration supports MCBS's strategic priorities of expanding its international network and enhancing research and innovation. By working with GUST, MCBS aims to offer students globally relevant education while addressing local needs. The MoU will also facilitate faculty collaboration on research projects tackling global challenges, fostering innovation, and contributing to regional development. It will enhance the professional growth of both students and faculty, equipping them with the tools to excel in their careers and contribute to societal progress, while building lasting academic relationships that benefit both institutions and the broader academic community.

ATM DUBAI

Omran and Visit Oman join Global Travel & Tourism Resilience Council for 'Destination Development' Roundtable

DUBAI: In a display of regional collaboration and forward-thinking strategy, the Global Travel & Tourism Resilience Council welcomed its newly joined Executive Leaders' members for 2025—Omran Group, contributing insights from a global perspective, and Visit Oman, bringing valuable expertise from the MENA region—at an exclusive high-level roundtable on destination development during the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) Dubai.

The event convened 20 senior leaders from across the tourism and development sectors, featuring prominent representatives from Omran Group, Visit Oman, UN Tourism, the Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority, Sabre, Intrepid, Horwath HTL, Roland Berger, and Outloud Communication Consultants. The session served as a dynamic forum for exchanging insights, tackling key industry challenges, and exploring forward-thinking strategies for destination planning amid a rapidly evolving global landscape.

> The session served as a dynamic forum for exchanging insights, tackling key industry challenges, and exploring forward-thinking strategies for destination planning amid a rapidly evolving global landscape

Held under the theme "Destination Development: Building for the Future," the roundtable explored pressing questions around sustainable growth, stakeholder engagement, infrastructure investment, destination branding, and regional cooperation. The diverse assembly of destination leaders and organizational representatives provided valuable insights into how global counterparts are navigating complexity and seizing emerging opportunities in real time.

Dr. Hashil Al Mahrouqi, CEO of Omran Group, said:"Omran Group's approach to destination development is rooted in clear purpose: advancing Oman's tourism sector through sustainable, authentic, and inclusive projects. Every investment, partnership, and initiative is carefully designed to enhance the visitor experience, empower local communities, and deliver lasting value. This exclusive high-level roundtable offers an important platform to exchange ideas, share best practices, and collectively shape the future of sustainable destination development on a global scale."

Shabib Al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, added: "These discussions reaffirmed Visit Oman's commitment to technology and innovation as the foundation of our strategy, while underscoring the vital role tourism providers play in destination development—driving creativity, shaping authentic experiences, and connecting global demand with local value. A central pillar of our approach is the empowerment of Omani tourism providers through scaled digital distribution, a key enabler in building resilient, inclusive tourism ecosystems that adapt to shifting traveler expectations and support long-term, sustainable growth."

"We planned this executive roundtable to serve as a springboard for deeper collaboration between Oman and international partners, reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to thoughtful, sustainable, and globally connected growth," stated Laurie Myers, Global Strategist of the Resilience Council.

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

State Audit Institution participates in Muscat International Book Fair 2025

MUSCAT: The State Audit Institution took part in the Muscat International Book Fair 2025, held from April 24 to May 3 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center.

This participation is part of the institution's ongoing efforts to strengthen community partnership in promoting integrity and protecting public fund. It also aims to raise awareness about the Institution's role and its efforts in exercising its responsibilities and achieving the objectives assigned to it, as well as to highlight the available communication channels with the public. As part of its outreach efforts, the Institution distributes educational materials and presents a variety of visual, audio, and digital publications related to public fund and public office duties. SAI's employees are present to respond to questions and receive feedback from visitors.

Hamood bin Sulaiman Al-Abri, Director of Communication and Media Department, stated that participating in such an important cultural event is a key part of spreading knowledge and enhancing public engagement. He emphasized that culture plays a vital role in building communities and reinforcing positive values such as integrity, respect, and responsibility.

He added that this year's participation features the launch of the English edition of the book "Integrity Influence on Functional and Institutional Performance" by His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed bin Hamad Al Khalili, the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman. This edition makes the content more accessible to English-speaking audiences —following the success of the original Arabic version launched in 2022.

Hamood Al Abri added that SAI's booth at the Fair features a variety of publications and releases, most notably State Audit Law, Protection of Public Fund and Avoidance of Conflict of Interest Law, and Code of Conduct for Civil Employees of the Units of State Administrative Apparatus, as well as Energy & Minerals Dictionary issued by SAI in 2024. In addition, the booth includes several awareness brochures bearing the following titles: "Crimes Against Public Fund and Their Prescribed Penalties", "Obligations and Prohibitions for Government Officials" and "Integrity and its Impact on the Individual and Society" as well as "How to be a Successful Employee".

Regarding this year's accompanying events, Hamood Al Abri explained that SAI is keen to leverage its participation through active involvement in the scheduled activities. It will take part in the panel discussion organized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth titled "Integrity: A Pillar of Sustainability and Community Transparency" under the theme of "Integrity, and Institutional and Societal Integration in Protecting Public Fund", presented a specialist from SAI in this field. The theme will address the roles of institutions and society in protecting public fund and highlight SAI's experience in promoting transparency through its issuance of the Community Brief, as well as discussing the roles in protecting public fund and its connection to sustainable development.

With regard to the activities and events related to children, Al-Abri mentioned that SAI will organize a workshop dedicated to children as part of the Fair accompanying events. The workshop titled " Integrity Stories with Ameen and Ameena", will be presented by experts in children's literature. The aim of the workshop is to raise awareness among children about integrity, as it serves as an early prevention against negative behaviors. A child who understands the values of integrity will grow up to be a responsible citizen who does not engage in or accept corruption. This generation will therefore serve as the first line of defense for public fund, contributing to the establishment of more transparent and just institutions. He also added that children are particularly receptive to learning principles and values at an early age. When we teach them honesty, integrity, and responsibility towards public fund, these values become an integral part of their personality and guide their behavior in the future. In this regard, SAI has issued several publications for children, including stories for kids titled: "With Integrity, We Rise"and "Series of Integrity Generations."

NEW FEATURE

NBO enhances digital personal loan top-up feature on its app

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has announced an enhanced digital personal loan top-up feature through the NBO app, reinforcing its commitment to deliver simple, customer-centric banking experiences.

The new feature allows eligible customers with existing salary-related loans to apply for additional financing seamlessly and securely without the need to visit a branch.

Designed with ease and accessibility in mind, this fully digital service enables customers to check their eligibility, apply for a top-up and receive approvals in significantly less time than traditional methods. By digitising key steps such as insurance coverage and credit checks, the process removes the need for paperwork and manual verification, ensuring a smooth, end-to-end experience.

Digital innovation

Commenting on the feature, Dr Ali Al Shekaili, Assistant General Manager – Head of Digital and E-Channels at NBO, said, "At NBO, digital innovation is not an add-on. It is embedded in how we reimagine banking for today's customer. This upgrade reflects more than a technology enhancement. It is part of a larger vision to simplify access to financial services, drive operational excellence and support financial empowerment across the community. By removing traditional friction points and building integrated digital journeys, we are enabling customers to make faster and more informed financial decisions with confidence and convenience."

ROUND-UP

Lulu Dream Drive 2025 concludes, prizes handed over to winners

The Dream Drive campaign, which was held across all outlets of Lulu in Oman, gave shoppers a chance to win eight Nissan Pathfinder-S 4WD as grand prizes and 40 other gifts from Ikon, including smart TVs, cooking ranges, refrigerators, washers and air fryers

MUSCAT: Lulu Hypermarket Oman concluded its biggest annual promotion of the year, Dream Drive 2025, with a grand prize distribution ceremony at the Boushar outlet. The final draw held on 24th April 2025 marked the end of the two month long promotion, which was held to coincide with Ramadan and Eid celebrations.

Saud Sulaiman Al Wahaibi, Salim Al Shibli, Fakeera Musthaheel, Rizwan Inamdar, Rajkumar Kokkula, Muna, Younis Mubarak, Divyesh Parandy were the proud winners of the Nissan Pathfinder cars. Forty other winners also took home exciting gifts from Ikon.

The prizes were distributed to the winners by the management of Lulu Oman and the Nissan team in the presence of a huge gathering of shoppers, well-wishers and media personnel, as well as officials and staff of Lulu Hypermarket Oman.

The Dream Drive campaign, which was held across all outlets of Lulu in the Sultanate, gave shoppers a chance to win eight Nissan Pathfinder-S 4WD as grand prizes and 40 other gifts from Ikon, including smart TVs, cooking ranges, refrigerators, washers and air fryers. Customers purchasing for a minimum value of RO 10 at any Lulu Hypermarket in Oman during the promotional period were entitled to register themselves to be part of e-raffle draws held during the entire period. Eight electronic draws were held every week on different dates during the promotion period and eight grand winners were selected.

Overwhelming response

Expressing his joy over the success of the promotion, Shabeer K. A., Director - Oman of Lulu Group International, stated, "We are happy to see the overwhelming response from our customers for this year's Dream Drive promotion too. We would like to congratulate all the winners and thank everyone who participated in this promotion. It is amazing to witness the excitement of not only the winners but also the huge crowd gathered here to share these joyous moments with the winners."

"This promotion serves as an appreciation and recognition towards Lulu's loyal customers. All our promotions are intended to reward our valued customers for their support and loyalty every time they visit us and also to add more excitement to their overall shopping experience", he added.

Lulu is constantly dedicated to delivering exceptional value and service to all its customers, and all its promotions and campaigns reflect the company's commitment to customer satisfaction.

SHARIA COMPLIANT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Dhofar Islamic Children Account: A secure path to financial responsibility and future savings

MUSCAT: Dhofar Islamic offers Children Account aimed at introducing children to Sharia compliant financial services, the basics of banking, financial responsibility as well as to help families save and invest for short-term or long-term goals such as education. The Children Account is rooted in the Islamic concept of Mudarabah and promotes savings habit via its attractive profit rates.

This Account is available for children up to the age of 13, ensuring that even the youngest members of society can begin their journey towards financial literacy. With no minimum balance required to open the account, it is accessible to a wide range of families, making it an ideal option for those looking to create a secure savings plan for their children's future.

A key feature of the account is the monthly distribution of profits, calculated on the average monthly balance. This means that every deposit made in the account is earning a return, helping the savings grow over time. Moreover, the account facilitates the seamless integration of monthly social protection program benefits, ensuring that children receive essential financial assistance directly.

Empower parents

Highlighting the significance of the Children Account, Amor Said Al Amri ,DGM& Head of Dhofar Islamic Retail Banking stated: "This Account is designed to empower parents to start saving for their children's future while simultaneously fostering financial responsibility from a young age. It serves as a solid foundation for important milestones, like education, while also introducing children to the concepts of money management, saving, and financial planning."

While the account is managed by the parent or guardian, who can deposit and withdraw funds at any time, Dhofar Islamic offers the convenience of an instant debit card issued in the guardian's name. This feature ensures easy access to funds while maintaining parental control.

For those looking to open the account, the process is straightforward. Parents or legal guardians can easily open an account with just a few documents, such as the child's passport or national ID, the guardian's ID, proof of address, and additional documents for non-Omani residents.

Dhofar Islamic remains committed to supporting families and the future of children in Oman, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to achieve their financial aspirations and goals. Through this initiative, the bank is not only securing a child's future but also empowering parents to take control of their financial journey.

UNLEASH RACER WITHIN

Lynk & Co 03 delivers unbeatable combination of dynamic design, powerful performance

MUSCAT: The Lynk & Co 03 delivers an unbeatable combination of dynamic design, powerful performance, and advanced safety all wrapped in a sporty yet luxury sedan starting from just OMR 8,999. Designed for those who crave the thrill of the road and demand more from their everyday drive, the 03 redefines itself as an affordable luxury car.

Lynk & Co is a global brand born from Volvo and Geely's joint venture, blending luxury, innovation and smart connectivity. In Oman, Lynk & Co is proudly represented by Towell Auto Group's Mobility Auto LLC, the official dealers delivering a world-class ownership experience. Together, they are redefining mobility with premium vehicles built for performance, sustainability and modern design.

Under the hood, the Lynk & Co 03 boasts a 2.0-litre turbocharged engine delivering 218 PS (160 kW), accelerating from 0 to 100 km/h in just 7.2 seconds. It's tuned to give you that dynamic racing sensation with seamless acceleration, while also maintaining impressive fuel efficiency perfect for both highway getaways & everyday drives.

Equipped with 20+ Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), the Lynk & Co 03 ensures peace of mind at every turn. Features like Highway Assistant (HWA) help maintain optimal lane positioning and speed on fast-moving roads, while the Smart Turning Lights adapt to your steering angle, illuminating your direction during curves and turns - a thoughtful detail that adds safety and style. Its 540° Full View Camera System, combining a 360° panoramic view with a 180° underbody view, lets you monitor your surroundings with clarity and confidence, especially useful in tight city spaces or adventurous terrains.

Engineered with one of the shortest braking distances in its class, the Lynk & Co 03 delivers exceptional control even at high speeds. Whether it's a sudden stop or a sharp corner, feel the confidence of precision handling and cutting-edge safety tech at your fingertips. This model is truly among the best luxury cars to buy when performance and safety are top priorities.

With its aerodynamic design, bold front fascia and performance-inspired details, the Lynk & Co 03 turns heads without turning your budget upside down. It's a perfect fit for modern drivers seeking style and smart value at OMR 8,999.

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FINANCING OPTIONS AVAILABLE IN STORES

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SEEB: MUSCAT CITY CENTRE (LEVEL 1) TEL: +968 24558062 | **BARKA**: BARKA GRAND CENTRE MALL (GROUND FLOOR) TEL: +968 26981873
SUHAR: OASIS MALL (GROUND FLOOR) TEL: +968 22507786 | **SALALAH**: OASIS MALL (GROUND FLOOR) TEL: +968 94122251, SALALAH GRAND MALL (GROUND FLOOR) TEL: +968 22826251