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VISIT REFLECTS LONG-STANDING HISTORICAL TIES: HM

KING WILLEM-ALEXANDER of the Netherlands and his spouse Queen Máxima hosted an official dinner in honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in the Royal Palace in Amsterdam, on Tuesday.

Prior to the dinner, His Majesty shook hands with the distinguished guests. His Majesty then delivered a speech, reading as follows: “Your Majesty the King... Your Majesty the Queen...

It is a great honour to be here in the Netherlands to celebrate the firm friendship between our two countries. We extend our sincere gratitude for the gracious hospitality we have received and for the valuable contributions that have fostered our partnership over the years. The warm welcome we received reflects deep-rooted cooperation between our two peoples which has flourished over centuries through maritime trade, exploration, and the shared pursuit of knowledge.

“This visit reflects the long-standing historical ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Early Dutch traders and navigators built bridges of friendship since the 17th century, laying the foundation for the fruitful cooperation we are witnessing today.

“This legacy is embodied at present in the Port of Sohar, the fruit of a joint venture between Asyad Group and the Port of Rotterdam to manage and operate Sohar Port and Freezone. This port symbolises our shared maritime heritage and our collective commitment to innovation, cooperation and a forward-looking vision. The port has become a vibrant hub for global trade and investment demonstrating what can be achieved when nations work together in a spirit of openness and determination.

“The Netherlands’ expertise in clean energy and water management is globally recognised and appreciated and we are grateful that this visit provided an opportunity to discuss our cooperation and initial successes we have achieved particularly in the production of green hydrogen and innovative water solutions.

“In addition to economic cooperation, the countries continue to foster ties through political consultations, academic exchange, and cultural dialogue.” **TURN TO P3**



HM ACCORDED
OFFICIAL RECEPTION
CEREMONY
AT ROYAL PALACE

HM AND KING
WILLEM-ALEXANDER
REVIEW BILATERAL
RELATIONS

HIS MAJESTY
MEETS CEOS OF
MAJOR DUTCH
CORPORATIONS

SULTANATE
OF OMAN AND
NETHERLANDS SIGN
3 AGREEMENTS

HIS MAJESTY
VISITS NATIONAL
MONUMENT IN
AMSTERDAM

OMAN AIR’S
DIRECT FLIGHTS
TO AMSTERDAM
FROM JULY 1

HM RECEIVES PHONE CALL FROM TRUMP



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a phone call from US President Donald Trump.

During the telephone conversation, the US President voiced his appreciation for the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries commending the Omani efforts in the ongoing talks between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. They also discussed ways to support the talks in order to achieve the desired outcome. — ONA

HM, King Willem-Alexander review relations

AN OFFICIAL reception ceremony was held at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam on Tuesday for His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of his state visit to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Upon His Majesty’s arrival, he was received by King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and his spouse Queen Máxima. The King and the Queen welcomed His Majesty the Sultan, wishing him and the official accompanying delegation a successful visit and a pleasant stay in the Netherlands. After that, His Majesty the Sultan, the King and the Queen ascended the main dais, where the Omani Royal Anthem and the Netherlands Royal Anthem were played.

Then, His Majesty inspected the guard of honour. After that, the King escorted His Majesty to the interior of the palace.



Prior to entering the Palace, His Majesty the Sultan was welcomed by a group of Omani students pursuing study in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, along with families of the Omani Embassy’s staff in Amsterdam.

After that, the two leaders headed to the main hall, where His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with members of the welcoming party. Then, the King and the Queen shook hands with the official Omani delegation.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with Dick Schoof, Prime Minister of the Netherlands and some officials in the Netherlands. Then, the two monarchs held a cordial meeting in the presence of the Omani and Netherlands sides. The meeting reviewed the relations of cooperation and partnership and the means of promoting them to serve the two countries. — ONA

HIS MAJESTY ACCORDED WARM WELCOME IN NETHERLANDS

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HM VISITS NATIONAL MONUMENT IN AMSTERDAM

AMSTERDAM: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday visited the National Monument in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The visit comes within the context of His Majesty's current state visit

to the Netherlands. It is worth noting that the monument was built in 1956 and holds great significance for the Dutch people, as it stands in Dam Square — the historic heart of the Dutch capital, Amsterdam. — ONA



LEADERS EXCHANGE ORDERS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands exchanged orders and commemorative gifts at the Royal Palace in Amsterdam on Tuesday on the occasion of His Majesty's state visit to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

His Majesty the Sultan conferred 'Al Said Order' on King Willem-Alexander, in commendation for the King and in manifestation of the advanced relations of cooperation and partnership between the two countries.

His Majesty the Sultan also conferred 'Oman First Order' on Queen Máxima, and 'Renaissance of Oman 1st Class Order' on Princess Catharina-Amalia, the Princess of Orange and the heir apparent to the throne of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. His Majesty also conferred Royal orders on some senior officials in the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands awarded His Majesty the Sultan 'Order of the Lion of the Netherlands', the oldest and highest civilian order of chivalry in the Netherlands, in commendation of His Majesty the Sultan and in acknowledgement of the two countries' distinguished relations.

The Netherlands Monarch also awarded Royal orders to Her Highness The Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, and members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty. Furthermore, the two leaders exchanged some commemorative gifts.

The event was attended by members of the official delegations from the Omani and Netherlands sides, as well as some senior officials in the Netherlands. — ONA

KING OF NETHERLANDS HOSTS DINNER

FROM P1

"Mutual understanding between our peoples is at an all-time high. As we continue to uphold our shared values of justice, pluralism, and the rule of law, we are confident that our cooperation will contribute to promoting peace and stability in Europe and the Middle East.

"Based on the achievements we have made together in the fields of transport, logistics, trade and energy, we have to expand our cooperation to address urgent global challenges, particularly in upholding international law and ensuring security for all. In these endeavours, we must be wise in our visions, bold and courageous

in our actions, and aware that our shared responsibility for shaping a better future extends beyond the borders of our two countries.

Your Majesty the King... Your Majesty the Queen... As we move forward towards realising this shared vision, allow us in conclusion to reiterate our strong appreciation for the deep-rooted friendship between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. We are looking forward to the honour of welcoming you, Your Majesty the King and Your Majesty the Queen, in Muscat soon. We are also looking forward to continuing our joint efforts in the upcoming months and years.

Thank you."

King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands also delivered a speech on this occasion, in which he reiterated his welcome to His Majesty the Sultan and his accompanying official delegation, affirming his country's keenness to diversify areas of partnership and investment between our two countries to enrich the economic growth of the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands at various levels.

The dinner was attended by the official delegation accompanying His Majesty, and a number of senior officials from the Kingdom of the Netherlands. — ONA



HIS MAJESTY MEETS WITH CEOs OF MAJOR DUTCH FIRMS

AMSTERDAM: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday met with a number of CEOs of major Dutch corporations and businessmen in the presence of King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands. During the meeting, they discussed ways for developing economic and industrial partnerships in the sectors of ports, logistics, maritime trade, chemical industries, renewable energy and agriculture and food in addition to cooperation in the cultural and academic fields. — ONA



SHORT TAKES



This direct link marks a significant milestone in strengthening ties between our two countries and enhancing connectivity. — ONA

OMAN AIR LAUNCHES DIRECT FLIGHTS TO AMSTERDAM

MUSCAT: Oman Air has announced the launch of fights between Muscat and Amsterdam, marking the airline’s 11th destination in Europe. Starting July 1, 2025, the airline will fly direct between Muscat and Amsterdam Airport Schiphol four times per week.

The new route was announced at a signing ceremony attended by Con Korfiatis, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Oman Air, and Pieter van Oord, CEO of Royal Schiphol Group. The ceremony is held on the sidelines of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s state visit to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The CEO of Oman Air said, “We’re proud to enter Amsterdam, marking our first direct connection to this vibrant city. As we continue to grow, we focus on destinations that not only align with our strategic goals but also offer long-term opportunities for tourism and business exchange. Europe is our second largest market in terms of revenue and Amsterdam represents a key hub in the region for business and leisure travel. Moreover, the growing economic ties with Oman make it an ideal addition to our expanding European network.” On his turn, Pieter van Oord, CEO of Royal Schiphol Group added, “We are delighted to welcome Oman Air to Amsterdam and have a direct connection between Amsterdam and Muscat. — ONA

DECLARATION OF INTENT SIGNED

AMSTERDAM: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Ministry, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands signed a Declaration of Intent on Tuesday pertaining to a draft work permit agreement for the spouses of official employees between the two countries. The Declaration of Intent was signed on behalf of Oman by SSayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister. On the Dutch side, it was signed by Caspar Veldkamp, Minister of Foreign Affairs. This document represents a declaration of intent between the government of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Foreign Minister, and the government of the Netherlands, represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, to enhance ongoing negotiations regarding an agreement between the two countries on work permits for spouses of official employees in the host state (the Work Permit Agreement). The move also comes in pursuance of a common desire to boost ties and expand bilateral cooperation. — ONA

Officials tour Port of Amsterdam, discuss investment opportunities



AMSTERDAM: As part of the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a number of ministers and officials visited the Port of Amsterdam on Tuesday to discuss cooperation and investment opportunities between Oman and the Netherlands in green hydrogen, clean energy, and logistics services.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, stated that the purpose of the visit was to inspect the site of the liquefied hydrogen receiving plant from Oman by 2030. He mentioned that representatives from 11 operating companies from



Oman, the Netherlands and Germany during the visit, confirmed their commitment to achieving the goal. Abdulsalam bin Mohammed

al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, emphasised that the cooperation between Oman and the Netherlands was a result of

mutual trust between the two parties. He noted that the efforts made had led to the signing of agreements between the two friendly countries.

Oman, Netherlands sign pacts in diverse fields

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN and the Kingdom of the Netherlands on Tuesday signed three agreements: the first in the field of liquefied hydrogen, the second a partnership agreement to study the development of infrastructure for transporting hydrogen and carbon dioxide via pipelines, and the third a partnership agreement with Dutch company ‘Royal Vopak’.

This took place during the ‘state visit’ of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Joint Development Agreement (JDA) for the liquefied hydrogen corridor entails the establishment of the world’s first commercial export corridor for liquefied hydrogen, linking the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Federal Republic of Germany. The Sultanate of Oman was represented in the agreement by Hydrom, OQ and the Port of Duqm.

This agreement is a pivotal step in cementing Oman’s position as a global hub for green hydrogen production and export, as well as a strategic partner in enhancing global energy security. Once fully developed, the corridor will serve as a direct export route for liquefied hydrogen compliant with the EU’s Renewable Fuels of Non-Biological Origin (RFNBO) standards - from the Port of Duqm to the Port of Amsterdam, and onward to strategic logistics centres in Germany, including the Port of Duisburg, for further distribution to other European markets.

Under the agreement, Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), as the national coordinator for implementing Oman’s green hydrogen strategy, will oversee production alignment with national plans and ensure the project’s integration with the sector’s infrastructure and overarching strategy.

Meanwhile, OQ Group will develop the liquefied hydrogen terminal and associated facilities, including storage and export infrastructure. The rapid growth of green hydrogen projects in Duqm will enhance the corridor’s readiness and its ability to contribute to national targets, leveraging the integrated infrastructure of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and the port’s strategic location.

The Joint Development Agreement aims for maritime transport within this corridor to rely on specialised vessels equipped with advanced technologies developed by ‘Ecolog’ to ensure highly efficient liquefied hydrogen transportation.



This took place during the ‘state visit’ of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



The involvement of eleven companies from three countries across the entire value chain - from hydrogen production and liquefaction to transport, storage, and regasification - demonstrates the trust Hydrom has gained in forming high-impact strategic partnerships, both within Oman and abroad.

ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUF

On the European side, the corridor will focus on establishing liquefied hydrogen regasification terminals at the Port of Amsterdam, after which industrial sectors in the Netherlands and Germany will be supplied with hydrogen via gas pipelines, rail networks, and waterways.

In a statement, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of Hydrom’s Board of Directors, said: “This international cooperation is a strategic step in Oman’s journey toward building a green hydrogen-based economy, linking our production capabilities to global markets and reinforcing Oman’s readiness to lead the sector.”

He added: “The significance of this agreement extends beyond paving the way for a green hydrogen export corridor from Oman to Europe - it reaffirms Oman’s confident progress in implementing its ambitious green hydrogen strategy. The involvement of eleven companies from three countries across the entire value chain - from hydrogen production and liquefaction to transport, storage, and regasification - demonstrates the trust Hydrom has gained in forming high-impact strategic partnerships, both within Oman and abroad. This will contribute to establishing an integrated national ecosystem and creating sustainable economic and developmental opportunities, whether through sector-related industries, infrastructure development, or the training and employment of local talent.”

For her part, Sophie Hermans, Minister of Climate and Green Growth of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, stated that this agreement marks a key milestone in Oman-Netherlands cooperation in clean energy. She noted that the project will link Omani green

hydrogen production to European markets, supporting long-term strategic efforts to diversify energy sources and enhance energy security.

The minister emphasised that Oman’s green hydrogen sector is witnessing notable progress under a sound framework, making it one of the most attractive regulatory environments for global investments and partnerships. She mentioned that contracts for green hydrogen projects have been awarded to consortia comprising 22 international companies, which have already begun development work in Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates.

She added: “Hydrom continues to advance Oman’s green hydrogen strategy and is currently preparing to launch the third round of public auctions for green hydrogen project sites, focusing on mid-scale projects. This aims to align early-stage production with downstream industries and strengthen the integration of Oman’s green hydrogen ecosystem, including shared infrastructure, supply chains and sector-related industries.”

The agreement was signed by representatives from eleven public and private entities from the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Meanwhile, the two additional agreements - the partnership to study hydrogen and carbon dioxide pipeline transport infrastructure and the partnership between OQ and Royal Vopak - represent ambitious steps toward shaping a new future for Oman’s energy sector. As per the partnership agreement between OQ and Royal Vopak, OQ will spearhead the development of Duqm in Oman as a premier integrated hub for hydrocarbons, chemicals, and low-carbon products. — ONA

SHORT TAKES

HM CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT OF GABON

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Brice Oligui Nguema of the Republic of Gabon on the occasion of being elected as his country’s President. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and a long life to President Brice. His Majesty also wished the President of Gabon success in leading the people of his country towards further progress and prosperity and for the bilateral relations further development. — ONA

HM CONDOLES KING OF MALAYSIA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to King Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, on the death of the former Malaysian prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to King Sultan Ibrahim and the people of Malaysia. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty to rest the deceased soul in peace in paradise and grant his family patience to bear the loss. — ONA

EMPOWERING YOUTH INNOVATION

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

The Environment Authority in Al Batinah North Governorate has launched the Environmental Ambassadors Initiative and opened registration for the much-anticipated Environmental Excellence Hackathon, scheduled to take place from May 2 to 4. The initiative aims to inspire youth, developers and environmental enthusiasts to craft creative, tech-driven solutions to pressing environmental challenges. Announced via the Authority’s social media platforms, the hackathon invites programmers, job-seekers, university students and leading tech companies to contribute their expertise and ingenuity in a 48-hour



challenge designed to address real-world ecological issues. Iman al Hosni, Training and Qualification Specialist at the Environment Department and Head of the Environmental Ambassadors Initiative, stated, “The Environmental Excellence Hackathon brings together developers, designers and innovators to develop innovative solutions to specific environmental problems. Outcomes will include functional prototypes, detailed presentations, impact forecasts and plans for future development.” Participants will work in teams to brainstorm ideas, design prototypes and build digital tools that tackle key environmental concerns. The hackathon will focus on tracks such as vegetation cover, wildlife, natural resource conservation and pollution. Specific challenges include coastal erosion, climate change, hurricanes, rising temperatures, invasive species, wildlife encroachment, desertification and overgrazing. With a registration deadline set for April 23, the initiative reflects the Sultanate of Oman’s steadfast commitment to sustainable development.

OMANI ELECTED MEMBER OF ARAB HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

CAIRO: Jamal bin Salim al Nabhani, Director of the Legislation Department at the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, member of Oman Human Rights Commission, Chairman of the Committee on Public Rights and Freedoms in the Commission, has been elected as a member of the Arab Charter on Human Rights’ Committee of the Arab League for a period of four consecutive years. Al Nabhani’s election took place in Cairo, Egypt, during a meeting



Jamal bin Salim al Nabhani

of states that are party to the Arab Charter on Human Rights. The meeting was dedicated to electing four independent Arab experts to fill vacant seats on the committee’s membership, following the expiration of the terms of four of the panel’s previous members. The election process was conducted under the direct supervision of the Secretariat-General of the Arab League. — ONA

RO 7m state-of-the-art autism centre approved

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

THE Sultanate of Oman is moving towards building an Autism Spectrum Disorder Centre for care and rehabilitation that will integrate and empower all segments of society, including people with disabilities. The focus will be on promoting health and well-being, providing high-quality healthcare services, offering comprehensive and inclusive education, and encouraging innovation and the development of technologies to help people with disabilities overcome the challenges of integrating into society. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued orders approving RO 7 million to establish an Autism Spectrum Disorder Centre for Care and Rehabilitation in Muscat Governorate, affiliated with the National Centre for Autism. The orders also stipulated a study of the governorates’ needs for such centres and a timetable for their establishment, based on the number of cases in each governorate. Nadia al Ajmi, Director of the National Centre for Autism at the Ministry of Social Development,

The Sultanate of Oman is making significant efforts to ensure excellence in academic, social and psychological healthcare services for all its citizens, including persons with disabilities.



stated in an interview that the centre, equipped with advanced services, will contribute to empowering people with autism spectrum disorder and effectively integrating them into society. She said, “There is no doubt that providing integrated services in a single building with the latest technologies and equipment will positively impact the level of service provided to autism spectrum disorder cases, empower them, contribute to developing their skills and enable their natural integration into society. This will also be reflected in the quality of service provided by the centre.” The centre will be built within the existing National Autism Centre in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, with a building area of approximately 26,000 square metres and a capacity of approximately 150 cases per day. It is expected to be the first of its kind in the Middle East, providing

a wide and integrated range of rehabilitation services that meet the needs of people with autism spectrum disorder. These services include specialised rehabilitation halls equipped with modern tools and technologies that contribute to achieving social integration for these cases. Quality recreational services will also be provided, through specialised and integrated recreational halls and programmes tailored to health. In addition, the centre will allow non-members to use the halls at specific times, as well as providing training and rehabilitation services. It will serve as the central entity responsible for providing specialised training services to those working in the field of autism, granting licences to practice this profession and providing ongoing training services to families from all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. Temporary care services will also be provided by offering appropriate and accessible facilities for those suffering from severe autism spectrum disorder, as well as diagnostic and assessment services specialising in early and comprehensive diagnosis in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

Students embark on Arabic programme

MANAH: The Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers on Monday received the 47th batch of students from 12 nationalities around the world namely: the United States, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Lithuania, Hungary, France, Comoros, India, Thailand, El Salvador, Poland and Türkiye. The scheduled programme includes a scientific course to prepare teachers of Arabic to non-native speakers of Arabic language, which includes two groups of Arabic language professors from Indonesia and Uzbekistan, in addition to a comprehensive Arabic language study programme.



On their first day at the institute, the new students were familiarised with the faculty, administrators and supervisors of the cultural programme and the institute’s facilities and services. The curriculum includes a number of activities, lectures, cultural evenings, educational trips to various historical and natural sites, Arabic calligraphy classes, art workshops and a language partner programme. The curriculum also encompasses frameworks for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, teaching language elements and skills, and methodological approaches to teaching Arabic. — ONA

260-bed Al Suwaiq Hospital 82 per cent complete

AL SUWAIQ: The implementation rate at Al Suwaiq Hospital has reached 82 per cent, the Ministry of Health announced. Constructed on a land area measuring 287,000 square metres with a built-up area of 47,357 square metres, the 260-bed hospital has a total cost of RO 75 million. Engineer Yousef bin Yaqoub Ambu Ali, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Projects and Engineering Services at the Ministry of Health, said that the new hospital in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq is one of the important health development projects in Al Batinah North Governorate.



The existence of a local hospital would reduce pressure on existing hospitals thus contributing to the provision of faster medical services. — ONA

He added that the hospital will have an accident and emergency unit, a radiology department, a nephrology unit, outpatient clinics, a rehabilitation unit, intensive care units, a gynecology and obstetrics

department, a special care unit for premature babies, a daily operations department, administrative offices, a meeting room, a central sterilisation department, hospitalisation wards, among other facilities. He stressed that the establishment of an integrated hospital in Al Batinah North Governorate to provide healthcare at both the primary and secondary levels contributes to achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040 which aims to improve and sustain health services in the governorate. The existence of a local hospital would reduce pressure on existing

hospitals thus contributing to the provision of faster medical services. The establishment of Al Suwaiq Hospital reflects the government’s commitment to meet the needs of citizens across the governorates. It embodies the decentralisation approach and is a step towards developing and improving healthcare services and enhancing the integration of the healthcare system, the official said. Once operational, Al Suwaiq Hospital will provide healthcare services to citizens while expanding the existing healthcare services. — ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The discussion highlighted importance of Oman's promotional identity

PANEL HIGHLIGHTS
UNIFIED
PROMOTIONAL
IDENTITY PROJECT

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) on Tuesday organised a dialogue session to discuss the Unified Promotional Identity Project for Oman, held in the university's conference hall with the attendance of a select group of project representatives.

The session featured a presentation highlighting the importance of Oman's promotional identity as a tool for communication with the world and a catalyst for investment projects and international initiatives. It emphasised that the promotional identity stems from the Omani citizen and aims to strengthen Oman's presence in the global economic system. — ONA

RAO MARKS
RECRUITS'
GRADUATION



Senior officers of SAF, RAO attended the ceremony

MUSCAT: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) on Tuesday celebrated the graduation of a batch of new recruits. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC), at the presence of Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman.

The event began by performing the military salute to the chief guest who inspected the first column of the graduates. The chief guest also felicitated awards to the top graduates. The event was attended by several senior officers of the Sultan's Armed Forces, RAO officers and personnel, as well as parents of graduating recruits. — ONA

Ninth career forum prepares youth for a changing job market

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, APRIL 15

In response to the rapidly evolving job market and growing employment demands, the Ninth Career Guidance Forum, held under the theme 'Be Ready for the Job', concluded in Suhar with a resounding call to action: equip young Omanis with the skills, confidence and tools necessary to thrive in tomorrow's workforce.

Under the auspices of Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology, the forum emerged as a

vibrant platform of opportunity. It brought together students, graduates, job-seekers, HR professionals and employers through immersive activities and insightful sessions designed to bridge the gap between academia and industry.

"This forum reflects our commitment to equipping graduates with the skills and knowledge needed to drive innovation and meet labour market demands. By aligning academic outcomes with national development goals, we aim to empower Omani youth for promising careers across sectors such as logistics, ICT and advanced industries," said Dr Hanifa al Qasmi, Head of UTAS-Suhar. The forum unfolded in two dynamic phases.

AL NAHDHA
HOSPITAL
CONDUCTS
COCHLEAR
IMPLANT
ON WORLD'S
YOUNGEST

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with Al Nahdha Hospital's Cochlear Implant Programme and Anaesthesia Department, a specialised medical team from the hospital's Otorhinolaryngology (ENT surgery) Department successfully conducted a unique, complex cochlear implant surgery on the world's youngest infant - a 9-week-old boy suffering from cerebral meningitis. The operation lasted about two hours.

Dr Yusef bin Ali al Saidi, ENT



consultant surgeon at Al Nahdha Hospital (Head of the medical team), said that the cochlear implant procedure aims to improve

hearing ability in individuals suffering from profound hearing loss, by directly stimulating the auditory nerve.

Al Saidi pointed out that such a surgery poses a medical challenge, notably when conducted on very young children, due to the sensitivity and complexity of the inner ear at this age. Before this, the youngest child to undergo this procedure was a 10-week old baby in the United States, he explained.

— ONA

Oman hosts landmark
IUCN Green List workshop

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

A two-day workshop titled 'Green List Reserves', organised by the Environment Authority in coordination with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), was held at the Grand Hyatt Muscat. The initiative aims to introduce the internationally recognised IUCN Green List standards to Oman's conservation and protected area communities.

Designed to enhance excellence in the management of nature reserves, the IUCN Green List evaluates protected areas across 17 criteria and 50 indicators, including governance, planning, management and conservation outcomes.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, emphasised that Oman's move to nominate several reserves for Green List status reflects its commitment to biodiversity protection and sustainable development goals. "It is a culmination of ongoing efforts to elevate the efficiency of nature reserve management to meet international standards," he said.

Currently, Oman has 31 declared nature reserves that span diverse ecosystems - coasts, deserts, plains, mountains and valleys. The workshop focuses on three nominated sites: Arabian Oryx



The specialised workshop is organised by the Environment Authority along with IUCN



Green List as a global benchmark in conservation management. It promotes active participation of both government bodies and local communities

ENG SULEIMAN
AL AKHZAMI

Reserve, Daymaniyat Islands and Saleel National Park. Saleel has already entered the first phase of the Green List application process.

Eng Suleiman al Akhzami, Director-General of Nature Reserves, described the Green List as a global benchmark in conservation management. It promotes active participation of both government bodies and local communities. Natalia Boulad, Programme Manager at IUCN West Asia, explained that the Green List is more than a certification - it is a holistic standard encompassing good governance, effective management and measurable conservation impact. "It's about showing you're on the right path

and encouraging a long-term commitment to excellence," she said.

Workshop sessions include visual presentations, knowledge exchange with international experts and discussions on preparing nomination files for global Green List consideration. The event aligns with Oman Vision 2040, reinforcing Oman's dedication to environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation.

With over 15,000 species of terrestrial and marine flora and fauna - many rare or endemic - Oman continues to prioritise environmental stewardship through global collaborations like the IUCN Green List.



FIFTH PHASE OF MARINE MAMMAL SURVEY BEGINS

KHASAB: The fifth phase of the Marine Mammal Survey, carried out by the Environment Authority (EA) in collaboration with several government agencies, began in Khasab, Musandam Governorate, on Monday.

The survey is part of the EA's ongoing efforts aimed at protecting wildlife and preserving biodiversity in the Omani marine environment.

Lasting until April 24, the survey targets to collect accurate data on marine mammal species in the National Nature Park Reserve. It includes a field survey that utilises advanced technologies such as drones and GoPro cameras with the aim of developing an accurate map of species distribution in the

reserve.

Eng Aida bint Khalaf al Jabriyah, head of the survey team, confirmed that the survey would enhance marine environmental management based on scientific data. The survey includes monitoring mammals using binoculars and specialised cameras and documenting sightings using the Spinner app.

The outcome of the previous phases showed a great diversity of species, with 38 sightings recorded, including the Indian Ocean humpback dolphin and spinner dolphin. Local communities are also participating in the survey by reporting their sightings, enhancing the effectiveness of research and providing a community database.



The first day featured simulated job interviews conducted by seasoned HR professionals

The first day featured simulated job interviews conducted by seasoned HR professionals, providing participants with real-time feedback to sharpen their interview techniques. The second day presented expert-led workshops, engaging panel discussions and

presentations from leading entities including the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Oman Information Technology Society and Sarooj International Company. Key sessions focused on professional certifications,

digital readiness - through global initiatives such as Maken - and future workforce strategies.

The event successfully cultivated a space where attendees could engage directly with industry experts and academic advisers, gaining insights into emerging labour trends and career-building strategies. It strongly echoed the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, reinforcing the importance of developing a future-ready, resilient workforce.

Concluding with a ceremony recognising contributors and participants, the forum stood as a strategic milestone in nurturing competitive, career-focused Omani youth.

SHORT TAKES



A view of the Parliament House building in Singapore. — AFP

SINGAPORE TO HOLD ELECTION ON MAY 3 AMID COST OF LIVING

SINGAPORE: Singapore will hold a national election on May 3, the election commission said on Tuesday, amid worries about the cost of living and fears of a recession as a result of US tariffs. The vote will be the first electoral test for Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, who took over from long-time premier Lee Hsien Loong as leader of the People’s Action Party (PAP) in May 2024.

“We are witnessing profound changes in the world. It is becoming more uncertain, unsettled and even unstable. The global conditions that enabled Singapore’s success over the past decades may no longer hold,” Wong said on social media.

“That is why I have called this General Election. At this critical juncture, Singaporeans should decide on the team to lead our nation, and to chart our way forward together.” The PAP is almost certain to dominate and win most seats, as it has in every vote since independence in 1965, although its share of the popular vote will be closely watched after one of its worst electoral performances in the last contest in 2020. — Reuters

MANILA CALLS JOINT US DRILLS ‘DEFENCE REHEARSAL’

MANILA: The United States is deploying around 9,000 troops to the Philippines for this year’s joint military exercises, as the allies strengthen ties amid tensions with China over its activities in the South China Sea and in Taiwan.

The annual drills, which the Philippine military on Tuesday described as a rehearsal for national defence, will include 5,000 Filipino troops, 200 from the Australia Defence Force, and observers from the Japan Self-Defence Force. For the first time, observers from countries like Poland and the Czech Republic will also participate.

While this year’s troop count is lower than 2023’s 17,600, it will be more purposeful, Brigadier General Michael Logico, spokesperson for the event, told a press conference. The annual ‘Balikatan,’ or ‘shoulder-to-shoulder’ drills reflect deepening defence ties between the two allies, as tensions simmer in the South China Sea and around Taiwan, where China recently held large-scale military exercises. The drills will run from April 21 to May 9. — Reuters

NEARLY 60,000 AFGHANS RETURN FROM PAKISTAN

KABUL: Nearly 60,000 Afghans have been forced to leave Pakistan since the start of April, the International Organization for Migration said, after Islamabad ramped up a campaign to deport migrants to Afghanistan. “Between 1 and 13 April 2025, IOM recorded a sharp rise in forced returns, with nearly 60,000 individuals crossing back into Afghanistan through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border points,” the UN agency said in a statement.



Families with their belongings in tow have crowded the crossings at

Torkham in the north and Spin Boldak in the south, recalling scenes in 2023 when tens of thousands of Afghans fled deportation threats in Pakistan.

“With a new wave of large-scale returns now underway from Pakistan, needs on the ground are rising rapidly — both at the border and in areas of return that are struggling to absorb large numbers of returnees,” said Mihyung Park, head of the IOM’s Afghanistan mission. — AFP

EU announces €1.6 bilion aid to Palestinians

THE European Union on Monday announced a new three-year financial support package for the Palestinians worth up to €1.6 billion (\$1.8 billion).

The fresh aid pledge came as EU foreign ministers met Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Mustafa in Luxembourg for the first meeting of “high-level dialogue” between the two sides.

“We are stepping up our support to the Palestinian people. EUR 1.6 billion until 2027 will help stabilise the West Bank and Gaza,” EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said.

The EU is looking to boost the Palestinian Authority as Israel has resumed its war in Gaza after a ceasefire largely put a halt to the fighting for two months.

“This will reinforce the authority’s ability to meet the needs of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and prepare it to return to govern Gaza once conditions allow,” Kallas said.



Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa is greeted by Slovenia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs Tanja Fajon and Luxembourg’s Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel ahead of the start of a European Union Foreign Affairs Council meeting at the European Convention Center Luxembourg in Luxembourg City. — AFP

The EU foreign policy chief reiterated the bloc’s condemnation over the “total blockade of aid into Gaza” and insistence that there was no military solution to the conflict.

She said that she was recommending further sanctions on “extremist” Israeli settlers in the West Bank, but there was not yet consensus among EU countries for the move. Mustafa said the international community faced a “moment of truth” over the situation in Gaza and the West Bank.

“We came to demand clarity from the

international community,” he said.

“There can be no lasting peace without accountability. Israel must be held responsible for the crimes committed.”

Brussels — the biggest international donor to the Palestinians — said the package would include €620 million in grants for the Palestinian Authority.

The funds will be linked to reforms on “fiscal sustainability, democratic governance, private sector development and public infrastructure and services”, the EU said. The rest will be made up of €576 million

in grants for projects aimed at helping economic recovery in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

A further €400 million in loans would come from the bloc’s lending arm, the European Investment Bank.

The EU’s new package follows on from the previous three-year support plan worth €1.36 billion from 2021 to 2024.

Despite being a major provider of aid, the EU has struggled to exert influence in the crisis as its 27 countries frequently over their approach to the conflict. — AFP



CLOWNS AMID CHAOS

Members of the Gaza Circus School relief team perform in a hallway at the Abdelaziz al Rantisi Hospital in Gaza City. Israel said on April 12 that it planned to expand its military offensive in Gaza after seizing a new corridor as part of a broader effort to take large parts of the war-battered Palestinian territory. The previous truce with the Palestinian Hamas movement brokered by the US, Egypt, and Qatar which took effect on January 19 collapsed on March 18 as Israel resumed intense strikes on Gaza. — AFP

Nations call for immediate end to ‘horrific’ Sudan war

LONDON: The UK led international calls on Tuesday for a swift end to the devastating war in Sudan, hosting a gathering of world officials with fresh pledges of humanitarian aid as the conflict which has cost thousands of lives entered its third year. The war erupted on April 15, 2023, in a bitter power struggle between rival generals leading Sudan’s regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) -- neither of whom were present at the conference.

More than 13 million people have been uprooted and tens of thousands killed, with both sides accused of committing atrocities.

It has created what the United Nations describes as the world’s worst hunger and displacement crises. “We simply cannot look away,” the UK’s foreign minister David Lammy said as he opened the talks among counterparts from around 15 countries, denouncing

what he called “a lack of political will” to end the fighting.

“We have got to persuade the warring parties to protect civilians, to let aid in and across the country, and to put peace first,” he said, adding it would take “patient diplomacy”. Various peace efforts have so far failed to lead to a ceasefire.

The continued fighting has fuelled fears that tensions will spill over Sudan’s borders and stir further instability in the impoverished Horn of Africa region.

“There can be no military solution in Sudan, only an immediate, unconditional secession of hostilities,” said the African Union’s commissioner for political affairs, Bankole Adeoye.

“This, we believe, must be followed by an all-inclusive dialogue to end the war.” The war has “shattered the lives of millions of children across Sudan,” said



Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock and Hadja Lahbib, European Commissioner for Preparedness, Crisis Management and Equality, attend the London Sudan conference in London. — Reuters

Catherine Russell, executive director of Unicef, which estimated 2,776 children had been killed or maimed in 2023 and 2024. A UN-backed assessment has concluded that famine is now blighting parts of the

country. Britain’s foreign ministry said more than 30 million people were in desperate need, and 12 million women and girls were in danger of gender-based violence.

Lammy unveiled £120 million

in new aid for Sudan, with the EU pledging more than \$591 million to address the crisis, and Germany putting up some €125 million. France also announced an extra €50 million in humanitarian aid this year. “How can we forget the world’s largest humanitarian crisis?” asked German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock.

During a visit to a refugee camp, she said she heard “horrific reports of women and children being raped” while people were dying of hunger.

Germany and France as well as the European Union and the 55-member African Union are co-hosting the conference with the British government in London.

Ministers from some 14 other countries including Saudi Arabia and the United States were attending, the Foreign Office said, along with high-level representatives from bodies such as the United Nations. — AFP

OPINION

The surge of interest in economics is a sign of our times



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

If there is a definitive word for the first quarter of 2025, it is tariffs. Everybody is talking about it. That is because nobody really knows what the implications of the rapidly changing, on-today, off-tomorrow tariffs from the United States government will be. An interesting offshoot of this scenario is the sudden interest in economics, or finance in particular, by virtually everybody. Defined by Cambridge Dictionary as ‘a charge or list of charges either for services or good entering a country’, this much specialised term has become part of everyday vocabulary around the world. The Financial Times just recommended five essential books for those who want to understand tariffs and their role in global trade. Their list includes Dmitry Grozoubinksi’s ‘Why politicians lie about trade... and what you need to know about it’, considered a layman’s guide to the basics of trade today. They also include Ha-Hoon Chang’s ‘Kicking away the ladder: Development strategy in historical perspective’, a book that outlines the forces

that make non-western countries comply with western policies and standards, not all of which are appropriate in other contexts. But more than traditional books, the information on tariffs and its potential implications are best found on social media. Even traditional media has created its own online channels where they post important snippets of conversations and parts of debates which have found more traction among the audience. The media, for instance, is exploring examples of how people are already being effected by not knowing how much products will cost. Some are stocking up while others are keeping an eye on everyday products that may see prices peak without warning. For those invested in the stock market, the only certainty is uncertainty. As the markets fall and rise at a moment’s notice, it is impacting small investors’ retirement corpus, as well as their savings for their children education and other incidental expenses. This has been true across the world, from the stock market in South Korea, Japan and India to Europe and Canada.

Knowledge of the economy provides focus, patience and discipline for investors while opening opportunities for young professionals to navigate an uncertain future

This is where a number of financial influencers, commonly referred to as finfluencers have entered. They offer advice on the changing situation, what stocks to buy and what to redeem. But their veracity is mostly suspect. It is, after all, almost impossible to make a 1-minute Instagram reel to reflect such a complicated situation. If the present moment has achieved anything, it is the upsurge of interest in finance education. This has the ripple effect of making people focus on finance literacy, learning the basics about investment, long term planning and playing the market. On the flipside, it has created a whole lot of ‘experts’ who are giving out unsolicited advice to increase the number of their followers. But in the long run, a fundamental knowledge of the economy, particularly at the personal level is important. It provides focus, patience and discipline for those investing in the market, and it also creates opportunities for younger professionals to prepare for an uncertain future.

UK LOSING GLOBAL TALENT OVER HIGH VISA COSTS

SACHIN RAVIKUMAR

It took Ed Roberts over a year to find a senior scientist to work at his cancer research laboratory in Scotland, a delay he blames on high UK visa costs that made it harder to attract international workers. The Royal Society says UK immigration fees for foreign workers are up to 17 times higher than the average for other leading science nations, inflated in part by an upfront charge to access Britain’s state-run health service. The Society, scientists, consultants and a lawmaker said the fees are making it harder to hire global talent to fill Britain’s skills gap and undermining Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s “mission” to grow the economy. They also risk efforts to attract scientists who may leave the United States following President Donald Trump’s cuts to research funding. “If we can’t convince people to come here, they’re going somewhere else,” said Roberts, who interviewed a mix of British and foreign candidates for the specialised role. “It’s definitely slowing down research.” Fees for visas to live and work in Britain have increased as successive governments vowed to cut record net migration. Roberts said an immunology researcher from Hong Kong rejected an offer to join his Cancer Research UK Scotland Institute over the roughly £15,000 (\$19,800) upfront bill he would have to pay to move to Britain with his wife and child. Like many other employers, the lab will reimburse visa costs for the employee but not accompanying family members. Reuters was not able to contact the Hong Kong researcher. Frenchman Baptiste Brauge was reimbursed for his £4,400 visa fee when he took up a separate role with Roberts. Even so, it was ‘frightening’ to initially part with a large chunk of his personal savings, the 28-year-old researcher said. Britain’s Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) went up by 66 per cent last year, reaching £1,035 a year per adult. “As soon as these kind of things come in, the number of applicants we have goes down,” Roberts said. “It just makes it hard to convince them that this is an attractive place to be.” Starmer’s government, which has commissioned a review of labour shortages in sectors including IT and engineering, says it is difficult to compare different countries’ visa costs. It said a policy paper would soon set out a plan “to restore order to our broken immigration system, linking immigration, skills and visa systems to grow our domestic workforce, end reliance on overseas labour and boost economic growth”. — Reuters

Oman-Orange ties: From Amstelveen to innovation

In 1763, a Dutch East India Company vessel, Amstelveen, wrecked off the remote shores of Ras Markaz in Oman’s Al Wusta Governorate. Thirty survivors embarked on a harrowing 400-kilometre journey north towards Muscat, battling hunger, heat and despair. Remarkably, they encountered kindness and hospitality from Omani villagers — an early and powerful testimony to the values of courage, compassion and cooperation that have since shaped relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This maritime encounter was not only a survival story; it was the beginning of a civilisational dialogue between two seafaring nations. Both Oman and the Netherlands emerged over centuries as strategic maritime hubs, resilient in the face of geographic and climatic adversity and guided by a deep commitment to justice, modesty and innovation. Fast forward to April 2025, as His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq visits the Netherlands, the relationship forged in hardship centuries ago is being renewed with vision and purpose — through concrete, transformative partnerships. The Amstelveen met its fate near Ras Markaz — a name that today has new significance as Oman accelerates the development of its green hydrogen economy along its southern coast. The Netherlands, a global leader in renewable energy and port logistics, is playing a key role. Recent talks during His Majesty’s visit reaffirm commitments to joint investment in green hydrogen hubs and enhancing Oman’s port infrastructure in collaboration with Dutch companies, aligning with Europe’s energy transition goals and Oman Vision 2040. Al Seeb will host the ambitious Sultan Haitham City — 15 million



The spirit of the Amstelveen lives on in the trust and collaboration it seeded between two great nations



KHALID ALSAFI AL HURAIBI

The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

square metres designed to become a modern, smart and sustainable city for 100,000 residents. Dutch expertise in circular urban planning, sustainable mobility and water-sensitive design is being tapped to co-develop the project. Dutch firms have already signed several agreements to support this mega development, making it a new anchor of cooperation, echoing the resilience and forward-thinking of both nations. The Netherlands has spent centuries learning how to manage water with humility and ingenuity. Oman, with its traditional aflaj irrigation systems and now growing climate challenges, is expanding cooperation with Dutch institutions to develop adaptive water strategies. These include sustainable desalination, aquifer recharge and flood management technologies tailored for arid conditions — reflecting a fusion of ancient wisdom and cutting-edge science. In 2012, I had the distinct honour of briefing Queen Beatrix, King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima during their state visit to Oman. Their attentiveness, grace and quiet strength left a lasting impression on me. They exemplified

the values that define both our monarchies: humility in leadership, curiosity in engagement and respect for history. As they listened to civil society perspectives with genuine interest, I was reminded of the legacy of the Amstelveen — where human dignity rose above crisis, and understanding took root between strangers. That meeting was more than diplomatic — it was deeply personal and life-changing, reaffirming for me that true partnerships are built on shared values, not just shared interests. From a shipwreck in 1763 to state-level cooperation in 2025, the story of Oman and the Netherlands is one of continuity, character and courage. It is proof that historical memory can shape bold futures. The projects in green hydrogen, smart cities and water resilience are not merely transactions; they are chapters in a larger story — one that began on Oman’s shores and now sails confidently into a shared, sustainable future. The spirit of the Amstelveen lives on — not in tragedy, but in the trust and collaboration it seeded between two great nations.

Never fall for an online scam



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

FROM scams to digital house arrests, the Internet and cyberspace are teeming with fraudsters. Not a day goes by without newspaper headlines or stories shared by victims about their experiences with scams.

Recently, a 70-year-old retiree posted on Facebook after losing all his hard-earned savings, “It makes me mad. I’m mad at the scammer, but I’m also mad at myself for believing the scammer.”

It all began in January when he received a web of lies through a WhatsApp call, seemingly from men posing as officials from the crime department. The scammers’ attire convinced him that they were real officers. They accused him of serious financial misappropriation and informed him that he was under “house arrest”.

The scammers promised to release him within 24 hours and claimed he could avoid jail time by complying with their demands. They instructed him to transfer money to the accounts they provided and did not permit him to consult his relatives. Terrified by escalating threats, he transferred \$21,000.

“I had to let it go because it almost drove me to consider suicide until I realised it was just money. My life would be so much better if I still had it, but it is gone. I feel ruined,” he wrote in his note.

This is not an isolated incident. Recently, there has been a surge in digital arrest scams, where fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials during video calls,

threaten victims with arrest over fabricated charges, and pressure them to transfer large sums of money. This trend has been particularly prevalent in India.

“Digital arrest is one of the most horrendous forms of scams, as fraudsters remotely place victims under false arrest and extort large sums of money based on fictitious charges. Investment schemes, shopping scams and cryptocurrency fraud have also emerged as prevalent methods for defrauding individuals in India this year,” reported the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre.

According to the Veriff Fraud Report 2025, impersonation fraud continues to be the most common form of online fraud, representing 82.47 per cent of all fraud cases in 2024. This method entails using stolen or falsified identity information to impersonate another individual, often aided by counterfeit documents.

“Although impersonation fraud experienced a slight decline compared to 2022, it remains a significant threat. Businesses must continue to invest in robust identity verification systems that can detect document tampering, synthetic identities and suspicious patterns,” the report states.

In its 2024 Global State of Scams report, the Global Anti-Scam Alliance revealed that scammers have siphoned over \$1.03 trillion globally in the past year - a figure that rivals the GDP of some nations.

“Despite relentless efforts to combat scam activity through awareness campaigns, scams

It all began in January when he received a web of lies through a WhatsApp call, seemingly from men posing as officials from the crime department. The scammers’ attire convinced him that they were real officers

continue to pose a significant and growing threat, with nearly half of global consumers experiencing a scam attempt at least once a week,” stated the report prepared in collaboration with Feedzai.

In its annual report to shareholders, FirstBank stated that although phishing has long been a favourite tool for cybercriminals, in 2024, attackers elevated their tactics by incorporating artificial intelligence.

“AI-driven phishing scams became more convincing; with criminals leveraging machine learning algorithms to generate e-mails, texts and voice messages that closely mimicked the writing style and tone of individuals the victim knew. These highly personalised attacks often deceived even the most vigilant recipients, leading to significant financial losses and data breaches,” the bank revealed.

NatWest’s research, which combines industry data with a national survey of 2,000 British adults, highlights the emerging and evolving types of scams in 2024. A total of £570 million was reported stolen by scammers in the first half of 2024.

According to the research, young adults aged between 18 and 24 were the most targeted this year, with 55 per cent approached by scammers in the last 12 months and 60 per cent either experiencing financial loss themselves or knowing someone who has. In contrast, among those over 65, only 15 per cent are aware of either themselves or someone they know losing money to a scam.

SUDAN’S WAR RAGES ON IN GLOBAL SILENCE

MUDATHIR HAMEED AND EVA KRAFCZYK

A capital in ruins and a country with no clear path out of the bloodshed and violence: two years into Sudan’s civil war, an accurate death toll from the conflict remains unclear.

The United Nations estimates that more than 20,000 people have died. However, there are also estimates of up to 150,000 dead, according to the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

Since the Sudanese army recaptured the capital Khartoum in March, harrowing images have surfaced on social media showing emaciated torture victims and prisoners held by the rival Rapid Support Forces (RSF), many reduced to little more than skeletons. Some were so weakened that they died shortly after their liberation.

Now, images of mass graves and the victims of violence left behind in empty flats contrast with the first signs of new life in Khartoum. The city centre resembles a ghost town full of burnt-out buildings and shot-up vehicles. In other parts of the city, the first inhabitants are venturing back.

A dpa reporter observed: “Most of them want to see whether their houses are still standing and whether their belongings have been looted.”

In some neighbourhoods, tea vendors are once again waiting for customers at the crossroads and children are playing football in the streets. But food, not only in Khartoum, is around three times as expensive as it was before the civil war.

Two years on, the humanitarian situation in Sudan is bleak. Almost 13 million people have been displaced and 25 million people are at risk of acute hunger, warns Shaun Hughes, responsible for Sudan at the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

“By any metric, this is the world’s largest humanitarian crisis in terms of displacement,” he says. “Nearly five million children and mothers are acutely malnourished.”

“The scale of what is happening in Sudan threatens to dwarf much of what we have seen in recent decades.”

The conflict erupted in Sudan on April 15, 2023 between the armed forces and the RSF. It began as a power struggle between former Sudanese vice-president Mohammed Hamdan Daglo’s RSF and the armed forces led by Abdel Fattah al Burhan.

Multiple diplomatic efforts to broker a ceasefire and launch peace negotiations have failed.

Human rights organisations accuse both sides of committing war crimes - including indiscriminate bombings by government forces and widespread atrocities by Daglo’s RSF, such as violence, summary executions and ethnic cleansing. Many aid organisations have voiced frustration that Sudan’s crisis receives far less global attention than the wars in the Middle East and Ukraine — reflected not only in media coverage but also in funding. — dpa

EPA’s rejection of climate science threatens all of us

IN mid-March, Lee Zeldin, President Donald Trump’s newly confirmed administrator of the US Environmental Protection Agency, announced that the EPA was undertaking a formal reconsideration of its “endangerment finding”. The Trump administration has made no secret of its desire to rescind the 2009 declaration that greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions endanger “both the public health and the public welfare of current and future generations.” In other words, Trump wants to walk back the US government’s assertion that climate change is real and caused by humans.

This scientific finding stemmed from a 2007 US Supreme Court ruling that various GHGs are pollutants covered by the Clean Air Act. The Court held that the EPA must determine whether GHG emissions from new motor vehicles “causes, or contributes to, air pollution which may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public health or welfare”. To be clear, the ruling did not command the EPA to regulate GHG emissions. But if the agency found that emissions caused or contributed to air pollution, the Clean Air Act would require it to establish air-quality standards that accurately reflect “the latest scientific knowledge.”

To make this determination, the EPA had to survey the scientific literature, assess existing and emerging risks based on that science, and evaluate the costs and benefits associated with alternative options for prospective regulation. The agency then posted a preliminary draft of its findings and policy options for a 60-day public-comment period, and was required to respond publicly to each comment while revising the document. After publishing a final version of its endangerment and “cause or contribute” findings – the latter recognises that GHG emissions from new motor vehicles contribute to harmful air pollution –



The EPA is undertaking a formal reconsideration of its ‘endangerment finding’.

in December 2009, the EPA began to design its response and implement appropriate measures. But the pushback was almost immediate. By July 2010, the agency had received and denied ten petitions for reconsidering both findings. In June 2012, after a group of lawsuits, the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit upheld the endangerment finding. Later, in April 2022, the EPA denied another four petitions for reconsideration.

But now, with a US president who calls climate change a “hoax” and is following a governing blueprint that seeks to roll back US environmental and climate policy in the name of fossil-fuel extraction and deregulation, the EPA has abruptly changed course. The stated rationale for reconsidering the endangerment finding is tenuous, based in part on false claims about the climate agenda – most notably that it has imposed trillions of dollars in costs on Americans.

Still, the EPA faces a difficult road ahead. Before the agency can reach the opposite conclusion – that GHG emissions do not endanger public health and welfare – it must undertake the same rigorous,

multi-step process that produced the 2009 finding. And now it must contend with a much larger body of scientific evidence for the observed and projected damages from these emissions: the past 16 years have produced reams of research pointing to GHG emissions’ harmful effects. The severity of the climate crisis became clearer in 2019, when 15 scientists published a review of the then-current literature in Science. They concluded that, since 2009, “the amount, diversity and sophistication of the evidence” had “increased markedly, clearly strengthening the case for endangerment.” In 2023, the sixth assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change brought home the message, finding that “adverse impacts from human-caused climate change will continue to intensify.” The report emphasised that the effects were worsening at a faster pace than ever before. Simply embarking on an official reassessment of the endangerment finding may produce the Trump administration’s desired effect: a massive retreat from climate action at the federal level.

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GARY YOHE

The writer is Professor Emeritus of Economics at Wesleyan University

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



OOC TAKES PART IN GENDER EQUALITY SEMINAR IN BRUNEI

MUSCAT: Dr Marwan bin Jumaa al Jumaa, OOC Board Member, and Sayyidah Sana bint Hamad al Busaidiyah, Chairperson of Oman Women and Gender Equality in Sport Committee, took part in the Gender Equality Seminar and workshops organised by the Olympic Council of Asia in cooperation with International Olympic Committee and the National Olympic Committee of Brunei Darussalam. The event was held from April 14 to 15 in Brunei Darussalam.

The seminar brought together 100 sports figures from 43 Asian National Olympic Committees, in addition to 19 speakers. It featured a series of presentations delivered by specialised experts aimed at providing essential knowledge and strategic insights. The programme also included interactive discussions with leaders and partners in the field of gender equality to exchange perspectives and diverse experiences.

On the sidelines of the seminar, three workshops were held to promote collaboration among participants. These sessions were designed to help attendees identify challenges, explore innovative solutions, and develop practical strategies to enhance gender equality within their respective National Olympic Committees.



DUBAI TRIP OFFERS LEARNING CURVE FOR OCA U15 GIRLS

MUSCAT: In a significant step forward for women’s cricket in Oman, the Oman Cricket Academy (OCA) Girls Under-15 team embarked on a four-match T20 tour in Dubai, UAE, on Monday.

The 14-member team are scheduled to participate in the Root Academy Tournament at the prestigious Sevens Stadium from April 15 to 18.

The tour kicked off on Tuesday, with Oman girls facing South Island Girls in the opening fixture. This will be followed by three more matches on successive days — against North Jersey Girls, Desert Vipers, and a yet-to-be-confirmed opponent.

The 15-member squad includes promising talents such as Aanya Kapil Sankla, Amishi Sarkar, Aneeka Ashik, Devananda Jithin, Disha Pradeep Kumar, Harnoor Kaur, Haya Rahamath, Katharine Treesa Binu, Kavya Nirav Damania, Kushi Cherish Muthukumari Egodagamage, Pia Sharma, Radhika Vatrana, Sahana Jeelany, and Tanya Amit Kirti.

OCA girls U15 coach Sultan Ahmed expressed optimism in the team’s potential and the importance of such tours for the development of women’s cricket in Oman. He said: “It’s a great opportunity for young girls, allowing them to express themselves and showcase their talent. They have been playing domestic cricket in Oman, and this opportunity allows them to challenge themselves in away conditions.”

“Our team is balanced - we have a strong batting lineup with the majority being all-rounders, along with impressive spin bowling options as well,” said Ahmed.

One of the standout names in the squad is Sahana Jeelany, who has already represented Oman at the senior national level. Sultan sees this as a sign of things to come.

Salalah clinch 2nd division title, join first division

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

SALALAH CLUB were crowned champions of the Second Division Volleyball League after a well-deserved victory over Taqah Club in the final held at the Sports Hall of the Al Saada Sports Complex on Monday. Naif bin Hamad Fadel, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry branch in Dhofar Governorate, was the chief guest of the evening.

The final match was intense, with both teams delivering a balanced performance in the early stages of each set before Salalah gradually asserted control. In the first set, both sides played cautiously and exchanged points until midway through, but Salalah managed to raise their performance level and closed the set 25-16, capitalising on strong serves and an effective block defence.

The second set was highly competitive, with Taqah showing strong determination to get back into the match and taking an early lead. However, Salalah quickly regained momentum thanks to the harmony between their defensive, middle, and attacking lines, eventually winning the set 25-19 with a series of fast and successful attacks. In the third set, Salalah entered with confidence and composure, dominating from the outset as Taqah players showed signs of fatigue. Salalah widened the gap as the set progressed and sealed it 25-16, securing the championship with a straight-set victory (3-0) and officially qualifying for the First Division League alongside Taqah Club.

In the third-place match, Sur Club defeated Samayil Club three sets to one. Sur won the first two sets 25-21 and 25-19,



Salalah Club players celebrate with the trophy.

before Samayil came back to take the third set 25-16. However, Sur closed out the match by winning the fourth set 25-20, clinching third place and leaving fourth place for Samayil.

Following the final, the guest of honour crowned the winning teams. Salalah Club received the championship shield and gold medals, Taqah Club received the silver medals, and Sur Club took home

the bronze medals. The Taqah Club fans association also received the award for Best Fan Club in the league.

The semifinals had witnessed strong competition among the four qualified teams. Taqah had swept Samayil in straight sets, while Salalah defeated Sur by three sets to one, sending both winning teams to the final, where Salalah were deservedly crowned champions.

Al Bashayer stun Seeb in five-set OVL thriller

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

Al Bashayer Club secured an exciting 3-2 victory over Seeb on Monday evening in a match held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, as part of the final qualifiers of the Oman First Division Volleyball League.

The match began with high competitiveness, as both teams traded leads in the first set. Al Bashayer capitalised on individual errors from Seeb and benefited from the attacking brilliance of its Uzbek professional, Islam, alongside Mazen al Hashemi. Despite strong resistance from Seeb, led by Ismail al Haidi and Saud al Maamari, Al Bashayer claimed the first set 25-21.

In the second set, Al Bashayer continued to dominate as Seeb players seemed to lose focus. Despite efforts from their professional player Doglan to narrow the gap, Al Bashayer took the set with the same score: 25-21.

Seeb bounced back strongly in the third set, asserting control from the start by taking a 4-0 lead, exploiting Al Bashayer’s complacency.

Seeb won the set convincingly 25-17.

The fourth set was intense and evenly matched, with both teams trading points until a 24-24 tie. Seeb’s experience gave them the edge to take the set 26-



Seeb and Al Bashayer players in action. — Khalfan al Ruzaiqi

24, forcing a decisive fifth set.

In the final set, the match reached peak excitement, with both teams battling fiercely until the end. Ultimately, Al Bashayer managed to seal the victory 20-18, earning a valuable win that reshuffled the standings.

AL SALAM TAKE CHARGE
In another match of the second phase of the league qualifiers, Al Salam Club earned a well-

deserved straight-set victory over Majees at the Sohar Sports Complex.

Al Salam controlled the match from the start, thanks to the outstanding performance of their Bahraini Mohammed Yaqoub and Khalid Nasser. They clinched the first set by a narrow margin, 25-23, then widened the gap in the second set to win 25-21, and comfortably sealed the third set 25-17.

On the other hand, Majees delivered a lacklustre performance, far from their usual level, as their players failed to meet expectations despite the support from their fans in attendance.

Despite the loss, Seeb remain at the top of the standings, followed by Majees in second. Al Salam moved up to third place, while Al Bashayer climbed to fourth after their remarkable victory.

16TEAMS



The organisers said this year’s Soccer Carnival promises to be innovative and exciting.

SECOND EDITION OF SOCCER CARNIVAL ON APRIL 17

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

THE SECOND edition of the ‘Soccer Carnival’, two evenings of football, fun and food, will be held at the Bausher Club Stadium in Muscat on April 17 and 18, according to the organisers. Organised by Mefriend, the digital platform of Gulf Madhyamam, a vernacular Daily published from Oman, the highly anticipated ‘Soccer Carnival’ event will have its share of glam and glitz with the presence of notable celebrities, including Indian football star CK Vineeth, Antony Varghese (Pepe), a popular Malayalam cinema actor and beloved family entertainer Dane Davis. The organisers further said that this year’s Soccer Carnival promises to be even more innovative and exciting. The Bausher Club Stadium will come alive with a vibrant mix of culinary delights and cultural performances. Entry to the venue will be free on both days.

There will be a variety of events designed for children and families to enjoy. The winners and runners-up will receive the largest prize money in Oman, and players will also be recognised with plenty of accolades while visitors can indulge themselves in a variety of delicious foods, as over 20 food stalls offering authentic Kerala cuisine will be set up. Special sections will highlight Malabar dishes,” said the organisers. Additionally, live counters from the country’s top restaurants will provide an opportunity for visitors to enjoy their favourite foods.

ORGANISERS

On the second day of the carnival, an array of entertainment and fun events are packed making it an even more vibrant evening and will feature a wide range of activities and competitions for children and families, with plenty of prizes for the winners to be won. There will be various games and quiz competitions for children and women, along with face painting, shootouts and other exciting contests. Afzal Ahamed, Resident Manager, Gulf Madhyamam, Shaiju Salahuddin, Marketing Manager, Haris Shamsudeen, Regional Marketing Manager, Nesto Hypermarkets, Binod Kumar Das, Marketing Manager, Lulu Exchange, Saithali Athavanad, Programme Convenor, Soccer Carnival, Muhammad Usman Fasil, Operations Manager, Foodlands Restaurant, and Faisal Wayanad were present at the press conference.



Chennai Super Kings’ MS Dhoni in action against Lucknow Super Giants. — Reuters

Dhoni snaps Chennai’s 5-match IPL losing streak

FORMER INDIA captain MS Dhoni rolled back the years with an unbeaten 26 as Chennai Super Kings bounced back from five losses to down Lucknow Super Giants by five wickets in the IPL on Monday. Chasing a tricky 167, Chennai rode on an unbeaten stand of 57 between Shivam Dube, who hit 43, and Dhoni to achieve their target with three balls to spare at Lucknow’s Ekana Stadium. The 43-year-old Dhoni, who took over as captain from the injured Ruturaj Gaikwad in their previous defeat, strode in at number seven and smashed four fours and a six in his 11-ball knock to silence suggestions that he had lost his touch as a master finisher. “Good to win a game, unfortunately the games haven’t gone our way, it gives a lot of confidence to the team,” Dhoni said after winning his first IPL player of the match award since 2019. “It was a tough game, glad to be on the winning side and hopefully it gives us momentum.” The left-handed Dube, who came in as an impact substitute for the five-time champions, got the winning boundary in his

37-ball knock. The result snapped Chennai’s streak of losses but they still remain bottom of the 10-team table with two wins in seven matches. They started strongly with openers Shaik Rasheed and New Zealand’s Rachin Ravindra, who hit 37, putting together a 52-run partnership inside five overs. Pace bowler Avesh Khan struck first to cut short Rasheed’s knock on 27 and Lucknow’s ploy to bring in part-time spinner Aiden Markram worked when the South African dismissed the left-handed Ravindra. Impact substitute Ravi Bishnoi struck with two key blows as he caught and bowled Rahul Tripathi for nine and then had Ravindra Jadeja taken at long-on for seven to dent Chennai’s chase. But Dube took charge and took Chennai over the line alongside Dhoni who walked in to loud cheers from the Lucknow crowd largely supporting Chennai. PANT HITS FORM Lucknow suffered their third loss in seven matches but can take consolation from skipper Rishabh Pant’s back-to-form 63 in their 166-7 after being invited to bat first.

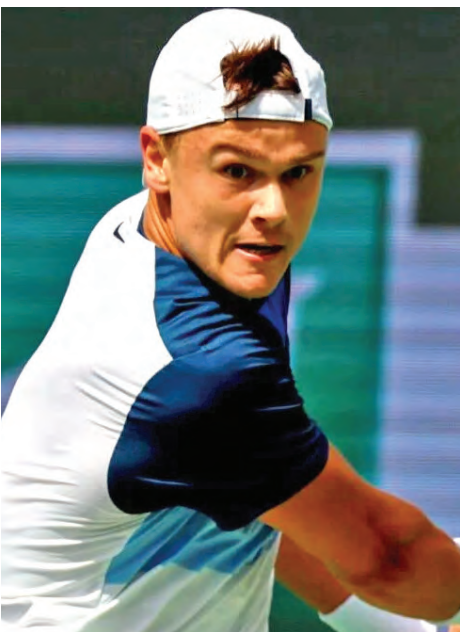
“We had to keep stitching in partnerships. The wicket was stopping a bit, but we could have got 15 runs more I feel,” Pant said. On his own knock, Pant said: “I am feeling better with each and every game, but sometimes it doesn’t come off. (I’m) Slowly getting into my rhythm, taking every match at a time.” Wicketkeeper-batsman Pant, who had scores of 0, 15, 2, 2, 21 in his previous five innings, started cautiously with Lucknow on 23-2. The swashbuckling left-hander played six dot balls to Afghanistan left-arm wrist spinner Noor Ahmad in the middle of his knock but finished with four fours and fours sixes in his 49-ball stay. Pant’s innings involved two key stands, adding 50 with Mitchell Marsh, who hit 30 on his return after he missed the previous match, and 53 with Abdul Samad, who made 20. Pant finally fell to Sri Lanka pace bowler Matheesha Pathirana, who took two wickets in the 20th over. Jadeja stood out with figures of 2-24 in his three overs of left-arm spin. Ahmad returned figures of 0-13 in his four overs and tops the bowling chart with 12 wickets this season. — AFP

Rublev hits form as Rune cruises into last 16 of Barcelona Open

BARCELONA: World number eight Andrey Rublev cruised into the Barcelona Open last 16 with a 6-1, 6-3 win over Jesper De Jong on Monday. The Russian has been in poor form of late with just one win in his previous four singles events, but made light work of 94th-ranked De Jong. Rublev, who recently hired former world number one Marat Safin as his coach, was broken in the fifth game but won the other six to claim the first set with ease. The 27-year-old broke for a 3-2 lead in the second set and once again when De Jong went long to seal his victory. Earlier Holger Rune dispatched retiring Spanish veteran Albert Ramos-Vinolas 7-5, 6-4.



Andrey Rublev



Holger Rune

The Danish player, ranked 13th, pulled out of the Monte Carlo Masters last week with food poisoning but came back strongly in Barcelona, hitting 28 winners. “I was very pumped to get a good start after a tough week in Monaco,” said Rune. “I’m happy to be feeling healthy, that’s an amazing feeling first of all, I’m not struggling with anything.” World number two Carlos Alcaraz begins his bid for a third Barcelona Open title on Tuesday when he faces American Ethan Quinn, on the back of his first Monte Carlo title. Second seed and last year’s winner Casper Ruud is in action against Daniel Elahi Galan, while Stefanos Tsitsipas faces Reilly Opelka. — AFP

SPORTS

CLAYSEASON



Germany’s Alexander Zverev in action during a match against France’s Alexandre Muller. — Reuters

ZVEREV SHAKES OFF RECENT FUNK TO BEAT MULLER IN MUNICH

MUNICH, GERMANY: World number three Alexander Zverev got his clay court season back on track with a 6-4, 6-1 over Frenchman Alexandre Muller in the first round of the ATP event in Munich on Monday.

The German came into the Munich tournament having lost his opener at last week’s Monte Carlo Masters to Italian Matteo Berrettini, missing the chance to bump Jannik Sinner from the world the No 1 position.

Instead, that defeat and the Carlos Alcaraz’s victory in the final on Sunday saw Zverev dropping down a place in the rankings and dented his preparations ahead of next month’s French Open.

Zverev broke his opponent in the first game but Muller broke back at 3-3 before Zverev recovered to win the set in 47 minutes.

The number one seed found his rhythm in the second, breaking his opponent three times.

The 27-year-old completed victory in one hour and 20 minutes.

Clay-court specialist Zverev has played six tournaments since losing the Australian Open final in three sets to Sinner in January but has not made it past the quarter-finals at any.

Since winning back-to-back titles in Munich in 2017 and 2018, Zverev has not made it past the final eight.

He will face either countryman Daniel Altmaier or Taiwan’s Tseng Chun-hsin in the quarter-finals.

Earlier on Monday, world number 15 Ben Shelton endured a stuttering start to the tournament, coming from a set down to beat world number 410 Borna Gojo 4-6, 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7-3). — AFP

Ahmad ready to bounce back at Imola 6-Hour race

A BREAK OF just over six weeks since the opening round of the 2025 FIA

World Endurance Championship in Qatar, the global challenge resumes this coming weekend, April 19/20 in Italy for the 6 Hours of Imola – where Ahmad al Harthy is aiming to bid for his first podium of the year.

Producing excellent pace in qualifying and race trim during the championship curtain-raiser in late February, the Omani and Team WRT team-mates Valentino Rossi and Kelvin van der Linde were on course for a very strong result.

Unfortunately, an issue with the No 46 BMW M4 LMGT3 had a negative impact on the pace they were able to run during the second half of the 10-hour encounter and the trio had to ultimately settle for an 11th place finish.

Knowing, from the early race pace performance in Qatar, they have a car and set-up capable of challenging for the podium, this weekend’s six-hour race at the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari will be seen as a fresh start to the squad’s 2025 season.

Imola, of course, was a very happy hunting ground for Al Harthy and Team WRT last year where a genuine bid for LMGT3 victory was only dashed by a late penalty. Nonetheless, Al Harthy, Rossi and then team-mate Maxime Martin still secured an excellent second place result.

Repeating such a performance this time around will be the focus for the No 46 squad, and the power of the challenge will be boosted by the tens of thousands of fans expected to pack the grandstands in support of their home hero Rossi.

As always, Al Harthy has unstinting support for his FIA WEC campaign from his prestigious partners OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, BMW Oman, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Experience Oman.

AHMAD AL HARTHY:
“We can’t wait to be back racing this weekend and we’re all really looking forward to returning to Imola, the scene of our best



Imola was a very happy hunting ground for Ahmad al Harthy and Team WRT last year.



Ahmed al Harthy during the 2025 FIA World Endurance Championship Prologue in Doha.

result last season in FIA WEC. Last year’s race was amazing, we had great a pace and were very close to actually taking our first LMGT3 win. There’s no reason we can’t be just as competitive this time around, we’re all going to be pushing very hard to fight for the podium.

“The main aim is to bounce back as strongly as we can after Qatar, things were going well and I was very happy with my triple stint at the beginning. Unfortunately, the issue we had with the car meant we couldn’t take the fight to the other teams later on, but this weekend is a fresh start in many ways and we’re all determined to kick-start our championship.”

Free practice at Imola begins with two sessions on Friday, 18th April, ahead of session three on Saturday, 19th April which precedes qualifying at 14.30 local time – with Hyperpole following immediately after. The 6 Hours of Imola will get underway at 13.00 local time on Sunday, 20th April, and all of the action can be followed at www.fiawec.com

McTominay guides Napoli past Empoli

MCTOMINAY NETS TWICE TO LEAD HOSTS TO VICTORY | LUKAKU SETS UP BOTH GOALS AND SCORES HIMSELF | NAPOLI WITHIN THREE POINTS OF LEADERS INTER

NAPLES, ITALY: Napoli cruised to a 3-0 win over relegation-threatened Empoli on Monday with Scott McTominay and Romelu Lukaku leading the charge as the hosts kept pace with Serie A leaders Inter Milan.

Second-placed Napoli were feeling the pressure after Inter’s 3-1 home win against Cagliari on Saturday but, with six rounds remaining, they trail the Milan side by three points with 68.

The Napoli duo were unstoppable at the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona against Empoli, who are second from bottom and two points off the safety zone. The home side created chance after chance and wreaked havoc on the Empoli defence.

“Romelu is a great team-mate. He demands a lot from all the team and me to score more goals and create more opportunities for him to score as well,” McTominay said.

“He’s obviously a great player. He’s had a great career, and we’re so happy to have him.”

It took 18 minutes for



Napoli’s Romelu Lukaku celebrates scoring their second goal with Scott McTominay. — Reuters

Napoli to open the scoring as Lukaku battled free in midfield and passed to the onrushing McTominay, whose low long-range shot bounced over Empoli goalkeeper Devis Vasquez’s outstretched hand and into the corner of the net.

Belgium striker Lukaku added his name to the scoresheet in the 56th minute, latching onto a perfect through ball inside the box and easily finding the net to double the advantage.

McTominay completed

his brace in the 61st, again assisted by Lukaku who whipped a cross in from the right for the unmarked Scotsman to power home a header off the underside of the bar. The two players linked up again shortly after as Lukaku played in McTominay for a counter-attack but the hat-trick opportunity was thwarted by the inside of the post.

JESUS INJURY
Napoli’s comfortable evening took a hit in front of a noisy home crowd

minutes later when Napoli defender Juan Jesus had to go off because of what looked like a hamstring injury.

Lukaku had one more chance just before being substituted but could not quite control David Neres’s cross and sent it wide.

In the dying minutes, McTominay had an opportunity to put the ball in the net again from close range but Vazquez produced a stunning save and the flag was in any case up for offside.

With the season moving towards a thrilling finale, McTominay said the focus must be on themselves despite Inter’s advantage.

“We must have fun and think about ourselves. We’re a strong team and must continue with this playing style and attitude. We must think about ourselves and then we’ll see what Inter will do.”

Napoli have a relatively easy run-in on paper with all of their last six opponents currently 10th or lower in the table. They next travel to bottom club Monza on Saturday. — Reuters

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

INTERNATIONAL TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at Ministry of Information announces its Tender for the following work:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
1/2025 (123/2025) at E-Tendering	CONSTRUCTION AND TECHNICAL FIT-OUT OF A NEW FM TRANSMITTING STATION IN DUQUM.	Excellent First	28/4/2025	2/6/2025	100/-

1. All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

2. Companies and institutions are exempted from providing a temporary insurance of 1% when submitting their bid, provided that they sign a document committing themselves to the submitted bid for a period determined when the bidding strategy is approved in accordance with the document attached to the Isnad platform. As for international companies that do not have a headquarters in the Sultanate of Oman, they are required to provide temporary insurance of 1%.

(For more information, please see the original circular issued by the Tender Board on the Isnad platform.)

Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am . Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically.

You are requested to provide 2 hard copies for your offer after the submission in Projects Department at Ministry of Information.

3. The Ministry has the right to:

- 1) Add or Cancell some works in the tender if necessary.
- 2) Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:
Telephone : 24943785, 24943177, Email: (Moi.Tenders@omaninfo.om)



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DR ALI AL
SUNAIDY
OPAZ Chairman

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

SHAIKH DR ALI bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), has urged Omani youth to pursue opportunities in

the country’s burgeoning industrial maintenance sector, describing it as one of the most promising fields in light of the sector’s rapid growth and increasing technical demands.

Speaking during OPAZ’s annual media briefing, Dr Al Sunaidy revealed that total investments in Oman’s industrial sector have now surpassed RO 21 billion, highlighting a pivotal shift in the nation’s industrial landscape.

“Industrial maintenance services will be critical in sustaining operations across factories and production facilities, especially as Oman expands its industrial base,” said Dr Al Sunaidy. “This presents a significant employment opportunity for young Omanis, particularly those trained in technical and vocational fields.”

The official stressed that the growing number of factories, both current and planned, will require consistent and advanced maintenance services to ensure operational efficiency, reliability and safety.

He added that OPAZ is actively enhancing infrastructure and fostering innovation, digitisation and sustainability across its economic and industrial zones — developments that will only intensify the need for skilled maintenance professionals.

He encouraged young Omanis to consider vocational training in areas such as mechanical, electrical and digital systems maintenance, describing these specialisations as vital for Oman’s industrial resilience and long-term economic diversification.

As the Sultanate of Oman continues to roll out new industrial zones and deepen integration between free zones and industrial cities, demand for operational support services — especially maintenance — is projected to rise sharply.

This shift offers a pathway for job creation, localisation and technical upskilling, aligning closely with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

OQAE to get 25% stake in
future renewable projects

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

UNDERSCORING

its mandate as the National Champion for Renewable Energy, OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE) has secured a commitment to receiving a stake of up to 25 per cent in all future renewable energy projects procured by Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP) — the sole procurer of all new power and water capacity in Oman.

This commitment will cover all future solar and wind projects (and potentially other alternative energy schemes as well) starting with the Ibri III Solar PV project — a 500 MW scheme slated for implementation in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

Parent company OQ — the wholly state-owned global integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman — made the revelation in its newly published 2024 Annual Report.

It said: “... OQAE secured up to 25 per cent stake in all future renewable energy projects floated by Nama Power and Water Procurement (NPWP), who is the single procurer of power and water capacity in the Sultanate of Oman, starting with ‘Ibri III’ solar PV project with a capacity of 500 MW.”

Under current laws governing the procurement of Independent Water / Power Projects (IWPP / IPPs) in Oman, developers can own up to 100 per cent of the share capital in the founding company that successfully bids for an IPP, IWP or IWPP.

However, the founding company is required to, within four years of its incorporation,



OQ Alternative Energy has been designated National Champion for Renewable Energy by the Omani government.

offer 35 per cent of its share capital for public subscription via an Initial Public Offering (IPO) on the local bourse.

Industry experts point out that a stake of up to 25 per cent now earmarked for OQAE is expected to be carved out from this share slated for public subscription.

In its report, OQ emphasised OQAE’s strategic role in driving Oman’s energy transition. “OQ Alternative Energy (AE) serves as the cornerstone of OQ’s energy transition efforts and a catalyst to achieve the national objectives for carbon neutrality by 2050. This is aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

Appointed by the government as ‘The National Champion for Renewable Energy’, OQAE is committed to placing decarbonisation at the heart of its strategy, focusing on the decarbonisation of OQ assets and, ultimately, the decarbonisation of Oman”.

Under current laws governing the procurement of Independent Water / Power Projects (IWPP / IPPs) in Oman, developers can own up to 100 per cent of the share capital in the founding company that successfully bids for an IPP, IWP or IWPP.

According to the parent company, OQAE is actively advancing renewable energy projects, with over 7 GW of energy initiatives in its pipeline. They include projects designed to support the decarbonisation of OQ Group subsidiaries and affiliates, as well as industries operating in Suhar, Al Duqm and elsewhere. In line with its mandate as National Champion, OQAE is also supporting Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in the decarbonisation of its oilfield operations.

In 2024, OQAE signed long-term Power Purchase

Agreements (PPAs) with PDO covering the output of three upcoming, mid-scale renewable projects under development within the latter’s Block 6 concession. The projects concerned are the 100MW North Solar and Riyah-1 and Riyah-2 wind schemes each of 100 MW capacity.

Also notable is OQAE’s significant role in fostering the growth of Oman’s ambitious green hydrogen industry. The company is a strategic partner in three of the eight green hydrogen projects firmed up for implementation so far.

In 2024, OQAE onboarded BP as a partner in the Hyport Duqm project, which targets the initial production of 60,000 tonnes of green hydrogen, corresponding to 330,000 tonnes of green ammonia every year. This output will support the energy transition of the transportation and heavy industry sectors.

Global financial cooperation boosts Oman’s creditworthiness

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

RECENT developments in Oman’s economic landscape are reinforcing international confidence in the country’s creditworthiness, with credit rating agencies acknowledging the progress made in fiscal reform, governance and financial resilience.

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the World Bank Group Day held here on April 14, 2025, Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Owaini, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance, highlighted the growing importance of international financial cooperation in shaping Oman’s economic reputation.

“Certainly, having access to finance from international organisations is not easy and hence it enhances the confidence of credit



MAHMOOD AL
AWEINI

Secretary-General
of the Ministry of
Finance.

benchmarks and be positively recognised in future credit assessments.”

Earlier this month, Standard & Poor’s Global Ratings (S&P) reaffirmed Oman’s long-term sovereign credit rating at ‘BBB-’ with a Stable Outlook.

rating agencies in Oman’s sustainable funds,” said Al Owaini.

“The reports issued by the IMF and World Bank on Oman’s strengths and progress in the financial sector are critical for these agencies. Through this cooperation, we aim to upgrade our standards to align with international

The agency cited the Sultanate of Oman’s favourable investment environment, ongoing fiscal reforms and commitment to financial sustainability as key factors behind the decision. S&P noted the government’s prudent fiscal management, efforts to reduce budget deficits and structural reforms as significant contributors to the rating. The agency also acknowledged progress in reducing public debt and improving governance frameworks within state-owned enterprises, both of which play a crucial role in Oman’s broader economic performance.

Looking ahead, S&P forecasts real GDP growth of 2 per cent over the period 2025 — 2028, supported by diversification efforts and continued investment in both oil and non-oil sectors.

It also projects a 1.5 per cent surplus in the State’s general budget, driven by healthy

revenues and disciplined spending.

The agency further indicated that Oman’s credit rating could improve over the next two years, should the government continue implementing its fiscal and structural reform agenda.

Key areas of focus include increasing non-oil revenues, enhancing expenditure efficiency and maintaining economic momentum in line with Oman Vision 2040.

As Oman accelerates its economic transformation, the alignment with international financial institutions and standards is seen as a strategic lever to attract more global investment and reinforce long-term economic stability.

The renewed confidence from credit rating agencies signals growing international recognition of the country’s resilience and reform-driven outlook.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The session convened shareholders, analysts and members of the financial community for an in-depth review of the bank’s financial performance, strategic direction and market outlook.

SOHAR INTERNATIONAL HOLDS INVESTOR SESSION TO PRESENT 2024 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

MUSCAT: Demonstrating its continued commitment to transparency, sound corporate governance and proactive stakeholder engagement, Sohar International held an investor session on April 14, 2025, to present its audited financial statements for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Conducted virtually via Zoom and facilitated by the Muscat Stock Exchange, the session convened shareholders, analysts and members of the financial community for an in-depth review of the bank’s financial performance, strategic direction and market outlook.

The session was led by Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, alongside members of the executive management team who participated as panelists. It featured a detailed presentation of the bank’s audited results, followed by an interactive Q&A session that fostered open dialogue and comprehensive discussions on key performance indicators and strategic initiatives.

Abdulwahid al Murshidi stated: “Investor sessions such as this provide a vital platform to articulate the bank’s long-term vision and strategic philosophy. In today’s dynamic economic landscape, stakeholders require more than just data — they seek clarity on the principles shaping our decision-making and the goals we pursue.

At Sohar International, we view financial performance as one component of a broader narrative — one that emphasises agility, prudent risk management and future readiness.

These engagements allow us to move beyond numbers and into meaningful conversations around value creation, resilience and our alignment with global banking standards. As we navigate evolving challenges and seize emerging opportunities, our focus remains on being agile, accountable and aligned with Oman’s ambitions for a robust financial sector.”

The presentation covered the bank’s performance across several dimensions, including sustained growth in core operating income, enhanced asset quality, capital adequacy and the effectiveness of risk management initiatives.

Attendees gained valuable insights into the bank’s strategic progress and how it continues to fortify its market position through a high-performance talent culture, digital transformation and a customer-centric operating model.

OAB SPONSORS INSPIRATIONAL “SAFAR” TOUR

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) is sponsoring the inspirational “Safar” tour, which was relaunched in April. The tour features a series of dialogue sessions with prominent Omani leaders and thinkers who share real-life experiences and enrich conversations around visionary thinking, innovation in leadership and paving the way towards achieving the objectives of Oman

Vision 2040. The tour kicked off with its first session at the Middle East College Theatre in Muscat Governorate, followed by the second at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. The final session will be held at the Sohar University Theatre. The sessions are moderated by Mohammed al Hinai, founder of the youth podcast Jalsat Karak, a

platform that promotes creativity in Oman’s cultural landscape. The tour features distinguished guests, including Dr Hani al Qadhi, Senior Consultant in General and Trauma Surgery, Visiting Professor at the University of British Columbia in Canada and Director General of Health Services in Dhofar Governorate. Also featured is Dr Lamya al Haj,

Associate Professor at Sultan Qaboos University and PhD holder in Biology from University College London. Recognised as one of the leading young scientific figures in Oman and globally, she has made significant contributions in technology, education and community service; and has been honoured with numerous prestigious regional and international awards.

Bank Muscat posts Q1 net profit of RO 58.56 million

BANK MUSCAT, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the three months ended March 31, 2025.

The Bank posted a net profit of RO 58.56 million for the period compared to RO 54.24 million reported during the same period in 2024, an increase of 8.0 per cent.

The key highlights of the results for the period are as follows:

1) Net Interest Income from Conventional Banking and Net Income from Islamic Financing stood at RO 102.00 million for the three months period ended March 31, 2025 compared to RO 95.45 million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 6.9 per cent mainly due to increase in loan volumes.

2) Non-interest income was RO 38.67 million for the three months period ended March 31, 2025 as compared to RO 37.25



million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 3.8 per cent.

3) Operating expenses for the three months period ended March 31, 2025 was RO 55.03 million as compared to RO 51.80

million for the same period in 2024, an increase of 6.2 per cent.

4) Net impairment losses on financial assets for the three months period ended March 31, 2025 was RO 15.04 million as against RO 16.22 million for the same period in 2024.

5) Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 6.9 per cent to RO 10,540 million as against RO 9,860 million as at March 31, 2024.

6) Customer deposits including Islamic Customer deposits increased by 2.6 per cent to RO 10,003 million as against RO 9,750 million as at March 31, 2024.

The full results for the three months period ended March 31, 2025 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during April 2025.

SAUD BAHWAN CHARITABLE FOUNDATION FULFILS UMRAH DREAMS

MUSCAT: In a heartfelt initiative, Saud Bahwan Charitable Foundation (SBCF) recently organised and fully sponsored a special Umrah trip for 70 pilgrims from Al Noor Association for the Blind. This noble initiative reflects the trust’s ongoing mission to empower individuals with disabilities, ensuring they feel included and valued as integral members of the society.

Al Noor Association for the Blind, a dedicated non-governmental organisation (NGO), plays a vital role in improving the lives of the visually impaired in Oman.

In facilitating this sacred journey, NTT has played a pivotal role, demonstrating not only its professional expertise but also an unparalleled dedication to understanding and fulfilling customer needs with warmth and empathy.

Every detail of the itinerary has been meticulously planned with the pilgrims’ unique



Saud Bahwan Charitable Foundation organises fully sponsored Umrah trip for 70 pilgrims from Al Noor Association for the Blind.

requirements in mind, ensuring a seamless and enriching experience for all participants. Special care has been taken to provide the visually impaired pilgrims with the support and assistance they need, allowing them to embrace the spiritual significance of the journey with ease and comfort.

Additionally, for those in

search of spiritual upliftment, NTT offers special packages for Umrah, catering to those seeking to reconnect spiritually and those who require special care, ensuring a truly personalised and fulfilling experience.

What sets this initiative apart is that it is far more than just an act of charity. Saud Bahwan

Charitable Trust envisions it as an opportunity for these pilgrims to reconnect with society, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion.

By providing this life-changing experience, the Trust is reinforcing its deep-rooted values of care and community betterment, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their abilities, can partake in spiritual and communal experiences with pride and joy.

This initiative exemplifies the essence of compassion and inclusivity, highlighting the profound impact that thoughtful social responsibility can have on people’s lives.

As the pilgrims embark on their sacred journey, they do so with the knowledge that they are not alone but rather embraced by a community that truly cares. This initiative is a testament to SBCF’s unwavering dedication to making a real difference in people’s lives, one kind act at a time.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils new concept showroom at UW Mall

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 390 showrooms across 13 countries, has just unveiled their stunning new showroom in Dubai at UW Mall.

Making it the 65th outlet of the brand in the UAE, the showroom was inaugurated by acclaimed actress and brand ambassador of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Kareena Kapoor Khan. Malabar Group Chairman, M P Ahammed; Vice-Chairman, Abdul Salam K P; Managing Director of International Operations, Shamlal Ahamed; Managing Director of India Operations, Asher O; Senior Director of Malabar Group, Mayankutty C; family members of Malabar Group’ senior leadership,



The showroom was inaugurated by acclaimed actress and brand ambassador of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Kareena Kapoor Khan.

other management team members from Malabar Gold & Diamonds, customers & well-wishers were also present.

The impending appearance of Kareena Kapoor Khan drew massive crowds to UW Mall, eager to catch a glimpse of the Bollywood diva in

her full splendor.

As part of the showroom’s grand opening, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has unveiled exciting inaugural offers for its customers. Customers can enjoy free gold coins on the purchase of diamond & precious gem above AED 3000. The offers are valid till April 30, 2025.

Commenting on the occasion, Malabar Group Chairman M P Ahammed said: “It is with immense pride and joy that we unveil our new showroom in the heart of Dubai.

The UAE has always been the cornerstone of our international growth and this launch further reinforces our commitment to deepening our presence in this

dynamic market in a responsible and sustainable way.

With our global showroom count soon approaching the 400 mark, we are steadily moving closer to our vision of becoming the world’s No 1 jewellery retailer.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our customers, partners and team members whose continued trust and support have been instrumental in this journey.”

Located at UW mall (next to BurJuman), the new showroom, which is Malabar Gold & Diamonds’ 65th outlet in the UAE, is designed to offer an elevated shopping experience, blending breathtaking design portfolio with unparalleled customer service.

BUSINESS



The platform is seamlessly integrated into Oman's national pavilion and offers visitors an immersive digital experience.

OMAN UNVEILS IMMERSIVE VIRTUAL PAVILION FOR EXPO 2025 OSAKA

OSAKA: The Sultanate of Oman has introduced an innovative virtual platform as part of its participation in Expo 2025 Osaka, Japan.

Developed by the Omani tech company U-Verse, the platform is seamlessly integrated into Oman's national pavilion and offers visitors an immersive digital experience that bridges heritage and future aspirations.

According to Ibrahim Bani Araba, Assistant Director General of the Arts Directorate at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and a member of the pavilion's Technical Committee, the virtual platform leverages cutting-edge extended reality and artificial intelligence technologies.

Created in collaboration with a group of Omani innovators, the platform reflects the country's vision for technological advancement and openness to global innovation.

"This is more than a digital showcase — it's a gateway to Oman's limitless potential," said Bani Araba. "It merges our rich cultural legacy with forward-looking innovation, in line with Oman Vision 2040."

The platform features a wide array of interactive content, allowing users to explore Omani culture through digitized manuscripts, visual and audio arts, and modern representations of Omani theatre and cinema. Notably, it includes a creative blend of Japanese manga and Omani cultural elements — an effort aimed at engaging younger audiences and presenting tradition in a contemporary format.

It also serves as a promotional tool for Oman's higher education sector and highlights investment opportunities in advanced technologies, underscoring the Sultanate's strategic focus on building a knowledge-based economy and strengthening global cooperation in research and innovation. — ONA

Passenger traffic at Oman airports reaches 2.5 million

OMAN'S AIRPORTS saw a dip in overall passenger traffic, with 2,535,246 travellers recorded by the end of February 2025 — a 6.7% decrease compared to 2,717,835 passengers during the same period in 2024, according to preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Muscat International Airport, the country's primary gateway, handled approximately 2,280,280 passengers in the first two months of 2025 — down 7.5% from 2,463,856 passengers a year earlier.

Total flights at the airport also declined by 11%, dropping to 15,133 compared to 16,996 flights in the same period last year.

Salalah Airport was a bright spot, registering a 5.4% increase in passenger numbers to reach 244,590, up from 232,077.

However, the total number of flights declined by 8.1%, standing at 1,444 compared to 1,572 flights during the same period last year.

Sohar Airport experienced the sharpest decline among all airports. Passenger numbers plummeted by 98%, with just 226 travellers recorded, compared to 11,410 in the same period of 2024. Flights also dropped significantly — down 74.5% to only 28 flights.

Duqm Airport saw marginal decreases. The number of flights slipped by 3.8% to 100, while passenger numbers dipped by 3.3% to 10,150, compared to 10,492 travellers last year.



Muscat International Airport handled approximately 2,280,280 passengers in the first two months of 2025.

In terms of nationalities passing through Muscat International Airport in February 2025, Indian nationals topped the list with 146,418 passengers — including 75,510 arrivals and 70,908 departures. Omani nationals

closely followed with 145,060 passengers (82,244 arrivals and 62,816 departures). Pakistani nationals came in third with 47,781 passengers (24,876 arrivals and 22,905 departures). — ONA

DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY GUIDE LAUNCHED TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVE ONLINE SERVICES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, through its National Programme for Digital Transformation (Tahawul), has launched the Digital Accessibility Guide to promote inclusive digital services for all, including people with disabilities and the elderly.

The guide is designed to support developers in building mobile applications and websites that follow digital accessibility principles from the outset — making platforms easier to access and reducing the need for costly modifications later.

It also helps organisations ensure their digital platforms are



It also helps organisations ensure their digital platforms are user-friendly and accessible to all segments of society.

user-friendly and accessible to all segments of society.

Targeted at both public and private sector developers, the guide is a practical tool for project managers, UX/UI designers, software developers, digital content creators, accessibility specialists and quality engineers.

It also serves as a reference for decision-makers, senior management and individuals or companies contracting developers.

The guide outlines key principles and best practices for achieving digital accessibility and provides methods for assessing accessibility levels in digital platforms. — ONA

Omani satellite start-up joins global satellite constellation



Key officials from OSE and Oman Lens signing the MoU.

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, APRIL 15

OMANI space-tech startup Oman Lens has announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to join the Oriental Smart Eye (OSE) satellite constellation. The signing took place last week during the ISPRS Geospatial Week 2025 in Dubai. In a statement, Oman Lens noted, "This step reflects Oman's growing role in the global space sector. Under this agreement, Oman Lens officially joins the OSE satellite constellation, enhancing its capabilities in AI-powered Earth observation and remote sensing technologies.

The partnership focuses on joint innovation, knowledge exchange

and the development of advanced space-based solutions."

The Oriental Smart Eye (OSE) Constellation is developed by Chinese aerospace company's 'Star Vision', which has also been a key collaborator in launching Oman Lens' first Satellite, OL-1 back in November. According to 'Star Vision', OSE will provide a large-scale Earth Observation satellite network to deliver real-time, AI-powered geospatial data which can provide global coverage with rapid responsiveness for sectors like disaster management, urban planning and environmental monitoring.

Furthermore, the constellation is expected to comprise of 252 satellites equipped with advanced

imaging systems — optical, SAR, hyperspectral and infrared which will utilise in-orbit AI processing which will enable immediate data analysis without relying on ground stations. Last year, Oman Lens successfully launched 'OL-1', an AI enhanced remote sensing satellite that will be used to monitor the country's landscapes, infrastructure and natural resources.

The satellite launch was a result of collaboration between the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Chinese space company 'Star Vision' Aerospace and Omani investment firm Mars Development & Investment. The company revealed that the satellite is the first of a planned constellation of 20 satellites.

REVIEWING CONTRACT

China to suspend Boeing jet deliveries



China has ordered its airlines not to take any further deliveries of Boeing jets in response to the US decision to impose 145% tariffs on Chinese goods, Bloomberg News reported on Tuesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

Shares of Boeing, which looks at China as one of its biggest growth markets and where rival Airbus holds a dominant position, were down 3% in premarket trading. Airbus shares were up 1%. — Reuters

PRODUCTION GROWTH

Global EV sales up 29% in March



Global sales of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles rose 29% year-on-year in March, helped by growth in China and Europe, while EV growth in North America was hampered by US President Donald Trump's stance towards emissions standards and uncertainties around tariffs.

US tariffs on car imports may force some of the country's automakers which produce in neighbouring Mexico to readjust prices. — dpa

DEMAND PREDICTION

Oil prices dip after IEA cuts demand outlook



Oil prices inched down on Tuesday after the International Energy Agency followed Opec in slashing its oil demand forecast, though price falls were limited by US President Donald Trump's suggestion of some new tariff exemptions.

Brent crude futures were down 50 cents, or 0.8%, at \$64.38 per barrel by 10:05 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude also dipped 50 cents, or 0.8%, to \$61.03 a barrel. — Reuters

OPINION

How anti-corrosion innovations safeguard Oman’s infrastructure



NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master’s graduate skilled in diverse writing formats, specialising in storytelling, branding, and in-depth journalism

IN A REGION where infrastructure faces constant exposure to salt, heat and humidity, Oman is carving out a leadership role in the fight against corrosion.

Once considered a behind-the-scenes maintenance issue, corrosion protection is now at the forefront of the Sultanate of Oman’s industrial innovation — driven by sustainability goals, economic diversification and the need to safeguard billions of rials worth of assets.

As industries seek longer-lasting, eco-friendly solutions, anti-corrosion strategies are becoming increasingly critical across infrastructure, energy and manufacturing.

The urgency is real. Corrosion costs the global economy an estimated \$2.5 trillion annually, or about 3.4% of global GDP, according to the Association for Materials Protection and Performance (AMPP, 2023).

Experts estimate that 15% to 35% of these losses — ranging from \$375 billion to \$875 billion — could be avoided through proper corrosion management strategies (AMPP, 2023).

For Oman, which is home to critical oil and gas infrastructure, desalination plants, seaports and industrial zones, corrosion control is both an economic and environmental imperative.

Oman has a strategic opportunity to lead in corrosion prevention across multiple

high-risk industries. In the oil and gas sector, advanced coatings, cathodic protection systems and corrosion-resistant alloys can significantly extend the lifespan of pipelines and offshore platforms.

Water infrastructure and desalination plants stand to benefit from the integration of smart corrosion monitoring and anti-fouling materials tailored to high-salinity environments.

At the nation’s bustling seaports, marine-grade protective systems can reduce maintenance costs and enhance operational safety.

Meanwhile, Oman’s growing renewable energy sector — particularly wind and solar installations along coastal zones — presents a forward-looking opportunity to apply corrosion-proof technologies that align with the country’s sustainability goals.

By investing in innovation, local manufacturing and technical training, Oman can position itself as a regional hub for corrosion control solutions.

Several companies in Oman are engaged in corrosion protection and infrastructure integrity. Advanced Oilfield Technology Company (AOTC) provides services such as thermal spray coatings and pipeline integrity management for clients including PDO and Oman LNG.

Amran CPSS focuses on cathodic protection systems for oil and gas; and

The urgency is real. Corrosion costs the global economy an estimated \$2.5 trillion annually, or about 3.4% of global GDP, according to the Association for Materials Protection and Performance (AMPP, 2023).

marine infrastructure. SGS Oman offers corrosion monitoring and assessment services. Channels Business & Construction and GL International are also involved in the delivery of corrosion control systems across industrial sectors.

On the manufacturing front, companies such as MIS Group and Muscat Chemical supply industrial coatings suited to Oman’s environmental conditions and infrastructure demands. These coatings are commonly used in sectors including offshore oil and gas, water treatment and construction.

Another key step towards strengthening corrosion control in Oman is the growing emphasis on locally driven, sustainable solutions. Under the country’s In-Country Value (ICV) strategy, there is increased support for homegrown innovation and research. One example is Cerbal, a university-based initiative exploring anti-corrosion coatings derived from natural Omani rocks — reflecting a broader shift towards environmentally conscious materials tailored to local conditions. This innovation aligns with Oman Vision 2040 strategy, which calls for technological advancement, industrial efficiency and environmental responsibility.

As mega-projects unfold across sectors — from ports to renewables — the demand for durable, high-performance coatings is only expected to grow.

SMALL COUNTRIES SIT AT NEXUS OF TARIFF TRADE-OFFS

BY ANTONY CURRIE

MELBOURNE: Among the many absurdities of Donald Trump’s global trade war is the inclusion of Singapore and Australia on his naughty list. The US President slapped the 10% baseline tariff, which will apply to nearly all countries, on both with very little justification.

Neither state has, to use Trump’s ill-judged words, “looted, pillaged, raped and plundered” the United States. Far from it: Australia has, at almost \$18 billion, one of the largest goods trading deficits with Washington; Singapore is not far behind at \$13 billion. Both boast a free trade agreement with America.

The two are strong security partners for Uncle Sam, too. They are long-standing buyers of US weaponry, have pledged to increase defence spending and they provide bases for American troops. In fact, there are now more of them on Australian soil than at any time since the end of the Second World War.

Sure, there are a few quibbles, like US beef farmers’ access to the Australian market, which Trump complained about on his self-styled “Liberation Day” on April 2.

But that’s small beer — and Singapore doesn’t even seem to have anything similar to warrant its inclusion.

That’s likely to make it hard to negotiate away the 10% tariff. In fact, Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong last week told parliament he doubts that’s possible, adding if the duty were meant to target surpluses, his country’s tariff should be zero.

Of course, Trump may yet decide to make removing the blanket levy dependent on the willingness of partners to help Washington squeeze China, on which he has imposed a 145% import tax.

That would be a nightmare scenario. The People’s Republic is the largest export market for both small countries. Canberra is particularly exposed, as China accounts for, at some \$135 billion last year, around a third of all Australian goods sold overseas.

Such over-reliance has already proven risky: a 2020 spat over Covid-19’s origins prompted Beijing to put tariffs of up to 200% on imports of Aussie coal, lobster and other products for several years. The shock prompted companies like Treasury Wine Estates and Whitehaven Coal to find new customers abroad.

In response to Trump’s moves, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese’s government is now trying to revive a free-trade agreement with the European Union and woo countries from Indonesia to India to the United Arab Emirates.

Diversifying away from China makes more sense than ever but there are limits to how far Asia-Pacific countries can look beyond their backyard. — **Reuters**

From oil to opportunity: Oman’s transition

OMAN IS at a critical juncture in its economic journey, the Oman Vision 2040 steering the country towards a future that encompasses sustainability at its core.

The Sultanate of Oman has long been dependent on the oil-based economy, but now it’s determined to diversify into the green sector, which will help to reduce the oil dependencies also contribute to a more sustainable and resilient economy.

This transition is more than a shift in industry; it is about reimagining Oman’s role on the global stage and aligning its growth with global sustainability goals.

Oman’s economic future hinges on eco-friendly innovation.

Oman has significant potential in areas beyond renewable energy, including sustainable mining and bioengineering. For instance, Oman could utilise green technologies to extract its copper resources, minimising environmental impact while developing its mineral sector.

By partnering with global experts in these fields, a country could establish itself as a pioneer in sustainable resource extraction, potentially exporting both technology and expertise to countries with similar natural assets.

To facilitate this transition, Oman must adopt sustainable trade and investment practices. One approach is the use of green bonds.

Oman could implement a way to secure funding for Oman Vision 2040 initiatives, such as sustainable energy facilities and environmentally conscious transportation networks.

The creation of a specialised green finance division within Oman’s financial sector would provide a streamlined platform for domestic and international investors interested in backing sustainable ventures.

A crucial aspect of Oman’s economic transformation could involve implementing a circular economy, which emphasises waste reduction, material reuse and resource recycling.



This transition is more than a shift in industry; it is about reimagining Oman’s role on the global stage and aligning its growth with global sustainability goals.



DR UMAIR WAQAS

The writer is Assistant Professor-Supply Chain Management, College of Commerce and Business Administration at Dhofar University

Sectors such as manufacturing, construction and agriculture have substantial potential to contribute to this model. For example, waste-to-energy technologies could help Oman decrease landfill waste while generating power.

This concept has been successfully implemented in places like the UAE and Oman could develop similar facilities.

To expedite this shift, the government could devise a national strategy that encourages businesses to adopt sustainable practices like recycling and reusing materials while fostering public-private collaborations to scale up waste-to-energy solutions.

Agriculture, a crucial industry in Oman, has the potential to become more sustainable. Due to water scarcity, traditional farming techniques are not sustainable in the long run.

However, innovations like hydroponics and vertical farming can enable Oman to grow crops with significantly less water while boosting productivity. Smart farming technologies, such as IoT sensors that track crop health and soil moisture, could also be essential in enhancing efficiency.

Providing subsidies to farmers for adopting these technologies would help decrease water usage and support food security in the area

while also improving agricultural output.

Tourism presents another avenue for sustainability. Oman’s natural landscapes and rich cultural heritage offer a strong base for ecotourism.

By emphasising sustainable travel experiences, such as eco-friendly resorts in the Al Hajar Mountains, Oman can protect its environment and draw eco-conscious tourists.

This approach would support a green economy and strengthen the tourism industry. Promoting eco-tourism initiatives and offering tax breaks to developers who focus on green projects can further speed up the growth of sustainable tourism.

In terms of urban development, smart city initiatives can also advance sustainability. By incorporating technologies like AI, IoT and renewable energy solutions into urban planning, a country can develop energy-efficient cities that minimise resource use while enhancing the quality of life for residents. The Sultan Qaboos University Smart City project is a promising example and Oman could build on this by investing in energy-efficient buildings, smart grids and sustainable transportation systems. Providing incentives for developers to use sustainable urban planning methods would further facilitate the realisation of these smart cities.

Finally, Oman is well-positioned to form international partnerships with countries that are leaders in sustainable development. Nations like Norway, with its expertise in clean energy, could provide Oman with valuable insights into expanding its renewable energy capabilities.

Collaborations with international companies in green technologies could assist Oman in developing its sustainable industries, ranging from wind and solar energy to water management and waste recycling.

As Oman pursues Oman Vision 2040, sustainability must be integrated into every aspect of its economic transformation.

From green innovation and circular economies to eco-tourism and smart cities, Oman has the chance to lead the region in sustainable development.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Classical music at Coachella? LA Philharmonic makes desert debut



THE LOS ANGELES Philharmonic led the charge into their first Coachella performance on Saturday with the “Ride of the Valkyries,” helmed by Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel, in his latest move to reach out to new audiences.

The first major orchestra to grace the annual music and arts festival in the Southern California desert was joined by several vocalists, including jazz pop singer Laufey, who debuted her new song “Silver Lining” and Becky G with her pop song “Shower.”

Country singer Maren Morris arrived on the stage in a shimmering gold dress, delivering her gospel number “My Church” alongside a majority Black choir.

Perhaps the most anticipated guest, German record producer and DJ Zedd, hopped on the piano and the choir, in yellow gowns, joined him for his popular 2012 song “Clarity.”

LL Cool J arrived in a yellow hoodie and took audiences far from the classical ambiance into his popular rap song “Mama Said Knock You Out.”

In a special moment on stage, LL Cool J presented Dudamel with a yellow hat that matched both the rapper and the choir.

The musical set included a host of classical pieces, including Johann Sebastian Bach’s “Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor.”

The LA Philharmonic, considered one of the world’s top orchestras, has been long admired for snaring Venezuelan sensation Dudamel more than 15 years ago.

The maestro, 44, is set to take over as music and artistic director of the New York Philharmonic in 2026. — Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



LIFESTYLE

A volunteer polishes a Bugatti Type 55 at the National Automobile Museum Schlumpf Collection (Musée National de Automobile Collection Schlumpf) in Mulhouse, eastern France. — AFP



FILM

Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar speaks during the press conference of his upcoming movie ‘Kesari Chapter 2’ in Mumbai. — AFP



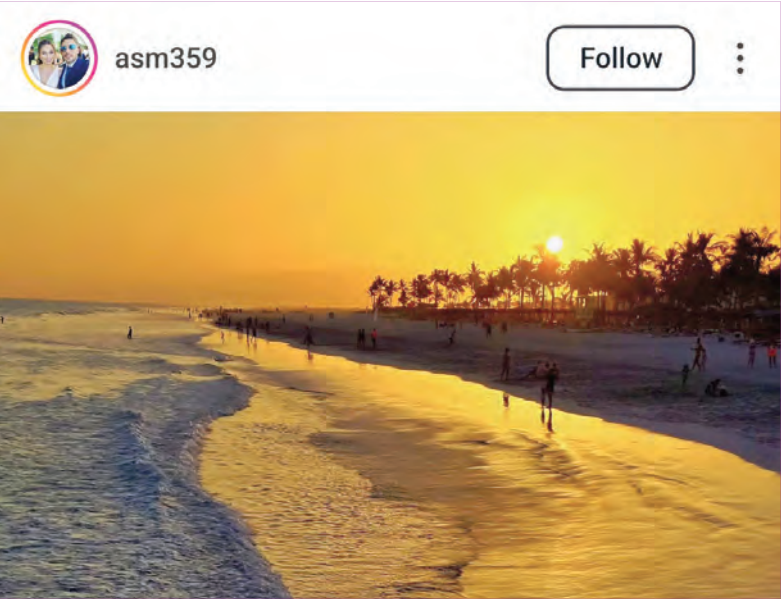
MUSIC

T-Pain performs at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California, US. — Reuters

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Exploring History



Beauty of Oman's Beaches

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Previously hidden
Richter mural partially
unveiled in Dresden



A HIDDEN WORK by German artist Gerhard Richter has been partially unveiled in Dresden for the first time in over 40 years. The uncovering of a section of the mural “Lebensfreude” (“Joy of Life”) at the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden has “come to a wonderful conclusion,” museum director Iris Edenheiser said in a statement on Monday. The approximately 63-square-metre mural was created by Richter in 1956 in a stairwell foyer of the museum as his diploma project at the end of his studies. The artist then famously defected from East Germany to the West in 1961. The mural, depicting various groups of figures in everyday and leisure scenes, was painted over in 1979 with the approval of Communist authorities as it was deemed that “this ‘student work’ had no artistic significance.” After reunification, the

museum made a first attempt to uncover the mural in 1994 but Richter did not agree. In 2022, further talks were held and it was decided along with the artist to only partially uncover a central section of the mural. The 93-year-old Richter, who was born in Dresden, now resides in Cologne. Richter’s innovative techniques, particularly the use of squeegees to manipulate paint, allow him to create striking effects on canvas. Richter’s work spans from abstract paintings to photo-realistic representations, engaging deeply with themes of memory and history. By exploring the nature of perception and challenging traditional notions of art, he has influenced many contemporary artists. His market success underscores his acclaim, with his works fetching significant prices at auctions, solidifying his status as one of the most important living artists today. — dpa



Miuccia Prada’s path from activist to top designer

AS A STUDENT in the volatile May of 1968, Miuccia Prada took to the streets of Milan to demonstrate for women’s rights wearing an Yves Saint Laurent suit. Today, the 76-year-old reigns over a luxury goods empire worth more than five billion euros (\$5.4 billion) a year, with her world about to expand further with the takeover of flamboyant rival Versace. An avant-garde designer whose minimalist style belies its rebellious nature, Prada has imprinted her elegant and intellectual sensibility on the world of Italian fashion for decades. As a young woman she wanted to become involved in politics and took courses in mime and theatre. But she shelved those dreams in the early 1970s to devote herself, along with her mother Luisa, to the leather goods boutique founded in 1913 by her grandfather, Mario Prada. “In the 1970s, as a left-wing woman, I was ashamed to make handbags and I was also ashamed because it was a profession that I liked very much,” she said in 2022. Born in Milan on May 10, 1948, into a bourgeois Catholic family, Prada has become one of the wealthiest and most influential women in the world, with a fortune estimated by Forbes magazine at 5.8 billion dollars. A political science graduate and feminist activist who frequented

Communist circles, she eventually devoted herself body and soul to turning around the family business, which had lost its lustre after the death of her grandfather in 1958. **A MONSTER OF AMBITION** In 1977, Prada found a perfect partner in Patrizio Bertelli, a Tuscan leather manufacturer she met at the Milan leather goods fair. He helped her boost the finances of the boutique, over which she took control in 1978. Nine years later, the business partners married. “He was the one who wanted to do something big. I told him I wasn’t ambitious. He replied: ‘You’re a monster of ambition’. He was right,” she said. It was the starting point for Prada’s irresistible rise. In the early 1980s, the designer broke new ground by creating a collection of black nylon bags with a silky effect, which became all the rage. She would go on 40 years later to champion nylon thread made from recycled plastic recovered from the oceans. The brand began growing, with boutiques springing up first in New York and Madrid, then London, Paris and Tokyo. Ironically, her first women’s ready-to-wear show in Milan in 1988, all in black and white, was not well

received, with critics considering it too austere. But her minimalist luxury, with its clean lines and somber colours, eventually made its mark, winning over an international audience. **BREAKING THE CODE** Federica Trotta Mureau, editor-in-chief of the Italian magazine Mia Le Journal, said that in tapping her fascination with art, architecture and philosophy, Prada “created a free universe, a sort of experiment without rules... aimed at breaking the codes of fashion”. Prada says she has long worn vintage garments, while speaking out against fast fashion, where quick production cycles churn out low-priced items that are often soon disposed of. Her signature garment has always been the skirt, with its infinite variations. Prada refuses to see women as “just beautiful figures”: “I don’t tend to make super sexy clothes. I try to be creative in a way that can be worn, that can be useful”. A men’s collection was rolled out in 1993, the same year that saw the launch of the Miu Miu brand appealing to younger customers — and borrowing the designer’s nickname. Sales of Miu Miu doubled in 2024, enabling Prada to weather the global luxury crisis unscathed. — AFP

FEATURES

BY GEORGINA BENISON
PHOTOS BY KHALID AL BUSAIDI

MOST FAMILIES love a trip to the cinema and most people enjoy becoming engrossed in a film's gripping plot. Few, however, get to experience a beloved classic in the imposing surroundings of an opera house auditorium with a world-famous orchestra performing the score live in front of them at a 'CineConcert'. That is exactly what members of the public were able to do last weekend when the Royal Opera House Muscat brought the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra to the stage to accompany the very first film in the Harry Potter franchise.

The iconic British movie series began an impressive twenty-four years ago, when the child wizards were barely eleven years old and at the start of their blossoming careers. Other stalwarts of the silver screen made cameo appearances or performed supporting roles as professors at the legendary 'Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry'. One of the elements that makes Director Chris Columbus's 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' so engaging and compelling is its stupendous orchestral score. Its composer, John Williams, has become one of America's most accomplished and successful composers for film and remains one of the most distinguished and contributive musical voices of this era. He has over a hundred films to his credit, including all nine Star Wars films, Superman and the first three Harry Potter films. His half-century partnership with Steven Spielberg produced classics of the screen such as Jaws, ET, Schindler's List, Close Encounters and many more.

This 2001 composition is one of Williams' most expressive and evocative scores in his filmic canon. The music underlies the mood and atmosphere integral to each scene, making it hard to imagine any other soundtrack achieving such an effect. Both evenings, the 84-strong Armenian State Symphony Orchestra took to the stage to perform this almost 160-minute soundscape under the versatile, multi-genre Dutch conductor, Ernst Van Tiel. Before the film's opening, Maestro Van Tiel welcomed the audience and praised the superb beauty of the Royal Opera House Muscat — one of many venues in which he has been a guest conductor. He invited the audience to engage and react to the performance they were about to watch; they were encouraged to sing and dance along if they felt so moved.

In fact, the viewers were spellbound into silence throughout the entire programme, with barely any movement from even the youngest attendees. From the famous opening theme, passing from woodwind to glockenspiel, the spell was cast and this fine orchestra created a perfect yet subtle execution of Williams' score. The forces employed to colour each shade of the narrative are vast: the score includes six percussionists and three pianists for the various keyboard instruments, including celesta and piano.

The brass section excelled in both muted and unmuted guises, playing at the extremes of their registers, while the woodwinds created a smorgasbord of sounds, effects and colours to complement the smooth, atmospheric playing of the massive string section. It was a true reflection of the breadth of orchestral language possible in John Williams' artistic palette and a tribute to his inspired creative genius. In a scene during the second half, a spell is cast on a harp to put the three-headed guard dog, "Fluffy", to sleep.

Here, the orchestra's harpist, Arpine Babayan, performed an exquisite solo to evoke the surreal and magical quality of the crypt. The effect of watching 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' with an orchestra performing live on stage created a three-dimensional experience, superimposed upon the visual and recorded soundtrack.

Occasionally, the grand swells of the accompanying orchestral crescendo seemed



Harry Potter at ROHM is a nostalgic, three-dimensional trip down memory lane



to overpower some deeper voice dialogue — though it may equally have been a result of lower-quality sound reproduction. In general, the balance and sound projection were excellent.

The film features a veritable who's who of British cinematic legacy, such as Hagrid, played by the now sadly departed Scottish actor Robbie Coltrane. Dame Maggie Smith portrayed the daunting Minerva McGonagall, Alan Rickman the semi-evil Professor Severus Snape and Richard Harris a lovable Dumbledore — all of whom have now passed away. This film, based on the 1997 novel by JK Rowling, bears witness to their lasting contributions to celluloid history; and the future shape and quality of talking movies to come.