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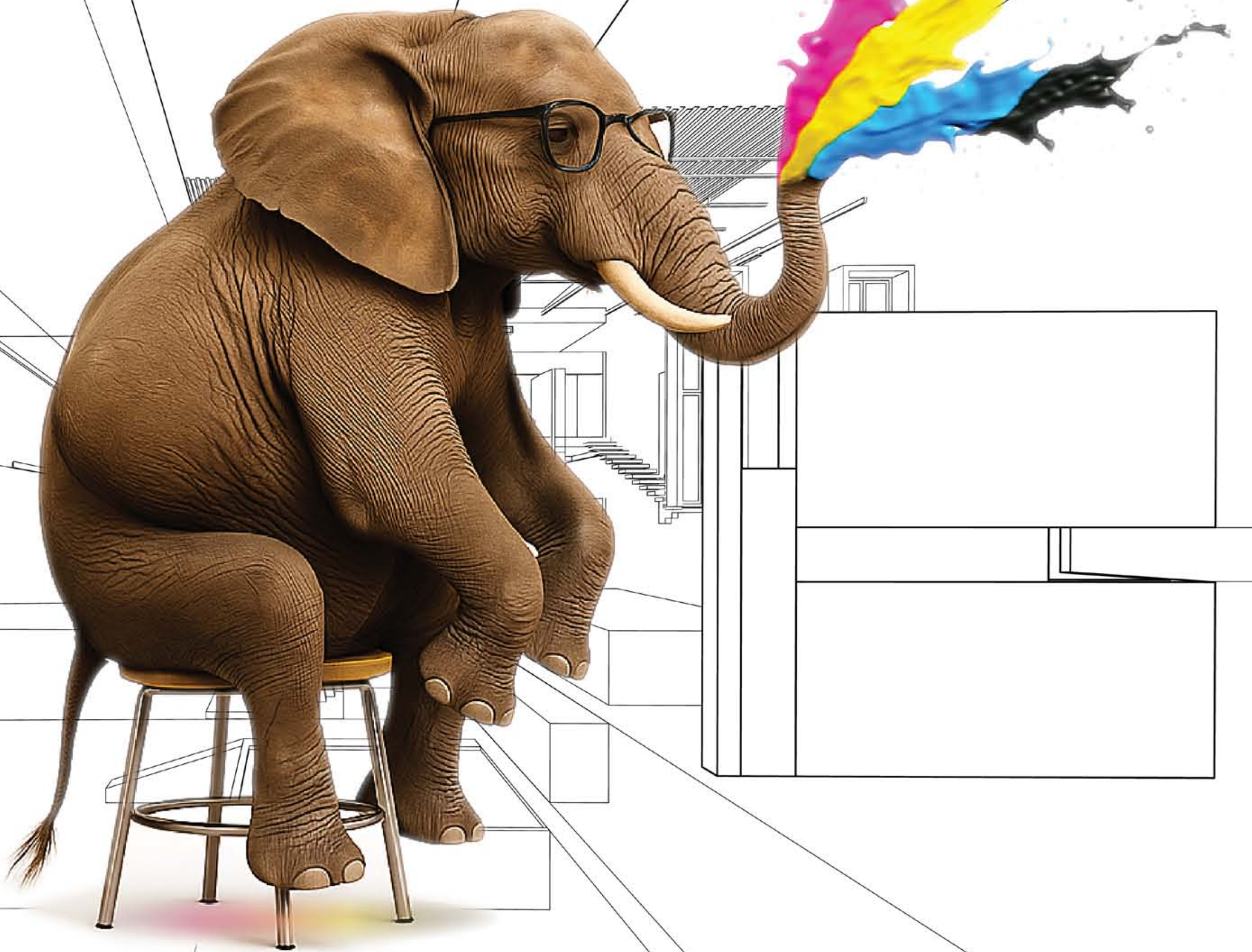
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Maghrib.....6:49pm

Isha.....8:05pm

Fajr (Tomorrow).....4:20am

RIYADA

RAM launches leadership programme for CEOs of startups

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to fostering the Omani business community, the Royal Academy of Management (RAM) has announced the launch of the bespoke Startup Leadership Programme, one of its strategic flagship programmes for the year 2025.

Set to run throughout 2025, the strategic initiative is tailored for startup founders and co-founders, and is centred around aligning their leadership purpose with business strategy.

Delivered in partnership with



the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority known as Riyada, the Startup Leadership Programme will engage participants with regional and international experts and investors, further supporting their efforts to scale and compete on a global stage.

Tech startups

A total of 15 CEOs and co-founders of Omani tech startups will be competitively selected to participate in the programme.

To be eligible, candidates must be co-founders in an executive role at a startup that is either headquarterd in the Sultanate of Oman or conducts its principal operations within the country.

In addition, the startup must have a team of at least five employees and demonstrate clear potential for sustainable growth and operational expansion.

The learning journey will consist of four core modules focusing on strategic leadership, technical and operational skills, and human capital management.

The programme combines theory and functional practice and also includes an international field visit to study leading global practices that they can apply in their businesses.

Upon successful completion of the programme, participants are expected to have empowered their global expansion mindset,

honed their leadership and technical skills, and will be able to produce a comprehensive expansion plan informed by detailed market research.

The Startup Leadership Programme will be open for applications from 10 August until 23 August 2025 and eligible startup CEOs and co-founders should register via the Royal Academy of Management's official registration platform and website.

Revenues from 3-5 star hotels top OMR141mn

Oman witnessed a 9.2 percent increase in the number of guests until the end of June 2025 compared to the same period in 2024



MUSCAT: Revenues from 3-5 star hotels in the Sultanate of Oman witnessed an 18.2 percent increase, reaching approximately OMR141,210,000 by the end of June 2025, compared to approximately OMR119,501,000 by the end of June 2024.

Data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed that hotels with a 3-5 star rating in the Sultanate of Oman witnessed a 9.2 percent increase in the number of guests until the end of June 2025 compared to the same period in 2024, as the total number of guests reached 1,142,702, compared to 1,046,224 guests during the same period of

the previous year.

Statistics indicated an increase in the occupancy rate in hotels classified as (3-5) stars until the end of June 2025 by 14.4 percent, reaching 54.7 percent, compared to 47.8 percent during the same period in 2024.

As for the distribution of guests by nationality until the end of June 2025, Oceanian guests led the growth rate with an increase of 57.9 percent, reaching 24,681 guests, followed by African nationalities with a percentage of 40.6 percent, with a number of guests reaching 7,794 guests.

The number of guests from the Americas also increased by 22.3 percent to reach 39,293 guests, while the number of European guests witnessed a 20.1 percent increase to reach 358,190.

The number of Gulf guests recorded a 10.6 percent increase, reaching 83,140 guests, while the number of Omani guests recorded a 5.7 percent increase to reach 384,222 by the end of June 2025.

Asian nationalities witnessed a 2.4 percent increase, with the number of guests reaching 163,286.

In contrast, statistics showed a 1.4 percent decrease in the number of residents of other Arab nationalities, reaching 48,453. -ONA

END OF JUNE 2025

Over 6.9mn passengers travel through Oman's airports

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The total number of passengers travelling through Oman's airports (Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Duqm) reached 6,921,569 by the end of June 2025, compared to 7,074,913 passengers during the same period in 2024, registering a 2.2 percent decrease, according to preliminary data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data showed that Muscat International Airport received 6,233,954 passengers by the end of June 2025, compared to 6,384,874 passengers during the same period of the previous year, a decrease of 2.4 percent.

The number of flights through the airport also reached 44,743, a decrease of 6.9 percent compared to 48,052 flights during the same period in 2024.

The number of passengers travelling through Salalah Airport increased by 4.5 percent until the end of June 2025, reaching 657,209 passengers, compared to 628,951 passengers during the same period in 2024.

The total number of flights recorded a slight increase of 0.3 percent, reaching 4,526 flights, compared to 4,514 flights by the end of June 2024.



In contrast, Sohar Airport witnessed a sharp decline in passenger numbers by the end of June 2025, dropping to 336 passengers, compared to 31,203 passengers during the same period last year.

The number of flights also decreased by 68.7 percent, reaching 84 flights, compared to 268 flights by the end of June 2024.

Duqm Airport recorded a slight decrease in the number of flights by 0.6 percent until the end of June 2025, recording 306 flights compared to 308 flights during the same period last year.

Meanwhile, the number of passengers increased slightly by 0.6 percent until the end of June 2025, reaching 30,070 passengers compared to 29,885 passengers at the end of June 2024.

Statistics showed that Indian nationalities topped the list of nationalities with the highest number of departures and arrivals through Muscat International Airport during June 2025, with a total of 193,183 passengers (79,424 passengers arriving and 113,759 passengers departing), followed by Omani nationalities with a total of 135,093 passengers (62,476 passengers arriving and 72,617 passengers departing), then Pakistani nationalities with a total of 48,733 passengers (23,247 passengers arriving and 25,486 passengers departing).

SMEs

Festival boosts Jabal Akhdar's cultural and natural assets

<FROM A1 The festival is promoting domestic tourism and showcasing the natural and cultural assets of Jabal Akhdar.

It features a variety of activities including cultural performances, sports competitions, and entertainment for all age groups. It also includes an open market with sections for productive families, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and local agricultural products.

A number of kiosks have come up on the route to the festival, where Omanis are selling freshly plucked figs, pomegranates, honey, grapes, olive and rosewater.

When asked about the stopovers of tourists in Jabal Akhdar on the way to Salalah, Jagdeep Thakral, General Manager at dusitD2 Naseem, said: "Definitely this is a better year for us compared to last year. We are having more bookings this year from travellers going to Salalah. They love the cool climate of this region.

With Dubai sizzling at nearly 50 degrees Celsius, Jabal Akhdar is giving them a perfect getaway from scorching summers." While parts of Oman are reeling under high temperature and



high humidity, Jab Al Akhdar in Al Dakhliyah Governorate received moderate rains on Thursday afternoon further bringing down the temperature. The rain was also accompanied with hail. Right from the Barkat Al Mouj to the uphill at Jabal Al Akhdar, signage both in English and Arabic guide tourists to the venue.

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COMMENTARY

Oman’s labour law: Strengthening worker protections and ensuring workplace justice

In an era where employee rights are often under strain, Oman has emerged as a regional leader by enacting a robust and progressive labour law framework introduced under Royal Decree 53/2023. Designed to ensure dignity, fairness, and accountability in the workplace, the law reflects a national commitment to protecting the interests of both employees and employers.

Speaking exclusively to the Times of Oman, a representative of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm, a leading law office in Oman, explained that “workplaces where employees are protected from unfair treatment, discrimination and unsafe conditions are not merely an ideal but a legal mandate.” Oman’s Labour law embodies this vision, establishing clear safeguards to ensure that workers’ rights are prioritized. Far from being punitive, the law reflects Oman’s Labour Law commitment to nurturing equitable and respectful workplaces. It provides clear legal protection against discrimination and unjust dismissal including termination on the grounds of gender, religion, pregnancy or union activity.

The law also underscores the



DR. MOHAMMED IBRAHIM AL ZADJALI,
Founding partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm



importance of work-life balance. It limits standard working hours to eight per day and reduces them to six hours during Ramadan for Muslim employees, in recognition of their religious observance. Additionally, it guarantees rest breaks and mandates fair compensation for overtime work. Furthermore,

the law empowers employees to file complaints without fear of retaliation and prohibits employers from withholding workers’ documents,” said Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Zadjali, Founding Partner of Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm. He added, “The law further reinforces employee protec-

tions by mandating effective grievance mechanisms, prohibiting forced or compulsory labour, and regulating disciplinary procedures to prevent arbitrary dismissal. These legal provisions embody a balanced approach that safeguards both employer accountability and workers’ rights.”

“By balancing employer responsibilities with employee rights, Oman’s Labour Law doesn’t just regulate it elevates workplace standards. In a world where fairness often falters, Oman’s approach sets a benchmark worth celebrating,” the expert said.

(Mohammed Ibrahim Law Firm (info@mohammedibrahim.net), (+968 244 87 600) was established 18 years ago and is serving clients through its offices in Muscat and Sohar, as well as operating on a request basis in other areas. It offers legal representation across a wide range of practice areas that include Labour Law, Corporate, Commercial, Contracts, Banking and Finance, International Trade, Foreign Investment, Insurance, Maritime Law, Construction and Engineering Contracts, International Arbitration, Intellectual Property and more).

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COMPANY REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

Dear Shareholders,

We would like to present to you the unaudited consolidated financial statements for the period ended 30th June 2025.

At the group level, the total turnover of the Company for the period ended 30th June 2025 is 13.145 million OMR compared with 9.539 million OMR for the same period of the last year, i.e. an increase of 38%.

The parent Company's total turnover for the period ended 30th June 2025 is 12.407 million OMR compared with 9.198 million OMR for the same period of last year, i.e. an increase of 35%.

At the group level, net loss after tax for the period ended 30th June 2025 is OMR 93,298 compared with net loss of 160,088 OMR for the same period of the last year.

last year.

The parent Company's net loss after tax for the period ended 30th June 2025 is 94,038 OMR compared with net loss of 71,508 OMR for the same period of the last year.

The Management is focusing on the enhancement of LPG business to yield better results in the coming period and the Company will put all its efforts to maximise the shareholders return.

Thanking you,

Engr. Omar Ahmed Salim Qatan
Chairman

SEPARATE AND CONSOLIDATED UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	30 June 2025		30 June 2024	
	Parent RO	Group RO	Parent RO	Group RO
Revenue	12,406,462	13,144,539	9,197,716	9,539,100
Cost of sales	(11,977,672)	(12,546,844)	(8,824,837)	(9,115,545)
Gross Profit	428,790	597,695	372,879	423,555
General and administration expenses	(565,415)	(733,258)	(474,276)	(611,237)
Investment and Other Income	42,588	42,588	29,889	29,889
Profit for the period before tax	(94,038)	(92,976)	(71,508)	(157,793)
Provision for Income tax	-	(322)	-	(2,295)
Net Profit for the period after tax	(94,038)	(93,298)	(71,508)	(160,088)
Other comprehensive income	-	-	-	-
Total comprehensive income	(94,038)	(93,298)	(71,508)	(160,088)
Earnings per share	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.005)

SEPARATE AND CONSOLIDATED UNAUDITED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT JUNE 30, 2025

	30 June 2025		30 June 2024	
	Parent RO	Group RO	Parent RO	Group RO
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	2,560,260	2,889,337	2,751,464	3,037,540
Right of use assets	196,694	196,694	211,094	211,094
Deferred Tax Asset	-	-	-	-
Investment	2,004,118	-	2,004,118	-
Goodwill	-	996,800	-	996,800
Trade Receivable	-	-	-	-
Total Non-current Assets	4,761,072	4,082,831	4,966,676	4,245,434
Current Assets:				
Inventories	1,096,124	1,277,291	1,419,081	1,536,294
Trade and other receivables	4,612,769	4,502,810	4,974,338	4,129,932
Cash and cash equivalents	1,187,350	1,347,544	1,468,122	1,526,029
Total Current Assets	6,896,243	7,127,645	7,861,541	7,192,255
TOTAL ASSETS	11,657,315	11,210,476	12,828,217	11,437,689
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity:				
Share capital	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Statutory reserve	1,000,000	1,015,863	1,000,000	1,013,094
Special reserve	1,457,067	1,457,067	1,457,067	1,457,067
Land revaluation reserve	807,666	807,666	807,666	807,666
Retained earnings	(486,275)	(644,787)	(312,750)	(435,141)
Total Equity	5,778,458	5,635,809	5,951,983	5,842,686
Non-current Liabilities:				
End of service benefits	134,433	166,999	131,358	141,969
Non current portion of Term Loan	-	-	-	-
Non current portion of lease liabilities	252,916	252,916	248,885	248,885
Deferred tax	106,778	112,164	133,189	139,690
Total Non-current Liabilities	494,127	532,079	513,432	530,544
Current Liabilities:				
Trade and other payables	5,281,125	4,938,660	5,923,283	4,622,778
Bank overdraft	74,203	74,203	320,562	320,562
Current portion of Term Loan	-	-	89,554	89,554
Current portion of lease liabilities	9,184	9,184	9,184	9,184
Income Tax	20,218	20,541	20,218	22,381
Total Current Liabilities	5,384,730	5,042,588	6,362,802	5,064,459
Total Liabilities	5,878,857	5,574,667	6,876,234	5,595,003
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	11,657,315	11,210,476	12,828,217	11,437,689
Net Assets Per Share (RO)	0.193	0.188	0.198	0.195

Note: The complete account will be sent by email to any Shareholders who request them in either Arabic or English as requested within 7 days of the request.

Providing Safe Housing to Thousands of Families in Need



Dar Al Atta'a Association has built **175 homes** and carried out maintenance for over 2,514 houses, supporting families across Oman.

Dar Al Atta'a Association, Oman's leading charitable organization, is committed to helping families achieve safe, stable and sustainable living. As part of its ongoing social responsibility and community service efforts, its work in housing not only offers shelter but also enhances health, safety and overall family well-being.

Taking this mission forward, the Association is set to launch the next phase of its

housing initiative — Dar Al Atta'a Neighbourhood in Al Khabourah — a step toward realizing its vision of modern and dignified living for all.

Over the past 18 months, Dar Al Atta'a Association has disbursed Omani Riyals 6.1 million to support underprivileged families across Oman through diverse initiatives spanning education, relief, empowerment and housing.

Muscat Media Group salutes social champions like Dar Al Atta'a Association for their lasting impact on society in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. We are proud to honour their contributions through Shabiba Jawa'iz Basma.



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CABLE

His Majesty greets President of the Republic of Ecuador

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Daniel Noboa of the Republic of Ecuador, on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President Noboa and the people of Ecuador.

— ONA



FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman welcomes Armenia-Azerbaijan pact, seeks similar agreement for Palestine issue

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed the peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan, expressing its deep appreciation for the peaceful efforts that contributed to achieving this historic agreement, which ends decades of conflict and division.

Pivotal role of the US

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Saturday, the Sultanate of Oman commended the pivotal role played by the United States and other parties in this context. The foreign ministry expressed hope that this step would inspire similar achievements in resolving various issues, most notably the Palestinian issue in the Middle East, through dialogue and peaceful means, based on the principles of justice and right.

This approach will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing stability and prosperity for all countries, peoples, and all regions affected by conflicts around the world. — ONA



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ANNOUNCEMENT

PUBLIC ONLINE AUCTION TO SELL USED ROP VEHICLES

The Royal Oman Police - Directorate of Public Relations and Security Information – announces a public online auction through the ROP Auctions Platform to sell detained vehicles at the police stations of A'Dahirah Governorate Police Headquarter via the website (www.rop.mzadcom.om), starting from **Sunday, 17 August 2025 for one day.**

The vehicles displayed for sale may be inspected during the period from **12 to 14 August 2025 from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm** at the Vehicle Detention Yard at Ibri police station of A'Dahirah Governorate Police Headquarter.

Bidders must abide by the following terms and conditions:

- To register on the website www.rop.mzadcom.om
- To pay an insurance amount of RO 500/- (five hundred Omani Riyals) via the website, which is non-refundable in case of failure to pay the value of the purchased vehicle or carry out the procedures for its registration and transfer within the specified period.
- To pay the auctioneer fees at 2% of the value of the vehicle plus 5% VAT.
- To pay the value of the vehicle by electronic transfer within 48 working hours.
- To register and transfer the vehicle within 3 days after paying its value to avoid a fine of RO 5/- (five Omani Riyals) for each day of delay after the end of the specified period, without the Royal Oman Police bearing any responsibility in the event of its loss or damage.
- The Royal Oman Police and the Auction Website shall not bear any responsibility if the image or description of any vehicle displayed does not match the reality and do not guarantee its validity or technical integrity.
- For more details, please visit the website (www.rop.mzadcom.om) or call 98886154.

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Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة

Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Date of Publishing	Last date to Purchase Tender Document	Submission Date	Companies who should participate in this Tender	Document Price
134/2025/ MTCIT	PURCHASE OF FIREWALL LICENSES AND MAINTENANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES	06-08-2025	13-08-2025	25-08-2025	Experienced Companies registered in Information Technology services category , with the projects, tenders and local content authority (Excellent and First)	(25/-) Twenty Five Omani Rials (For Local) (10/-) Ten Omani Rials (For SME) (25/-) Twenty Five Omani Rials (For Regional) Non- Refundable

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website.

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:

Tel: +968 24402200 e-mail: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

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Internal Tenders Committee

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August 8

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Priya Arunkumar, Niveda Arunkumar,
Dr Kamalam Ilango and family

AWARENESS ON LOCAL CONTENT

Two public opinion polls to be held

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) in cooperation with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, will conduct two public opinion polls on measurement of awareness of the community with the local content on Sunday.

The two opinion polls include two samples one of which represents society and represents the employees of the public and private sectors establishments.

The opinion polls come within the national efforts aimed to boost the in-country value (ICV) and to support the economic and social aspects of Oman Vision 2040.

The two opinion polls, which continue till 27 August, aims to



measure the level of knowledge with the concept of the local content, to measure the extent of community and constitutional interaction with the policies of the support of the local products and the national service.

They also aim to study the factors affecting the preference of the local goods and to identify the



challenges facing the individuals and establishments in adopting this strategic move.

First opinion poll

The first opinion poll includes the individuals of both gender aged 18 and above and displays their awareness with the basic concepts of the local content while the sec-

ond one focuses on the Omanis working in the sectors associated with the supply, manufacturing, distribution and marketing and examines the extent of implementation of their establishments with implementation of the local content policies, the procurement priorities and the challenges in dealing with small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Mahfoudh bin Salim Al Mashrafi, Director of the Opinion Poll Measurement Department at the NCSI, said that these opinion polls represent a vital step towards the support of the decision-makers with a clear vision established on reliable data on the actual condition and challenges of the local content in Oman. — OMA



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COMMENTARY

More tariffs on the way – Learn to become self-sufficient



R. MADHUSOODANAN*

Every day, we hear news of fresh and increased tariffs on US imports. Last Wednesday, Donald Trump imposed an additional 25 percent tariff on Indian imports, bringing the total to 50 percent.

Speaking to the Times of Oman, R. Madhusoodanan, a financial expert based in Muscat, said, “This is nothing but a retaliatory action” by the US, citing that India continues to purchase Russian crude.

This is quite discriminatory as China is importing more crude from Russia than India, and still, their tariff is much lower than that of India.

No doubt, if implemented, India’s exports to the US, particularly textiles, pharma, vehicle parts, leather, and marine products, are expected to be impacted at least in the short term.

For example, the current tariff on steel, copper, and aluminium is 1.7 percent, while the revised rate will be 51.7 percent, whereas the tariff applicable to Mexico, China, and Canada is 25 percent, 30 percent, and 35 percent, respectively.

This makes the Indian products costly for the US customers.

‘Unfair, unjustified, and unreasonable’

The Indian government has said the move is “unfair, unjustified, and unreasonable.

The government has been taking steps to diversify the export markets to other regions, including South American countries, to mitigate the potential risks. More credit flow is expected to happen to sectors like agriculture, manufacturing, pharma, housing, and textiles.

New markets, infrastructure, tariffs on imports, export incentives, and tax sops are also very important, besides making available cheap, timely, and adequate finance to these sectors.

Currently, India has around 18 percent of its exports to the US, and India has a trade surplus with US. New developments may impact the trade deficit of India. The shocks in the Indian equities, weaker INR, and high volatility in the forex markets are indicators, he further said.

It is high time that India becomes self-sufficient in many areas and restricts the import of electronic goods, gold, and other precious metals to preserve forex earnings.

Efforts are also needed to produce goods and services that are globally competitive.

Outlook

The new tariffs on more than 90 countries around the world have come into effect. But the fact is that the US is also not insulated from the aftermath of the tariff decisions. The latest payroll data released is not good.

The dollar index (DIX), which indicates the strength of the dollar against a basket of currencies, is in the range of 98-99. Inflation and growth concerns are also factors affecting the US economy.

The US is well aware of the consequences of its exports and the higher inflation, etc, due to the increased tariffs. The US has kept the windows open for discussion with many countries, including that of India, and the new rates are unlikely to be the final ones, R. Madhusoodanan said.

UN HEADQUARTERS

Oman takes part in key UN-GGIM 15th session

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the 15th session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), held at the UN headquarters in New York, USA.

The Omani delegation was headed by the Acting Chairman of the National Survey and Geospatial Information Authority at the Ministry of Defence.

The meeting addressed several topics related to geospatial information management, including enhancing governance frameworks, the contributions of regional committees to the global geospatial information agenda, and the role of thematic networks in advancing geospatial data initiatives.

Discussions also covered the future of geospatial information ecosystems.

Key agenda items included the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF), the Global Geodetic Reference Frame (GGRF), and the use of geospatial data for sustainable development, climate action, and environmental applications.

The session further examined legal and policy frameworks, reference data management, emerging technologies, and the implementation and adoption of global geospatial standards.

Additionally, participants reviewed the role of UN Global Geospatial Information Management Centers (operating outside headquarters) in strengthening global geospatial data governance arrangements.

The session was organised in accordance with relevant resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to facilitate deliberations on the proposed

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Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries
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The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders :-

Tender no.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are eligible to participate	Tender Document fee (R.O)
489/2025/MAFWR /HQ- 54	Supply of insecticide magnesium phosphate (fumigation Plates)	Wednesday 30/7/2025	Monday 18/8/2025	Sunday 7/9/2025	Specialized companies registered with Excellent, First Second, Third, fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- Above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

2025 ALEXANDER DALRYMPLE PRIZE

National Hydrographic Office head awarded

LONDON: Captain Ahmed Ali Al Badi, Head of the National Hydrographic Office at the Royal Navy of Oman, has been awarded the prestigious 2025 Alexander Dalrymple Prize by the United Kingdom’s Hydrographic Office (UKHO). The honour recognises his outstanding contributions to advancing hydrographic science and maritime navigation at regional and international levels.

The award was presented during an official ceremony at the UK Hydrographic Office headquarters in Taunton.

International accolade

This international accolade underscores Oman’s pioneering role in hydrography, demonstrated through its exceptional efforts in enhancing maritime safety, updating navigational charts and information, and active participation in international cooperation under the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO).

Established in 2006, the Al-



exander Dalrymple Prize ranks among the world’s most distinguished hydrographic honours. Awarded annually to pioneering figures, it recognises individuals or institutions that have made significant advancements in hydrography (nautical charting), navigation, and maritime geography worldwide. — OMA

ROYAL OMAN POLICE

ROP installing smart surveillance cameras on major roads

MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has highlighted its ongoing efforts to keep pace with new technological developments, such as self-driving cars, and their potential impact on traffic safety.

The ROP recently launched smart traffic monitoring systems and is working on future projects that incorporate artificial intelligence to enhance traffic management.

These initiatives pave the way for integrating smart vehicles into Oman's transport network by monitoring global trends and assessing potential risks.

As part of this effort, the ROP is studying the experiences of other countries to develop a future regulatory framework tailored to Oman's environment.

The analysis covers key risks associated with emerging technologies, including the safety of autonomous vehicles and the question of legal responsibility in the event of accidents.

To strengthen the nation's smart safety infrastructure, the ROP is



upgrading traffic signals to align with Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS), enhancing automated traffic monitoring with advanced technologies, and installing smart surveillance cameras on major roads.

Traffic safety is a significant community issue that touches

the lives of the individuals of the society, notably with the increase of the number of vehicles and the expansion of the road networks in Oman, which requires gathering the official and community efforts for cementing the culture of commitment with the traffic rules and systems.



Royal Oman Police continues with its efforts for protection of lives and provision of a safe and secure traffic environment.

Brigadier Ali bin Saleem Al Falahi, Director General of Traffic at Royal Oman Police said that the traffic safety institutes in the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman play a vital role in boosting traffic culture for drivers and applicants for driving licences.

He said that the traffic safety institutes work on upgrading their programmes in accordance with the state-of-the-art technologies

and the programmes and curricula related to the field of traffic safety.

He said that the traffic safety institutes train school bus drivers within the defensive driving programme in coordination with the Ministry of Education. The results of this programme are revised through following with the performance of drivers in transporting the students, soothing that reflects positively on improvement of the performance of drivers and the reduction of their traffic breaches.

He said that the traffic safety institutes in the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman offer specialised training programme including the syllabus on training on defensive driving, the syllabus of training driving vehicles' instructors, taxi drivers training programme and heavy vehicle drivers training syllabus among other programmes.

Regarding the role of the National Road Safety Committee, he said that the committee works on establishment of the strategies and the guidelines related to traffic safety and implementation of the

same in cooperation with the government departments concerned.

The recommendations of the committee included the one on setting a national strategy for curbing traffic accidents and setting plans for media coverage for the purpose of dissemination of awareness on traffic culture among the members of the society.

He also pointed out to the co-operation existing between the ROP and the Ministry of Education which aimed to raise the students' traffic awareness and traffic culture.

He also pointed to the implementation of the Road Friends VIA experimental programme during the school year 2022/2023, which has later covered 33 schools in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

He said that the organisation of the Traffic Safety Competition comes within the belief of ROP on the effective role the government and individuals of the society play in traffic awareness and dissemination of traffic culture. — ONA

NEXT WEEK



Trump and Putin to meet in Alaska

WASHINGTON DC: Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart Donald Trump are scheduled to meet in person for bilateral talks on August 15 to discuss how to end the war in Ukraine.

Before his election victory in November 2024, Trump announced he would end the war within the first 24 hours of his term. He is now about 200 days past his own deadline.

Trump said the meeting with Putin will help accelerate the peace process. Here's an overview of what's known so far.

The two leaders will meet next Friday in Alaska, a state in the northwest of the United States. The Kremlin has confirmed the meeting and has also invited Trump to Russia after the talks in Alaska.

Kremlin foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov described the choice of location for the meeting as "logical."

"Russia and the United States are close neighbors, bordering each other," Ushakov said. "It seems quite logical that our delegation should simply fly across the Bering Strait and that such an important and eagerly awaited summit between the leaders of the two countries should be held in Alaska."

For the US president, who por-

trays himself as an accomplished dealmaker, taking a significant step toward peace would be of personal and reputational importance. His political ally, Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu, recently nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize.

As for the actual conflict, Trump wants a ceasefire at the very least, and a long-term solution, at best.

Trump has said he also wants to arrange a three-way meeting with Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. But neither the Russian nor the Ukrainian leader has agreed to this yet.

The Russian president wants to prevent the NATO military alliance from expanding further eastward. It's likely he will try to convince Trump to vote against Ukraine's NATO membership.

Another important point for Putin is preventing any possible NATO military presence on Ukrainian territory. He also wants a new, Russia-friendly government in Kyiv.

In addition, Putin has repeatedly demanded that certain territories captured by Russian troops during the Ukraine war be permanently transferred to Russia. Putin likely expects Trump to provide assurances on this as well. — DW

CREW-10 MISSION

NASA astronauts return to Earth from ISS after five months

CALIFORNIA: Four astronauts from NASA's Crew-10 mission departed the International Space Station (ISS) on Friday aboard a SpaceX Dragon capsule, beginning an almost 18-hour journey back to Earth.

US astronauts Anne McClain and Nichole Ayers, Japan's Takuya Onishi, and Russian cosmonaut Kirill Peskov are set to splash down off California's coast in the Pacific Ocean at 3.33 p.m. UTC/GMT on Saturday.

The crew's return wraps up NASA's 10th commercial crew rotation. According to the space agency, the four astronauts conducted more than 200 "important and time-sensitive research" experiments over 146 days, including studies on plant growth and cell behavior in microgravity.

The Crew-10 mission was launched on March 14, replacing Crew-9, whose members includ-



ed Barry "Butch" Wilmore and Sunita "Sunni" Williams. Wilmore and Williams were stranded for nine months aboard the ISS after their Boeing Starliner capsule developed propulsion issues. Eventually, a SpaceX capsule owned by billionaire Elon Musk brought the stranded astronauts home. Wilmore retired this week after 25 years with NASA, the space agency announced.

Last week, US astronauts Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke, Japan's Kimiya Yui and Russian cosmonaut Oleg Platonov boarded the ISS for a six-month mission. — DW

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- Public Engagement Initiative
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SPORTS

Hasan Nawaz, Shaheen shine as Pakistan beat WI in series opener

Chasing 281, Pakistan crossed the finish line with seven balls to spare, ending on 284/5 in 48.5 overs

TAROUBA: A composed unbeaten knock from young Hasan Nawaz and a fiery spell from Shaheen Shah Afridi powered Pakistan to a comfortable five wicket win over West Indies in the first ODI at Trinidad.

Chasing 281, Pakistan crossed the finish line with seven balls to spare, ending on 284/5 in 48.5 overs. Nawaz, showing maturity beyond his years, scored a fluent 63 Not Out off 54 balls, peppered with five fours and three sixes. He found able support in Hussain Talat, whose unbeaten 41 off 37, laced with four boundaries and a maximum. Both of them stitched a partnership of 104 runs.

Skipper Mohammad Rizwan



crafted a steady 53 off 69 balls, which included four fours, while Babar Azam fell just short of a half-century with 47. For the hosts, Shamar Joseph was the pick of the bowlers, returning 2/65 in 9.5 overs.

Keacy Carty was the next to de-

part, after scoring 30. Opener Evin Lewis was the top scorer for the Windies with a 62-ball 60 runs, but was dismissed by Saim Ayub.

Captain Shai Hope (55) and Roston Chase (53) also made their half-centuries. In the end, Gudake-

sh Motie made a quick-fire 31 off 18 balls, but the Pakistani bowlers came back strong and dismissed them for 280 with an over in hand.

Pakistan seamer Shaheen Shah Afridi completed his 350 international wickets. He had a terrific

impact on this match as he led the charge with 4/51 in eight overs. He moved to 11th on Pakistan's all-time wicket-takers list with 351 scalps.

Naseem Shah was equally impressive, taking 3/55 in his eight

overs. **Brief scores:** West Indies 280 in 49 overs (Evin Lewis 60, e Shai Hop55; Shaheen Shah Afridi 4/51) vs Pakistan 284/5 in 48.5 overs (Hasan Nawaz 63*, Mohammad Rizwan 53; Shamar Joseph 2/65). **-ANI**

HEARTWARMING ASPECT

Relentless and promising: Siraj-Krishna-Akash step out of Bumrah's shadow

NEW DELHI : During the Team India's recently-concluded tour to England, which ended in a well-fought 2-2 draw, an extremely heartwarming aspect of the series was a raw, inexperienced and written-off pace attack consisting of Mohammed Siraj, Akash Deep, Prasidh Krishna stepping out of pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah's shadow and deliver something off note during the course of these five matches for themselves.

Before the series began, Bumrah's workload and him consequently playing three Tests was the hottest topic undoubtedly. After sustaining a stress fracture in his back during the backend of a massive 32-wicket Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Australia, India's beloved 'Jassi Bhai' had to be wrapped in cotton wool. It was a hard task to decide which Tests Bumrah was going to play given the unpredictability of the series and the 'Bazball-charge' that had kept Englishmen firing big runs since last three years or so.

In the first Test itself, Bumrah made an impact with a five-wicket haul. However, when Bumrah went wicketless during the second innings while defending 371 runs, it was Prasidh who had broken the partnership between openers Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett and struck twice. Shardul Thakur's golden arm also had Harry Brook and Duckett, but the pairing of Jamie Smith and Joe Root took England beyond the finishing line with five wickets in hand. While the match was lost and runs were leaked, there was some promise nonetheless.

This bubbling promise exploded during the Birmingham Test when Bumrah did not play. In reply to India's 587, Akash Deep removed Duckett and Ollie Pope while Siraj ended Crawley's stay at the crease. During the next day three, Siraj removed Stokes and Root quickly, reducing England to 84/5. While



Brook and Jamie smashed massive tons during their 303-run stand for the sixth wicket to avert an innings loss, Siraj still walked away with a six-fer to his name, while Akash Deep had a four-fer, ending England's innings at 407. When the target of 608 runs was set, Akash ran through the English top-order with the ferocity of a bull, delivering the 'Ball of the Series' (as per legendary Sachin Tendulkar) to dismiss Joe Root, which was pitched on attacking full length and nipped away, crashing into Root's bails. England was skittled out for 271, losing by a massive 336 runs. Akash walked with his head held high, securing the best-ever figures by an Indian in England with 10/187 and only second taffer by an Indian in England.

Siraj took a total of seven wickets, starting off England's second innings implosion.

Bumrah was back for the Lord's fixture and figures of 5/74, which included a key spell of him removing skipper Ben Stokes, centurion Root and Chris Woakes, marked a historic fifer for Bumrah, as he overtook Kapil Dev to register his 13th fifer away from home. England was all out for 387, and so was

India in their first innings. During the second innings, it was Siraj once again delivering a double whammy, packing up Duckett and Pope to reduce England to 2/42 before a Nitish Kumar Reddy full-length delivery tempted Crawley to drive, handing a catch to gully to Yashasvi Jaiswal. Bumrah took two more wickets, and spinner Washington Sundar bowled an amazing four-wicket spell to bundle out England for 192. However, India failed to chase down the total. India trailed 1-2.

The Manchester Test was not kind to Indian pacers, with Bumrah drawing his most expensive Test figures of 2/112. Debutant Anshul Kamboj and Siraj went at over four runs an over, getting just one a piece. The match ended in a draw.

The future of the Indian pace, at least for a while, hinged on the fifth and final Test at The Oval. After India was bundled out for 224, a fine spell in tandem from Siraj (4/86) and Krishna (4/62) reduced England from 142/2 to 247 all out, allowing for a slim 23-run lead. When 374 runs were set, England was in the driver's seat with Brook and Root having stitched a 195-run stand and making centuries. **-ANI**

ENGLAND ALL-ROUNDER

Emotions were running high: Chris Woakes on his batting despite shoulder injury

NEW DELHI: England all-rounder Chris Woakes spoke about his shoulder injury, which he got in the fifth and final Test against India in the recently concluded Anderson-Tendulkar Trophy and expressed disappointment at not being able to cross the line in the series decider.

Woakes' injury took place in the 57th over of India's first innings. Stretching to make a dive at the boundary to save a run, Woakes was seen in discomfort, holding his shoulder. The England pacer received immediate inspection from the team physio and was forced off the field.

In a video posted by Sky Sports, Woakes said, "When you have an injury like that, you think your game is done. And then, the closer it goes, it's always never a matter of whether I was going to be



out there or not. And it was just a matter of how I was going to approach it."

"Emotions were running high. I was hoping that we could get over the line with Gus at the other end

and I wouldn't have to face a ball, but not to be, unfortunately," he added.

Despite having a shoulder injury, Woakes came out to bat for England when they needed 17 runs to win the fifth Test alongside Gus Atkinson. However, he did not face a ball but was in serious pain while running in the middle.

Woakes' resistance eventually came to an end after Mohammed Siraj rattled Atkinson's off stump to seal India's six-run triumph. India's tour of England concluded on a dramatic 2-2 series draw on Monday at The Oval in London.

India defied the odds, rebuked the win predictions heavily favouring England and stood triumphant with a narrow six-run victory in front of a jam-packed crowd. **-ANI**

DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Olympic Council of Asia to open first Asian Games Virtual Museum in October

KUWAIT: The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) will launch the Asian Games Virtual Museum in October 2025, creating the first comprehensive digital archive of Asia's premier sporting competition.

Step inside stadiums where history was made. Walk through Olympic villages. Stand on podiums where champions were crowned. The museum spans seven decades of competition, available in dozens of languages including English, Arabic, Mandarin and Russian, ensuring fans across Asia can explore their sporting heritage whether browsing on a phone or diving into full VR.

"This museum tells the stories that shaped Asian sport," said Husain Al-Musallam, OCA Director General. "Every medal ceremony,



every record broken, every moment of triumph – they all find a home here. It's how we honor our athletes and share their achievements with the world."

The platform features interactive timelines tracking the Games' growth from 11 participating countries to today's 45 OCA member nations. Users can search the archive by sport, coun-

try, or athlete, with content available in multiple Asian languages.

Beyond entertainment, the museum serves educational institutions and researchers studying sports development across Asia. The OCA partnered with digital archivists and sports historians to ensure historical accuracy and cultural sensitivity throughout the collection.

LOCK HORNS

Crystal Palace eye second successive silverware as they clash with Liverpool



LONDON [UK]: FA Cup winners Crystal Palace will lock horns with Premier League champions Liverpool in the FA Community Shield 2025, which will be played at the iconic Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday.

Regarded as the curtain-raiser for the domestic English football season, the FA Community Shield is a one-off match that is held every year between the previous season's

Premier League champions and FA Cup winners.

After winning a record-equaling 20th English title last season, Liverpool will head into the Community Shield having bolstered their squad over the summer, as per Olympics.com.

They have signed Florian Wirtz, Hugo Ekitike and Milos Kerkez, aiming to add depth to their squad for the upcoming season.

Liverpool have won the Community Shield 16 times, with their last title coming in 2022. Crystal Palace, on the other hand, have never won the Community Shield. The Eagles won last season's FA Cup - a first in the club's history - after having fallen short twice before in 1990 and 2016.

They have been relatively quiet in the transfer market, roping in defender Borna Sosa and goal-

keeper Walter Benitez so far.

However, they will return to Wembley for the first time since their maiden FA Cup success as they bid to get their hands on more silverware, as per Olympics.com.

Liverpool dominates the head-to-head record between the teams, having won 36 of the 65 matches between the sides. Crystal Palace have 15 wins, while 14 encounters ended in draws. **-ANI**

TRADE, INVESTMENT PACTS
Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Foreign Trade, confirmed that the UAE, under the vision and directives of its wise leadership, continues to take firm steps toward strengthening its international partnerships and solidifying its role as a global hub for trade and investment.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



OMANTEL'S AI INITIATIVE
As part of its ongoing commitment to driving comprehensive and sustainable digital transformation in Oman, Omantel organised a specialised training workshop in Salalah, Dhofar, focused on artificial intelligence applications designed for people with visual impairments.

Asyad Shipping profit surges by 31% to OMR51.5 million

The company boasts a diverse fleet of more than 86 vessels, including very large crude carriers (VLCCs), container ships, bulk cargo ships, and natural gas carriers, with operations spanning more than 60 countries worldwide



ers, with operations spanning more than 60 countries worldwide.
Dr. Ibrahim bin Bakhit Al Nadhairy, CEO of Asyad Shipping, said that the company achieved strong financial and operational results in 2024, with net profits reaching OMR51.5 million (equivalent to \$133.9 million), recording a 31 percent growth compared to 2023. This reflects the company's efficient performance and flexibility in adapting to global market challenges.
He pointed out that the shipping market is expected to continue to be affected by global economic and geopolitical challenges this year.
In a statement to the Oman News Agency, he pointed out that revenues rose to OMR366.1 million

(equivalent to \$951 million), a one percent increase compared to last year, as a result of redirecting the investment portfolio towards fixed-term contracts, which contributed to enhancing financial stability.
He explained that the VLCC and petrochemical tanker sectors continued to be the main sources of revenue, contributing more than half of the total annual revenues.
The CEO of Asyad Shipping Company said that the company recorded a 28 percent growth in total profits to reach OMR105.9 million (\$275.2 million), while operating profits increased by 33 percent to OMR86.9 million (\$225.7 million), thanks to improved operational efficiency and optimal investment



of market opportunities, reflecting Asyad's commitment to the highest standards of performance and institutional excellence.
He stressed that Asyad Shipping continued its efforts to support local content during 2024, awarding local contracts worth more than OMR13 million (equivalent to \$34 million), with a clear focus on empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and enhancing their role in the national economy. It also contributed to providing 122 direct job opportunities for Omani seafarers, in addition to implementing training programmes to develop national competencies in the maritime sector.
He pointed out that the Omani-

sation rate at the company reached 90.6 percent, a step that reflects Asyad Maritime Transport's drive to build a qualified national human capital base that keeps pace with growth requirements and supports the achievement of the goals of Oman Vision 2040.
On the sustainability front, Dr. Ibrahim Al Nazairi explained that Asyad Shipping continued to implement low-carbon transportation initiatives, contributing to a 6 percent reduction in emissions and a 5 percent improvement in fuel efficiency compared to the previous year, as part of its efforts towards digital transformation and environmental commitment.
He pointed out that Asyad

Shipping is expanding its fleet by adding modern, technologically advanced vessels that meet global efficiency and sustainability standards. It is also developing its digital logistics system to enhance operational efficiency and provide innovative solutions to customers.
The CEO of Asyad Shipping Company stated that the company continues to invest in developing national talent through advanced training and qualification programmes, in parallel with expanding the application of environmentally friendly maritime transport technologies, thus enhancing its global standing and ensuring the long-term sustainability of its business. - **ONA**

STATISTICS

Marginal increase in Oman's natural gas production



MUSCAT: Oman's natural gas production, including domestic production and imports, witnessed a slight growth of 0.3 percent, reaching 2769 billion cubic metres by the end of June 2025 compared to 2760 billion cubic metres during the same period in 2024.
Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSD) showed that associated gas production increased by 11.4 percent by the end of June 2025, reaching 6.25 billion cubic metres, compared to 5.61 billion cubic metres during the same period in 2024.

In contrast, non-associated gas production (including imports) declined by 2.5 percent to 2143 billion cubic metres by the end of June 2025, compared to 2198 billion cubic metres by the end of June 2024. At the consumption level, natural gas consumption in industrial projects declined by 5.3 percent to 13.81 billion cubic metres by the end of June 2025 compared to 14.59 billion cubic metres for the same period in 2024.
Gas use in power plants increased by 1.6 percent to 7.28 billion cubic metres by the end of June 2025,

compared to 7.17 billion cubic metres by the end of June 2024. Data also showed that gas consumption in oil fields, including industrial zones and Oman mining and cement companies, grew by 13.1 percent, reaching 6.45 billion cubic metres by the end of June 2025, compared to 5.70 billion cubic metres during the same period in 2024.
Gas used in industrial zones grew by 9.4 percent, reaching 136 million cubic metres by the end of June 2025 compared to 124.30 million cubic metres during the same period in 2024. - **ONA**

REPORT

India's resilient domestic demand

NEW DELHI: India's strong domestic demand and the robust performance of its services sector will help cushion the economic impact of steep new US tariffs imposed as a penalty for continued imports of Russian crude oil, according to a report by Moody's Ratings.
The report however also said that, if India maintains Russian oil purchases despite the penalty, real GDP growth could slow by around 0.3 percentage points from its current forecast of 6.3 per cent for FY2025-26. - **ANI**

STOCK MARKET

Muscat Stock Exchange records its best level in 29 months

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange's main index hit its best level in 29 months at the end of Thursday's trading amid strong buying interest from local investment funds and institutions, as well as Omani investors.
The main index rose 68 points, closing at 4,849 points, its best level since March 30, 2023. Sectoral indices performed positively, led by the industrial index, which posted the highest gains, rising 150 points. The services index rose 28 points, the financial sector index rose 18 points, and the Sharia index rose 3 points, closing at 469 points.
These gains were driven by strong buying interest in a number of leading stocks, which continued their upward trend over the past week, posting new gains that were reflected in the stock market's indices. Trading value reached OMR129.8 million, a 31.3 percent increase over the previous week's OMR98.8 million. Transactions executed grew by 3 percent, rising from 10,384 to more than 10,700.
The market capitalisation of securities listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded gains of OMR269 million closing Thursday's trading at OMR29.4 billion.
During the week, prices of 42 securities rose, while the prices of 21 securities declined and 29 securities remained stable.
United Finance Bonds recorded the highest gains, rising by 11.1 percent to close at 80 baisas. Oman Refreshments also rose by the same percentage to close at OMR1. Al Jazeera Steel Products rose by



9.4 percent to close at 475 baisas. Dhofar International Development and Investment rose by 7.5 percent to close at 300 baisas. Gulf International Chemicals rose by 7 percent to close at 76 baisas.
Muscat Insurance was the biggest loser, falling 18.9 percent to close at 708 baisas. Oman Packaging declined 3.5 percent to close at 136 baisas. Gulf Hotels Oman fell 2.7 percent to close at 3,500 baisas. Sembcorp Salalah declined 2.5 percent to close at 155 baisas. Barka Desalination Plant declined 2.2 percent to close at 132 baisas.
Bank Muscat topped the most traded companies in terms of trading value, with transactions worth OMR35.2 million, representing 27.1 percent of the total trading value. OQ Basic Industries came in second place with transactions worth OMR29.8 million, while Bank Sohar International came in third with OMR16.8 million.

OQ Gas Networks came in fourth place with transactions worth OMR16.1 million, and OQ Exploration and Production came in fifth place with transactions worth OMR11.3 million, representing 8.7 percent of the total trading value.
In corporate news, Omantel and Ooredoo said in separate disclosures that the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has unified the royalty rate on mobile and fixed telecommunications services to 10 percent of revenues, with this amendment set to begin during the fiscal year 2025. Omantel said that reducing royalty expenses will have a positive impact on net profits for the first half of this year by OMR1.7 million after tax, while Ooredoo said that unifying the royalty will have a positive impact on the company's financial results for the current year by OMR2.5 million after tax. - **ONA**

MSX extends gains in weekly trading

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market continued its positive performance during the week, gaining 1.44% and marking its sixth consecutive session of growth, according to an analyst. "This solid momentum has brought the index near a two-year historical resistance level. The upward trend follows a strong Q2 earnings season that has bolstered the Omani stock market and supported most of the markets in the region," said Joseph Dahrieh, Managing Director at Tickmill.
Conversely, a decline in oil prices this week poses a potential risk to these accumulated gains should the downward pressure persist. "Economic and supply concerns drove the decline in oil prices. US tariffs continued to fuel worries about global growth and fuel demand, while Opec's unwinding of supply cuts raised concerns of an oversupply," said Joseph Dahrieh. "Additionally, easing geopolitical tensions between the US and Russia, evidenced by the



upcoming meeting between Presidents Trump and Putin, could trim the war-related risk premium, weighing on the market," he further added.
All sectors posted positive returns during the week. The Industrial sector was a primary driver, led by a significant surge in Gulf International Chemi-

cals, which climbed 7.04%. Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles also contributed with a solid gain of 1.64%. Meanwhile, OQ Base Industries, one of the week's most traded stocks, finished 0.70% higher.
The Services sector also saw robust growth, rising by 1.59%. Telecommunication stocks were bolstered by a recent decision from the regulatory authority to reduce the royalty rate on mobile telecommunications from 12% to 10%, a move expected to positively impact future financial results. Consequently, Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) and Ooredoo gained 0.9% and 0.4%, respectively. Other notable movers in the sector included Al Suwadi Power, which jumped 6.74%, and OQ Gas Networks, which increased by 2.67%.
The Financial sector recorded a more modest gain of 0.23%. Within the sector, Bank Muscat posted a solid advance of 4.03%, while Bank Dhofar rose by 0.79%. Madina Takaful also contributed to the sector's positive performance, closing the week 1.22% higher.

MARKET

Omantel hosts AI training to empower visually impaired

The workshop introduced participants to the latest AI-powered tools such as “Aira” and “Seeing AI,” which rely on computer vision and voice technologies to help users perceive their surroundings, read text, and navigate with confidence



MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to driving comprehensive and sustainable digital transformation in Oman, Omantel organised a specialised training workshop in Salalah, Dhofar Governorate, focused on artificial intelligence applications designed for people with visual impairments. This initiative formed part of Omantel’s broader community programs aimed at achieving genuine digital inclusivity and ensuring equitable access to technology for all members of society. It was also one of the company’s key contributions to this year’s Khareef Dhofar activities. The initiative reflected Omantel’s belief that technology is not an end but a means to empower people and expand their horizons. Its true value emerges when it serves those who need it most. People with visual impairments are an integral part of the community, and they deserve



equal opportunities to benefit from today’s digital advancements. The workshop introduced participants to the latest AI-powered tools such as “Aira” and “Seeing AI,” which rely on computer vision and voice technologies to help users perceive their surroundings, read text, and navigate with confidence. Participants received hands-on training on using these tools in their daily lives, from browsing the internet and reading documents to recognizing objects and currencies, as well as interacting with digital services. The program received strong engagement from attendees, who expressed their appreciation for the initiative and highlighted its importance in breaking down digital barriers, strengthening independence, and enabling them to participate more actively in the digital community. This initiative is part of Omantel’s broader strategy to integrate smart solutions into community programs by developing tailored initiatives that address the needs of underserved groups and by creating innovative models that ensure everyone can participate in the digital transformation journey. Over the years, Omantel has launched numerous technological and social initiatives targeting diverse segments of society, including students, low-income families, and rural communities. These efforts reinforce its pioneering role in using AI not only as a tool for innovation but also as a driver of sustainable development. Aligned with its strategic vision for comprehensive digital transformation, Omantel reaffirmed its commitment to continue developing similar initiatives targeting different groups, including people with disabilities, senior citizens, and school students in remote areas. The aim is to build an inclusive digital society where all individuals can benefit from modern technologies without barriers.

GLOBAL HUB

UAE to finalise ‘Eurasian Economic Union’ trade, investment agreements by year-end

ABU DHABI: Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Foreign Trade, confirmed that the UAE, under the vision and directives of its wise leadership, continues to take firm steps toward strengthening its international partnerships and solidifying its role as a global hub for trade and investment. He noted that today’s signing of a new Services and Investment Trade Agreement with the Russian Federation, complements the previously signed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), a bloc



that includes Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Belarus. Commenting on the broader negotiation landscape with the remaining EAEU member states, the UAE Minister of Foreign Trade noted, “This marks the second services and investment agreement following the earlier one with Belarus. The third agreement, with Armenia, has also been finalised. We expect to conclude negotiations with both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in the near future.” Dr. Al Zeyoudi said that he looks forward to finalising all five bilateral services and investment agreements with EAEU members

before the end of this year, thereby reinforcing the UAE’s comprehensive economic engagement with the Eurasian bloc. In statements to the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Dr. Al Zeyoudi noted that the second-of-its-kind agreement with Russia reflects the UAE’s expanding economic footprint in the EAEU region and focuses on liberalising and supporting strategic sectors, including financial and fintech services, business consulting, hospitality, logistics, renewable energy, and infrastructure development. These agreements aim to enhance investment flows and support the economic diversification strategies of both the UAE and its partner nations. He noted that UAE–Russia relations are witnessing significant growth, with non-oil trade between the two countries reaching about US\$11.5 billion in 2024, marking an increase of nearly 5% compared to the previous year. Data for the first half of the current year showed exceptional growth of up to 75% compared to the same period last year, driven by the overall expansion of economic relations. He noted that the agreement

with Russia builds on last month’s signing of the EAEU-wide CEPA, which provides for the liberalisation of 95% of total trade volume and 85% of tariff lines between the UAE and the Eurasian bloc. Dr. Al Zeyoudi highlighted the strategic importance of Eurasia as a priority trade expansion zone, noting its population of over 200 million people. He added that bilateral trade with the Eurasian bloc grew by 27% in 2024, reaching nearly US\$30 billion, a testament to the UAE’s forward-looking policy of economic openness and global integration. -WAM

TRADE

Trump tariffs: Did Swiss gold refiners fuel the crisis?

BRUSSELS: US President Donald Trump’s argument is straightforward: He believes trade partners of the United States benefit from broad access to the US market, while often restricting access to their own, creating persistent trade imbalances. In the case of Switzerland, Trump balked at the Alpine nation’s \$48-billion (€41.2-billion) trade deficit, which he said showed Swiss firms were “taking advantage” of the US. For that and the country’s apparent unwillingness to address the imbalance, he put a much higher tariff on Swiss imports than the European Union’s 15%. At 39%, the tariff rate is the highest among developed countries and may inflict major damage on trade with the US, Switzerland’s most important trading partner. Around 18% of Swiss exports crossed the Atlantic last year. Despite intense talks and a high-stakes visit to Washington by President Karin Keller-Sutter, Switzerland failed to clinch a framework deal like the EU, Japan or United Kingdom. Keller-Sutter couldn’t even get an appointment with Trump and instead met with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who doesn’t oversee trade policy, and walked away empty-handed. The tariff, which took effect on Thursday (August 7, 2025), hits luxury and consumer goods hardest, with watches, skin care and cosmetics products, precision instruments and chocolate expected to face large price rises in the US.

Why is Swiss gold the problem? The Swiss gold refining sector has drawn scrutiny because it plays a surprisingly big role in the economy, making the trade imbalance look much larger. The Trump administration has counted the billions of dollars of gold that passes through Switzerland every year in its tariff calculation. On the face of it, the Swiss make a fortune from refining gold from Africa, Asia, Australia and South America. More than 2,000



tons of gold are imported annually, much of it from intermediary banks in London, New York and elsewhere, and later reexported. Despite being the world’s largest gold refining hub, Switzerland’s gold sector is tiny, with just five major refiners employing around 1,500 people. While the value of the precious metal they are processing is huge, Swiss refiners say the profit they make on processing gold into bullion bars, investment-grade coins and precision parts for watchmaking, electronics and jewelry is tiny. Recent soaring demand for gold globally has also boosted refining in Switzerland, further distorting trade data. “While gold exports have received attention because they have surged this year, historically, Switzerland has run a trade deficit in gold with the US, so gold is not a key contributor to Switzerland’s structural trade surplus with the US,” Adrian Prettejohn, Europe economist at Capital Economics, said in a note. **Is Washington misrepresenting Switzerland’s gold trade?** The Swiss National Bank (SNB) has argued that gold should be excluded from Washington’s tariff calculation since refiners earn just a small fee for processing the metal. Most of the value comes from the gold itself, not Swiss labor or production, SNB said. Although the total value of Switzerland’s trade in gold to the US was worth more than \$36 billion in the first quarter of this year, the industry is making prof-

its of just a few hundred million dollars per year. The remaining trade deficit is mostly made up of the exports of pharmaceuticals, watches and precision-engineered goods. Simon J. Evenett, a professor of geopolitics and strategy at the Lausanne-based IMD Business School, told Bloomberg that “Gold is special,” as it “isn’t really manufactured in Switzerland. Processed is a better word.” Despite a call for gold not to be included in the trade balance data, Washington has yet to show any willingness to change course. **How has Swiss business community reacted?** Switzerland’s non-gold producers argue they will take the hit from the tariffs, even though they’re mostly not to blame for the imbalance. Business association Economiesuisse has urged the government to continue talks aimed at cutting the tariffs, which are likely to have a severe impact on economic growth. Hans Gersbach, an economist at the Zurich-based KOF Swiss Economic Institute, estimated that the levies would cut Swiss GDP by 0.3% to 0.6% over the next year, if they remained in place for long. Swiss products will soon be uncompetitive for US consumers versus similar goods produced in the EU or Britain, which clinched a 10% tariff deal. The London-based Capital Economics estimated that negotiators will likely bring the 39% tariff rate down, but that Switzerland would have to accept a higher rate than the 27-member EU bloc. -aw

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LIFESTYLE

HOW SUNSCREEN PROTECTS YOUR SKIN

It's summertime and you're likely spending considerable time outdoors, using sunscreen to prevent sunburn. But how exactly do these products protect our skin?

Skin cancers, of which more than 300,000 new cases are diagnosed each year, are preventable. And yet cases continue to rise, particularly in regions of the world where numbers have previously been low.

As well as avoiding direct sunlight and wearing protective clothing such as hats, long-sleeved shirts and pants, effective sunscreen products have been available for years. But as genuine concerns about product safety mix with myths and falsehoods on social media and elsewhere online, some people may move away from these cancer-preventing products.

"The most important thing that I always want to emphasise in any of the research I'm doing is the importance of using [sunscreen]," said Richard Blackburn, a materials scientist at the University of Leeds and Keracol Limited, UK, who researches and develops new sunscreens and skin products.

"We should be worried about skin, skin damage, DNA damage, skin aging, so the use of a sunscreen, if you're going to be out, is really, really important."

Ultraviolet light damages skin

Ultraviolet (UV) light is emitted by the sun, penetrates Earth's atmosphere and reaches the surface. And it's dangerous. "UV damages all living things," said Antony Young, a photobiologist at Kings College London.

UV is invisible but the damage it causes to humans when it's absorbed by the skin is obvious. Even a short-term

exposure to sunlight — sometimes less than half an hour — can cause sunburn.

There are two types of UV light: UVA and UVB

UVA is a longer wavelength form of ultraviolet and reaches deep layers of the skin. UVB usually penetrates the outer skin layers, such as the epidermis, and is the main cause of sunburn. Even people with darker skin tones need to be careful of UV. While natural pigmentation can provide a temporary guard against ultraviolet light, skin is skin, and damage can still occur after extensive exposure.

There are two types of sunscreens

In the 20th century, sunscreens were developed to reduce the harm caused by UV. They contain many ingredients but are generally divided into two categories based on their active properties.

One of these are "chemical" sunscreens. But scientists are trying to move away from that description because, after all, everything on our planet is made of chemicals.

The term they prefer is "organic sunscreen" because they contain carbon-based active ingredients. These molecules absorb and diminish UV rays when they hit the skin, helping to prevent sunburn. The other category is sometimes called "physical" or "natural" sunscreens. The active ingredients in these are chemicals too — but they aren't carbon-based. Instead, these use titanium or zinc oxide particles to provide a physical filter.

Both sunscreens absorb and block UV from penetrating and damaging skin. The radiation is released as heat.

While no sunscreen filters out 100% of UV, they are vital at blocking out an overwhelming amount of it. Sunscreens are rated using protective factor labels, abbreviated to SPF or UPP, indicating how much UV is filtered out.

SPF15, for example, filters away 93% of UVB radiation; SPF30 filters 97% and SPF50 filters 98%.

Sunscreen having a moment in the spotlight

Health authorities are increasingly vocal about the importance of using sunscreen, and general sun protection, to prevent skin damage and reduce skin cancer rates.

But these messages are also competing with claims, including ones circulated on social media, that sunscreen can do more harm than good. Some of these are falsehoods misrepresenting data. There are, however, also reasonable concerns about the safety profile of some chemicals that have been used in sunscreen for years.

While these have generally been considered safe, some long-approved substances like oxybenzone, avobenzone and octinoxate have been detected in the bloodstream, and may break down into toxic compounds.

The question scientists — and health regulators — are asking is, are these toxins enough to pose a danger?

"What matters is the dose," said Young. "This is also true with concerns

about sunscreen pollution into the oceans. The trouble is a lot of the toxicity studies are done with doses that are not going to be achieved, or [are] very difficult to achieve."

Among other recommendations from dermatologists and researchers are for consumers to pay attention to expiry dates, storage conditions and to avoid mixing different sunscreens at the same time. That includes cosmetics that have an SPF rating.

Blackburn's research has shown applying two different types of sunscreen products can diminish their protective benefits. "We found it actually can reverse the whole process by combining those [different sunscreens] together, and that's very counterintuitive," he said. "You would almost think you're layering and layering and you get better [protection]. It's not the case."

Do-it-yourself sunscreens are risky

Then there's so-called natural sunscreens that swap out certain lab-made molecules for naturally derived ingredients.

Rendered beef fat, commonly called tallow, has been marketed as one such product, while some homemade recipes and online blogs point to naturally derived oils and even certain supplements to provide protection.

But the SPF of these ingredients is usually negligible. Products marketed as "natural" will usually contain chemicals like zinc or titanium oxide to provide adequate protection.

Young warns against do-it-yourself sunscreens

"The thing about these homemade efforts is that you can't test them. Formulating a sunscreen is quite a technically tricky job to get it both cosmetically appealing, stable and also protective," he said.

Future of sunscreen could be plant-based

While most sunscreen chemicals, whether skin-absorbed carbon compounds or physical protectors like zinc are the current gold standard for SPF, scientists are finding new chemicals in nature.

Like many pharmaceuticals, chemical compounds evolved by plants, fungi and other animals could be harnessed to provide health benefits. "There are natural chemicals that have the potential to be protective," said Young. "And plants in particular produce chemicals to protect their DNA."

Labs like those run by Blackburn are trying to identify, isolate and produce such chemical compounds for use in sunscreens. It could reduce the reliance on lab synthesised chemicals in future sunscreens, though in places like the US, these would still need regulatory approval.

"Everything is chemistry," said Blackburn. "If we can understand from a chemical level and a mechanistic perspective what's working, we can actually improve [sunscreen], look to... plants that can provide the same function." -DW

High hopes on Carlos Queiroz as he begins his coaching assignment with Oman team

Queiroz is one of the most prominent coaches on the international stage, having coached major national teams such as Portugal, Colombia, Iran, and South Africa

MUSCAT: Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz will begin his coaching assignment with the Oman national football team, a move that holds great hope for the team's historic first qualification for the World Cup finals.

The team will play in the fourth round of the qualifiers, which will be held next October. Group A includes Qatar and the UAE, in addition to the Oman national team.

Queiroz is one of the most prominent coaches on the international stage, having coached major national teams such as Portugal, Colombia, Iran, and South Africa, in addition to serving as assistant to legendary Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United and coaching Real Madrid.

Sports analyst Hilal bin Salem Al-Mukhaini said: "There is no disagreement about the distinguished resume of coach Carlos Queiroz. He is a big name in the world of coaching, and possesses extensive and diverse experience with international teams. From this perspective, I see signing him as an important step for the national team, provided that this step is supported by hard work and sufficient time for the coach to implement his technical ideas."

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, he indicated that there are some reservations regarding the future work programme that the coach will present. Despite his extensive experience, Queiroz has not always achieved the desired goals in some of his previous positions. Although he led the Iranian national team to qualify for the World Cup finals twice, this in itself is not a sufficient measure, given that the Iranian team is accustomed to qualifying.

He added that the time remaining before the qualifiers is sufficient for any serious coach to build a comprehensive technical team, especially given Queiroz's solid track record and extensive experience in the qualifiers. "This is an additional strength, especially since he knows the teams we will face in the group and has previously worked in these environments," added.

He explained that there are real challenges, most notably raising the technical and physical level of the players, something that is currently not sufficiently available in our local competitions or in the clubs' training programmes. "Furthermore, the players' response to the coach's ideas must be swift, as time cannot tolerate delay. In this context, I believe that providing high-level international matches will be a decisive factor in helping Queiroz implement his programme and achieve his desired goals."

For his part, former international player Fawzi Bashir said: "The name Carlos Queiroz is well



known. He is a great coach with a long and successful experience in leading teams to the World Cup finals, such as the Iranian national team. He is also no stranger to the region, having worked with Gulf clubs and national teams, and this is an important positive factor, especially since we will be playing the play-off against teams from the same environment, which gives him an advantage in knowing the nature of the Gulf player and how to deal with him."

Bashir added: "Queiroz has a leadership personality and extensive experience in his coaching career, and he is - without a doubt - a qualitative addition to the national team at this stage. I believe that his selection was a good decision by the Oman Football Association, especially since the journey to qualify for the World Cup requires a great deal of integrated work from everyone, whether from the technical, administrative, or media staff, as well as from the fans. The greatest burden will also be on the players, and they undoubtedly realize the extent of the responsibility, and they will be up to the task."

He pointed out that the timing of the appointment was very appropriate, as it provides an opportunity to make up for lost time and prepare well. "We hope that this decision will be a positive turning point in the journey of Omani sports, and that it will contribute to the development of the national team technically, mentally and physically. The presence of Queiroz at the helm of the technical staff will benefit the players from his extensive experience. The main goal is clear, which is to reach the World Cup finals, in addition to developing a number of technical and physical aspects of our football system in general."

Sports journalist Walid bin Zaher Al-Abri explained that the move to hire Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz was necessary in light of the national team's below-optimal technical and physical performance in its last two matches.

He added: "The national team did not perform at the required level, technically and physically, against middle-ranking teams in Asia, and suffered a 3-0 defeat to Kyrgyzstan, a result that has not happened in the qualifiers since our loss to Qatar in 2001, despite facing major teams such as Iran, South Korea, and Japan."

He praised the move to hire Queiroz, saying: "When we talk about Queiroz, we're talking about a coach with a leadership personality and extensive experience. He has previously led national teams



on four different continents, and has also played 36 World Cup qualifiers with Iran. Although his recent experiences with Colombia and Qatar were not successful, his team Egypt reached the final of the Africa Cup of Nations with Egypt, losing on penalties. He also failed to qualify for the 2022 World Cup on penalties."

He explained that Queiroz is capable of bringing about a technical shift in the national team, but significant challenges await him, most notably getting to know the players, especially given that the league is suspended and the Omani national team's environment is different from that of previous national teams he has coached, such as Iran, Colombia, and Egypt, which have strong leagues and players who are professionals in

Europe.

He noted that the average age of the national team is high, which are challenges Queiroz must address. He also noted that Queiroz's defensive style may not suit Omani players, but play-off matches are won, not played for a draw. He expressed hope that the Central Asian Championship would help shape the starting lineup ahead of the matches against Qatar and the UAE.

National coach Nasser bin Mohammed Al-Hajri said: "The change was inevitable, even though the move carried some risk, especially given that our team's qualification for the play-offs was not convincing from a technical standpoint. We faced great difficulty until the final moments of our last match against Palestine,

and qualification was only decided by a penalty kick in stoppage time."

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, he pointed out that the most important question at this stage is: "Is Queiroz the most suitable? In my opinion, yes. He possesses sufficient technical experience and has previously led major teams to the World Cup finals. He also has a good understanding of the nature of the game in the Gulf region, which gives him an advantage, especially since our upcoming play-off matches will be against Qatar and the UAE."

He explained that Queiroz's biggest challenge currently is his lack of familiarity with the players, especially since the league is currently on hiatus, which could make it difficult for him to directly evaluate them. However, the presence of

national assistant coach Hamad Al-Azani, who has extensive experience and a thorough knowledge of the players, will be a key factor in facilitating Queiroz's task of selecting the most appropriate lineup during this sensitive phase.

Oman's national team will begin its first match in the fourth round of the qualifiers against Qatar, the host of Group A, on October 8 at Al Thumama Stadium in the Qatari capital, Doha. In the second match, it will face the UAE national team at the same stadium. This will be preceded by a training camp in Turkey, scheduled to start on August 20 and continue until the national team participates in the Central Asian Football Federation Championship, which will be the final preparation stage before the Asian play-offs.



Tourism gets a boost as players showcase their skills at Jabal Akhdar padel court



The game, played at dusitD2 Naseem Resort, has taken the world and Oman by storm with more athletes falling in love with this sport

Pankaj Kumar Sharma

MUSCAT: It was a maiden experience for Omani and other foreign players to play padel at such a high altitude in Jabal Akhdar.

Oman's top tennis players Fatma Al Nabhani and Khaled Al-Nabhani tried their hands at the padel court built on the sprawling campus of dusitD2 Naseem Resort.

While speaking about the popularity of this game in Oman and around the world, local player Khaled Al-Nabhani said: "It's very popular in Spain. The game gained a lot of traction. When it came to the GCC, people liked the game. It started spreading to other countries in the GCC. Now, it has reached Oman for quite a while now. Maybe you can say almost three years. What's cool about this game is that it's easy to play. It's easier to play than tennis. It's played in doubles. It's a lot of fun to play. It's a lot of fun to play and it's more friendly as a beginner to start playing very quickly and getting used to the game."

"Another thing that's cool about it is that it's very social. There are communities that have been built here. Like you see, we are here today in this event because of the



community and because we are coming to the hotel here. The community gathered and they came to have fun and play here. I think it's a very unique venue in particular because it's Jabal Akhdar. Now, we are playing on a higher altitude, so the ball is a little bit faster. That's kind of exciting for all of us to see what it's like to play at high altitude. Another thing, it's also very important for tourism to come and do such events in unique places like Jabal Akhdar."

He added: "We're here to have fun. I am originally a tennis player. I used to represent Oman in the Davis Cup in the GCC. We have a lot of achievements, such as the GCC championships, international tour, and international tournaments. After my career in tennis, padel brought back the competition feeling again because it's an easier game. It's more age-friendly. As an athlete, it was a blessing in a

way to keep competing in sports. It means that a player who knows tennis, it's easier for him to play this game. Yes, it's easier. That's an advantage that tennis players have in particular. I don't want to say it's a more high-skilled game. It's friendly for a tennis player to start. Now, as a tennis player, when they first start, the difference, I mean the rules are very close to tennis, but the only difference is the glass, the glass barrier surrounding the court."

"Tennis players, when they first move to padel, they struggle with the glass. They will need to get a lot of training and footwork coordination to get used to the rebound of the glass. If you're talking about ground strokes or volleys, it feels like home for tennis players. Of course, there's some variety in the shots that tennis players usually get used to very quickly."

When asked about the future

of this game in Oman, he said: "I think, like it started, it was booming all of a sudden. And that booming keeps continuing until today. A lot of clubs opened all over the country. You have from north to south of the country. And now you are here. So, padel is a game here to stay. It's getting popular across the world. The tournaments are being played more and more all over the court. And as I said, the number one thing for popularity, I think, is that it's a very friendly game and it's fun. It's a lot of fun to play."

Top Omani woman tennis player Fatma Al Nabhani has been playing padel for the past two years. "I was a professional tennis player. I represented my country and won a lot of tournaments. So, I started playing padel almost two and a half years ago. We were invited to come and play today here. We're very excited, to be honest. It's a nice experience. It's our first

time playing in a very high altitude padel. I've played tennis at a high altitude, but never in padel. So I'm excited, to be honest, and I'm happy that... I mean, I never expected that I would be playing padel in Jabal Akhdar."

Fatma said that a lot of women in Muscat are interested in padel. "They play some for fun, some competitive. So, I mean, I'm sure a place like this, when women come to visit Jabal Akhdar, they would love to sometimes play in a different environment, which is in weather, and altitude. So, it's a nice experience."

Fatma said that the game is gaining popularity and she hopes many professional tournaments will come up in the future.

Arsham, who came from Iran to Jabal Al Akhdar to play in the tournament, said: "The first time I tried this game, it was six years ago. I was living in Iran, I was playing

tennis, and my friend's dad established the very first court in Iran. He introduced me to the game. The first time I tried it, I fell in love with this sport. I remember I was wearing jeans and sneakers, when I went to the court. I really loved it. And since then, I couldn't stop playing. And after a while, I just stopped playing tennis, and I just totally got into padel."

"And after a while, I was in the national team, so everything was just like a professional player. But overall, what I love about this game is the rallies. You know, it's longer than tennis, you always have a second chance with the class," he said.

When asked about the more prize money in tennis, Arsham said: "If you want to compare tennis and padel, they're like whole different sports. Because, this sport is new to the world. Like now, there's a lot of investors and investments into this sport during the past few years. Tennis is way older. It has like more character and everything, but padel is new, so we need to give time to it. But for sure, it's going to reach tennis level."

The Iranian player said that his Omani friend texted him last week, and told him about this event.

"I knew about the place, and I was really looking forward to coming. And this was a really good opportunity to visit the place, Jabal Akhdar. It was a pleasure playing with my friends, and being present in this perfect place."

He said that he sees a bright future of this game overall, in the GCC, and especially in Oman. "I think it's useful, and it will help tourism as well. Especially for Oman, compared to other countries in the GCC, it has places such as this place, Salalah. There are a lot of attractions for tourism here and padel can help it develop as well. If you're going to have international tournaments in Oman, for sure it's going to be huge for tourism as well," he concluded.



ROUND-UP

Maseer, bp Oman empower Omani youth through ‘Discover Yourself’

The programme represented a wide cross-section of Oman's youth, from university students to job seekers, with a focus on engaging individuals from certain governorates such as Al Dhahirah and Musandam, with 107 total participants, in which approximately 50% were job seekers

MUSCAT: In partnership with bp Oman, Maseer concluded the first edition of its “Discover Yourself” youth development programme which was held in the mountains of Jabal Al-Akhdar.

The initiative gathered over 100 young Omanis from diverse backgrounds to engage in a transformative journey of self-reflection, leadership, and experiential learning.

The programme represented a wide cross-section of Oman's youth, from university students to job seekers, with a focus on engaging individuals from certain governorates such as Al Dhahirah and Musandam, with 107 total participants, in which approximately 50% were job seekers. “Discover Yourself” was designed to strengthen essential life and career skills such as teamwork, communication, leadership, and critical thinking, all within an immersive natural setting. Over the course of the programme, each participant rotated through various roles in group activities, and introduced them to health, safety, and environmental principles

(HSE), reinforcing the value of responsible decision-making in real-world settings.

Mohammed Al-Rawahi, CEO of Maseer, remarked: “The programme ‘Discover Yourself’ which was designed for jobseekers, sponsored by bp Oman, was an experience filled with challenges for us at Maseer in terms of preparation, implementation and reaching to the targeted audience. However, despite the challenges, we were able to achieve great results, overcoming the expectations whereby the engagement with the programme was huge and inspiring.”

Ibrahim Al Hinai, Social investment manager at bp Oman, Kuwait, and Qatar, added, “As Oman continues its march toward Vision 2040, initiatives like this stand as crucial platforms for youth empowerment, environmental stewardship, and national development. This programme supported many jobseekers and students in discovering their hidden strengths, building their confidence and skills, and realigning their goals and future pathways.”



FUTURE-READY INSTITUTION

SPECIAL OCCASION

Bank Muscat leverages innovation to enhance customer experience and drive digital excellence

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to customer-centric transformation, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to lead the way in adopting cutting-edge innovations and technologies that enhance service excellence and streamline operations across all channels. From AI-powered tools to automated workflows, the bank is continuously raising the bar in delivering smarter, faster, and more intuitive customer experiences.

Bank Muscat remains committed to being a future-ready institution, combining the strength of its workforce with the power of technology to drive excellence, trust, and long-term value for customers. At the heart of this strategy is a vibrant internal culture of innovation, where employees are empowered to challenge the status quo and put forward ideas that solve real customer pain points. Through dedicated innovation platforms and cross-functional collaboration, staff at all levels and across regions is encouraged to contribute to the Bank's goals of simplifying processes, anticipating customer needs, and delivering meaningful experiences across every touchpoint.

Bank Muscat continues to expand a broad portfolio of innovative initiatives designed to elevate service delivery, enhance



efficiency, and strengthen customer engagement. This includes investment in its mobile banking platform with new features rolled out regularly to provide comprehensive and intuitive banking services from the App. Also, the Bank has introduced tokenized card services, Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, QR payments, and soft POS solutions aimed at delivering secure, convenient, and future-ready payment experiences. Besides the comprehensive and intuitive banking services directly from the Mobile and Internet Banking, the Bank has a network of ATMs,

CDMs, instant card issuance kiosks, and statement printing machines offer customers easy access to banking services, reducing wait times and enhancing convenience.

The Bank is a leader when it comes to Corporate Ecosystems Integration. Through API-based solutions, the Bank enabled corporate customers to integrate banking capabilities directly into their operational systems. The Bank is also utilizing AI and robotic process automation across various functions to improve productivity, enhance decision-making, and support faster and more accurate

service delivery.

As the leading financial institution, the Bank is committed to continuously evolving its operations and services to meet the changing expectations of customers, businesses, and the wider economy.

Looking ahead, the Bank will continue to invest in the latest digital capabilities, and is exploring further initiatives in generative AI, predictive analytics, and omnichannel servicing aimed at ensuring seamless, personalized interactions that exceed customer expectations.

As a result, the Bank has earned the trust of the local, regional, and international community, winning several prestigious awards in various business fields, including leadership in the digital domain. The Bank received the Best Bank for Digital Solutions Award at the Euromoney Private Banking Awards 2025, the Best Digital Bank Award in Oman at the Euromoney Excellence Awards 2025, and the Best Bank for Communications and Digital Marketing Award from The Banker, as well as the Gold Award for Innovation in Digital Channels and another award for Enhancements to improve the security standards of digital channels at the Infosys Innovation Awards 2025. It also named the Best Brand in Customer Experience- Retail Banking by Times of Oman from Muscat Media Group (MMG).

Indian Social Club Oman to celebrate India’s 79th Independence Day with grandeur

MUSCAT: The Indian Social Club Oman is delighted to announce its 79th Independence Day celebrations, to be held on August 15, at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel's Oman Auditorium.

The event will be honoured by the presence of G.V. Srinivas, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, who will attend as the chief guest, accompanied by distinguished dignitaries. The event will begin at 7pm (Doors open at 6:30pm). The entry will be strictly by invitation only.

The evening's festivities will commence with a soul-stirring medley of patriotic songs, performed by ISC's talented Open Mic singers, accompanied by a synchronized visual background performance. This immersive tribute to the motherland will set the tone for a memorable evening. This will be followed by a spectacular array of cultural dance performances presented by various linguistic wings, showcasing the vibrant and diverse cultural heritage of India. These performances will embody the true spirit of “Unity in Diversity,” highlighting the rich cultural tapestry of the nation.

The evening will also feature the prestigious “Indian of the

The event will be honoured by the presence of G.V. Srinivas, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, who will attend as the chief guest

Year” award which would be conferred upon Dr. Avirat Vaishnav, recognizing his outstanding service and significant contributions to the Indian community in Oman.

This grand celebration promises to be an unforgettable evening of pride, culture, and community spirit, honouring the legacy of India's independence and celebrating the strong bonds between the Indian diaspora and the Sultanate of Oman.

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