

OMAN
Observer
DAILY

SUNRISE 06:47 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 05:27 AM

DHUHR 12:13 PM

ASR 03:14 PM

MAGHRIB 05:34 PM

ISHA 06:50 PM

2010000387405

POP THESE PILLS WISELY

INBRIEF

COMPLEX CONDITION IN BRAIN TREATED

A medical team from Khoula Hospital successfully performed an emergency intervention at Sohar Hospital to treat a complex case of a patient suffering from an abnormal tangle of cerebral arteries and veins, using advanced neurocatheterisation techniques. When admitted to Sohar Hospital, the patient was suffering from recurrent neurological symptoms that necessitated comprehensive examinations. Initial results revealed a complex cerebral vascular malformation, a rare and delicate condition requiring highly specialised intervention. Consequently, direct coordination was established with Khoula Hospital, being a specialised referral centre for such interventions, to develop a joint treatment plan to ensure the best possible outcome for the patient. [DETAILS ON P2](#)

Registration for ‘Together We Progress’ forum

MUSCAT: Registration for attending the fourth edition of the Together We Progress forum, organised annually by the Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers on the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, closes on Sunday.

This year’s registration stage witnessed widespread participation from a broad segment of the population.

The forum, scheduled to be held from February 8 to 9, 2026, aims to enhance community partnership in decision-making, foster effective communication between the government and society to overcome obstacles, discuss challenges and engage citizens in the development process.

It also aims to clarify the government’s directions and priorities at each stage and transparently inform the public about its policies, programmes and initiatives.

The Secretariat-General of the Council of Ministers will review and sort out the applications of those wishing to attend the forum according to criteria to achieve broad participation from various society segments from all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. Afterwards, citizens who have been selected to participate in the forum will receive SMS. — ONA

FIRST DIRECT FLIGHT FROM MOSCOW



Salalah Airport received the first direct flight by Oman Air arriving from the Russian capital Moscow, marking the commencement of seasonal direct air services between the two destinations with two flights per week. A reception was held at Salalah Airport to mark the occasion, under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, in the presence of dignitaries, officials and representatives of the aviation and tourism sectors in the Sultanate of Oman. The launch of direct charter flights comes within the context of the company’s strategy to develop key markets with promising potential and provide dedicated, direct air connectivity options that meet the aspirations of travellers.

[DETAILS ON P2](#)

THAI-CAMBODIA BORDER SILENT

Thailand and Cambodia ended weeks of fierce border clashes on Saturday with a second ceasefire in recent months in the worst fighting in years between the Southeast Asian nations. The ceasefire was holding, a Thai Defence Ministry spokesperson, Rear Admiral Surasant Kongsiri, said about two hours after it went into effect at noon (0500 GMT). “So far there’s been no report of gunfire,” he said. Cambodia’s Ministry of National Defence did not report any clashes after what it said had been a Thai air strike early on Saturday before the ceasefire announcement. The agreement ended 20 days of fighting that killed at least 101 people and displaced more than half a million on both sides. [DETAILS ON P6](#)

Russian drones and missiles pound Ukraine

Z E L E N S K Y - T R U M P M E E T I N G S E T F O R S U N D A Y I N F L O R I D A

RUSSIA PUMMELED

Ukraine’s capital with drones and missiles on Saturday as President Volodymyr Zelensky was headed to the US to meet with President Donald Trump. Zelensky said the attack showed Russia did not want to end its war launched in February 2022 that has left tens of thousands dead.

Ahead of Zelensky’s talks in Florida with Trump on Sunday, Russia said Kyiv and its EU backers were trying to “torpedo” a previous US-brokered plan to stop the fighting.

The barrage of drones and missiles killed two people, wounded dozens and cut power and heating to hundreds of thousands of Kyiv region residents during freezing temperatures, Ukraine authorities said.

Some 2,600 residential buildings were hit in the attack, as well as more than 300 schools, pre-schools or social services buildings, Kyiv mayor Vitaliy Klitschko said. Zelensky said some 500 drones and 40 missiles had pounded the capital and its surrounding region.

“Russian representatives engage in lengthy talks, but in reality, Kinzhals (missiles) and Shaheds (drones) speak for them,” he said.

Just as Zelensky departed for the US, Ukraine’s anti-corruption agency announced a new probe



Ukrainian rescuers recover a victim’s body from the rubble of a damaged residential building following Russian drones and missiles attack in Kyiv on Saturday. — AFP

in which it said some MPs were implicated. It tried to raid parliamentary offices but was blocked by security personnel.

During the Russian onslaught, which lasted 10 hours, AFP reporters in Kyiv heard loud explosions, some accompanied by bright flashes that turned the sky orange.

The Russian army said it used hypersonic missiles and drones to target infrastructure and energy facilities “used in

the interests of the armed forces of Ukraine”, as well as military sites.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said the attack left about 600,000 people without power while authorities said apartment blocks, a university dormitory and a petrol station had been among buildings hit. Neighbouring Poland, a Nato member, scrambled jets and put air defences on alert during the attack, the Polish military

Karwa’s minibus set to meet Oman’s public transport needs

MUSCAT: Karwa Motors announced the production of a new bus designed to meet the needs of mass transit with high efficiency, with a focus on performance and safety, as part of its efforts to enhance the automotive industry in the Sultanate of Oman, and keep pace with the demand for public transport vehicles.

The launch of the new bus comes as part of Karwa’s commitment to providing practical and safe transportation solutions that meet the requirements of government

agencies and institutions in the market. The bus, dubbed the ‘Karwa Minibus’ with a capacity of 14 passengers, was designed to meet various transportation requirements, with a focus on operational efficiency and safety. Dr Ibrahim bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Karwa Motors, said that the production of the new vehicle represents a new addition as part of the company’s plans to supply the industrial sector with products that meet the demand for mass transportation in Oman and for



The company believes in localising the mass transit vehicle industry.

export, noting that the production of the new ‘Karwa Mini Bus’ constitutes a step towards building a industry capable of meeting market needs with high efficiency and quality.

He added that the company believes that localising the mass transit vehicle industry is an important pillar for providing safe and reliable transportation solutions that meet the requirements of government agencies and institutions, stressing that the company is keen to ensure that its products are designed

according to operational standards that suit the work environment in Oman, with a focus on safety, reliability and operational efficiency.

The company pays great attention to after-sales services through a wide network that includes 23 service stations in various governorates of Oman, and is currently working on expanding its exports to about 10 countries including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Algeria, Iraq, Nigeria and Ethiopia, with future plans to export to Jordan, Egypt and Tanzania. — ONA

OMAN

SHORT TAKE



PATIENT GETS RELIEF FROM RARE BRAIN CONDITION AT SOHAR HOSPITAL

SUHAR: A specialised medical team from Khoula Hospital successfully performed an emergency intervention at Sohar Hospital to treat a complex case of a patient suffering from an abnormal tangle of cerebral arteries and veins, using advanced neurocatheterisation techniques.

When admitted to Sohar Hospital, the patient was suffering from recurrent neurological symptoms that necessitated comprehensive examinations. Initial results revealed a complex cerebral vascular malformation, a rare and delicate condition requiring highly specialised intervention. Consequently, direct coordination was established with Khoula Hospital, being a specialised referral centre for such interventions, to develop a joint treatment plan to ensure the best possible outcome for the patient.

The procedure was performed at Sohar Hospital using neurovascular catheterisation, a precise therapeutic technique performed through the blood vessels without the need for traditional surgical intervention.

The operation was successful, and the medical team was able to treat the vascular malformation with high efficiency, resulting in a significant improvement in the patient's condition.

Dr Ali bin Khalfan al Balushi, Senior Consultant in Neurology and Interventional Neuroradiology at Khoula Hospital, said that this success reflects the advanced level of healthcare services in the Sultanate of Oman and highlights the importance of integrated work among healthcare institutions in exchanging expertise and complementing roles to ensure the provision of specialised and safe healthcare for patients.

He added that such cooperation contributes to raising the efficiency of national medical professionals and enhancing the utilisation of available resources and technologies in various healthcare institutions across the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

Municipality launches dedicated site for food trucks

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 27

Muscat Municipality has opened a new, devoted food truck site in Al Mawaleh as part of its “Masar” initiative, aiming to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and bring better organisation to street vending.

The project provides a regulated, fully serviced space for food truck operators, with designated parking, shaded seating areas and access to essential utilities, creating a vibrant and organised environment for mobile food vendors.

Officials say the site is designed to improve both business opportunities for entrepreneurs and visitor experiences.

The Sohar International Bank has played a key role



in delivering the project through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme. The Bank contributed 25 fully equipped food trucks, enabling aspiring entrepreneurs to launch their businesses with minimal startup costs. The initiative is part of the municipality's broader efforts to foster entrepreneurship and improve urban planning.

Oman Air’s flights to bring more tourists from Russia

STAFF REPORTER
SALALAH, DEC 27

SALALAH Airport received the first direct flight from Oman Air arriving from the Russian capital Moscow, marking the commencement of seasonal direct air services between the two destinations with two flights per week. A reception was held at Salalah Airport to mark the occasion, under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, in the presence of dignitaries, officials and representatives of the aviation and tourism sectors in the Sultanate of Oman.

Ahmed bin Ali al Mahrouqi, Regional Vice-President for Sales at Oman Air, said that the launch of direct charter flights between Moscow and Salalah comes within the context of the company's strategy to develop key markets with promising potential and provide dedicated, direct air connectivity options that meet the aspirations of travellers.

He added that the Russian market is vital for Oman Air, noting that this service will facilitate tourist access to Dhofar Governorate, support tourism as well as boost local business growth during the tourist season.

Al Mahrouqi explained that these seasonal flights are expected to attract at least 7,000 visitors to Salalah in the inaugural season thus positively impacting the hospitality sector, tour operators and local businesses across the governorate.

He emphasised that this service embodies Oman Air's vision of enhancing Salalah's position as a leading global tourism and leisure destination. This step is a significant



Children welcome Russian tourists at the Salalah airport on Saturday. — ONA

milestone in Oman Air's strategy to boost year-round tourism to Dhofar Governorate and expand its air connectivity with high-growth international markets.

Oman's rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and scenic landscapes attract Russian tourists. The visa waiver agreement signed in April this year will further boost tourism cooperation.

Between January and July, 41,128 Russian tourists visited Oman – an 87 per cent increase on the 21,991 who arrived during the same period in 2024. The figure is particularly striking given that the total number of Russian arrivals for the whole of last year stood at 44,618, suggesting that 2025 will set a new record.

This growth is the result of promotional strategies in Russia. In 2024, Oman established a tourism representative office in Moscow

to promote the country's diverse attractions. The office collaborates with airlines, travel agencies and local operators to design packages tailored to Russian travellers.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has also intensified its participation in major Russian tourism fairs and launched extensive media and awareness campaigns.

This year, it has arranged familiarisation trips for leading Russian tour operators and journalists, and concluded nine agreements with partners in the Russian market.

Promotional campaigns in Moscow and other major cities include advertising on public transport, digital platforms and curated media coverage showcasing the richness of the Omani experience.

‘Privacy is a luxury in hyper connected world’

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, DEC 27

In this social media era, privacy is a luxury and it is at the mercy of someone else, observes Dr Fatma bint Abdullah al Maqbaliyah of University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS).

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the Artificial Intelligence Security Conference held under the auspices of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Dr Fatma said, “Privacy has become a luxury, and keeping our personal details confidential from others has become a story of the past as one's personal data is exposed to many places. In today's world, we need to safeguard them for our sake.”

She believes that it is very easy to get the personal data of any person and if you want to connect with anyone, you have an ample number of apps to find out the whereabouts of the person.

VIRTUAL WORLD
“Today, every gadget is connected to the other. One's air conditioner is connected to the phone. Gadgets, washing machine, cooker, and even Alexa all are connected to your phone. Guess, a one-year-old child utters ‘google’ along with ‘mama’ or ‘baba’ as her first words. This shows how much they are exposed to social media just as we are used to and they cannot be detached from the virtual world,” she adds.

The solution is, according to Dr Fatma, not to let others know your life whereabouts, your travel



details, and your shopping data, as your card details can be easily extracted from the wallet, and your kids names, etc should be kept secret from the public platforms. Keep one's personal account, name, data, and other personal information private.

“It is always better to have a preventive measures before any cyber attack happens.

“Phishing is on the rise due to the fact that Omani nationals are very kind and they are vulnerable to cyber attacks by opening the links and sharing the personal details on phone, especially from senior citizens. Sometimes, you get a message to open a photo and there you are. You will soon be subject to a cyber attack which has been on the rise since the introduction of AI,” said Dr Fatma.



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SHORTTAKES



Offenders may face imprisonment up to two years

PENALTY, JAIL FOR OFFENCES AGAINST DISBALED PERSONS

MUSCAT: The Public Prosecution has warned that any act of violence, exploitation, abuse or degrading treatment that undermines the dignity, reputation or honour of persons with disabilities constitutes a criminal offence punishable by law.

In a post on X, the prosecution said offenders may face imprisonment for up to two years, a fine of up to RO 3,000, or both, in accordance with Article 68, read together with Article 15 of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The offence covers a wide range of abusive conduct, including physical or psychological harm, exploitation and any form of ill-treatment directed at individuals with disabilities, whether in private or public settings.

The Public Prosecution stressed that the legislation reflects Oman’s commitment to protecting vulnerable groups and safeguarding human dignity, calling on society to uphold respect, inclusion and equal treatment for persons with disabilities.

Authorities urged the public to report any violations, reiterating that preserving the rights of persons with disabilities is a legal and moral responsibility shared by all members of society.

The Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is aimed at ensuring empowerment, integration and participation in sustainable development. The law guarantees persons with disabilities full rights without discrimination, in line with national policies and international agreements. It seeks to promote equal opportunities across education, employment, health and social participation.

UTAS LAUNCHES THE HORIZONS MAGAZINE

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 27

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) has released the second issue of its quarterly magazine “Horizons”, published by the University’s Communication and Media Department.



The issue features a rich collection of topics, reports, interviews, exploratory articles, and analytical studies.

This comes as part of the UTAS efforts to strengthen its media and knowledge presence, highlight its academic and research achievements, and keep pace with its future aspirations in education, innovation and community service as a leading educational institution and an active partner in achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The second issue, published in December

2025, features a rich collection of topics, reports, interviews, exploratory articles and analytical studies. It also addresses several distinguished academic programmes offered by the University, foremost among them the Bachelor of Applied Biotechnology, which embodies the UTAS orientation toward education linked to research and application, and reflects its commitment to aligning educational outcomes with the requirements of sustainable development. In addition, the issue reviews the University’s experience in leveraging education and scientific research to employ creative industries.

Responsible social media enhances social stability

EXPERTS say that honesty, objectivity, truthfulness, sense of responsibility and conscious engagement with societal issues through media outlets and social media platforms are key principles for handling social media platforms.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s emphasis, during his meeting with the chairman and members of the State Council Bureau, on the importance of dealing with societal issues and existing challenges, and conveying accurate and appropriate messages on social media.

This, His Majesty said, represents a firm approach to promoting effective communication, enhancing transparency and clarifying the efforts exerted and the achievements and gains made at the national level.

Specialists and stakeholders emphasised that upholding these principles when addressing issues raised in the media and on social media platforms is of paramount importance given the diverse and often irresponsible nature of cyberspace.

Dr Sabra bint Saif al Harasiyah, an academic and educational researcher, stated that engaging with mainstream media and social media platforms is no longer an isolated, individual matter.

The impact of words in today’s world may impact social harmony and reshape collective consciousness. Every digital interaction, no matter how minor, contributes to the algorithms of dissemination and participates, whether consciously or unconsciously, in amplifying the impact of content within society.

She added that the media content does not exist in a vacuum but rather within a social and cultural environment influenced by a multitude of posts and other contents. Therefore, addressing this



Digital media platforms are subject to the Media Law issued by Royal Decree No 58/2024



“The Basic Law of the State is the constitutional framework for freedom of expression in the Sultanate of Oman. Article (35) stipulates that freedom of opinion and expression is guaranteed, but it explicitly restricts it with the phrase ‘within the limits of the law.’

HAMOUD AL MUKHAINI Lawyer

issue becomes a collective responsibility, because repeated individual behaviour transforms into a phenomenon which may change the contours of public discourse.

She emphasised that the Omani society is known for its balanced discourse and respect for different opinions.

This balance is reflected in the measured use of language and the skilful management of disagreements, in contrast to the harshness and polarisation prevalent in some digital spaces. This balance is not based on suppressing opinions or avoiding discussion, but rather on managing differences wisely.

Rashid bin Abdullah al Shaithani, a public opinion researcher, stated that responsible communication fosters trust, reduces the gap between the government and society and limits the spread of misinformation and inaccurate news among members of society. This, in turn, strengthens communication, social cohesion, and stability, raises the level of

public awareness, establishes a culture of dialogue and respect for differing opinions, and contributes to enhancing national unity and social stability.

He explained that the government institutions in the Sultanate of Oman have adopted a philosophy of community participation in decision-making through dialogues, enhancing government communication with the community and organising forums and this helped in planning and making decisions.

Hamoud bin Abdullah al Mukhaini, a lawyer, said: “The Basic Law of the State is the constitutional framework for freedom of expression in the Sultanate of Oman.

Article (35) stipulates that freedom of opinion and expression is guaranteed, but it explicitly restricts it with the phrase ‘within the limits of the law.’

This phrase reflects the legislator’s philosophy of establishing freedom of expression coupled with responsibility and restricted by law.

It should be noted that this restriction does not empty freedom of its content, but rather sets controls that protect public order and state security, the dignity and rights of individuals and preserve the sanctity of private life.”

He noted that digital media platforms, such as news accounts, are supposed to be licensed by the Ministry of Information, and therefore, in carrying out their activities, they are subject to the Media Law issued by Royal Decree No 58/2024.

In principle, they are subject to the general restrictions on content, especially that which leads to misinformation, or the publication of what is officially prohibited, or that violates public morals, according to Article (4) of the Media Law. — ONA

Forum explores the future of interdisciplinary education

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 27

The second edition of the Research Projects Forum at Higher Education Institutions commenced at Sultan Qaboos University under the theme “Transformations in STEAM Education in the Digital Revolution Era: Interdisciplinary Innovation and Empowerment for a Sustainable Future.”

The forum was jointly organised by the Oman Mathematics Committee and the Research Group for Innovation and Excellence in STEAM Education, with the participation of a distinguished group of academics, researchers and specialists in STEAM fields. The event was held under the



The forum was jointly organised by the Oman Mathematics Committee and the Research Group for Innovation and Excellence in STEAM Education.

auspices of Dr Sana bint Sabeel al Balushyah, Member of the State Council and attended by a number of faculty members, educators and researchers.

The forum underscores the importance of keeping pace with rapid digital transformations in STEAM education and highlights its pivotal

role in reshaping learning systems and strengthening interdisciplinary integration. It seeks to empower teachers and students with future-ready competencies in line with the requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Sustainable Development Goals. The

forum also serves as an active academic platform for the exchange of expertise, the presentation of research and applied experiences; and the discussion of contemporary global practices and their potential application within local and Arab contexts.

In his opening remarks, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Ghafri, Member of the Oman Mathematics Committee, emphasised that investment in education is a fundamental pillar for building a generation capable of engaging with modern technologies and the challenges associated with them. He highlighted the importance of advancing the education system to ensure its relevance to

contemporary demands and stressed the need to support high-quality research projects that contribute effectively to achieving sustainable development goals and strengthening the role of education in comprehensive national development.

Dr Mohammed Shahat delivered the address on behalf of the Research Group for Innovation and Excellence in STEAM Education at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, College of Education. He noted that the forum stems from a firm conviction that STEAM education represents one of the most important strategic approaches to educational development.

SPOTLIGHT



POP THESE PILLS WISELY

AHMED
AL KAABI

INDISCRIMINATE USE of painkillers, especially Brufen (ibuprofen), may harm certain patients, warns the Ministry of Health (MoH). These medicines must be used only after a doctor's advice. According to studies, it may also cause antibiotic resistance if used for a long time and without medical advice. As part of its ongoing efforts to enhance awareness in the community, the ministry published educational material through its official platforms aimed at promoting a culture of safe medication use under the slogan "Leading and Sustainable Health for All."

Brufen is known for its anti-inflammatory properties, making it a common choice for treating a variety of medical conditions. It is typically used to relieve joint and muscle pain, toothache and post-surgical pain, in addition to easing symptoms of colds and influenza.

Health guidelines indicate that the usual dose for adults and children aged 12 years and above ranges between 200 and 400 mg as needed. Despite the widespread use of Brufen as an analgesic, caution is required when using Brufen in individuals with asthma, as the medication may, in some cases, exacerbate respiratory symptoms, making it essential to consult a doctor before use. It is also advised to avoid its use in patients with stomach ulcers or gastric irritation, due to the potential for increased

gastrointestinal irritation or the risk of bleeding.

The uncontrolled use of Brufen may affect kidney and liver function, particularly when taken for long periods or in high doses. Those facing kidney or liver ailments must strictly avoid self-medication.

The MoH warned against using the medication in children under one year of age except under direct medical supervision that determines the appropriate dose and method of use.

Dr Muna Mohammed explained that Brufen is considered a safe medication but the risk lies not in the drug itself but in misuse or overdose. She stated that individuals should not regard painkillers as simple medications that can be taken without regulation, as the random use of Brufen may lead to health complications, particularly among patients with gastrointestinal, kidney, or asthma conditions.

She stressed the importance of adhering to prescribed doses and avoiding the combination of Brufen with other medications from the same class without consulting a doctor.

She also called for immediately discontinuing the medication if any unusual side effects appear and consulting a physician to assess the condition.

She said medication awareness is a fundamental part of preventive healthcare, stating that adherence to medical instructions significantly contributes to achieving therapeutic benefits and avoiding risks.

Brufen is used to relieve joint and muscle pain, toothache and post-surgical pain, in addition to easing symptoms of colds and influenza

The usual dose for adults and children aged 12 years and above ranges between 200 and 400 mg as needed

The random use of Brufen may lead to health complications, particularly among patients with gastrointestinal, kidney, or asthma conditions

The uncontrolled use of Brufen may affect kidney and liver function, particularly when taken for long periods or in high doses

SHORT TAKE



The actors are demanding, among other things, payment for rehearsals and full health insurance coverage

GREEK THEATRES SHUT AS ACTORS RESUME STRIKE

ATHENS: Most theatres were closed in Greece on Saturday during one of their busiest time of the year as actors seeking better pay went on strike for the second time this month. The actors are demanding, among other things, payment for rehearsals and full health insurance coverage.

“We will no longer tolerate working with unpaid and undeclared rehearsals, with contributions calculated by the hour, and with shows that are set up and dismantled at the whim of the employers,” according to the SEH actors’ union.

A protest rally was planned on Saturday evening in central Athens. Musicians as well as other theatre employees were also striking. For their part, theatre employers stated in a press release that “all basic demands have been fully met.” — AFP

Ukraine anti-graft agency raids parliament offices

UKRAINE’S anti-corruption agency said security services tried to prevent officers from raiding parliament offices on Saturday, as investigators said some MPs were implicated in a new graft probe.

The anti-corruption detectives were later allowed into the heavily guarded compound where the parliament is located, Ukraine’s State Security Department said on Facebook.

Ukraine has been embroiled in a string of corruption scandals that led to the resignation of the chief of staff to President Volodymyr Zelensky, including a \$100 million kickback scheme in the battered energy sector, masterminded by an alleged personal friend of the president.

“NABU and SAPO, following an undercover operation, exposed an organised criminal group that included current members of parliament,” the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) said, referring to the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office.

“Employees of the State Security Department are resisting NABU officers during investigative actions in committees of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine,” it added, referring to Ukraine’s parliament.

The anti-corruption agency did not reveal details of the investigation, but said suspects took bribes for votes. The investigation became public as Zelensky departed for talks in the US about efforts to formulate a plan to



Ukraine has been embroiled in a string of corruption scandals that led to the resignation of the chief of staff to President Volodymyr Zelensky, including a \$100 million kickback scheme

end the war, and after Russia sent scores of drones and missiles against the capital Kyiv, killing one and wounding dozens.

The corruption scandals have triggered widespread public anger at a time when Russia is hammering Ukraine’s power grid, causing blackouts and threatening winter heating outages.

These challenges come at a critical time for Zelensky, who has remained popular and largely unchallenged since Russia invaded in 2022.

The US is pushing Zelensky to cede territory and hold elections during war, amid

a mounting Russian offensive in the east of the country. The Ukrainian president had in the summer tried to strip the independence of Ukraine’s two key anti-graft agencies, NABU and SAPO, established after a pro-Western revolution in 2014.

This had triggered rare wartime anti-government protests and forced him to walk back the decision after criticism from the EU, Kyiv’s key financial and military backer. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has been plagued by frequent corruption scandals — with graft and rule-of-law major vulnerabilities in Kyiv’s EU bid. — AFP

Coal plant closure risks exodus

PTOLEMAIDA: Mayor Panagiotis Plakentias fears what will happen to the town of Ptolemaida and the surrounding region when the last of the brown coal power plants in northern Greece close next year.

He said that eight out of 10 young people who leave the region to study never come back and it risks “turning into Detroit”, the US city devastated by the collapse of the car industry.

Western Macedonia has for decades been the centre of Greece’s brown coal mining industry that fed its lignite-fired power stations.

But now with power plant closing “unemployment is rising and the jobs that are being cut aren’t being replaced”, said Plakentias, further crippling a region with the country’s highest jobless rate.

Its last two brown coal plants will close next year, with the one in Ptolemaida being converted to run on natural gas, as Greece moves



A vehicle is operating during an excavation at an interrupted lignite-fired power plant, near Ptolemaida, in northwestern Greece. — AFP

away from highly-polluting lignite in a sweeping transition towards renewable energy. Three men who will soon lose their jobs sipped their coffee as they looked at the chimneys of the doomed electricity station at nearby Agios Dimitrios, which will close in May.

“The lignite monoculture has been both a blessing and a curse for the region,” one said emphatically. “On the one hand, it has provided work for most people for decades, but the local economy’s dependence on it has been so great that it makes us feel there’s no tomorrow.” Public power company PPC has promised

more than five billion euros of investment in solar panel parks, data centres and energy storage units in the region over the next three years. But the head of the local council, Ilias Tentsoglidis, said he sees no sign of these projects as he condemned what he called “brutal de-lignite-isation”.

Many locals want the land back that was expropriated by PPC years ago to mine the low-grade brown coal so they can farm it again.

“Our villages are emptying and, in the region’s most fertile plain, we’re sowing glass and concrete,” said Tentsoglidis in a tilt at the solar farms.— AFP

ONE DEAD AS STORM BATTERS SWEDEN

One person died on Saturday in Sweden after being caught under a falling tree, authorities said, as a storm battered Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute issued alerts for strong winds in the northern regions as Storm Johannes hit the country. The one fatality was near the Kungsberget ski resort. — AFP

MOORE STEPHENS LLC
NOTICE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF LIQUIDATION OF APPLUS LLC
(AS APPEARED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE NO 1627)

Moore Stephens LLC, announces the liquidation process of Applus LLC, bearing commercial registration number 1583573, in accordance with the decision taken by the Company’s Shareholders on 7 December 2025. The liquidator alone have the right to represent the Company under liquidation before third parties, and all parties are to confirm with the liquidator for all matters concerning the company’s business at the following address:

Office No. 41, 4th Floor, Building No. 1022, Way No. 1013; Al Walaj Street, Al Qurum
P.O. Box 933, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24061000, Email: liquidation@moore-oman.com

By this announcement, the liquidator calls the company’s creditors to submit their claims against the company, together with the supporting documents, to the above address within 180 days from the date of publishing this announcement for the first time, and any debtors should settle the company’s rights with the liquidator on the address above.

Moore Stephens LLC
Official Liquidators of Applus LLC
(Under voluntary liquidation)

وزارة الصحة
Ministry of Health

Announcement

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ before 10:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) Per set
4869/2025/ MOH/ HQ-405	Maintenance Works at Directorate General of Health Services in South Al Sharqiya	01-01-2026	28-01-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board Third	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4872/2025/ MOH/ HQ-406	Provision of Loading and Unloading Services for Nizwa Medical Store at Al Dakhiliyah Governorate	01-01-2026	04-02-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4884/2025/ MOH/ HQ-407	Maintenance Works in Bukha Hospital at Musandam Governorate	01-01-2026	04-02-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board Excellent, First	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4885/2025/ MOH/ HQ-408	Maintenance Works in Khasab Polyclinic at Musandam Governorate	01-01-2026	04-02-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board Excellent, First	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4886/2025/ MOH/ HQ-409	Provision of Students Transportation for Higher Institute for Health Specialties	01-01-2026	28-01-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4887/2025/ MOH/ HQ-410	Supply of Pharmaceutical (Gastrology) for the Royal Hospital	08-01-2026	28-01-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4888/2025/ MOH/ HQ-411	Supply of Surgical Items(TPN) for the Royal Hospital	08-01-2026	28-01-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4889/2025/ MOH/ HQ-412	Provision of Landscaping and Maintenance of Irrigation System for the Gardens of HQ and Drug Safety Center	04-01-2026	04-02-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4894/2025/ MOH/ HQ-413	Providing of Transportation Services for Medical and Non-Medical Supplies from the General Directorate of Medical Supply at Dhofar Governorate to Various Health Establishment within the Governorate	05-01-2026	04-02-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4903/2025/ MOH/ HQ-414	Printing and Supply of Medical Forms and Health Programs to Various Health Facilities	08-01-2026	04-02-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	• SME: 10 • LO: 25
4909/2025/ MOH/ HQ-415	Supply and Installation of Roof Waterproofing for Headquarters Building	29-12-2025	07-01-2026	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board First,Second.	• SME: 10 • LO: 25

- Tenders should be submitted on line on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200 , Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



France President Emmanuel Macron

CONFIDENCE IN FRENCH PRESIDENT HITS ALL-TIME LOW

PARIS: The French people’s confidence in President Emmanuel Macron has reached an all-time low, according to a new survey. Only 25 per cent of respondents to a poll conducted by the research company Toluna-Harris Interactive and LCI news said they trusted the 48-year-old leader to pursue good policies for the country.

According to the data, released on Friday, this is the lowest level since Macron took office in 2017. The president already reached this level once in October. A total of 1,099 people took part in the online survey on December 22 and 23.

The so-called political confidence barometer is surveyed every month.

Compared to November, Macron’s popularity fell by four percentage points.

His ratings have hovered below 30 per cent for months amid growing pressure, mainly stemming from national challenges. Despite lengthy wrangling, the highly debt-burdened country still does not have a proper budget for the coming year. This week, parliament passed a stopgap solution.

In September, the government collapsed due to protests over austerity measures proposed by then prime minister François Bayrou. — dpa

US-BACKED AIR STRIKES IN NIGERIA HIT TWO CAMPS



A general view of destroyed structures in Offa caused by debris from expended munitions that fell from US strikes on unspecified IS fighters in Nigeria. — AFP

LAGOS: US-backed air strikes in Nigeria hit two IS-linked camps in the Bauni forest of Sokoto State, targeting foreign fighters infiltrating from the Sahel, the Nigerian government said.

The strikes carried out on Thursday were approved by President Bola Tinubu and launched from maritime platforms domiciled in the Gulf of Guinea, after extensive intelligence gathering, operational planning, and reconnaissance, the information ministry said in a statement.

US President Donald Trump announced on Truth Social on Thursday that US forces had launched a strike against IS fighters in northwest Nigeria at the request of Nigeria’s government. He said the group had been targeting Christians in the region.

“A total of 16 GPS-guided precision munitions were deployed using MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial platforms, successfully neutralising the targeted ISIS elements attempting to penetrate Nigeria from the Sahel corridor,” the Nigerian government statement said. — Reuters

SAUDIS THREATEN ACTION AGAINST YEMEN GROUPS

SANAA/CAIRO: Saudi Arabia on Saturday called on Yemen’s southern fighters to withdraw from territory they recently seized, and threatened action against them.

Earlier this month, forces aligned to the Southern Transitional Council (STC) took over large chunks from the government in the provinces of Hadramaut and al Mahra, which together make up around half of Yemen’s territory.

The STC and the government have been allies for years in the fight against Ansar Allah.



A man holds a People’s Republic of South Yemen flag on the 58th anniversary of National Independence Day in the port city of Aden. — AFP File

On Saturday, the Saudi Defence Minister Khalid bin Salman called on the STC to “give a precedence to the voice of reason, wisdom and unity” by handing over sites their forces recently seized in the eastern provinces of Hadramaut and al Mahra.

“The regrettable events since the start of December 2025 in both provinces have led to a division in the ranks against the enemy,” the Saudi official said in a post on the social media platform X.

— dpa

Thailand and Cambodia reach immediate ceasefire

THAILAND and Cambodia agreed to an ‘immediate’ ceasefire on Saturday, the two countries said in a joint statement, pledging to end border clashes that killed dozens of people. The European Union called on both sides to implement the truce “in good faith”, while UN human rights chief Volker Turk hoped it would lead to more permanent peace.

At least 47 people were killed and more than a million displaced in three weeks of fighting with artillery, tanks, drones and jets, according to official tallies.

The conflict spread to nearly every border province on both sides, shattering an earlier truce for which US President Donald Trump took credit.

Cambodia and Thailand agreed to the ceasefire that took effect at 12 pm, said the statement signed by the Southeast Asian neighbours’ defence ministers at a border checkpoint on the Thai side.

The truce applies to “all types of weapons, including attacks on civilians, civilian objects and infrastructures, and military objectives of either side, in all cases and all areas”.

Both sides agreed to freeze all troop movements and to allow civilians living in border areas to return home as soon as possible, the statement said. They also agreed to cooperate on demining efforts and combatting cybercrime, while Thailand is to return 18 captured

Both sides agreed to freeze all troop movements and to allow civilians living in border areas to return home as soon as possible



Cambodia’s Defence Minister Tea Seiha and Thailand’s Defence Minister Nattaphon Narkphanit during a special General Border Committee meeting at a border checkpoint, in Chanthaburi province, Thailand. — Reuters

Cambodian soldiers within 72 hours.

Thai Defence Minister Nattaphon Narkphanit said that initial three-day window would be an “observation period to confirm that the ceasefire is real”.

He called the truce “a door to a peaceful resolution” in a speech earlier. Displaced Cambodian Oeum Raksmei said she was “very happy that people can return home” if the fighting stops.

“But I dare not return home yet. I am still scared,” said the 22-year-old, who has sheltered with her family in Cambodia’s Siem Reap province.

On the other side of the border, 55-year-old Thai village head Khampong Lueklarp was similarly cautious. “I personally think the ceasefire won’t really happen,” said the head of Ban Ta Sawang

Samakkee village in Sisaket province, adding he hoped for “a real peace”.

The ceasefire came after three days of border talks convened following a crisis meeting of foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), of which both Cambodia and Thailand are members. EU foreign affairs spokesman Anouar El Anouni thanked “Asean for playing a positive part” and said the European bloc was ready to provide any support that was needed.

“The EU welcomes the ceasefire agreement signed by Cambodia and Thailand and calls on both sides to implement it in good faith,” he said in a post on X. The United States and China also pushed for an end to the fighting. — AFP



MYANMAR ELECTION PREPARATIONS

Election Commission officials prepare at a polling station inside a school ahead of a general election, in Thingangyun Township, Yangon. Myanmar heads to the polls on Sunday as it battles a civil war that has ravaged parts of the country as well as one of Asia’s worst humanitarian crises. Already one of Southeast Asia’s poorest countries, Myanmar has been hammered by a conflict triggered by a 2021 coup in which the military ousted an elected civilian government led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. — Reuters

VIETNAM ROAD TRAGEDY

Vietnam bus crash kills nine



A bus overturned and crashed in northern Vietnam, killing nine people and injuring another nine, state media reported. Most of the 18 passengers were teachers from Hanoi on a charity trip to Lao Cai province, where the accident occurred on a long downhill stretch in Phinh Ho commune. Rescue workers used specialised equipment to pry survivors from the wreckage. Local authorities were investigating the cause of the crash, it said. — AFP

FINAL FAREWELL

Bodies of Libyan crash victims flown home



Türkiye sent the remains of Libya’s chief of staff and his delegation back home following a military ceremony in Ankara. Top officials, including Turkish Defence Minister Yaar Güler and the chief of staff, joined Libya’s ambassador and grieving relatives at the ceremony at Ankara’s Mürted Air Base. The private jet carrying the delegation back to Tripoli after defence talks in Ankara crashed, killing all five passengers. — dpa

SEARCH ON

Spanish family missing after boat sinks



A Spanish family of four is missing after a tourist boat sank in Indonesia. The vessel was carrying 11 people when it sank in the Padar Island Strait near the popular destination of Labuan Bajo, Antara said. Seven people including two Spanish tourists, four crew members and a tour guide were rescued. A search for the remaining four was continuing. The Labuan Bajo port authority attributed the sinking to high waves of up to 3 metres, Antara said. — AFP

After Bondi massacre, a moment of unity. Then, bitter partisanship



YAN ZHUANG

The writer is the NYT reporter based in Seoul

In the hours after the massacre at a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi Beach in Sydney last week, it seemed that Australia's leaders had come together to offer a bipartisan response, as they had done for many past catastrophes. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urged unity, describing the assault on the Jewish community as an attack on every Australian. Sussan Ley, the leader of the conservative opposition, offered the government her party's "full and unconditional" support. That unity quickly broke down. Opposition leaders seized on mounting anger in the Jewish community, where many say that Albanese's centre-left government had not acted enough on their warnings of a dangerous rise in antisemitism over the past two years. Days after the shooting, some of Albanese's political opponents blamed him and his government for the mass shooting. Others attacked members of his government for not attending funerals for the 15 people killed and dismissed his move to tighten Australia's gun laws as a distraction from the issue of antisemitism. Albanese fired back, saying that his government had appointed Australia's first antisemitism envoy and passed legislation to criminalise hate speech. And, he noted that he had condemned the apparent antisemitic

motivations behind the attack. Scenes like this would not be out of place in the charged political landscape of the United States. But the speed at which a horrific event has turned into bitter partisanship has been unusual in Australia, where politics gravitates toward the centre, lawmakers typically have little incentive to fan the flames of emotion, and the political class tends toward consensus in moments of crisis. "I've not seen a moment of national tragedy so quickly turned to partisan political advantage as has happened here," said Mark Kenny, the director of the Australian Studies Institute at the Australian National University. The massacre and its aftermath fell along existing political fault lines in Australia. Even before the Bondi shooting, Albanese's government had faced criticism for not quickly addressing a series of recommendations from his antisemitism envoy — which included setting up a national database for antisemitic incidents and allowing the government to withhold funding from universities that fail to act against antisemitism — though some rights groups had described them as overreaching. Hours after the December 14 attack, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel directly linked it to that decision. "You let the disease spread and the result is the horrific

It is the biggest political challenge Albanese has faced since he won reelection in a landslide victory in May. And it has galvanized the conservative side, which has in recent months been wracked by infighting

attacks on Jews we saw today," he said. Although Ley has not gone as far as Netanyahu, the opposition leader has accused Albanese and his government of letting antisemitism fester. On Monday, Ley accused the government of not engaging enough with those in mourning, and launched a scathing tirade against one minister, who she said she had not seen "shed a single tear." The anger directed at Albanese has been such that he has not attended the funerals of those killed in the attack, even while other leaders, including Ley, have. On Sunday, when thousands gathered at a memorial at Bondi Beach to mark one week since the attack, some in the crowd booed Albanese, who did not speak. It is the biggest political challenge Albanese has faced since he won re-election in a landslide victory in May. And it has galvanised the conservative side, which has in recent months been wracked by infighting. The bloodshed at Bondi Beach was the deadliest mass shooting in Australia since 1996, when a gunman killed 35 people in the state of Tasmania. The prime minister at the time, John Howard, a conservative, enjoyed bipartisan support as he quickly enacted strict gun control laws that are celebrated to this day. — The New York Times

Surviving El Fasher atrocities



IVOR PRICKETT

The writer has been a regular contributor to NYT since 2017

The capture of the city of el Fasher in late October marked a bloody milestone in the nearly three-year conflict in Sudan. The Rapid Support Forces, the paramilitary group battling the Sudanese army in a catastrophic civil war, took control of el Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state in western Sudan, handing the RSF almost total control of the region. As it tore through the city, the RSF embarked on a killing spree. Aid groups reported widespread accounts of violence. One chilling video verified by The New York Times shows a fighter executing a survivor of the violence as he begs for his life. The United Nations' migration agency estimates that 100,000 people have fled el Fasher since its collapse. That would leave more than 150,000 people still unaccounted for. No one knows the true toll of the massacre, and the city remains closed to the outside world, although some aid has started to reach other parts of Darfur. One of the few ways to report on the siege is by travelling to refugee camps in eastern Chad, now home to about 900,000 displaced Sudanese from Darfur and other parts of the country.



Sudanese refugees return at dusk to Oure Cassoni refugee camp, having collected dry grass used for thatching and building huts, in Chad.

Only days before el Fasher fell to the RSF, Manahil Ishaq, 35, sent her 14-year old son, Rami, out to look for some food. Rami was not gone long before he was critically wounded in an explosion, his mother said. Neighbours brought him back to the family home. "He couldn't speak or say anything," Ishaq recalled. "His belly was out and his

bones were fractured." As more fighting erupted, Ishaq, who was three months pregnant at the time, prepared to flee. Rami was still alive, she said, but she knew he would not survive his wounds. "I told him that I wished him forgiveness and well-being, in this life and the hereafter," she recalled. Then she left.

Through tears, Ishaq recounted her escape from el Fasher and month-long journey to the Oure Cassoni refugee camp in eastern Chad. While sitting outside the dusty, rundown hospital in the camp, she said her brother was killed as the family fled. Ishaq said she was shot in the back by a sniper. Miraculously, the baby she is carrying survived, and she reached the camp with her other children. Adjusting to the harsh conditions of the camp has not offered her much relief. Oure Cassoni is one of the most remote camps in Chad. It was founded by the government of Chad in 2004, when tens of thousands of people fled Darfur to escape mass killings led by the Janjaweed, the group that was the precursor to the Rapid Support Forces. The camp has doubled in size over the past year, but support from Chad and international aid have not kept pace with its needs. Mustafa said he and four of his friends, all in their late teens and 20s, knew they had to leave el Fasher. He recalled watching four members of his neighbour's family be executed by RSF fighters as the group took over the city. He requested that only his first name be used for fear of his safety.



VALERIE HOPKINS

The writer is the Moscow Correspondent at The New York Times

NOBEL LAUREATE BLINDFOLDED

Just days ago, Ales Bialiatski, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, was blindfolded, bundled into a car and driven from a notorious penal colony in his native Belarus to Lithuania's border. There, his blindfold was untied. Bialiatski had been serving a 10-year sentence on charges of smuggling and financing public disorder, accusations widely seen as politically motivated. Suddenly, he was free. "It is like jumping out of a room where there was no air," the veteran human rights campaigner said in an interview on Friday in Vilnius, six days after his release after having served nearly half his

sentence. "You have such oxygen intoxication, your head starts spinning immediately." The organisation Bialiatski founded, Viasna, tracks the conditions of political prisoners in Belarus, population 9.5 million. After he was freed December 13 along with 122 other prisoners, it determined that 1,103 were still languishing in jail. Bialiatski's release came about after an envoy for President Donald Trump met Belarus' president, Alexander Lukashenko, and announced that the United States would lift sanctions on the fertiliser potash, one of Belarus' largest

sources of cash. Also released were Maria Kolesnikova and Viktor Babariko, two of Belarus' top opposition leaders. Bialiatski, 63, expressed profuse gratitude for his freedom, but said he felt he had been "trafficked" as part of a transaction — released only when there was economic gain for Belarus. In prison, Bialiatski worked in a carpentry shop at Penal Colony No 9, in the eastern Belarus city of Gorki, doing manual labour for eight hours a day. He had to lift and move wood scraps from the workshop, which, according to reports from Viasna, produces pallets for the Russian military, among other things.

Tender Announcement

Oman Housing Bank

Oman Housing Bank (OHB) invites qualified and experienced companies to participate in a tender for the implementation of an API Gateway Solution, as part of the Bank's ongoing digital transformation and system integration enhancement initiatives.

RFP No.: RFP -08-12-25	
Interested vendors are invited to submit their technical and commercial proposal in accordance with the requirements and specifications outlined in the Request for Proposal (RFP) document.	
Proposal Submission Deadline:	Submission Address:
Wednesday, 7th January 2026	Oman Housing Bank – Head Office, Ruwi Ground Floor – Corporate Support Services Department
Tel	
24775800	

Proposals received after the specified deadline will not be considered.

Interested bidders may obtain the RFP document and further details through the Bid Bid Channel.

BidBid Support Team – contact information
Email: info@bidbid.tech, Mobile number: 93338889

OPINION

Closing the year with lessons on strength and self-growth



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

AS We reach the end of the year, I find myself reflecting on my personal and professional journey. I think about what I achieved, what remains unfinished and what lessons have shaped me. This year, I decided to share some of the wisdom I have gathered through reading and listening to people’s stories in my clinical work.

We often equate psychological strength with being unbreakable — immune to pain, disappointment, or failure.

Many people confuse resilience with emotional numbness: “If I feel nothing, nothing can hurt me.” But this belief is inaccurate and harmful, cutting us off from the experiences that help us grow.

In my clinical practice, I often meet individuals who have spent years waiting for rescue.

They wait for the right person, the perfect opportunity, or a sudden change that will finally put their lives in order. Support and compassion are essential, of course. Yet there is an uncomfortable truth we all must face: no one is coming to save us from our inner struggles.

Responsibility for healing, growth and direction ultimately lies with you. Once we stop waiting for rescue, we inevitably encounter discomfort, and this brings us to our uneasy relationship with pain.

We live in an age obsessed with comfort, quick solutions, instant relief and constant distraction. Any unpleasant emotion is treated as something to be silenced. Yet pain is not always an enemy. Failure, loss and disappointment are often our most powerful teachers.

Psychological growth rarely happens when everything is easy; it happens when life challenges us, and we choose to learn rather than collapse. Avoiding pain at all costs may feel safe, but it quietly builds emotional fragility.

Equally important is understanding the limits of control. Many people exhaust themselves trying to change their partners, colleagues, parents, or even entire systems.

This struggle usually ends in frustration and resentment.

The truth is simple but difficult to accept you cannot change people who do not want to change. You’re either accepting

For many people, resilience is confused with emotional numbness. This belief is not only inaccurate but also harmful, as it disconnects us from the experiences that help us grow

them as they are with awareness or stepping away with dignity. Anything else is emotional self-sabotage.

Fear of judgement is another silent prison. Many dreams die not because they are impossible, but because people worry too much about what others might say. Ironically, most people are far too busy dealing with their own insecurities to analyse your life as you imagine. When self-worth becomes dependent on external approval, decisions lose authenticity.

Finally, there is a crucial distinction between emotions and values. While our feelings are important signals, we need to remember that they are not instructions. Feeling afraid does not mean you should stop. Feeling unmotivated does not mean you are weak.

True resilience is not about becoming a rock-rigid, cold and unfeeling, but more flexible, adaptive and shaped by circumstances.

As this year closes, perhaps the goal is not to avoid falling, but to learn how to rise again and again with a little more wisdom each time. Not harder. Not colder. But wiser, kinder and more alive.

WHEN BRITAIN SLEEPS, MIGRANTS KEEP WORKING

AKSHATA KAPOOR

“We are ghosts on the night shift,” said Leandro Cristovao from Angola, who has worked the graveyard shift at a south London market for seven years. In the last decade, Britain’s nine million-strong nighttime workforce has become increasingly reliant on migrants like Cristovao as the number of UK-born workers doing night work shrinks.

“You have a lot of night work carried out by migrant night workers in, somewhat unfairly named, low-skilled sectors,” said Julius-Cezar Macarie, a sociology professor at University College Cork. “Their work is very, very essential, because they maintain this... 24-hour society,” said Macarie, whose “Nightwork Footprint” project researches the invisibility of the shift.

Amid the raging debate in the UK about the number of migrants and irregular immigrants, those not born in the UK are twice as likely to work nights as those born in the country, according to official data from 2022. In the health and care sector, over a third of night workers are migrants.

As the sun rose on a chilly morning in central London, Roxana Panozo Alba walked against the tide of suited-up bankers whose offices she spent the night cleaning. The 46-year-old and her team, most of whom are migrants, clean toilets, kitchens, conference rooms and over 500 desks from 10 pm to 7 am.

She said she gets paid the London Living Wage of \$18.47 per hour. Alba, originally from Bolivia and a Spanish citizen through marriage, moved to the UK with her husband because “there was no work left in Spain”. She has worked nights for eight years to be with her kids, aged six and 15, in the day, and because she does not speak English, limiting her opportunities.

“Working at night is not good, it damages your health,” said Alba. “You have to sleep (in the day), but you can’t. The slightest noise and you can’t get to sleep.” Omatule Ameh, 39, is an overnight support worker for children with learning disabilities in rural southeast England. He moved there from Nigeria in 2023 on a care worker visa.

During the day, Ameh looks after his own eight-year-old and 18-month-old while his wife works at the care home. Sometimes, he gets only three hours of sleep. “You find that emotionally, mentally, it’s taking a gradual toll on you,” said Ameh, who earns the minimum wage, around £12.20 an hour.

Judith Munyonga, 44, from Zimbabwe works from 7 pm to 7 am four days a week, caring for patients with spinal cord injuries in Hertfordshire. “I’ll try to play music in one of my headphones to keep myself awake. When it’s dark, I tell you, it’s not easy,” said Munyonga. — AFP

Why schools must act early against drugs

THERE

Is a rapidly growing problem of illegal drug use in Oman. Denial is dangerous because once drug use takes hold among the young, it rarely loosens its grip without lasting damage. Preventative action in the earliest stages is urgently needed; the earlier the better. Silence is perceived as consent. Thus, schools in Oman carry a heavy responsibility. They are among the first places where changes in behaviour can be noticed. Experience from Western societies shows that drug dealers approach even very young schoolchildren, who are easily influenced. However, schools must be careful: drug warnings founded solely on fear soon lose their force.



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former School Principal and Author



Youngsters are especially vulnerable because judgement, concentration and emotional balance are still forming

Early and decisive action is far less costly than attempting prevention too late. What is urgently needed, especially for parents and children, is a confidential drug hotline that can be accessed for guidance without fear of social stigma or repercussions

The experience of North America and Europe offers a stark warning. There, widespread drug availability has contributed to rising addiction, increasing overdose deaths and the decline of once-stable communities.

Drug dealers are everywhere, health services struggle with long-term physical and psychological harm, families fracture and crime increases. Youngsters are especially vulnerable because judgement, concentration and emotional balance are still forming.

Exposure to drugs at this early age can cause lasting impairment: academic failure, school dropout, mental illness and long-term dependency.

Government action must therefore be firm and consistent. Drug trafficking thrives where enforcement is weak or uneven. Strong border controls, intelligence-led policing, police departments dedicated to arresting drug dealers and swift prosecution send a clear message that trafficking will not be tolerated.

While users require rehabilitation rather than punishment, those who profit from supplying drugs must face severe penalties. Delay and

denial allow the problem to grow quietly until it becomes deeply entrenched. Rumours that illegal drugs in Oman are sold mainly by non-Omani residents must be treated with caution. Assigning blame on the basis of nationality distorts justice and weakens enforcement. Responsibility must be determined by evidence and applied impartially to all involved: Omanis and expats.

Waiting for unmistakable signs is often waiting too long. International evidence also indicates that vaping devices are sometimes used to consume illegal drugs discreetly, increasing the need for awareness at home and in schools.

Protecting Omani youth requires coordinated effort rather than isolated gestures. Families, schools and authorities must act together. Oman’s stability has been built patiently over generations.

Allowing illegal drugs to spread would place that inheritance at risk. Early, decisive action remains far less costly than prevention attempted too late. What is needed immediately, especially for parents and their children, is a drug hotline which can be called for advice without fear of social repercussions.

Oman’s diplomats ‘punching above their weight’



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

TO Celebrate 2025 and the promise for 2026, I want to focus on a rarely seen facet of Oman's burgeoning global identity, which is the quality and respect held for its diplomatic service. A diplomat is said to have patience, subtlety, persistence and tact, or as Robert Frost once observed, “One who always remembers a woman’s birthday, but always forgets her age,” which may well be flippant, yet is also truly diplomatic.

More academically, the 17th-century French scholar Blaise Pascal wrote, “Diplomacy is the art of saying things in such a way that those to whom we speak may listen with pleasure,” and Ronald Reagan determined it to be a “subtle and nuanced craft.”

There is too the historical comfort of the diplomatic service's Latin motto 'ex amicitia pax', to be interpreted as “peace through understanding.” Here, I have chosen to reflect upon three examples of those who demonstrate the strength, eloquence and resilience of the Omani diplomatic service abroad.

In the United States, a new appointee as Oman's Ambassador to the United States of America has been Talal bin Sulaiman al Rahbi, who presented his credentials to President Donald Trump at the White House in July 2025, following his March appointment. With global tariffs being implemented by President Trump to remedy the US trade balance deficit and revitalise its economy, these levies also appeared to

have a vindictive profile. However, with the Sultanate of Oman having had a Free Trade Agreement with the US since 2009, its diplomats and advocates have secured a 10-per cent tariff, which is modest compared to other nations.

It must be incredibly difficult to, as Rudyard Kipling wrote, “Keep your head about you when others are losing theirs.” Yet, in America today, its ‘Homer Simpson-esque’ politics, fearmongering, dystopian utterances, and where religion, race and colour have again become issues, Oman has a voice, and a presence that exemplifies its best qualities.

Across the Atlantic, Bader bin Mohammed al Mantheri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom, oversees the UK/Oman Comprehensive Agreement (2019) on cultural and educational development between the two societies, so distant and different.

It promotes post-graduate study opportunities, partnerships between universities, British Council language, cultural and study programmes, and research and development partnerships.

Add to this the positive trade and tourism outlooks, and Oman's role in global peacekeeping and conflict resolution; with the ongoing Arab–Israeli conflict in Gaza and the Russia–Ukraine “stalemate” still unresolved, there is clearly much for the London-based diplomatic service to occupy itself with. In both critical diplomatic offices, the skills of diplomacy must be

As such, the diplomatic service of Oman has performed with quiet distinction throughout 2025 and looks certain to maintain its high standing in the diplomatic community in 2026, continuing to ‘punch far above its weight’

almost immeasurable. It can't be easy, for example, being a Muslim in a country where the very word is used to inspire fear, to look and speak differently, to be seen differently, and to be the object of the West's misconceptions. Yet, these two come from a long line of political appointees to serve Oman so well.

In another, quite different diplomatic environment, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, or Unesco, Samira bint Mohamed al Moosa, appointed as Oman's Ambassador and Permanent Delegate in 2011, represents Oman with growing distinction. A graduate of the University of Southern California, her career began at Sultan Qaboos University, where she played a key role in the foundation of its Child Care Centre.

Since assuming her Unesco office, Al Moosa has been at the forefront of several of its more influential committees, especially in the areas of fiscal responsibility and human resources and is also proving a staunch advocate at the highest level for children's rights, women's rights and social equality. In doing so, Al Moosa displays the finest qualities of Oman's society, compassion, respect and faith.

As such, the diplomatic service of Oman has performed with quiet distinction throughout 2025 and looks certain to maintain its high standing in the diplomatic community in 2026, continuing to ‘punch far above its weight.’

WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR ZAPORIZHZHIA N-POWER PLANT?

PAVEL POLITYUK

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe’s largest, is one of the main sticking points in US President Donald Trump’s peace plan to end the nearly four-year war between Russia and Ukraine. The issue is one of 20 points laid out by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in a framework peace proposal.

Russia took control of the plant in March 2022 and announced plans to connect it to its power grid. Almost all countries consider that it belongs to Ukraine but Russia says it is owned by Russia and a unit of Russia’s state-owned Rosatom nuclear corporation runs the plant.

Zelensky stated at the end of December that the US side had proposed a joint trilateral operation of the nuclear power plant with an American chief manager.

Zelensky said the Ukrainian proposal envisages Ukrainian-American use of the plant, with the US itself determining how to use 50 per cent of the energy produced. Russia has considered joint Russian-US use of the plant, according to the Kommersant newspaper.

The plant is located in Enerhodar on the banks of the Dnipro River and the Kakhovka Reservoir, 550 km southeast of the capital Kyiv.

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has six Soviet-designed reactors. They were all built in the 1980s, although the sixth only came online in the mid-1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It has a total capacity of 5.7 gigawatts, according to an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) database.

Four of the six reactors no longer use Russian nuclear fuel, having switched to fuel produced by then-US nuclear equipment supplier Westinghouse. After Russia took control of the station, it shut down five of its six reactors and the last reactor ceased to produce electricity in September 2022. Rosatom said in 2025 that it was ready to return the US fuel to the United States.

According to the Russian management of the plant, all six reactors are in “cold shutdown.”

Both Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of striking the nuclear plant and of severing power lines to the plant.

The plant’s equipment is powered by electricity supplied from Ukraine. Over the past four years, these supplies have been interrupted at least eleven times due to breaks in power lines, forcing the plant to switch to emergency diesel generators.

Emergency generators on site can supply electricity to keep the reactors cool if external power lines are cut. IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi says that fighting a war around a nuclear plant has put nuclear safety and security in constant jeopardy. Russia has been preparing to restart the station but says that doing so will depend on the situation in the area. — Reuters

Trump’s Xmas gift comes with bombs and blessings

CHRISTMAS

Under Donald Trump brought air strikes abroad and political threats at home, as the US president used the holiday to project a vision of power rooted less in peace than in grievance, even as his top lieutenants leaned hard into their Christian faith.

Last Tuesday and Wednesday, the president flooded his Truth Social feed with posts that ditched the usual holiday cheer. Instead of goodwill to all, Trump announced military action against militants in Nigeria and hurled insults at his enemies.

The strikes, he said, were retaliation for a “slaughter of Christians” in the west African nation.

Last Thursday, Trump dropped an even darker line: “Enjoy what may be your last Merry Christmas.” The cryptic warning appeared to hint at Democrats he believes will be exposed when files tied to Jeffrey Epstein are all released.

The White House, by contrast, issued a traditional message later that day - heavy on scripture - signed by the president and First Lady Melania Trump.

Trump has long claimed credit for restoring “Merry Christmas” to public life, accusing his first term predecessor Barack Obama of pushing “Happy Holidays” - a greeting seen as more inclusive of multiple faiths. In reality, Obama regularly said “Merry Christmas.”

This year, though, Trump skipped formal worship entirely. The official schedule shows the 79-year-old billionaire spent the holiday at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida without attending church.

Homeland Security urged Americans to “remember the miracle of Christ’s birth,” while Secretary of State Marco Rubio posted a nativity scene and spoke of “the hope of Eternal Life through Christ.”

The Pentagon even hosted its first-ever Christmas Mass on



US President Donald Trump takes part in a Christmas Eve dinner in the ballroom of his Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida. — Reuters



AURÉLIA END

The writer is White House Correspondent at AFP

December 17. Religious language is nothing new in the politics of the United States - a country that calls itself “one nation under God.” But the First Amendment bars any official creed.

That hasn't stopped Vice-President J D Vance from pushing Christian doctrine into every corner of policy, from diplomacy to immigration.

“A true Christian politics, it cannot just be about the protection of the unborn... It must be at the heart of our full understanding of government,” he told a recent rally organised by the conservative group Turning Point USA.

“We have been, and by the grace of God, we always will be, a Christian nation,” Vance added. The crowd roared.

Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, offers a disciplined Christian nationalist vision.

In his inauguration speech,

he claimed God saved him from assassination so he could fulfil America's destiny.

Since then, he has sold \$60 “God Bless The USA” Bibles, launched a White House Office of Faith under televangelist Paula White, and posted photos of himself praying at his desk, pastors hovering around him. Trump, never known as a committed churchgoer, now speaks often of his own salvation.

“I want to try and get to heaven if possible,” he told Fox News in August, suggesting brokering peace in Ukraine might help.

At other moments, however, he has sounded far less confident.

“I hear I’m not doing well - I hear I’m really at the bottom of the totem pole!” he has said, again linking any improvement in his prospects to a potential peace deal in Ukraine.

His bleakest assessment came on October 15, when he remarked: “I don’t think there’s anything that’s going to get me into heaven.”

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



17 MEDALS CROWN OMAN WEIGHTLIFTING TEAM’S IN DOHA CHAMPIONSHIPS

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 27

The Omani national weightlifting team delivered an impressive performance in its recent participation in the Qatar Cup, Arab Cup, and West Asia Championships, all hosted in the Qatari capital Doha, after producing high-level technical displays that resulted in a total of 17 medals, reflecting the remarkable development of the sport in Oman at both regional and international levels.

The team’s medal haul included 10 gold, 4 silver, and 3 bronze medals, an achievement that highlights the tremendous efforts of the athletes, alongside the technical and administrative work and the continuous support enjoyed by the team.

INDIVIDUAL BRILLIANCE AND NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

In the details, lifter Elias al Busaidy stood out in the 71 kg category at the West Asia Championship, where he won three silver medals after a strong competitive performance against some of the region’s top lifters. Meanwhile, Mahmoud al Battashi, competing in the 79 kg category, added two bronze medals to Oman’s tally in the clean and jerk and the total at the West Asia Championship, underlining his presence in one of the most competitive weight classes.

The standout achievement came from Amer al Khanjari, who dominated the 88 kg category, claiming nine gold medals three each at the Arab Championship, the West Asia Championship, and the Qatar Cup, in an exceptional display that reflected his high level and technical consistency.

In addition, Murshid al Ajmi competed in the 94 kg senior category at the West Asia Championship and secured three medals (gold, silver, and bronze), further reinforcing the team’s strong performances across multiple weight divisions.

With these results, the national team concluded its Doha campaign with a total of 17 medals, 10 gold, 4 silver, and 3 bronze, once again confirming the growing status of Omani weightlifting on the regional competitive map.

It is worth noting that the Omani delegation to the Qatar Cup, Arab Cup, and West Asia Championships was headed by Lt Col Fahd al Ghammari, Chairman of the Oman Weightlifting and Powerlifting Committee, alongside Badr al Wuhaibi, Secretary of the Committee.

Saham, Sohar advance to quarterfinals in HM’s Cup



Sohar and Al Rustaq players in action.

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 27

SAHAM AND Sohar booked their places in the quarterfinals of His Majesty’s Cup football competition following two hard fought Round of 16 encounters held on Friday at Seeb Stadium and the Al Rustaq Sports Complex, as the knockout stages continued to deliver intensity and excitement.

At Seeb Stadium, Saham claimed a valuable 1–0 victory over Muscat in a match marked by tactical discipline and missed opportunities, Saham dominated possession for long periods and consistently pressed Muscat’s defensive line, creating several clear chances that went unconverted, despite the missed opportunities, Saham remained composed and patient in their build up play.

The breakthrough came in the 20th minute when Mohammed al Maamari

capitalised on a defensive lapse by Muscat, the forward showed excellent awareness to seize on the loose ball before unleashing a powerful strike into a tight angle, leaving the goalkeeper with little chance, the goal proved decisive, as Saham tightened their defensive structure and limited Muscat’s attacking threat for the remainder of the first half.

Muscat emerged after the break with renewed attacking intent and enjoyed their best spell of the match during the opening stages of the second half, They pushed numbers forward and created a handful of promising situations, but lacked the finishing touch in the final third, as the match passed the hour mark, Saham gradually regained control, restoring balance to the contest and preventing Muscat from mounting sustained pressure, with no further goals added, Saham held on to secure a deserved qualification to the next round.

Meanwhile, at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex, Sohar advanced after

overcoming hosts Al Rustaq in a dramatic penalty shootout following a 1–1 draw after extra time, the first half saw both sides exchange attacks in a closely contested affair, with midfield battles dominating the tempo and few clear chances emerging before the break.

Al Rustaq took the lead in the second half through Omar al Salti, who finished confidently after sustained pressure from the home side, Sohar responded positively and drew level from a corner kick, capitalising on a mistake attempt by Al Rustaq’s goalkeeper to clear the ball, which left the goal exposed.

With neither team able to find a winner in normal or extra time, the match was decided on penalties, where Sohar showed greater composure to seal their passage into the quarterfinals.

The results underline the growing competitiveness of His Majesty’s Cup, as the tournament continues to produce closely fought matches and dramatic moments in its knockout stages.

Al Bashayer defeat Al Seeb to take the lead in Basketball League

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 27

Al Bashayer Club secured a valuable 59–48 victory over Al Seeb Club in the final match of the preliminary round of the Oman General Basketball League for the 2025–2026 season, moving to the top of the standings with 8 points, while Al Seeb finished second with 7 points after an exciting and highly competitive encounter.

The match was closely contested for most of its duration, with both teams exchanging momentum, but Al Bashayer managed to impose their rhythm thanks to their strong defence and effective offence. Standout performances came from Ahmed al Halhali, Osama al Riyami,

Hadeed Bait Bakhit, and Saif al Tobi, who led the team in the decisive moments.

Al Bashayer started the game in better form at both ends of the court and quickly took the lead at 9–2, before Al Seeb fought back through the shooting of Rasheed al Zahibi and Jawad Adkouya to make it 10–4. Ahmed al Halhali then drained a three pointer, while Rasheed al Zahibi responded with a basket from under the hoop and a free throw to cut the margin to 13–7. The excitement continued as both sides exchanged points, with Al Seeb managing to level the score at 16–16, before Al Bashayer regained the lead through a basket by Mahmoud Al Sauli, ending the first quarter ahead 18–16.



Al Seeb and Al Bashayer players in action. — Ammar al Musafir

In the second quarter, the offensive exchanges continued with high intensity, keeping the gap to just one point in favour of Al Bashayer at 19–18. However, Saif Al Tobi and Ahmed al Halhali added four quick points to extend the lead to 23–18, as Al Bashayer continued to dominate at both ends to close the first half in front 31–24.

The third quarter saw both teams trade baskets, with Al Bashayer maintaining their advantage at 35–27. Al Seeb players Jawad and Abdulrahman al Shaeibi scored four points with two close-range shots to cut the deficit to 35–31, before Jawad added a three pointer to make it 35–34. Despite the pressure, Al Bashayer responded well and widened the gap again, finishing the

third quarter ahead 43–37.

In the final quarter, Al Seeb applied strong pressure and reduced the deficit to just one point at 43–42, but the experience of Al Bashayer’s players and their efficient use of chances, especially through Hadeed Bait Bakhit and Saif Al Tobi decided the contest in the closing minutes, sealing a 59–48 victory.

International referee Issam Al Siyabi officiated the match as first referee, Mazin al Hilali as second referee, and Taha al Ameri as third referee. The table officials were Rayan al Dhabouni, Majid al Akhrami, and Moosa al Siyabi, with international referee Faris al Khalasi serving as the technical commissioner.

SHORTTAKES



Man UtdPatrick Dorgu celebrates scoring their first goal with team-mates. — Reuters

MAN UTD MOVE UP TO FIFTH WITH WIN OVER NEWCASTLE

MANCHESTER, England: Manchester United’s Patrick Dorgu struck in the first half as Ruben Amorim’s side held on for an ugly 1-0 victory over Newcastle United on Friday in the year’s only Boxing Day fixture to climb to fifth place in the Premier League standings.

The hosts have 29 points after 18 games, with the rest of the week’s games to be played on Saturday and Sunday, while Newcastle are 11th with 23 points.

Dorgu scored his first goal for United with a volley against the run of play in the 24th minute when Diogo Dalot’s long throw was partially cleared. The ball fell to the Dane, who smashed it into the bottom left corner from 15 yards out.

Newcastle pushed for an equaliser late on but could not break down a team missing key players, including injured captain Bruno Fernandes along with Bryan Mbeumo and Amad Diallo, who are playing in the Africa Cup of Nations.

Man United’s Benjamin Sesko hit the crossbar in the second half and Dalot had a huge chance to double the home side’s lead when Lisandro Martinez picked him out with a free kick. However, Dalot fired his shot over from eight yards out.

The visitors had 16 shots to Man United’s nine and thoroughly dominated the second half, leaving manager Eddie Howe to rue the chances missed in a loss that leaves them with one victory on the road this season.

Newcastle forward Anthony Gordon had a couple of good late chances, but fired his best of them over the bar. Lewis Miley also shot over at the end of regulation time.

The lone game marked the fewest top-flight Boxing Day fixtures in 43 years, in a break from the tradition of a full slate of festive fixtures that fans have long enjoyed.

The Premier League cited mounting scheduling pressures linked to the expansion of European club competitions as the key reason for the change, with a promise that next season would have a full slate of Boxing Day games once again. — Reuters



Al Seeb and Al Bashayer reach volleyball final

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 27

AL SEEB and Al Bashayer have qualified for the final of the First Division Volleyball League for the current season, scheduled to take place on January 27, while Sohar and Majees will meet in the third-place playoff, following the conclusion of the semifinal matches held at the Sohar Sports Complex Hall.

Al Seeb successfully secured their place in the final after defeating Majees in straight sets, in a match that was full of excitement and technical balance but highlighted Al Seeb’s superiority in the decisive moments. Al Seeb won the three sets 26–24, 25–23, and 26–24, confirming their strong readiness to go all the way in the competition.

Al Seeb delivered a well-balanced performance that combined tactical discipline, attacking efficiency, and defensive solidity at the net. This was reflected in the total points, as Al Seeb scored 77 points compared to 69 for Majees.



Despite the close number of errors (24 for Al Seeb and 23 for Majees), Al Seeb clearly had the edge in blocking, recording 10 blocks compared to 7, as well as a slight advantage in service aces (2–1), giving them a clear upper hand in key moments.

The match also featured a strong scoring battle between Ismail al Hadidi of Al Seeb and Saeed Morgan of Majees, with both players finishing with 13 points each. However, Al

teams exchanged control before Al Bashayer claimed the final advantage. Al Bashayer won the opening set 25–19, before Sohar responded strongly in the second set, winning 25–18. However, Al Bashayer quickly regained momentum and secured the third and fourth sets 25–21 and 25–19.

Despite the loss, Sohar recorded a higher total of 93 points compared to 84 for Al Bashayer, but the decisive factor was the large number of errors committed by Sohar, who made 36 errors compared to just 21 for Al Bashayer, handing their opponents many free points. Sohar also led in blocks (11 to 8) and in service errors (15 to 10), while Al Bashayer had the advantage in service aces (3 to 2).

In the race for top scorer, Sohar’s Shisha stood out with 22 points, compared to 19 points for Al Bashayer’s star Emil Khan. Khan showed greater attacking efficiency, scoring 18 attack points with a 55 per cent success rate, while Shisha recorded 21 attack points with a 50 per cent success rate.

Shisha also committed 7 errors, compared to 5 errors by Emil Khan.

Rif Muscat, Al Patriota shine at Al Rahba racecourse

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
BARKA, DEC 27

The Al Rahba Racecourse in the Wilayat of Barka hosted an exciting finale to the tenth race meeting of the 2025–2026 season, organised by the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation through the Oman Horse Ra cing Club, with strong competition across eight races and a high technical standard throughout the programme.

The meeting featured four races for purebred Arabians, two for locally bred horses and two for Thoroughbreds, drawing notable performances from jockeys, trainers and owners.

The opening race, the Wadi Al Khoudh Dam Stakes for purebred Arabians over 1,200 metres, was won by Rif Muscat, owned by Ghassan bin Issa al Rawshdi, ridden by Munis bin Salem al Siyabi and trained by Shihab bin Dhiyab al Balushi, the winner produced a confident display to finish ahead of Iram in second and Labwah Al Shahaniya in third.

Commenting on the victory, jockey Munis bin Salem al Siyabi said “The race was highly competitive from the start, Rif Muscat responded well and showed great balance, which reflects the quality of preparation and teamwork behind this result.”

In the Wadi Dhayqah Dam Stakes for locally bred



The meeting featured four races for purebred Arabians, two for locally bred horses and two for Thoroughbreds. — Mohammed al Balushi

Arabians over 1,600 metres, Barq Al Suwaih claimed first place, followed by Najm Ibri in second and A S Wahaj in third, the Wadi Khasab Dam Stakes over the same distance saw Bousdrah secure victory, ahead of A G S Sarhan and A G S Burkan.

The fourth race, the Wadi Tanuf Dam Stakes over 2,000 metres, was topped by Saadat Muscat, while Subat dominated the Wadi Al Sahtan Dam Stakes to take first place in another competitive Arabian contest.

In the Thoroughbred races, Tadshin won the Wadi Sahalnout Dam Stakes over 2,000 metres, and Al Patriota concluded the meeting in style by claiming the Wadi

Al Jizzi Dam Stakes over 2,200 metres, ahead of Jistic Protocol and Royal Touch.

Trainer Shihab bin Dhiyab al Balushi praised the overall standard of the meeting, stating “The races reflected strong preparation and growing professionalism, these results highlight the positive development of horse racing in Oman and the federation’s commitment to raising performance levels.”

The successful conclusion of the tenth race meeting reaffirmed Al Rahba Racecourse as a key venue in the season, showcasing competitive racing and continued progress in Omani horse racing.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Manchester City's Rayan Cherki celebrates scoring their second goal with Erling Haaland and Phil Foden. — Reuters

CHERKI’S LATE STRIKE SENDS MAN CITY PAST FOREST

Manchester City beat Nottingham Forest 2-1 to move provisionally to the top of the Premier League table after Rayan Cherki grabbed a goal and assist away at The City Ground on Saturday. The French midfielder first threaded the pass for City's opener before striking an 83rd-minute winner from a set-piece to secure their eighth straight victory across all competitions. The result moved City to 40 points, one ahead of Arsenal who face Brighton & Hove Albion later on Saturday. Forest remain in 17th place, nervously looking over their shoulder at a five-point gap between them and the relegation zone. “When the games come we need just one thing: to win. We take the points because the championship is so long and so hard, so today is a big win,” Cherki told TNT Sports. “It’s good for the team because the game was not simple.” City dominated possession in a goalless first half but struggled to break down Forest’s compact defensive shape, with striker Erling Haaland largely isolated up front. Forest’s best chance fell to Morgan Gibbs-White, who failed to convert Callum Hudson-Odoi’s cross from behind the defence early in the game. CHERKI AND REIJNDERS FIND CITY BREAKTHROUGH The breakthrough came within three minutes of the restart when Cherki slipped the ball through for Tijjani Reijnders and the Dutchman fired home from an angle to make it 1-0. But City’s lead lasted only six minutes as Forest launched a swift counter-attack that ended with Igor Jesus crossing for Omari Hutchinson, who took his shot first-time and beat Gianluigi Donnarumma to score his first goal for the club. Forest sensed victory but squandered chances when Jesus and Nicolo Savona both shot over, while at the other end Phil Foden’s effort was well saved by goalkeeper John Victor. City’s sustained pressure finally paid off when Josko Gvardiol headed down a corner kick for Cherki, who took it on the half-volley and sent a low drive from the edge of the box into the back of the net to restore their lead. Forest’s loss also extended Sean Dyche’s winless record against Pep Guardiola to 17 Premier League games, the longest winless streak for a manager against another in the league. —Reuters



Manchester City's Rayan Cherki celebrates scoring their second goal with Erling Haaland. — Reuters



Benin's players celebrate after the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) Group D football match between Benin and Botswana. — AFP

Benin beat Botswana for maiden Africa cup



Botswana's defender #05 Alford Velaphi and Benin's defender #13 Mohamed Tijani vie during the Africa Cup of Nations. — AFP



YOHAN Roche scored a deflected winner as Benin claimed a first-ever victory at the Africa Cup of Nations finals with a 1-0 Group D success against Botswana in Rabat on Saturday. Benin move to three points from their opening two games, level with Senegal and Democratic Republic of Congo in the table, who meet in their second pool fixture in Tangier later on Saturday. Benin took the lead in the 28th minute when Roche played a one-two in the box with captain Steve Mounie and his shot



from 10 yards took a wicked deflection off a defender and into the net. Benin finally celebrated a victory at the continental finals at the 16th attempt following their debut in 2004, and despite the fact they were quarter-finalists in 2019. They also have five draws to go with 10 defeats. Botswana offered little going forward, though Mothusi Johnson struck the crossbar with a curling free-kick that beat the goalkeeper but not the frame of the goal. Benin had several chances to add to their score, though Botswana goalkeeper Goitseone Phoko made an excellent low



stop to deny Tamimou Ouorou. Dodo Dokou then worked an excellent shooting chance 12 yards from goal in added time at the end of the game but fired over the bar with the goal gaping. Botswana become the second team, after Benin, to lose their first five Cup of Nations matches after three defeats on debut in 2012 and an opening 3-0 loss to Senegal this year. They meet DR Congo in their final pool game on Tuesday, while Benin face Senegal at the same time. The top two teams in each pool, as well as the four best third-placed sides across the six groups, qualify for the Round of 16. —Reuters

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The initiative aims to strengthen company growth, improve competitiveness and support sustainable expansion across key sectors.

INCENTIVES DRIVE SHIFT TO JOINT STOCK FIRMS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has rolled out a comprehensive package of incentives to encourage limited liability companies to convert into closed joint stock companies, or to establish new entities under this structure.

The initiative forms part of the Royal Directives launched last May through the Capital Market Stimulus Programme, which aims to strengthen company growth, improve competitiveness and support sustainable expansion across key sectors.

To promote the programme, the Ministry has carried out field visits to companies and held awareness meetings through branches of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in several governorates.

These engagements focused on explaining the benefits of conversion and guiding businesses through the requirements of becoming closed joint stock companies. As a result of these efforts, seven limited liability companies have already transformed into closed joint stock companies, while ten new closed joint stock companies, including holding firms, have been established.

The Ministry noted that this transition has helped participating companies adopt stronger corporate governance practices, improve transparency and compliance, and enhance their financial resilience.

These improvements have increased their ability to compete in both local and international markets, while also making them more attractive to high-quality investment.

Mohammed bin Salem al Hashmi, Director of the Regulatory Establishments Department at the Ministry, said the incentive programme represents a strategic step towards strengthening Oman's business environment. — ONA

35 projects power Oman’s national grid expansion

THE Oman Electricity Transmission Company has made strong progress in expanding and upgrading the national electricity transmission network, with 35 major projects currently under implementation at a total cost of around RO 250.2 million.

These projects form part of a wider long-term strategy to strengthen grid capacity, reliability and readiness for future demand.OETC reported that more than 60 per cent of the second phase of the strategic Rabt project has been completed, while network expansion projects in the Dhofar Governorate have surpassed 90 per cent completion.

Significant progress has also been made on the landmark project to connect Masirah Island to the main transmission network, with more than half of the work completed using advanced and complex technologies.

In addition, a fault current limiting system has been introduced on the 132 kV network to reduce outages, protect equipment and enhance supply security, while the main transmission station for the polysilicon factory project in Suhar has been commissioned.

The company's phased expansion of the national grid is expected to continue through to 2030, with total investments exceeding RO 1 billion.

These efforts are designed to support national development priorities and meet rising electricity demand across all sectors. Since its establishment, OETC has steadily expanded the network, increasing the number of



ENG HISHAM BIN ABDULLAH AL RIYAMI
Acting CEO, OETC

During 2025, OETC awarded nine new projects valued at over RO 250 million, many of which support the integration of renewable energy. These projects are expected to cut carbon emissions by more than 1.9 million tonnes annually and include the connection of three wind power plants with a combined capacity of 1,220 megawatts, alongside a 500-megawatt solar project.



More than 60 per cent of the second phase of the Rabt project has been completed.

transmission stations to 116 from just 29 in 2005, while network length has grown to more than 10,400 kilometres.

During 2025, OETC awarded nine new projects valued at over RO 250 million, many of which support the integration of renewable energy. These projects are expected to cut carbon emissions by more than 1.9 million tonnes annually and include the connection of three wind power plants with a combined capacity of 1,220 megawatts, alongside a 500-megawatt solar project.

These initiatives contribute directly to Oman's net-zero ambitions, optimise gas consumption and support the localisation of clean energy industries.

The reliability of the transmission network reached 99.9999 per cent by the end of November 2025, despite record demand. Peak load on the main grid rose to 8,059 megawatts, while renewable energy contributions climbed to 9.46 per cent of total

electricity supplied, driven by solar and wind projects across Ibri, Manah and Dhofar.

OETC maintained strong credit ratings and advanced its green finance agenda by issuing the country's first green sukuk.

The company also repaid \$1 billion in bonds and saw its asset base grow significantly. Alongside infrastructure development, OETC continued to invest in human capital, achieving an Omanisation rate of 97 per cent, while awarding over RO 259 million in tenders to local firms, including a significant share to SMEs.

Eng Hisham bin Abdullah al Riyami, Acting CEO of OETC, said the achievements reflect years of accumulated experience, technological adoption and strong engagement with global industry leaders. He affirmed that the company remains committed to ensuring a reliable, secure and sustainable electricity transmission system that supports Oman's national development goals and long-term energy transition. — ONA

OQGN invites Expressions of Interest for CO₂ pipeline network in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 27

OQ GAS NETWORKS (OQGN), part of OQ Group, has invited local companies to submit Expressions of Interest (EoIs) outlining the roles they could play in a future national CO₂ pipeline network, a key pillar of Oman's broader decarbonisation strategy.

In a statement posted over the weekend, OQGN said the EoIs will inform the design of CO₂ capture, transport and storage infrastructure aligned with actual industry requirements.

"In line with national and global decarbonisation targets, OQGN is working towards developing a CO₂ pipeline network in Oman to connect emission sources with storage locations or sinks, ultimately reducing the Sultanate of Oman's CO₂ emissions", the company noted.

The call for EoIs follows the completion of a CO₂ transportation strategy study in 2024, with OQGN now moving into the next phase to gain a clearer understanding of potential user needs for a future network.



As Oman's designated National CO₂ Transporter, OQGN intends to own, operate and maintain all CO₂ pipelines in the country.

Interested parties are invited to complete a non-binding information form capturing basic organisational details — such as name, location and contact information — as well as the status of their decarbonisation targets.

The form also seeks insight into plans for CO₂ capture, utilisation or storage (CCUS), the potential need for pipeline transmission infrastructure and indicative volumes of CO₂

that could be off-taken.

Describing the initiative as strategically significant, OQGN said it represents a critical opportunity for industry stakeholders to help shape infrastructure that will underpin their future decarbonisation efforts.

The proposed network aligns with national sustainability priorities and is supported by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Oman Net Zero Centre (ONZC).

As Oman's designated National CO₂ Transporter, OQGN intends to own, operate and maintain all CO₂ pipelines in the country.

Accordingly, CCUS project developers that have received government endorsement will be required to coordinate with OQGN to ensure alignment with the national CO₂ transport infrastructure.

Following a comprehensive market forecast assessment completed last year, OQGN has proposed the development of three distinct CCUS ecosystems in Oman — Northern, Central and Southern — each tailored to regional emissions profiles and infrastructure needs.

The Northern CCUS Ecosystem is designed to support the decarbonisation of the Suhar Industrial Area, Oman's largest emissions hub, as well as nearby centres such as Ibri.

This would involve securing reliable CO₂ sources and transporting captured emissions via an estimated 300-kilometre pipeline network to suitable sinks for long-term geological storage or utilisation.

The Central CCUS Ecosystem will cater to existing and emerging users in Al Duqm, with potential CO₂ storage sites located in Block 6 — Oman's largest oil concession area — linked by an estimated 200-kilometre pipeline.

The Southern CCUS Ecosystem will focus on the Salalah Industrial Area, using storage sites in southern Block 6 and requiring an estimated 300-kilometre pipeline.

An assessment of integrating Sur into either the Northern or Central ecosystems found this approach to be less cost-effective. As a result, OQGN is working with emitters in Sur to identify more suitable CO₂ storage solutions located closer to the source of emissions.

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NATIONAL FINANCE REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO SUPPORTING BUSINESSES

MUSCAT: National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance company, reaffirms its commitment to supporting businesses and driving economic growth through a comprehensive suite of corporate financing solutions. The company empowers enterprises of all sizes to access tailored financial products that address their evolving business needs.

Through its Corporate Finance offerings, National Finance provides a wide range of products, including New & Used Vehicle Finance, Equipment Finance, Working Capital, Sale & Leaseback, Debt Factoring, Warehouse Finance and Corporate Fixed Deposits. These solutions are designed to help businesses manage liquidity, expand operations and achieve sustainable growth.

A key focus is SME Financing, which supports small and medium enterprises and homegrown businesses, reflecting National Finance's dedication to strengthening local business capabilities and fostering long-term economic development.

The company also provides sustainability-linked financing, promoting environmentally responsible practices and projects with social impact.

In line with the company's sustainability vision, the National Finance's sustainable financing solutions reflect its forward-looking approach and strong commitment to creating meaningful environmental and social impact.

For corporate clients, National Finance supports the financing of projects and business models centred on environmental responsibility and community wellbeing, including sustainable solutions such as electric vehicle, solar energy systems and energy-efficiency technologies.

Reinforcing this commitment, National Finance has secured funding from the International Finance Corp, a member of the World Bank Group, to expand its support for sustainable projects with positive social and environmental impact.

Tariq bin Sulaiman al Faris, CEO at National Finance, stated: "Our goal has always been to offer a comprehensive range of financing options that respond to customers' evolving needs while creating real impact – both in the lives of individuals and the success of businesses.

Our broad product portfolio speaks to this promise and our focus on delivering exceptional customer experiences truly distinguishes us in today's market. We continuously strive to develop innovative solutions and enhance our ability to meet the needs of small, medium and large enterprises alike, supporting their sustainable growth and contribution to driving the national economy".

NBO HOSTS EXCLUSIVE DINNER FOR SADARA PRIORITY BANKING CUSTOMERS

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) hosted an exclusive networking evening at Al Hillah Castle in Al Buraimi for its Sadara Priority Banking customers, reaffirming its commitment to delivering premium and personalised banking experiences to high-net-worth individuals.

Attended by Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi and Abdullah bin Zahran al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO, the event brought



together valued customers and select industry partners for an evening of insight, connection and appreciation.

Commenting on the event, Faisal bin Hamad al Wahaibi, General

Manager and Chief Retail & Digital Banking Officer at NBO, said: "Our Sadara Priority Banking customers are at the core of our service promise.

This gathering reflects our continued dedication to deepening the trust-based relationships we share with our customers while offering bespoke financial solutions. We remain committed to delivering exceptional service and tailored banking experiences that support their ambitions".

Avicen Connect brings focus on digital health



Group successfully hosted Avicen Connect

2025, its annual corporate gathering, featuring a high-level Strategic Panel Discussion on the theme "The Role of Digital Health in Oman Vision 2040".

The event brought together senior government officials, healthcare leaders, technology experts and industry stakeholders to engage in a forward-looking dialogue on the future of healthcare in the Sultanate of Oman.

While Avicen Connect is traditionally an occasion to celebrate organisational milestones, teamwork and shared success, Avicen Group intentionally broadened the scope of this year's gathering.

Rather than limiting the event to celebration alone, Avicen sought to create a meaningful platform that would generate insights, encourage collaboration and contribute constructively to national



Avicen Group intentionally broadened the scope of this year's gathering.

development priorities.

This initiative reflects Avicen's commitment and solidarity with Oman Vision 2040, particularly in supporting the transformation of the healthcare sector through digital innovation.

The event commenced with a formal welcome acknowledging Avicen Group's leadership, including Ibrahim al Ghafri, Chairman, Nissar Edathum Chalil, Managing Director,

Shabeer Ali Konnola, Executive Director, Vinu Koderampat, General Manager and other board members whose strategic direction continues to guide the organisation's growth and contribution to the healthcare ecosystem.

The strategic panel discussion was moderated by Hamid bin Saif al Sabahi, Managing Director, AAPC and featured a distinguished panel representing government

institutions, national strategy teams, healthcare providers and technology leaders.

- Khalid bin Said bin Saif al Kharusi, Director of Logistics and Medical Supplies, The Medical City for Military and Security Services
- Hanan bint Saif bin Sulaiman al Maaniyah, Senior Officer – Chief Nurse, The Medical City for Military and Security Services
- Manal al Ansari, Senior Officer, Directorate General of Medical Supplies
- Ahmad al Saalmi, Vice President, Future Technologies Team – Oman Vision 2040
- Abdul Hakeem al Balushi, Vice President, Health Priority Support Team – Oman Vision 2040
- Sameer P T, Chief Executive Officer, Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals & Polyclinics
- Rahul Kadavakolu, Group Chief Marketing Officer – GCC, Aster DM Healthcare
- Dr Ranjith Raj, Chief Executive Officer, Paddle Business Consultancy, India

AHLIBANK WINS EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AWARD

MUSCAT: Highlighting its leadership in advancing social responsibility, ahlibank received the "Excellence in Social Responsibility" Award during the second edition of the Oman CSR Summit and Awards, held on December 22, 2025.

The ceremony was attended by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, along with a number of their excellencies and senior officials. This recognition reflects ahlibank's commitment to impactful and sustainable initiatives, as well as its alignment with national development priorities.

Through diverse community



The recognition reflects ahlibank's commitment to impactful and sustainable initiatives.

programmes and strategic partnerships, the Bank continues to support social development and create long-term shared value for the community.

The award was received on behalf of the Bank by Jumana al Hashmi, AGM – Head of Marketing & Corporate Communications. ahlibank is recognised as a leading institution in Oman's banking sector in the field of social responsibility, with a clear focus on transforming initiatives into sustainable, structured programmes that deliver measurable social and economic

impact.

These efforts include supporting underprivileged families, empowering women and promoting inclusive education for visually impaired students, in addition to Ramadan initiatives and the Back-to-School programme.

The Bank's annual media gathering further supports these efforts by highlighting community initiatives and strengthening partnerships with the media, reflecting ahlibank's commitment to investing in people and building community capabilities that contribute to national development.

Adanté Realty unveils the Yenaier Residences Experience Centre

MUSCAT: Adanté Realty invites discerning investors, homebuyers and design connoisseurs to step into a world where architecture, artistry and lifestyle converge with the unveiling of the Yenaier Residences Experience Centre – an immersive showcase at Adanté Realty's Corporate Office located at the Capital Building on 18 November Street, Al Athaiba.

The Experience Centre was officially inaugurated by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour on Tuesday, December 23, in the presence of Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture,



The Experience Centre offers visitors an intimate introduction to the philosophy, materials and craftsmanship that define Yenaier Residences.

Fisheries and Water Resources, Dr Thomas Alexander, Chairman of Al Adrak Group of companies and other dignitaries.

Designed as a sensorial journey rather than a conventional showroom, the Experience Centre offers visitors an intimate introduction to the philosophy, materials and craftsmanship that define Yenaier Residences.

Its centrepiece is a meticulously realised, fully furnished Sky Palace Penthouse – the most exclusive residence within the development and a masterclass in understated luxury. From the richness of bespoke finishes to the quiet drama of proportion, light and flow, the Sky Palace Penthouse captures the essence of refined living: generous

spaces framed by panoramic views, precision-crafted interiors and a palette that speaks in whispers rather than excess. Every element reflects a commitment to enduring quality, artisanal detail and thoughtful design.

Now open to the public on all weekdays between 10 am and 7pm, the Experience Centre welcomes all visitors and prospective buyers to explore the project at their own pace – to walk the spaces, observe the detailing and experience first-hand the atmosphere of calm sophistication that defines Yenaier.

With the imminent launch of Phase 2 with new payment plans, prospective buyers are urged to avail of the limited availability of the current Phase at the earliest.

SHORTTAKES



The workshop aims to equip diplomatic missions with the knowledge required to promote Oman as an attractive destination for investments in clean energy and low-carbon technologies.

NET ZERO DIPLOMACY STRENGTHENED THROUGH WORKSHOP

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 27

THE Ministry of Energy and Minerals, through the Oman Net Zero Centre, has organised an introductory workshop for officials from the Foreign Ministry and overseas diplomatic missions, aimed at strengthening institutional understanding of Oman's net-zero agenda and enhancing international cooperation and investment promotion in low-carbon sectors.

The workshop focused on outlining the mandate and responsibilities of the Oman Net Zero Centre, as well as its role in supporting the national transition towards emissions reduction.

Participants were briefed on the national, regional and international dimensions of net-zero concepts, with the objective of improving coordination and integration among government entities involved in climate and sustainability initiatives.

A key objective of the workshop was to equip diplomatic missions with the knowledge required to promote Oman as an attractive destination for investments in clean energy and low-carbon technologies.

The sessions highlighted priority investment opportunities in these sectors, reinforcing Oman's presence and engagement in global climate action platforms.

Mohsin al Jabri, Director General of the Oman Net Zero Centre, said the workshop forms part of broader efforts to establish a unified understanding among Foreign Ministry staff and diplomatic missions regarding the Sultanate of Oman's priorities in achieving net-zero emissions.

Oman's industrial rise gains global recognition

OMAN'S industrial sector is undergoing a rapid and far-reaching transformation, marked by strong progress in legislation, production capacity and investment.

Manufacturing has become a central pillar of national economic policy, reshaping the Sultanate of Oman's industrial identity and reinforcing its position on the global economic map as a competitive and diversified economy.

This industrial momentum is reflected in the launch and operation of several landmark strategic projects across the country. These include the Karwa Motors vehicle manufacturing plant in the Duqm Special Economic Zone, the Sanfira Carbon factory in Dhofar, the Duqm Refinery and the Liwa Plastics Industries Complex.

In addition, the completion of the United Solar polysilicon production plant has strengthened supply chain localisation for the solar energy sector, supporting Oman's ambitions in renewable energy manufacturing.

The industrial expansion has also extended to pharmaceutical security, with the inauguration of the Flex, Dhofar and Menagen pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities.

These projects have enhanced domestic production capacity, enabled the transfer of advanced technologies, strengthened local supply chains and created opportunities for skilled Omani talent within high-value industries.

Economic indicators highlight the scale of the sector's transformation. Industrial output has recorded annual



Manufacturing has become a central pillar of national economic policy.

growth of around 7 per cent, while industrial exports exceeded RO 7 billion by the end of 2024.

Foreign direct industrial investment reached approximately RO 2.8 billion and employment in the sector rose to more than 57,000 Omani nationals, underlining its growing contribution to economic diversification and job creation.

International recognition has followed these achievements. The United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) has classified Oman among emerging industrial countries, commending its rapid progress in high-tech industries and the development of advanced value chains.

UNIDO also cited Oman's Industrial Strategy 2040 as a strong model for leveraging innovation and localising technology.

Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, said the next phase of industrial development, aligned with the Eleventh Five-Year Plan, will prioritise smart production and the adoption of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies.

He noted that these initiatives are essential to sustaining industrial leadership and positioning manufacturing as a true engine of economic diversification.

Engineer Khalid bin Salim al Qasabi, Director General of Industry at the ministry, reported record growth in industrial licence applications, driven by enabling programmes such as "Itqan" and the "Smart Production Factories" initiative.

He also highlighted the activation of new regulatory and planning tools, including the "Industrial Observatory" and the "Tasnee" platform, aimed at organising industrial procurement and boosting local content.

In the downstream industrial landscape, Engineer Saeed bin Mohammed al Masoudi, CEO of Sohar Aluminium, said the company has established a strong foundation for downstream industries by attracting quality investments and achieving record Omanisation rates.

These efforts, he noted, have significantly increased local value addition within the national economy.

Eng Omar bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Oman Aluminium Rolling Mill Company, described the past five years as a decisive period for Oman's industrial sector, marked by major structural shifts and tangible achievements.

He stressed that supportive government policies and sustained institutional backing have driven growth in aluminium production and exports, alongside notable expansion in operational capacity and infrastructure.

— ONA

OIA launches 'Hamat' programme to advance socioeconomic projects

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 27

BUILDING on its unwavering efforts to strengthen the entrepreneurial landscape, foster innovation and invest in national capabilities, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has launched the 'Hamat' programme in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, as part of the 'Idea Makers' initiative and within the framework of 'Together Forward' forum.

Through the 'Hamat' programme, OIA seeks to harness the potential of Omani youth, residents, startups, SMEs, innovators and entrepreneurs to address pressing challenges raised by OIA companies, empowering them to create projects with lasting economic and social

impact.

The programme offers a comprehensive journey across three main tracks. The first, the Governorates Track, is designed to showcase and elevate the tourism potential of Oman by encouraging the creation of innovative tourism experiences.

This track aims to strengthen the cultural and economic role of each governorate, while contributing to sustainable local development.

The second track focuses on real-world challenges faced by companies, particularly in key sectors such as energy, logistics and tourism. The third track is academic in nature, targeting students, researchers and academics; and fostering collaboration with academic institutions, private sector entities and entrepreneurs.



The Hamat initiative reflects OIA's commitment to nurturing innovation, strengthening cross-sector partnerships and supporting national development priorities in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

This track aims to bridge the gap between scientific research and market demand through the development of innovative and practical solutions.

The programme will be rolled out in four phases. The first phase will take place from January 1 to 27, 2026 and will include a series of orientation tours across Oman's governorates to introduce the programme and the specific challenges.

Participants will receive support in developing and submitting their ideas through a series of workshops facilitated by experts from OIA companies and the broader entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The second phase, scheduled from February 1 to 5, 2026, will feature an intensive bootcamp that covers essential topics such

as problem framing, solution development, business model design and the fundamentals of prototyping.

The third phase will coincide with the 'Together Forward' forum on February 8 and 9, 2026, during which shortlisted projects will be presented and recognised for their contributions to the national economy. The final phase will focus on incubating outstanding ideas for up to nine months, giving them the necessary support to be developed into economically viable and nationally impactful ventures.

OIA encourages youth to participate in 'Hamat' programme and register via the website hamat.oia.gov.om. Additionally, the programme guide is available for detailed information on the main tracks and challenges.

TECH DIPLOMACY

China urges lawful TikTok deal



China said it hopes firms involved in the TikTok deal will reach solutions that comply with Chinese laws and balance all parties' interests. The comment followed ByteDance's agreement to hand control of TikTok's US operations to a US-led investor group to avert a ban.

China urged US to honour commitments and ensure a fair and transparent business environment for Chinese firms. — Reuters

LABOUR SIGNALS

US jobless claims dip again



US weekly jobless claims unexpectedly fell for a second week, signalling limited layoffs, though hiring remains sluggish. Initial claims dropped by 10,000 to 214,000, below forecasts.

However, more people continue to receive unemployment benefits, suggesting persistent labour market strain. Economists noted seasonal adjustment issues around year-end holidays. — Reuters

WEATHER DISRUPTION

Winter storm hits US Northeast



A powerful winter storm swept towards the US Northeast, disrupting post-holiday air travel and prompting emergency declarations in New York and New Jersey. Forecasts warned of heavy snow, ice and freezing rain, with up to a foot of snow in parts of Long Island and the Hudson Valley. Officials cautioned against treacherous roads as New York City faced its heaviest snowfall since 2022. — Reuters

OPINION

Oman’s CSR accomplishments in 2025: From charity to impact



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert.

THE evolution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in 2025 saw Oman adapting CSR to long-term strategic programmes rather than discrete acts of corporate philanthropy.

This evolution took place in all sectors of the economy including telecommunications, banking, insurance, logistics and energy. Companies began to align CSR with sustainable development, job readiness, community health, and environmental protection in accordance with Oman Vision 2040's goal of economic, social and environmental balance

The Oman CSR Forum conducted in Muscat in December 2025 underscored the importance of this direction where organisations are no longer treating corporate social responsibility as an extraneous activity but rather integrating it into the core of their business activities.

This change brings the opportunity for more effective CSR programmes where planning, budgeting and outcomes measurement are the focus.

Outcomes for measurement would be jobs created, skills gained and emissions reduced as opposed to charity measurement of dollars donated.

One of the most modern approaches was the use of recognition and awards. Digitally integrated tools, Empirical and Omantel,

received two awards for innovation and technology-driven social responsibility, highlighting how digital tools are being integrated into the delivery of social responsibility.

Oman Arab Bank, in the financial sector, received an award for corporate social responsibility practices at the Oman Leadership Awards 2025, reflecting growing expectations for banks to contribute to social and economic empowerment beyond financing.

Meanwhile, Takaful Oman received the “Excellence in Social Responsibility Award 2025”, recognising its leading role in corporate social responsibility across a wide range of sectors, particularly in Islamic finance and insurance.

One of the most important institutional changes in 2025 took place in the energy sector, where a formal foundation for social responsibility was established.

This signalled a shift towards structured and coordinated social investment, rather than ad hoc initiatives.

This is particularly relevant in Oman, where large energy companies have long played a positive role in community development, with a growing focus on providing sustainable frameworks.

These companies have been closely involved in training, small business support and community services in the areas

As global ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) frameworks become more mainstream, the Omani business community is moving beyond viewing CSR as charitable “doing good” and is instead refocusing on building prosperous and resilient communities alongside sustainable businesses for the future.

surrounding their operations, underpinned by frameworks designed to ensure continuity, transparency and sustainability while responding to evolving community needs.

Oman’s CSR advancement in 2025 was also closely tied to environmental concerns. Oman Vision 2040 sets out clear goals for environmental sustainability and natural resource management.

In this context, the role of the private sector in conservation efforts, renewable energy advocacy and responsible resource use is increasingly important.

As global ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) frameworks become more mainstream, the Omani business community is moving beyond viewing CSR as charitable “doing good” and is instead refocusing on building prosperous and resilient communities alongside sustainable businesses for the future.

Overall, 2025 illustrates that CSR in Oman is becoming more sophisticated, more measurable and more closely aligned with national development priorities.

With stronger advocacy, first-of-its-kind industry-wide collaborations and growing recognition of responsible corporate citizenship, Oman stands on the cusp of a paradigm shift in which social responsibility becomes the default standard of business citizenship.

THE ROLE OF HYDROPOWER IN OMAN’S ENERGY TRANSITION



NAJAH
AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master’s graduate.

RENEWABLE energy in the Gulf has been shaped largely by solar, driven by abundant sunlight and falling technology costs. As renewable penetration rises, however, attention is shifting from installed capacity to system resilience.

In this evolving context, water-based renewable energy, including hydropower, pumped storage and marine technologies, is

re-emerging as a strategic complement to solar-led growth.

Globally, hydropower remains the largest source of renewable electricity, supplying around 14 per cent of total power generation and exceeding 1.25 terawatts of installed capacity.

While annual additions lag behind solar and wind, hydropower’s value lies in its ability to deliver dispatchable power, long operational lifetimes and grid stability.

That role is becoming increasingly important as electricity systems integrate higher shares of variable renewables. Solar and wind output fluctuates with weather and time of day, placing pressure on grids designed around fossil-fuel baseload generation.

Pumped storage hydropower addresses this challenge by storing surplus electricity and releasing it during peak demand. It accounts for more than 90 per cent of global long-duration energy storage capacity, making it the most established grid-scale storage technology worldwide.

In the Gulf, limited river systems restrict conventional hydropower development, but water-energy innovation remains viable.

Rapid solar deployment, expanding coastal infrastructure and growing demand for storage are driving interest in pumped storage and hybrid water-energy systems.

Rather than competing with solar, these solutions enhance grid flexibility as renewable shares increase beyond 2030.

Oman occupies a distinctive position within this regional shift. While the Sultanate of Oman lacks major rivers suitable for large hydropower plants, it has significant water infrastructure, varied terrain and one of the longest coastlines in the Arabian Peninsula.

Assets such as Wadi Dayqah Dam are primarily designed for flood control and water supply, yet they also illustrate the potential for multipurpose infrastructure that could support future energy integration as technologies mature.

Market dumping: A bargain, a deferred cost

IN an open market, a lower price can look like good news for consumers. But it can also be a warning signal for the economy when it is not driven by higher efficiency or better productivity, but by unfair trading practices designed to undercut the market and later dominate it.

That is where dumping begins: a quick gain at the checkout, followed by a quiet loss in investment, jobs and the resilience of local production.

Oman, by geography and by economic design, cannot treat imports as a threat in themselves. The issue is not importing. The issue is when imports become a tool to distort competition. Looking at the scale of trade helps explain why any “price distortion” matters.

Preliminary NCSI data indicate that Oman's goods imports reached RO 16.713 billion in 2024, against total goods exports of RO 24.230 billion, generating a trade surplus of RO 7.517 billion.

The bigger story is the composition of imports. In 2024, the highest-value import groups included mineral products (RO 4.674 billion) and machinery and electrical equipment (RO 2.934 billion), followed by base metals and articles thereof (RO 1.605 billion) and transport equipment (RO 1.516 billion).

These are not marginal items. Many are direct inputs into industry, construction, energy and services. If those supply chains are hit by “broken-price” competition, the damage does not stop at a single factory. It spreads to contractors, suppliers, warehousing, transport and finance.

In 2025, sensitivity increased as imports continued to rise while the surplus narrowed.

Preliminary NCSI data show that by end-September 2025, Oman recorded a trade surplus of RO 3.885 billion, down 42% from the same period in 2024 (RO 6.743 billion).

Imports rose 9.3% to RO 13.297 billion, from RO 12.163 billion a year earlier. This does not prove the market is being dumped, but it shows how quickly trade dynamics



Anti-dumping action is not a war on imports; it’s a defence of competition itself. (Picture for illustration only.)



QASIM
AL MAASHANI

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

can pressure local industry and market balance when volumes and pricing shift.

Another layer of risk is that import costs are not static. NCSI reported that the import price index rose 1.3% in Q1 2025 compared with the same quarter of 2024. In Q3 2025, official indicators pointed to a 15.2% year-on-year increase.

In such an environment, an “exceptionally low” price becomes more suspicious because it may not reflect real cost structures. It may instead reflect aggressive pricing, the dumping of surplus output, or hidden forms of support.

This is why “free trade” must be managed through “fair trade” rules.

Oman has a legal framework within the GCC system to address dumping, countervailing measures and safeguards, under Royal Decree 20/2015, which gives effect to the GCC unified law.

What does Oman need in practical terms? It needs to move from reaction to prevention. A credible early-warning system should track unexplained spikes in volumes and sharp price drops, compare them with real domestic demand and detect origin manipulation or disguised re-exports before they become

“normal” in the market.

It also needs technically robust investigations, with as much transparency as commercial confidentiality allows. Markets do not tolerate information vacuums; they invite rumours, hoarding and opportunistic behaviour.

At the same time, the compass must remain clear.

Anti-dumping action is not a war on imports. It is a defence of competition itself. If dumping channels are closed without improving the competitiveness of local producers, the problem is merely postponed.

Industry is not built by duties alone, but by productivity, quality, efficient energy and logistics, accessible finance and innovation.

Ultimately, dumping is not just a cheaper price.

It is a deferred economic decision. It may feel comfortable today, but it weakens local investment, shrinks employment, increases reliance on external suppliers and raises costs when the next shock hits.

An open market needs rules and Oman can protect its market from harmful practices without losing the benefits of openness — if it treats fair trade as a daily policy, not a late exception.

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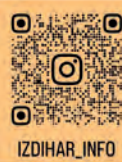
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NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The Diwan of Royal Court has announced the publication of the Field Guide to the Mammals of Oman, a landmark scientific reference that, for the first time, brings together detailed documentation of both terrestrial and marine mammals of the Sultanate of Oman in a single, comprehensive volume. The guide is authored by Dr Andrew Spalton, Dr Hadi al Hikmani, Gareth Whittington-Jones and Robert Baldwin; and is jointly published by the Diwan of Royal Court and Nomad Publishing.

The publication provides an authoritative account of Oman's mammalian diversity, covering 60 terrestrial and 20 marine wild mammal species. Its scope ranges from the White-toothed pygmy shrew — among the world's smallest mammals, weighing less than five grams — to the Blue Whale, the largest mammal on Earth, which can reach weights of up to 150,000 kilogrammes. While iconic species such as the Arabian Leopard and the Humpback Whale are well known, the guide also sheds light on lesser-known mammals, including many of Oman's 24 bat species, several of which are described in detail for the first time.

Beyond the 80 species of wild mammals, the guide also records two vagrant bat species, four introduced rodent species and eight domestic or feral species, offering the most complete overview to date of mammal species known from Oman.

Each species profile is supported by photographs, illustrations and distribution maps, alongside concise information on geographic range, habitats, reproduction and behavioural traits. Practical field guidance enables readers to identify mammals through signs such as tracks, feeding remains and droppings, making the guide a valuable resource for researchers, conservation practitioners and wildlife enthusiasts alike.

The book also explores Oman's diverse ecoregions — from the Al Hajar Mountains in the north and the vast interior sand seas to the monsoon-influenced Dhofar Mountains in the south. These varied landscapes include 30 protected areas that play a vital role in supporting mammal populations. Wadi Al Sirrin Nature Reserve, for instance, is home to the Arabian Tahr and at least 13 other wild mammal species. Offshore, the Dimaniyat Islands Nature Reserve hosts at least six species of whales and dolphins, while Jabal Samhan Nature Reserve in Dhofar supports 27 mammal species—the highest number recorded in any protected area in Oman — including the Arabian Leopard.

QUICK FEATURES



WILDLIFE

A Short-eared Owl is perched on drift wood near the shore on Hart-Müller Island, Maryland while a birding club counts species. — AFP



EVENTS

US actress Laura Dern attends the premiere of Searchlight Pictures' "Is This Thing On?" at Vidiots in Los Angeles, California. — AFP



WINTER SEASON

People fish through the ice during snowfall in Shenyang, northern China's Liaoning province. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Predator-keen Arabian Red Fox



Dream skies, high summits

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STREET ARTIST BANKSY UNVEILS LATEST MURAL IN LONDON

LONDON: British street artist Banksy unveiled his latest work in central London on Monday amidst speculation over an identical second work which has appeared elsewhere in the city.

The black and white mural painted on the side of an old building in Bayswater shows two people, probably children, in winter hats and wellington boots lying down, looking up and pointing to the sky.

Banksy, whose real identity has not been revealed, posted an image of the work on his official Instagram account on Monday.

A wide angle photo of the artwork at Queen's Mews, in Bayswater, made it look as if the people in the image are lying on top of a corrugated-iron roof garage, part way up a two-storey building.

In the photo on Banksy's Instagram post, there is an overflowing skip in an alleyway next to the garage, spilling its rubbish onto the pavement.

Above the building towers a crane, with a red light visible at night at the top — perhaps an allusion to a Christmas tree.

An almost identical artwork also appeared a few miles away under the multi-storey Centre Point building in Tottenham Court Road, where the two children can be seen looking up at the London skyscraper.

Both images attracted interest from passers-by and generated much speculation on social media throughout Monday about whether Banksy was behind them.

But by 4 pm only the Queens Mews artwork had been posted on Banksy's social media.

In September, the artist took



A new mural reported to be by anonymous artist Banksy, in Tottenham Court Road, London. — Reuters

aim at the UK's crackdown on protesters with a new work outside the Royal Courts of Justice in London, adding fuel to a free-speech row roiling the country.

The artist posted an image of the work, which features a judge wielding a gavel over a protester on the ground holding a blood-splattered placard, on his Instagram page.

The work was later covered by black plastic sheets and two metal barriers.

It appeared after hundreds of people were arrested at a demonstration against a ban on the activist group Palestine Action.

In May this year, one of his paintings, which reimagines Jack Vettriano's famous "The Singing Butler", sold for nearly 4.3 million pounds (\$5.5 million) at an auction in London, auction house Sotheby's said. — AFP



Empowerment rather than isolation

RUQAYA AL KINDI

IN EVERY Omani home, a story often begins with a wrinkled face and eyes shaped by time. The elderly are not simply aging parents or grandparents, they are the living memory of the nation, carrying values, traditions and lessons that have quietly shaped generations.

In the Sultanate of Oman, aging is not viewed as a period of decline, but as a stage deserving dignity, respect and care. This deeply rooted belief has guided the Ministry of Social Development in making elderly care a national priority, designing programmes that preserve family warmth while ensuring professional support for those most in need.

One of the most significant initiatives reflecting this commitment is the Social Welfare Home in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq. It is the only facility in Oman dedicated to housing elderly individuals who have no family or anyone able to care for them. Established in 2015 through a partnership with the Suhail Bahwan Group for Charitable Works, the home has provided care to 35 residents up to mid-2025.

"This home was created to offer more than shelter", said Radhiya al Fahdi, Director of the Elderly Affairs Department at the Ministry of Social Development. "It provides an environment that reflects family warmth and psychological comfort". Care at the Al Rustaq home goes far beyond accommodation. The facility includes 11 fully equipped residential units designed to meet all basic needs. Residents receive continuous medical care through regular checkups and round-the-clock supervision, alongside psychological and social support through individual and group sessions aimed at easing anxiety, combating depression and encouraging emotional stability. Meals are carefully planned to match each resident's medical condition, ensuring balanced and appropriate nutrition.

Equally important is keeping residents connected to life beyond the walls of the home. Cultural, religious and recreational activities form a central part of daily life, including light sports programmes, cultural evenings, religious sessions and craft workshops such as sewing, pottery, agriculture and fishing net-making. In this space, the elderly are not treated as dependents, but as individuals whose long lives and contributions are deeply respected.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information,



Oman's elderly population stood at approximately 181,241 in 2024, a figure expected to rise to around 385,395 by 2040. These projections underline the urgency of expanding and diversifying elderly care services.

Despite the importance of care homes, the Ministry stresses that they are not meant to replace families. "Our teams continuously assess residents' situations to reintegrate them into their families

or suitable alternative families whenever possible", Al Fahdi explained.

One of the ministry's most distinctive initiatives is the Alternative Family Care Programme, which allows elderly individuals to live with volunteer families who are able to provide care without financial compensation. During the first half of 2025, 36 elderly Omanis benefitted from this programme. Alternative families may include distant relatives, neighbours, or families caring for elderly individuals with no relatives at all, provided they can offer independent accommodation and stable living conditions.

When remaining at home is possible, the Ministry prioritises that option. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, it launched the Home Care Programme for the Elderly, which delivers medical and social services directly to elderly individuals in their own homes. During the first half of 2025, the programme served 1,327 beneficiaries and provided 1,217 prosthetic devices and medical aids.

Services also include home modifications, family training, psychological guidance, social engagement activities and the provision of domestic workers when necessary. Financial and in-kind assistance is also offered to elderly individuals facing difficult health or economic circumstances, ensuring stability while preserving dignity.

Expanding care options further, the Ministry issued regulations last year for the establishment of Day Care Centres for the Elderly. These centres, encouraged through private sector and civil society participation, provide daytime social, psychological, cultural and recreational services while keeping the family as the cornerstone of care. At the heart of all these initiatives is a clear vision: empowerment rather than isolation. Active community participation remains central, whether through involving the elderly in social work, valuing their experience in sustainable development, or supporting their economic independence through suitable productive activities and social assistance programmes.

Oman's elderly population stood at approximately 181,241 in 2024, a figure expected to rise to around 385,395 by 2040. These projections underline the urgency of expanding and diversifying elderly care services.



WHEN A RAISED HAND CHANGED A LIFE

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

WHEN MOST children were still adjusting their backpacks and finding their seats, a quiet moment changed the course of Al Waleed al Balushi's life. The first class of the day was music. The teacher asked a simple question: "Who would like to learn the piano?"

One hand went up, his alone. Drawn by curiosity towards the black and white keys, Al Waleed did not yet know that this small act of volunteering would become the foundation of a lifelong devotion to music.

That early fascination soon turned into commitment.

Recognising his eagerness, the teacher took him on as a private student and introduced him to the fundamentals of piano playing. What began as curiosity grew into discipline and passion. When Al Waleed reached high school, his path was already taking shape.

Faced with the choice between the scientific and literary tracks, he chose the latter, as a deliberate step towards studying music academically. Today, he is a third-year student of Music and Musicology at Sultan Qaboos University, within the College of Arts and Social Sciences, continuing a journey that began with a single raised hand.

The piano, for Al Waleed, is not merely an instrument, it is a universe.

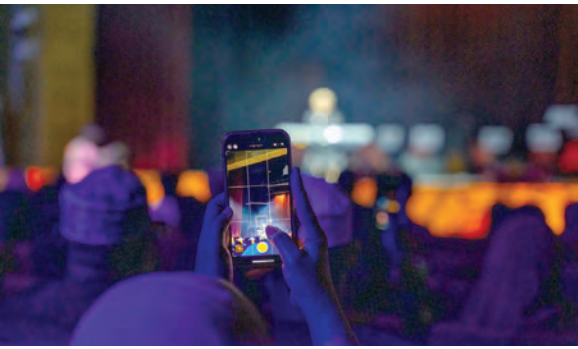
Its unique ability to carry melody and rhythm simultaneously is what deepened his attachment over time. He describes the piano as a language capable of translating emotions too complex for words, a space where structure and freedom coexist. This balance mirrors his own artistic philosophy and approach to music making.

Balancing academic study with rigorous practice is part of his daily rhythm. Mornings are dedicated to lectures and theoretical foundations, while practice fills the spaces in between, short breaks, quiet afternoons and moments carved out between university commitments.

For Al Waleed, studying music and practicing it are inseparable acts, one feeds the other, creating a continuous cycle of learning and refinement.

Musically, his inspirations have evolved over time. In his early years, he was deeply influenced by the works of Fairuz and Omar Khairat, whose melodies shaped his emotional understanding of music.

As his studies deepened, his interests gravitated towards Western classical music, particularly the Romantic era. The expressive



intensity of Frédéric Chopin and the emotional depth of Sergei Rachmaninoff now form the core of his musical admiration.

Beyond the practice room, Al Waleed's presence has resonated across numerous cultural stages. From performances in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar with Outward Bound Oman to formal musical evenings held under royal patronage, from national festivals and university events to award winning competitions, each appearance marked a step forward. These experiences, he reflects, were essential in overcoming stage anxiety. What once manifested as tension gradually transformed into focus, an ability to immerse himself fully in the music.

Inspiration, for Al Waleed, comes from life in its quietest forms, personal experiences, reflections on nature and memories that leave a lasting emotional imprint. Through composition and performance, he seeks to create musical worlds that feel honest and deeply human.

His style leans towards tonal and classical music, subtly infused with Arabic elements, reflecting both his heritage and a broader global musical language. His ambitions are clear yet grounded. He hopes to complete his ABRSM certifications in theory and piano, join the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra and one day perform Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No 3, a piece he considers a defining summit in a pianist's life.

At home, his decision to pursue music was met with discussion, as many families naturally gravitate towards traditional professions. Yet the choice remained his, supported by a family that ultimately chose belief and encouragement.

For Al Waleed, music is not a destination but a journey, one built on discipline, theory and endless discovery.

The road is long, he believes, so enjoy the journey rather than fixating on the end. Between the black and white keys, he continues to shape a space where Omani identity, classical tradition and personal truth quietly converge.