

O M A N
عمان
D A I L Y

Observer

VOL. 44, NO. 53
PAGES 20 | BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 06:50 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:30 AM
DHUHR 12:18 PM
ASR 03:20 PM
MAGHRIB 05:40 PM
ISHA 06:55 PM


2010000387405

INBRIEF

HM CONGRATULATES EMIR OF KUWAIT AND BAHRAIN KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on Kuwait's success in hosting the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to Shaikh Mishal and the people of Kuwait, lauding the sincere efforts made by the State of Kuwait in organising this major football event in the Gulf countries.

His Majesty the Sultan wished Kuwait success in accomplishing further achievements at all levels. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of congratulations to King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, on the occasion of his country's football team winning the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to King Hamad and the people of Bahrain for this triumph, wishing the Kingdom of Bahrain further achievements in all sectors.

Thanks Cable: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Dr Mohamed al Menfi of the Libyan Presidential Council in response to His Majesty's greetings cable on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, the President of the Libyan Presidential Council expressed his thanks for His Majesty's sentiments, stressing his keenness to bolster the bilateral relations in various fields to serve the interests of the two countries and their peoples.

HM TO PRESIDE OVER ROYAL HORSE RACE FESTIVAL

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will preside over the Royal Horse Race Festival, which will be held at Al Adiyat horse race track in the Wilayat of Al Seeb on Tuesday.

The festival will include five races allocated for pure Arabian horses, while the fifth race will be the prominent one as jockeys will compete for His Majesty the Sultan's Horse Race Cup.

Equestrian shows and skills, as well as Omani folklore arts and diverse musical pieces, will be performed between the races. The festival will also see the participation of the Royal Camel Corps.

The Royal grace of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the Royal Horse Race Festival reflects His Majesty's support for horse and equestrian sports. It also embodies His Majesty's encouragement to preserve this authentic heritage as the Sultanate of Oman enjoys a deep-rooted equestrian history. — ONA



HOLIDAY FOR HM'S ACCESSION DAY

Upon the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, it has been decided that Sunday, January 12, will be an official holiday for employees in units of the State's administrative apparatus (public sector), other legal entities, and private sector establishments on the occasion of His Majesty the Sultan's Accession Day.

The Ministry of Labour said that employers may agree with their respective employees to continue working during the above-mentioned day if deemed necessary, provided the workers are compensated for that. — ONA

HM CONFERS MEDALS



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, conferred medals of Excellent Service, Royal Commendation and Proficiency on a number of senior officers of the Royal Oman Police (ROP), on Sunday. Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, presented the medals at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences. **DETAILS ON P2**

Israel kills 14 as mediators strive for a truce

CAIRO/GAZA: Israeli air strikes killed at least 14 Palestinians in three separate attacks in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, taking the weekend death toll to 102, Palestinian medics said, as US and Arab mediators stepped up efforts to conclude a ceasefire deal. Health officials said an Israeli air strike killed five people in a house in the Nuseirat camp in central Gaza, while another air strike killed four others in Jabalia in the northern edge of the enclave, where Israeli forces have been operating for three months.

Later on Sunday, an Israeli air strike hit a police station in Khan Yunis in southern Gaza, killing five people, medics said. It wasn't immediately clear if all the dead were policemen. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on Sunday's strikes.

Earlier on Sunday, the health ministry of Gaza said Israeli strikes across the territory had killed at least 88 Palestinians and wounded more than 200 others in the past 24 hours.



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Gaza City on Sunday. — Reuters

In Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood, relatives and neighbours rushed to the Zuhd family's house, which was struck by an Israeli air strike late on Saturday, killing seven people, medics said. The search continued on Sunday morning for four others believed to be trapped under the rubble.

A hand belonging to one of

the dead could be seen amongst the ruins, with the rest of his body buried under collapsed masonry. Three men removed dirt with their bare hands to retrieve bodies and search for possible survivors. "Three young men, the son's wife, and three children are still here. We retrieved this cousin of mine. Another cousin has been

martyred and is now in the hospital. Approximately 11 people have been martyred here," Ammar Zuhd, a relative, said. A renewed push is under way to reach a ceasefire in the war between Israel and Hamas, and return Israeli captives who were taken to Gaza, before US President-elect Donald Trump takes office on January 20. Israeli negotiators were dispatched on Friday to resume talks in Doha brokered by Qatari and Egyptian mediators, while US President Joe Biden's administration, which is helping to mediate, urged Hamas to agree to a deal. Hamas said it was committed to reaching an agreement as soon as possible, but it was unclear how close the two sides were.

Israel launched its assault on Gaza in response to an October 7, 2023 attack. Israel's military campaign has levelled swathes of the enclave, driving most people from their homes, and has killed 45,805 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry. — Reuters

SNOW, ICE SNARLS POST-HOLIDAY TRAVEL IN EUROPE

LONDON: Snow and ice forced the grounding of dozens of flights in parts of Europe on Sunday, disrupting the tail end of the busy New Year holiday travel season. Airports in the northwestern cities of Manchester and Liverpool, central Birmingham, and western Bristol reopened on Sunday after heavy snow across large parts of England forced runway closures. Northern Leeds Bradford airport, however, said its runway would remain closed until further notice.

The snow also left some key roads in northern England shut, with the rail line between northern Leeds and Halifax suspended due to the weather conditions.

Snow and black ice forced the cancellation on Sunday of dozens of flights at Frankfurt airport, Germany's largest. A total of 120 of some 1,990 flights at the airport in the country's west were cancelled, with a spokesperson saying that take-off and landing runways needed clearing while "de-icing the

planes is also more complex and more demanding." Poor visibility was another factor behind the cancellations. In Munich, 35 flights were cancelled as a precaution late on Saturday evening out of a total of 750 departures and landings scheduled at Germany's second-largest airport, a spokesperson said. The meteorological office warned of freezing rain on Sunday after snowfall overnight and recommended passengers avoid unnecessary travel. — AFP

MOH 1796367/2024

برجیل
burjeel
hospital
by Burjeel Holdings

24399777
burjeelhospitaloman.com

Visiting
11-14
January
2025

Renowned visiting consultant from India

Injured on the field?

We'll help you come back stronger, faster, and more resilient.

Dr. Raghunathan Narayanasamy

Consultant - Orthopedic Surgeon (Sports Medicine)

Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair, Muscat

SHORT TAKES



Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy holding talks with Hans Grundberg.

UN ENVOY
TALKS YEMEN
SOLUTIONS

MUSCAT: Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, received on Sunday Hans Grundberg, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Yemen.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the regional developments, as well as the situation in Yemen and the efforts made to reach a political solution. The meeting was attended by members of the delegation accompanying the guest and some officials from the Foreign Ministry. — ONA

HAJ ELIGIBILITY
NOTIFICATION
FROM TUESDAY



MUSCAT: Citizens and residents who were deemed eligible to perform Haj 1446 AH from the Sultanate of Oman will be notified, in accordance with eligibility priority, electronically and via SMS starting from Tuesday, Rajab 7, 1446 AH, corresponding to January 7, 2024, the Omani Haj Mission (OHM) announced on Sunday. The OHM stated that those eligible should join Haj companies within 5 days of receiving notification upon payment of 50 per cent of the contract value. — ONA



SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES THAILAND AMBASSADOR

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Sunday Warunee Pan-Krajang, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Sultanate of Oman. HH Sayyid Shihab wished the ambassador success in carrying out her duties in Oman.

The meeting reviewed the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Thailand, in addition to discussing several matters of mutual interest. — ONA

HM confers medals on
senior ROP officers

HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, conferred medals of Excellent Service, Royal Commendation and Proficiency on a number of senior officers of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Sunday.

On this occasion, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, presented the medals at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences.

Al Busaidy congratulated the officers for receiving this honour, which comes in appreciation of the continued efforts made by the Royal Oman Police officers for the advancement of this dear country under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander.

The event was attended by Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, Maj Gen Abdullah bin Ali al Harthy, Assistant Inspector General of Police, Customs and Operations, Maj Gen Khalifa bin Ali al Siyabi, Assistant Inspector General of Police and Customs for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and several senior ROP officers.



On this occasion, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, presented the medals at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences

Royal Oman Police marks annual day with military parade

NIZWA: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Sunday celebrated its annual day, which falls on January 5 every year.

On this occasion, a ceremony was held at the military parade grounds of the Sultan Qaboos Academy of Police Sciences in the Wilayat of Nizwa under the auspices of Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court.

The ceremony saw the graduation of the 47th batch of cadet officers – holders of a Diploma in Law and Police Sciences, the 11th batch of service system cadet officers, the 55th batch of university cadet officers and the 56th batch of specialised cadet officers. The batches included officers from the Internal Security Service and the Royal Guard of Oman, as well as officers from the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Republic of Djibouti.

The celebration began with a salute to the chief guest. The commandant of the parade requested Sayyid Khalid to inspect the front row of the column. After



A ceremony was held at the military parade grounds of the Sultan Qaboos Academy of Police Sciences in the Wilayat of Nizwa under the auspices of Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court.



that, the graduates presented a military show before the dais. Then, the chief guest handed over awards to top graduate officers.

This was followed by protocols of handing over the “Banner of Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences” from the 47th batch of diploma cadet officers to the 47th batch of university cadet officers.

Then, the column of the parade chanted the ROP Anthem and swore the Oath of Loyalty. They chanted thrice “Long Live His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander”, after which they saluted the chief guest, marking the end of the parade.

A column of ROP Cavalry paraded past the dais to the accompaniment of musical tunes by the ROP Band.

The names of winners of ROP Awards 2024 were announced during the ceremony.

The ceremony was attended by some Royal Family members, ministers and advisers, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the ROP and security and military units. — ONA

SHORT TAKE



The celebration was held under the auspices of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

SUR ENDS ARAB TOURISM CAPITAL 2024 WITH EXPEDITION LAUNCH

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JAN 5

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) concluded the Wilayat of Sur’s tenure as the Arab Tourism Capital for 2024 with a grand celebration, highlighting the launch of the exploratory expedition Sultanate of Oman: Jewel of the Arabs. Key officials attended the event, held under the auspices of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, representing both the public and private sectors in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

Throughout the year, Sur’s executive programme featured a variety of events and activities that attracted tourists from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman. Key highlights included the Meteorite Exhibition in the Wilayat of Sur, showcasing a rare collection of meteorites, and the meteor observation devices project, which contributes to documenting meteorite activity in the region.

These initiatives reinforce Oman’s position as a unique scientific and tourist destination. In celebration of World Heritage Day, the Ministry hosted an event featuring a visual presentation of its heritage preservation efforts, an exhibition on Sur’s historical landmarks, and outlets for local entrepreneurs. Educational workshops on archaeological excavation further enhanced awareness of Sur’s rich history. Sur’s tourism potential was further showcased through the Sur Marine Sports Festival, which included sailing, parasailing, swimming races, and traditional boat rowing championships.

The White Sails event, celebrating World Tourism Day, offered workshops on traditional shipbuilding and exhibitions of marine photography, providing insight into Sur’s rich maritime heritage. The programme also included training courses on tourism entrepreneurship, tourist guidance, and rescue skills in open waters, empowering the local community and enhancing safety and service quality in tourism.

The Sur Maritime Heritage Festival brought the region’s maritime history to the forefront, attracting visitors with its cultural, artistic and sports events.

It also provided a platform for local artisans to showcase their handicrafts. The crowning event was the announcement of the Sultanate of Oman: Jewel of the Arabs expedition. Led by British explorer Mark Evans and joined by young Omanis and Britons, the 30-day journey will span from Al Suwaih Beach in the Wilayat of Sur through the governorates of Al Sharqiyah North, Al Wusta and Dhofar.

The expedition aims to raise global awareness of Oman’s cultural and natural heritage while addressing environmental sustainabilit.

SULTAN QABOOS INSTITUTE FOR TEACHING ARABIC RECEIVES 47 NEW STUDENTS

MANAH: The Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic to Non-Native Speakers on Sunday received 47 students from the United Kingdom, Russia, Belgium, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Belarus, Uzbekistan, South Korea, El Salvador, India, Iran, Australia and Kazakhstan. Based in the Wilayat of Manah, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, the institute also received 15 Arabic language teachers from some Uzbek universities, including the

University of Oriental Studies and the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan. Besides teaching Arabic to non-native speakers and teachers (male and female), the institute is conducting a variety of activities, including lectures, educational trips to various historical and natural places, Arabic calligraphy lessons, art courses, and a programme titled “language partner” for like-minded counterparts.

The course also includes theories of second language acquisition, methods of learning and teaching foreign languages, models for teaching Arabic to non-native speakers, teaching skills, designing language examinations and questionnaires, dialogue sessions, and other hands-on applications.

The institute is conducting an 8-week course for non-native students and a 4-week course for non-native teachers. — ONA

Arab Theatre Fest from Jan 9

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 5

OMAN is set to host the 15th edition of the Arab Theatre Festival from January 9 to 15, under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, in partnership with the Arab Theatre Authority and the Omani Theatre Association. The festival will be held at three major venues: Al Bustan Palace Theatre, Al Irfan Theatre at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), and the Theatre of the College of Banking Studies.

This vibrant cultural event will feature 15 theatrical performances from 13 Arab countries, with 11 competing for the prestigious Shaikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi



Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy addressing the press conference.

Award for Best Arab Play. Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture and Chairman of the festival’s organising committee, described the festival as a vital gathering for Arab artists, theatre professionals,

and creatives, providing an opportunity to celebrate theatre and foster cultural exchange.

The event will showcase over 500 theatre artists and include various complementary activities, such as an Omani crafts exhibition, an art gallery, 30 press conferences, and an intellectual conference exploring thought-provoking themes, including the intersection of theatre and artificial intelligence. Moreover, 33 books on Omani, Gulf and Arab theatre will be launched, with nine new titles spotlighting Omani theatre.

The festival will also feature 370 titles from the Arab Theatre Authority’s publications. Al Busaidy emphasised that the festival aligns with Oman’s 2021–2040 cultural strategy, which seeks to enrich the nation’s cultural landscape and provide

opportunities for Omani artists to engage in performances, training, and collaborative discussions.

The festival will also honour five Omani entities for their contributions to theatre development, including Al Saidia Schools and the Omani Theatre Association. In addition to the performances, Palestinian artist Fathi Abdel Rahman will deliver the Arab Theatre Day message on January 10. To expand its reach, the festival will be live-streamed, and the Arab Theatre Authority has introduced the ‘Studio 15’ programme to offer daily analyses and discussions on the festival’s activities.

This year’s festival promises to be an unforgettable celebration of Arab theatre, creativity and shared cultural values.

National survey on NCDs launched in Dhofar

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

The National Survey on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) was launched on Sunday at Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in the Wilayat of Salalah. The initiative is part of the Ministry of Health’s efforts to enhance community health and strengthen the Sultanate of Oman’s healthcare system with a strong foundation of scientific research. HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, officially launched the survey in the presence of Dr Ali bin Abdullah al Maqbali, Director-General of Health Services in Dhofar Governorate and several other officials. Dr Hamoud bin Saeed al Fazari, Director of the Primary Health Care Department in Dhofar Governorate, outlined the objectives and methodology of the survey, which targets citizens and residents aged 15 and above. The survey aims to gather detailed data on the prevalence and risk factors associated with NCDs, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory conditions and cancer. These diseases pose significant challenges both nationally and globally, driven by factors such as unhealthy behaviours and physical inactivity.

The NCDs’ impact on community health is substantial. As per a report review in 2022,



The survey aims to gather detailed data on the prevalence and risk factors associated with NCDs.

NCDs account for 72 per cent of all deaths in Oman, and one in five adults succumbs to these diseases before the age of 70.

The survey’s execution is divided into two phases. The first involves updating maps of residential complexes and identifying residents. The second phase will consist of visiting randomly selected households across Oman’s governorates to collect data through questionnaires, physical measurements, and health examinations. Dr Al Fazari emphasised that the data collected will provide a precise assessment of Oman’s current health status, enabling the formulation of innovative health policies and programmes to prevent NCDs and mitigate their health and economic impacts.

Dr Al Fazari underscored the importance of community participation in this survey, stating that it is both a national duty and a step towards a sustainable and healthier future. Public cooperation with field teams is vital, as joint efforts reflect the collective commitment to societal well-being. By contributing to the survey, participants will help improve the quality of life for current and future generations. The National Survey on Non-Communicable Diseases was initially launched in Muscat Governorate last month and is set to expand to all governorates in the Sultanate of Oman. It is a critical component of the Ministry of Health’s agenda to safeguard the health and safety of Oman’s population.survey aims to gather detailed data on the prevalence and risk factors associated with NCDs, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory conditions, and cancer. These diseases pose significant challenges both nationally and globally, driven by factors such as unhealthy behaviours and physical inactivity.

The NCDs’ impact on community health is huge. As per a report review in 2022, NCDs pose a significant burden in Oman. They account for 72 per cent of all deaths in the country, and one in five adults succumbs to NCDs before the age of 70. The survey’s execution is divided into two phases. The first involves updating maps of residential complexes and identifying residents.

RAM launches ‘Minbar for an Impactful Speech’ programme

MUSCAT: In line with its mission to foster national talent, the Royal Academy of Management (RAM), in partnership with the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA), has introduced the ‘Minbar for an Impactful Speech’ programme.

This initiative brings together 50 preachers from across Oman, aiming to elevate the role of mosque preachers in promoting national, social, and humanitarian values. The programme addresses the growing need for effective public speaking and preaching skills.

Designed to have a lasting



The RAM programme in partnership with MoARA brings together 50 preachers from across Oman.

impact, the programme equips preachers with innovative tools and strategic vision, enhancing their ability to contribute meaningfully to society. It aligns

with Oman’s broader goals of building a cohesive society capable of tackling present and future challenges.

The programme also emphasises

the use of modern technologies to spread knowledge while preserving Omani identity and culture.

Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati,

President of RAM, said: “The ‘Minbar for an Impactful Speech’ programme is a key initiative to support mosque preachers. It highlights the collaboration between RAM and the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

The programme aims to foster values of tolerance, openness and constructive dialogue, empowering preachers to contribute to Oman’s development while reinforcing national values and identity.”

Conducted over ten days, the programme combines theory and practical sessions, led by public speaking experts.



The African Village is designed to highlight the beauty and richness of East African traditions and is a cultural showcase blending music, food, art, animals and interactive activities



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 5

AS part of the ‘Muscat Nights’ festival activities organised by the Muscat Municipality this year, the Oman Automobile Association is hosting the ‘African Village’, an exceptional experience that takes visitors on a journey into the heart of the African continent to explore its diverse cultures and arts.

Mohammed al Hashmi, founder of Carnival City, explained, “Carnival City focuses on creating unique and immersive experiences that connect people and cultures. Our latest initiative, the African Village experience, is a vibrant celebration of East African culture, specifically designed to be part of this year’s Muscat Nights.”

Al Hashmi noted that the African Village is a dynamic addition to Carnival City, designed to highlight the beauty and richness of East African traditions. This cultural showcase, which runs throughout the Muscat Nights event, blends music, food, art, animals and interactive activities to create a truly unforgettable experience.

LIVE BAND FROM KENYA

Al Hashmi also mentioned that a talented band from Kenya was specially brought in for the event to perform traditional East African music and dance. The band engages with the audience by teaching children how to play African drums, adding an interactive and educational element to the event.

EAST AFRICAN CUISINE & SHOPS

The village offers a unique culinary experience through nine African restaurants serving a variety of dishes, from hearty soups to signature desserts, reflecting the richness of African cuisine.

Shops and stalls allow visitors to purchase

authentic African items such as traditional clothing, handmade crafts, spices and chili products, offering them a chance to take a piece of Africa home.

The village includes a section showcasing a variety of animals such as snakes, monkeys and parrots, adding an educational and adventurous aspect for visitors.

This section provides children and families with the opportunity to enjoy African-inspired face painting designs, adding a fun and cultural touch. Al Hashmi pointed out that the concept of the ‘African Village’ was inspired by the deep historical ties between Oman and East Africa. He emphasised that the goal is to offer a new cultural experience that celebrates the shared heritage between the two regions while providing a space that combines entertainment and learning.

Ahmed al Saadi, a father of three, commented, “The village is an amazing experience that combines entertainment and education. My children thoroughly enjoyed the activities, especially playing African drums and interacting with the animals. This event is not just entertainment but also an opportunity to learn about a rich and fascinating culture.”

Maryam al Balushi added, “I came with my children and did not expect this level of excellence. The diverse activities and the musical band captivated the children’s attention. My kids learned to play the drums and enjoyed the animal section. I was particularly impressed by the shops, where I bought some African spices. I believe events like this enrich cultural connections between people.”

She concluded, “The African Village is not just a place for entertainment but an opportunity to discover a rich and distinctive culture. The dishes were amazing, especially the desserts, and I feel this event combines education and enjoyment in a wonderful way.”

A JOURNEY INTO CULTURE, CUISINE



Recall



Recall Date: 06/01/2025

Brand of Commodity	Production Period (Production Weeks)	Number of Affected Commodities
Dunlop – 285/60R18 116V GRANDTREK PT5	From December 2023 (5023) to September 2024 (3724)	250

Recall consequence

The tyres did not meet the requirements of the GSO53/2007 high speed performance test. The test results indicate failures in the bead area of the tyres occurring between 1 and 14 minutes at a speed of 230 km/h. The defect poses a safety concern, as high speed driving may lead to serious accidents.

Recall Action

A recall plan to replace the tyres with GRANDTREK AT22 tyres at no cost to customers.

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>



T: +968-2459 5058
F: +968-24501818



SHORT TAKE



‘Landmarks of Identity: Bronze Age Towers of the Oman Peninsula’ written by Prof Stephanie Döpfer is the new edition

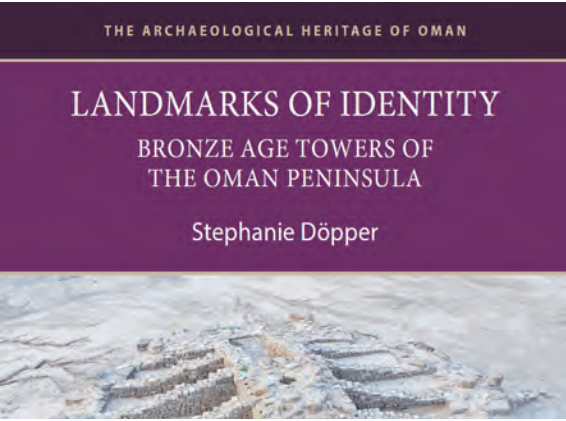
MoHT UNVEILS NEW EDITION IN HERITAGE SERIES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) has unveiled the latest edition in the Omani Archaeological Heritage series, titled ‘Landmarks of Identity: Bronze Age Towers of the Oman Peninsula’.

Written by Prof Stephanie Döpfer, this book provides a unique exploration of nearly 100 Bronze Age towers dating back to the third millennium BC, offering new insights into their history, functions and cultural significance.

The illustrated volume challenges previous beliefs about these structures, often seen as mere watchtowers or defensive fortifications. Through modern archaeological excavations, Döpfer reveals that these towers served various purposes throughout ancient times.

The book also delves into their construction, development, and repurposing over centuries, highlighting their role in Bronze Age activities, such as long-distance trade, large-scale copper production and the emergence of monumental architecture. Beyond being a scholarly reference, this work serves as a guide for both visitors and researchers, featuring maps, illustrations and photographs that document the precise locations of each tower. — ONA



Salalah Agricultural Plain highlights sustainability and economic growth

SALALAH: The Salalah Agricultural Plain, spanning approximately 5,000 acres, exemplifies economic sustainability and food security in the Sultanate of Oman by merging traditional and modern farming techniques.

Known for its annual seasonal rainfall of about 100 mm during the khareef season, the plain benefits from enhanced soil fertility and supports a variety of crops vital to the region’s economy.

Eng Fael bin Mohammed al Jahfali, Assistant Director-General for Agriculture and Water Resources in Dhofar Governorate, highlighted the plain’s role in bolstering the economy through significant agricultural production. Key outputs include 4,928 tonnes of bananas annually, comprising 15.3 per cent of the plain’s fruit yield and exported to Gulf markets. Additionally, it produces 7,000 tonnes of coconut, which is utilised in food manufacturing, cosmetics, and body care products. The



A key output of the fruit yield includes 4,928 tonnes of bananas annually, comprising 15.3 per cent of the yield for export markets.

Salalah Agricultural Plain also serves as a major tourist attraction during khareef, drawing visitors to its lush coconut farms and fresh fruit kiosks.

The plain cultivates various crops, including mangoes, citrus fruits, and vegetables, alongside aromatic and medicinal plants suited to its humid climate. Despite its successes, the plain faces challenges such as mountainous terrain, limited water resources,

and urban sprawl. To address these, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is promoting modern agricultural techniques, including drip irrigation, hydroponics, greenhouse farming, and solar-powered systems. Programmes supporting turmeric, ginger, and Arabic coffee cultivation, along with organic farming, are also underway.

Farmers like Abdullah bin Mohammed al Shanfari are adopting greenhouse farming to improve crop production in controlled environments.

This method uses plastic or glass structures to shield crops from harsh weather, with efficient systems for irrigation, fertilisation and harvesting. Crops such as herbs, tomatoes, and peppers thrive under this method. Meanwhile, Alawi bin Abdullah al Muqbil emphasised Salalah’s agricultural history, marked by rain-fed farming and terrace cultivation, adapting to climatic changes and urban expansion. — ONA

Al Sharqiyah South Hackathon wraps up

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JAN 5

THE Al Sharqiyah South Hackathon wrapped up on Saturday, marking a significant milestone in fostering innovation and sustainability in Oman. Held under the theme ‘Innovate to Make a Change’, the three-day event brought together over 120 innovators and leading national entities to present creative solutions addressing critical challenges across key sectors such as tourism, environment, logistics, urban planning, energy and water.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), alongside Dr Yahya bin Badr al Maawali, Governor of Al Sharqiyah



South. The event was a collaborative effort spearheaded by the office of the Governor of Al Sharqiyah South, in partnership with Matters Group and strategic entities, including the Oman Investment Authority, be’ah Company, Omran Company, Asyad Group and OQ Company, supported by organisations like Oman LNG and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Sur.

Dr Yahya emphasised the hackathon’s

pivotal role in empowering youth and innovators: “The Al Sharqiyah South Hackathon reflects the governorate’s commitment to supporting Omani talents in providing practical and sustainable solutions. This platform not only nurtures creativity, but also enhances Oman’s standing in global innovation.” With over 305 registrants and 86 ideas submitted, the hackathon narrowed down 25 innovative solutions for development.

Initiative launched to address traffic congestion in Nizwa



NIZWA: A meeting was held in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate to discuss the ‘Crowd Management and Traffic Congestion Management Initiative in the Wilayat of Nizwa’, aimed at alleviating traffic congestion, improving public transport routes, and providing modern and safe transportation options. The initiative is designed to reduce traffic accidents and minimise travel time for visitors.

Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, emphasised the governorate’s dedication to enhancing public transport services in collaboration with relevant authorities. He highlighted how this initiative will strengthen the tourism and investment sectors while providing exceptional services that mitigate traffic-related challenges.

During the meeting, the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, in partnership with Mwasalat and the Royal Oman Police, presented a visual overview of the proposed crowd management project, scheduled for implementation from January 11 to 31. — ONA

By virtue of articles 22 & 21 of the Statue and Article VIII/A of the By Law of the Oman Society of Engineers has decided to hold General Assembly Meeting and hold elections and nominations open according to the following days:

Subject	Date
Nominations Open	12/1/2025
Nominations Close	27/1/2025
General Assembly & Election	17/2/2025

The current Board of Directors urges Omani Engineers who wish to nominate themselves to the Board of Directors to contact the OSE office to get the nomination applications. Note: A member of the Assembly is a member of the outstanding fees, including an annual subscription for 2024

92319975 / 24210099
Office@ose.org.om

TENDER NOTICE

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries
Wealth and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
1137/2023/MAFWR/HQ-124 Recall	DESIGN AND BUILD SERVICES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXISTING MIRBAT FISHERY HARBOUR IN DHOFAR GOVERNORATE	Monday 30/12/2024	Monday 20/1/2025	Sunday 9/2/2025	Specialized companies registered with First and Second grades	(100/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
1/2025/MAFWR/HQ-1	PURCHASING TABLETS FOR THE MINISTRY	Wednesday 1/1/2025	Monday 20/1/2025	Monday 10/2/2025	Specialized companies registered with, Excellent, First Second, Third, Fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

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

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al Shaibani meets Qatari Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al Thani in Doha. — Reuters

SYRIAN MINISTERS ARRIVE ON FIRST VISIT TO QATAR

DOHA: Ministers from Syria’s transitional government arrived in Qatar on Sunday for their first visit to the Gulf state since the toppling of president Bashar al Assad last month. The interim foreign minister, Asaad al Shaibani, was accompanied by defence minister Morhaf Abu Kasra and the new head of intelligence, Anas Khattab.

In a statement, Qatar’s foreign ministry said the Gulf country’s premier met with Syria’s delegates. Qatari Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al Thani “reiterated the State of Qatar’s position in support of Syria’s unity, sovereignty and independence,” the statement said.

Following discussions with Qatar’s Minister of State, Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al Khulaifi, Shaibani reiterated calls for the lifting of US sanctions on Syria. The interim foreign minister called the measures a “barrier and an obstacle to the rapid recovery” telling local media that his government “renewed our demand for the United States of America to lift these sanctions”. At the end of December, Qatar also called for the quick removal of sanctions on Syria. — AFP

VENEZUELAN OPPN LEADER TO SPEAK WITH BIDEN

MONTEVIDEO: Venezuelan opposition politician Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, who fled the country after a tumultuous election and subsequent police crackdown, said that he has plans to speak with US President Joe Biden. Appearing in Argentina, where he met with President Javier Milei, Gonzalez Urrutia added that he was travelling to the United States on Sunday, though it was unclear when the conversation with Biden would take place.

“We are planning a conversation with President Biden and we are waiting for details regarding the new authorities,” Gonzalez Urrutia said, referring to



Venezuelan opposition leader Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia in Montevideo. — AFP

incoming US president Donald Trump, set to take over on January 20.

Gonzalez Urrutia’s meeting with Milei came at the start of a regional tour aimed at building international support for the man Venezuela’s opposition considers the rightful president-elect.

The 75-year-old appeared alongside Milei on a balcony of the Casa Rosada, the Argentine president’s official workplace, as hundreds of Venezuelans gathered below on the Plaza de Mayo chanted “Venezuela, you are not alone!” — AFP

SUDAN’S ARMY CHIEF WELCOMES TURKISH OFFER TO RESOLVE CONFLICT

PORT SUDAN: Sudan’s army chief has welcomed a Turkish offer to resolve the brutal 20-month conflict between his forces and their paramilitary rivals, the Sudanese foreign minister said. In early December, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a phone call with Sudan’s Abdel Fattah al Burhan that Ankara could help establish “peace and stability” in the war-torn African state.

At a meeting in Port Sudan, Burhan asked Türkiye’s deputy foreign minister Burhanettin Duran

to “deliver the Sudanese leadership’s welcoming of the initiative” to Erdogan, Sudanese foreign minister Ali Youssef said in a briefing after the meeting. “Sudan needs brothers and friends like Türkiye,” Youssef said, adding that “the initiative can lead to... realising peace in Sudan”. Erdogan said in his December call with Burhan that Türkiye “could step in to resolve disputes”, and prevent Sudan from “becoming an area of external interventions”, according to a statement from the Turkish

presidency.

Following his meeting with Burhan on Saturday, Türkiye’s Duran said that the peace process “entails concerted efforts”, and that his country was ready to play a “role in mobilising other regional actors to help overcoming the difficulties in ending this conflict”. The war in Sudan, which has pitted Burhan against his former deputy and RSF chief Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, has killed tens of thousands of people and uprooted 12 million more. — AFP

S Koreans protest as Yoon arrest deadline nears

THOUSANDS of South Koreans braved a snowstorm on Sunday to rally in support or opposition of President Yoon Suk Yeol, suspended over a failed martial law bid and resisting arrest a day before the warrant expires. Yoon plunged the country into political chaos last month with the bungled martial law declaration and has since holed up in the presidential residence, surrounded by hundreds of loyal security officers. An attempt to arrest him by investigators failed when a tense six-hour standoff with his presidential security service ended over security fears, with his supporters also camped outside.

Thousands descended on his residence again on Sunday despite bitter snow conditions blanketing the capital -- with one camp demanding Yoon’s arrest while the other called for his impeachment to be declared invalid. The rallies in the cold come as Yoon this week pledged to “fight” those trying to question his short-lived power grab.



Police stand guard, blocking the road leading to the official residence of impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol as protesters gather, in Seoul. — Reuters

Yoon faces criminal charges of insurrection, one of a few crimes not subject to presidential immunity, meaning he could be sentenced to prison or, at worst, the death penalty. If the warrant is executed, Yoon would become the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested. A prosecutors’ report for his former defence minister seen by AFP on Sunday showed Yoon ignored the objections of key cabinet ministers before his failed martial law bid. It said the country’s then prime minister, foreign minister and finance minister all expressed reservations about the potential economic and diplomatic fallout in a cabinet meeting on the night of the decision.

The country’s opposition Democratic Party called on Saturday for the dissolution

of the security service protecting Yoon. Their announcement followed scenes of high drama on Friday, when hundreds of Yoon’s guards and military troops shielded him from investigators who eventually called off the arrest attempt citing safety concerns.

On Sunday, presidential security service chief Park Jong-joon said he had no intention of letting the investigators arrest Yoon by Monday’s deadline, because those under his charge were legally obliged to protect the country’s sitting leader. “Executing an arrest warrant amid allegations of procedural and legal impropriety undermines the PSS’s fundamental mission of securing the President’s absolute safety,” Park, who has denied a police request for questioning, said in a speech.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was set to arrive in Seoul, likely to wade into the crisis of a key security ally in talks with his counterpart Cho Tae-yul. Yoon’s lawyers decried the warrant underpinning Friday’s arrest attempt as “unlawful and invalid”, and filed an objection to the Seoul court that issued it. But the court said on Sunday the objection case was dismissed, saying the reasons could not be disclosed.

Yoon’s lawyer said they would file another complaint against the head of the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) that tried to arrest Yoon.

The president’s legal team “intend to hold those who committed illegal acts strictly accountable under the law,” Yoon Kab-keun said in a statement. — AFP



RESCUERS SAY 23 KILLED IN GAZA

GAZA: Gaza’s civil defence agency reported that Israeli strikes in the Palestinian territory had killed at least 23 people on Sunday. At least 11 people were killed in an air strike on a house in northern Gaza’s Sheikh Radwan area early on Sunday, civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said, adding that the dead included women and children.

Bassal accused Israeli forces of “directing violent air strikes on homes where displaced people were sheltering, claiming they were targeting resistance fighters”.

The latest violence in Gaza comes as indirect negotiations for captives release deal and ceasefire had resumed in Qatar. Mediators Qatar, Egypt and the United States have been engaged for months in efforts to strike a deal to end the war and secure the release of dozens of hostages still held in Gaza. — AFP

WEATHER ALERT

Major storm set to dump snow in US



Blizzard and winter storm warnings were in effect across the Midwest on Sunday, as a massive weather system was forecast to hit the United States, dumping buckets of snow. The National Weather Service issued blizzard warnings in Kansas and Missouri, with a belt of winter storm and ice storm warnings stretching all the way to the US capital on the East Coast, putting an unusually broad 2,400-kilometre swath under immediate threat. — AFP

VIOLENCE INCIDENT

At least eight civilians killed in Mali attack



At least eight civilians have been killed in central Mali, several sources said, accusing the Malian army and Russia’s Wagner group for the latest attack in the country. “A Hilux four-by-four vehicle... was heading towards a refugee camp in Mauritania when Wagner and the Malian army fired. At least eight civilians were killed,” a local official said. There was no immediate comment on the incident from the Malian army. — AFP

NATIONAL MOURNING

Greek reformist ex-PM Simitis dies at 88



Costas Simitis, the reformist prime minister whose governments oversaw Greece’s euro zone entry, helped Cyprus join the EU and planned for the Athens 2004 Olympics, died at the age of 88. The Greek government announced on Sunday a four-day national mourning. Current Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, in a statement, expressed his sadness at the passing of Costas Simitis and his respect for “a worthy and noble political opponent.” — AFP

SURPRISE COLLAPSE



Austrian Chancellor and leader of Austrian People’s Party (OeVP) Karl Nehammer (C) in on his way to the Presidential Chancellery in Vienna. — AFP

AUSTRIANS PICK NEW LEADER AFTER CHANCELLOR QUITTS

VIENNA: The leadership of Austria’s ruling conservatives held a crisis meeting on Sunday to pick a successor to Chancellor Karl Nehammer, who announced his resignation on Saturday as attempts to form a coalition government without the far right fell apart. More than two hours after the meeting began, several Austrian media reported that People’s Party (OVP) Secretary-General Christian Stocker, 64, would take over as party leader in an interim capacity. There was no immediate comment from the party.

The surprise collapse of three- and then two-party talks aimed at cobbling together a centrist coalition that could serve as a bulwark against the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) after the FPÖ came first in September’s parliamentary election leaves President Alexander Van der Bellen with few options.

A snap election with support for the eurosceptic, Russia-friendly FPÖ still growing or an about-face in which Van der Bellen tasks FPÖ leader Herbert Kickl with forming a government are now the most likely options, with only limited scope for alternatives or playing for time. — Reuters

ENGLAND SNOW CAUSES DISRUPTION



An aerial photograph shows Anfield stadium in Liverpool, north west England. Heavy snow across parts of England was on Sunday set to cause disruption for air travellers with runways closed at airports in Bristol and Liverpool. The Met Office said Bingley in northern England had seen 12 centimetres of snow overnight.

FRANCE’S EX-PRESIDENT SARKOZY ON TRIAL OVER ALLEGED PACT

PARIS: Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy, already convicted twice in separate cases since leaving office, goes on trial charged with accepting illegal campaign financing in an alleged pact. The career of Sarkozy has been shadowed by legal troubles since he lost the 2012 presidential election. But he remains an influential figure for many on the right and is also known to regularly meet President Emmanuel Macron. The fiercely ambitious and energetic politician, 69, has been convicted in two cases,

charged in another and is being investigated in connection with two more.

Sarkozy will be in the dock at the Paris court barely half a month after France’s top appeals court on December 18 rejected his appeal against a one year prison sentence for influence peddling, which he is to serve by wearing an electronic bracelet rather than in jail.

The latest trial is the result of a decade of investigations into accusations that Sarkozy accepted illegal campaign financing —

reportedly amounting to some 50 million euros — to help his victorious 2007 election campaign. Sarkozy has denounced the accusations as part of a conspiracy against him, insisting that he never received any financing for the campaign and that there is no evidence of any such transfer. If convicted, Sarkozy faces up to 10 years in prison under the charges of concealing embezzlement of public funds and illegal campaign financing. The trial is due to last until April 10. — AFP

Moscow says Ukraine launches attack in Kursk

RUSSIA said on Sunday that Ukraine had launched a counter-attack in the Kursk region, an area of western Russia from which Russian troops have been trying to eject Ukrainian forces for the past five months. Ukrainian troops broke across the border in a surprise incursion on August 6 and have managed to hold on to a chunk of territory there which could provide Kyiv with an important bargaining chip in potential peace talks.

“Around 9:00 Moscow time, in order to stop the advance of Russian troops in the Kursk direction, the enemy launched a counterattack with an assault group consisting of two tanks, a mine clearing vehicle and twelve armoured combat vehicles with paratroops towards Berdin village,” the Russian defence ministry said in a statement.

“Artillery and aviation of the North group of (Russian) forces defeated the assault group of the Ukrainian Armed Forces,” it added. The statement said two Ukrainian attacks had been repelled. Reuters could not independently verify the situation on the ground. Reports from Russia’s influential war bloggers, who support Moscow’s war in Ukraine but have often reported critically on failings and setbacks, indicated that the latest Ukrainian assault had put Russian forces on the defensive.

“Despite strong pressure from the enemy, our units are heroically holding the line,” the Operativnye Svodki (Operational Reports) channel said. It said artillery and small-arms battles were taking place and Ukraine was using Western-armoured vehicles to bring in large numbers of infantry. The accounts from the defence ministry and the bloggers said fighting was concentrated just north of a highway that runs from Sudzha, near the border, to Kursk, the regional capital.

Ukrainian and Western assessments say that some 11,000 troops from Russia’s ally North Korea have been deployed in the Kursk region to support Moscow’s forces. Russia has neither confirmed nor



Rescuers work at the site of a residential building hit by a Russian air strike, in Sumy, Ukraine. — Reuters

denied their presence. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Saturday that Russian and North Korean forces had suffered heavy losses. “In battles yesterday and today near just one village, Makhnovka, in Kursk region, the Russian army lost up to a battalion of North Korean infantry soldiers and Russian paratroops,” Zelenskyy said. “This is significant.” The president provided no specific details. A battalion can vary in size but is generally made up of several hundred troops.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in response to a question at his marathon annual phone-in last month that Russia would definitely drive Ukrainian forces out of Kursk but declined to set a date for when this would happen. Russia currently controls about a fifth of Ukraine, but Ukraine’s

unexpected success in biting off and retaining a slice of Russian territory could boost its negotiating position as both sides gear up for possible peace talks this year. Both have been striving to improve their battlefield positions before US President-elect Donald Trump is sworn in on January 20. Trump has repeatedly said he will bring a quick end to the war, but without saying how.

The Ukrainian military said on Saturday that the “hottest” front was near Pokrovsk, an important road and rail hub towards which Russia has been pressing for months. On Sunday, Ukraine’s air defences shot down 61 out of 103 drones launched by Russia in an overnight attack, the air force said. Russia said it had destroyed five Ukrainian drones over Russian territory. — Reuters

Italy’s Meloni boosts ties with Trump in surprise Florida visit

FLORIDA: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni made a surprise trip to Florida to meet with Donald Trump late on Saturday, as the key European leader sought to buttress ties with the president-elect before his inauguration on January 20. Members of Trump’s Mar-a-Lago resort welcomed Meloni with applause after an introduction by the president-elect, according to videos shared on social media by reporters and others.

“This is very exciting. I’m here with a fantastic woman, the prime minister of Italy,” Trump told the Mar-a-Lago crowd, according to a media pool report. “She’s really taken Europe by storm.”

Meloni is seen as a potentially strong partner for Trump given her conservative credentials and the stability of the right-wing coalition she has led in Italy since late 2022. She has also forged a close relationship with billionaire tech

CEO Elon Musk, a close Trump ally who spent more than a quarter of a billion dollars to help him win the election. Tommaso Foti, Italy’s EU and regional affairs minister, said on Sunday that the meeting, which had not been announced in advance, showed that Italy could act as “a diplomatic bridge between two worlds: the European Union and the USA”.

Meloni’s trip comes days before she is to meet US President Joe Biden during a visit to Rome from Thursday to January 12. Trump defeated Biden in the November election and is preparing to return to the White House. While no details of their meeting have been disclosed, Meloni had planned to talk with Trump about Russia’s war in Ukraine, trade issues, the Middle East and the plight of an Italian journalist detained in Tehran, according to Italian media reports. Trump and Meloni watched



US President-elect Donald Trump meets with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida. — Reuters

a screening of a documentary questioning the criminal investigations and legal scrutiny

faced by John Eastman, a former Trump lawyer who was central to Trump’s unsuccessful efforts to

overturn his 2020 election loss.

President-elect Donald Trump will be sentenced on January 10 in the criminal case in which he was convicted on charges involving hush money paid to a star, but is unlikely to face jail time or other penalties, a judge said on Friday. Justice Juan Merchan’s ruling means Trump will be required to appear at a court hearing just 10 days before his January 20 inauguration — an unprecedented scenario in US history. Before Trump, no US president — former or sitting — had been charged with or convicted of a crime.

The judge said Trump, 78, may appear at his sentencing either in person or virtually. He wrote that he was not inclined to sentence Trump to jail and that a sentence of “unconditional discharge” — meaning no custody, monetary fine, or probation — would be “the most viable solution.” — Reuters

OPINION

Bring back the joy of reading



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is a Associate Professor, Dept of English and Translation, SQU.

It is that time of year again – New Year resolutions are made, only to be broken within a few days. That is because we often set unrealistic goals for ourselves and give up because it is too ambitious, or seems difficult to achieve. Take reading for instance. Almost nobody will say that reading is not a useful habit – we encourage it in others, but may not follow it ourselves. The benefits are obvious: knowledge, cultural awareness, communication skills and just sheer joy of imagining stories. Yet, we are reluctant to pick up a book. Magazines are almost invisible now and the only hard print we see around are a few newspapers in offices. Bookstores have closed and libraries are less frequented, even in communities where they were once valued. Yet, most of us love to be surrounded by books. Instagram is a clear indication of this trend: there are booktoks, online book clubs, even influencers taking 30 seconds to talk about a recent book or a current trend.

Researchers have talked about this trend as an aesthetic: books forming a background that shows old world charm and a vision of intellect. This may not be necessarily a limitation because it still showcases a world that sees books and reading, as an aspirational lifestyle. We still yearn to be associated with a library full of beautifully bound stacked books, complete with the mandatory props of yellow lights, a comfortable arm chair and the ubiquitous coffee alongside. Reading is still valued, even if it is not actually done in the same spirit. That is itself a positive. All that remains is to bring back the trend, not as a fashion accessory but as a real habit that positively adds to the development of a human being. The best way to follow any resolution is to set realistic targets. Promising to read a masterpiece in a weekend is not really possible, but breaking it up in bits definitely is. The Time magazine this year promoted a

Time magazine’s ‘Read 25 in ‘25’ encourages building a reading habit with just 25 minutes a day.

‘Read 25 in ‘25’ suggestion which basically meant that a realistic target of reading for 25 minutes in a day would help to establish a habit that could be built on later. This is an interesting idea because it shows how realistic a goal can be when framed in bite sizes: “It’s measurable. It’s manageable; 25 minutes of reading is realistic, even for a busy person. And over the course of a year, we can read a lot of books in our 9,125 minutes – that’s more than 152 hours of reading time,” says Gretchen Rubin in her Times article on making reading a daily habit. There are many ways in which we can pack 25 minutes of reading. Starting with audio books while driving could be a good start to generate interest. Using social media to get some recommendations based on one’s taste is a good way to feel belonging to a reading community. So does signing up to an online reading group that keeps the motivation going. Whatever strategy we choose, these small steps can become a lifelong habit.

BRITISH NOVELIST DAVID LODGE, 89, DIES

PETER HUTCHISON & EMILIE BICKERTON

British novelist David Lodge, who was shortlisted for the Booker Prize twice, has died at the age of 89, his publisher said. The English author was best known for “Small World” and “Nice Work”, which were nominated for the prestigious literary award in the 1980s. He died “peacefully” on New Year’s Day, Penguin Random House said, without giving a cause of death. “His contribution to literary culture was immense, both in his criticism and through his masterful and iconic novels which have already become classics,” Lodge’s publisher, Liz Foley, said.

Lodge’s family said they were “very proud” of the writer, who was renowned for his plays, memoirs and TV scripts, as well as his books. “Small World” (1984) and “Nice Work” (1988) came after “Changing Places” (1975) and made up his campus trilogy series about a fictional university called Rummidge. It followed professors Philip Swallow from England and Morris Zapp from the United States and the cultural challenges they face when they swap universities for six months. Lodge garnered a worldwide following for his comical, cynical take on middle-class life in more than a dozen novels, many mining the worlds of academia and Catholicism. In 2008, the Guardian newspaper described him as “one of Britain’s best-loved comic writers”, while “A Clockwork Orange” author Anthony Burgess called Lodge “one of the best novelists of his generation”. Lodge was born in southeast London on January 28, 1935, into a Catholic household. His father was a professional dance musician and his mother was a homemaker. A gifted student, Lodge read literature at University College London, where he met fellow student Mary Jacob, whom he married in 1959.

‘CAPTURED BRITAIN PERFECTLY’ A year later he took a teaching job at the University of Birmingham and published his first novel “The Picturegoers”, a multi-character social exploration set around a local cinema. With his third novel, “The British Museum Is Falling Down” (1965), Lodge hit his stride with a well-received comic story of the life of a procrastinating student trying to work – and being endlessly distracted – in the British Museum’s reading room. Ten years later, “Changing Places” introduced professors Swallow and Zapp. The novel – which was inspired by Lodge’s own academic experience and a long study trip he had made to the United States – won the prestigious Hawthorn Prize and marked the beginning of his most popular and critically successful phase. The New York Times called “Small World” an “exuberant, bawdy and wickedly satiric sequel”. The novel and “Nice Work”, which completed the trilogy, were both later adapted for television. The books missed out on Booker prizes to Anita Brookner and Peter Carey respectively.

Why I can no longer call the UK my home

THIS is a difficult article for me to write. I have always regarded myself as an English patriot. Of course, I have always known my country isn't perfect. No country is. However, I am finding it increasingly difficult to be anything but ashamed to call myself English. I no longer feel at home in my own country.

The UK was a place I called home despite living much of the year in my beloved Oman. My country has many attractions with its fascinating history and culture. My English compatriots share my sense of humour and I can identify with them. I am very English. But now? Forget it. The UK government's stance on Israel and Palestine is amoral because it supports genocide and the slaughter of innocent children. My government's inhuman position has sickened me. And as if that weren't bad enough, the BBC - once a symbol of journalistic integrity - seems determined to whitewash Israel's brutal actions, pushing a narrative that perpetuates injustice and obscures the suffering of Palestinians.

I refuse to sugarcoat this: the UK government's track record on Israel and Palestine is both disturbing and disgraceful. They have shown unwavering support for Israel even when the bombs are raining down on Gaza when entire families are obliterated and thousands of children - the vast majority are children and women - are being murdered. The narrative of 'Israel's right to defend itself' gets rolled out every time, but where's the outcry for the defenceless Palestinians facing annihilation? The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza isn't exaggerated, it's a living nightmare. The Palestinian people are trapped, their homes reduced to rubble, their futures shattered and the UK government has done little more than offer hollow words whilst continuing to supply the weapons to Zionists which kill innocent Palestinians and now innocent Lebanese families. It is monstrous. This is a serious moral crisis, a question of basic humanity. The UK's stance gives a stamp of approval on mass murder and ethnic cleansing. I find it difficult to walk the streets of England, enjoy the beautiful countryside, and pretend everything's okay when



Palestinians gather to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen, in Khan Younis



KARIM EASTERBROOK k.easterbrook@yahoo.com

The writer is a Former School Principal UK

The UK government’s stance on Israel and Palestine is deeply troubling, as it tacitly endorses actions that amount to genocide and the slaughter of innocent children. This inhumane position has left me profoundly disheartened

my government is complicit in this horror. And then we have the BBC, a supposed beacon of truth. But when it comes to the Israel-Palestine conflict, their reporting feels like a slick PR campaign for Israel. Headlines that emphasise Israeli suffering while downplaying the slaughter of Palestinians. The language that paints systematic oppression as mere ‘clashes.’ The BBC’s coverage often leaves out key context, making it sound like both sides are equally matched. They’re not. Israel continues to be supported by the West with billions of dollars to buy arms. For the BBC this is not just lazy journalism, it’s wilful deception. By sanitising the violence, by failing to fully and fairly give voice to the Palestinian plight, the BBC is complicit. The English media indoctrinates the public using Zionist propaganda. As a result, the majority are numb to Zionist atrocities. It’s a betrayal of the truth and a glaring violation of what journalism is supposed to stand for. Many BBC journalists with ethical standards have resigned in protest.

All of this makes visiting the UK a gut-wrenching moral dilemma. Visiting one’s homeland should be about connecting with one’s people, but right now the UK’s values - reflected in its foreign policy and media reporting - feel alien and hostile to my values. I can’t just sip tea and admire the countryside while ignoring the blood in the hands of those in power. Choosing to stay away isn’t about making a bold political statement, it’s about staying true to what I believe in. It’s about standing in solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians, about refusing to normalise my country’s support for the oppression and murder of an entire people. Until the UK government recognises the inhumanity of Zionists and the humanity of Palestinians and until the BBC starts reporting the truth, visiting Britain is difficult. I’m holding onto a glimmer of hope that things might change, and that justice and compassion will eventually prevail. Only then might I consider revisiting my country, but until that day comes the UK has lost me.

Protecting humans and homeland



ABDULAZIZ AL JAHDHAMI

The writer is author, translator and a communications professional

STAYING awake every night, at every nook and corner of the country, while others are in deep sleep, is not an easy responsibility. It is a mission that is not possible for everyone, for sure. That is why, although it is their profession and source of livelihood, they sacrifice their time and effort. They are always on standby in all kinds of weather, day and night, hot or cold, rain or sun, safeguarding both men and the nation.

In fact, they are peacekeepers, striving to ensure that citizens, residents and visitors alike enjoy a peaceful life here. Very often, we see them standing by the roads or at roundabouts, controlling traffic and enduring the scorching heat of summer and the biting cold of winter for long hours. Every day, we observe them in the morning and afternoon as we commute to work and back home.

Probably, most of us pay no attention to their presence, which makes our journey smooth and hassle-free. We simply drive past them, sometimes even blaming them for blocking the way to let other motorists pass. To them, it is a way of ensuring fairness by giving every driver the right to go, while we may see it as a delay! A warm and sincere salute to all Royal Oman Police (ROP) personnel as we celebrate their

annual day. January 5 is a day of honour and pride for all of us, our dear policemen and policewomen, the heroes of the country.

Can you imagine what your day would be like if you don't see a police car on the roads? I'm not overstating it to say that our day would be abnormal. You'd feel that something important is missing in our life that day. Nobody can deny the fact that whenever there is a police officer around, a sense of safety and stability prevails. Along with all other military and armed forces, the ROP is accorded special public respect.

Certainly, we all recall the old days of our childhood when teachers and parents would ask: "What would you like to be in the future?" The very common answer from most children was, "I want to be a policeman." This answer was uttered straightforwardly by every child. Children regarded policemen as role models and felt proud of the idea of becoming one someday. Being a policeman was the most desired profession for many.

"I want to be a policeman when I finish school to help catch thieves," was the honest justification many children gave for their wish. To be a policeman was and still is the most desirable profession among kids. They eagerly long to join the ROP someday. Lucky you, dear police officers, to receive such

Police officers are men and women on a mission. They sacrifice their lives and strive tirelessly to maintain security, safety and stability around the clock

admiration and respect.

I know that some of you might not have the best relationship with ROP personnel due to some unpleasant experiences. Perhaps you had trouble with an officer, received a traffic ticket for speeding or for not fastening your seatbelt while commuting, or got caught by a speed control radar and received a frustrating fine when renewing your car registration. These are just to name a few examples of why some people might feel annoyed with the police.

Regardless of these unpleasant experiences, police officers are simply doing their job, carrying out their necessary daily duties. Some of these tasks and responsibilities may not be liked by everyone, but rules are rules. Rules are meant to be followed and enforced; otherwise, there would be no point in having legislative authorities.

If truth be told, police officers are men and women on a mission. They sacrifice their lives and strive tirelessly to maintain security, safety and stability around the clock. They deserve our thanks and appreciation. In every aspect of their duties, whether it is rescuing missions, firefighting operations, traffic management, immigration, or other demanding responsibilities, police personnel have demonstrated remarkable competence and excellence as true heroes.

BLINKEN WADES INTO POLITICAL CRISIS WITH STOP IN SOUTH KOREA

SHAUN TANDON

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives late on Sunday in crisis-riven South Korea where he will seek delicately to encourage continuity with the policies, but not tactics, of the impeached president. Blinken will hold talks with counterpart Cho Tae-yul on Monday, the same day a warrant expires to arrest suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol who unsuccessfully tried to impose martial law on December 3.

Seoul is the first stop on what will likely be Blinken's final trip as the top US diplomat as he seeks to highlight President Joe Biden's record rallying democratic allies before the return of the more mercurial Donald Trump.

Blinken will head afterwards to Tokyo, making it crucial in the eyes of his advisers not to snub South Korea, which has a fraught and often competitive relationship with Japan, a fellow US ally also home to thousands of American troops. Yoon had once been a darling of the Biden administration with his bold moves to turn the page on friction with Japan and his eye on a greater role for South Korea on global issues.

Yoon joined Biden for a landmark three-way summit with Japan's prime minister and -- months before declaring martial law -- was picked to lead a global democracy summit, a signature initiative for the outgoing US administration.

Yoon also memorably charmed his hosts on a state visit by belting out "American Pie" at a White House dinner.

Blinken may face some criticism from the South Korean left for the visit but should be able to navigate the political crisis, said Sydney Seiler, a former US intelligence officer focused on Korea now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Blinken has a high enough profile to be above the fray, and can keep the focus on challenges such as China and North Korea, he said.

"Blinken can dodge a lot of these domestic South Korean landmines relatively easily and contextualise it not as trying to help the ruling party or artificially create a sense of normalcy where it otherwise isn't," Seiler said.

In a statement, the State Department did not directly mention the political crisis but said Blinken would seek to preserve trilateral cooperation with Japan, which has included enhanced intelligence sharing on North Korea.

Blinken's visit comes at a time of change for both countries, with Trump returning to the White House on January 20.

Paradoxically, while Biden worked closely with the conservative Yoon, Trump in his first term enjoyed a warm relationship with then progressive president Moon Jae-in, who encouraged the US president's groundbreaking personal diplomacy with North Korea. — AFP

What are BRICS good for?

ONE question that 2025 may begin to answer is whether the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) is becoming the new centre of power in world politics. Now that the group has added new members (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates) and come to represent 45 per cent of the world population, some believe that it is consolidating the (misleadingly named) "Global South" and posing a serious challenge to American and Western power. But I remain skeptical of such claims.

When Jim O'Neill (then the chief economist at Goldman Sachs) coined the "BRIC" acronym in 2001, his aim was simply to identify the four emerging economies that were most likely to dominate global economic growth by 2050. But the label soon acquired a political valence. It became an informal diplomatic grouping at the 2006 United Nations General Assembly, and then a formal organisation with the first BRIC Summit in 2009. Hosted in Russia, the focus then -- as it is now -- was on advancing a multipolar world order. At the end of the following year, the group got its "S" when South Africa joined.

A Wall Street asset class evolved into an international organisation partly because it aligned with Russia's and China's own aspirations to lead the developing world. The BRICS 16th summit in Russia in October 2024 was the first to include its new members. Some 36 national leaders attended, as did representatives from many international organisations, including UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and Türkiye used the occasion to present its own application for membership.

The 2024 summit focused on fostering ties across the Global South and building a multipolar world, with Russian President Vladimir Putin using the occasion to demonstrate his global diplomatic relevance despite Russia's war on Ukraine in 2022.

With more countries showing an interest in joining, it looks like the BRICS could indeed present itself as a leader of the resistance to the US-dominated international order. Some even see it as the successor to the Cold War-era Non-Aligned Movement, whose members refused to choose between the United



The 2024 summit focused on fostering ties across the Global South and building a multipolar world.



JOSEPH S NYE, JR

The writer is Professor Emeritus at Harvard University, is a former US assistant secretary of defence and the author of Do Morals Matter?

States and the Soviet Union. But while NAM had a shared interest in resisting the US, it did not have Russia and China as founding members.

In any case, the BRICS is unlikely to succeed in formally organising the "Global South." Not only do its largest and most important members -- China, India and Russia -- all lie north of the equator, but the three are competing for leadership.

Russia and China do have a common interest in countering what they see as an American threat, and they have declared an "alliance without limits." But such slogans mask major differences in their strategic perspectives. While Russia took vast swaths of territory from China in the nineteenth century, when the Qing dynasty was weak, China's economy is now ten times the size of Russia's. Both countries are vying for influence in Central Asia, and China is uneasy about Russia's recruitment of its neighbour North Korea to fight in Ukraine.

An even more important limit on the BRICS as an organisation is the rivalry between China and India, which is now the world's most populous country. Although China is much wealthier than India, it is experiencing demographic decline (like Russia), while India's population and workforce continue to grow.

Moreover, China and India share a disputed boundary in the

Himalayas -- where their forces have clashed repeatedly -- and the situation is further complicated by China's traditional friendship with Pakistan. In fact, an abiding concern about China is one reason why India participates in the BRICS in the first place. While it avoids formal alliances, it has also stepped up its participation in "the Quad" (which includes the US, Japan and Australia) for the same reason.

Rather than making the BRICS stronger, the admission of new members merely imports more rivalries. Egypt and Ethiopia are locked in a dispute over a dam that Ethiopia is building on the Nile River. Far from making the BRICS more effective, these new intra-organisational rivalries will hamper its efforts. The Group of 77 developing countries has even more members, and it is chronically limited by internal divisions.

At their 2024 summit, BRICS+ discussed matters such as economic and security cooperation, promotion of cultural exchanges, and joint development projects focused on infrastructure and sustainability. But such talk usually does not yield significant results. In 2014, the group established the New Development Bank, which is headquartered in Shanghai; but the institution has had only modest results to date.

©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

Red Warriors express regret

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 5

OMAN'S Red Warriors expressed their deep regret to their fans following their unexpected 2-1 loss to Bahrain in the final of the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup, which concluded in Kuwait on Saturday night. Despite leading for most of the match, Oman conceded two late goals that dashed their hopes of claiming a third Gulf Cup title.

Oman's captain, Mohammed al Musallami, congratulated Bahrain on their victory while reflecting on the hard-fought encounter. "Congratulations to Bahrain and hard luck to our team and fans. We played an excellent match but lost focus in the last five minutes of the game in the second half.

There are many lessons to take from this defeat, and we must build on this experience for the upcoming Fifa World Cup qualifiers," he said. Al Musallami acknowledged the team's disappointment at not returning with the trophy.

"Our aim was to bring the cup back to Oman, but football is a game of small details. We missed key opportunities to extend our lead, which cost us dearly. Now our focus shifts to maintaining momentum and performing strongly in future matches," he concluded. Experienced midfielder Harib al Saadi echoed similar sentiments, expressing regret to Oman's loyal supporters.

"I thank my teammates for their commendable efforts. Congratulations to Bahrain on their victory. We delivered an excellent first-half performance but lost focus during two critical minutes in the second half, which allowed Bahrain to capitalise on their win," he said. Al Saadi extended a heartfelt apology to fans, particularly those who travelled to Kuwait and those supporting from Oman. "We promise to come back stronger in the Fifa qualifiers.

The Gulf Cup is now behind us, and we will take all the positives forward as we aim for success in the 2026 Fifa World Cup Asian qualifiers," he added. Oman's prolific striker, Essam al Subhi, who scored three goals during the tournament, expressed his disappointment at not clinching the title. "I personally apologise to all our loyal fans for the result.

It's tough to lead for most of the game and then concede two goals in such a



Rasheed Jaber during awarding ceremony

short span," he said. Commenting on his competition for the top scorer award, Al Subhi remarked, "My primary goal was to help the team win the title. Personal accolades come second.

I am proud of our team's effort, and we are determined to make a strong comeback in the Fifa qualifiers." Despite the heartbreak, the Red Warriors remain committed to using the Gulf Cup as a

stepping stone for their future campaigns. Their focus now shifts to the World Cup qualifiers, where they aim to make a strong impression and achieve their ultimate goal of reaching the 2026 Fifa World Cup.

Gulf Cup runners-up praised for stellar display

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 5

Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, received Oman's national football team, led by Salim bin Said al Wahaibi, President of the Oman Football Association, at Muscat International Airport's VIP lounge.

Al Rawas in his speech praised the team's exceptional performance, saying: "The performance was outstanding, and I hope the team will continue the same dedication and fighting spirit in the games ahead. We always aspire for distinguished performances, and during the Gulf Cup, you delivered remarkable results, reaching the finals. The fans have greatly commended your outstanding display."

He conveyed the greetings of His Highness, who followed the team's achievements closely, stating: "We hope you maintain this level in the upcoming World Cup qualifiers, which is the most significant milestone ahead. We are confident that with your high spirits and efforts, you can achieve



the aspirations of the fans." He concluded his remarks saying: "Thank you all. You were true champions in this tournament, and we look forward to seeing even more from you. I also want to extend my gratitude

to the loyal fans, who were your greatest support throughout the tournament. They were a shining example of civilised encouragement." National coach Rashid Jaber expressed his immense pride in

leading the group of exceptional players, saying: "I am very proud to be the coach, who exerted tremendous efforts and made significant sacrifices during the tournament. You demonstrated great discipline and genuine

passion to achieve success." He also added: "We must believe in ourselves and our abilities. We are no less than any other team. Throughout the tournament, we played five very challenging matches against strong teams, including the host nation, the Asian champion, and other favourites like the UAE and Saudi Arabia. In all these games, you proved to be the best on the field."

About the final match, he said: "Against Bahrain, we were the better side for most of the match, but minor details led to our loss. Nevertheless, I tell you to hold your heads high and be proud of what you've achieved. You've shown that you are a team capable of competing at the highest levels, and I am extremely proud to coach such an exceptional group of players."

The coach concluded his remarks with a message to the players and fans: "We must continue to work hard and remain committed because the road ahead demands even greater effort. I also thank the fans, who were our biggest supporters, and their presence proved to be a strong motivation in every match."

SPORTS

SHORT TAKE



GAUFF BEATS SWIATEK AS US WIN UNITED CUP

SYDNEY: Coco Gauff roared past Iga Swiatek to inspire team USA on Sunday before Taylor Fritz sealed the United Cup title with victory over Poland’s Hubert Hurkacz in Sydney.

Gauff opened with a statement 6-4, 6-4 win over Swiatek in 1hr 51min of hard-hitting tennis to fire a warning shot ahead of the Australian Open.

Big-serving Fritz then battled through against Hubert Hurkacz 6-4, 5-7, 7-6 (7/4) to spark wild celebrations as the Americans won the mixed-teams cup for the second time in three years after winning the inaugural event in 2023.

For Poland it meant falling at the final hurdle again after losing to Germany 12 months ago.

Gauff set the ball rolling with a second victory in a row over Swiatek after beating the former world number one at the WTA Finals in Riyadh on her way to the title.

Gauff had won all six of her previous singles and doubles matches this week and continued her streak when Swiatek double-faulted on match point at 4-5, 30-40 in the second set.

“I think I have the belief that I am one of the best players in the world, and when I play good tennis, it’s hard for me to be beaten,” said Gauff, who won the award as player of the tournament.

- ‘Tough today’ -

The 20-year-old will go into the first Grand Slam of the year next Sunday unbeaten in singles since losing to world number one Aryna Sabalenka in the Wuhan semifinals in October, and brimming with confidence.

“It’s been a great week,” said Fritz.

“They’re an incredibly tough team and the margins are very small,” he added after a serve-dominated match that featured 30 aces and just three break points.

“I feel like it could have always gone either way. Just want to say thanks to my whole team.”

Earlier, Swiatek took a medical timeout at 5-4 down in the second set to have strapping put on her nagging left thigh which has bothered her all week in Sydney.

After losing to Gauff, Swiatek left the court in tears, walking gingerly, but returned laughing and joking during the trophy presentations.

Red-hot Gauff, who did not drop a set in five singles matches, goes into the Australian Open as world number three.

She enjoyed United Cup singles wins over Leylah Fernandez, Donna Vekic, Zhang Shuai, Karolina Muchova and Swiatek.

Fritz, who is at career-best number four in the rankings, dropped his opening United Cup match to Felix Auger-Aliassime but then won four straight. — AFP



Seeb Club vs Majees Club during the 6th week of OVL

Seeb, Sohar triumph in OVL

SEEB Club claimed an exciting win over Majees Club, defeating them 3-1 in sets during the sixth week of the Oman Volleyball League (OVL). The first set witnessed intense competition between the two teams, with both sides exchanging points amid impressive performances from attackers and defenders on both ends. Seeb managed to clinch the set with a score of 27-25, thanks to powerful spikes from their front-line players and strong defensive blocks at the net. This strong start put Majees under pressure early in the match.

In the second set, Majees made a strong comeback, showing great determination to level the score. Taking advantage of minor errors from Seeb, Majees narrowly won the set 31-29 in a thrilling, long-lasting battle that kept the crowd on edge.

Seeb quickly regained their balance in the third set, asserting complete dominance with remarkable harmony between their setters and attackers. They secured a clear victory in the set with a score of 25-16. The

set was marked by standout performances from Seeb’s back row, which successfully thwarted many of Majees’ attempts.

Continuing their momentum in the fourth set, Seeb capitalised on the fatigue and loss of focus among Majees players. Delivering a strong performance in serving and cohesive defence, Seeb closed the set 25-19, sealing the match victory. With this win, Seeb reinforced their lead in the league standings with 16 points, maintaining a perfect record by winning all six matches. On the other hand, Majees remains in third place with seven points, awaiting improved results in the upcoming rounds.

Sohar Club achieved crucial victory over Al Shabab Club in another match of the same round, Sohar Club secured an important 3-1 victory over Al Shabab Club in a game marked by fluctuating performances between the sets.

Al Shabab started the match strongly, leveraging their players’ sharp focus in attacks and serves. They dominated the pace of the game and concluded the set in their

favour with a score of 25-19, while Sohar’s defensive performance left much to be desired.

Sohar responded strongly in the second set, correcting their earlier mistakes. The team showcased great discipline in executing powerful spikes and organising their defence, which enabled them to win the set 25-15.

The third set saw Sohar take full control, capitalising on a dip in Al Shabab’s performance, especially in defence. Sohar’s players delivered an exceptional team performance, dominating the game and ending the set 25-14 in their favour.

Al Shabab attempted a comeback in the fourth set, but Sohar’s experienced players shone during the critical moments, sealing the set 25-23 by exploiting Al Shabab’s defensive errors.

With this result, Sohar climbed to fifth place with six points, while Al Shabab dropped to sixth place with three points, facing a challenging road ahead to improve their performance in the upcoming matches.

India cricket loss to Australia sparks questions back home

NEW DELHI: Indian cricket fans and pundits heaped praise on stand-in skipper Jasprit Bumrah on Sunday, but questioned the future of several veteran players after their team lost 3-1 to Australia in a gripping five-Test series.

Star quick bowler Bumrah offered something for India to celebrate in an otherwise gloomy assessment of the team’s performance following their six-wicket defeat in the final Test in Sydney.

“Trophy lost, questions aplenty, uncertain future,” a Times of India headline read.

“Questions were continuously raised on the future of ageing superstars in that dressing room, which doesn’t look happy anymore,” the paper wrote.



Pat Cummins celebrates after taking the wicket of India’s Rishabh Pant

The Indian Express gloomily noted that “the big two were poor”, referring to captain Rohit Sharma and batting superstar Virat Kohli.

Sharma, who has averaged just 10.9 runs in his last eight Tests, stood down -- or was dropped -- for the final match because of his form.

For Kohli, apart from an unbeaten century in Perth, he was out every other time caught after edging to the wicketkeeper or slips.

Bumrah, however, was a revelation.

Standing in as skipper in the final Test, he finished the tour with 32 wickets at an average of 13.06, and was named Man of the Series.

“Superhuman Jasprit Bumrah was let down by colossal batting failures and dubious selections,” said the Times of India.

“The highlight of the series for me... has been watching Jasprit Bumrah bowl,” said veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle, calling the loss a “fair result”.

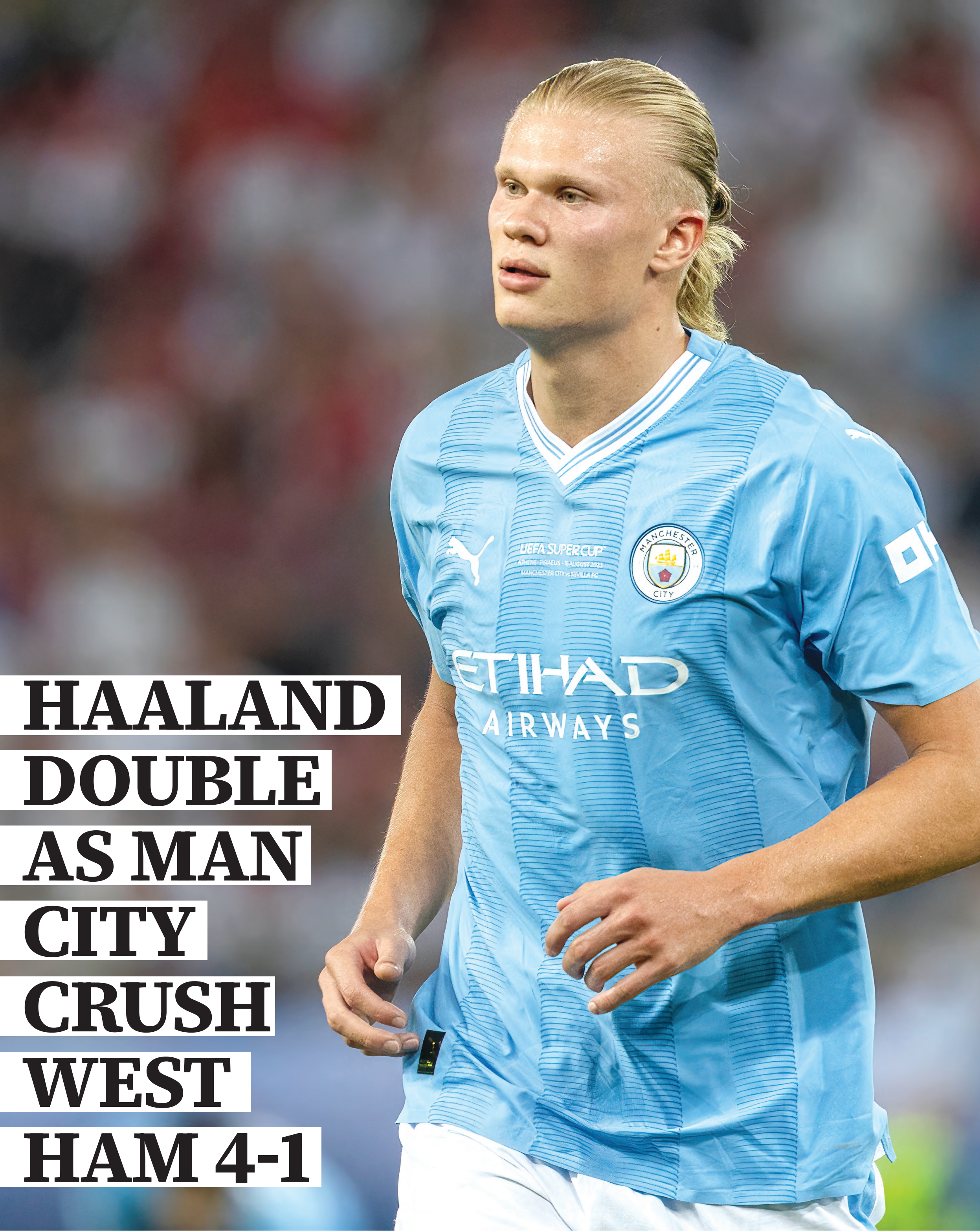
“It will be one of the highlights of my media career.”

Bumrah suffered a back niggle on Saturday and went for scans, and was ultimately forced to watch from the sidelines.

“Brave fightback by India, but Bumrah’s absence was too big a loss to overcome,” Indian cricket journalist Ayaz Memon wrote on social media.

Veteran Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar said it was a “commendable performance”, but reserved his praise for Bumrah.

“Jas is just the best in the world!” he wrote on social media. — AFP



HAALAND DOUBLE AS MAN CITY CRUSH WEST HAM 4-1

MANCHESTER City thrashed West Ham United 4-1 in the Premier League on Saturday to claim their first back-to-back wins since October thanks to two goals from Erling Haaland in one of their best performances in weeks. The champions are sixth in the table on 34 points, 11 behind leaders Liverpool who have two games in hand. West Ham, who were coming off a 5-0 rout by Liverpool, are 13th with 23 points.

Savinho, who scored his first goal for City in the 2-0 win over Leicester City on Sunday which was their first victory in five league games, set up three goals at Etihad Stadium, including the 10th-minute opener when defender Vladimir Coufal deflected the Brazilian's angled shot into the far corner. Haaland, whose double was his first in a Premier League game since September, struck in the 42nd minute when Savinho whipped in a long cross and the big Norwegian leapt sideways to head in. Haaland notched his second shortly after

the break when Savinho set him clear with a through ball and the 24-year-old nonchalantly chipped over goalkeeper Alphonse Areola. Phil Foden increased City's lead in the 58th minute when Kevin De Bruyne pounced on Mohammed Kudus' sloppy pass and sent a square pass to Foden for an easy tap-in. Niclas Fullkrug grabbed a late consolation for the visitors. West Ham boss Julen Lopetegui will surely rue several terrific chances for his team in a positive first half, including an early close-range shot from Kudus into the side netting after the Hammers had sliced through

City's nervous-looking defence. Soon after, Kudus sprinted down the right before cutting the ball back to Tomas Soucek who sent his shot wide and Kudus blazed another shot wide. West Ham had 17 shots to City's 10, but only four on target, while the home side had seven. It was only the second time this season that City scored four goals in a league game, the other being a 4-1 win over Ipswich Town. West Ham have conceded three or more goals in eight games this season, tied for worst with rock-bottom Southampton. — Reuters



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
4,569.702

BUSINESS

Ladies
Account



Empowering you
more than ever!

 Dhofar.islamic

 Dhofar_islamic

 2477 5777

 [www.dhofarislamicbank.com](#)



ASSET SURGE



Total foreign assets at CBO reach RO 7,209.5 million.

FOREIGN ASSETS
AT CBO RISE
13.8 PER CENT

MUSCAT: Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) show that the total foreign assets at the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) increase by 13.8 per cent to RO 7,209.5 million by the end of October 2024, compared to the corresponding period in 2023, when it was RO 6,336.7 million.

Initial data issued by the NCSI showed that narrow money supply (M1) by the end of October 2024 stood at RO 6,995.8 million, an increase of 24.8 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2023.

Broad money supply (M2), which consists of total cash outside the banking system in addition to current accounts and demand deposits in local currency, increased by 12.6 per cent to RO 24,808.1 million, compared to RO 22,036.3 million at the end of October 2023.

Meanwhile, private sector deposits in commercial banks and Islamic windows at the end of October 2024 stood at RO 20,384.3 million, up by 9.4 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2023 (when it was worth RO 18,638.5 million).

Total loans and financing in commercial banks and Islamic windows grew by 4.8 per cent by the end of October 2024 to RO 31,875.2 million, compared to RO 30,409.9 million.

The average interest rate on total loans increased by 3.2 per cent at the end of October 2024 to reach 5.628, while the effective exchange rate index of the Omani rial decrease by 1.1 per cent to 116.4 at the end of October 2024.

Agreement signed for
GRE facility in Al Duqm

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 5

OMANI oilfield services company, Hema Energy has entered into a landmark cooperation agreement with Shengli Oil Field Xinda Pipe Technology Development Co, Ltd, to establish a state-of-the-art Glass Reinforced Epoxy (GRE) manufacturing facility in Al Duqm.

The facility is set to produce GRE lining for carbon steel (CS) pipes, GRE high-pressure pipelines, GRE tubing and GRE casing, marking a significant step in the Sultanate of Oman's industrial and economic landscape.

In an interview with *Oman Observer*, Azzan Moghrob Asmi, General Manager for Oman, UAE & KSA and Acting Group Managing Director of Hema Energy, expressed his enthusiasm for the project. He highlighted the longstanding relationship between the two entities, which began nearly a decade ago.

“We have acted as the Omani representative for Xinda, successfully delivering projects for major oil and gas companies in Oman, as well as the Ministry of Defence,” Asmi said.

ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC BENEFITS

Asmi emphasised the strategic importance of Al Duqm as the location for the GRE facility.

“Having the facility in Al Duqm will boost the local economy and create jobs for



Hema Energy's decision aligns with its broader strategy to transition from a supplier model to a manufacturer model.

local companies, such as those in logistics, as well as for the people of Al Duqm,” he said.

The facility will also result in a more competitive market, addressing the rising demand for GRE products in Oman and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region.

Hema Energy's decision aligns with its broader strategy to transition from a supplier model to a manufacturer model.

“This shift, which was approved by our board in 2024, will make products more readily available and open up more employment opportunities,” Asmi explained.

He drew parallels with the company's success in establishing “Oman Flanges,” a factory for flanges in Nizwa, as a blueprint for the current project.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND MARKET IMPACT

The move to GRE technology is particularly significant in addressing the challenges posed by the corrosiveness of oil and gas fields.

“Non-metallic solutions like GRE help reduce pipeline failures and leaks, thereby improving production efficiency and minimising environmental risks,” Asmi noted. While the technology is already widely used in downstream operations, Hema Energy plans to focus its efforts on upstream applications, where demand is surging.

FUTURE PLANS AND OMAN VISION 2040

The GRE facility is slated to begin production by Q3 2026, though Hema Energy is working to expedite

the timeline. Beyond GRE pipes, the company envisions expanding into the manufacturing of GRE tank farms, electrical poles, fiber sucker rods and tank linings.

Asmi also underscored the alignment of this project with Oman Vision 2040.

“Our initiative supports competitive business opportunities, integrates SMEs with large corporations and enhances Oman's global standing by diversifying imports and exports,” he said.

This project is poised to transform Oman into a regional hub for GRE production, fostering economic growth, innovation and sustainability. As Asmi concluded, “The benefits of this venture will extend to all stakeholders, reinforcing Oman's position as a leader in industrial development.”

Chinese hydrogen-powered automaker eyes Oman presence

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 5

Wisdom Motor, a Chinese-based technology company specialising in the design and manufacture of zero-emission commercial vehicles, is exploring opportunities to roll out its well-acclaimed green transport solutions in the GCC states, including the Sultanate of Oman.

Fujian-headquartered Wisdom Motor is a portfolio company of Templewater, a Hong Kong based alternative asset management firm that already enjoys close ties with Oman Investment Authority (OIA). Templewater is partnering with OIA's Future Fund Oman in supporting investments in key green energy ventures.

Commenting on this partnership, Templewater said:



Wisdom Motor has signed an MoU with Oman Investment Authority to explore the potential for localising the manufacture of hydrogen-powered transport vehicles.

“Through our collaboration with the Future Fund Oman and the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), we are focusing on investments that support the region's net-zero ambitions and economic

diversification goals.

Wisdom Motor, a leader in zero-emission commercial vehicles, is proud to play a key role by introducing hydrogen-powered and other green transport solutions in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

“This partnership underscores our shared commitment to decarbonisation, localisation and creating enterprise value in key sectors such as green energy, manufacturing, logistics and more,” the asset management firm noted in a recent post.

Much attention is focused on the potential role that Wisdom Motor will play in supporting Oman's low-carbon energy transportation ambitions.

In March 2024, the automaker signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with OIA

to explore opportunities for the localisation of manufacturing and eventual deployment of its eco-friendly transport products, not only in Oman, but the wider Gulf region as well.

Eyeing global prominence as a manufacturer of zero-emission smart commercial vehicles, Wisdom has shipped hundreds of green energy powered smart commercial vehicles to markets internationally over the past five years.

Building on its MoU with Wisdom Motor, a high-level delegation from Oman Investment Authority attended the 2024 Belt and Road Summit held in Hong Kong last September.

Besides engaging with Wisdom Motor representatives, the delegation also toured the bus depot of Citybus, one of the

city's biggest bus transportation services. A subsidiary of Templewater owns 30 per cent of Bravo Transport, the operator of Kong Kong's Citybus.

The Omani visitors were introduced to Citybus' pioneering sustainable transport technologies, including the world's first tri-axle hydrogen double decker bus and the bus operator's first hydrogen refueling station.

In the Gulf region, Wisdom Motor has already established a presence in the United Arab Emirates. In November 2023, the automaker introduced a 12-metre hydrogen city bus in Abu Dhabi.

In all, three hydrogen-powered buses — the mainstay of Wisdom Motor's offerings — are in operation in the UAE capital as part of a pilot that will run until the end of this year.

ADVERTORIALS

AHAGUIDELINES



This partnership allows Sohar Aluminium to become an officially recognised AHA training site.

SOHAR ALUMINIUM AND SOHAR HOSPITAL SIGN ACCREDITATION PACT

MUSCAT: Sohar Aluminium Company and Sohar Hospital, an accredited American Heart Association (AHA) Training Center, have signed an agreement to grant accreditation to Sohar Industrial Training Institute (SITI) to conduct AHA courses in full accordance with AHA's esteemed guidelines.

This partnership allows Sohar Aluminium to become an officially recognised AHA Training Site, offering different life-saving courses, including First Aid/Heart Saver and Basic Life Support.

These courses will be conducted at the Company's Sohar Industrial Training Institute (SITI).

The courses are designed to equip Sohar Aluminium's employees and other trainees with the essential skills needed to respond effectively in emergency situations and in life-threatening conditions.

As occupational health is an essential part of healthcare in industry, Sohar Aluminium has long been committed to the safety and well-being of its workforce. The Company established a Medical Centre on its premises and became operational in November 2008 after due inspection and accreditation/licensing by Ministry of Health with primary focus on Occupational Health.

Subsequently, scope of activities was enlarged to include urgent/acute medical care and strengthen emergency medical response.

Forming this partnership with Sohar Hospital serves to ensure that Sohar Aluminium's employees have access to high-quality, internationally recognised training in life-saving skills, underscoring our commitment to health, safety and well-being in the workplace and beyond.

By providing essential AHA-certified training, Sohar Aluminium's Medical Centre aims to empower individuals with the knowledge and skills to act confidently in critical moments.

Being a professional institute, Sohar Industrial Training Institute (SITI) primarily focuses on delivering technical vocational training while also providing safety and soft skills training.

It provides various training programmes and courses with competitive international standards in the technical and professional fields and personal skills development for employees, trainees and contractors from within and outside Sohar Aluminium.

SUBARU TOPS CHARTS AS THE MOST RELIABLE CAR BRAND

MUSCAT: Subaru, the esteemed Japanese automaker represented by the OTE Group in Oman, proudly announces its recognition as the most reliable car brand, as reported by Consumer Reports.

This recognition underscores Subaru's unwavering commitment to producing durable, safe, and innovative vehicles that cater to both adventure enthusiasts and everyday drivers.

"Being recognised as the most reliable vehicle brand is a reflection



Among Subaru's lineup, the Forester stands out as a true testament to the brand's engineering excellence.

of our dedication to quality, safety, and customer satisfaction," said the business unit head at Subaru.

"Our vehicles are designed to deliver exceptional performance, whether navigating challenging terrains or cruising through city streets. This recognition reaffirms our promise to provide drivers with unmatched confidence and driving enjoyment."

Among Subaru's lineup, the Forester stands out as a true testament to the brand's engineering excellence.

BankDhofar now with 131 branches nationwide

BANKDHOFAR, one of the leading financial institutions in Oman, has significantly expanded its branch network to 131 branches nationwide, reinforcing its commitment to enhancing customer accessibility across the Sultanate of Oman.

In 2023 alone, the bank opened 43 new branches, each offering a comprehensive suite of banking services designed to meet the diverse needs of its customers. From card collections to tailored banking solutions, BankDhofar's branches make these services easily accessible to all segments of its clientele.

With this impressive expansion, BankDhofar is now the second-largest bank in Oman by branch network size. However, these branches represent more than just the bank's physical presence — they are fully equipped and staffed to deliver a wide range of banking solutions to all segments of society, including women, youth, children and high-income groups, particularly holders of the Al-Riyada and Al-Rifaa cards. The branches also cater to high-net-worth customers, providing specialised services with a focus on safety, confidentiality and personalised care.

In 2023 alone, the bank opened 43 new branches, each offering a comprehensive suite of banking services designed to meet the diverse needs of its customers.



BankDhofar is now the second-largest bank in Oman by branch network size.

BankDhofar's offerings include clear and strategic savings and investment plans, such as fixed and recurring deposit accounts and long-term deposit accounts designed to support children's education. These products help parents save for their children's higher education needs, while retirement planning options enable customers to grow their savings for financial security and stability in their later years.

Celebrated for its exclusive banking services tailored for women, BankDhofar has introduced specialised accounts that offer

unique benefits and privileges.

Recently, the bank launched a special credit card for women that includes first-year fee exemptions, access to exclusive rewards programmes and additional perks like airport lounge access at Muscat and Salalah International Airports, travel and purchase protection and global acceptance at millions of locations.

In support of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), BankDhofar has developed dedicated banking solutions that enable business owners to efficiently manage their finances.

CPA launches recall campaign for Dunlop tyres

MUSCAT: The Consumer Protection Authority, (CPA) in collaboration with Al-Tamimi and Partners, has launched a recall campaign for 250 Dunlop tyres, models 2023-2024. Consumers can verify the serial number by visiting the

recall section on the Consumer Protection Authority's online portal (recall.pacp.gov.om). The recall is due to the tyres failing to meet high-speed performance testing requirements as per the GS 053/2007 standard. This defect

causes failures in the tyres bead area within 1 to 14 minutes at speeds of 230 km/h, posing a serious risk of accidents. Therefore, the affected tyres will be replaced with GrandTrek AT22 tires at no cost to customers. This recall reflects

the Authority's efforts to ensure road safety in cooperation with industry agencies. It aligns with its commitment to ongoing reviews of all products available in the markets of Oman to provide necessary protection for consumers across various fields.

National Finance powers the Tornado MTB race

MUSCAT:Reinforcing its commitment to promoting an active lifestyle and supporting community-centric events, National Finance, Oman's leading finance company, recently sponsored the Tornado MTB Race. Organised by Adventures Box Oman and held at Al Khoudh, the event brought together cycling enthusiasts of all levels for an exhilarating mountain and off-road race.

Through this sponsorship, National Finance not only engages with the local community but also plays a pivotal role in enhancing Oman's growing reputation as a premier destination for outdoor sporting events.

Beyond conventional sponsorship, National Finance's involvement in the Tornado MTB Race highlights the company's dedication to addressing diverse customer needs



National Finance not only engages with the local community but also plays a pivotal role in enhancing Oman's growing reputation as a premier destination for outdoor sporting events.

with innovative financial solutions.

At the event, the company showcased its comprehensive portfolio, with particular emphasis on its specialised Bike Finance offering under the Consumer Durables Financing arm.

This innovative offering provides cyclists with flexible, tailored options to support their passion. With fast approvals, streamlined applications and customisable repayment plans, National Finance ensures a seamless, efficient financing experience for customers.

Tariq Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, remarked, "At National Finance, we are dedicated to driving positive change by championing initiatives that engage and inspire communities. Through our sponsorship of the Tornado MTB Race, we have had the opportunity

to reaffirm the importance of sports activities in the Sultanate of Oman and to highlight adventure sports, which have found geographically suitable spaces within the diverse terrains of Oman.

We encourage all segments of society, particularly the youth, to venture into broader horizons to discover the abundant opportunities that require initiative and determination to achieve their set goals efficiently. We remain committed to supporting the growing community of cycling enthusiasts by offering tailored financial solutions to meet their diverse needs. By aligning ourselves with events that promote health, collaboration and innovation, we continue to advocate a culture of integration, empowering people to realise their potential and helping shape Oman's prosperous future."

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



The new digital services will help improve business efficiency.

MOCIIP TO LAUNCH TWO KEY DIGITAL SERVICES

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JAN 5

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) will mark the official launch on January 6, 2025, of two key digital services — the Rental Contracts Service, along with the Financial Reports Service and the Interactive Guide for Trade Names.

The inauguration ceremony, set to commence at 12:30 PM, will feature a welcoming note from the Ministry and a speech from Muscat Municipality, highlighting the importance of these services for the country's digital transformation.

The Rental Contracts Service, which will be launched on the Haman Business Platform, is designed to simplify the process of creating and managing rental agreements for both landlords and tenants.

The Financial Reports Service and Interactive Guide for Trade Names, also part of the Oman Business Platform, aim to provide businesses with easy access to real-time financial data and a streamlined process for managing trade names in the country.

These services represent an important step forward in improving business efficiency, transparency and accessibility in Oman's rental and business sectors.

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE INDEX CLOSES DOWN 0.08%

MUSCAT: Muscat Stock Exchange 30 (MSX30) Index closed yesterday at 4,569.70 points, down 3.6 points and 0.08%compared to the last trading session of 4,573.30 points.

The trading value amounted to RO 6,284,270, up by 9.2% compared to the last trading session of RO 5,752,697. The report issued by Muscat Stock Exchange indicated that the market value increased by 1.351% from the last trading day and amounted to approximately RO 27.96 billion.

The value of non-Omani purchases in the stock exchange amounted to RO 361,000, representing 5.75%, while the value of non-Omani sales amounted to RO 435,000, representing 6.93%, while the net non-Omani investment decreased by RO 74,000, representing 1.18%. — **ONA**

CEO TALK

Leading with purpose in Oman’s energy sector

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 5

“TRUE leadership lies in service — creating an environment where individuals feel empowered, valued and aligned with a shared purpose,” said Eng Abdulrahman al Yahyaei, CEO of Integrated Gas Company (IGC), in an interview with the *Observer*.

With an illustrious career spanning leadership roles across Oman's energy sector, Abdulrahman al Yahyaei embodies a vision of purposeful leadership that prioritises innovation, collaboration and sustainable growth. Speaking candidly about his professional journey, achievements and vision for IGC, he shared insights into what it takes to drive transformative change in a competitive industry.

A PATH SHAPED BY VALUES

Al Yahyaei's journey to becoming a CEO was fuelled by a desire to lead with impact and empower others. His entry into the dynamic oil and gas industry taught him resilience and adaptability, laying the foundation for a career marked by meaningful milestones.

“Each role I embraced offered unique opportunities to address challenges, innovate and inspire growth in myself and others.

Over time, I realised that true leadership is about fostering a culture of empowerment and collaboration,” he explained.

In his current tenure at IGC, his leadership philosophy centres on creating value for stakeholders while advancing the company's strategic objectives. “Leadership isn't just about achieving business success; it's about leaving a lasting, positive impact on people and communities,” he emphasised.

DRIVING TRANSFORMATION AT IGC

Under Al Yahyaei's stewardship, IGC has positioned itself as a key player in Oman's energy sector.

He highlighted several transformative milestones achieved during his leadership, including the introduction of a groundbreaking



“Each role I embraced offered unique opportunities to address challenges, innovate and inspire growth in myself and others. Over time, I realised that true leadership is about fostering a culture of empowerment and collaboration.

ENG ABDULRAHMAN AL YAHYAEI
CEO of Integrated Gas Company

Gas Spot Market and Auction. “These initiatives revolutionised how gas resources are managed and traded, reinforcing our commitment to innovation and efficiency,” he said.

Additionally, IGC's strides in operational excellence, such as digitising workflows, have significantly reduced inefficiencies and boosted productivity.

“Leveraging technology to streamline operations isn't just about enhancing efficiency — it's about ensuring the organisation's sustainability and scalability.

This aligns with my core belief in using innovation as a catalyst for meaningful and lasting impact,” he added.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

One of the defining moments of Al Yahyaei's career was navigating the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Leading cross-functional teams, he ensured business continuity and minimised disruptions to operations.

“We executed critical initiatives, such as repatriation flights during airport closures, saving over RO 22 million in energy sector costs. These efforts required swift decision-making, empathy and collaboration with multiple stakeholders,” he recalled. The pandemic also reinforced his focus on adaptability.

“In times of crisis, leadership demands agility, transparency and a commitment to strengthening the foundation for future resilience,” he noted.

VISION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Looking ahead, Al Yahyaei envisions IGC as a driving force in Oman's energy transition, championing cleaner and more sustainable energy solutions.

“At the core of our vision is maximising value for Oman's economy by smartly allocating gas resources and positioning the country for long-term prosperity,” he stated.

Beyond economic goals, he emphasised the importance of developing human capital and enhancing In-Country Value (ICV). “Empowering local talent and

investing in skill development are essential to creating a robust workforce that drives both organisational and national growth.

This focus on people and sustainability will remain central to our strategy,” he affirmed.

A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

Reflecting on his proudest achievements, Al Yahyaei pointed to building sustainable leadership pipelines. “Through mentorship programmes and personalised development plans, I've nurtured future leaders grounded in integrity and purpose,” he shared.

For him, this accomplishment represents the long-term impact of values-driven leadership.

“True success isn't just about achieving business goals; it's about empowering others to lead with vision and responsibility,” he remarked.

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING CEOS

Al Yahyaei's advice to the next generation of leaders underscores the principles that have guided his career: Empower others:

“True leadership is about creating environments where people can thrive.” Adaptability is key: “Stay flexible in a constantly changing world to remain effective.”

Integrity first: “Make decisions that align with ethical principles to build trust and long-term success.” Continuous learning: “Embrace lifelong learning to foster growth.”

BALANCING LEADERSHIP AND PERSONAL GROWTH

While balancing leadership demands with personal well-being remains a challenge, Al Yahyaei emphasised the importance of resilience and self-reflection.

“I've learned to set boundaries and prioritise continuous learning, but it's a constant juggling act.

What keeps me grounded is staying aligned with my personal and professional values,” he noted.

As he continues to lead IGC, Abdulrahman al Yahyaei's unwavering focus on purpose, innovation and empowerment serves as a blueprint for sustainable growth and meaningful impact in Oman's evolving energy landscape.

MDO to target promising Al Baydha copper mine for development

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 5

Having restarted the production and export of copper concentrate from its Lasail mine — after a three decades-long gap — Minerals Development Oman (MDO), the nation's biggest miner, has set its sights on replicating this success at the nearby Al Baydha mine within the next two years.

Al Baydha Mine, like Lasail, are part of the same Block 4 license straddling the adjoining wilayats of Liwa and Suhar. An extensive exploration programme carried out in 2022 by MDO — part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — has estimated the Block's copper ore reserves potential at 2.78 million tonnes. This potential is anticipated to grow significantly once new reserves are unearthed and developed elsewhere within the Block.

Lasail, which was brought into production last month, is home



Mining trucks in operation at MDO's Lasail Mine in Wilayat of Suhar.

to high-quality copper ore with a concentration ranging from 18 — 22 per cent. Annual copper output is projected at 500,000 tonnes, positioning Lasail as a “significant player in the both regional and

global markets”, said MDO in a statement.

Targeted next for development is Al Baydha Mine in Wilayat of Liwa. “MDO's commitment to growth is reflected in its comprehensive plans

and explorations for the future. The company is set to begin copper production at the Al Baydha Mine in the Wilayat of Liwa between 2025 and 2026. This is part of MDO's broader strategy to redevelop and expand Oman's mining capabilities,” the OIA-backed mining enterprise noted.

Complementing these copper mining activities is the Mazoon copper project in Yanqul in the northwest of Oman. Last November, Mazoon Mining, a subsidiary of MDO, broke ground on the landmark project, billed as the largest integrated copper concentrate production venture in Oman.

Covering an area of 20 square kilometres, the project comprises five open-pit mines with an estimated 22.9 million tonnes of copper ore reserves.

At its centrepiece is a state-of-the-art processing plan with the capacity to process 2.5 million tonnes of copper ore annually. When operational by Q1 2027, the project is

expected to produce 115,000 tonnes of copper concentrate per year at a 21.5 per cent copper grade.

Significantly, MDO sees its investments in copper mining activities eventually catalysing a role for Oman in the global energy transition drive.

“Copper's role in advancing green energy and technology makes MDO's copper mining efforts not only economically significant for Oman but also environmentally relevant, placing Oman on the map as an important contributor to sustainable development,” said MDO.

“Copper is a critical mineral in the transition to clean energy and future technologies, including electric vehicles (EVs), renewable energy systems like solar and wind, and battery storage solutions.

As global demand for copper continues to rise, this project aligns with Oman's long-term vision of being a reliable player in the global energy transition,” the company added.

OPINION

Oman 2025 outlook and prospects



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The author is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies in Muscat.

THE 2025 outlook for Oman looks cautiously optimistic with the support of pillars of steady reform and diversification efforts. The country seems positioned for stability and continued growth driven by non-hydrocarbon exports, renewable energy projects and contributions from strategic sectors.

According to the International Monetary Fund, Oman's real GDP was expected to grow by 0.7 per cent in 2024, but Oman's real GDP increased by 1.9 per cent. Despite challenges in hydrocarbon, Oman has had a favourable economic situation in 2024. International Monetary Fund (IMF) states that there will be a further increase in GDP by 2.7 per cent in 2025, followed by 3.2 per cent in 2026.

The main contributors to this growth will be economic diversification, increased private sector investments and an expanding hydrocarbon sector. The World Bank has also forecasted an average economic expansion of 3.2 per cent for 2025-2026. The 2025 state budget is designed to enhance non-oil revenue growth, maintain stability, improve public spending and reduce public debt to support economic stability and diversification.

2025 will focus on strategic sectors like manufacturing, logistics, tourism, fisheries, mining and education. The non-hydrocarbon sector is projected to grow by 4.3 per cent, with export growth projected to accelerate to 13.6 per cent in 2025. The

Government of Oman is moving steadfastly in its nationalisation drive with targets of 20 per cent to 50 per cent in transportation and logistics and 50 per cent to 100 per cent in the communication and technologies sector by 2026.

The SME sector will significantly contribute to Oman's economic growth in 2025. The SME is estimated to contribute 12.9 per cent of the GDP, creating employment for 33,990 individuals. In Oman, SMEs represent 14.1 per cent of all businesses.

To further support the growth and development of SMEs, the financial sector aims to allocate 5.5 per cent of the total bank loan portfolio to SMEs in 2025. Oman is expected to face some challenges in the current deficit. In 2023, the current account deficit was 0.2 per cent of the GDP; in 2024, it grew to 1.1 per cent.

The expected decline in oil prices is estimated to widen further to 1.6 per cent of the GDP in 2025. The government of Oman aims to reduce the public debt by enhancing non-oil revenue growth and improving public spending. While Oman's economic and investment outlook in 2025 appears cautious and optimistic, with projections of a GDP of 2.7 per cent and accelerating efforts in diversification into non-hydrocarbon exports, several challenges warrant a critical eye.

The country is still heavily reliant on oil reserves, which makes them vulnerable, as

Despite challenges in hydrocarbon, Oman has had a favourable economic situation in 2024. International Monetary Fund (IMF) states that there will be a further increase in GDP by 2.7% in 2025, followed by 3.2% in 2026.

evidenced by the OPAC+ impact of production cuts in 2024. However, the government managed to mitigate the negative effect on the economy. Diversification efforts are promising and have made progress, but they face hurdles in developing nascent non-oil sectors and attracting sufficient investment. The widening account current account deficit also raises concerns about the long-term fiscal sustainability.

The nationalisation drive is booming, but the country still needs to factor in the need for foreign expertise in emerging sectors.

The reforms and efforts towards Oman Vision 2040 are progressing and the pace of implementation and their effectiveness are leading to a diversified knowledge-based economy.

Still, the global economic landscape, including the potential of oil price vulnerability and geopolitical escalations in the Middle East, poses a cloud of unpredictability to Oman's 2025 prospects.

While there are challenges with the widening current account deficit, the expected dipping oil prices and geopolitical tensions, the country needs to progressively move forward with diversification efforts towards sustainable growth and development.

Rigorous implementation of strategies and adapting to the BANI world construct will ensure that Oman has a positive and progressive 2025.

TECH WILL LEARN THE VALUE OF A CASH PAYCHECK

BY PRANAV KIRAN

Technology companies are ready for a New Year's resolution: shaking their addiction to stock-based compensation. Startups strapped for cash but rich in faith that valuations must go up have attracted talent by paying their salaries in shares. Even mature tech giants have trouble just using cash. In 2025, the incentive to keep this up will dwindle as scrutiny rises.

The ultra-low-interest-rate, post-pandemic period turbocharged the habit. Some 121 tech companies went public in 2021, a level last seen ahead of the dotcom bubble. Many were fast-growing but unprofitable; ostensibly saving cash on pay by using headily valued equity held appeal.

Given that the BVP Nasdaq Emerging Cloud Index had doubled the year prior, equity likely also seemed a safe bet for employees.

Some 121 tech companies went public in 2021, a level last seen ahead of the dotcom bubble. Many were fast-growing but unprofitable; ostensibly saving cash on pay by using headily valued equity held appeal.

The trend was already set by their more established peers. Among the Russell 3000 Index, stock-based compensation grew about 15 per cent annually between 2006 and 2022, according to Morgan Stanley analysts, far outstripping roughly 4 per cent revenue growth over that time.

At \$270 billion, it represented as much as 8 per cent of total compensation among US public companies in 2022.

It didn't just accrue to bosses, with 80 per cent of equity pay going to those below the top executives.

The information technology sector leaned furthest into the practice. There will be less incentive to offer generous packages to junior employees. Tech firms, rather than scooping up all the talent they can find, are now retrenching. They notched over 500,000 layoffs since 2022, according to layoffs.

Management will also get less leeway from investors. After a decade of growth-above-all, profitability is now prized. In 2022, as interest rates rose worldwide, the Emerging Cloud Index halved.

The valuation gap between companies exceeding the rule of 40 — a metric combining revenue growth and EBITDA margin to benchmark profitable expansion — and ones that don't is widening. Sure, companies might exclude stock compensation in adjusted profitability metrics. But issuing equity is not costless, diluting existing holders and reducing earnings per share.

Even \$300 billion industry behemoth Salesforce had to reassure investors in August, opens new tab that its capital return programme will “fully offset” dilution from its stock plan. It's a tortured logic to save upfront only to spend cash flow afterwards on compensation. — Reuters

Digital gateway shapes business landscape

AS Oman positions itself as the Middle East's digital gateway, connecting Europe, Asia and Africa, the nation is witnessing an unprecedented transformation in its business landscape. This strategic evolution, backed by substantial infrastructure investments and clear government vision, is creating remarkable opportunities for businesses and professionals alike.

Our nation's geographical advantage, with its extensive coastline outside the Strait of Hormuz, has become a powerful asset in the digital age.

The network of 21 submarine telecom cables and five landing stations provides direct access to over 46 countries, creating a robust digital highway that's attracting global technology companies and empowering local businesses.

This digital infrastructure is revolutionising how Omani businesses operate. With 13 state-of-the-art data centres and a growing cloud services market, companies of all sizes are finding new ways to digitalise their operations cost-effectively. The impact is particularly significant for our small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which can now access world-class digital services without massive capital investments.

The numbers tell a compelling story. Our ICT market is projected to grow from \$5.02 billion in 2023 to \$8.33 billion by 2028, while the e-commerce sector is expected to expand at an impressive 13.54 per cent through 2028.

These figures represent more than just market growth — they signify thousands of new opportunities for Omani entrepreneurs and businesses.

High-speed internet penetration, reaching 74.39 per cent, is enabling our SMEs to compete globally. Local



This strategic evolution is creating remarkable opportunities for businesses and professionals alike. Image for illustration only.



DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI
yousufh@omaninvest-gateway.com

The author is founder and CEO - Smart Investment Gateway, economists, board adviser & business transformation mentor.

businesses are launching e-commerce platforms, implementing digital payment solutions and leveraging cloud-based tools to streamline their operations.

This digital accessibility is leveling the playing field, allowing smaller enterprises to compete effectively with larger organisations. The employment

landscape is undergoing a remarkable transformation. New career opportunities are emerging across various technology domains, from digital infrastructure management to cloud solutions architecture, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

Young Omanis are increasingly gravitating towards these technology-related careers, meeting the growing demand for digital expertise.

Our government's Oman Vision 2040 digital initiatives are providing crucial support for this transformation. With the Digital Transformation Programme already achieving a 53 per cent completion rate, we're seeing tangible progress in creating a comprehensive framework for digital growth.

This includes streamlined business registration processes, enhanced e-government services and robust support for technology startups.

The ripple effects of this digital revolution extend across traditional sectors.

Manufacturing companies are implementing smart factory solutions, logistics firms are digitalising their supply chains,

and healthcare providers are embracing telemedicine.

The retail sector is adopting omnichannel platforms, while educational institutions are developing e-learning solutions.

For entrepreneurs and investors, specific opportunities are emerging in digital payment solutions, cloud computing services, cybersecurity, data analytics and IoT applications.

The digital infrastructure is also attracting foreign direct investment, contributing significantly to our GDP growth and economic diversification efforts.

Looking ahead, Oman's digital ecosystem will drive economic diversification through technology sector growth, digital service exports to the MENA region and the development of digital entrepreneurship.

The establishment of technology parks and innovation centres is fostering a startup culture and attracting international talent, creating a vibrant environment for innovation and growth.

While Oman's digital transformation presents exciting opportunities, it's important to recognise the accompanying challenges. Businesses must proactively address cybersecurity risks, bridge skills gaps through training and development, and ensure compliance with evolving digital regulations.

The government's proactive initiatives in establishing comprehensive frameworks and support programmes are instrumental in helping businesses navigate these challenges and thrive in this new digital era.

To further enhance this progress, it's essential to leverage the potential of academic institutions and research centres in fostering innovation and driving technological advancements.

ART/LIFE



ENTERTAINMENT

South Africa’s colourful minstrel carnival draws thousands



THOUSANDS OF colourfully costumed minstrels paraded through Cape Town Saturday in an exuberant century-old carnival rooted in the South African city’s history of slavery that drew large crowds of spectators.

In glitzy uniforms matched with flashy hats, parasols and face paint, the marchers walked and danced through the city’s historic centre in an annual event that an organiser said had grown to become the biggest such parade on the continent.



The highly anticipated New Year parade celebrates Cape Town’s mixed-raced community descended from slaves brought from Africa, Southwest Asia and Indian Ocean territories after the city was settled by the Dutch in the 1650s.

Organisers said 18 troupes of around 20,000 performers took part in this year’s event, with marchers from all ages and accompanied by trumpets, trombones and tambourines.

The first formal parade was held in 1907, Muneeb Gambeno, director of the Kaapse Klopse Karnival Association that organises the event, told broadcaster SABC, with slavery abolished in Cape Town in 1834.

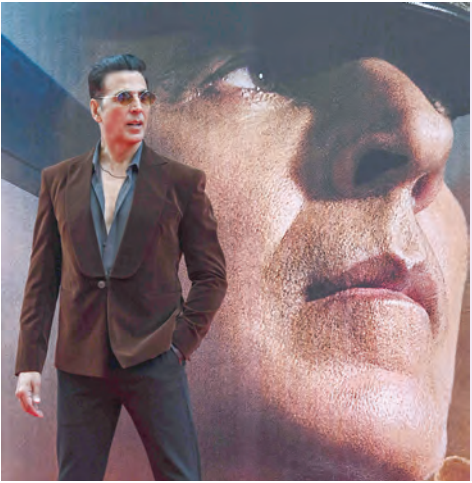
Similar to London’s Notting Hill Carnival, it is the biggest event of its kind on the African continent, he said. —AFP

QUICK FEATURES



ENTERTAINMENT

US fashion designer Jonathan Simkhai attends the Golden Globes WWD Style Awards at the Four Seasons Hotel at Beverly Hills in Los Angeles, California. —AFP



FILM

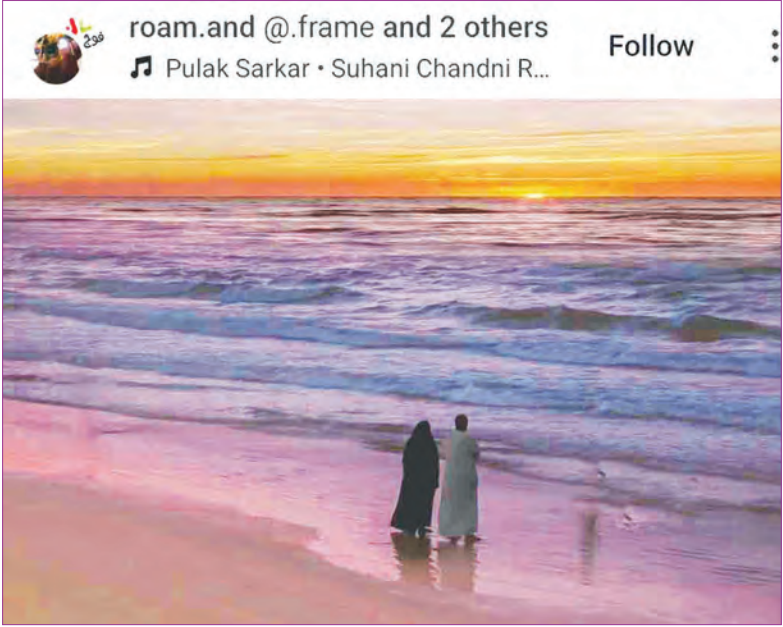
Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar poses for photographs during a promotional event of his upcoming Indian Hindi-language war film ‘Sky Force’ in Mumbai. —AFP



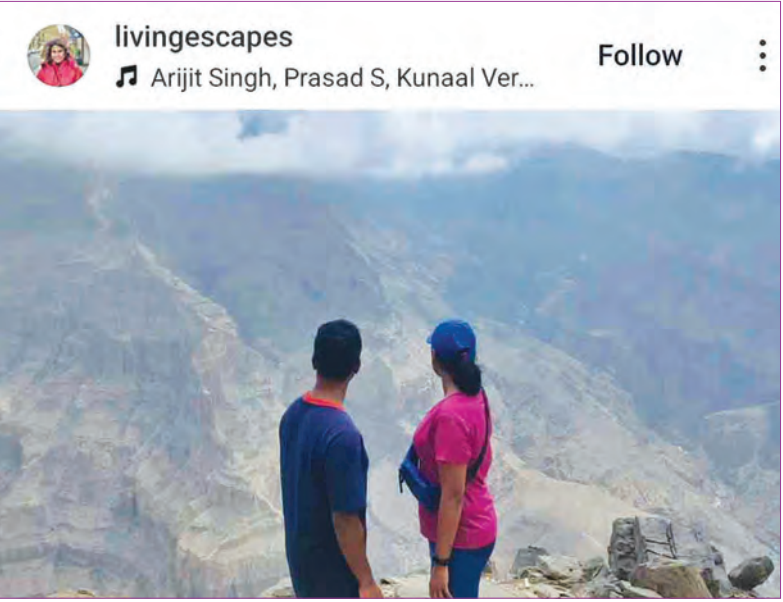
LIFESTYLE

A motorcyclist rides past a mural of two men playing the Maya ball game on a wall in the colourful municipality of Dulce Nombre de Copan, Copan department, Honduras. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



The Colours of Sunset



Beauty of Remote Places

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. To be selected, follow us on Instagram and every time you upload or share your photos, make sure to tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

Jurassic highway: Hundreds of dinosaur footprints found in UK quarry



RESEARCHERS have uncovered hundreds of dinosaur footprints dating back to the middle Jurassic era in a quarry in Oxfordshire, southern England, showing that reptiles such as the nine-metre predator *Megalosaurus* moved along enormous tracks.

The dig at Dewars Farm Quarry found five extensive trackways, one of which measured more than 150 metres in length, researchers from the Universities of Oxford and Birmingham said on Thursday.

Four of the tracks were made by gigantic, long-necked, herbivorous dinosaurs called sauropods, most likely to be *Cetiosaurus*, an up to 18-metre-long cousin of the well-known *Diplodocus*, they said.

The fifth trackway was made by the carnivorous theropod dinosaur *Megalosaurus*, which had distinctive three-toed feet with claws.

The carnivore and herbivore

tracks, which are about 166 million years old, cross over at one point, raising questions about whether and how the two types of dinosaur were interacting, the researchers said.

Megalosaurus was the first dinosaur to be scientifically named and described in 1824, kick-starting the last 200 years of dinosaur science and public interest. Emma Nicholls, vertebrate palaeontologist at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, said: "Scientists have known about and been studying *Megalosaurus* for longer than any other dinosaur on Earth and yet these recent discoveries prove there is still new evidence of these animals out there, waiting to be found."

The buried prints came to light when quarry worker Gary Johnson felt "unusual bumps" as he was stripping the clay back with his vehicle in order to expose the quarry floor.

— Reuters



Ralph Lauren Makes Fashion History With Top Civilian Honour

ON SATURDAY, the United States' clothier in chief met its commander in chief, as Ralph Lauren became the first fashion designer to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Dressed in a tweed blazer, a knit necktie and squishy dark sneakers, Lauren, 85, was described in an introduction as "classic yet creative, timeless yet innovative." He was praised for reminding "us of our distinct style as a nation of dreamers and doers."

Established by John F Kennedy, the Presidential Medal of Freedom is the nation's highest civilian honour. It has been bestowed upon a host of cultural, corporate and political figures, including Babe Ruth, Mother Teresa, Julia Child, Warren Buffett, John McCain and Rush Limbaugh.

If ever there was a fashion designer worthy of this award, it is Lauren. A son of the Bronx, Lauren marketed a preppy image to the upwardly mobile masses, building his eponymous company into a multimillion-dollar corporation — one he remains executive chair and chief creative officer of nearly a half-century after he founded it.

The fashion world, which had been largely absent from the event in the past, was well represented at the White House on Saturday. Joining Lauren in receiving the gilded medallion from President Joe Biden was Anna Wintour, a steely Brit (and longtime supporter of Democratic causes) who has been *Vogue's* editor-in-chief since 1988.

In her introduction, Wintour, who was dressed in a shin-length plaid coat and forwent her ever-present oversized sunglasses for the occasion, was hailed for using "fashion as a mirror to reflect our culture."

Other recipients Saturday included Hillary Clinton, Bono, José Andrés and George Soros.

Lauren, was joined at the ceremony by his wife of 60 years, Ricky Lauren, dressed in a sleek black suit and his elder brother

Jerry Lauren. Also in attendance were Lauren's three children: Andrew, David and Dylan.

Born in New York to immigrant parents in 1939, Lauren nosed into the apparel market in the late 1960s by introducing a line of men's neckties, which he sold out of a drawer in a showroom in the Empire State Building. Soon, Lauren was marketing a holistic



shoes-to-suits brand of aspirational prepwear.

The rest is well-trod fashion history, as Lauren rode his brand's pony logo to the celestial heights of American fashion. In a sense, he found success by perfecting the building blocks of the all-American look: bluejeans, polo shirts, white T-shirts, flannels and work boots. As Lauren told luxury magazine *Robb*

Report in 2023, "I loved things that were American." His brand's brisk-selling American flag sweaters put an exclamation point on that.

Lauren expanded the brand into winsome home goods and personally came to embody the aspirational image pushed through his label's cinematic ad campaigns. Lauren's holdings include a garage full of automobiles and a sprawling ranch in the Colorado mountains. Rife with leather furniture, saddle blankets and polished wood accents, Lauren's oft-photographed homes are lived-in tableaux of his well-honed all-American look.

Through his brand, the designer has been a patriotic cheerleader and if not a friend, at least an acquaintance, to many political figures. For decades, his company has outfitted the US Olympic team, dressing athletes in all forms of spangled and striped sportswear. In 2022, during a period of national soul-searching about racial inequity, Ralph Lauren collaborated with Morehouse College and Spelman College, two historically Black colleges in Atlanta, on a collection including silk wrap dresses and a schoolboy blazer — dressy pieces defying the look of today's sweatpants-loving undergrads.

There is bipartisan appeal to Lauren's clothes. Nancy Reagan and Michelle Obama both wore the brand's designs during their time in the White House. In 2017, Melania Trump wore a cashmere dress from the brand at her husband's swearing-in. Lauren's son, David, married George HW Bush's granddaughter Lauren in 2011.

Lauren's company seems to hold a special significance for the Bidens. Biden wore a Ralph Lauren overcoat and suit at his inauguration in 2021 while the first lady, who has often been photographed in the brand's designs (including on the cover of *Wintour's Vogue* last year), was the marquee guest at Ralph Lauren's most recent runway show, held in the Hamptons in September. — NYT

FEATURES

BY YERU EBUE

JUST A stone's throw from the striking Bahla Fort — a celebrated Unesco World Heritage Site — lies Bahla Souq, one of Oman's most cherished traditional markets. This vibrant marketplace is a treasure trove of centuries-old craftsmanship that whisks you away into the heart of Oman's rich trading heritage. Picture this: narrow alleys adorned with wooden roofs, inviting you to wander through history while shopping for unique goods.

Bahla Souq dates back to the Nabahina dynasty, which thrived between the 12th and 15th centuries when Bahla served as a central capital. Its strategic location as a trading hub is reflected in the lively atmosphere of the souq, which has relentlessly maintained its role as a cultural and economic centre, radiating the allure of an authentic Eastern marketplace.

What sets Bahla Souq apart? For starters, it's renowned for its stunning handmade pottery, a craft that dates back to 2500 BC! In addition to pottery, you can discover exquisite copper artefacts, silver jewellery and beautifully woven textiles. Take a stroll through the ancient alleys, where artisans can often be seen at work, bringing age-old skills to life. The daily sheep market adds an extra layer of excitement, providing a sensory feast that truly transports visitors back in time.

Planning a visit? Early mornings are the best time to experience the souq in full swing, and if you can make it on a Friday, you won't want to miss the bustling livestock market. Located about 200 km from Muscat, Bahla Souq is easily reachable by car or public bus. Just remember to dress respectfully and don't shy away from haggling — it's all part of the fun!

As part of the Bahla Oasis, this captivating souq is not just an isolated attraction; it's surrounded by other significant landmarks, like traditional mosques and the remnants of a 13 km-long defensive wall that dates back to pre-Islamic times. Sprawled across 4,493 square metres, the souq features 142 shops overflowing with a diverse array of products, from household goods to fragrant herbs and spices that can tantalise your senses.

Originally constructed from mud bricks, the souq has undergone various renovations, with some shops now featuring concrete elements. Shaikh Salim al Shaqsi, in a previous local interview, said, "This souq is our cultural heritage. Its history has been passed down from era to era." The importance of preserving this living museum cannot be overstated.

In response to concerns over its historical significance, the Ministry of Heritage and Culture has initiated restoration plans designed not just to enhance the souq's visual appeal, but also to ensure that it remains an integral part of Bahla's economic landscape.

GREAT FOR A DAY TRIP

Strolling through Bahla Souq is like stepping into a living museum. The welcoming wooden doors and earthy mud-finished walls set the tone for an exploration that's both engaging and enlightening. With neatly organised sections for everything from fresh vegetables and aromatic spices to traditional clothing and handcrafted accessories like kummah and khanjar, the souq invites casual wanderings and spirited haggling.

Badar bin Harib al Shukaili, CEO of Bahla Heritage Souq, underscores the significance of this marketplace in contemporary life. Historically, souqs were strategically located next to forts, serving as centres for information exchange among the local populace. Today, despite the rise of modern supermarkets, many Omanis still prefer the personal touch of local sellers where trust, freshness and authenticity reign supreme.

Al Shukaili's antique shop is among the historical treasures that can be found at the souq. As the Chairman of the Bahla Souq Company, Harib views his store not merely as a business but as a mini-museum. His



BAHLA SOUQ
A GREAT
DESTINATION
FOR A DAY TRIP



collection, showcasing items that span 400 to 500 years, includes beautifully crafted swords, traditional jewellery, and even nostalgic antiques like vintage radios and phones. For Harib, each item is a piece of Oman's living history, and he often hosts auctions where collectors can bid on these rare finds.

To keep the atmosphere fresh and engaging, the local community hosts various cultural events, ensuring that both locals and visitors can immerse themselves in the vibrancy of Omani culture.

Adding a modern twist is the delightful "Kadam" café, where dining becomes an experience. Offering a menu inspired by diverse cultures, it's the perfect spot to recharge and reflect on your souq adventures.

The balance between modernisation and historical preservation is palpable in Bahla Souq. The government takes deliberate steps towards sustainable development, ensuring that the souq can thrive while honouring its rich legacy.

From ancient trees that have stood for centuries to the modern pulse of community life, Bahla Souq is a must-visit destination. It's where Oman's history meets contemporary culture, and the blend of tradition and modernity creates an unforgettable experience.

