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INBRIEF

HIS MAJESTY GREETES
PRESIDENT OF SERBIA

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Aleksandar Vucic of the Republic of Serbia on the occasion of his country’s National Day.

His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings to President Aleksandar wishing him success in every field to fulfil the aspirations of the friendly Serbian people for progress and achievements, hoping that the cooperation and partnership relations between the two countries would see further growth and advancement. — ONA

MORE THAN 45
KILLED IN NIGERIA
ATTACKS

KANO: Gunmen shot dead or cut the throats of more than 45 people in three new attacks on villages in a Nigerian state, a humanitarian said on Saturday. The attacks again threw the spotlight on Nigeria’s efforts to contain security threats that have been strongly criticised by US President Donald Trump. Some 38 people were shot dead or had their throats cut at Konkoso in Niger state, the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Nearly all homes were burned down in the village and more bodies were expected to be found. Seven more people were killed at Tungan Makeri and one in the village of Pissa, the source added. All the villages are in the Borgu locality near Kwara state where more than 160 people were massacred by suspected militants in early February.

Niger state police confirmed six dead and other people kidnapped in a dawn raid at Tungan Makeri. — AFP

SUNNY FEBRUARY IN STOCKHOLM

People walk and skate on the ice at Riddarfjarden, in front of the city hall in central Stockholm, on a sunny February 14. —AFP

AL NAHDA WIN HM CUP

Al Nahda were crowned champions of the 2025-26 His Majesty’s Cup after defeating Oman Club 2-0 on Saturday night in a thrilling final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The final was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat. The title showdown was the culmination of a week-long celebration across Muscat Governorate, organised in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Muscat. The prestigious trophy toured the wilayat of the governorate in a symbolic parade, while a vibrant fan village attracted thousands of supporters with entertainment and cultural activities. SEE P10

DEBATE OVER NUCLEAR
WEAPONS GAINS PACE

EUROPEAN LEADERS, worried about threats from a nuclear-armed Russia and doubts about the future of US security commitments, are increasingly debating whether to bolster nuclear arsenals on the continent. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz told the Munich Security Conference (MSC) that he had “held confidential talks with the French president about European nuclear deterrence”.

And Prime Minister Keir Starmer of Britain, Europe’s other nuclear power along with France, said it was “enhancing our nuclear cooperation with France”.

The UK’s nuclear deterrent already protects Nato members, and Starmer said “any adversary must know that in a crisis they could be confronted by our combined strength” alongside France. Still, while the United States and Russia have thousands of nuclear warheads each, the combined French and British arsenal is in the hundreds.

Discussion of nuclear armament has long been viewed as taboo in many other European countries — but Russian aggression and worries about US commitment have forced the issue into

Sayyid Badr participates in MSC

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, participated in the Munich Security Conference(MSC) in Germany on February 13 and 14. The foreign minister held a number of bilateral meetings to exchange views on current issues and developments, and to explore ways to support efforts to establish security and peace through dialogue, legal and diplomatic frameworks, and respect for the sovereignty of states and the rights stipulated by international law. The consultations focused on key current issues related to the Iranian-American talks on Iran’s nuclear programme, the situation in Gaza and the Palestinian cause, the conflict in Ukraine, the crises in Yemen and Sudan, the situations in Lebanon and Syria, maritime navigation, and the need to ensure a safe and smooth flow of international trade. — DETAILS ON P2

mainstream European politics.

In a report assessing “Europe’s nuclear options” published for the MSC, experts warned that the relatively small nuclear arsenals of France and the United Kingdom might not be enough

to face down Russia without US support.

“Europeans can no longer outsource their thinking about nuclear deterrence to the United States,” the group of 11 experts warn in the paper, which calls

on Europe to “urgently confront a new nuclear reality” in the face of “Russia’s nuclear-backed revisionism”.

Many European officials are convinced that Moscow’s territorial ambitions will not be confined to Ukraine, and that other European countries — including even Nato members — could face some sort of attack.

US President Donald Trump’s disdainful comments about Nato and his highly transactional approach to foreign relations, meanwhile, have Washington’s European allies questioning whether they can risk relying on US protection.

The MSC report lays out five nuclear options for Europe, but cautions that none are good and that there is “no low-cost or risk-free way out of Europe’s nuclear predicament”.

“The era in which Europe could afford strategic complacency has ended,” the authors write.

“However uncomfortable the debate may be, the new security environment requires European policymakers to confront the role of nuclear weapons in the defence of the continent directly and without delay — and to invest the resources needed to do so competently.” — AFP

‘Extermination’ of Palestinians must stop: African Union chair

ADDIS ABABA: The “extermination” of the Palestinian people must end, the chairman of the African Union Commission Mahmoud Ali Youssouf said on Saturday as he launched the organisation’s 39th summit.

“In the Middle East, Palestine and the suffering of its people also challenge our consciences. The extermination of these people must stop,” said Youssouf, who was elected to head the institution a year ago. The summit brings together heads of state from the 55 member states of the African Union over two days.

Palestinian president Mahmud

Abbas called for the removal of “all obstacles” he said Israel has imposed on implementing phase two of the Gaza ceasefire.

“We emphasise the need to lift all obstacles imposed by the Israeli occupation on the implementation of the provisions related to the second phase of the agreement,” Abbas said, in a speech read by his prime minister Mohammed Mustafa at an African Union summit in Ethiopia.

This included the work of a technocratic committee established to oversee the daily governance of Gaza, he added.

A girl walks on a hill overlooking a camp for displaced Palestinians in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

Removal of the obstacles was needed to “ensure continuity of services, coordinate humanitarian efforts and enable a swift recovery”, the president said.

CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

Abbas accused Israel of “continuing to violate” the ceasefire agreement with Palestinian militant group Hamas that took effect in October and was backed by the United States.

“From the announcement of the ceasefire until today, more than 500 Palestinians have been killed (in Gaza), which threatens

the durability of the truce and the full implementation of its second phase,” he added. Even though the US-brokered truce entered its second phase last month, violence has continued in the Palestinian territory, with Israel and Hamas trading blame. The deal is aimed at permanently ending the Gaza war and was endorsed in November by the United Nations.

The second phase stipulates that Israeli forces gradually withdraw from Gaza and Hamas should disarm, with an international stabilisation force deployed to ensure security. — AFP

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SHORT TAKES



The consultations focused on key current issues.

SAYYID BADR PARTICIPATES IN MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE

MUNICH: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, participated in the Munich Security Conference in Germany on February 13 and 14. The foreign minister held a number of bilateral meetings to exchange views on current issues and developments, and to explore ways to support efforts to establish security and peace through dialogue, legal and diplomatic frameworks, and respect for the sovereignty of states and the rights stipulated by international law.

The consultations focused on key current issues related to the Iranian-American talks on Iran’s nuclear programme, the situation in Gaza and the Palestinian cause, the conflict in Ukraine, the crises in Yemen and Sudan, the situations in Lebanon and Syria, maritime navigation, and the need to ensure a safe and smooth flow of international trade. They also addressed economic, climate, and humanitarian challenges, as well as the importance of advancing reforms to international organisations and the Security Council to ensure fair representation of states and regional groups particularly those from the Global South. The discussions also included follow-up on existing bilateral relations and cooperation programmes with the Sultanate of Oman.

Sayyid Badr held meetings with: Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar; Fuad Hussein, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Iraq; Shaikh Jarrah Jaber Al Ahmad al Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait; Paulo Rangel, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Portugal; David van Weel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; Dr Johann Wadephul, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany; Andrii Sybiha, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine; Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof, Minister for Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam and Kaja Kallas, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission. The meetings were attended by Maithaa bint Saif al Mahrouqi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Federal Republic of Germany, and the official delegation accompanying the foreign ministry.

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS WALK THE RED CARPET

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, FEB 14

Over 100 children and adults were greeted with cheers and flashing lights as they entered the Diplomatic Club in Muscat on Friday night.

This global event, which saw companies, charities, and faith-based organisations from around the world coming together to honour and value people with special needs, is aimed at celebrating individuals with disabilities.

Each event is unique to its location, but some common activities include a red carpet



This global event is aimed at to celebrate individuals with disabilities.

entrance, a warm welcome from a friendly crowd and paparazzi, food, music, activities and a crowning ceremony where every guest is honoured as a King or Queen.

HH Sayyidah Hujaifa bint Jaifer al Said, Chairperson of the Association for Children with Disabilities, delivered a touching speech emphasising the importance and value of individuals with special needs. She highlighted the joy, love, and hope they bring to the world.

Joseph Stewart, Founder of Joy House Arabia, expressed his excitement for hosting the first Night to Shine event in Oman and the GCC region. He emphasised the life-changing impact of the event on the honoured guests.

Joy House Arabia collaborates

with local and international partners to promote dignity, belonging, and meaningful participation in society. Night to Shine, through hundreds of churches worldwide, has provided over half a million guest experiences and over a million volunteer experiences in the past eleven years.

Tim Tebow, founder of the Tim Tebow Foundation, shared his enthusiasm for Night to Shine, expressing a desire to reach every person with special needs around the world. The goal is to ensure that all individuals are celebrated, regardless of their location.

Flexible retirement for women under new law

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, FEB 14

THE Social Protection Law has provided flexible retirement options for women to reflect their role as contributors to economic growth and society. The new framework seeks to strike a balance between social fairness, job stability, and financial sustainability based on age, years of service, and the nature of employment.

Under the Social Protection Law, the statutory retirement age — for both men and women — is 60 years and will be raised to 65, in accordance with a defined transition schedule. This adjustment aligns with international practices aimed at extending workforce participation and strengthening the sustainability of pension systems amid rising life expectancy.

No pension reduction
One of the most notable features of the law is the provision allowing women to retire early without any reduction in pension benefits.

Women employed in regular positions may retire at the age of 55 without incurring pension deductions. For those working in hazardous or physically demanding occupations like the military, retirement is permitted at 50, provided that at least 20 years of service have been completed in such roles.

In hazardous occupations,



The Law is particularly relevant for women who entered the workforce at an early age.

retirement is permitted from the age of 45 under the same service conditions.

Women with disabilities may also retire at 45 after completing 15 years of service.

Mariam bint Salim al Alawi, a government employee, described these provisions as a progressive step forward. “The law gives women the flexibility to make retirement decisions based on their health and family responsibilities without compromising their financial security,” she said.

With pension reduction
The law allows women to opt for early retirement, subject to pension reductions, offering greater flexibility for those seeking to leave the workforce earlier.

Pension reductions are calculated according to clear and standardised

formulas designed to ensure fairness between contribution periods and benefit levels, while maintaining the financial integrity of the pension system.

Based on long service
The law also introduces the option of retirement based solely on years of service, without imposing a minimum age requirement, provided that the insured individual has completed 30 years of actual service.

This option is particularly relevant for women who entered the workforce at an early age and accumulated extensive professional experience over several decades.

Khadija bint Hamad al Shaqsi, a former employee in the services sector, noted that this provision recognises long-term contribution. “Focusing on years of service is fair, especially for women who have dedicated more than three decades to their jobs and played a direct role in national development.”

Experts emphasise that the effectiveness of the new retirement system depends largely on awareness. Women must be fully informed about their entitlements and the financial implications of each option in order to make well-considered decisions regarding their future.

By placing individuals at the centre of policy design, the law enhances social security, financial stability, personal well-being and a dignified life after service.

Al Mazyouna sees development projects across various sectors

ADEL AL YAFAI
AL MAZYOUNA, FEB 14

Saif bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Wali of Al Mazyouna, said that the governorate represents a geographical and economic bridge connecting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries with the markets of Yemen and southern Arabia. He added that Al Mazyouna is considered the Gulf Gateway for land trade to Yemen and beyond.

Al Mazyouna is located some 270 kilometres from the city of Salalah and only 14 kilometres from the Yemeni city of Shahn. This has given it growing strategic importance, making it the main land gateway

between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Yemen from the southwest, and a natural corridor for the movement of people, goods and trade. Al Mazyouna Free Zone was established to facilitate trade with Yemen and the Horn of Africa and to serve as an advanced logistics platform for storage, transit, and re-export Despite its desert nature, Al Mazyouna boasts unique tourism potential placing it a desert tourism and adventure destination in the Sultanate of Oman. Ramlat Jadilalah, one of the world’s tallest sand dunes, is a perfect destination for camping, sandboarding, ecotourism and desert safaris.

Regarding infrastructure, Al



AL MAZYOUNA

Busaidy said that road projects are a key component of development in Al Mazyouna, given its border and desert location. The Harweeb-Al Mazyouna-Miten road project is

one of the largest projects currently underway, with a total length of approximately 210 kilometres. It has several main sections including: Harweeb-Andat (45 km), Andat-Tusnat (26 km), Tusnat-Al Mazyouna (39 km), and Al Mazyouna-Miten (90 km). Approximately 32 kilometres of internal roads were constructed in 2024 and 2025 including paving and improvements within the wilayat centre, its districts and residential areas.

In the health sector, the opening of Al Mazyouna Hospital in September 2024 marked a qualitative leap in the level of healthcare services provided to the residents of the Wilayat of

Al Mazyouna and neighbouring wilayats. The project cost RO 15.4 million making it the second largest hospital in Dhofar Governorate. It has a capacity of 50 to 69 beds and a build-up area of approximately 15,000 square metres. The hospital includes multiple specialised clinics, including internal medicine, paediatrics, general surgery, ENT, ophthalmology, dentistry, emergency department, surgical operations, obstetrics and gynaecology, prenatal care, paediatrics, radiology, a laboratory, a dialysis unit, inpatient wards and intensive care units. The Wilayat of Al Mazyouna also has a number of health centres and primary clinics.

SHORT TAKES



The first axis addresses the issue of juvenile delinquency and awareness programmes in this regard.

SHURA TO HOST MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura will host Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, today to deliver her ministry's statement to the council members in a public session.

The statement of the Minister of Social Development, which the council will discuss during its tenth and eleventh regular sessions of the third ordinary session of the tenth term (2023-2027), includes six axes. The first axis addresses the issue of juvenile delinquency in the Sultanate of Oman and the preventive and awareness programmes in this regard. The second point will cover the family development sector and the ministry's plans to develop family protection programmes and strengthen family cohesion, in addition to its efforts to support national values and identity and the role of social welfare and civil society organisations.

The third axis will discuss the most prominent social phenomena and changes facing society in the Sultanate of Oman. It will highlight the social policies adopted to address these phenomena and changes, the scientific research and studies that monitored them during the period (2023-2025), and the resulting recommendations, along with the solutions and measures taken to mitigate these social phenomena.



50 SMEs from diverse economic sectors took part in the exhibition.

RIYADA HOSTS ENTREPRENEURS EXHIBITION

SUHAR: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada) organised the Al Batinah Entrepreneurs Exhibition 2026 in Suhar, Al Batinah North Governorate, with the participation of 50 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from diverse economic sectors.

The two-day event highlights ongoing national efforts to strengthen the SME ecosystem and promote sustainable economic growth.

The exhibition was held under the auspices of Eng Bader bin Salem al Maamari, Chairman of the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority, and attended by Halima bint Rashid al Zari, Chairperson of Riyada. Khalfan bin Abdullah al Kharousi, Director of Riyada in Al Batinah North, said the exhibition forms part of national programmes aimed at empowering SMEs by providing professional platforms that combine commercial showcasing, institutional networking and strategic partnerships with public and private sector entities.

He noted that the participation of 50 entrepreneurs offers a direct interface with decision-makers and procurement officials, facilitating business introductions ahead of contracting opportunities. The initiative also enables SMEs to present their products and services, demonstrate national competencies, and strengthen their integration into local value chains. The exhibition brings together enterprises from sectors including manufacturing, handicrafts, technology, digital innovation, tourism, services and trade — reflecting the expanding role of SMEs in supporting Oman's economic diversification. — ONA

‘HER STORY, OUR VOICE’ CAMPAIGN PROMOTES WOMEN’S HEALTH AWARENESS

MUSCAT: A two-day women's health awareness campaign under the slogan 'Her Story, Our Voice' held at Al Mouj Walk in Muscat, aimed to strengthen community awareness of key health issues affecting women.

The initiative is organised by the Medical Students Group (MEDSCO) at Sultan Qaboos University and the National University of Science and Technology, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, represented by the National Center for Women's and Child Health, as well as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other related entities.

The campaign was launched under the auspices of HH Sayyidah Dr Basma bint Fakhri al Said and features 13 dedicated awareness



13 dedicated awareness corners focused on a specific health issue.

— ONA

corners, each focusing on a specific health issue.

Topics include polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), endometriosis, cervical cancer associated with human papillomavirus (HPV),

breast cancer, premarital medical examination, sexually transmitted diseases, urinary tract infections, infertility, assisted reproductive technologies such as IVF, safe pregnancy and family planning, menopause, skin conditions and women's mental health at various life stages.

An interactive children's corner offers competitions, colouring activities and simplified health awareness sessions. A dedicated health services section, led by the Ministry of Health and the Directorate-General of Health Services in Muscat Governorate, provides on-site consultations and information about available healthcare services and access procedures. — ONA

ROP launches 2025 Security Research Competition

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, FEB 14

ROYAL

Oman Police (ROP) has announced the launch of the 2025 Security Research Competition, reinforcing its commitment to advancing scientific research in the security field and strengthening community engagement.

The competition invites researchers to submit studies under the theme, 'Security and Sustainable Development in Light of Oman Vision 2040,' offering a platform to present innovative ideas that support national development priorities.

The initiative aims to promote applied security research by implementing the findings of winning projects, while ensuring a transparent evaluation process based on rigorous scientific standards. It also seeks to deepen cooperation between the police and civil society to enhance sustainable security and comprehensive development.

Lieutenant Colonel Khalifa bin Said al Amiri, Director of the Research and Studies Centre at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police



The initiative seeks to harness scientific research to serve the security system and develop innovative solutions to contemporary challenges, ensuring the sustainability of security and safety.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL KHALIFA BIN SAID AL AMIRI
Director of the Research and Studies Centre at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences



Sciences, said the competition reflects the directives of His Majesty who has placed scientific research and innovation at the core of Oman's renewed renaissance.

He noted that the competition aligns with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises research as a key driver of a knowledge-based economy. "The initiative seeks to harness scientific research to serve the security system and develop innovative solutions to contemporary challenges, ensuring the sustainability of security and safety," he said.

Al Amiri added that the future of security in Oman is moving towards

proactive approaches that leverage modern technologies such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and strategies to combat transnational crime. Research, he said, also plays a vital role in enhancing security awareness, particularly in addressing emerging issues such as cybercrime, and in improving the efficiency of police services for citizens and residents.

Guiding themes include comprehensive security and sustainable development; national security and its impact on development; and the role of citizens in achieving security and sustainability.

Participation is open to Omani citizens as well as legal entities, including universities, colleges and research centres within Oman.

Entries will undergo a blind review process to ensure impartiality. Evaluation will consider not only research content but also methodological rigour, analytical strength and practical relevance. The judging panel comprises leading academics from Omani universities in collaboration with field experts from the Royal Oman Police, ensuring a balanced assessment that integrates theory and practice.

Decreased concentration in children a concern

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 14

Decreased concentration in children has become increasingly noticeable recently, due to several reasons stemming from the fast-paced lifestyle they lead, according to Suad al Ghelani, a child and adolescent mental health specialist.

"Lack of physical activity, insufficient sleep, excessive screen time and heavy reliance on the rapid and continuous stimulation provided by devices play a role in decreased concentration in children. We must also consider the factors of nutrition and lack of physical activity, as the body and mind are closely linked," Suad said.

"The reasons may also stem from psychological factors that the child may experience at school or at home, which can affect their ability to concentrate," she added.

Regarding how this phenomenon can be avoided and addressed with necessary steps, Suad said, "The first step is awareness. Parents should pay attention to signs of



SUAD AL GHELANI

Child and adolescent mental health specialist

distraction in their child and not interpret them as bad behaviour or 'laziness', but rather as an indication of something that needs support. It is important to establish a daily routine: sufficient sleep, a balanced diet, a specific time for screens, and breaks between tasks," she said. "Also, the child's environment should be calm and organised, with space for movement, play, and even boredom. Most importantly: communicate with the child, listen to them, and try to understand what is occupying their mind or distracting them.

Sometimes distraction is caused by anxiety or internal pressure," she added.

On when parents should be concerned and seek medical or psychological help, Suad said, "Help would be needed when distraction begins to affect the child's daily life, such as their academic performance, their ability to complete simple tasks, or when forgetfulness becomes so excessive that it directly hinders their daily functioning," she said. "Also, if they notice that the child is having difficulty concentrating, even on things they enjoy, or has started to withdraw, or shows signs of anxiety or hyperactivity, it's important to seek a professional psychological evaluation to understand the exact cause — whether it's related to attention, due to anxiety or other environmental factors," she added.

As for effective ways to improve concentration in children, Suad said the most important method is balance: a balance between rest, play, learning, and sleep. Activities that develop attention,

such as reading, building blocks, drawing, or games that involve planning and skill, all strengthen a child's concentration in an enjoyable way.

"Also, training a child to finish one task before starting another promotes self-regulation. And let's not forget positive encouragement instead of reprimand. When we encourage a child for their small attempts, we instil in them self-motivation, which in turn increases their ability to concentrate," Suad said.

On why some people do not pay attention to the aspect of caring for a child's concentration from birth, Suad said the early years of a child's life are a crucial period of brain development. "Every experience a child goes through leaves a lasting impact on their ability to pay attention and organise themselves later in life. Therefore, it is important to create a safe and enriching environment from the very beginning, one that includes interaction, play, and regular routines," she said.

SPOTLIGHT



Children should not be given a phone at least till the age of 14 years, because this is the developmental stage and it affects not only the eyes, but also the brain. So, we have to guard against the use of the phone for children. It causes irritability and anxiety. There is strain and dryness and migraine headache, so all these things can be caused by usage of the phone.

DR PRIYA RANGARAJAN
Ophthalmologist

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

SMARTPHONE

addiction is no longer a time pass, but a real challenge for parents that requires a deep understanding of its roots and causes. Studies indicate that mobile usage exceeding seven hours a day can weaken the brain areas responsible for critical and logical thinking.

Dr Priya Rangarajan, an ophthalmologist, said, “Children should not be given a phone at least till the age of 14 years, because this is the developmental stage and it affects not only the eyes, but also the brain. So, we have to guard against the use of the phone for children. It causes irritability and anxiety. There is strain and dryness and migraine headache, so all these things can be caused by usage of the phone.”

Dr Priya mentioned that there are cases of children becoming short-sighted at a young age because of using phone for a long time.

“Parents should let their children play some outdoor games, as exposure to sunlight for at least two hours is important. By exposure to sunlight, they will be away from the phone, and the physical activity and the exposure to light will help with the development of the retina.”

Abuse of screen time may also lead to increased risk of depression, sleep disorders and obesity. Before determining the appropriate age, it is advisable to focus on the child’s maturity level and actual need for a phone while establishing clear guidelines from the outset. A phone can be a tool that supports a child’s development or a negative influence, depending on how and within what limits it is used. An international study has shown that children’s use of smartphones before the age of 13 is linked to an increased likelihood of psychological and mental health problems, a decline in mental health indicators, and a deterioration in the quality of family relationships. The study, conducted by the non-profit research organisation Sapien Labs and published in the Journal of the Human Development and Capabilities, confirmed a clear correlation between the duration of smartphone use in childhood and the decline in mental health indicators in adolescence, including low self-esteem, sleep disturbances and social isolation. Studies indicate that the frequent use of mobile devices to quiet and occupy young children may hinder their development of emotional regulation strategies over time and could contribute to psychological disorders such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety and depression.

Excessive screen time can negatively impact skills such as imagination, mental control and self-regulation, leading to slower cognitive processing. It can also affect meaningful interaction with family and teachers. It is recommended that children under two years old not use these devices at all, and for older children, limit their screen time to no more than one hour per day.

Furthermore, excessive screen time is linked to dry eye syndrome and eye strain, and can cause headaches and neck pain. Studies have also indicated a possible link between mobile phone use and childhood obesity, in addition to an increased incidence of muscle and bone problems, eye strain, excessive neck strain and problems with hand and finger joints.

Children can be kept away from phones during their free time in healthy and appropriate ways, such as: reading stories and novels, joining sports clubs and pursuing hobbies, developing drawing and colouring skills or other talents, playing and interacting with peers, spending time talking with them, watching educational programmes, series and films, and assigning them simple tasks.

Researchers point to the importance of childhood and its impact on brain development.

Giving children their own phones early negatively affects this stage for the following reasons: constant notifications increase stress and distract children; frequent late nights disrupt melatonin (growth hormone) production; electronic games stimulate the release of high doses of dopamine, making them more susceptible to behavioural addiction; and social media increases psychological stress, especially with constant comparisons.

These factors explain the high rates of depression, obesity and sleep disorders among children who get phones at a young age. The real tragedy is that these risks are not minor; they can develop into chronic illnesses over time.



Studies indicate that the frequent use of mobile devices to quiet and occupy young children may hinder their development of emotional regulation strategies over time and could contribute to psychological disorders such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety and depression.

Tender Notice for the sale of used and unused Cables
Tender No. AW/T/PH2/01/2026

Al Watanyiah United Engineering and Contracting Co. LLC hereby announce a Tender for the sale of used and unused Cables, as described in the table below, on an “as is, where is” basis. Those wishing to submit a Bid must obtain the Tender documents from the Company’s Head Office (HO) in Ghala Industrial Area after paying the specified Tender Fee in the Company’s Bank Dhofar account: 01040605344006 (IBAN NO: OM080250001040605344006).

S. No.	Tender for the Sale of	Location	Tender Fee (RO)	Earnest Money Deposit (RO)	Period for purchase of Tender	Last date for submission of offer
1	Used and unused High Tension (HT) and Low Voltage (LV) armored and unarmored cables, instrumentation cables, fiber optic cables, earth cables, and wires of various sizes and lengths.	Ghala	300/-	10% of the Total Bid Value	16/02/2026 To 01/03/2026	11/03/2026 5.00 PM

- The last date for submission of Bids accompanied by an Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) issued by any local bank in Oman (equivalent to 10%) of the total Bid value is on Wednesday, 11h March, 5 PM, detailed date on the above table.
- The EMD must be valid for 30 days from the last date of submission of the Bid and the original EMD along with the Bid must be submitted in the tender box at the reception of our Head Office at Ghala, Muscat, Oman on or before the date and time mentioned above.
- Contact details: 2450 2581 / 82 - Extn. 149 / 150. GSM: 9294 7637 / 7722 8166

UAE, Saudi Arabia, India top destinations for Omanis

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, FEB 14

THE TOP outbound countries visited by Omani travellers in 2024 are the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, India, Iran, Thailand and Türkiye. Of these, the UAE topped the list with 4.9 million visits by Omanis, Saudi Arabia (257, 000), India (77,000), Iran (64,900), Thailand (56,600) and Türkiye (55,600).

The total amount spent by Omanis on international travel in 2024, representing 21.5 per cent of total spending by citizens' outbound travel.

The top six nationalities departing the Sultanate of Oman by international flights are India (96,572), Omanis (58,417), Pakistanis (26,529), Bangladeshis (21,626), Iranians (11,961), and Egyptians (11,159).

It may be noted that the Sultanate of Oman's Passport has improved its rankings in the recent Henley Passport Index 2026 to 57 from 59 in 2025.

Oman's citizens can travel visa-free

The Sultanate of Oman's Passport has improved its rankings in the recent Henley Passport Index 2026 to 57 from 59 in 2025.



to 85 countries, including Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Bermuda, Botswana, Brunei, China, Colombia, Cook Islands, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Georgia, Haiti, Hong Kong (SAR China), Iran, Jordan, Kosovo, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Macao, Malaysia, Mauritius, Pakistan, Philippines, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia,

Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, The Bahamas, Tunisia, Türkiye, Turks and Caicos Islands, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Zambia. In the GCC, the UAE passport is ranked 5th (184 visa-free countries), Saudi Arabia 55th (87 visa-free countries), Qatar 50th (96 visa-free countries).

MTC MARKS ANNUAL DAY



MUSCAT: The Military Technical College (MTC) celebrated its Annual Day with a vibrant programme featuring national and popular musical performances by the Royal Oman Army Band and the Royal Oman Air Force Band. The ceremony also included a poetry recital, an impressive military marching display and a Taekwondo demonstration, reflecting the college's emphasis on discipline, physical excellence and cultural appreciation.



OMAN CRICKET CLUB (OCC)

INVITATION TO ATTEND AGM MEETING OF THE OMAN CRICKET CLUB TO ELECT NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE PERIOD 2026-2030

The Board of Directors of the Oman Cricket Club hereby announces that the Annual General Meeting (AGM), including elections for the new Board of Directors, will be held on Tuesday, 31 March 2026 at 6:00 pm at the Oman Cricket Academy.

Members wishing to attend the meeting are requested to renew their membership on or before Saturday, 21 March 2026 at 5:00 pm.

Membership renewal can be completed online through the following link: <https://members.omancricket.org/>

All members wishing to contest the elections for the Board of Directors must submit their nomination papers before 24 February 2026, in accordance with the conditions specified in Article (49) of the Sports Club Statute issued by Ministerial Decision No. 124/2008.

In accordance with Article (29) of the Law on Special Bodies working in the field of sports issued by Royal Decree No. 81/2007, the meeting shall be valid in the presence of an absolute majority of eligible working members (half + 1). If this quorum is not achieved by 6:30 pm, the meeting will be postponed to 7:00 pm on the same day.

The second meeting shall be valid in the presence of one quarter of the eligible working members entitled to attend and discuss the agenda.

Important notes:

- The club doors will open to members two hours prior to the meeting.
- Each member must bring their present digital membership card and valid ID to attend.
- For further inquiries, please contact Vinod Mathews at GSM: 94052625.

Board of Directors
Oman Cricket Club

Aquinex

NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Tender Ref: Q260020

Aquatic Investments Excellence LLC (Aquinex) is spearheading the development of a modern shrimp processing plant designed to handle up to 90,000 MT of shrimp per year. The facility will be equipped with advanced freezing systems, cold storage facilities, automated processing lines, and associated utilities to ensure operational efficiency, minimize waste, and reduce environmental impact.

Aquinex invites sealed tenders from reputed and experienced contractors for the following package:

Project Name: Al Jazer Shrimp Processing Plant Project

Tender Title: Construction of Processing Plant & Associated Facilities

1. Scope of Work:

The package involves comprehensive construction works for the shrimp processing plant and associated facilities. The primary scope of work includes, but is not limited to:

- **Civil & Structural Works:** Construction of processing plant building - Earthworks, foundations, structural framework, floor slabs, and all related Sub & Super structural elements.
- **Architectural Works:** Finishes, partitions, cladding, False ceiling, roofing systems, internal fit-outs, and construction of Mezz Floor, office block at Ground Floor and First Floor.
- **MEP Works:** Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing works including process-related services, HVAC systems, fire detection & protection, lighting, power distribution, and utility connections.
- **Process Integration Works:** Civil and structural & MEP provisions required for installation of freezing systems, cold storage facilities, automated processing lines, water treatment plants, and rendering plant.
- **Associated Facilities:** Construction of all required ancillary infrastructure.

2. Eligibility:

Contractors must be registered and possess a proven track record in executing large-scale industrial processing facilities, including civil, structural, architectural, and MEP works of similar magnitude and complexity.

3. Tender Documents:

Interested parties may request the tender documents by emailing procurement@aquinex.om no later than **18/02/2026**.

Reinforcing alumni ties at 2026 forum

AL MUSANNAH: Under the auspices of Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi, Governor of Al Batinah South, the University of Technology and Applied Sciences – Al Musannah hosted its Alumni Forum 2026 on February 11.

The event was attended by the Assistant Vice-Chancellor of the branch and his deputies, underscoring the university's continued commitment to sustained engagement with its graduates as active partners in development and nation-building.

The forum celebrated the achievements of alumni across diverse professional fields, while creating new opportunities for networking, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas. The programme featured official remarks, a visual presentation titled 'Alumni Journey,' musical and interactive segments, and a showcase under the theme 'Stories Worth the Spotlight,' linked to the Alumni Excellence Award.

A key highlight of the event was the recognition of finalists of the Alumni Excellence Award, launched during the previous edition of the forum.

The award honours graduates who have demonstrated distinguished accomplishments in innovation and invention, professional excellence, entrepreneurship, and culture and arts. This year, 10 outstanding alumni were recognised for their achievements.

The Alumni Forum reinforces the strategic partnership between the university and its graduates by leveraging their professional expertise to support academic programmes.



وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology



إعلان مزاد إلكتروني E-Auction Announcement

Announcement of an Electronic Auction for the Sale of Government Movable Assets

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology announces the holding of an electronic auction for the sale of a number of government movable assets through the website of (www.mazadat.om) Company, in accordance with the details below.

MOVABLE ASSETS	INSPECTION LOCATION	INSPECTION DATE & TIME	AUCTION START & CLOSE
Stone and rock rubble, steel canopies, water tank, steel fence (mesh), caravans, steel rooms (shinko)	Al-Abeelah / Al-Fayadh – Al Buraimi Governorate	24-26/2\2026 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Starts: 8:00 a.m. (1\3\ 2026) Closes: 12:00 p.m. (2\3\ 2026)
Stone and rock rubble, steel fence (mesh)	Sinaw – Mahout Road		
Stone and rock rubble, steel fence (mesh), assorted scrap metal, steel canopy, caravan, steel room (shinko)	Tiwi Area – Wilayat Al Kamil and Al Wafi		
Electrical cables (2 rolls 8000 meters) (1 roll 500 meters)	Roads Department – Wilayat Sur		

Terms and Conditions

1. Registration on the electronic auction website (www.mazadat.om).
2. Payment of a security deposit of OMR 500 (Five Hundred Omani Rials) electronically through the website. The amount is refundable if no purchase is made.
3. The successful bidder must pay the value of the movable assets via electronic transfer through the website within forty-eight (48) working hours from the auction award date.
4. Value Added Tax (VAT) at a rate of 5% and a brokerage fee of 1% of the item value shall be added to the total price.
5. The purchaser must remove the movable assets within one week from the auction award date. In case of delay, a ground penalty of 5% per day shall be imposed, and the Ministry shall not be responsible for any loss or damage.
6. Sold movable assets are non-returnable and non-refundable, and no claims shall be accepted.
7. Assets are sold "as is", and no guarantees are provided.
8. The Company is not obligated to award the auction to the highest bidder if the offered price does not reach an acceptable level, without providing reasons.
9. The security deposit shall be forfeited in case of non-compliance with payment or removal requirements.

Notes

- All movable assets are sold in their current condition.
- The Company reserves the right to cancel the auction without providing reasons.
- For more informations, please visit (www.mazadat.om) or contact (**77790066, 76621644, 76617644**)
- For inspection during official working hours, please contact (**77790066, 76621644, 76617644**)



جمعية البيئة العمانية Environment Society of Oman



Notice of the Annual General Assembly

The Board of the Environment Society of Oman invites all members to attend the Annual General Assembly, which will be held on **Monday, 30th March at 7:00 pm, at the Cultural Club in Qurum.**

Agenda of the Annual General Assembly:

1. Discussing the Financial Report for the year 2025.
2. Discussing the Progress Report for the year 2025.
3. Election of Board Members for the 2026–2027 term.

In accordance with the ESO Constitution, only renewed members can attend the meeting. Members may authorize another member to attend on their behalf by submitting a written proxy authorization. Kindly fill out the proxy form and send it via email to: Membership@eso.org.om

For further information, please call ESO office on phone No. 24790954 or via email: Membership@eso.org.om

www.eso.org.om / admin@eso.org.om

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



A worker paints over graffiti of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny in Saint Petersburg. — AFP

RUSSIA ‘POISONED’
NAVALNY IN PRISON
WITH ‘RARE TOXIN’

MUNICH: Five European countries, including Britain, France and Germany, accused Russia of ‘poisoning’ opposition leader Alexei Navalny in prison in 2024 using a “rare toxin”, on Saturday on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference.

“The UK, Sweden, France, Germany and the Netherlands are confident that Alexei Navalny was poisoned with a lethal toxin,” the countries said in a joint statement, following “analyses of samples” from his body.

The staunch critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin died in an Arctic prison in February 2024, while serving a 19-year prison sentence.

The epibatidine toxin found in the skin of dart frogs native to South America was found in samples and “highly likely resulted in his death”, the European states said.

“Only the Russian state had the means, motive and opportunity to deploy this lethal toxin to target Navalny during his imprisonment in a Russian penal colony in Siberia, and we hold it responsible for his death,” the UK Foreign Office added in a statement. — AFP

CHINESE
INVESTIGATIVE
JOURNALIST
RELEASED ON BAIL

Authorities in China have granted bail to an investigative journalist taken into custody after publishing an article alleging corruption among local officials, police said. Liu Hu became widely known more than 10 years ago for his reports on graft among high-profile figures in the Chinese Communist Party and government.

Police in the southwestern city of Chengdu said in a statement that Liu and another person detained alongside him had been released on “bail pending trial”.

“The investigation in the case is ongoing,” it said.

The statement referred to the two men only by their surnames. When their detention was announced on February 2, several Chinese media outlets, as well as rights group Reporters Without Borders, identified them as Liu and Wu Yingjiao, another journalist. — AFP



Chinese investigative journalist released on bail.

US-BOUND

Vietnam’s top leader for ‘Board of Peace’ meeting



Vietnam’s top leader To Lam will travel to the United States next week for a meeting of President Donald Trump’s “Board of Peace”, two sources briefed on the visit said.

Lam was reconfirmed as general secretary of Vietnam’s Communist Party in January, after launching sweeping growth-oriented reforms officials describe as a “revolution”.

He accepted Trump’s invitation to join the “Board of Peace” as a founding member state, the foreign ministry announced last month. — AFP

PHILIPPINE
SENATORS
NAMED ‘CO-
PERPETRATORS’
IN DUTERTE
ICC CASE

MANILA: Two sitting Philippine senators have been identified as “co-perpetrators” in former president Rodrigo Duterte’s crimes against humanity trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC), documents released by prosecutors show.

Senators Ronald Dela Rosa and Christopher Go are among eight current and former officials named in a document dated February 13 and posted to the court’s website.

ICC prosecutors have charged



Duterte with three counts of crimes against humanity, alleging his involvement in at least 76 murders between 2013 and 2018 as part of his “war on drugs”. “Duterte and his co-perpetrators shared a common plan or agreement to ‘neutralise’ alleged criminals in the Philippines (including those perceived or alleged to be associated with drug use, sale or production) through violent crimes, including murder,” the prosecution document reads. — AFP

Rubio urges Europeans
to join Trump’s fight

SECRETARY OF STATE
Marco Rubio

sought to assuage European leaders’ worries on Saturday about fraying ties with the United States while attempting to rally them behind US President Donald Trump’s ambitions.

“The fate of Europe will never be irrelevant to our own,” he told the Munich Security Conference, adding that “ultimately our destiny is, and will always be, intertwined with yours”. The top US diplomat’s speech was a striking contrast to the inflammatory words delivered from the same stage by Vice-President JD Vance a year earlier, when he took aim at Europe for its immigration policy and accused it of curbing free speech. Tensions have soared recently over Trump’s ambitions to seize Greenland, an autonomous territory of EU and Nato member Denmark, and his frequent hostile comments about the continent.

Rubio said the United States under Trump wanted to lead a global “renewal and restoration”.

Washington will be “driven by a vision of a future as proud, as sovereign, and as vital as our civilisation’s past,” he said in a speech that was greeted with applause from security and defence officials gathered in a Munich hotel.

“And while we are prepared, if necessary, to do this alone, it is our preference and it is our hope to do this together with you, our friends here in Europe,” he said.

Europe and the United States are meant to be together, he stressed, adding: “We want Europe to be strong. We believe that Europe must



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on the sidelines of the 62nd Munich Security Conference in Munich. — AFP

Rubio’s speech touched on topics like immigration to Western countries, deindustrialisation, and urged Europe and the US to work together on these issues

survive.” He talked up the United States’ and Europe’s shared history, referring to how the two sides had fought together after World War II to defeat communism.

European settlers, he went on, had helped lay the foundations of the modern United States.

“Our great Midwestern heartland was built by German farmers and craftsmen who transformed empty plains into a global agricultural powerhouse,” he said.

“Our expansion into the interior followed the footsteps of French fur traders and explorers whose names, by the way, still adorn the

street signs and towns names.”

Rubio’s speech also touched on topics close to Trump’s heart, from worries about immigration to Western countries, to deindustrialisation, and urged Europe and the United States to work together on these issues.

By acting together, “we will not just help recover a sane foreign policy,” he said.

“It will restore to us a clear sense of ourselves. It will restore a place in the world, and in so doing, it will rebuke and deter the forces of civilisational erasure that today menace both America and Europe alike.” — AFP

EU POLL ASSESSMENT



European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) Chief Observer Ivars Ijabs (R) and Tomas Zdechovsky, Head of the European Parliament delegation, attend a press conference presenting a preliminary statement on Bangladesh’s general election in Dhaka. Bangladesh’s elections, in which the nationalist party won a landslide victory in the first polls since a 2024 uprising, were credible, European Union observers said on Saturday. — AFP

SHOW OF FORCE

UK to deploy aircraft carrier group to Arctic



The UK will deploy its aircraft carrier group to the North Atlantic this year in a “powerful show of force” against Russian threats in the Arctic, British officials said. “I can announce today that the UK will deploy our carrier strike group to the North Atlantic and the High North this year, led by HMS Prince of Wales, operating alongside the US, Canada and other Nato allies in a powerful show of our commitment to Euro-Atlantic security,” Prime Minister Keir Starmer told the Munich security conference. — AFP

HEALTH FEARS

Tajik leader makes public appearance



Tajikistan’s long-time leader Emomali Rakhmon made his first official appearance in over two weeks - an absence that raised questions about the 73-year-old’s health.

Rakhmon met with Zou Jiayi, the new president of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Tajik presidency said on its website. Questions had been raised about Rakhmon’s health, as he had not appeared in public for several weeks - an unusual absence in a country where every move of his is reported almost daily by a tightly controlled press. — AFP

The New York Times

The rise of Bangladesh’s new leader



ANUPREETA DAS

The writer is South Asia Correspondent for TNYT



SAIF HASNAT

The writer is an independent reporter at TNYT

WHEN Tarique Rahman, who is set to become the prime minister of Bangladesh, went into exile in 2008 after being charged with bribery and corruption, many Bangladeshis wrote him off. He was the scion of a political dynasty and, in a country often described as a kleptocracy, it seemed he was finally being held to account.

Nearly two decades later, he has returned to seal a triumphant reversal of fortunes.

Rahman arrived in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, in December, as the country was gearing up for one of the most significant elections in its history. The vote follows a student revolution that demanded fundamental political change, and Rahman led his party to a landslide victory by positioning himself as a man of the people.

Rahman has promised to address the demands of the protest movement — a stronger democracy, less corruption, and more opportunity. But some students have expressed concerns that power in Bangladesh is just seesawing again between two entrenched families that have dominated its history since it gained independence from Pakistan in 1971.

After casting his vote at a polling station in a wealthy enclave of Dhaka, Rahman, 60, delivered brief comments pledging that his Bangladesh Nationalist Party would deliver on the pledge for change.

“If we win, our next priority will be to improve the law and order situation so that

people can feel safe,” Rahman said, as police officers and army troops shooed away those who got too close, part of a huge security net around the election.

“If we can form the government, we’ll start working on that from day one,” Rahman said, before he jumped into a waiting SUV. Police officers on horseback kept the crowds at bay as the vehicle inched its way toward the BNP office, about a block away.

On Friday, as votes were still being counted, it became clear that his party would lead the new government, most likely with a large majority.

It was rarely in doubt that Rahman’s party would win, with the Awami League — the party of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, an autocratic leader who was ousted by the student revolution in 2024 — banned from participating in the election. The Awami League and the BNP have traded power for much of the almost 55 years since Bangladesh split from Pakistan and became a nation. Hasina is a member of Bangladesh’s other political dynasty.

The BNP’s main opposition this time was Jamaat-e-Islami, which has long pushed for a society based on Islamic law but formed an alliance with 10 other parties, including the National Citizen Party, created last year by leaders of the student revolution. While it appeared to have picked up seats, it may not have won enough to exert much influence over the BNP.

In an interview with The New York Times

The BNP’s manifesto mirrored the progressive vision that many student protesters had for their country, including greater participation of women in political life, more economic opportunity and the rule of law

in his office days before the election, Rahman seemed ready to reclaim his inheritance. “We are very confident that, Inshallah, we’ll be forming the next government,” he said.

On the campaign trail, Rahman appeared aware of the challenge of positioning the BNP as a party of change. He spoke directly to the demands of students, sending a message of inclusivity with his “Bangladesh before all” slogan. The BNP’s manifesto mirrored the progressive vision that many student protesters had for their country, including greater participation of women in political life, more economic opportunity and the rule of law.

The BNP had been a party of change before under his mother’s leadership, Rahman said in the interview. He promised that the party would work to empower women, as had his mother, Khaleda Zia, Bangladesh’s first female prime minister. Zia was well regarded by many Bangladeshis, who supported her efforts to improve access to education for girls.

She was also lauded for building Bangladesh as a garment manufacturing hub, which helped the country’s economic growth. At the same time, critics said that Zia was unable to control the rise of extremism in Bangladesh in the early 2000s.

Still, the BNP’s win poses troubling questions for Bangladesh’s future, and for the future of the 2024 student revolution that toppled Hasina’s government. The revolution grew out of students’ frustration at the lack of economic opportunity, widespread corruption and shrinking political freedoms.

Europe’s leaders wonder if they can ever trust America again



STEVEN ERLANGER

The writer is a US journalist who has reported from more than 120 countries



JIM TANKERSLEY

The writer is a tax & economics reporter for TNYT

WHEN Vice-President JD Vance told the Munich Security Conference last year that America’s European allies were destroying themselves with immigration and unfairly barring the far-right from power, it was a shock to the trans-Atlantic alliance.

There was much more to come. In the year that followed, President Donald Trump imposed tariffs on European goods. He pushed to end the war in Ukraine on terms largely favourable to President Vladimir Putin of Russia and threatened to pry Greenland from Denmark by any means necessary. He mocked European leaders in a bullying speech in Switzerland, declaring Europe would be nothing without the US.

It has been a dizzying unravelling of the friendship that bound the West together for three-quarters of a century, since World War II. That has left European leaders more wary — and in some cases, more defiant — toward America, as they meet again in Munich, for Europe’s largest annual gathering of politicians and security officials.

Diplomats and heads of state across the Continent say they no longer expect relations with America to revert to a pre-Trump normal, even after Trump leaves office. They have accelerated efforts to reduce their military and economic dependence on the US, even as they continue to court the president with flattery in an effort to maintain influence with him on Ukraine and other global issues.

“Trans-Atlantic relations have changed, and no one in this room says this with more regret than I do,” Chancellor Friedrich Merz of Germany, who will open the Munich conference with a speech, said. “But nostalgia and reminiscing about bygone better times won’t help us.”

The question on many Europeans’ minds is whether they can ever really trust the United States again — and what they need to do if they cannot.

“Of course, we’ve had a serious loss of trust, no doubt about it,” Wolfgang Ischinger, the chair of the security conference, said in an interview. “Of course, trust can be rebuilt. But we all know losing trust is easier than



Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton poses for a selfie with women at the 62nd Munich Security Conference (MSC) in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP

rebuilding it.”

In a report before the gathering, staff at the security conference called Trump a “wrecking ball” and one of the “demolition men” destroying the norms and institutions of the international order. Last month, Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen of Denmark questioned how long America would remain a European ally.

Administration officials do not see it that way. They say Trump is pushing Europe to be a stronger, more self-sufficient partner, after decades of relying on US troops and nuclear weapons to ensure their national security.

Matthew Whitaker, the US ambassador to Nato, suggested in Berlin this week that the administration viewed Europe as a child who had grown up and needed to find a job.

“We’re not asking for European autonomy,” he said. “We’re asking for European strength.”

Europeans, though, are talking about Trump in terms that are more resigned and more urgent than a year ago.

At the time, when Vance stunned

the Munich crowd, which had been expecting to hear about Trump’s plan to swiftly end the war in Ukraine, European leaders tried to rebut him. “This is unacceptable!” Boris Pistorius, Germany’s defence minister, shouted from the audience as Vance spoke. He later singled out the vice president from the Munich stage.

“If I understood him correctly, he is comparing conditions in parts of Europe with those in authoritarian regimes,” Pistorius said. “This is not the Europe and not the democracy in which I live.”

Weeks later, Europeans watched as Trump and Vance berated President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine in the Oval Office. In December, they read the White House’s updated National Security Strategy, which warned that Europe faced “civilizational erasure,” echoing language from far-right European political parties.

Nathalie Tocci, the director of the Institute of International Affairs, a research group in Rome, said those events and Vance’s Munich speech were clarifying.

“Those three moments indicated that we’re not in a ballgame of disentanglement, disengagement, detachment or even abandonment,” she said, “but we’re really in a scenario of betrayal.”

Europeans have questioned Trump’s strategy of scorning Europe when America needs their support to compete against Russia and China.

Jan Techau, a former German defence official and an analyst at the Eurasia Group, said, “It’s just absolute folly to throw away an empire and to throw away your best allies, to alienate them at a time when you need them.”

Europe’s leaders have often sought to mollify Trump by flattering his ego and giving him small wins.

They pledged to increase military spending within Nato, one of Trump’s longtime goals. They called Trump the only leader in the world who could broker peace in Ukraine — in an effort to steer him away from Putin’s influence.

They cut a hasty trade deal to limit the damage from Trump’s threatened tariffs. Last month, they promised to bolster Nato’s defence of the Arctic in an apparent handshake deal to stall Trump’s attempts to take Greenland from Denmark, a Nato ally.

The Greenland crisis seems to have brought Europe to the acceptance phase of its grief, understanding that the traditional reliance and dependence on the United States is no longer possible or even strategically wise, said Ivo H Daalder, a former US ambassador to Nato.

“Europe cannot trust America today and cannot trust America tomorrow, unless and until the US engages in behavior designed to regain that trust,” Daalder said. “And it’s possible, if not probable, that Europe will never trust us again. The nature of the relationship between the US and Europe will never go back to where it was.”

The European public appears to think in similar terms.

The latest Cluster17 survey of 7,498 people from seven European countries, conducted in January for Le Grand Continent, a French journal, was startling. A large majority backed sending European troops to defend Greenland, if tensions there escalate.

OPINION

When losing a job feels like losing yourself



DR HAMED AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

THE Korean film ‘No Other Choice’ begins with Yoo Man-su, a manager at a paper factory, enjoying a barbecue with his wife, two children and their dogs. It is an ordinary moment, comfortable, familiar and stable. But within minutes, his world collapses. After 25 years of service, he is abruptly dismissed from his job, leaving him shocked and directionless. He attends self-affirmation sessions where he reassures himself that he is valuable and will soon be re-employed. The job market is highly competitive and his job application gets rejected, leaving him feeling desperate. Over time, Yoo Man-su begins to view other job-seekers as enemies standing in the way of his survival. He decides to set up a fake paper company and lure applicants matching his skills to murder them one by one. His family discovers evidence of his crimes but chooses silence to maintain a sense of normalcy. The movie concludes with Yoo Man-su being rehired at a fully automated paper factory, becoming the only human employee among machines. Despite everything he has

done, he walks away unpunished which made me think “Why was justice not served?” The film powerfully highlights an emotional issue that is becoming a growing concern for employees globally, including in Oman. Across many industries, employees are facing sudden redundancies, restructuring and the replacement of human roles with automated systems. In one of the film’s most powerful lines, the protagonist says, “After slaving for 25 years, they gave me 25 minutes to clear my desk. The security guard already had my things in a box and was ready to escort me out from the back door.” This is a shared reality for many individuals who have experienced abrupt job loss. For many people, work is more than a source of income. It is a source of identity, purpose and belonging. Losing a job, whether through retirement, dismissal, or organisational change, can trigger a deep emotional crisis. People may question their value, feel rejected by the very institutions they served, or struggle with a sense of invisibility. This eventually leads to loss of confidence,

Providing psychological support, career counselling and adequate notice can soften the blow of losing a job

anxiety about the future, emotional withdrawal, sleep disturbances, strained relationships at home, and a sense of shame or personal failure. Some even become addicted to drugs to numb the pain they are experiencing. Most people will never react the way Yoo Man-su did in the film. But many will experience an internal collapse, which often goes unnoticed by others, including family members. As societies, we must confront this challenge. Employers have a responsibility to treat redundancies with transparency, dignity and empathy. Providing psychological support, career counselling and adequate notice can soften the blow of losing a job. But there is also an individual responsibility to redefine identity beyond job titles. We must teach ourselves that our worth does not depend solely on our employment status. ‘No Other Choice’ is a dark film, but it offers a powerful message. When we define people solely by their job roles, we risk leaving them lost when those roles disappear.

US ALLIES FOCUS ON STEPPING UP IN NATO

OLIVIER BAUBE

US allies in Nato said they believed the crisis over Greenland had passed after the launch of a mission in the Arctic - and looked to press on with bolstering Europe’s role in the alliance. President Donald Trump’s threats against Denmark’s autonomous Arctic territory last month plunged the 76-year-old transatlantic alliance into its deepest crisis in years, before he abruptly backed off. As part of a package to assuage Trump - who said the US needed to secure the region against a threat from Russia and China - Nato announced on Wednesday the start of an Arctic Sentry mission to increase security in the region. Dutch Defence Minister Ruben Brekelmans said he was “fully confident that this will also meet the concerns of the United States” at a meeting with counterparts from the 32-nation alliance in Brussels. But while Europe breathed a sigh of relief about the apparent passing of that storm, the Greenland crisis has only reinforced for many the urgent need for Europe to take a greater role in Nato and its own defence in the face of the threat from Russia. “What I see today is this mindset shift, where people understand that, yes, it is about spending more, but also it is about a duty of vision that we have to do this together with the United States,” said Nato boss Mark Rutte. That is the message being sent by the Trump administration as well: that Europe needs to step up as Washington pivots to focus on other challenges, such as China. US defence under secretary Elbridge Colby said allies were making strides towards a situation where it is “Europe that leads the conventional defence of Nato” rather than traditionally relying on US military might. And he said Washington would “continue to press, respectfully but firmly and insistently, for a rebalancing of roles and burdens within the alliance”.

“If Europe rises to this moment,” he said, “the alliance will emerge stronger, more resilient, and better prepared for the challenges ahead,” Colby told allies at Nato’s Brussels headquarters. To make good on plans for Europe to play a bigger role, Nato needs to make strides on fulfilling the pledge made at its summit last year for countries to massively ramp up defence spending. Military budgets have already increased since Russia’s 2022 war of Ukraine and Trump has spurred on that trend. “The good news is that the billions are coming in,” Rutte said. He insisted however that he believed the United States would continue to play a central role in defending Europe. — AFP

The benefits of fasting during Ramadhan

MUSLIMS FAST during the month of Ramadhan as an act of obedience to Allah and as one of the Five Pillars of Islam, which form the core of Muslim faith and practice. The fast, from dawn to sunset, is intended to cultivate self-discipline, humility and mindfulness of Allah, while reminding believers of their dependence on Him. By abstaining from food, drink and other physical needs, Muslims are encouraged to develop empathy for the poor and hungry, strengthen moral character and focus on prayer, reflection and acts of charity. Alongside the spiritual benefits, research on fasting suggests several potential health benefits. These findings are consistent with what is already known about daily fasting. Dr Alan Goldhamer is the founder and long-time director of the TrueNorth Health Centre in Santa Rosa, California, and president of the nonprofit TrueNorth Health Foundation. His work centres on medically supervised water-only fasting and the training of clinicians in fasting supervision. While his approach attracts scepticism from some, there is sound evidence that fasting can deliver measurable health benefits. The strongest evidence concerns blood pressure. Studies linked to Goldhamer’s clinic show that prolonged fasting can produce large reductions in blood pressure, in some cases allowing people to reduce or stop medication whilst fasting, although stopping any medication should always be discussed first with your doctor. This outcome is consistent with known physiological effects. Fasting leads to reduced salt intake and changes in blood vessel function, both of which influence blood pressure. Fasting also causes metabolic changes. When food intake stops or is sharply reduced, insulin levels fall and the body shifts



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

During fasting snacking is reduced, meals are more structured and there is greater emphasis on moderation and self-control



Ramadhan fasting may also encourage positive behavioural changes.

towards burning fat for energy. This results in weight loss and reductions in abdominal fat. Some studies also report improvements in cholesterol levels. Safety is often raised as a concern, however data published from Goldhamer’s clinic suggests that prolonged fasting is generally safe. Most reported side effects are mild to moderate, such as fatigue and headaches. This does not mean prolonged fasting carries no risks for those with certain health concerns, but it indicates that fasting itself for healthy people is not inherently dangerous when properly managed. Research on calorie restriction and intermittent fasting shows improvements in insulin sensitivity and blood sugar control. Fasting also activates autophagy, a cellular repair process that removes damaged components from cells. Although much of the strongest evidence for this comes from animal studies, it provides a plausible biological explanation for the benefits seen in humans. Claims that fasting can cure serious diseases such as cancer are far less robust. These are usually

based on case reports or clinical observations rather than controlled trials. While such observations may justify further research, they do not amount to strong evidence. As with most health interventions, long-term benefit depends largely on what follows the fast, particularly your diet and lifestyle. Ramadhan fasting does not involve prolonged water-only fasting but abstention from food and drink from dawn to sunset, typically for 12 to 16 hours, with normal eating outside fasting hours. Ramadhan fasting may also encourage positive behavioural changes. Snacking is reduced, meals are more structured and there is greater emphasis on moderation and self-control. Although sleep and activity patterns can be mildly disrupted, many people benefit from a temporary break from habitual overconsumption. Overall, the evidence supports the view that fasting can produce metabolic benefits. Ramadhan fasting fits well with current scientific understanding and can offer genuine health benefits when practised sensibly.

Oman charts a steady course forward



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

AS WE see global equilibrium challenged by a geopolitical ‘new order,’ where civilisation, as we know it, is being challenged to accept that threats of brute force and violence matter more than dignity and respect, let’s take the time to appreciate that the Sultanate of Oman is on a true course.

Since 1970, Oman’s leadership has observed how its neighbours across the border have utilised their natural resources and climate to develop as tourism and lifestyle destinations, global hubs of finance, commerce and transport, and most importantly, creating a standard of living and social responsibility for their citizens, amidst what has always proven to be a volatile region.

The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have become more open to global influences while retaining their national identities by remaining socially aloof from the West yet completely allied to the commercial and financial imperatives of the traditional powerhouses of the US, Russia, China and the United Kingdom.

Much of the world does not know where Oman is, or anything about it, but really, that’s fine, because it is ‘looking after’ home first, and that’s the way it should be, with the

focus inside its borders, not outside. Just like at home... our families have priority, then society, then our country. Oman’s leaders have looked and learned, and impressively, it appears their observations have been accurate, their responses measured, deliberately paced, and aligned with, the country’s more modest oil and gas resources, its reliance upon ‘imported’ expertise, and probably too, the need to reassure a population of their safety and security following several less pleasant decades when survival was of primary importance to most.

A succession of planning initiatives has rightly prioritised three imperatives across this last half-century, of education, social development and fiscal responsibility. Education, of course, improves an entire nation, in every way, exponentially, with the investment ensuring an assembly line, if you like, of confident, informed, aware, young people, who will see beyond the boundaries of borders, seas and skies, who will not only want to care for their elders and societies, but have the intellect and wherewithal to be able to so, and in doing so the societal responsibility that Oman is renowned for will be perpetuated.

Certainly, through prioritising education, entrepreneurship, commerce and finance

I believe that the prioritising of education is what is driving Oman’s renaissance, or resurgence, as its young artists, scholars, entrepreneurs and inventors reach out into new and exciting areas of research, development, academic and cultural awareness and development

development, the Omani people are, by degrees, continuing what is a journey of self-discovery, towards maximising their potential, and with far less reliance upon expatriate knowledge, skills and experience.

How? The focus on education has been the most significant factor in developing Oman’s undoubted potential, and in fact, is the panacea, or universal remedy, for all ills if you believe ancient Greek mythology.

Often used sarcastically, to reflect something that is not a cure for everything, I believe that the prioritising of education is what is driving Oman’s renaissance, or resurgence, as its young artists, scholars, entrepreneurs and inventors reach out into new and exciting areas of research, development, academic and cultural awareness and development.

I have fond memories of my Omani students, particularly of how they ‘switched on’ to their opportunities and possibilities once they had progressed beyond their initial year of higher education. What was so evident too was the amount of work the students would do, the passion with which they discussed, and inevitably argued, their perspectives, with absolute respect. Not so great with homework... but otherwise outstanding.

FLOODS DEVASTATE MOROCCO FARMLANDS

YASSINE EL MCHIEK & ISMAIL BELLAOUALI

In the Moroccan village of Ouled Salama, 63-year-old farmer Mohamed Reouani waded through his crops, now submerged by floodwaters after days of heavy downpours.

Farmers in the North African kingdom have for the past few years endured severe drought.

But floods have now swamped more than 100,000 hectares of land, wiping out key crops and forcing farmers in the country’s northwest to flee with their livestock.

“I have about four or five hectares” of crops, Reouani said. “All of it is gone now.”

Morocco, where agriculture employs about a third of the working-age population, has seen seven consecutive years of drought.

As of December, its dams were only around 30 per cent full on average, and farmers have largely relied on rainwater for irrigation.

Now their average filling rate stands at nearly 70 per cent after they received about 8.8 billion cubic metres of water in the last month - compared to just 9 billion over the previous two years combined.

Many like Reouani had at first rejoiced at the downpours.

But the rain eventually swelled into a heavy storm that displaced over 180,000 people killed four so far.

In his village, the water level climbed nearly two metres, Reouani said. Some homes still stand isolated by floodwater.

Elsewhere, residents were seen stranded on rooftops before being rescued in small boats.

Others were taken away by helicopter as roads were cut off by flooding.

Authorities have set up camps of small tents, including near the city of Kenitra, to shelter evacuees and their livestock.

“We have no grain left” to feed the animals, one evacuee, Ibrahim Bernous, 32, said at a camp. “The water took everything.”

Bernous, like many, now depends on animal feed distributed by the authorities, according to Mustapha Ait Bella, an official at the agriculture ministry.

At the camps, displaced families make do with little while waiting to return home.

“The problem is what happens after we return,” said Chergui al Alja, 42. “We have no grain left to feed our livestock, and they are our main source of income.”

On Thursday, the government announced a relief plan of some \$330 million to provide aid to the hardest-hit regions.

A tenth of that sum was earmarked for farmers and livestock breeders.

Rachid Benali, head of the Moroccan Confederation of Agriculture and Rural Development, said farming was “among the sectors most affected by the floods”.

Benali added that sugar beet, citrus and vegetable farms had also been devastated by flooding. — AFP

Replacing deported immigrants in the US

MOST American dairy cows are milked by immigrants. On Dale Hemminger’s farm in upstate New York, the cows are milked by robots. When a cow wants to be milked, it walks up to a machine that cleans its udder, attaches cups to its teats, draws the milk and dispenses a treat.

In a barn that Hemminger plans to open this year, other robots will roam the floor like little automated poooper scoopers, picking up manure.

President Donald Trump should pay a visit. He might learn something about the limits of his plan to improve the fortunes of US workers by forcing immigrants to leave the country.

There is a big hole in the seductively simple argument that Trump’s policy will push employers to hire Americans: For many jobs, the cheaper and more likely replacement is a robot. And the jobs that can’t be done by robots? Many will simply leave the country.

Farmers, in particular, are not facing a choice between employing immigrants and hiring Americans. Many of the jobs performed by immigrants are best understood as a kind of mirage. They exist only because immigrants are available to perform them. The most important reason, of course, is that recent immigrants often work for much lower wages than Americans. They are also more willing to do the dirty, dangerous and demanding jobs most Americans won’t even consider.

“I’m trying to put this gently because I don’t want to alienate my nonrobot customers, but it’s not the most desirable job,” said Whitney Davis, the automation specialist at Finger Lakes Dairy Services in upstate New York. “Hot in the summer, cold in the winter, cow manure — and on top of that, it’s really an assembly line job. People don’t know you can make more money milking cows than at McDonald’s, and even if they did, they still wouldn’t do it.” Employers have been replacing workers with machines at least since the invention of the plow about 6,000 years ago. In the United States in recent decades, the ready availability of low-cost immigrant labour slowed that march of progress. Milking robots



BINYAMIN APPELBAUM

The writer is the lead writer on business and economics for The New York Times

There is a big hole in the seductively simple argument that Trump’s policy will push employers to hire Americans: For many jobs, the cheaper and more likely replacement is a robot. And the jobs that can’t be done by robots? Many will simply leave the country



are widely used on European dairy farms, but they are still a novelty in the United States.

The immigration crackdown is changing that calculus. More than 750,000 immigrants left the US labour force during the first half of 2025, according to the Pew Research Center, creating a growing challenge for industries that rely heavily on those workers. Dairy farming is near the top of that list: Immigrants make up more than half of that sector’s labour force.

Hemminger was an early adopter, installing his first milking machines in 2007 after authorities arrested one of his workers. “I just decided I wasn’t going to risk having both my vegetables and the dairy both be dependent on a labour force whose paperwork could be challenged,” he said. “That was the main driver.” Before he began using the robots, Hemminger’s farm produced about 800,000 pounds of milk per worker per year. Today, the farm produces 2.5 million pounds of milk per worker per year. He employs half as many people as he would otherwise need — a dozen workers to manage his herd of more than 2,000 dairy cows.

Artificial intelligence is expanding the range of work that can be performed by robots. Companies are rolling out machines like the LaserWeeder G2, which looks like a row of white metal filing cabinets mounted on a tractor but is basically a real-life Terminator: cameras for eyes, two Nvidia microchips for a brain and a pair

of laser guns to zap weeds. It can weed as much cropland in a day as roughly 75 workers. And it doesn’t need rest.

Other industries that historically have relied on low-cost immigrant labour are racing to automate. White Castle is installing robots to staff the fry stations at its fast food restaurants, replacing one worker on each shift. Amazon, the nation’s second-largest private employer, estimates that automation will obviate more than half a million of the company’s workers by 2033.

Automating agriculture would be a worthy goal for any administration to pursue. It has long been one of the great engines of human progress. The American Farm Bureau Federation calculates that in 1940, the labour of one farmer provided the food for about 20 people. Today, the labour of one farmer, amplified by a wide range of technology, provides food for more than 160 people. That has freed a lot of people to do a lot of other things with their lives.

In 2024 the average hourly farm wage was \$18.12, about 60 per cent of the average hourly wage for nonfarm work, according to the Department of Agriculture. Even if the jobs paid \$30 an hour, would Americans return to the farm? It seems unlikely.

In 2011, of the roughly 500,000 unemployed North Carolina residents required to apply for work to get state benefits, only 268 applied for farm jobs, according to an analysis by economist Michael Clemens. — The New York Times

SPORTS



Al Nahda players celebrate with the HM Cup after beating Oman Club in the final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Saturday. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

AL NAHDA BLANK OMAN CLUB TO EMERGE HM CUP CHAMPIONS

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
@riyadhbaluch

AL NAHDA were crowned champions of the 2025-26 His Majesty's Cup after defeating Oman Club 2-0 on Saturday night in a thrilling final at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The final was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat.

The title showdown was the culmination of a week-long celebration across Muscat Governorate, organised in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Muscat. The prestigious trophy toured the wilayat of the governorate in a symbolic parade, while a vibrant fan village attracted thousands of supporters with entertainment and cultural activities.

A special exhibition corner highlighted the rich history of the competition, which dates back to 1971 when Al Ahli Sidab won the inaugural title against Oman Club a historical note that added extra narrative weight to this year's final between Oman Club and Al Nahda.

Adding to the festive atmosphere, valuable prizes including cars were raffled to fans through ticket draws.

The match itself began with a spectacular opening ceremony featuring live performances and fireworks that lit up the Muscat sky, setting the stage for one of Omani football's most prestigious occasions.

The encounter was officiated by referee Qasim al Hatmi, assisted by Rashid al Ghaithi and Omar al Alawi, with Ali al Ajmi as fourth official and Mohammed al Manai overseeing VAR duties.

EARLY ATTACKS

Oman Club started the match aggressively, launching a series of early attacks through Yazid al Rawahi and Mohammed al Omairi, who tested Al Nahda's defensive organisation. In the 21st minute, Al Nahda captain Harib al Saadi received a yellow card after a challenge on Al Rawahi, reflecting the high intensity of the contest.

Momentum shifted dramatically in the 30th minute when Oman Club were reduced to 10 men. Mohammed al Maashari was shown a red card following a strong challenge on Al Nahda's Piri Jean Mari. After a VAR review confirmed the severity of the tackle, the referee upheld the dismissal, giving Al Nahda a numerical advantage.

Capitalising on the extra man, Al Nahda gradually regained control. In the final minute of the first half, Andres Oxnes broke the deadlock with a powerful header,

expertly converting a precise cross delivered by Ahmed al Kaabi. The goal handed Al Nahda a 1-0 lead heading into the interval.

The second half saw fluctuating momentum. Al Nahda appeared slightly more cautious compared to their late first-half surge, while Oman Club, despite being a man down, attempted to reorganise tactically. Around the 70th minute, Oman Club increased their attacking pressure following a tactical reshuffle by their coach.

Al Nahda responded with substitutions in the 74th minute, introducing Mohammed al Habsi and Azan al Tamimi in place of Oxnes and Hamad al Habsi. Oman Club's Waleed al Musalmi was booked in the 78th minute as tensions continued to rise.

Shortly after, Oman Club brought on Ziki Omo in the 80th minute, replacing Husni al Hinai, a move that immediately injected pace and

urgency into their forward play.

Oman Club pressed forward relentlessly in the closing stages, creating several dangerous moments. Al Nahda coach reacted once more by introducing Mohammed al Ghafri in place of Piri Jean, a substitution that would ultimately prove decisive.

Deep into stoppage time, Al Ghafri capitalised on a defensive lapse to score Al Nahda's second goal, sealing a 2-0 victory and extinguishing Oman Club's hopes of a comeback.

Following the final whistle, HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said presented the championship trophy to Al Nahda amid jubilant celebrations from players and supporters. The victory marked a memorable chapter in the club's history and reaffirmed the enduring prestige of His Majesty's Cup as a cornerstone of Omani football tradition.



The pack rides during the ffith and last stage of the Tour of Oman cycling race from Nizwa to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain), on February 11. — AFP

15 editions of Tour of Oman

Legacy of sporting excellence



Cyclists in action during Tour of Oman 2026.



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 14

THE TOUR OF OMAN, since its launch in 2010, has grown from an ambitious regional cycling event into one of the most respected races on the international calendar. Over 15 editions, the race does not only showcased world-class competition across the Sultanate of Oman's dramatic landscapes but also built a lasting legacy in sport development, media exposure, tourism promotion and national capability building.

Today, the Oman Cycling Association (OCA), in coordination with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) and other government stakeholders, is studying plans to preserve and present the legacy of the Tour of Oman through a dedicated exhibition that will document its full journey and boosting the cycling sports to different community categories.

Saif bin Subaa al Rushaidi, Chairman of the OCA, Vice-Chairman of the Asian Cycling Confederation and member of the UCI Management Committee, stressed the importance of safeguarding the history of what has become Oman's flagship annual sporting event.

"It is essential to preserve the legacy of the 15 editions of the Tour of Oman," Al Rushaidi said.

"The race has covered most governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, highlighting Oman's natural beauty through challenging routes that attract top-ranked international cyclists. We aim to create an exhibition featuring archival photos, historic jerseys, trophies and international media coverage from outlets such as BBC and other global networks, making the Tour's story accessible to everyone."

OMAN PLACED FIRMLY ON GLOBAL CYCLING MAP
From its early editions, the Tour of Oman quickly established itself as one of the oldest and most prestigious professional cycling races in the Middle East.



Saif bin Subaa al Rushaidi

Organised under Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) regulations and standards, the race steadily climbed the international hierarchy.

The Tour is broadcast to nearly 190 territories worldwide, reaching approximately 150 countries across multiple time zones. More than 63 international television channels cover the race live, generating hundreds of broadcast hours globally, alongside strong digital engagement exceeding millions of views.

"The Tour of Oman has become more than a sporting event," Al Rushaidi explained. "It is a strategic platform that elevates Oman's global image by showcasing our geography, infrastructure and cultural identity to international audiences."

The race's iconic climbs specially the summit finish at Al Jabal Al Akhdhar which is called 'Jewel of the Tour' have become defining features that test elite riders and draw global cycling fans. The combination of coastal roads, desert stretches and mountain ascents offers a unique sporting spectacle rarely matched elsewhere.

PROGRESS OF MUSCAT CLASSIC
One of the most significant technical achievements linked to the Tour of Oman is the development of the Muscat Classic. Initially introduced as a supporting event, the Muscat Classic has evolved into a major standalone race and is now listed on the UCI ProSeries calendar as a milestone that positions it among the highest-



Khalifa al Maktomi

ranked races in Asia.

The Muscat Classic serves as a curtain-raiser to the Tour of Oman and covers a challenging 179-kilometre route from Al Mouj to Al Bustan. The course combines fast coastal segments with technical sections that demand tactical intelligence and endurance.

"The development of the Muscat Classic reflects the growing technical maturity of cycling in Oman," Al Rushaidi noted. "It is now one of the top races in Asia underlining the strength of Oman's organisational model. For the first time, Omani cyclists took part in the race, gaining invaluable exposure at a professional level," the OCA chief added.

NATIONAL HUMAN CAPACITY
Beyond sporting prestige, the Tour of Oman has played a central role in developing national human capabilities. While the race is delivered in partnership with experienced French organisers, Omani specialists have gradually taken on increasing responsibilities in technical supervision, logistics coordination, media management and safety operations.

Over 15 editions, local expertise has matured significantly. Today, Omani officials are deeply involved in race monitoring, route assessment, timing systems and operational coordination ensuring that knowledge transfer has translated into sustainable domestic capability. This institutional learning directly contributed to the creation of the Tour of Salalah, a local cycling product developed using the Tour

of Oman as a model. The Tour of Salalah demonstrates how international experience can be adapted to local contexts.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
At the domestic level, the Tour has steadily built community participation. Recent editions have included criterium races for semi-professional riders and fun rides for amateurs across different age categories. Side events in Muscat and Suhar have further expanded public engagement. Public perception has also evolved positively over time.

ROLE OF KHALIFA
Among the key figures behind the Tour's success is Retired Major Khalifa bin Saif al Maktomi, who represented the Royal Oman Police and served in all 15 editions. He played a crucial role in route planning, road selection and safety coordination.

Following the launch of the inaugural edition, Al Maktomi joined the first organising committee and participated in extensive field visits to ensure that race routes met professional standards while safeguarding public safety.

"Balancing rider requirements with the safety of road users was not easy," he reflected. "But through cooperation and detailed planning, we built a race that is now a national occasion."

In recognition of his longstanding contributions, he was honoured during the final stage of this year's Tour at Al Jabal Al Akhdhar on Wednesday.

Al Maktomi also noted that early challenges including limited alternative roads and temporary closures were gradually overcome through improved communication and inter-agency coordination. Today, the Tour stands as a model of operational excellence and community partnership.

The last 15 editions of Tour of Oman is not acting as a longer simply a cycling race event but it is a national asset, a tourism promoter, a technical training ground and a symbol of Oman's ability to host world-class events.

SPORTS

16TH EDITION



Al Bashayer thrashed Masirah 125-25 to book their place in the final. — **Ammar al Musafir**

SEEB, AL BASHAYER MEET IN MINISTRY’S SHIELD FINAL TODAY

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 14

All eyes will turn to the Sub Hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Sunday at 7 pm, where the curtain will fall on the 16th edition of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Basketball Shield for the 2025–26 season. The final showdown will bring together Al Bashayer Club and Seeb Club to determine the champion.

Earlier in the day, at 4 pm, Nizwa Club will meet Masirah Club in the third-place playoff. The final and award ceremony will be held under the auspices of Hisham bin Juma al Sinani, Director-General of Sports Welfare and Development, in the presence of Abu Bakr Al Jahdhari, Vice-Chairman of the OBA and Saeed al Habsi, Acting Secretary-General, along with board members and club representatives.

The final promises strong competition, as it features two of the season’s top teams. Al Bashayer enter the match aiming to complete a double after winning the league title, seeking to secure another trophy and defend the Shield crown. Led by national coach Mahmood Ambudli, the team relies on a distinguished lineup that includes: Osama al Riyami, Mahmood al Souli, professional Demonta Harris, Abdulridha al Battashi, Ahmed al Halhali, Al Hawari al Rashdi, Bassam al Busaidy, Saif al Tobi, Nouh al Mahrrouqi, Ibrahima Thomas, Haddid Bait Bakhit and Sami al Ghailani.

Seeb are determined to reclaim the title after several years away from the top. Guided by coach Iskandar Nabil, the team boasts a balanced squad combining experience and youth. Key players include: Marwan al Hadeed, Mazin al Hadeed, Nouh al Ameri, Ayman al Muharrami, Abdulrahman al Maamari, Al Waqas al Hinaï, Zakariya al Wahibi, Ahmed al Sinani, Hassan al Faraji, Mamadou Badji and Rashid al Zuhaibi.

In the third-place playoff, Nizwa enter with the ambition of affirming their merit for a podium finish, relying on their experience and consistent presence in the competition. Masirah, meanwhile, approach the game with competitive spirit despite being relatively new to basketball compared to Nizwa, making the latter the favourites on paper.

On Saturday, Al Bashayer booked the final spot with a commanding 125–25 victory over Masirah. The game was largely one-sided. Al Bashayer started strongly in the first quarter, scoring 20 points to Masirah’s 7. They continued their dominance in the second quarter, adding 26 while limiting Masirah to just one point, ending the first half comfortably ahead 46–8. In the third quarter, Al Bashayer netted 44 points against only 2 for Masirah to extend the lead to 90–10. Masirah improved offensively in the fourth quarter with 15 points, Al Bashayer added 35 more, sealing a comprehensive win and a ticket to the final.



The routes reflected Oman's diverse natural landscape, combining sea views and open terrain in a fully integrated sporting and tourism experience.

Germany’s Mattner crowned Ironman ME champion

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 14

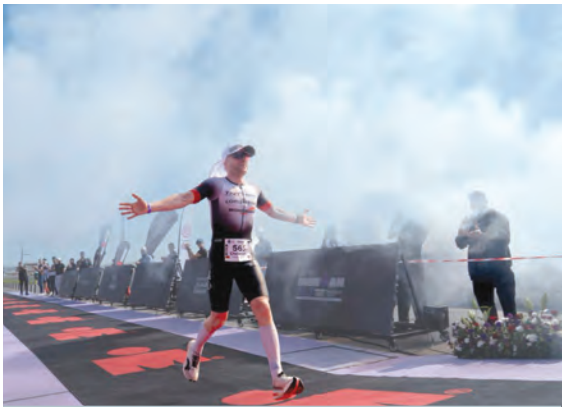
GERMAN athlete Christoph Mattner claimed the title of the Middle East Championship ‘Experience Oman Ironman 70.3 – Muscat’ after completing the race in 3 hours and 51 minutes. He finished ahead of France’s Alexander Kael, who secured second place with a time of 3:53, while Portugal’s Rafael Dominguez came third in 3:55.

The championship, organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) in cooperation with Middle East Global Events (MGE), was held as part of the global Ironman 70.3 series. The event witnessed broad international participation, reflecting growing global confidence in the Sultanate of Oman’s ability to host world-class competitions that serve as qualifiers for world championships. The race attracted 1,049 athletes from 82 countries.

The closing ceremony included recognition of sponsors and supporting entities, in addition to awarding winners across various age categories, showcasing key race highlights, and presenting musical and entertainment performances.

The competition took place at Al Qurum Beach in Muscat Governorate, where athletes competed across three stages: a 1.9 km open-water swim, a 90 km cycling course, and a 21.1 km run along the coastline. The routes reflected Oman’s diverse natural landscape, combining sea views and open terrain in a fully integrated sporting and tourism experience.

Anwar bin Said al Balushi, Director of Tourism Events at the Ministry of Heritage



German athlete Christoph Mattner claimed the title of the Middle East Championship ‘Experience Oman Ironman 70.3 – Muscat’.

and Tourism, stated that the current edition further positioned Oman as an ideal destination for hosting global championships, thanks to its natural assets, geographic diversity, favourable climate, and advanced infrastructure capable of accommodating various sporting events. He added that the Ministry is committed to supporting sports activities that stimulate tourism and generate both direct and indirect economic returns across aviation, transport, hospitality, restaurants and other tourism-related sectors.

VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY

He also noted that the partnership with the Ironman Group represents a valuable opportunity to showcase Oman’s unique tourism offerings and increase visitor inflows from diverse international markets. Ironman events, he added, are among the key platforms relied upon by the Ministry to enhance Oman’s positioning as a premium global tourism destination, in line with broader plans to develop the tourism sector and diversify sources of income.

Alongside the main championship, an Ironman Kids Race was organised to instil a culture of sport and challenge among children, promote healthy lifestyles, and engage families in a comprehensive community experience that contributes to building a promising generation of Omani athletes.

The event received extensive international media coverage, spotlighting Oman’s natural and tourism assets and reinforcing its image as a safe and well-prepared global destination for major events, linking sport with an integrated tourism experience in support of the sector’s strategic objectives.

In parallel, the championship provided Omani sports tourism companies with an opportunity to showcase their services to a global audience, open new international communication channels, and strengthen prospects for future partnerships and investments.

MONTHS OF PREPARATION

Champion Christoph Mattner said he was delighted to finish the race and claim the title, noting that months of continuous preparation were needed to build both physical fitness and mental endurance. “It was an exceptional experience,” he said. “The challenge goes beyond physical effort to willpower and discipline, and crossing the finish line gave me an indescribable sense of pride and achievement.”

Mattner also praised the scenic course passing through landmark locations that blend sea and mountain views, adding a distinctive visual dimension to the event. He added that despite the strong competition, the spirit of sportsmanship among athletes created a positive and motivating atmosphere throughout the race.

Ireland rain sixes in Colombo, crush Oman by 96 runs

COLOMBO: The forecast in Colombo on Saturday spoke of showers, and rain did visit the Sinhalese Sports Club. But it was boundaries that truly poured as the Ireland cricketers bludgeoned the Oman bowlers to post the highest total of the 2026 T20 World Cup - 235/5 - and seal a thumping 96-run victory.

Chasing a mountain, Oman began with attacking intent, racing to 63/2 in the powerplay with two sixes and nine boundaries.

Veteran all-rounder Aamir Kaleem, the tournament’s oldest player, rolled back the years with a composed half-century (50), adding 73 runs with Hammad Mirza (46) to briefly ignite hope. But Kaleem’s dismissal in the 11th over, caught by Matthew Humphreys off Barry McCarthy, proved the turning point.

Vinayak Shukla and Mohammad Nadeem fell within ten balls, and Oman slumped from promise to peril, sliding to 108/5 and then 116/8 by the 15th over before being bowled out for 139 in 18 overs.

Following Kaleem’s dismissal, a mix-up between Jiten Ramanandi and Mirza ended the resistance, a sharp direct hit from Harry Tector at the non-striker’s end catching Mirza short. His 46 off 37 balls comprised six boundaries and a six.

Josh Little then struck twice in one over to remove Ramanandi and Nadeem Khan, and Oman were bowled out. Sufyan Mehmood’s late blows merely delayed the inevitable as Oman crashed from 97/3 to 139 all out in a dramatic collapse. The defeat confirmed Duleep Mendis’ men as the first side officially eliminated



Oman’s Aamir Kaleem plays a shot during the 2026 ICC Men’s T20 World Cup group stage match against Ireland in Colombo on Saturday. — **AFP**

from the race for the Super Eights after a third successive loss.

Earlier, Ireland’s innings was a tale of recovery and ruthless acceleration. Captain Lorcan Tucker anchored the surge with

an unbeaten 94 off 51 balls, forging a match-defining 101-run fifth-wicket stand with Gareth Delany (56) and an explosive unbroken 70-run sixth-wicket partnership with George Dockrell, who hammered 35 from just nine deliveries. Ireland’s imposing total was studded with 13 sixes and 21 fours.

Oman had started brightly after skipper Jatinder Singh opted to field under overcast skies. Spin spearhead Shakeel Ahmed, returning after missing the Sri Lanka clash, struck in the opening over to bowl Tim Tector and later dismissed Mark Adair and Harry Tector to leave Ireland wobbling at 47/3 at the end of the powerplay. Kaleem tightened the squeeze by trapping Curtis Campher lbw as Oman seized control at 64/4, and Ireland were 79/4 at halfway.

But the tide turned sharply. Delany launched the assault in the 10th over, and Tucker followed with measured authority, bringing up his half-century in 35 balls. The death overs turned brutal: Delany’s power-hitting lifted the tempo before Tucker and Dockrell unleashed carnage. Ireland plundered 86 runs in the final five overs, with Dockrell’s late blitz and Tucker’s clean striking leaving Oman’s bowlers searching for answers.

Brief scores: Ireland 235/5 (Lorcan Tucker 94*, Gareth Delaney 56, George Dockrell 35*; Shakeel Ahmed 3/33, Shah Faisal 1/32, Aamir Kaleem 1/29) beat Oman 139 in 18 overs (A Kaleem 50, H Mirza 46, Sufyan Mehmood 10; Matthew Humphreys 2/27, Josh Little 3/16, Barry McCarthy 2/32, George Dockrell 1/6)

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES



Most output is exported via Omani ports to markets in Asia and Europe.

CHROMIUM OUTPUT TOPS 353,000 TONNES

MUSCAT: Chromium ore production in the Sultanate of Oman reached 353,538 tonnes in 2025, with sales climbing to 387,995 tonnes and total revenues exceeding RO 15 million, underscoring the mineral’s growing contribution to economic diversification.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals said it continues to regulate chromium exploitation through clearly defined concession allocations and licensing frameworks designed to ensure efficient resource use and long-term sustainability. The approach aligns with Oman Vision 2040 objective of maximising local added value and strengthening downstream industries.

Eng Saud al Mahrouqi, Director General of Minerals, highlighted ongoing efforts to expand exploration and improve product quality, while managing exports through a dedicated metals trading company to enhance value realisation and reinforce Oman’s position as a regional hub.

Most output is exported via Omani ports to markets in Asia and Europe. Authorities are also encouraging investment in ferrochrome smelting and related manufacturing to reduce raw material exports and deepen industrial linkages.

Oman’s chromium deposits are associated with the globally significant ophiolite belt stretching across the Al Hajar Mountains, from Shinas to Wadi Bani Khalid. Currently, 29 licensed quarries operate under regulatory oversight.

Chromium remains strategically important due to its essential role in stainless steel, ferroalloys, refractories and specialised chemicals. By strengthening governance, promoting exploration and supporting downstream processing, the Ministry aims to enhance competitiveness, attract investment and secure sustainable returns from one of the Sultanate of Oman’s key mineral resources. — ONA

\$216m EV battery project advances in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 14

INDIAN

specialty chemicals manufacturer GFCL EV Products

Limited has announced the incorporation of its wholly-owned Omani subsidiary, GFCL EV (SFZ) LLC, which plans to set up the Sultanate’s first advanced battery materials project for electric vehicle (EV) and energy storage applications.

The initial investment in the facility, which will be located in Salalah Free Zone in Dhofar Governorate, is estimated at \$216 million.

The announcement regarding the Omani subsidiary’s incorporation came in a regulatory filing by parent company Gujarat Fluorochemicals Limited to Indian bourses over the weekend.

Plans for this first-of-its-kind project were first unveiled last September at an event hosted with the support of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), Salalah Free Zone, and Invest Oman.

Per the filing, the incorporation involves a total investment of RO 35 million, distributed between GFCL EV Products Limited (99.70%) and group company Gujarat Fluorochemicals Limited (0.30%).

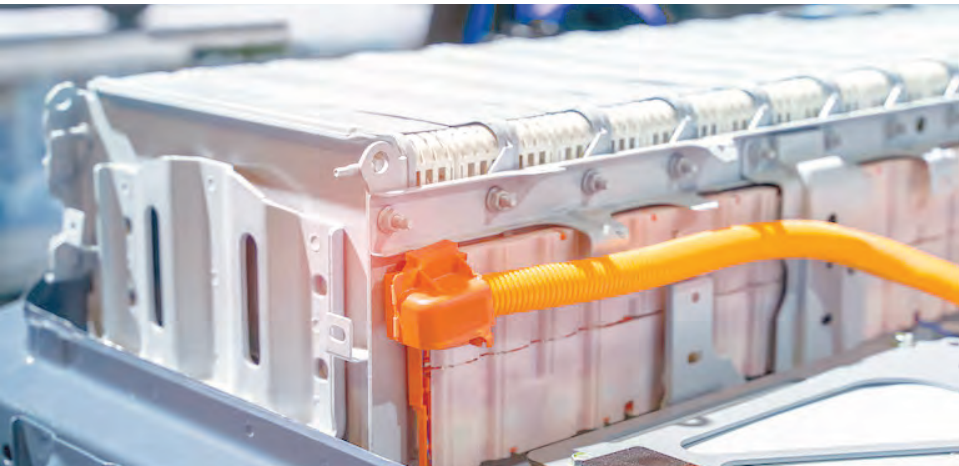
“The newly incorporated subsidiary will operate in the chemical manufacturing sector, specifically focusing on the production of various chemicals.

This expansion aligns with the company’s broader strategy in the chemical industry and represents a step toward diversifying its



The newly incorporated subsidiary will operate in the chemical manufacturing sector, specifically focusing on the production of various chemicals. This expansion aligns with the company’s broader strategy in the chemical industry and represents a step toward diversifying its geographical presence.

GFCL EV (SFZ) LLC



The Salalah venture will specialize in the production of chemicals for lithium-ion battery (Li B) cells used in EVs and BESS systems (For illustration only).

geographical presence,” the Indian promoter noted in the filing.

The Salalah venture is envisaged as a state-of-the-art greenfield project specializing in the production of chemicals for lithium-ion battery (Li B) cells used in EVs and stationary battery energy storage systems (BESS).

In India, parent company GFCL EV Products Limited is actively developing the country’s first fully integrated EV battery materials manufacturing facility at Jolva near Bharuch in Gujarat.

This plant is designed to produce key components for lithium-ion batteries, including electrolyte salts (e.g., LiPF₆), electrolyte formulations, cathode active materials (LFP), and PVDF/PTFE binders under one roof.

Last December, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) — part of the World Bank Group — committed \$50 million to GFCL EV to support the construction and scaling of this integrated facility through compulsorily convertible instruments, signaling strong investor confidence and

international backing for the project.

Both facilities support GFCL EV’s ambition to secure multiple nodes in the global battery materials value chain, enabling geographic diversification and proximity to key markets.

A presence in Oman positions GFCL EV to leverage regional trade routes and industrial clusters in the Middle East, while the India base anchors domestic production and aligns with initiatives such as clean energy growth and import substitution.

GFCL EV operates under the umbrella of the INOXGFL Group, a diversified Indian conglomerate active in specialty chemicals (including fluoropolymers and fluorochemicals), advanced battery materials, and renewable energy sectors such as wind, solar, and green power generation, with a combined market capitalization of around \$12 billion.

The group comprises several listed and private entities, including Gujarat Fluorochemicals Limited, Inox Wind, and Inox Green Energy Services.

Invest Oman unveils manufacturing investment opportunities

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 14

Invest Oman has unveiled a portfolio of high-value investment opportunities across the manufacturing sector, comprising a diversified pipeline of industrial projects varying in scale, capital intensity and geographic distribution. This initiative reinforces Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to accelerate industrialisation and expand the manufacturing sector’s contribution to economic value creation.

The portfolio spans priority industrial segments including metals, advanced building materials, electrical and electronic industries, textile manufacturing, industrial inputs and consumer goods production. The breadth of these sectors reflects the depth of Oman’s industrial ecosystem and its readiness to accommodate investments ranging from specialised mid-scale operations to capital-intensive industrial ventures.

Highlighted opportunities are located within Madayn Samayil and Madayn Suhar, and include manufacturing facilities for military textiles and uniform supplies, air conditioning and refrigeration units, computer



In 2025 the Ministry successfully developed and published 30 well-structured investment opportunities through the Invest Oman platform.

hardware and accessories, office supplies and tire production.

The portfolio further features projects in aluminium processing and semi-rigid aluminium containers, aluminium composite panels (ACP), steel manufacturing units, stainless steel pipe production, as well as bitumen plants, insulation materials, glass wool and extruded polystyrene sheet production.

The investment values of these opportunities span a broad range, starting from medium-scale

projects at approximately \$2.4 million and extending to major industrial ventures exceeding \$90 million. This diversity offers flexibility to investors across different segments and strengthens prospects for strategic partnerships and long-term investment.

The portfolio also incorporates sustainability-driven ventures aligned with circular economy objectives, including a polyester fiber production facility utilising recycled PET plastic bottles.

These projects advance national environmental priorities while positioning Oman within emerging green manufacturing value chains.

These opportunities are supported by Oman’s structural advantages, including competitive access to raw materials, integrated infrastructure within industrial cities, and a regulatory and legislative framework designed to facilitate manufacturing growth.

Streamlined establishment procedures and efficient supply chain connectivity further enhance operational certainty for investors.

In this context, Khalid bin Hamad al Kharousi, Director General of Investment Promotion at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said the department develops and structures investment opportunities in coordination with various relevant entities and sectors

. This ensures their technical and economic readiness, implementability and effective promotion in targeted markets, ultimately transforming them into tangible investment projects with sustainable economic impact.

He noted that in 2025, the Ministry successfully developed and published 30 well-structured

investment opportunities through Invest Oman platform, covering sectors of national priority, with a focus on the quality of investment content, clarity of business models and integration of value propositions. This was undertaken in coordination with relevant sectoral entities to frame certain opportunities in line with market needs and development priorities.

He added that these efforts were accompanied by a commitment to achieving balanced sectoral diversification and comprehensive geographic coverage across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting each governorate’s competitive advantages and enhancing the Sultanate of Oman’s ability to attract high-quality, long-term investments.

Invest Oman ecosystem enables investors to access detailed information on these projects — including technical data, investment values and operating models — supporting project readiness for implementation and contributing to faster investment decision-making.

Investors are invited to access the full manufacturing investment portfolio through the interactive Opportunity Map: <https://investoman.om/investment-opportunities>.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The initiative targets the training of 100 employees across various functional levels.

NAMA WATER SERVICES CONCLUDES CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMME IN CHINA

MUSCAT: Nama Water Services has concluded the first phase of its specialised international training programme in China, marking a significant step in its long-term strategy to invest in human capital and strengthen institutional capabilities across the organisation.

The programme, implemented under a recently signed cooperation agreement with China’s HCIG, forms part of Nama Water Services’ broader vision to enhance operational excellence and accelerate digital transformation within the water and wastewater sector in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The initiative targets the training of 100 employees across various functional levels. The first batch included 23 participants, with three additional batches scheduled in the coming period to complete the programme.

The training covered advanced technical and managerial tracks designed to deliver sustainable impact on performance quality. These included project development, engineering design, planning, budget management and customer service, in addition to the application of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in modern operating models.

The programme also featured specialised field visits to leading water and wastewater facilities in China, enabling participants to explore global best practices in smart water management and advanced operational systems.

Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, Chief Executive Officer of Nama Water Services, said: “This international training programme reflects Nama Water Services’ institutional approach to aligning human capital development with our strategic priorities. Investing in people remains a fundamental pillar for achieving operational readiness and long-term sustainability”.

He added: “Implementing the programme in China — a global leader in smart infrastructure and digital integration within water operations — provides our employees with direct exposure to advanced operational models. These experiences will support the localisation of knowledge and the adaptation of international best practices to Oman’s operational context and future sector transformation”.

Al Zakwani further noted that the phased structure of the programme and the engagement of international expertise contribute to embedding innovation-driven practices, smart analytics and data-based decision-making within the company’s culture, ultimately strengthening institutional performance and supporting the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Sohar International hosts annual corporate dinner

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its commitment to deepening client engagement through knowledge-driven dialogue and institutional thought leadership, Sohar International recently convened an exclusive Corporate Dinner for its customers from the Private and Government sectors, bringing together a distinguished group of senior executives, corporate leaders and strategic partners.

The invitation-only gathering featured a keynote address titled “The Economic Outlook of 2026” delivered by Dr Charlie Lay, Managing Director, Senior Economist and FX Strategist at Commerzbank AG.

The session was complemented by a high-level panel discussion



The gathering featured a keynote address titled “The Economic Outlook of 2026”.

BYD Oman launches its best-ever Ramadhan offer

THIS Ramadhan, the journey towards sustainable luxury in Oman becomes even more rewarding. BYD, the world’s leading manufacturer of new energy vehicles, is igniting the festive spirit with an extraordinary campaign that promises to make this season unforgettable.

Beyond a suite of premium ownership benefits, one lucky customer will experience the ultimate Ramadhan blessing: the chance to win the sophisticated BYD SEAL 7 DM-i Luxury in a spectacular Grand Raffle.

Under the theme “This Ramadhan, Enjoy the Five Benefits from BYD”, the campaign — running from February 8 to April 8, 2026 — is designed to provide a seamless transition to the future of mobility.

Every eligible purchase during this period unlocks a comprehensive package of “Five Benefits” including free 1-year motor insurance, complimentary 3-year roadside assistance, a 3-year free service package and a free battery charger unit.

This powerful combination of value ensures that new owners can focus entirely on the joy of the drive, supported by the peace of mind that comes with BYD’s world-class service standards.

The centrepiece of this year’s excitement, the BYD SEAL 7 DM-i, is a masterpiece of hybrid engineering and the designated Grand Raffle prize. Designed to meet the highest expectations of Omani motorists, this premium plug-in hybrid sedan features the latest DM-i 4.0 technology, delivering a smooth 265 horsepower and a remarkable total driving range of up to 850 km.

Its “Ocean-inspired” interior is a sanctuary of elegance, featuring ripple-patterned seats and a 1.5L T-Plug-in-Hybrid system that



The BYD SEAL 7 DM-i, is a masterpiece of hybrid engineering and the designated Grand Raffle prize.

ensures a powerful yet efficient drive for both city commutes and long-distance travel.

For families seeking luxury and versatility, the BYD ATTO 8 stands out as the brand’s first premium seven-seat luxury SUV. It commands the road with 480 hp and intelligent AWD, capable of reaching 100 km/h in just 4.9 seconds.

Inside, the ATTO 8 is a hub of comfort with a 26-inch W-HUD, massage functions for both front and second-row passengers and a massive panoramic roof that bathes the cabin in natural light.

The efficiency-driven BYD Qin Plus DM-i continues to redefine everyday performance, offering an incredible fuel consumption of just 3.8L/100km and a range of 990 km, making it the perfect companion for cross-country Omani adventures.

Similarly, the BYD Song Plus Comfort

blends SUV practicality with Super DM technology, offering an AWD experience enriched by a 360° camera, a panoramic sunroof and a 15.6” Electric Rotatable entertainment system with 10 Infinity Speakers.

For enthusiasts seeking specialised performance, the BYD ATTO 3 provides a vibrant, all-electric SUV experience powered by the ultra-safe Blade Battery, featuring a unique “gym-themed” cockpit and a 12.8-inch rotatable screen.

Meanwhile, the BYD Shark 6 arrives as Oman’s first hybrid pickup. Built on the DMO Super Hybrid Off-Road Platform, the Shark 6 is designed to master rugged terrains while offering innovative Vehicle-to-Load (V2L) technology, effectively turning the vehicle into a mobile power station for outdoor lifestyles.

Ministers tour PDO sustainability projects

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) hosted an official ministerial visit to its sustainability initiatives in the Rima area of Al Wusta Governorate, highlighting projects designed to strengthen environmental performance, operational efficiency and local economic development.

The visit was attended by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals; Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources; and Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, accompanied by Aflah bin Said al Hadhrami, Managing Director of PDO, along with senior officials.

The delegation reviewed the Rima Water Treatment



The visit highlights projects designed to strengthen environmental performance, operational efficiency and local economic development.

Plant, which applies biological treatment technologies and natural filtration systems to manage associated water produced during oil operations.

The facility enables safe reuse of treated water while lowering

the energy requirements and environmental footprint typically associated with conventional treatment processes.

Officials also toured the Rima Jojoba Plantation Project,

implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Fully funded by PDO, the initiative aims to cultivate around 150,000 jojoba trees across approximately 1.2 million square metres using treated wastewater.

The project is designed to support desert-adapted agriculture, stimulate local value chains linked to jojoba-based bio-oils and cosmetics; and create employment opportunities for communities in the region.

Al Hadhrami said the Rima initiatives demonstrate PDO’s approach to embedding sustainability into its operations by converting environmental challenges into development opportunities through innovation and collaboration with government partners.

featuring Dr Charlie and Sohar International’s senior leadership, including Rabee al Qadi, Head — Global Trade Solutions and Dr Al Muatasim al Mutairi, Head — Investment Banking, moderated by Hisham Hassan Moosa, Senior Executive Vice President and Head — Project Financing and Global Banking.

Commenting on the significance of such engagements, Hisham Hassan Moosa stated: “In an increasingly complex and interconnected economic landscape, financial institutions are expected to serve not only as capital providers, but as strategic partners offering informed perspective and disciplined insight.

Clients seek contextual intelligence that supports forward-looking decision-making amidst evolving macroeconomic cycles, policy shifts and sectoral transformations.

At Sohar International, we view it as a strategic responsibility to curate platforms that enable our clients to interpret global signals, assess inflection points with clarity and align their growth strategies with broader economic transitions.

By facilitating dialogue with internationally recognised experts and leveraging our in-house sector capabilities, we aim to strengthen our clients’ capacity to navigate complexity, anticipate change and pursue sustainable expansion with confidence”.

SHORTTAKES



Total aircraft movements declined by 2.8 per cent to around 104,510 flights, reflecting higher passenger loads on services.

AIRPORTS TRAFFIC IN OMAN RISES DESPITE FEWER FLIGHTS

MUSCAT: Passenger traffic through the Sultanate of Oman’s airports rose by 2.8 per cent in 2025, reaching 14,939,209 travellers by the end of December, compared with 14,537,674 a year earlier, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Despite the rise in passenger numbers, total aircraft movements declined by 2.8 per cent to 104,510 flights, down from 107,546 in 2024, reflecting improved load factors and route optimisation across the network.

At Muscat International Airport, international flights fell by 4.5 per cent to 82,913, yet passenger numbers on those services increased by 1.3 per cent to 11.84 million, indicating stronger seat occupancy.

Domestic operations at Muscat recorded solid growth, with flights rising 6.6 per cent to 9,606 and passenger numbers surging 12 per cent to 1.32 million.

Salalah Airport posted mixed results. International flights slipped 2.4 per cent to 4,886, while passenger numbers remained broadly stable at 678,591. Domestic traffic showed robust expansion, with flights climbing 14.3 per cent and passenger volumes jumping 17.7 per cent to just over one million.

By contrast, Suhar Airport saw a sharp contraction in international activity, with flights plunging 77.8 per cent and passenger numbers dropping 99.1 per cent. Domestic services also declined.

Duqm Airport recorded marginal decreases in both flights and passengers. Overall, the figures underscore steady growth in passenger demand, particularly on domestic routes, reinforcing aviation’s contribution to tourism, connectivity and economic activity.

— ONA

\$215 bn India–Arab trade milestone as IACCIA launched in New Delhi

NEW DELHI: The launch of the India & Arab Countries Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture (IACCIA) marked a significant step in deepening economic and strategic ties between India and the Arab world, as bilateral trade reached \$215 billion.

The inaugural ceremony brought together senior leaders and dignitaries from both sides, reflecting centuries-old ties rooted in trade, culture and people-to-people connections.

Among the distinguished guests were Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; Kirti Vardhan Singh, India’s Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change; and Dr Khaled Mohamad Hanafy, Secretary-General of the Union of Arab Chambers, alongside visiting ministers and senior officials from Arab countries.

Dr Siddeek Ahmed, Co-Chair of the Arab Council at Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and Chairman and Managing Director of ERAM Holdings,



The inaugural ceremony in New Delhi brought together senior leaders and dignitaries from both India and the Arab world.

said India–Arab relations have evolved into comprehensive partnerships spanning diplomacy, trade, energy, infrastructure and strategic cooperation.

“India and the Arab world are entering a new phase of economic partnership — driven by shared growth ambitions, strategic trust

and long-term collaboration across trade, investment, energy, technology and skills”, he said. “The launch of IACCIA provides a strong institutional platform to translate this shared vision into tangible outcomes”.

Economic engagement has expanded rapidly. Trade between India and the GCC reached approximately \$180 billion in 2024–25, while total trade with Arab League countries stood at \$215 billion. Under the India–UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), bilateral trade surpassed \$100 billion, with a target of \$200 billion by 2032. Saudi Arabia remains one of India’s largest trading partners, with trade exceeding \$41 billion.

Non-oil exports from India to the Arab region — particularly electronics and engineering goods — are rising steadily.

Growth opportunities are also emerging in renewable energy, food security, advanced technology, logistics and resilient supply chains, aligned with national strategies such as

Viksit Bharat @2047, Saudi Vision 2030 and the UAE’s We the UAE 2031.

Cooperation is also expanding in infrastructure, energy and space. Initiatives such as the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) aim to strengthen connectivity. The UAE has committed \$75 billion in infrastructure investments in India, while long-term energy agreements — including a 10-year HPCL–ADNOC LNG deal — underscore deepening strategic alignment.

Foreign direct investment flows remain robust. India received \$81 billion in FDI in 2024–25, with the UAE ranking as its seventh-largest investor. Saudi Arabia has announced plans to invest \$100 billion, while Qatar has committed \$10 billion and opened an investment office in India.

People-to-people ties continue to anchor the relationship, with nearly nine million Indians living and working across the Arab world, contributing significantly to economic growth and cultural exchange.

INFLATION WATCH

US prices edge up slightly



US consumer prices rose less than forecast in January, helped by cheaper petrol and easing rents, though services costs climbed, signalling limited urgency for the Federal Reserve to cut rates before summer.

A Labour Department report showed firmer underlying pressures as firms lifted prices for personal care, recreation, airfares and hospital services, drawing mixed political reactions.

— Reuters

SANCTIONS SHIFT

Reliance secures Venezuela oil licence



India’s Reliance Industries Ltd has secured a US general licence allowing direct purchases of Venezuelan crude without breaching sanctions, sources say.

The move follows US easing curbs after the capture of President Nicolas Maduro, part of plans for a \$2 billion supply arrangement and reconstruction of Venezuela’s oil sector, potentially lowering feedstock costs.

— Reuters

DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY

Tech giants launch trust alliance



Microsoft and Ericsson have spearheaded the launch of the Trusted Tech Alliance, a 15-member coalition promoting five principles for secure technology.

Microsoft President Brad Smith said countries are under pressure to strengthen technological borders.

The initiative responds to mounting digital sovereignty concerns as governments weigh tighter rules and local investment.

— Reuters

OPINION

Impact of the creative industry on entrepreneurship



DR HILAL AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert

THE creative industry has become one of the most important parts of the modern day’s economy while helping develop more entrepreneurship potential. Creative industry includes: arts, design, film, advertising, music, video games, digital media and etc. Under a traditional economy, various sectors had a potential of growth, but now, under the digital and knowledge economy, the most potential sectors, amongst all, are the creative industries, as these sectors are highly concentrated with innovation as well as emerging technologies. The creative industry as well has the most potential in developing entrepreneurship, creating new jobs and all while ensuring the society’s cultural needs are met. The creative industry helps develop more entrepreneurship potential when it helps start lots of creative businesses. Unlike the high capital required sectors, the creative sector can be started with a lower capital. A video musician, graphic artist, content creator and film producer only need a few instrumental tools and start producing content and business through digital channels. The low capital requirement helps encourage people and especially the young, to start developing their ideas, be more risk takers and start developing their entrepreneurship potential. The ever-changing interests of consumers

necessitate the need for entrepreneurs to constantly develop new offerings, whether that be products, services, or experiences. This necessitates the ability to solve problems, be adaptable and think outside the box. With respect to the fashion, media and digital arts industry, there is always a need for innovation. Change in this column gives the industry the life-blood of philanthropy and yes, innovation is the key and for these entrepreneurs, the arts offer an engaging and enjoyable means to exercise these traits in the entire spectrum of entrepreneurial practice. Cultivating the ability to innovate and develop outside of the box is instrumental for any entrepreneur or individual, no matter which field they eventually end up in. Just as important is the creative industry’s ability to extract economic value from culture and ideas. Imagination, talent and culture are all considered resources and need to be transformed from an intangible to a tangible state. As an example, from a local fashion business perspective, when traditional inspired designs are blended with contemporary design features, there is the potential for an international market to be achieved. Similarly, a game developer entrepreneur can establish a business based on an innovative use of storytelling and user experience. This is a highly creative element of entrepreneurship and the end result is the

The creative industry as well has the most potential in developing entrepreneurship, creating new jobs and all while ensuring the society’s cultural needs are met.

monetisation of creative ideas, whilst also maintaining an economy of cultural variety. Networking and collaboration is also promoted by the creative industries. Many creative activities/projects flourish when there is collaboration among a range of professional participants, which may include designers, writers, programmers, marketers or performers. When there is a creative environment, collaboration is critical for leading to the sharing of knowledge as well as in establishing mentor/mentee relationships. This can ultimately lead to the establishment of new business ventures. As well, there are also creative hubs, co-working spaces and festivals, which further strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems by integrating talent with investors, customers and audiences. The creative industries have greatly benefitted from new technologies, which have helped the sector become more entrepreneurial. Innovations such as social media, streaming services and digital marketplaces have created opportunities for entrepreneurial activity without the constraints of traditional distributors. Many independent creators can sell their work directly on social media, distribute their films via streaming services and market their brands as social media marketers. Digital technologies have made it easier for creative entrepreneurs to grow their businesses more quickly and independently.

OFFSHORE CCS: FROM GLOBAL PRECEDENT TO REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

NAJAH AL RIYAMI

AS climate commitments deepen and industrial decarbonisation becomes more urgent, offshore carbon capture and storage (CCS) is steadily moving from a niche solution into a core component of national energy strategies. By capturing carbon dioxide from power generation, gas processing and heavy industry and storing it permanently beneath the seabed, offshore CCS addresses emissions that cannot be eliminated through renewables or electrification alone. For coastal, energy-producing regions such as the Gulf, its relevance is becoming increasingly pronounced. Offshore CCS is not an experimental technology. It has operated safely for nearly three decades, beginning in 1996 with the Sleipner CCS Project in Norway. Operated by Equinor, the project captures around one million tonnes of CO₂ annually from natural gas processing and injects it into a deep saline aquifer beneath the North Sea. Long-term monitoring has shown stable containment and no leakage, making Sleipner one of the most cited CCS references globally. This experience was reinforced in 2008 by Norway’s Snøhvit CCS Project, which transports CO₂ from an onshore LNG facility for offshore storage beneath the Barents Sea. Together, these projects have stored more than 25 million tonnes of CO₂ and helped establish regulatory and technical confidence in offshore storage. Momentum has accelerated over the past decade as net-zero targets have hardened and policymakers have recognised that sectors such as cement, steel, refining and gas-based hydrogen cannot decarbonise without CCS. According to the Global CCS Institute, more than 30 CCS facilities are currently operating worldwide, capturing around 50 million tonnes of CO₂ per year, with over 300 additional projects in development. Offshore storage plays a growing role in this pipeline, particularly through shared hub models in Europe and North America. This global shift carries clear implications for the Gulf Cooperation Council. GCC economies combine energy-intensive industries with extensive coastlines, offshore infrastructure and deep subsurface geology, conditions well suited to offshore CCS. Depleted oil and gas reservoirs and deep saline aquifers beneath regional seas offer long-term storage potential, while existing offshore platforms, pipelines and subsurface expertise can reduce costs and accelerate deployment. Offshore storage also avoids many of the land-use and public acceptance challenges associated with onshore projects.

Executives stay silent, the economic story gets noisy

OMAN’S economic transition is moving faster than its public economic narrative. The country is pushing towards higher productivity, stronger logistics performance and a larger digital footprint, yet the conversation leans heavily on ceremonies and headline milestones. In a digital age, that imbalance weakens understanding, trust and the talent pipeline. The direction is measurable. The Oman National Digital Economy Programme aims to raise the digital economy’s contribution to GDP from 2% to 10% by 2040. Future Fund Oman has reported approving 44 projects in its first year, with total project value of about RO 1.2 billion, including foreign capital contributions of RO 885 million. The Ministry of Economy says non-oil sectors’ contribution to GDP at constant prices rose to 73.3% by the end of the third quarter of 2025, up from 72.5% in 2024. Yet too often we report the “what” without explaining the “how”. That is where a critical layer is missing: the operational voice of business. Oman has real success stories across sectors, but many senior executives remain largely absent from the wider economic conversation, especially on the platforms where younger audiences learn, decide and imitate. This is not a call to turn CEOs into influencers. It is a call for disciplined visibility, where leaders speak plainly about how value is created, what slows delivery, what skills they hire for and why some results take time. When credible operators do not speak, the conversation does not stay neutral. Complex trade-offs get reduced to slogans, rumours gain space and “motivational economics” replaces serious economic literacy. Silence becomes a vacuum and vacuums get filled by louder voices that are less accountable to facts. The result is a higher cost of reform,



A productive economy needs leaders who can explain execution — what works, what doesn’t and why it takes time.



QASIM AL MAASHANI

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

Oman has real success stories across sectors, but many senior executives remain largely absent from the wider economic conversation, especially on the platforms where younger audiences learn, decide and imitate.

because people become less patient when outcomes take time and less confident when the logic is not explained. To be fair, executive caution in Oman has real reasons. A statement can be clipped, misread, or circulated without context. Listed companies must be careful about anything that could be interpreted as price-sensitive disclosure. Many family businesses also prefer discretion as a matter of culture, choosing stability and reputation over visibility. These constraints deserve respect, but the strategic question remains: what is the cost of leaving the economic narrative to ceremonies, scattered commentary and short-form noise? Trust is one cost and it is not abstract. Edelman’s 2025 Trust Barometer found that 61% globally have a moderate or high sense of grievance, defined by a belief that government and business make life harder and serve narrow interests. In such an environment, silence does not protect institutions; it can feed suspicion and oversimplification. Talent is another cost. Young people do not only need inspiration; they need realism about pathways

and workplace demands; and they need it from people who run organisations, not second-hand commentary. Oman does not need louder messaging. It needs safer, better engagement. A voluntary “Executive Visibility Compact” could create a practical middle ground by setting guardrails that make it easier for leaders to engage without compliance or reputational risk. It should favour context-rich formats such as written Q&As and moderated long-form interviews and it should normalise a simple discipline: speak with a small set of non-sensitive indicators on jobs and skills, productivity and investment or innovation. Practical media training should be part of it. The media has a role too. If we want better executive voices, we must offer platforms that reward explanation, not outrage. Economic journalism in a productivity-driven economy cannot treat announcements as endpoints; it must follow outcomes and ask tougher questions without drifting into hostility. Oman story will be told either way. The only question is whether it will be shaped by operational authority, or by noise.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

SALES professional with 5 yrs Experience in Medical sector. Graduate, Available in Muscat. akhilmanu777@gmail.com
Contact: 76323324

INDIAN electrical engineer more than 20 years experience in "MEP" construction field in Oman seeks suitable job.
Contact: 92919281

OPERATIONS Support / Tendering / Contract Management / Procurement professional with 18+ years' Oil & Gas experience. NOC & driving license available. 96227272, jijilmathew@gmail.com

ACCOUNTS/ SALES Indian male (b com) having 2+ years of experience in India accounts sales looking for suitable placement, join immediately. Contact: 76324360

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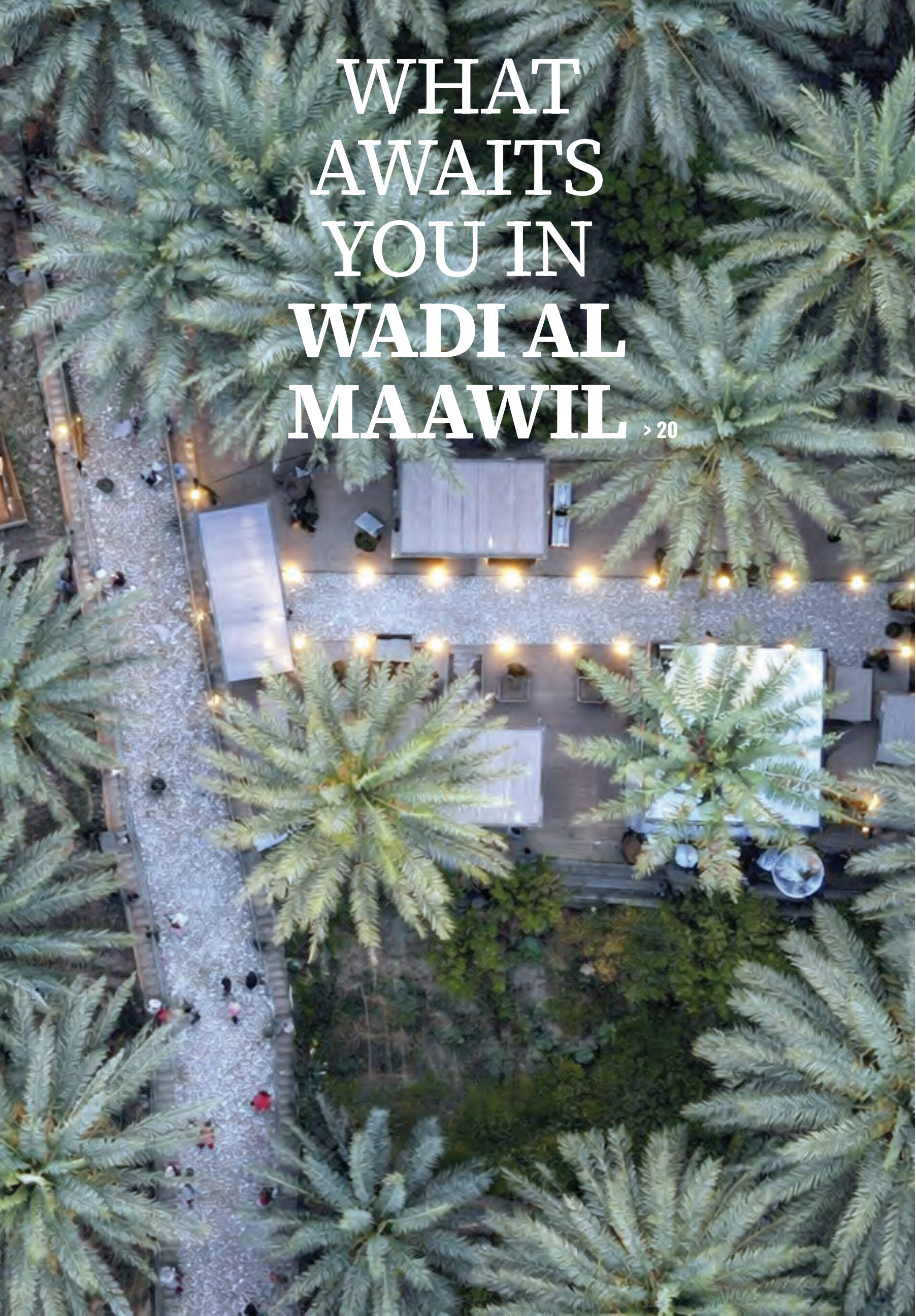
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ART/LIFE



GAINFUL DEALS

BRITNEY SPEARS SELLS RIGHTS TO MUSIC CATALOGUE



Pop star Britney Spears has sold the rights to her music catalogue to independent music publisher Primary Wave, becoming the latest major artist to secure a high-profile deal for her body of work. The news was first reported by entertainment outlet TMZ, which cited legal documents it had obtained.

TMZ quoted sources as saying the value of the deal was “in the ballpark” of Canadian singer Justin Bieber’s widely reported \$200 million agreement to sell his music rights to Hipgnosis in 2023. While the exact financial terms of Spears’ agreement have not been officially disclosed, a person familiar with the situation confirmed that the deal between Spears and Primary Wave is accurate. No additional details about the scope of the rights included or the structure of the transaction were immediately made public.

Primary Wave is a prominent independent music publisher whose catalogue includes legendary artists such as Whitney Houston, Prince and Stevie Nicks. The company did not immediately respond to requests for comment following the reports, and Spears herself has not made a public statement regarding the sale.

Now 44, Spears remains one of the most successful and influential pop artists of her generation. She first topped charts worldwide with her 1998 debut single “...Baby One More Time,” launching a career that would define late-1990s and early-2000s pop music. Her catalogue includes enduring hits such as “(You Drive Me) Crazy,” “Circus,” “Gimme More” and “I’m a Slave 4 U.” Her ninth and most recent studio album, “Glory,” was released in 2016.

The sale comes several years after Spears was released from a 13-year court-ordered conservatorship that had governed her personal life, career and estimated \$60 million estate. The conservatorship, established in 2008 and controlled by her father, Jamie Spears, was terminated in November 2021 following intense public scrutiny and legal proceedings.

Spears joins a growing list of major artists, including Sting, Bruce Springsteen and Justin Timberlake, who have chosen to monetise their music catalogues through lucrative rights deals.

— Reuters

QUICK FEATURES



FILM FEST

French actress D'Johé Kouadio attends a press conference for the film 'Dao' presented in competition at the 76th Berlinale, Europe's first major film festival of the year in Berlin. — AFP



NEW YEAR

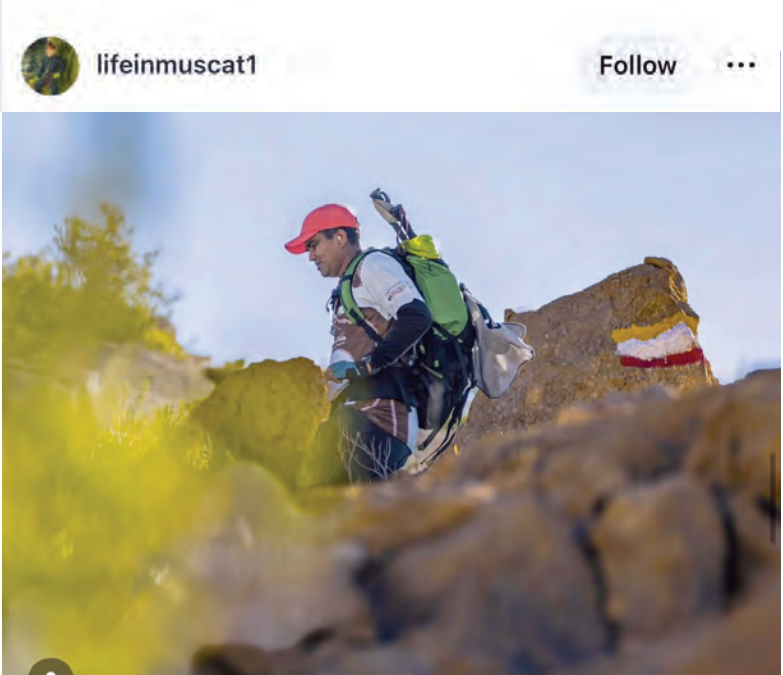
Men participate in a dragon dance on Qianmen Street in Beijing ahead of the Lunar New Year of the Horse. — AFP



CELEBRATIONS

Couples pose after they receive their marriage licenses during a Valentine's Day celebration in Bangkok. — Reuters

INSTA PICKS



Hiking culture



Bright morning walk

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LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD FOR BILL NYE

Bill Nye, the pop culture science educator, will be awarded a lifetime achievement award at the 4th annual Children's & Family Emmy Awards, the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences (NATAS) announced on Thursday in a press release.

The 70-year old will be given his award on March 1 at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City.

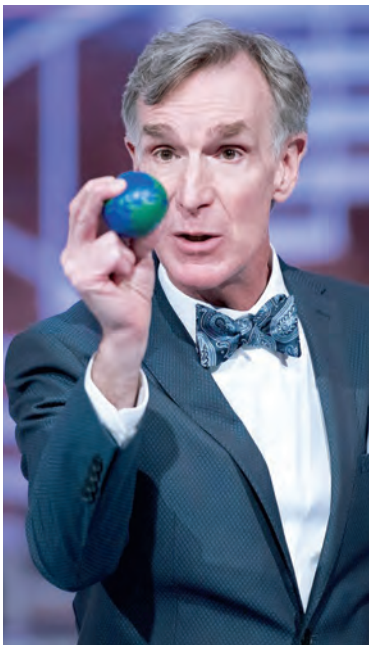
“Mr. Nye is one of the most revered broadcast educators in television history, having instilled multiple generations of children with an appreciation for the extraordinary world of science,” said Adam Sharp, NATAS president and CEO.

“It is an honour to celebrate his career, as well as the esteemed careers of this year’s Gold and Silver Circle inductees and individual honourees, alongside this year’s fantastic nominees who are building upon their work with important children’s programming today,” Sharp added.

Nye is best known for starring in the silly science show “Bill Nye the Science Guy,” which ran from 1993 to 1998 and became a staple in science education in classrooms.

His work as a science educator, inventor, mechanical engineer, television host and best-selling author was also recognised in 2025 with the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Joe Biden and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame that same year.

Nye also hosted the Netflix



series “Bill Nye Saves the World,” which covered a range of scientific issues and ran for three seasons until 2018.

He went on to host the 2022 Peacock series “The End is Nye,” which explores natural and unnatural disasters. Born William Sanford Nye, the Cornell University alumnus started his career as a comedian, eventually branching into several avenues of entertainment and educational expertise.

NATAS is a service organisation dedicated to the advancement of the arts and sciences of television and the promotion of creative leadership for artistic, educational and technical achievements within the television industry.

— Reuters



HERITAGE AND
ADVENTURE IN AL
JABAL AL AKHDHAR

ARWA AL HASHIMI

HIGH in the cool elevations of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, where terraced farms meet dramatic cliffs and sweeping views, a new tourism initiative is offering visitors more than just scenery. Mountain Sniper, or Qannas Al Jabal in Arabic, introduces a unique outdoor experience that combines adventure, heritage, and environmental awareness.

The project reflects Oman's growing effort to diversify tourism while honouring the cultural and natural identity of one of its most treasured destinations.

Unlike conventional tours that focus solely on hiking or sightseeing, Mountain Sniper offers an immersive adventure that integrates hiking through the mountains with safe, guided shooting practice.

Participants navigate the landscape before engaging in shooting exercises, creating an experience that is both physically engaging and culturally meaningful.

Environmental responsibility is at the heart

Mountain Sniper offers an immersive adventure that integrates hiking through the mountains with safe, guided shooting practice



of the initiative. Organisers emphasise strict respect for wildlife and the ecosystem, providing guidance on ethical practices to ensure that the natural environment remains unharmed.

The project also bridges tradition and modernity, drawing on Oman's historical marksmanship heritage while following contemporary safety standards. It appeals to both locals and international

tourists interested in adventure, outdoor exploration, and cultural discovery, highlighting the global draw of authentic, experience-based tourism.

Beyond recreation, Mountain Sniper supports the local economy by enriching the region's tourism offerings, encouraging longer stays, and fostering deeper engagement with Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

Careful planning ensures the initiative aligns with the mountain's ecological balance, reflecting a broader vision of sustainable tourism.

One of the founders explains, “Shooting is not merely a skill, but a culture deeply rooted in Omani identity. Through Mountain Sniper, we aim to present this heritage in a modern spirit that combines enjoyment, discipline and respect.”

With its blend of heritage, adventure, and eco-consciousness, Mountain Sniper represents a promising model for Oman's tourism sector, celebrating tradition while opening new pathways for cultural and experiential exploration.

FEATURES



WHAT AWAITS YOU IN WADI AL MAAWIL

YERU EBUEN

I found myself in a peaceful, charming café just as the winter light began to soften, turning the garden at Dhellah Cafe into a warm, green hush. It sits in Hujrat Al Sheikh in the Wilayat of Wadi Al Maawil, Al Batinah South Governorate, the kind of place you don't stumble into by accident unless you've decided, quietly, that you've had enough of noise for one week.

The windows held the sunlight like honey. Outside, palms lifted and lowered with the breeze as if they were breathing. And inside this garden café, time didn't feel slow in a boring way. It felt slow in the way you want it to be when you're finally paying attention.

This café is all about the setting: shade, greenery, stone and a sense of calm that makes you put your phone down without forcing yourself to.

People pass by gracefully. Locals on a gentle walk, families stopping for a treat, visitors pausing as if they've just remembered what a day is supposed to feel like. The garden doesn't perform for you. It simply exists, and you're allowed to exist with it.

I took a bite from a hefty slice of cake. Proper, generous, the kind that doesn't pretend to be dainty and held a hot drink in one hand while my other hovered over a laptop keyboard. There's a particular type of comfort in working somewhere like this: the soft clack of keys, the lull of conversation in the distance, the occasional laugh, the sound of footsteps on stone. It's the beauty of Oman's best discoveries: cafés that appear in places you'd once have driven past without a second



There's something grounding about that, the way history in Oman isn't sealed behind glass. It sits alongside everyday life, still present in the routes people take, the walls that hold gardens, the ruins that watch over palm groves

thought, “middle of nowhere” until you realise nowhere is exactly what you needed.

But Dhellah isn't a random pocket of charm dropped onto a map. It's part of why Wadi Al Maawil is quietly changing shape in the public imagination — from a name you recognise on a road sign to a place you actively seek out. Historically, this wilayat has carried its story in architecture and water: old towers, fortresses, castles and mosques that speak to long years of settlement, protection and community life, built for a landscape that demanded ingenuity.

There's something grounding about that, the way history in Oman isn't sealed behind glass. It sits alongside everyday life, still present in the routes people take, the walls that hold gardens, the ruins that watch over palm groves.

One of the clearest reminders is Al Safalah Castle, a heritage landmark that has stood as part of the area's defensive and civic story.

Nearby, Bait Al Ghasham Museum adds another layer. Less fortress, more home, offering a sense of how life was lived and how beauty and function were always intertwined. And then there is the lifeline running through all of it: the falaj, those traditional water channels that turned harsh ground into green pockets and made settled life possible, feeding palms and farms like a quiet, persistent promise.

In recent years, the story has gained a new path — literally. The Hujrat Al Sheikh Tourist Walkway, a 1,500-metre stone-paved route, was created to link key heritage points: Hujrat Al Sheikh, Al Safalah Castle and Bait Al Ghasham, while guiding you through palm groves and past

falaj-fed oases. It's designed with traditional aesthetics in mind, not as a theme park version of heritage, but as a gentle invitation to walk through a living place rather than simply “visit” it.

What's especially telling is how the project has been framed: not only as tourism infrastructure, but as a community-facing cultural space, one meant to include stations for local crafts and household products, sitting areas that work for older visitors, and corners where small businesses can thrive without losing the area's spirit. That's the kind of development that can change a destination without flattening it. Growth that still leaves room for the human pace of daily life. And you feel that pace when you're there.

Back at Dhellah, I watched the light shift again, the garden turning deeper green as the day leaned towards afternoon. I thought about how travel is often marketed as speed — do more, see more, tick the list. Yet the places that stay with you are usually the ones that let you sit still long enough to feel like yourself again. Wadi Al Maawil doesn't shout for attention. It doesn't need to. It lets its history stand in the background, steady and unforced, while the present carries on—coffee cups, family walks, heritage stones underfoot, palms moving like they're keeping time.

I can be anywhere in the world but being in this moment, it feels transformative and nostalgic. If you're looking for that place just to let time pass you by, consider this hidden secret yours. All you have to do is make the barely two hour drive to be transported to a place of many discoveries.