

O M A N
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SUNRISE 06:30 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:15 AM
DHUHR 12:25 PM
ASR 03:45 PM
MAGHRIB 06:14 PM
ISHA 07:24 PM

INBRIEF

HM GREETINGS
TO DOMINICA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Luis Abinader of the Dominican Republic, on his country’s Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Abinader in leading his country’s people to achieve further stability and progress.

HM GREETINGS TO
LEBANON PRESIDENT



General Joseph Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, received at the Republican Palace in Beirut on Wednesday Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Aoun, along with His Majesty’s best wishes of good health and well-being to the President. Sayyid Badr also conveyed His Majesty’s wishes of progress and welfare for the Lebanese people, and the Omani-Lebanese relations further growth. On his turn, the Lebanese President asked the minister to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people. He wished the relations between Oman and Lebanon further progress and prosperity.

FOREIGN MINISTRY’S
SERVICES ON APP

The Foreign Ministry on Wednesday launched an e-services portal and a smartphone application with the aim of integrating technology into diplomatic and consular functions.

The step will also enhance digital interaction, facilitate access to consular services and provide an interactive means that enables citizens, residents and visitors to communicate immediately with Omani embassies at any time and place.

Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, the chief guest at the launch ceremony, said that the digitisation of the services reflects the ministry’s commitment to innovation and modernisation and means of harnessing modern technology to develop performance.

DETAILS ON P3

His Majesty
exchanges
Ramadhan
greetings



MUSCAT: On the advent of the holy month of Ramadhan, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has exchanged cables of greetings on this blessed occasion with leaders of Arab and Islamic countries.

In the cables, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt greetings and sincere sentiments, praying to Allah the Almighty to shower His

blessings on all Muslims around the world during this holy month, in which good deeds are accepted, rewards are multiplied, goodness and success prevail.

In their cables, the leaders expressed their greetings to His Majesty, praying to Allah the Almighty to accept from His Majesty and the people of his country the good deeds in this blessed month, at a time they enjoy good health, well-being and prosperity. They appealed to the Almighty for the return of the holy month of Ramadhan for many years to come with blessings and bounties. — ONA

Three digital platforms to
improve government work

HUGE RESPONSE TO ‘TOGETHER WE PROGRESS’ FORUM

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 26

‘TOGETHER We Progress’ Forum in its third edition kicked off on Wednesday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The 2-day conference, organised by the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, was opened under the auspices of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

This forum aligns with the government’s efforts to enhance effective communication with the community by discussing current challenges, keeping up with future aspirations, and engaging citizens in the process of national development and progress. The event reflects the government’s commitment to providing a platform for constructive citizen insights to support development policies and programmes while reinforcing transparency in clarifying the government’s directions and priorities across various stages.

On this occasion, HH Sayyid Theyazin launched three national electronic platforms aimed at enhancing the quality of government services and facilitating access to them. These include the National System for Planning, Evaluation and Performance Monitoring, the Unified National Portal for Electronic Services, and the National Platform for Suggestions, Complaints and Reports.

These unified platforms include an electronic platform dedicated to receiving



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, launching the electronic services on Wednesday.

complaints and suggestions in government institutions to improve government services and enhance beneficiary satisfaction, a national digital system for planning, evaluation and performance monitoring of strategic targets and programmes, to ensure annual plans are carried out in line with Oman Vision 2040.

DIVERSIFICATION

Over the two-day forum, two panel discussions will be held under the theme of economy and development, addressing the key features of the upcoming five-year plan, economic diversification efforts and investment’s role in national economic growth. Additionally, five interactive dialogue sessions will cover topics such as

governorate development and its role in economic growth, the future of professions and jobs, the pension system, culture, sports and youth, as well as the future of economic diversification sectors.

Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, emphasised that the ‘Together We Progress’ forum aims to strengthen community partnerships through direct dialogue between the government and society, in line with the Royal vision of His Majesty the Sultan, which highlights the importance of listening to public opinion and aspirations across various fields while solidifying the principle of societal participation in achieving comprehensive national development. TURN TO P4

Education ministry to recruit 4,000 teachers next academic year

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 26

The Ministry of Education (MoE) will recruit 4,000 teachers during the next academic year (2025/2026), most of them will be Omanis, bringing the number of Omani teachers appointed during the Tenth Five-Year Plan to more than 19,000.

This was stated by Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, when she was hosted

by Majlis Ash’shura on Wednesday, during the seventh regular session of the second session of the tenth term. The minister in her statement focused on four main topics: school education policies, quality of school education, human resources, training and qualification, and private school education in the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr Madeeha stressed that the educational process in the Sultanate of Oman is proceeding on the path of development and achieving



Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, hosted by Majlis Ash’shura on Wednesday.

the desired quality, thanks to the government support and the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The minister’s statement focused on school education during the Tenth Five-Year Plan, and evaluating its performance until the middle of the plan, school education in light of the School Education Law between reality and challenges and post-basic education paths and their compatibility with the needs of the

labour market.

It also included evaluation of studies of educational curricula and their impact on improving school curricula and their suitability to global educational and educational variables, e-learning and educational platforms and what the ministry provides in this regard to students and teachers and the ministry’s plan for digital transformation and the use of artificial intelligence.

TURN TO P4



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BASIC EMERGENCY MEDICAL SCIENCES COURSE CONCLUDES

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority celebrated on Wednesday the graduation of the fourth batch of the Basic Emergency Medical Sciences Course, under the auspices of Eng Odai bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of the Medical City for Military and Security Services.

Throughout the course, the graduates participated in the Basic Emergency Medicine Programme, which spanned two semesters, each lasting 16 weeks. Additionally, they completed 8 weeks of practical training in ambulance centres, following the course's objectives and requirements.

The curriculum included English language courses, preparation for the IELTS test, anatomy and medical terminology relevant to pre-hospital emergency services. — ONA

Oman, Lebanon review bilateral cooperation

SAYYID Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Wednesday met with Nawaf Salam, Prime Minister of Lebanon. The meeting took place within the framework of the Foreign Minister's official visit to Lebanon. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral cooperation in various fields. They also explored means of enhancing bilateral relations and coordination in matters of mutual interest.

The two sides underscored the importance of joint action to support stability and development.

Meanwhile, Sayyid Badr held a meeting on Wednesday with Youssef Raji, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants in the Lebanese Republic.

The meeting took place upon the arrival of Sayyid Badr at Beirut International Airport, within the context of his official visit to Lebanon. They exchanged cordial conversations on the bilateral relations



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy with Nawaf Salam, PM of Lebanon, in Beirut on Wednesday — ONA

between the two countries and the means of promoting them in various fields.

The two sides underlined the importance of consultation and coordination in respect to regional and international developments of common concern.

Also, Sayyid Badr met with Nabih Berri, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, in the Lebanese capital Beirut, on Wednesday. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and ways to enhance parliamentary and legislative cooperation between the two brotherly countries. — ONA

Arabia Falcon Insurance العربية فالكون																																																																																																														
ANNUAL AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2024																																																																																																														
DIRECTORS' REPORT																																																																																																														
Dear Shareholders, On behalf of the Board of Directors of Arabia Falcon Insurance SAOG, I have the pleasure of presenting to you the financial results of the company for the year ending December 31, 2024. Business overview The macroeconomic outlook has improved driven by stable oil prices and improvement in government finances, accordingly, the insurance sector started to show improvement in 2024, aside from the weather events that took place in April 2024 and affected some companies in the market. The impact of the weather events on Arabia Falcon operation and profitability was very limited due to robust insurance arrangements. The insurance sector is expected to show approximately 6% average growth in the coming few years. However, the growth in claims continued as well in 2024, which caused technical losses for many Omani insurance companies. For the company, 2024 results showed a positive shift in the trend of high motor claims that started post covid toward more stabilized, controlled and sustainable level. During the year 2024, the insurance industry observed a decline in premiums compared to the previous year 2023. The total premium underwritten by the insurance companies was down by 6%, to RO 534 million in 2024 against RO 569 million in 2023 (source: Financial Services Authority portal). Income and Technical Results The international financial reporting standard IFRS17 replaced IFRS4 for from financial year 2023. All the numbers in the financial statements are presented based on IFRS 17. a. Gross written Premium increased by 23% from RO 24.3 million in 2023 to RO 29.9 million in 2024. b. Net insurance service results inclusive of net insurance finance expense increased by 158% from RO 614K loss in 2023 to 363K profit in 2024.																																																																																																														
c. Investment income increased by 3% from RO 2.121 million in 2023 to RO 2.179 million in 2024 primarily due to increase in the investments incorporate and Oman Government bonds and the improvement in interest income from bank deposits. d. The net profit for the year was RO 1,585K compared with RO 742K in the previous year, an increase of 114% due to the improvement in technical results. e. The shareholder's Equity was RO 22.211 million on December 31, 2024, compared with RO 19.967 million on December 31, 2023. Outlook for 2025 Overall, this year is expected to be challenging in terms of the increase in reported Motor claims. During the past few years, management has taken necessary measures to tackle the increase in claims and has been reviewing the pricing to bring the claim ratio to acceptable levels. Property and casualty are expected to continue steady growth and profitability. Life is expected to continue growing at high rate following the introduction of the unified life policy in the middle of 2024. The Financial Service Authority (FSA) is expected to release the plan for compulsory medical insurance scheme and new medical insurance licensing requirements during this year or by next year. This is expected to have a significant growth impact on health insurance. The Management is committed to grow the insurance portfolio profitably and to keep control of the expenses with the main objective of delivering better technical profit at year-end. The company remains committed to its digital transformation strategy, through significant investments planned in the coming year to enhance market leadership, digitalization and service excellence Acknowledgements I take this opportunity to wish all the success to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik bin Taimur towards further development and prosperity of the country. We would like to thank the Financial Service Authority and all Regulatory bodies for their continuous guidance and support. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would also like to thank the management team and all the employees of the company. We sincerely thank our shareholders for their continued confidence and trust in the company and its board and for their support over the years. For & on behalf of the Board of Directors of Arabia Falcon Insurance SAOG H.H Sayyida Meyyan bint Shihab bin Tariq Al Said Chairperson of the Board																																																																																																														
Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2024 (Expressed in Omani Rial) <table><thead><tr><th></th><th>31 December 2024</th><th>31 December 2023</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>ASSETS</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Property and equipment</td><td>113,940</td><td>175,183</td></tr><tr><td>Right-of-use asset</td><td>-</td><td>19,602</td></tr><tr><td>Goodwill</td><td>555,883</td><td>555,883</td></tr><tr><td>Intangible assets</td><td>162,814</td><td>251,409</td></tr><tr><td>Investments at fair value through other comprehensive income</td><td>12,674,920</td><td>7,706,473</td></tr><tr><td>Investments at fair value through profit or loss</td><td>4,978,672</td><td>2,530,150</td></tr><tr><td>Deferred tax asset</td><td>230,825</td><td>210,585</td></tr><tr><td>Reinsurance contract assets</td><td>15,146,862</td><td>11,519,473</td></tr><tr><td>Insurance contract assets</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>Other receivables and prepayments</td><td>1,345,784</td><td>730,207</td></tr><tr><td>Term deposits</td><td>24,650,455</td><td>25,444,383</td></tr><tr><td>Cash and bank balances</td><td>4,172,024</td><td>6,097,825</td></tr><tr><td>Total assets</td><td>64,032,179</td><td>55,241,173</td></tr><tr><td>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>EQUITY</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Capital and reserves</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Share capital</td><td>10,330,166</td><td>10,330,166</td></tr><tr><td>Share premium</td><td>1,749,442</td><td>1,749,442</td></tr><tr><td>Legal reserve</td><td>1,569,511</td><td>1,410,978</td></tr><tr><td>Contingency reserve</td><td>6,659,867</td><td>6,305,987</td></tr><tr><td>Investment fair value reserve</td><td>505,969</td><td>387,439</td></tr><tr><td>Insurance finance reserve</td><td>276,118</td><td>(264,501)</td></tr><tr><td>Retained earnings</td><td>1,120,271</td><td>47,356</td></tr><tr><td>Total shareholders' equity</td><td>22,211,344</td><td>19,966,867</td></tr><tr><td>Liabilities</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Lease liabilities</td><td>-</td><td>26,328</td></tr><tr><td>Insurance contract liabilities</td><td>39,801,296</td><td>31,925,426</td></tr><tr><td>Reinsurance contract liabilities</td><td>514,334</td><td>2,275,627</td></tr><tr><td>End of service benefits</td><td>185,711</td><td>186,723</td></tr><tr><td>Other payables and accruals</td><td>795,870</td><td>643,876</td></tr><tr><td>Provision for taxation</td><td>523,624</td><td>216,326</td></tr><tr><td>Total liabilities</td><td>41,820,835</td><td>35,274,306</td></tr><tr><td>Total equity and liabilities</td><td>64,032,179</td><td>55,241,173</td></tr><tr><td>Net asset per share</td><td>0.215</td><td>0.193</td></tr></tbody></table>				31 December 2024	31 December 2023	ASSETS			Property and equipment	113,940	175,183	Right-of-use asset	-	19,602	Goodwill	555,883	555,883	Intangible assets	162,814	251,409	Investments at fair value through other comprehensive income	12,674,920	7,706,473	Investments at fair value through profit or loss	4,978,672	2,530,150	Deferred tax asset	230,825	210,585	Reinsurance contract assets	15,146,862	11,519,473	Insurance contract assets	-	-	Other receivables and prepayments	1,345,784	730,207	Term deposits	24,650,455	25,444,383	Cash and bank balances	4,172,024	6,097,825	Total assets	64,032,179	55,241,173	EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			EQUITY			Capital and reserves			Share capital	10,330,166	10,330,166	Share premium	1,749,442	1,749,442	Legal reserve	1,569,511	1,410,978	Contingency reserve	6,659,867	6,305,987	Investment fair value reserve	505,969	387,439	Insurance finance reserve	276,118	(264,501)	Retained earnings	1,120,271	47,356	Total shareholders' equity	22,211,344	19,966,867	Liabilities			Lease liabilities	-	26,328	Insurance contract liabilities	39,801,296	31,925,426	Reinsurance contract liabilities	514,334	2,275,627	End of service benefits	185,711	186,723	Other payables and accruals	795,870	643,876	Provision for taxation	523,624	216,326	Total liabilities	41,820,835	35,274,306	Total equity and liabilities	64,032,179	55,241,173	Net asset per share	0.215	0.193
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Oman Climate Week came at the right time, say experts



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, FEB 26

As Oman Climate Week came to a close, officials, experts, speakers and researchers reflected on the importance of the event, which sparked discussions on various aspects of climate change impact.

In an exclusive interview with the Observer, Dr Hani El Shaer, IUCN Regional Director for West Asia, emphasised the impact of climate change on biodiversity. He stated, “We are losing biodiversity, habitats and species. We are witnessing the shifting of ecosystems, so it is crucial for countries to come together to decide on necessary actions. We appreciate Oman's leadership in bringing together experts, institutions, countries and international organisations to discuss and agree on measures needed to address climate change.”

Dr El Shaer described Oman Climate Week as one of the most successful conferences

in the region. He highlighted the urgency of the climate crisis, citing examples from hurricanes to floods and the disappearance of species.

He mentioned that last year alone, the West Asia region experienced 70 droughts, prompting the IUCN to focus on restoration, reforestation, livelihood enhancement and resilience-building efforts in collaboration with governments, NGOs and the business sector. Dr El Shaer emphasised the need for transformative action from countries and individuals to address the impacts of climate change.

He explained that Oman is taking steps towards large-scale actions such as restoration, reforestation and combating coral bleaching. The country is also collaborating with the IUCN on initiatives like the Green List, aimed at protecting biodiversity effectively. Dr El Shaer expressed optimism that Oman could have sites declared on the Green

List in the near future and highlighted efforts to protect other species through the Red List. Dr Earl Goetheer, a chemical engineer from the Netherlands, spoke at Oman Climate Week on carbon capture.

Reflecting on his experience, he praised the students of Oman for their forward-thinking approach to solving future problems.

Hannah Woodley from the British Embassy commended the event for its diverse panels covering topics such as biodiversity, climate resilience and climate finance. Ruba Abdelqader Al Zubi from the UK FCDO Levant Region Climate Energy & Environment Lead also spoke at the event, praising Oman's potential to lead in climate action and highlighting the importance of resilience-building and accessible funding for vulnerable countries in the Middle East and North Africa region against extreme weather conditions and climate impacts.

SHORTTAKES



The session was led by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy and Pengiran Norhashimah binti Pengiran Mohd Hassan

Oman and Brunei hold consultations on culture and investment

MUSCAT: The 23rd consultations session between the Sultanate of Oman and Brunei Darussalam was held at the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday.

The Omani side was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the Brunei side was headed by Pengiran Norhashimah binti Pengiran Mohd Hassan, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The session reviewed the bilateral relations in the economic, cultural and investment cooperation areas.

They also exchanged views on a set of regional and international issues of common interest. The session was attended by Erma bint Said al Kathiriyah, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Brunei Darussalam, Noralizan Abdul Momin, Brunei's Ambassador to Oman, Ambassador Shaikh Abdulaziz Mohammed al Hosni, Head of the Asia and Pacific Department, and several officials from both sides.

RAO OPENS THREE BORDER GUARDS BRIGADE CAMPS



The move comes as part of the plans for continuous modernisation and development laid down by the Sultan's Armed Forces. — ONA

MUSCAT: *The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) celebrated the opening of Saa, Ain Al Hilwa and Al Safa camps of RAO's Border Guards Brigade, on Wednesday.*

The inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence, in the presence of Major General Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of RAO and a number of senior officers.

The move comes as part of the plans for continuous modernisation and development laid down by the Sultan's Armed Forces and other units of the Ministry of Defence.

Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence, unveiled the memorial plaques for each of the three camps following which he and the attendees listened to a briefing on the facilities and installations of the camps and the national roles and tasks they undertake. Then the chief guest toured the camp facilities and their various installations and was briefed on the equipment and supplies at the camps. — ONA



SAYYID
SHIHAB
RECEIVES
SAUDI
AMBASSADOR

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Saïd, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Wednesday Ibrahim Saad Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman. The meeting reviewed the distinguished relations between the two countries and discussed some topics of common concern. — ONA



App, portal launched for better consular services

BALOEEs AL ORAIMI

MUSCAT, FEB 26

THE Foreign Ministry on Wednesday launched a portal and a smartphone app for Omanis abroad under the auspices of Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

Al Muselhi said this platform reflects the government's efforts in harnessing technology to serve citizens in line with the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. He explained that the new platform will facilitate consular procedures and provide quick access to the services needed by citizens abroad.

Khalid bin Ghulam Hussain al Zadjali, FM's Head of the Digital Transformation Office, explained that this step represents a qualitative leap in consular and diplomatic services, as it aims to achieve greater operational efficiency and reduce reliance on paper in line with Oman Vision 2040. He pointed out that the portal and the app are designed as per latest cybersecurity standards.

The app allows citizens to communicate directly with Oman's embassies around the world, making it easier for them to obtain information or consular assistance when needed. It also helps citizens to register their data online when travelling, making it easier for the relevant authorities to follow up on them and provide assistance in case of emergency.



Khalid al Muselhi launches the app and the portal for citizens in Muscat on Wednesday

The launch of the new application reflects the ministry's strategy to modernise consular services and make them more efficient. By providing a unified digital platform, Omanis abroad can now complete their transactions easily.

The launch of the foreign ministry's e-services portal and smartphone application is a significant step in the Sultanate of Oman's digital transformation

journey and reflects the Omani government's keenness to adopt the latest technologies to ensure the comfort and safety of citizens. This application is expected to contribute to enhancing confidence in consular services and make the experience of Omani citizens abroad smoother and safer, in line with Oman's ambitious vision for digital transformation and achieving an integrated e-government.

Humpback whale found dead in Al Wusta



The whale is a rare and endangered whale on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List and is one of 20 species of whales residing in Oman.

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority (EA) in the Al Wusta Governorate is dealing with the death of an Arabian Sea humpback whale off the coast of Al Jazir found on Monday.

EA in cooperation with the relevant authorities is dealing directly with the whale's death in a scientific manner, including the methods to identify the animal and the causes of its death.

EA took necessary measurements and data for the whale and samples, and sought the assistance of the Future Seas Company in implementing the procedures smoothly, including burying the whale in a suitable



location.

The Arabian Sea humpback whale is a rare and endangered whale on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List and is one of 20 species of whales residing in the seas of the Sultanate of Oman, as proven by research studies through satellite tracking.



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العرض ساري من تاريخ ١٦ فبراير ٢٠٢٠ إلى ١ مارس ٢٠٢٠
موقع قف نيسكو هائل مبارك
المدينة الأولى الكبير، المنطقة الممتدة الجبل خلدان
قاع الفساتل الجبل الجنوبية، ريف القاهرة بركة، محمد
صالح بك بون



9.485 OMR
ججاج بربنا رابكا ١٠ x ١.1 كجم
Pena Branca Chicken 10x1.1kg



0.325 OMR
برتقال نابض مصر رابكلو
Orange Navel Egypt Per Kg



0.445 OMR
برتقال مصر رابكلو
Mandarin Egypt Per Kg



1.990 OMR
جبنة كريمه المرصعة ٢ x ٥٠٠ جم
Almarai Spreadable Cream Cheese 2x500Gm



1.190 OMR
جبنة هالاب مبشورة ٢ x ٢٠٠ جم
Halab Shredded Mozzarella 2x200Gm



0.690 OMR
بسكويت التيفاني ١٠ x ١٠٠ جم
Tiffany Tea Biscuit 10x100gm



1.490 OMR
شراب شرائح اناناس ديل مونت
٣ x ٤٣٥ جم
Del Monte Pineapple Slice Syrup 3x435gm



18.900 OMR
ارز بسمتي المدينة
طويل جدا ٣٥ كجم
Al Madinah Extra Long Basmati Rice 35Kg



3.990 OMR
كاجو سادة رابكلو
Cashew Nut Plain W320 Per Kg



1.890 OMR
مسحوق غسيل
بونكس المونوكس
Bonux Washing Powder 5Kg



3.990 OMR
مكسرات مشكولة رابكلو
Mixed Nuts Roasted Per Kg



4.450 OMR
عطر جاكوار كلاسيك بلاك ١٠٠ مل
Jaguar Classic Black EDT 100ml



1.890 OMR
مسحوق غسيل
بونكس المونوكس
Bonux Washing Powder 5Kg



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3.990 OMR
مكسرات مشكولة رابكلو
Mixed Nuts Roasted Per Kg

OMAN



Khalid Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'Shura, at the session on Wednesday

MOE TO RECRUIT 4,000 TEACHERS NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR

FROM PAGE 1

The statement included outputs of general education in light of the evaluation of the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority and Quality Assurance of Education, programmes for developing educational supervision and evaluation centres, plans for developing special education services provided to people with disabilities and autistic children and developing services accompanying education such as student transportation, printing school books and student activities.

The statement also covered Omanisation plans in the Ministry of Education according to specialisations and future expectations, and educational rehabilitation programmes in Oman and their compatibility with future needs and procedures for appointing expatriate teachers.

The most important topics discussed by members of Majlis Ash'Shura included increase in the number of evening schools. The members felt that this affects the quality of school education, and increases the burden on teachers with an increase in number of classes, which in turn affects the quality of education.

They laid emphasis on the importance of developing educational curricula to keep pace with rapid developments and developing the infrastructure to suit modern educational technologies.

GROWTH RATE

She added that the Ministry of Education was able (during the first four years of the Tenth Five-Year Plan) to appoint 15,000 Omani male and female teachers, compared to 6,800 male and female teachers who were appointed in the Ninth Five-Year Plan, noting that it hopes to appoint 4,000 teachers, most of whom are Omanis, during the next academic year 2025/2026.

TOTAL BUDGET

She said that the government has allocated a total budget of RO 27.4 million for the digital transformation project as a national priority to develop the digital education and artificial intelligence system, by benefiting from technical programmes and applications in curricula, teaching strategies, administrative and educational systems, developing digital infrastructure in government schools, and employing artificial intelligence in the teaching and learning process.

The session was attended by Khalid Hilal Al Maawali, Chairman of the Shura Council.

Three digital platforms to improve government work



FROM PAGE 1

He noted that the previous two editions of the forum had achieved significant success in this regard.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

He further pointed out that the selection process for the current edition's topics witnessed extensive citizen engagement, with over 19,000 citizens participating in the voting process. The economy and development theme received the highest votes, with more than 12,000 votes. Citizens were also given the opportunity to propose additional topics beyond the preset options, with the pension system emerging as the most requested topic, garnering over 12,000 votes.

REMARKABLE GROWTH

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, stated during the first panel discussion that Oman's economy has witnessed remarkable growth and expansion, driven by non-oil activities, with expectations of continued growth in various sectors based on national programme outcomes.

He highlighted that the next phase will focus on the green economy and net-zero emissions, supported by financial policies that enhance economic performance and improve banking credit indicators, facilitating borrowing to achieve developmental goals. He also noted that the Tenth Five-Year Plan has set a growth target of 3.5 per cent given the prevailing economic conditions, emphasising the success of the financial balance programme in restoring confidence in Oman's credit rating and attracting foreign direct investments.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, announced that Oman has launched its first scientific rocket last year, with a government plan to launch five more rockets this year. He also pointed to the significant impact of artificial intelligence, which is expected to be 5 to 6

times stronger in the coming years, stressing the importance of keeping pace with this technological evolution.

DIGITAL ECONOMY

He revealed that the digital economy currently contributes 2 per cent to GDP, with a goal to increase it to 10 per cent by 2040. Additionally, Oman has designed electronic chips for the first time, and an agreement has been signed to establish a chip design laboratory. More than 2,000 new jobs were created in 2024 despite challenges, with expectations of even better results in the future. He confirmed that certain jobs occupied by expatriates will be phased out annually, and the bidding process for the first digital city, an ambitious project set up on a designated land in Muscat, has been launched.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, stated that oil prices are volatile and unpredictable but assured that the ministry maintains production capacity in the oil and gas sector regardless of price fluctuations. He highlighted that operational costs remain between \$9 and \$10 per barrel, while annual production costs range between \$23 and \$25 per barrel, ensuring the sector's sustainability even if prices drop below \$60.

He also directed investors towards alternative energy sources such as electricity and new hydrogen energy, which will mark a significant transformation. He revealed that 32 per cent of Oman's current electricity consumption comes from renewable energy sources. Additionally, he announced a strategy to open vast areas for mining investments, starting with 12 concession zones in collaboration with Oman Investment Authority and Oman Minerals, to identify viable extraction sites.

Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, stated that Sultan Haitham City is expected to accommodate 500 Omani families by the end of 2026 and 2027. He also revealed that the Council of Ministers has approved the implementation of the Comprehensive

Rehabilitation Complex, which will cater to over five types of disabilities with an estimated budget of RO 7 million. He noted that Omanis make up the majority of project managers in Sultan Haitham City, and a similar project is planned for Dhofar Governorate. Additionally, the Council of Ministers has approved a national programme for capacity-building in urban planning, with 150 young Omanis receiving training in this field.

INVESTMENT FUNDS

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), emphasised that most investment funds focus on asset growth rather than paying annual dividends, but Oman is an exception, having contributed RO 6.8 billion to the state budget since 2016. He noted that interest in investing in Oman is increasing, with expectations of even better results over the next 4-5 years. The authority has created over 800 jobs last year, bringing total employment to 1,200, with Omanisation rates reaching 77 per cent in government companies and 94 per cent within the investment authority.

He clarified that restructuring companies does not lead to job losses but rather to the reallocation of human resources, with 90 per cent of affected employees being reassigned to other positions. He also stressed that the Future Oman Fund will not be used to bail out under-performing companies but will serve as a financial safeguard for future challenges.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, spoke about the launch of the Oman exports initiative as a comprehensive centre targeting international markets. He noted the rise in foreign direct investment, highlighting Oman's success in attracting international investors. He also confirmed the establishment of the Unified Promotional Identity Office for Oman and mentioned that a list of activities restricted to foreign investors has been compiled and reviewed by relevant authorities.

Omani students participate in major Nasa discovery

KABEER YOUSUF @kabiyousef

A group of students from Oman has become the first Omani students to participate in Nasa's research through the International Astronomical Search Collaboration (IASC), leading to the discovery of a moving celestial object.

As many as 26 students and 4 staff members of Ahmad bin Majid International School (ABM), collaborated in two research campaigns from November 2024 through February 2025, working in dedicated boys' and girls' teams, making Oman's scientific community proud.

Speaking to the Observer, Wejdan al Bourai, a student leader, said, "I felt proud to teach others about the project, it was a great experience." Supported by school educator



As many as 26 students and 4 staff members of Ahmad bin Majid International School (ABM), collaborated in two research campaigns.



facilitators, the students worked together to examine time-lapse sky images provided by IASC, leading to the successful identification of the celestial object — a discovery officially recognised by Nasa.

"Participating in this project has been an unforgettable journey.

I've gained valuable skills in asteroid detection, teamwork and perseverance. This experience has shown me the power of collaboration in making real scientific contributions," said Ali al Abdawani.

"This achievement is a testament

to the power of teamwork and student leadership," said Waheeda Said, ABM Board Member and Project Lead. "Our students didn't just participate — they led, collaborated and problem-solved, demonstrating the kind of skills that define future scientists and innovators." Student leaders took on key roles within their teams, from data analysts to observation recorders, ensuring accuracy and driving the project forward throughout the campaigns. Their hard work paid off when they confirmed the presence of the moving object — an inspiring moment for Oman's science fraternity.

"This project taught us the importance of leadership, communication and patience," said one of the student leaders. "It wasn't just about finding an asteroid — it

was about working together and pushing each other to do our best." Facilitated through IASC, a global citizen science programme that enables participants to analyse real astronomical data, the campaign gave the students a rare opportunity to contribute directly to Nasa's research efforts. Each student involved received an official certificate from Nasa, recognising their role in the discovery.

"This is more than just a scientific breakthrough, it's a moment of pride for Oman," added Waheeda. "Our students have proven that with teamwork, dedication and leadership, they can reach for the stars — and beyond." The success of ABM's students not only marks a historic moment in Omani space research but also inspires future generations to explore, innovate and dream big.

SHORT TAKES



The event’s main objective was to emphasise the significance of sustainability and keeping coastal areas clean

UTAS STUDENTS
CLEAN MUSANNAH
BEACH

AL MUSANNAH: The College of Economics and Business Administration at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) — Al Musannah, in collaboration with be’ah, Oman Environmental Service Holding Company, conducted a beach cleaning activity at Al Musannah beach. The event aimed to promote environmental awareness and sustainability while encouraging students to participate actively in community services.

The Tourism and Hospitality students participated enthusiastically with the purpose of contributing to the cause of maintaining a clean coastal environment in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

The event’s main objective was to emphasise the significance of sustainability and keeping coastal areas clean while fostering environmental responsibility among students. By engaging in this initiative, participants gained first-hand knowledge of the impact of pollution on marine ecosystems and learned about effective waste management and disposal methods.

The event began at 8:30 AM. Students gathered with gloves, garbage bags and cleaning tools. They diligently collected plastic waste, discarded items and other debris from the shoreline, ensuring the beach remained clean. Faculty members actively participated alongside students. They offered proper waste segregation and disposal guidance.

Throughout the morning, students engaged in teamwork and hands-on learning which reinforced their understanding of sustainability and responsible tourism. The initiative contributed to environmental preservation and instilled a greater sense of social responsibility among students. They were informed about the long-term benefits of such activities and how they contribute to the nation’s broader sustainability goals.

The beach cleaning activity concluded successfully, leaving a lasting impact on both the students and the community.

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Economy
Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees In Omani Riyals	Last Date For Tender Submission
2025/3	Request for Proposal (RFP) for Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Secondment of Two Senior IT Experts	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	7/4/ 2025

First

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board can participate and collect the specifications and conditions of the tender from the following website: [www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om) The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

Second

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For Inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tender- ing system, please contact via e-mail and phone:

etenderhd@ita.gov.om
 + 96824402200

ISG student
shines in
olympiad



Jayantika Kishore
with Jayal Tharakan

MUSCAT: Indian School Al Ghubra’s Jayantika Kishore has secured Zonal Rank 1 in the International Zone, which includes 6 zones — International, India (North, East, South, West and Central) and overall Rank 28 in the prestigious International Foundation Entrepreneurship Olympiad held on November 17, 2024. In recognition of her exceptional achievement, Jayantika was honoured with several accolades, including the Zonal Topper Trophy, medal, badge and certificate for securing the first rank at the zonal level.



RO 38 MILLION
AL JUFAINAH DAM
IN AL AMERAT OPENS

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources on Wednesday celebrated the opening of Al Jufainah Protection Dam in the Wilayat of Al Amerat, Muscat Governorate. The dam, which costs more than RO 38 million to build, has a storage capacity of about 15.7 million cubic metres of water. The dike is 30 metres high and 2,287 metres long. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. — ONA

BEST TEACHER AWARD
WINNERS ANNOUNCED

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 26

THE Ministry of Education (MoE) announced the winners’ names of the Omani Teacher Educational Excellence Award. The award came as a continuation of the Ministry of Education’s efforts to enhance the status of teachers and appreciate their societal role, and a new addition to the ongoing national initiatives to highlight, encourage and develop the efforts of teachers.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and Chairman of the Award’s Supervisory Committee, delivered a speech on this occasion, in which he said: “We meet today to celebrate the people of giving, honour the makers of hope and appreciate the blessed efforts made to build the promising generations of tomorrow. The teacher was and still is the main pillar of the educational process and one of the most important pillars of the renaissance of our dear country. Teachers are the ones who plant the seeds of knowledge and water them with giving, so that the country may reap the fruits of a conscious, responsible generation, capable of building its future



AISHA
AL JARWANI



SALEH
AL KASBI



SULTAN
AL HABSI



IMAN
AL RAHBI

with will and confidence.” The award witnessed a great turnout in its second session, as the number of applicants reached 2,705.

Winners in the stage from (1-4) are Shamsa al Rasbi from Al Sharqiyah South; Badriya al Thuhli from Al Dakhiliyah Governorate; Aisha al Jarwani from Al Batinah North Governorate; Azza al Salti from Al Batinah

South Governorate and Moza al Fazari from Al Batinah North Governorate. In the stage from (5-8), ten teachers received the award: Sultan al Habsi from Al Sharqiyah North Governorate; Saif al Mahfoudhi from Al Batinah South Governorate; Adel al Ajmi from Al Batinah North Governorate; Abdullah al Mazrouei from Al Batinah North Governorate; Abdullah al Alawi from Al Batinah North Governorate; Subha al Ghaithi from Al Buraimi Governorate; Aida al Wahaibi from Muscat Governorate; Fatima al Yaarubi from Al Buraimi Governorate; Mona al Mukhaini from Al Sharqiyah South Governorate and Naima al Ghaithi from Al Buraimi Governorate. In the stage from (9-12), Mustafa al Yahyaei from Al Buraimi Governorate; Saleh al Kasbi from Al Sharqiyah South Governorate; Abdullah al Roshdi from Al Batinah North Governorate; Abdullah al Kaabi from Al Buraimi Governorate; Hamoud al Adawi from Al Dakhiliyah Governorate; Iman al Rahbi from Muscat Governorate; Badriya al Muqbali from Al Batinah North Governorate; Rahma al Azri from Al Dakhiliyah Governorate; Samia al Hadhrami from Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and Fatima al Alawi from Al Batinah North Governorate won awards.

Sultanate of Oman
The Supreme Judicial Council
Tender Announcement

The Supreme Judicial Council announces its desire to submit the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
03/2025	Rehabilitation of the Primary Court Building in Biddiyah	11/03/2025	08/04/2025	Second, Third	RO 39/100

Where you can buy the more detailed tender documents electronically via the link below website:
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders must submit a letter of commitment to the bid, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tenders Committee of the Supreme Judicial Council, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tenders Council and the latest updates to the electronic bidding system. Based on Circular No. (1/2024) issued by the General Secretariat of the Tender Board.

1- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

2- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@gtsb.gov.om

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Syria's interim President Ahmed al Sharaa meets with Jordan's King Abdullah and his son, Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah, in Amman, Jordan. — Reuters

JORDAN, SYRIA LEADERS AGREE TO BOLSTER SECURITY

AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah and Syria's interim President Ahmed al Sharaa agreed on Wednesday to work together to secure their common border against arms and drug trafficking, officials said. At a meeting with al Sharaa in Amman, the Jordanian monarch also condemned Israel's strikes late on Tuesday on southern Damascus and in southern Syria near the Jordan border, the latest in a series of Israeli attacks on Syrian military targets.

The leaders agreed that coordination was crucial for border security and for curbing arms and drug smuggling, a phenomenon that Jordan struggled to contain along its border during the rule of ousted president Bashar al Assad, the palace added. The monarch welcomed the outcome of a landmark national dialogue conference held at the presidential palace in Damascus on Tuesday, saying it was "an important step towards rebuilding Syria to attain the aspirations of the Syrian people." — Reuters



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen delivers a speech during the European Industry Summit 2025, in Antwerp. — AFP

EUROPE PLANS TO EASE SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING RULES

BRUSSELS: The European Commission plans to loosen its rules on corporate sustainability reporting and supply chain transparency, it said on Wednesday, in a bid to make Europe more competitive with the United States and China. The plans — or "Simplification Omnibus" — are part of a wider package of reforms aimed at helping make Europe's companies more competitive and they include incentives to encourage industry to decarbonise and measures to lower energy costs. European businesses may cheer after long complaining that tight regulations and bureaucracy hampered their ability to compete globally, but opponents of the new deregulation drive said it "guts corporate accountability".

"EU companies will benefit from streamlined rules," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a statement. "This will make life easier for our businesses while ensuring we stay firmly on course towards our decarbonisation goals. And more simplification is on the way." — Reuters

TRUMP FLOATS \$5 MILLION 'GOLD CARD' TO GAIN US CITIZENSHIP

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump floated the idea of replacing a visa programme for foreign investors with a so-called "gold card" that could be bought for \$5 million as a route to American citizenship. Trump said to reporters he will replace the "EB-5" immigrant investor visa programme, which allows foreign investors of large sums of money that create or preserve US jobs to become permanent residents, with a so-called "gold card." The EB-5 programme grants "green cards" to

foreigners promising to invest in US businesses.

"We are going to be selling a gold card," Trump said. "We are going to be putting a price on that card of about \$5 million," he added. "It's going to give you green card privileges plus its going to be a route to (American) citizenship and wealthy people would be coming into our country by buying this card," Trump said, adding that details about the scheme will come out in two weeks. Trump added it is possible Russian

oligarchs could qualify for the gold cards, when asked by a journalist if those people would be eligible. "Yeah, possibly. Hey. I know some Russian oligarchs that are very nice people," he said. The EB-5 Immigrant Investor Programme, administered by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, was created by Congress in 1990 to "stimulate the US economy through job creation and capital investment by foreign investors," according to the USCIS website. — Reuters

UKRAINE OUTLINES US MINERALS DEAL

UKRAINE said on Wednesday Washington would commit to supporting Kyiv's efforts to obtain security guarantees under a finalised minerals deal the two nations have wrangled over for two weeks, but the Americans offered no security pledges of their own. The deal is at the heart of Kyiv's push to win over Donald Trump's robust support as the US president strives to clinch a rapid end to the war with Russia that Ukraine's supporters fear could come at the expense of its national interests.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Wednesday that the success of an initial minerals agreement with the US will depend on President Donald Trump. Zelenskiy said to reporters that it was part of broader agreements with the US and could provide security guarantees to Ukraine to ensure a lasting and fair peace.

Trump said to reporters that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy wanted to come to Washington on Friday to sign a "very big deal". Denys Shmyhal, Ukraine's prime minister, said the government would authorise the agreed wording so it could be signed. He described it as a "preliminary" agreement. "After the Ukrainian president and the US president agree on security guarantees, agree on how we tie this preliminary agreement to security guarantees from the United States for our country, in the presence of (both) presidents, a representative



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy speaks with the media in a press conference, in Kyiv. — Reuters

The deal is at the heart of Kyiv's push to win over Donald Trump's robust support as the US president strives to clinch a rapid end to the war with Russia that Ukraine's supporters fear could come at the expense of its national interests.

of the Ukrainian government will sign this preliminary agreement," he said.

A copy of a draft agreement, dated February 25, was titled "Bilateral Agreement Establishing Terms and Conditions for a Reconstruction Investment Fund". It says: "The Government of the United States of America supports Ukraine's efforts to obtain security guarantees needed to establish lasting peace." A Ukrainian source said the document was the version the government in Kyiv was expected to agree on.

Shmyhal, outlining the agreement in televised comments, said Kyiv would contribute 50 per cent of "all proceeds received from the future monetisation of all relevant state-owned natural resource assets and relevant infrastructure".

The US-Ukraine minerals deal is part of a broader effort to end the war with Russia and will lay the groundwork for long-term cooperation between Kyiv and Washington, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Olha Stefanishyna said on Wednesday. — Reuters



WEST BANK BECOMING ' BATTLEFIELD ', SAYS UNRWA

GENEVA: The West Bank is facing an "alarming spillover" of the Gaza war, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said on Wednesday, with dozens killed since Israel expanded its operations there last month. "The West Bank is becoming a battlefield," Philippe Lazzarini warned on X, saying that "more than 50 people, including children, have been reported killed since the Israeli forces' operation started". "This must end."

Israel's military began a major raid against Palestinians in the West Bank's north a over a month ago, just after a truce went into effect in the Gaza Strip. Since the start of the war in Gaza, Israeli troops or settler attacks have killed at least 900 Palestinians in the West Bank. — AFP

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

Sudan plane crash kills 46 people



Forty-six people were killed when a Sudanese military transport plane crashed into a residential neighbourhood on the outskirts of Khartoum, the regional government said on Wednesday. The Antonov aircraft went down on Tuesday night near Wadi Seidna air base, one of the army's largest military hubs in Omdurman, northwest of the capital. The army said the plane crashed during takeoff, killing and injuring both military personnel and civilians. — AFP

RARE OUTAGE

Power restored after Chile's massive blackout



Chileans returned to a sense of normalcy after a state of emergency was lifted and authorities said power was restored to most homes following the country's worst blackout in well over a decade. The massive outage struck on Tuesday afternoon, leaving millions without power and causing transport chaos in the capital Santiago. Interior Minister Carolina Toha announced the end of the emergency on Wednesday morning, declaring, "Today we should have a normal day." — AFP

LANDMARK TRIAL

Bosnia Serb leader Dodik found guilty



Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik was found guilty for defying rulings made by an international envoy charged with overseeing the country's peace accords. "The court sentenced the accused Milorad Dodik to one year of imprisonment, as well as a security measure of banning him from performing the duties of the president of Republika Srpska for six years, from the date the verdict becomes final," the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina said. — AFP

Formulating a national strategy: Challenges & approaches

NASSER AL ABRI

In an era of rapid geopolitical shifts and evolving economic and security challenges, national strategy formulation is no longer a theoretical exercise but a fundamental necessity for ensuring stability, safeguarding interests, and strengthening a country’s global position. How is a national strategy formulated? What factors influence it? And are there ideal models that nations can follow?

A national strategy is a comprehensive framework adopted by a state to achieve its long-term national objectives. It is built on a combination of national values, interests, public policies, and available resources while accounting for potential threats and future challenges.

The process of national strategy formulation varies from country to country, depending on political priorities, economic capabilities, and cultural contexts. Resource-rich nations like the US, China, and Russia integrate hard, soft, and smart power into their strategic frameworks. Meanwhile, resource-limited states, such as some Arab, Latin American, and Scandinavian countries, emphasise diplomacy, alliances, and regional cooperation to bolster their influence and protect their interests.

Key stages in strategy formulation

The development of a national strategy follows several key stages, including:

- National Values: These represent the fundamental principles that shape the identity and direction of the state, including sovereignty, independence, national unity, and social justice.
- National Interests: These include critical

objectives such as national security, economic development, and sovereignty over natural resources.

3. Strategic Appraisal: This stage involves analysing internal and external environments to identify threats and opportunities using accurate data on national capabilities and potential risks.

4. National Policy: A broad framework that outlines how national interests will be achieved through various policy tools (economic, military, or diplomatic).

5. National Strategy: Defines the methods and means through which national objectives will be realised using available resources and prioritisation.

6. Risk Assessment: Evaluates the likelihood and impact of potential risks that may hinder strategic implementation and outlines contingency plans to mitigate them.

The Top-Down Approach in Strategic Planning

Many nations adopt the top-down approach in national strategy formulation, where the process begins at the highest levels of leadership. National values, interests, and policies are defined by senior decision-makers before being translated into sectoral and operational strategies at lower levels.

This approach offers several advantages:

- Ensures alignment between values, interests, and objectives.
- Provides a practical framework for strategic decision-making.
- Enhances adaptability to internal and external changes.

Despite its effectiveness, the top-down approach presents several challenges, such as:

- Senior planners may lack a comprehensive

Given the complexity of today’s geopolitical landscape—marked by economic globalisation, climate change, and regional conflicts—states must develop dynamic and long-term strategic plans that continuously assess risks and opportunities.

understanding of field realities, leading to impractical strategies.

- Excessive centralisation can stifle innovation and limit the ability of lower levels to adapt to changing conditions.
- The successful implementation of policies often depends on resource availability, particularly in defence and economic sectors.

Top-Down and Bottom-Up Approaches

To overcome these challenges, some nations integrate both top-down and bottom-up approaches in strategy formulation. In this hybrid model, senior leaders define broad objectives, while specialists at lower levels contribute to shaping the details based on ground realities.

Additionally, the scenario-based planning approach allows decision-makers to evaluate multiple well-researched options, leading to more flexible and effective policymaking.

The success of any national strategy depends on a clear vision, efficient resource management, and the ability to adapt to evolving global conditions. Given the complexity of today’s geopolitical landscape—marked by economic globalisation, climate change, and regional conflicts—states must develop dynamic and long-term strategic plans that continuously assess risks and opportunities.

Ultimately, formulating a national strategy is not merely a top-level directive but a collaborative process requiring the involvement of all national institutions, strategic foresight, and the agility to respond to emerging threats. In the modern era, strategic planning is one of the most crucial tools of statecraft, helping nations navigate challenges and shape their futures with confidence.

Transforming education through communication

In the rapidly evolving educational landscape of Oman, the ability of teachers to advocate for their students effectively has never been more critical. Oman Vision 2040 places education at the heart of its national development strategy, emphasising innovation, equity, and inclusivity to cultivate a globally competitive knowledge-based society. Amidst these goals, one skill that stands out as essential for educators is assertiveness



SONIA UMAIR

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which mainly is a communication style that empowers teachers to address challenges, advocate for resources, and inspire positive change.

Assertiveness is often misunderstood as aggression but is the ability to express thoughts, needs, and rights clearly, honestly, and respectfully. In the

context of teaching, assertiveness is invaluable for articulating students’ educational needs to parents, administrators, and policymakers. It equips teachers with the tools to navigate the bureaucratic and systemic challenges that can impede progress, ensuring that their students’ needs are not only heard but met effectively. For Oman, assertiveness in teaching aligns seamlessly with the objectives of fostering equity, excellence, and innovation.

Teachers working in underserved areas often face unique challenges, including limited resources and large class sizes. Assertiveness becomes a vital skill for these educators, enabling them to advocate for equitable distribution of resources and the support needed to bridge these gaps.

Teachers who can confidently articulate their needs for professional development or advocate for specific classroom technologies help create an environment where students can thrive in a technology-driven world.

This proactive approach aligns with the vision’s goal of fostering a generation equipped with 21st-century skills.

Assertiveness also helps teachers model and instil the values of self-advocacy and critical thinking in their students. When teachers demonstrate assertive communication, they inspire students to express their needs respectfully and confidently, fostering a classroom culture of mutual respect and empowerment.

Closure of restaurants in Ramadhan



BADR AL ABRI

The writer focuses on reconciliation and understanding and is the author of The Jurisprudence of Extremism

Moreover, the reality of frequent travel and global economy necessitates a more pragmatic approach. Ramadhan should not hinder business operations, tourism, or investment growth. Facilitating essential services, including food and beverage outlets, is crucial for maintaining financial activity

Modern nation-states, especially in the Gulf region, have witnessed significant migration due to economic opportunities. Many expatriates, particularly from South Asia, follow other religions. Additionally, international tourism brings visitors who do not observe Ramadhan. Frequent travel further complicates the issue. Even local residents, including Muslims, may be exempt from fasting due to travel or physically demanding jobs, particularly during the scorching summer months.

In contemporary societies, restaurants and cafés are integral to daily life, far more than in the past. Every street, town, or even small village has numerous dining establishments, reflecting the evolving social landscape. Imposing traditional religious rulings on such a transformed reality raises practical challenges. The expectation that restaurants remain closed for an entire month disregards the demands of modern economies, which are closely linked to tourism, investment, and global commerce. Some countries have addressed this by permitting licensed restaurants to operate discreetly for those allowed to break their fast, including non-Muslims and travellers. Iran, for example, designates “travellers’ restaurants” during Ramadhan, ensuring that tourists and exempt individuals can access food without violating social norms. These establishments are carefully designed to respect the fasting community’s sensitivities.

Allowing specific restaurants to operate during the day is not a violation of Ramadhan’s sanctity, nor does it encourage breaking the fast. It is neither practical nor justifiable to compel large non-Muslim communities to observe fasting by restricting their

access to food, just as it would be unreasonable to impose their religious practices on Muslims. The Holy Quran affirms this principle: “Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds. There is no need for argument between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is the final return” (Ash-Shura: 15).

Moreover, the reality of frequent travel and global economy necessitates a more pragmatic approach. Ramadhan should not hinder business operations, tourism, or investment growth. Facilitating essential services, including food and beverage outlets, is crucial for maintaining financial activity.

This does not conflict with existing legal frameworks that penalise individuals who “publicly consume food or beverages in a manner that offends public decency during Ramadhan.” The solution lies in establishing designated dining areas tailored for those permitted to eat—whether due to travel, health conditions, or religious differences. Such spaces could be located in shopping malls, tourist areas, hotels catering to travellers, or roadside facilities designed for long-distance commuters.

Ramadhan, a month of spirituality and devotion, need not obstruct economic progress. The debate over restaurant operations should not be confined to traditional legal arguments rooted in historical contexts but should instead align with the contemporary realities of diverse societies. A balanced approach ensures both the sanctity of Ramadhan and fairness for all members of society.

Translated by Badr al Dhafri
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OPINION

Reflections from Oman Climate Week



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AS I navigated the discussions at Oman Climate Week, one theme kept surfacing in my mind. The urgency of climate action is undeniable, yet there remains a critical gap in how we finance the preservation of biodiversity. Mechanisms such as blended finance, biodiversity credits and impact investment funds remain underutilised due to a lack of regulatory clarity, limited awareness among investors and insufficient incentives for private sector participation.

Addressing these barriers requires policy reforms that provide clear guidelines for biodiversity finance, increased public-private partnerships and targeted financial incentives to attract investment in conservation. Without meaningful investment, even the most well-intentioned strategies risk fading into mere rhetoric.

A pivotal moment for me was the round-table discussion with the International Finance Corporation. The conversation revealed a deep disconnect between what major lenders require for financing large-scale projects and how regulatory frameworks in Oman currently operate. Financial institutions worldwide are shifting towards nature-positive investments, with models like

the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) providing frameworks for integrating biodiversity into decision-making. Yet, within our own systems, biodiversity is often seen as an afterthought rather than a priority. For example, major infrastructure projects in Oman have moved forward without comprehensive biodiversity impact assessments, highlighting the need for stronger regulatory alignment with international sustainability financing standards. If projects do not align with lender expectations, funding opportunities will continue to be limited. This raises an important question. How do we bridge this gap in a way that ensures financial viability while protecting our natural environment.

Another discussion that resonated with me focused on the role of women in climate leadership. At the Women in Climate Dinners and the Women in Future Energies sessions, I was reminded of the undeniable impact that women have on building resilience in their communities. Studies show that when women are in leadership, communities are 20 to 30 per cent more resilient to climate disasters. They prioritise long-term adaptation strategies, ensuring that responses to climate challenges are proactive rather than reactive.

Studies show that when women are in leadership, communities are 20 to 30 per cent more resilient to climate disasters. They prioritise long-term adaptation strategies, ensuring that responses to climate challenges are proactive rather than reactive

The economic impact is just as compelling where women could have added 28 trillion dollars to the global GDP by 2025 if they were engaged right. Women reinvest 90 per cent of their income back into their families and communities, compared to 30 to 40 per cent by men. This reinforces a powerful reality. Investing in women is investing in sustainable, lasting change.

As I reflect on Oman Climate Week, it becomes clear that its true impact lies beyond the discussions. Moving forward, aligning biodiversity finance with national economic strategies, fostering regulatory frameworks that attract sustainable investment and ensuring women's leadership in climate action receive meaningful support will be essential.

Policymakers, financial institutions and industry leaders have an opportunity to shape a future where economic growth and environmental stewardship go hand in hand. The urgency is clear. The solutions are within reach. What remains is the determination to act decisively, ensuring that biodiversity finance, inclusivity and long-term sustainability are not just topics of discussion but guiding principles in the choices we make every day.

MERZ TO BOOST
GERMAN DEFENCE
SPENDING

SEBASTIEN ASH

Germany's next leader, conservative Friedrich Merz, has raised the alarm over European defence but the clock is ticking for him to muster the funds needed to refurbish the armed forces.

Only hours after his party's election won on Sunday, Merz said his "absolute priority" would be to strengthen European security as US President Donald Trump had shown indifference to the continent's fate. The chancellor-in-waiting will however have to find a way to work within Germany's budgetary straitjacket — which limits new borrowing to 0.35 per cent of GDP — or find a way to escape it.

The make-up of the incoming parliament makes it challenging to change the constitutional debt brake. Far-right and far-left parties critical of extra defence spending will have enough seats to block any amendment to Germany's Basic Law.

Merz has however suggested he is open to an unusual manoeuvre: recalling the current Bundestag before the new one is formed to swiftly approve new money. According to Bloomberg News, he is in discussions to top up Germany's special defence fund with another 200 billion euros (\$210 billion). Racing the changes through before MPs take their seats on March 25 "will be a challenge, but should be doable if Merz really pushes for it", said Berenberg Bank analyst Holger Schmieding.

Trump's direct overtures to Russian President Vladimir Putin to end to the war in Ukraine have blindsided European capitals and left them feeling dangerously exposed. An agitated Merz said on Sunday that "independence from the USA" in defence matters was a strategic necessity and that Germany, long reluctant to throw its weight around, would have to do its part.

A special fund could compensate for "decades of underfunding", the head of the IW Koeln economic institute Michael Huether said to the Rheinische Post daily.

Estimates by defence experts put the extra funding requirement at around 200 billion euros, Huether said.

But getting the necessary two-thirds majority in the new Bundestag was "hardly conceivable" in the face of potential opposition from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) and far-left Die Linke, he said.

"An exception to the debt brake is practically unavoidable to ensure the Bundeswehr is adequately equipped," Defence Minister Boris Pistorius, a senior figure in the Social Democrats, said Bild newspaper.— AFP

Choose your higher
education courses wisely

WE always advise our students to make the most of this opportunity by making informed choices prior to and during their higher studies that rely on facts and research, rather than hearsay and unfiltered sources," Dr Rawya al Busaidy once told me in an interview during which we spoke about education, scholarships, and seats.

From my perspective, this useful advice aligned with the philosophy behind the national Your Decision, Your Future (YDYF) Campaign. I first learned about this wonderful government initiative in 2009.

The YDYF Campaign was specifically designed to steer Omani school students in grades 10 to 12 and years 11 to 13 towards making well-informed higher education and career choices based on realistic expectations and best suited to their interests, capabilities and career aspirations. In 2009, it aimed to achieve its objectives through various special projects and initiatives, including targeted school and event visits, meetings with career counsellors, tailored presentations, and the broader reach of media.

Unfortunately, the campaign stopped running for several years at some point, partly because most civil servants had to spend a lot of time on this initiative on top of their regular workload. Besides, back then, most, if not all, Omani students already had access to a career counsellor at school who assisted them in making informed career choices and/or applying to higher education institutions, while they also had access to the informative Daleel al Talib (student guide) published by the efficient Higher Education Admissions Centre (HEAC). When I started working for the Directorate-General of Scholarships in 2012, and based on all the repetitive questions we used to receive from students and their advisors, I noticed gaps



There is and always will be a need to support Omani students in making informed higher education choices



BREGJE VAN
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in the effectiveness of information. Although students, their counsellors and parents had access to growing amounts of important data, it seemed they needed more support to make sense of all what they were reading and hearing.

To provide some context: It is important to remember that scholarship regulations held, and probably still hold, students accountable for their choices, while sometimes scholarship recipients did find themselves in programmes that turned out to be not well-suited to their talents and interests. Inspired by the philosophy behind the YDYF Campaign and the fact that it is not easy for students to choose what they want to study and wisely apply for undergraduate scholarships, I requested the ministry for approval to produce an externally sponsored, not-for-profit initiative in 2015. The idea was to circulate contextualised and comprehensive content to prospective undergraduate scholarship applicants by creating a one-stop, easy-to-read and trustworthy resource in English and Arabic.

Sponsored by localised content

provided by higher education institutions abroad and in Oman, YDYF Magazine consisted of a body of text and visuals that broke down complex education and scholarship jargon; and expert views into simple and effective sentences. We ended up publishing the magazine for five consecutive years and received positive feedback, especially from parents. In 2019, I even tried hard to turn the popular publication into a digital website application, but the pandemic led to a failure.

I am writing about these past initiatives because there is and always will be a need to support Omani students in making informed higher education choices. Today, Khuta (www.khuta.om) is an example of an Oman entity that is doing a great job offering career guidance to school students. I hope students are using Khuta's services and resources because, as part of their overall and responsible higher education decision-making process, school students should always make sure they base their choices on verified facts sourced from trustworthy media.

The digital conflict and empowering awareness



DR MUAMAR BIN ALI AL TOBI

The writer is Omani academic and researcher

In today’s rapidly evolving digital transformation, digital literacy and its active implementation have become crucial to counter the risks posed by digital influences on young people, psychologically, mentally, and morally. Modern societies face unprecedented challenges due to the widespread use of modern video games, digital platforms, and films that carry messages and content potentially detrimental to youth minds, even steering them towards terrorist and criminal organisations. A major risk lies in the impact of violent digital content that affects behaviour, emotions, and cognitive abilities. This situation calls for a scientifically and philosophically informed digital educational strategy aimed at empowering youth to understand and confront this reality.

Digital influence comes from many sources and manifests negatively both individually and collectively. A recent international study published on The Australian website found a link between playing video games, especially those featuring “loot boxes”, and increased risks of gambling as well as related mental health issues. Researchers noted that purchasing these loot boxes can trigger anxiety, stress, depression, and impulsivity, factors common to other behavioural addictions, warning that children involved in buying them may later be prone to gambling problems. Similarly, a 2023 report by CyberSafeKids revealed that 65 per cent of Irish children aged 8 to 12 experienced external contact from strangers online,

highlighting a lack of awareness and parental supervision regarding online safety. This deficiency raises the likelihood of children encountering harmful content or exploitation by dangerous groups.

Digital platforms and video games have also become easily exploitable tools for terrorist and criminal organisations to recruit and indoctrinate young minds. These groups use virtual spaces to interact with youth, influencing their ideas and behaviours through targeted content or direct interactions, thus facilitating the recruitment of minors. Such phenomena require both societal awareness and effective tools to monitor and combat them.

Furthermore, many young people, often referred to as the digital generation, rely on platforms like TikTok and YouTube as primary sources of information. This reliance exposes them to media misinformation and erroneous intellectual guidance. In this context, Jean Baudrillard’s notion of “virtual reality” becomes apparent, as the boundaries between truth and illusion blur, leaving youth vulnerable to both intentional and unintentional manipulation.

Smart algorithms on these platforms can promote extremist content; a study by Egypt’s Suez Canal University revealed that certain games and digital platforms broadcast ideas conflicting with societal and religious values. Additionally, research reported by Saudi’s Al-Mowaten electronic newspaper found that about 30 per cent of children playing online games experience bullying, which increases

Digital platforms and video games have also become easily exploitable tools for terrorist and criminal organisations to recruit and indoctrinate young minds

social isolation and anxiety, weakening social bonds and making individuals more susceptible to external influences, including recruitment by criminal groups.

Beyond the risks associated with video games, violent films or those depicting acts of terrorism can also instil unethical behaviours in young minds. A study published in PubMed found that excessive exposure to violent content correlates with higher rates of depression and aggressive behaviour among teenagers. Moreover, some films are indirectly used by extremist and criminal groups by portraying “heroic” characters from their ranks to sway viewers ideologically, stimulate emotions, and redirect their thinking.

Many reports and studies indicate that terrorist groups recruit youth online, often using AI techniques to target those most addicted to digital platforms. In this context, the Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci’s idea on “cultural hegemony” intersect with the digital reality: the struggle to control collective consciousness is no longer limited to traditional tools but extends into virtual space, where narratives and beliefs are carefully crafted by specialised groups capable of infiltrating societies.

Only through a threefold alliance, governments enacting strict regulations on harmful digital practices, educational institutions incorporating critical digital literacy in curricula and families raising awareness and monitoring digital activities, can the digital realm be transformed from an ideological battleground into a positive space that enriches minds and benefits both individuals and society.

NO-SHOWS, AID CUTS MAR G20 MEET ON GLOBAL POVERTY

KOPANO GUMBI AND ANDY BRUCE

South Africa sought to salvage international talks on tackling global poverty on Wednesday as finance chiefs of several leading economies skipped a gathering of Group of 20 nations in Cape Town held against a backdrop of foreign aid cuts.

The two-day meeting comes after the Trump administration announced plans to gut its USAID arm and Britain slashed its aid budget by 40 per cent to divert funds towards defence spending.

Disputes over trade, the Ukraine war and how to tackle climate change have long made it hard for the G20 grouping to make serious progress on global challenges, but the latest no-shows risk further undermining its credibility.

After US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent confirmed he would not attend, finance ministers from Japan, India and Canada also pulled out. Others cut short their presence and the European Union’s top economic official chose to stay away.

“It is now more important than ever that the members of the G20 work together,” South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said in opening remarks appealing for multilateral cooperation.

“It is vital to ensuring that the rights and interests of the vulnerable are not trampled beneath the ambitions of the powerful.”

The high-profile absences further reduce chances of agreement on a meaningful communique at the end of the meeting. There also seemed little hope of major progress on issues that Ramaphosa as host wanted to target: scant climate finance from rich nations and reform of a financial system that penalises poor countries, as well as widening inequalities.

“The absence of key officials at the G20 finance meetings further underscores the diminishing commitment to global poverty reduction at a time when it’s needed most,” said Dirk Willem te Velde, Director of the International Economic Development Group at ODI Global, calling the aid cuts “devastating news”.

The grouping of the world’s 20 major economies was formed after the Asian financial crisis in 1999 to improve cooperation in addressing crises that spill across international borders.

G20 countries account for 85 per cent of global gross domestic product and 75 per cent of international trade. South Africa’s finance minister Enoch Godongwana said the host appreciated the “scheduling challenges” facing some delegations but added: “The G20 is a year-long process with numerous engagement opportunities.” Salvatore Nocerino, aid policy lead of Oxfam, said the non-attendances were particularly unfortunate given that the G20 was being hosted by an African country. “It is an opportunity to really address this distrust between the (global) North and South. So I think wasting that is also not smart,” he said. — Reuters

Building next generation of public institutions

PUBLIC institutions worldwide are in crisis. Trust in them is declining, and US President Donald Trump’s administration, working hand in glove with the world’s richest man, Elon Musk, view them as enemies that need to be dismantled. In the face of funding cuts and geopolitical fragmentation, multilateral organisations look weaker than ever.

The attacks by Trump and Musk, who boasted about “feeding” USAID “into the woodchipper” and preparing to abolish the Department of Education, may be ill-conceived and set to backfire. But they are reminding us that there is no good reason why public institutions have to be just as they were a half-century ago. Simply defending existing institutions looks ever less like an adequate response.

Few of humanity’s biggest challenges – from shaping artificial intelligence and addressing mental health to managing energy transitions and industrial policy – are likely to be handled well without effective institutions. But today’s ministries, agencies, commissions, public services and regulators often look ill-suited to meet these new needs.

So, what should the alternatives look like? Governments have always depended on institutions to do their work – to enforce laws, educate children, collect taxes, or provide security – and they have often invented new ones for new tasks, like reducing carbon dioxide emissions or fighting organised crime.

Amid the funding cuts and attacks, reformers must focus on creating better expressions of the public interest, making the most of new tools and technologies to improve efficiency, and restoring public trust.

But the options for designing institutions today are very different from a generation ago. Global businesses like Alphabet, ByteDance, Amazon, and Alibaba have pioneered radically new business models and tapped into



Governments have always depended on institutions to do their work.

unprecedented economies of scale. A generation ago, few would have imagined that companies like Uber or Grab could provide a taxi service without owning any taxis.

Meanwhile, civil society has also developed new models, such as Wikipedia, Ushahidi (data crowdsourcing), and Buurtzorg (home care), and there are many new forms of public-private partnerships, as well as thousands of B-corps (like Natura in Brazil) guided by social and environmental principles. There has also been some remarkable innovation within the public sector. Since its launch in 2009, India’s Aadhaar programme has provided biometric IDs to more than one billion people and helped vastly expand access to financial services. Over the past decade, Narendra Modi has been implementing his motto of “maximum governance and minimum government,” while China created the world’s first Cyberspace Administration in 2011, and its Government Guidance Funds have mobilised trillions of dollars for new technology since 2002.

But, in much of the world, public institutions have hardly changed. Most are still pyramid structures, as they were a century ago, and are too often opaque and unresponsive. When new institutions are created, they are typically designed by committees of relatively elderly politicians or civil servants and tend to be siloed, hierarchical, and inflexible.



GEOFF MULGAN

The writer is a professor at University College London, is the author of When Science Meets Power (Polity, 2024)

Artificial intelligence shows starkly the gap between what’s there and what’s needed. It has been 20 years since AI started being widely used in some public services (including law enforcement and healthcare) and many private ones (such as credit scoring and search engines). But the world is only just starting to create institutions to govern it well – from procurement to maximise its value for public services to regulation to mitigate abuses, as well as multilateral institutions to pool global knowledge about the risks and opportunities associated with the technology.

One reason for the delay was clever positioning by the industry, which discouraged governments from acting by framing AI as a fait accompli that should just be accepted. As Microsoft’s chief economist, Michael Schwarz, put it in 2023: “We shouldn’t regulate AI until we see some meaningful harm that is actually happening.”

Such arguments are obviously favourable to private interests. But public institutions’ duty is to the public.

And as Daron Acemoglu, one of last year’s Nobel laureate economists, and others have shown, it is institutions that determine why some countries prosper so much more than others.

Still, it is one thing to tout the successes of the Central Provident Fund and Temasek in Singapore, Brazil’s Ministry of Social Development, the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), and the Development Bank of Southern Africa. It is quite another to devise equivalents for our current needs.

What will it take to create agile, flexible, and trustworthy institutions? What is the best design for making the most of AI, data, and collective intelligence (as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change does for climate science)? Can we build on successes like Icarus.

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SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Oman Sail to host Renaissance Interschool Regatta

MUSCAT: Oman Sail will welcome 45 schoolchildren from 15 government schools in Muscat, Sur and Al Mussanah this week for the Renaissance Interschool Regatta at Al Mouj Muscat. Racing in Optimist dinghies, the children are all part of Oman Sail’s Community Sailing Program, sponsored by Renaissance Services, which has introduced 301 boys and girls to the sport and has succeeded in making sailing accessible to more young Omanis.

Abdulaziz al Shidi, Oman Sail’s Acting Director Sailing, said, “Oman Sail’s Community Sailing Program, sponsored by Renaissance Services, has been a valuable gateway for introducing schoolchildren to the sport and encourage more young Omanis to participate in sailing. Together with Renaissance Services, the Community Sailing Program and Interschool Regatta provides opportunities for the youth and help keep them engaged in a healthy and active lifestyle, and by investing in our communities we are giving back to the nation and supporting the dreams of the next generation of Omani sailors.”

Oman Sail and Renaissance Services have committed to teach a total of 900 students aged 8-10 from government schools in Al Batinah South, Al Sharqiyah South and Muscat governorates each year through a coordinated approach at Oman Sail’s sailing schools in Al Mouj Muscat, Al Mussanah and Sur.

Each student will take part in a five-week sailing course with one weekly session using the Optimist boat, as well as take part in a beach clean-up to ensure the local community is kept clean and underline the importance of preserving the environment and keeping the seas clean.

The programme culminates with the Renaissance Services Interschool Regatta where the best performing sailors from the three sailing schools will compete against their peers.



Al Khabourah hold Seeb to a hard-fought draw in OL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 26

SEEB, the current leader of the Omantel League (OL), continued its inconsistent run of results after being held to a 1-1 draw against Al Khabourah on Tuesday. The match took place at Al Rustaq Sports Complex as part of the 15th round of the competition.

Seeb started the match by dominating possession and controlling the tempo, but struggled to create real threats on Al Khabourah’s goal. Meanwhile, Al Khabourah relied on quick counterattacks, aiming to exploit Seeb’s advanced positioning. Amir Alaa came close to giving Al Khabourah the lead in the 10th minute with a header that went just over the crossbar. His teammate, Al Faraj al Kiyoumi, wasted a golden opportunity in the 24th minute following a mistake by Seeb’s goalkeeper, Bilal al Balushi, but failed to capitalise on it.

Seeb suffered a major setback in the 30th minute when Eid al Farsi received a second yellow card and was sent off after fouling Al Khabourah’s player, Etrini. The first half ended in a goalless draw.

Despite being a man down, Seeb began the second half with high pressing and successfully broke the deadlock in the 49th minute through Arshad al Alawi, who dribbled past defenders and fired the ball into Al Khabourah’s net. In response, Al Khabourah intensified its attacking efforts, continuously pushing forward in search of an equaliser. The breakthrough finally came in the 74th minute when Ahmed al Riyami capitalised on a long ball, finding himself one-on-one with the goalkeeper before slotting it home.

In the final minutes, Al Khabourah attempted to take advantage of its numerical superiority to snatch a winning goal, but Seeb’s defence held firm,



ensuring the match ended in a 1-1 draw. Although Seeb increased its tally to 38 points, the team lost two crucial points in the title race against Al Nahda, who now trails by just three points. Meanwhile, Al Khabourah continued its impressive form, raising its total to 21 points and climbing to fourth place in the standings.

Seeb, Al Bashayer dominate in quarterfinals

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 26

Seeb secured a well-deserved victory over Mirbat with a straight-set win (3-0) in the quarterfinals of the Ministry Volleyball Shield Championship. The match took place on Tuesday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, earning Seeb a spot in the semifinals.

Seeb started the match strongly, relying on powerful serves and an effective blocking line, which gave them the upper hand for most of the set. However, Mirbat showed resilience and managed to close the gap in the final moments. Despite this, Seeb clinched the set thanks to their swift attacking plays, winning 25-22.

In the second set, Seeb played with greater focus and quickly established dominance with diverse attacking plays, especially from the wings. Their efficient first-ball reception allowed them to extend their lead early. Mirbat attempted to regain momentum, but Seeb maintained their strong performance, securing the set with a comfortable 25-17 win.

The third set was more competitive, with Mirbat improving their defensive play and keeping pace with Seeb for



significant portions of the set. However, Seeb’s experience and decisive play in crucial moments proved decisive, as they closed the set 25-21, sealing a clean 3-0 victory.

Al Bashayer Overpowers Masirah to Reach Semifinals

Meanwhile, Al Bashayer also booked their place in the semifinals of the Ministry Volleyball Shield Championship after a dominant 3-0 win over Masirah at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, joining Seeb in the final four.

Al Bashayer started the

match strongly, imposing their rhythm from the outset with powerful spikes and a solid blocking line, which helped them gain an early lead. On the other hand, Masirah attempted to reduce the deficit by improving their reception and diversifying their attacks, but they struggled to keep up with Al Bashayer’s fast-paced play. The first set ended in a commanding 25-16 win for Al Bashayer.

Al Bashayer continued their impressive performance in the second set, excelling in precise passing and quick offensive transitions, making it difficult for Masirah to catch up. Despite Masirah’s efforts to stay in the game by improving their defence and applying pressure with well-placed serves, Al Bashayer maintained their dominance and took the set 25-17.

The third set was more competitive, with Masirah stepping up their game and minimising errors compared to the previous sets, keeping the score close on several occasions. However, Al Bashayer capitalised on their players’ experience and composure in crucial moments, closing the set 25-19 and securing a straight-set victory. With these results, Seeb and Al Bashayer will face off in the semifinals.

SHORT TAKES



Samrudh Shankar — Best All Rounder



ISWK-I, MCCC CROWNED CHAMPIONS

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket recently concluded the U13 School & Academies League Season 2024-25, in which, ISWK-I U13 (Indian School Wadi Kabir — Cambridge) emerged Champions while ISM U13 (Indian School Muscat) bagged Runners-Up position in the Schools league while MCCC Yellow U13 (Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre) emerged Champions and OCA U13 (Oman Cricket Academy) bagged the Runners-Up position.

The highly competitive and engaging tournament that highlighted the immense talent of young budding cricketers from various schools and academies served as an excellent platform for these aspiring players to showcase their abilities and deepen their passion for the sport.

The tournament witnessed 8 teams in the School league which were grouped in 2 groups of 4, with the top 2 of each group playing Semi Finals, then Finals. While the academies witnessed participation from 7 teams in a round-robin format to adjudge the podium finishes. ISWK-I U13 remained unbeaten throughout the Schools tournament to claim Champions, mirrored by MCCC Yellow U13 being unbeaten in 6 out of 6 league matches to claim the championship. The growing interest and enthusiasm in the players and the participation turn out for the matches was impressive and promising to show signs of significant growth in youth cricket.

Oman Cricket remains committed to fostering young talent through structured competitive tournaments providing the youth to experience cricket, ensuring a bright future for the game from its grassroots in the Sultanate of Oman. The success of this league reflects the significance of grassroot cricket and youth development programmes and the unwavering passion for the sport among aspiring cricketers.

Oman Cricket extends its gratitude to all participating teams, coaches, parents and supporters who contributed to the success of the league. Looking ahead, we are excited to continue providing platforms that nurture talent and inspire young players to excel in the sport.



Ibrahim Zadran celebrates after scoring a century during the ICC Champions Trophy at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Wednesday. — AFP

Zadran helps Afghanistan dump England out of CT

ENGLAND were knocked out of the Champions Trophy after they suffered an eight-run defeat against tournament debutants Afghanistan in a Group B match on Wednesday.

Opener Ibrahim Zadran smashed 177 off 146 balls, the highest score in the tournament's history, to help Afghanistan overcome Jofra Archer's three early wickets and rack up 325-7.

Joe Root's classy 120 kept England alive in the chase until the 46th over but Afghanistan chipped away with regular wickets eventually bowling them out for 317 with one ball left in the innings.

Azmatullah Omarzai was the pick of the Afghanistan bowlers claiming 5-58. (Reporting by Amlan Chakraborty in New Delhi; editing by Toby Davis)

Playing under the cloud of boycott calls from some British politicians over the plight of women in the Taliban-ruled nation, Afghanistan elected to bat in a bid to bounce back from their opening loss.

But they soon slipped to 37-3 inside nine overs before Zadran pulled the innings together with a fourth-wicket partnership of 103 with skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi, who made 40.



Joe Root's classy 120 kept England alive in the chase until the 46th. — AFP

Zadran later added 111 for the sixth wicket with Mohammad Nabi, who hit 40 in 24 balls. Zadran, 23, took apart the England bowling and went past his previous ODI best of 162 in his 146-ball knock laced with 12 fours and six sixes.

He not only broke his own record for Afghanistan's highest individual ODI score but also a tournament record, days after Ben Duckett's 165 in England's opening loss to Australia.

England fast bowler Jofra Archer struck three early blows including two in one over starting with Rahmanullah Gurbaz bowled for six.

Jofra and new-ball partner Mark Wood worked up fast speeds between 145 kmph and 150 kmph but were soon jolted by an injury to Wood, who twice left the field.

Wood's absence after bowling just four overs allowed Zadran to counter attack, forcing skipper Jos Buttler to rotate his bowling options.

Leg-spinner Adil Rashid finally broke the stand as he bowled Shahidi who failed to connect an attempted reverse sweep and the ball rattled the stumps.

Zadran reached his seventh ODI ton with a single of Liam Livingstone as he and Azmatullah Omarzai changed gears in a brisk stand of 72 until Omarzai departed on 41.

Zadran remained unaffected by the wicket as he kept up the attack and hammered a six and three fours off Archer.

Wood went off again after bowling another set of four overs with Buttler left to manage his options against a rampaging Zadran and Nabi.

Zadran finally fell to Livingstone, who also sent back Nabi in the final over.

Afghanistan previously faced England in an ODI in the 2023 World Cup in New Delhi where they shocked the defending champions with a stunning victory. — AFP

Charity Golf Tournament strengthens community ties

MUSCAT: Positive Vision Association (PVA) successfully concluded its charity golf tournament on February 21, at Ras Al Hamra Golf Club. The event, organised in a texas scramble format at 2 pm. shotgun start, attracted 56 enthusiastic participants, reaching full capacity and even generating a waiting list due to high demand.

Players engaged in spirited competition, with the winning team awarded an annual membership at Dolphin Village, valued at OMR 400 per player. Prizes were also presented on nine holes, adding to the excitement. The event concluded with a gala dinner, live entertainment, a raffle draw featuring 30 prizes, and a charity auction, fostering a strong sense of community among attendees.

The primary objective of this tournament was to raise



awareness and strengthen community engagement in support of individuals affected by HIV/AIDS and substance abuse, while advancing prevention and education efforts to reduce stigma in Oman. The event successfully raised over OMR 7,000, which will directly support PVA's ongoing initiatives in public education, community outreach and support services

for affected individuals and their families. PVA President, Mrs Nashia Nasib, expressed gratitude to all participants, sponsors and volunteers, stating, "This tournament marks a significant milestone for PVA. The strong turnout and generous support reflect a growing commitment to addressing HIV/AIDS and substance

abuse in Oman. We look forward to building on this initiative and strengthening partnerships in future events."

The success of this event was made possible through the generous support of Renaissance Services, the tournament's title sponsor, along with Special Technical Services (STS) as gold sponsors, MASIN Projects & Dolphin Village as silver sponsors

and, Al Busaidy Mansoor Jamal & Co (AMJ), WJ Towell & Co LLC, and Oman Shapoorji LLC as bronze sponsors. Their contributions played a vital role in the event's success.

Building on the momentum of this successful event, PVA remains committed to expanding its programmes and initiatives. Future projects include the launch of a dedicated support hotline for individuals affected by HIV/AIDS and substance abuse in partnership with Omantel, as well as collaborations with local organisations to develop rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.

The association continues to focus on creating a supportive environment, raising public awareness and reducing stigma through education and community-driven initiatives.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



CHELSEA CLOBBER SOUTHAMPTON 4-0 TO MOVE UP FOURTH

LONDON: Chelsea thumped hapless Southampton 4-0 on Tuesday, with scorers from all over the pitch, to climb to fourth in the Premier League and keep the visitors pinned to the bottom of the table.

The win takes the west London side to 46 points, two points above Manchester City and Newcastle United who respectively play at Tottenham Hotspur and leaders Liverpool on Wednesday.

Southampton's 22nd defeat of the season leaves them 13 points from the safety zone, while Chelsea's win means they can hang on to hopes of Champions League football next season.

With no out-and-out striker because of an injury to Nicolas Jackson, Chelsea have been struggling for goals and needed defenders as well as forwards to step up.

They were in control from the start, though, and barely a minute after Aaron Ramsdale saved a Cole Palmer shot with his feet, Christopher Nkunku bundled the ball in at the back post after a corner and nod down from defender Tosin Adarabioyo.

France striker Nkunku then turned provider by slipping a neat pass to Chelsea's Portugal winger Pedro Neto who fired a powerful left-foot shot between Ramsdale and the near post.

Central defender Levi Colwill made it 3-0 just before halftime, heading down a Neto free kick, and Spain wing back Marc Cucurella converted a pinpoint pass from 19-year-old substitute and academy graduate Tyrique George in the 78th.

Ramsdale made sharp saves in the last 10 minutes to deny Palmer and Enzo Fernandez or the score could have been more.

Chelsea had lost four of their previous five games in all competitions before Tuesday's match, dropping to seventh.

"We all needed that," Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca told broadcaster TNT. "We were in a bad run in terms of results ... The club needed that. We are happy."

PALMER STRUGGLES

One disappointment on an otherwise morale-boosting night for Chelsea was the form of their talisman Cole Palmer, who again failed to capitalise on good chances and endured a frustrating seventh game in a row without a goal.

But Maresca said Palmer would be fine. He had seen other players go through awkward periods in their careers.

"We are all former players. All of us went through some bad moments. You cannot expect Palmer to be like he was last season or how he was in the first part of the season. It's normal. He is human.

"It's about how you react. Keep working, keep laughing, keep calm, be happy and enjoy the football. It's the only thing you have to do," Maresca said.

The coach gave a few minutes to debutants 17-year-old Shumaira Mheuka and French midfielder Mathis Amougou, 19.

"Probably, there were too many young players at the end," he said. "The Chelsea academy has always been a good one. We have already many players like Levi Colwill and hopefully in the future, we can have more." — Reuters



Atletico Madrid's Alexander Sorloth scores their fourth goal.— Reuters

Atletico draw Barcelona 4-4 in Copa del Rey semis

ATLETICO Madrid clawed back from two goals down to rescue a last-gasp 4-4 draw at Barcelona in a rip-roaring battle in the first leg of their Copa del Rey semi-final on Tuesday. Atletico stunned the home side early on, taking a two-goal lead with Julian Alvarez opening the scoring inside the first minute and Antoine Griezmann extending their advantage five minutes later.

However, Barcelona fought back with goals by Pedri in the 19th minute and Pau Cubarsi in the 21st, before taking the lead through Inigo Martinez's header from a corner in the 41st minute.

Barca took control of proceedings and Robert Lewandowski made it 4-2 with a tap-in from close range after great individual work by Lamine Yamal in the 74th minute.

But if Barca's fans were confident of taking a two-goal advantage into the second leg, Atletico had other ideas.

They struck back through Marcos Llorente in the 84th minute and another goal on the counter by Alexander Sorloth in the third minute of stoppage time left it all square ahead of the return encounter in the Spanish capital on April 2.

"That was just crazy," Atletico forward Alvarez told Spanish TV station Movistar Plus.

"We knew it was not going to be an easy game because we were playing against one of the best teams in Europe. We left with the sensation that we did a great job but there are still 90 minutes left where it's still very close.

"We were winning by two goals but conceded several goals from set pieces and with the 4-2 scoreline it was just a matter of holding on and trying to reduce the deficit for the second leg.

"That's the mentality, always stay in the game. Always keep our heads up, believe that we can do it. That's how we work and you can see that on the pitch."

Barca were caught by surprise when Griezmann crossed for Alvarez to score the opener with a close-range volley 55 seconds after kickoff.

The Argentinian forward then returned the favour in the sixth minute, curling a pass through to Griezmann, who beat the offside trap on a quick counter and extended Atletico's lead.

Barcelona woke up and went on the attack, hitting Atletico with a two-punch combination to level the scores with two goals in two minutes.



Atletico Madrid's Julian Alvarez celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters

Pedri delivered the first blow from inside the box in the 19th minute after Yamal worked his magic to play a brilliant pass to Jules Kounde inside the box, who delivered the assist with a low cross to the middle.

In the 21st minute, Raphinha lofted a cross to the far post where defender Cubarsi jumped higher than Pablo Barrios to head in the equaliser.

Barcelona turned the game around in the 41st minute, with Raphinha's corner from the right finding Martinez unmarked at the far post to head the ball in.

The home side came out strongly after the break but Atletico held on, with keeper Juan Musso producing a brilliant performance between the posts to keep them in the game.

But there was nothing he could do in the 74th minute when Yamal made another outstanding run inside the box before putting the ball on a plate for Lewandowski to tap in to the empty net.

But Barca's aggressive, and extremely high defensive line proved once again to be a liability as they were hurt by two deadly counter-attacks within nine minutes that allowed Atletico to level the score. — Reuters



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Oman attracts major investments in semiconductors, electric vehicles



Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef met with representatives from both companies to explore investment opportunities aimed at positioning Oman as an advanced industrial hub.

THE Sultanate of Oman is set to become a key player in the semiconductor and electric vehicle (EV) industries, following high-level discussions between the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and two global companies — Taiwan’s EONH Private Holdings and China’s Jetour.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, met with representatives from both companies to explore investment opportunities aimed at positioning Oman as an advanced industrial hub.

These discussions align with the country’s Industrial Strategy 2040, which focuses on attracting high-value industries that drive economic diversification and technological advancement.

During the meeting, Al Yousef reaffirmed the ministry’s commitment to providing incentives and streamlining regulations to support these strategic investments. He emphasised that collaboration between government agencies and private sector stakeholders is essential to ensuring the success of such projects.

that the project aims to transfer technical expertise and develop local talent through a dedicated training and research centre. The facility will support Oman’s ambitions in Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced computing.

\$18 BILLION EV INVESTMENT
China’s Jetour, a key player in the electric vehicle sector, presented its investment plan for Oman, focusing on EV production and battery technology. The company’s innovative approach includes advanced battery charging and replacement systems, currently deployed in China.

Preliminary assessments indicate an investment of RO 6.9 billion (\$18 billion), with the potential to generate 10,000 job opportunities. The project is expected to commence within two years following its official announcement.

STRATEGIC ECONOMIC IMPACT
Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, highlighted the strategic alignment of these projects with Oman’s Industrial Strategy 2040, which prioritises capital-intensive and knowledge-based industries. He also directed the formation of a technical team to develop an implementation roadmap for localising these projects and ensuring they deliver maximum economic benefits. — ONA

SEMICONDUCTOR MANUFACTURING IN OMAN
Taiwan’s EONH Private Holdings, a leader in semiconductor technology, announced its decision to establish a semiconductor chip manufacturing plant in Oman — its first investment of this scale in the region.

Ali Steve Chao, Chairman of EONH, stated

Omani-Uzbek business forum strengthens trade, investment ties

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, FEB 26

THE Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) hosted the Omani-Uzbek Business Forum on February 26, 2025. The forum focused on enhancing trade, investment and partnerships between the two nations. The event, attended by key dignitaries and business leaders, explored opportunities in vital sectors such as construction, textiles, education and healthcare, while emphasising the role of women in entrepreneurship.

Her Highness Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said, alongside Dr Siham bint Ahmed al Harthyah and Areej bint Mohsen al Zadjaliyah, both members of the OCCI Board of Directors, welcomed Abdussalam Khatamov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Oman, and a delegation from the Uzbek Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The forum underscored the historical ties between Oman and Uzbekistan, highlighting their shared commitment to fostering economic cooperation.

Dr Siham, in her opening remarks, emphasised the forum’s role in deepening bilateral relations. “The longstanding ties between our nations, built on mutual respect and common interests, are evolving into a robust economic partnership,” she said.

She noted the establishment of the Omani-Uzbek Investment Company (Ouz Oman Capital) as a milestone in bilateral cooperation, which has already funded several developmental projects and boosted investment flows.

The forum also highlighted Uzbekistan’s growing economy, driven by sectors such as construction, agriculture and manufacturing, and its alignment with Oman Vision 2040, which prioritises economic diversification through manufacturing, food security



Omani-Uzbek business forum paves way for stronger economic ties and women’s empowerment.

and tourism. She pointed out that Oman’s strategic location offers Uzbek businesses a gateway to Gulf markets and beyond, including access to the US under the Oman-US Free Trade Agreement.

Areej al Zadjali, representing the OCCI’s Businesswomen’s Committee, stressed the importance of empowering female entrepreneurs. “This forum is a platform to strengthen partnerships between businesswomen in both countries and address challenges they face in establishing joint ventures,” she said. She added that the OCCI is committed to supporting women-led businesses through institutional development and sustainable growth strategies.

Abdussalam Khatamov echoed these sentiments, describing the forum as a pivotal step in strengthening economic and trade links. “The focus on women’s entrepreneurship is crucial for fostering innovation and driving growth,” he said.

البنك الوطني العماني
لدول مجلس التعاون الخليجي
National Bank of Oman GCC Fund

ملووقا

National Bank of Oman GCC Fund

Investment Manager Report
For the quarter ending
31st December 2024

GCC equity markets' performance were positive (S&P GCC price index up by 3.34%) during December 2024 primarily led by Saudi Tadawul Index (up by 3.39%) and Dubai Market (up by 6.42%). Rest of the markets registered marginal gains:- Muscat (0.54%), Qatar (1.47%), Kuwait (1.61%). GCC markets rallied with crude rising by 2.33% due to expected recovery in demand of key markets like China while US rate cut of 25 bps soothed market sentiments. Capital expenditure spend of various GCC economies as per CY25 budget continues to remain strong helping the market remain buoyant.

In terms of sectoral performance, majority of the sectors in S&P GCC composite price Index closed in the green while materials and telecom were slight negative. Financials were the major contributor to return with Saudi banks seeing price appreciation post the rate cut. Real Estate was the 2nd best sector led by extremely positive dividend policy announced by key UAE real estate player EMAAR Group. With the increase in price this month, the S&P GCC composite price index has closed the year with returns of 3.34%. The month also saw IPO activity in Saudi Market with Almoosa Health and Nice One Beauty raising funds.

The fund performance reported an increase of 3.91% during the month of December compared to the benchmark performance of 3.34%. Allocation to key markets like Saudi helped and selection effect was largely led by strong selection with key stock holdings: - Saudi RE, EMAAR group doing well.

Stock selection would be the key return determinant in CY25 with global and GCC markets expected to remain volatile, and we believe the portfolio is appropriately positioned to take advantage of the same.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR
ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2024 RO	2023 RO
ASSETS		
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	11,565,847	11,620,258
Cash and cash equivalents	559,493	410,400
Total assets	12,125,340	12,030,658
LIABILITIES		
Accruals and other payables	49,991	149,411
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	12,075,349	11,881,247
Net asset value per unit	1.094	1.050

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

	2024 RO	2023 RO
INCOME		
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	1,133,688	1,324,731
Net realised (loss) / gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	(127,353)	611,429
Dividend income	337,636	378,093
Interest income	646	1,190
Foreign exchange gain	--	581
Other income	--	11
	1,344,617	2,316,035
Expenses		
Management fees	140,216	128,509
Brokerage expenses	45,951	86,289
Fund Management Body fees	35,000	35,000
General and administration	24,443	24,416
Administration fees	19,120	17,524
Custodian fees	11,577	10,442
Foreign exchange loss	8,346	--
Performance fees	--	104,974
	284,653	407,154
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the year	1,059,964	1,908,881
Net profit per unit	0.094	0.167

Investment Manager & Administrator

البنك الوطني العماني

NBO

Note: The complete accounts, in Arabic or English as requested, will be sent by mail to any shareholder within 7 days of a written request addressed to the Administrator, Investment Banking Operations, National Bank of Oman, P.O.Box 751, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman. Tel: 24778757, Fax: 24778993 Email: [GCCFund@nbo.co.om](#)

ADVERTORIALS

DIGITALTRANSFORMATION



This integration enables OOMCO to directly connect its systems with NBO’s banking solutions.

NBO AND OOMCO STRENGTHEN BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS WITH B2B INTEGRATION

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has announced the successful integration of its Business-to-Business (B2B) solution with Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO), streamlining business transactions and driving digital transformation in corporate banking.

Abdullah bin Zahran al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO, and Tarik bin Mohammed al Junaidi, Chief Executive Officer of OOMCO, signed the agreement at a ceremony held at the NBO Head Office.

This integration enables OOMCO to directly connect its systems with NBO’s banking solutions, allowing for automated and secure real-time financial transactions. Not only does this strengthens OOMCO’s commitment to innovation, but it also positions both organisations at the forefront of financial technology advancements in Oman.

Mohammed bin Yahya al Jabri, Assistant General Manager - Head of Global Transaction Banking at NBO, said, “This integration with OOMCO marks a significant step in our commitment to driving digital transformation in corporate banking. By enabling seamless, secure and automated transactions, we are enhancing operational efficiency and setting new standards for financial technology in Oman.”

The collaboration empowers OOMCO to enhance its operations by reducing processing times and improving financial connectivity with business customers, ultimately boosting the overall efficiency of its services and delivering a seamless experience for clients.

Additionally, this integration enables OOMCO to securely process payments and payrolls through the Wages Protection System (WPS), further reinforcing its commitment to regulatory excellence.

From his end, Musaab Faris Bingaradi, Chief Financial Officer at OOMCO, added, “Our collaboration with NBO underscores our commitment to adopting forward-thinking solutions that improve efficiency and customer satisfaction. By integrating with NBO’s cutting-edge B2B platform, we are providing our business customers with faster, highly secure and more efficient transaction processes.”

AL RIADAH FROM DHOFAR ISLAMIC: INNOVATIVE SERVICES AND EXCLUSIVE OFFERS

MUSCAT: Dhofar Islamic, the Islamic banking window of BankDhofar, offers distinguished Sharia-compliant banking solutions, delivering personalised services and exclusive benefits to enhance the customer experience.

The Al Riadah account provides customers with priority service for their daily banking transactions through a dedicated team of experienced relationship managers across the bank’s 25 branches in Oman. A wide range of innovative products, services and exclusive offers has been introduced to simplify banking.

The Visa Signature debit card



provides exceptional travel, dining and shopping benefits, including complimentary access to over 1,000 international airport lounges, free multi-trip travel insurance, and a 24/7 concierge service for booking flights, restaurants, and more.

The World MasterCard credit card features an attractive rewards

programme, enabling customers to earn points on every transaction and redeem them for cash.

Al Riadah customers enjoy a variety of flexible financing solutions at competitive rates. Options include personal, vehicle and educational financing with repayment periods of up to 10 years. Housing financing is available for up to 25 years, while travel financing, including coverage for Haj and Umrah expenses, comes with flexible repayment terms of up to 3 years.

Opening deposit accounts is quick and straightforward, with competitive profit rates calculated daily and paid monthly.

Toyota unveils Biggest Excitement campaign

THIS Ramadhan, Saud Bahwan Automotive is making the season even more special with its Biggest Excitement campaign, offering customers an unmatched opportunity to own their favourite Toyota vehicle with incredible benefits.

Running until April 24, 2025, the campaign brings together an array of exciting offers designed to enhance ownership experiences, making every Toyota purchase even more rewarding.

As part of the campaign, customers can enjoy exclusive benefits such as service ranging from 3 years/30,000 km up to 10 years/100,000 km (whichever is earlier), 1 Year Comprehensive Insurance and Scratch & Win Prizes including iPhone 16 Pro Max, Apple Watch Ultra 2, Golden Seven Package, 3M Nano Ceramic Coating, 3M Colour Stable Type 2 Films and a chance to win 1 out of 2 brand-new Toyota Prado SUVs.



The campaign brings together an array of exciting offers designed to enhance ownership experiences, making every Toyota purchase even more rewarding.

Sharing his thoughts about Toyota Oman’s Biggest Excitement campaign, a representative said, “With this campaign, we aim to provide customers with an exciting and rewarding way to go beyond rewards this season and to own a Toyota. Every element of this offer has been designed to enhance the joy of ownership,

from long-term service benefits to thrilling prizes, making this the best time to experience the reliability, performance and innovation that Toyota is known for”.

Toyota Oman offers an impressive line-up of vehicles to suit every kind of driver. From the iconic Camry, celebrated for its refined design and

hybrid efficiency, to the all-new Land Cruiser Prado, built for adventure with cutting-edge off-road capabilities, Toyota continues to set new standards in performance and durability.

Adventure seekers can opt for the Fortuner, featuring powerful petrol engine options, or the legendary Land Cruiser, known for its commanding presence and robust powertrain. Meanwhile, the Corolla remains a trusted companion, offering a balance of efficiency and performance.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade.

Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions and fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories.

Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.

ahli islamic holds workshop empowering SMEs

MUSCAT: In its ongoing efforts to strengthen the business community, ahli islamic – the leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman – organised a workshop aimed at empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to grow and expand.

The event attracted an impressive attendance of 60 entrepreneurs, who were equipped with essential skills and foundations to help them grow and expand strategically. The workshop was held at ahlibank’s Head Office.

The workshop was led by entrepreneur Husam Baqawir, who has over 10 years of experience in the field of entrepreneurship.

The workshop covered a range of important



topics, starting with correcting false beliefs and myths about entrepreneurship, and moving on to effective strategies to solve 80% of entrepreneurial problems through the concept known as the “Black Box.”

The workshop also explored modern strategic directions, advanced accounting and financial

practices, governance principles, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). In addition, key AI and automation tools were showcased to help entrepreneurs boost productivity. The session concluded with entrepreneurial marketing tips that enhance professionalism in business operations.

Zainab al Lawati, AGM - Head of Corporate Banking at ahli islamic, expressed, “As part of our ongoing efforts to drive economic progress in Oman, and through empowering entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises, the workshop organised by ahli islamic is not merely a social responsibility role, but a strategic platform to enhance entrepreneurial concepts.”

Artha Bharat Investment Managers celebrates key milestones

MUSCAT: Artha Bharat Investment Managers IFSC LLP hosted an exclusive networking event in Muscat, bringing together a distinguished audience of industry leaders, corporate executives and business associates. The prestigious evening was graced by Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, alongside prominent business luminaries who gathered to celebrate the company’s recent achievements.

Held at the scenic lawns of the Intercontinental Hotel, the event marked several key milestones for Artha Bharat Investment Managers. Among the highlights was the successful transfer of the company’s first fund from Mauritius to Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) in India, a



The prestigious evening was graced by Amit Narang, the Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, as the guest of honour.

strategic move aligning with the Indian government’s vision of establishing GIFT City as a world-class financial hub. Additionally,

the firm celebrated the successful completion of its second fund in Gujarat, reinforcing its position as a leader in fund management.

The evening also provided a platform to honour the remarkable achievements of Ashwini Sawrikar, Chief Operating Officer of Artha Bharat Investment Managers, who was recently recognised as the Woman Chartered Accountant of the Year by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI).

The prestigious accolade was conferred at a grand ceremony in New Delhi by Union Minister of Law & Justice, Arjun Ram Meghwal, alongside ICAI President Ranjit Kumar Agarwal and other dignitaries.

Speaking at the event, Sachin Sawrikar, Founder and Managing Partner of Artha Bharat Investment Managers, emphasised the significance of relocating to

GIFT City, stating, “Artha Global Opportunities Fund became the first Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) to move its Head Office from Mauritius to India, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision for GIFT City. The regulatory framework in GIFT City has evolved significantly, offering a business-friendly environment that supports our growth ambitions. We look forward to building on our success and launching more innovative funds in 2025.”

The celebration was further enhanced by live musical entertainment and a gourmet buffet, creating a memorable evening for the esteemed guests and employees who had come from various offices including Mauritius, Dubai and India.

BUSINESS

SHORT TAKES

SOHAR INTERNATIONAL APPOINTS CEO



ABDUL WAHID BIN MOHAMMED AL MURSHIDI
CEO, Sohar International

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of Sohar International is pleased to announce the appointment of Abdul Wahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi as Chief Executive Officer, effective on February 26. Al Murshidi has been serving as Acting Chief Executive Officer since January 1, 2025, during which he has demonstrated exceptional leadership and strategic vision.

Said bin Mohammed al Aufi, Chairman of Sohar International, stated, “Today marks an important milestone for Sohar International. Abdul Wahid’s proven track record, exceptional expertise, and unwavering dedication make him the ideal leader to steer our bank into its next chapter. We are confident that under his guidance, Sohar International will continue to thrive and reinforce its position as a leading financial institution in the region.”

In his new role, Al Murshidi will spearhead the bank’s initiatives aimed at achieving exponential and sustainable growth. “We are pleased to have a leader like Abdul Wahid to guide the management team towards further success and excellence. With his diverse experience in the banking industry, we believe he will build on the bank’s achievements and strengthen its capabilities as a market leader,” Al Aufi added.

Abdul Wahid brings over 18 years of extensive experience in various banking functions, including Audit, Finance, Investment and Islamic Banking. He joined Sohar International in July 2019 and previously served as Deputy General Manager at a prominent local Islamic bank. He holds an Executive MBA from the London Business School and a Bachelor of Science from SQU.

OCCI SME COMMITTEE MEETS THAI TRADE DELEGATION

MUSCAT: Members of the SME Committee at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) on Wednesday, February 26, met with a trade delegation from the Kingdom of Thailand to discuss prospects for trade cooperation between institutions in both countries.

Aspects of trade cooperation and entering into joint trade partnerships with owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Sultanate of Oman were discussed by obtaining commercial agencies for Thai products and marketing them.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Amer al Musalhi, Chairman of the Committee, stressed the importance of this meeting, which would open the way for entering into fruitful trade cooperation and partnerships and opening marketing outlets for products from both countries by granting SMEs in the Sultanate of Oman agencies for Thai products, which would contribute to the sustainability and continuity of these institutions. — ONA

JOMAR MENDOZA

OMAN’S first-ever recycling app, Go Green Oman, has been launched during Oman Climate Week, aiming to bridge the gap between residents and recycling firms while boosting sustainable waste management.

The app, developed by Eco-Friendly Packaging (EFP) Oman, allows users to book a collection for their recyclables, which are then transported to local SMEs specialising in plastic, paper and biofuel production.

“We’ve had many people asking where to take their recyclable materials — whether paper, plastic, or even cooking oil,” said Rufaida al Bakri, Head of Marketing at EFP Oman.

“The challenge wasn’t just segregation; it was the lack of connection between individuals and recycling companies. Go Green Oman solves this by making recycling as easy as booking a ride.”

Through partnerships with local recycling

NWS drives local growth, workforce development

JOMAR MENDOZA

BEYOND its ambitious RO 700 million infrastructure investment, Nama Water Services (NWS) is positioning itself as a driver of economic growth, local workforce development, and sustainability in Oman’s water sector.

Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, CEO of Nama Water Services, highlighted the company’s commitment to in-country value (ICV), Omanisation, and operational efficiency in an exclusive interview with *Observer*.

“These projects are not just about expanding our water and wastewater networks; they are about building a sustainable ecosystem that benefits Oman’s economy,” Al Zakwani stated.

“Through ICV initiatives, we ensure that local contractors, suppliers and workforce development remain at the heart of our investments.”

STRENGTHENING IN-COUNTRY VALUE

Nama Water Services’ projects contribute RO 193 million to ICV, a critical component of Oman’s economic strategy. Al Zakwani explained that the company’s approach is designed to maximise benefits for local businesses.

“When we execute these projects, we don’t just want to complete them — we want to create lasting economic value. By prioritising local contractors and materials, we



These projects are not just about expanding our water and wastewater networks; they are about building a sustainable ecosystem that benefits Oman’s economy.

QAIS BIN SAUD AL ZAKWANI
CEO, Nama Water Services

ensure that the investments translate into sustainable growth for Omani businesses,” he said.

Beyond contracts, the company’s focus on ICV extends to job creation and skills development. Nama Water Services has introduced long-term contracts with service providers, fostering employment opportunities and skill enhancement in the sector.

ACCELERATING OMANISATION

A key highlight of Nama’s strategy is its workforce localisation efforts. The company aims to increase the Omanisation rate in contractor firms from 55% to 84% by 2025. This is being achieved through the creation of nearly 900 jobs in the water and wastewater sectors.

“We announced 450 jobs last year, and this year we are adding another 410 positions. With this, we will have created around 880 jobs in the sector,” Al Zakwani shared.

“These are not just numbers — we are providing opportunities for Omanis to build long-term careers in this critical sector.”

The recruitment process has already begun, with new employees undergoing assessments and training to equip them with the necessary technical expertise.

ENHANCING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND WATER SECURITY

Alongside infrastructure expansion, Nama Water Services is prioritising operational improvements. With water quality compliance reaching 99%, the company has implemented an advanced management system

to maintain consistency across its networks.

“The water that leaves Barka is the same water that reaches Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. Ensuring this consistency is a major challenge, but we have an integrated system in place to maintain quality throughout the distribution process,” Al Zakwani explained.

The company is also leveraging treated wastewater for agriculture and industrial applications, reducing reliance on freshwater sources and supporting Oman’s sustainability goals.

ADDRESSING EXPANSION CHALLENGES

Despite these advancements, Nama Water Services faces logistical and operational challenges in expanding network coverage beyond 72%. The scale of the investment programme, availability of skilled contractors, and public safety concerns are among the primary hurdles.

“With such a massive CAPEX programme, ensuring we have the right contractors and workforce in place is crucial. We are also mindful of the safety risks associated with heavy excavation work, and we are implementing awareness programmes to mitigate these risks,” Al Zakwani noted.

As Nama Water Services moves forward with its strategic projects, its dual focus on infrastructure expansion and economic development reinforces its role as a key player in Oman’s long-term water security and sustainability agenda.

OCCI LAUNCHES FRANCHISE GROWTH INITIATIVE

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s Commercial Excellence Centre Committee convened its first meeting of 2025, marking a strategic push to develop Oman’s franchise ecosystem and support local brands in their expansion.

The meeting was chaired by Eng Hamoud bin Salem al Saadi, Second Deputy Chairman of the Chamber and Committee Chairman, who highlighted the centre’s role in sustaining Oman’s franchise development efforts.

He noted that the initiative builds on the success of the Commercial Excellence Programme, which has helped Omani companies secure franchise agreements and enhance their competitiveness.

The committee’s agenda focuses on establishing a Franchise Centre, a decision endorsed by the Chamber’s Board of Directors. The centre will provide:

- a. Specialised support for businesses and entrepreneurs.
- b. Comprehensive training and consultancy



The committee’s agenda focuses on establishing a Franchise Centre, a decision endorsed by the Chamber’s Board of Directors.

services for franchise development.

- c. Strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, and the Development Bank.
- d. Guidelines and resources to help Omani companies scale their businesses internationally.

“Our goal is to create an environment where

Omani brands can thrive through franchising, unlocking new growth opportunities for local businesses while strengthening the national economy,” Al Saadi said.

The meeting featured presentations from franchise industry experts, including: Eng Fadhel al Nassar, CEO of Franchiseme, who discussed franchising’s economic impact on Oman, Yasser Qutli, CEO of Franchise Engineers Consulting, who outlined global best practices in franchise management and Abdullah al Mahrrouqi, CEO of Silsila Al Imtiaz, who shared insights on marketing strategies for Omani brands in collaboration with the Chamber.

The committee’s initiatives aim to enhance Oman’s franchise sector, support business scalability and position Omani brands on the global stage.

The Commercial Excellence Centre will serve as a catalyst for entrepreneurial growth, ensuring local companies benefit from structured expansion strategies and international franchise partnerships.

Pioneering recycling app launched at Oman Climate Week

JOMAR MENDOZA

OMAN’S first-ever recycling app, Go Green Oman, has been launched during Oman Climate Week, aiming to bridge the gap between residents and recycling firms while boosting sustainable waste management.

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Through partnerships with local recycling



Rufaida al Bakri, Head of Marketing at EFP Oman, says the app allows users to book a collection for their recyclables, which are then transported to local SMEs specialising in plastic, paper and biofuel production.

firms, Go Green Oman ensures collected waste is processed into sustainable products. Paper waste is turned into eco-friendly egg trays, while plastic is repurposed, and used cooking oil is converted into biofuel.

“Our goal is not just to promote recycling

but to support local SMEs,” Rufaida added.

“By channelling recyclables to these businesses, we’re creating a circular economy that benefits the environment and local industries.” Unlike traditional waste collection services, Go Green Oman does not impose a minimum quantity requirement for pickup. However, the app incentivises users through a loyalty points system, rewarding them with redeemable vouchers for businesses like Lulu Hypermarket.

INSPIRATION FROM GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

The concept for Go Green Oman was inspired by global recycling models, particularly from the UK. The app’s founder, having spent 35 years in London, was struck by the lack of structured recycling in Oman.

“In London, waste segregation is deeply ingrained,” Rufaida explained. “We had separate bins for general waste, plastics, paper and glass. Bringing that structured approach

to Oman was a key motivation behind this initiative.”

SUSTAINABILITY AT THE CORE

EFP Oman, established in 2022, has been at the forefront of paper recycling, transforming business and institutional waste into locally produced, eco-certified egg trays. As an SME, it aligns with Oman’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and offers corporations a way to enhance their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts through sustainable waste management.

“Our products are made in Oman, supporting local industry while reducing landfill waste,” said Rufaida. “Through Go Green Oman, we’re taking this mission a step further — making recycling easy, rewarding and impactful.”

With Oman’s growing focus on sustainability, Go Green Oman could be a game-changer in shaping a greener future for the Sultanate of Oman.

OPINION

Social responsibility and the private sector



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The writer is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI

MANY studies have been conducted on the subject of social responsibility of institutions and private sector companies and its impact on the development on economic and social projects. There are many attempts to convince companies to enter into this endeavour and assume responsibility due to the need of societies for this attempt.

However, some officials in the private sector believe that there is ambiguity and insufficient knowledge on the part of individuals and companies in meeting the demands of institutions in civil society, which requires the dissemination of more information and enhancing transparency in this regard.

It seems that many Arab countries have benefited from international experiences and have begun to develop methods of social responsibility, which has contributed to encouraging companies to assume their responsibility in this regard, and have succeeded in facing the challenges in carrying out their social role, whether in the Gulf region or outside.

This work is also welcomed by the Islamic religion, which urges others to cooperate, unite and help members of a society towards projects that serve people and their daily needs, whether in the field of education, health, social affairs, environmental

conservation or serving other community issues.

This sometimes reduces the responsibility of government institutions and accelerates the accomplishment of important matters in society by companies assuming this responsibility, especially those that benefit from the administrative and logistical work that governments build in the economic and social systems for all.

In addition, the private sector institutions assuming this responsibility works to enhance the preservation of the state's financial resources and accelerates the employment of more citizens in commercial businesses in addition to enhancing the capabilities of human cadres, which contributes strongly to the development of countries and eliminating some of the problems of societies.

Enhancing social responsibility in societies makes institutions partners in achievements, allows future generations to learn a lot of work, meets the needs of youth and promotes social justice among individuals, in addition to enhancing the economic development of countries and preserving the environment.

These actions have also been approved by international institutions since the first United Nations conference on environmental issues was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and its results were adopted by 100 countries with the aim of achieving development and

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sustainability in the twenty-first century, which also focus on social responsibility as one of the pillars of achieving sustainability for societies and governments.

The economic growth of countries means creating new job opportunities for young people, enhancing education and health plans, alleviating poverty, confronting environmental issues, and spreading justice among individuals, which requires the contribution of private sector institutions to social responsibility.

Any success achieved by private companies in this regard will bring them more benefits and profitability, and thus achieve more prosperity and stability for society in the long term, and enhance the goals of sustainable development.

Societies should study the historical development of the concept of social responsibility in the world, and the lessons that can be learned from international experiences in various societies, and work to reduce the challenges that can result from wrong methods in this field.

All these attempts and initiatives will work to improve people's standard of living in a way that serves private institutions and companies as well as individuals in societies. This also helps in combating corruption, promoting human development, employment, and preserving the environment.

INTERESTS PARTLY ALIGN BEHIND HONG KONG BOURSE CEO

HUDSON LOCKETT

In cards you play the cards you're dealt, and Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing (0388.HK), opens new tab looks at last to have a decent hand. Chief Executive Bonnie Chan caps her first year with the delivery of annual results on Thursday. Thanks to a rally in Chinese tech stocks, she can look forward to some ample tailwinds ahead.

A median forecast from Visible Alpha tips annual earnings at the \$56 billion bourse to rise 10% to HK\$13 billion (\$1.7 billion). That's largely thanks to a forecasted surge of nearly 20% in trading, clearance and other fees at its equities business, which accounted for nearly half of the exchange operator's EBITDA in 2023.

Technology, in particular, is in vogue again: The release of Hangzhou-based Deepseek's low-cost AI training model last month and President Xi Jinping's supportive messaging to private sector entrepreneurs have further whetted appetites, sending the Hang Seng Tech index up 27% year to date.

Much of the credit for rising turnover goes to external circumstances: pledges of forceful economic stimulus from Beijing in September boosted Hong Kong stocks' combined market cap by about \$450 billion by the end of January and prompted global investors to reconsider their aversion to Chinese equities.

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Chinese officials, under pressure to boost growth and bolster confidence in the private sector, have good reason to want more share offerings in Hong Kong. To that end, Chan has worked to clear the runway for initial public offerings. In October, HKEX streamlined listings, opened new tab to subject applicants to only two rounds of questioning — or just one, for qualified companies already trading on the mainland.

That will help to bolster the ranks of firms like Shenzhen-listed Contemporary Amperex Technology, the world's largest battery maker, which recently filed to raise up to \$5 billion from a Hong Kong share sale this year.

And as part of broader reforms to improve liquidity, HKEX will soon adopt a new fee regime that removes minimum settlement fees, among other things. That should encourage lower-value transactions, and no doubt please the small-bore mainland traders who have been pouring money into Hong Kong stocks this year.

Still, it is not difficult to imagine spoilers to these favourable trends. — Reuters

What should be on the global financial agenda?

THE United Nations Conferences on Financing for Development have been great occasions for building consensus on global financing issues. The next meeting, set for mid-2025 in Spain, will continue the progress made previously in Monterrey (2002), Doha (2008), and Addis Ababa (2015), and preparations are already underway with the launch of two major background documents.

While a "Zero Draft" will serve as the basis for the negotiations, delegates also will consider a set of proposals from an international commission of experts that I had the honour of coordinating. Both reflect the ambition to build on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The central objective of this process is to support developing countries' growth strategies. The commission of experts emphasised the need to restore and strengthen the transformative role of the state, envisioning it as a key driver of development and structural transformation.

That means emphasising the quality as well as the quantity of resources that are mobilised, and replacing a short-term project-focused agenda with one geared towards collectively defined longer-term goals. Each task calls for strengthening the currently weakened multilateral system and creating new regional platforms.

A crucial issue is public-sector over-indebtedness, which affects about one-third of developing countries, while several others face high debt levels and interest costs. This problem stems from the large fiscal imbalances during the Covid-19 pandemic and the rise in interest rates in recent years. Managing it will require an ambitious short-term renegotiation instrument, which can build on the G20's 2020 Common Framework for Debt Treatments. This time, however, the renegotiation process must be faster, and access should be extended to middle-income countries. In the long term, we need a permanent mechanism for sovereign debt restructuring, which could be housed either in the UN or



The central objective of this process is to support developing countries' growth strategies.



JOSÉ ANTONIO OCAMPO

The writer, a former United Nations under-secretary-general and a former minister of finance and public credit of Colombia, is a professor at Columbia University, a member of the UN Committee for Development Policy, and a member of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.

the International Monetary Fund, provided, in the latter case, that it remains independent of the IMF Board. Another urgent objective is to reinvigorate development financing. An estimated \$4 trillion more is needed annually to fund the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Mobilising these resources will require official development assistance on the scale that high-income countries committed to decades ago: "0.7% of gross national income to developing countries and 0.15-0.20% of GNI to least developed countries." Most developed countries have failed to hit these targets, and the funds directed to low-income countries have actually decreased in recent years.

A second priority in this area is to increase the financing available from multilateral development banks (MDBs) and support the expansion of national development banks' activities (or the creation of such institutions in the developing countries lacking them).

Such efforts must include more financing in local currencies to mitigate the risks of debt escalation from exchange-rate depreciation, and support for the development of domestic bond markets in these countries. Beyond traditional lending, these

institutions also should support developing countries' efforts to provide international public goods such as pandemic preparedness and prevention, climate-change mitigation and adaptation and biodiversity protection.

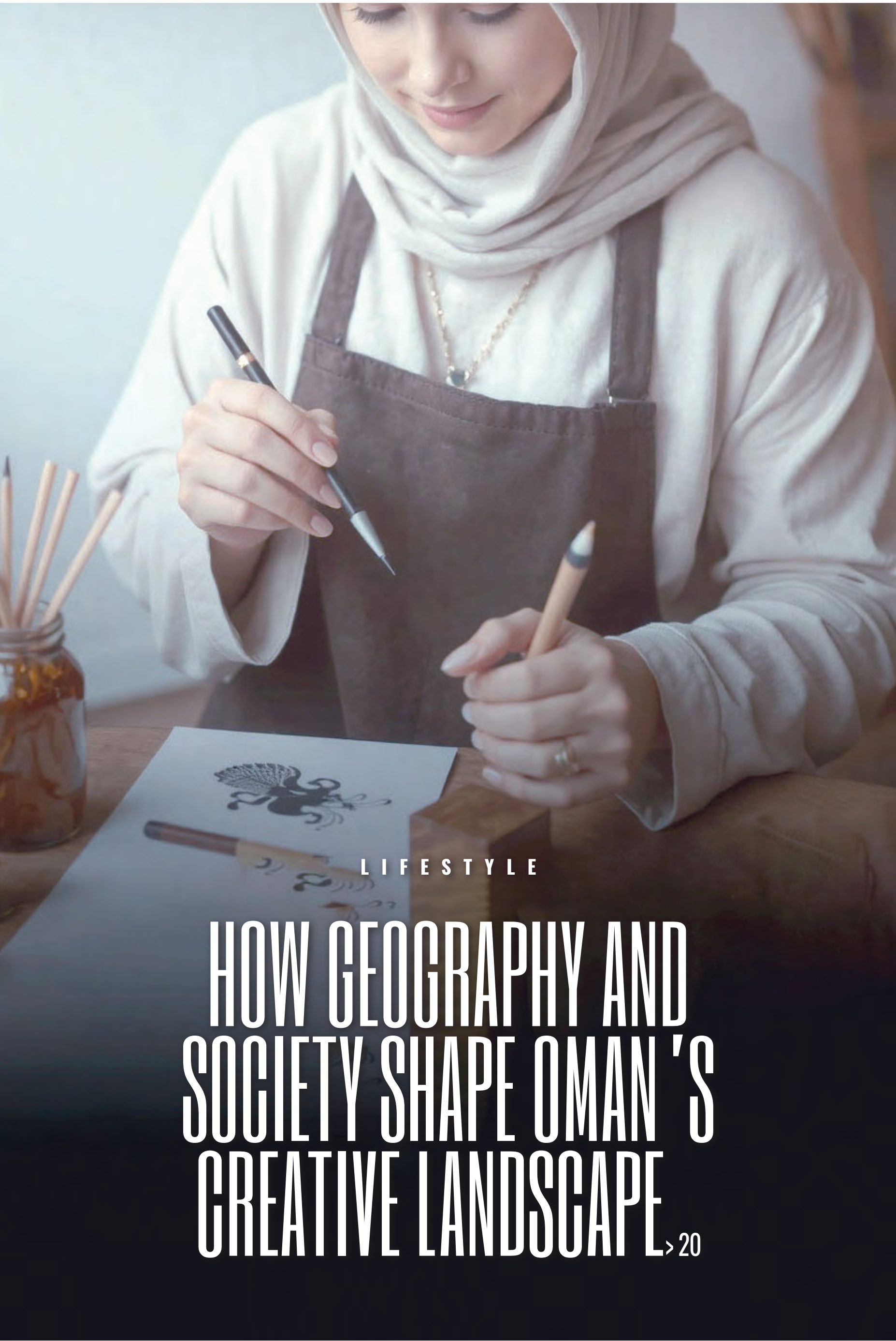
Increasing environmentally sustainable financing is crucial. While the recent Conferences of the Parties on climate change and biodiversity agreed to more financing, their targets remain insufficient.

This is particularly worrying now that biodiversity losses are mounting and global warming has already begun to exceed the 1.5o Celsius threshold set by the Paris climate agreement. In these areas, and in development financing in general, greater private-sector involvement should be mobilised with the help of credits for environmental investments or complementary mechanisms such as loan guarantees from development banks.

Building adequate, progressive tax bases is also essential. We need to prevent multinationals from shifting their profits to low-tax jurisdictions and tax havens, and ensure adequate tax payments by the wealthy.

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ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

HOW GEOGRAPHY AND SOCIETY SHAPE OMAN'S CREATIVE LANDSCAPE_{> 20}

ENTERTAINMENT

Kate Bush leads UK musicians in 'silent album' AI fight



ON TUESDAY, more than 1,000 musicians, including Kate Bush, Annie Lennox and Damon Albarn, released a silent album titled “Is This What We Want” as a protest against proposed changes to UK copyright law concerning artificial intelligence (AI). They argue that these changes threaten to legitimise music theft. The album, which features recordings of empty studios and performance spaces, signifies a growing backlash against the government’s intentions.

In a letter to *The Times*, prominent artists such as Paul McCartney, Elton John, Ed Sheeran, Dua Lipa and Sting denounced the proposals as a “wholesale giveaway” to Silicon Valley. Writers including Kazuo Ishiguro, Michael Morpurgo and Helen Fielding also added their voices to the critique. The concerns were echoed by UK newspapers, which launched a “Make it Fair” campaign that included wrap-around advertisements on the front pages of nearly all national dailies, along with an editorial addressing the issue penned by the editors.

The Labour government, led by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, is contemplating significant alterations to copyright law that would allow AI firms to utilise creators’ content from the Internet for model development, unless rights holders choose to opt out — a process many artists deem impractical and burdensome. Ed Newton-Rex, the organiser of the album, stated that musicians are “united in their thorough condemnation of this ill-thought-through plan.” He emphasised that the government’s proposal would effectively hand over the hard-earned work of the country’s musicians to AI companies without compensation.

The release of the album coincided with the conclusion of the government’s public consultation on the proposed legislative changes. Starmer has acknowledged the need for a balanced approach regarding copyright and AI, recognising the technology as presenting “a huge opportunity”. Authors are similarly alarmed, with best-selling US writer Scott Turow criticising the British government’s “cavalier attitude”, which could allow technology firms to exploit authors’ works as “original content”.

McCartney, in a rare interview, stressed the necessity for any new legislation to safeguard creative individuals, warning that neglecting this will inhibit artistic innovation. The UK music sector contributed £7.6 billion to the economy in 2023, with exports reaching £4.6 billion, underscoring the economic importance of protecting creative talents. — AFP

Q U I C K F E A T U R E S



FESTIVAL

A holy man with face smeared in ash walks near Sangam, the confluence of Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers, on the eve of Maha Shivaratri during the Maha Kumbh Mela festival in Prayagraj. — AFP



FILM

Bollywood actor Naseeruddin Shah attends the opening ceremony of the 2nd French Film Festival in Kolkata. — AFP



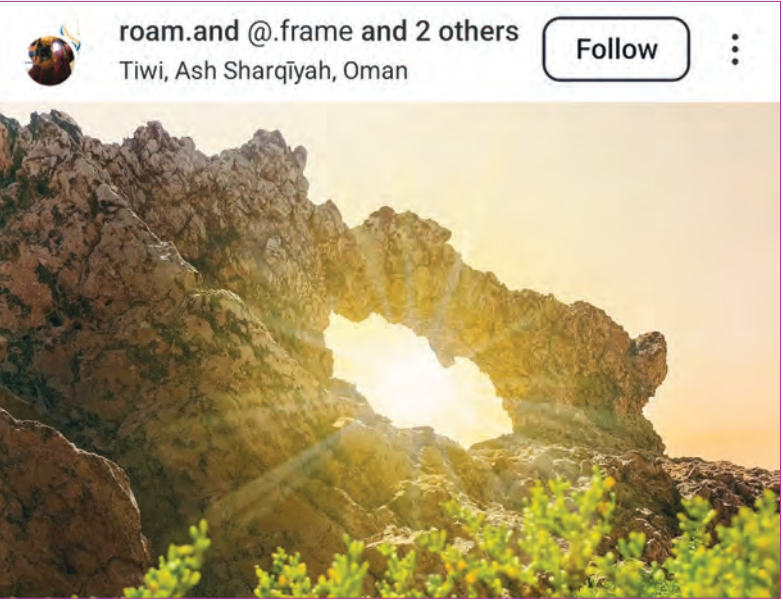
ART

A person looks at AI artwork created by Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst called ‘Embedding Study 1 & 2 (from the xhairymutantx series)’ at a press preview for ‘Augmented Intelligence’ at Christie’s in New York. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Appreciating Local Attraction



Beauty of Remote Places

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

Arctic doomsday seed vault gets more than 14,000 new samples



A “DOOMSDAY” vault storing food crop seeds from around the world in man-made caves on a remote Norwegian Arctic island will receive more than 14,000 new samples on Tuesday, a custodian of the facility said.

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault, set deep inside a mountain to withstand disasters from nuclear war to global warming, was launched in 2008 as a backup for the world’s gene banks that store the genetic code for thousands of plant species.

Protected by permafrost, the vault has received samples from across the world, and played a leading role between 2015 and 2019 in rebuilding seed collections damaged during the war in Syria.

“The seeds deposited this week represent not just biodiversity, but also the knowledge, culture and resilience of the communities that steward them,” Executive Director Stefan Schmitz

of the Crop Trust said in a statement.

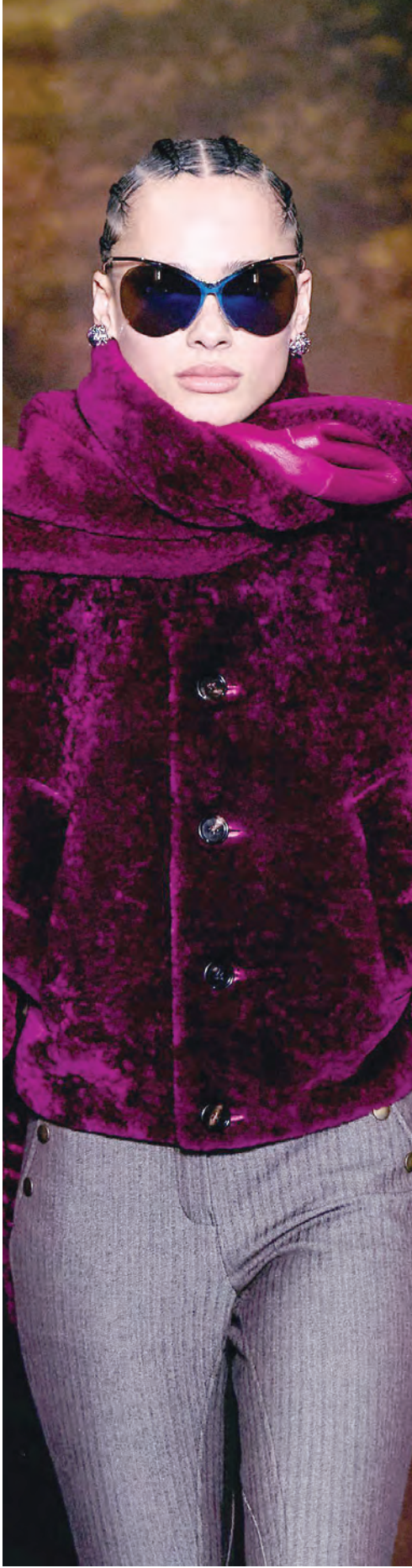
The new contributions include a sample of 15 species from Sudan, consisting of several varieties of sorghum - a plant that is significant both for the country’s food security and its cultural heritage, the Crop Trust said.

The war between the Rapid Support Forces and the army which broke out in April 2023 has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced 12 million, while plunging half of Sudan into hunger and several locations into famine.

“In Sudan...these seeds represent hope,” the director of Sudan’s Agricultural Plant Genetic Resources Conservation and Research Centre said in a statement.

The total of 14,022 new samples will be deposited at 1430 GMT, including seeds of Nordic tree species from Sweden and rice from Thailand, the Crop Trust said.

— Reuters



Muted London fashion week wraps up with Burberry show

LONDON FASHION Week wraps up with Burberry sending its Autumn/Winter collection down the catwalk on Monday, capping off a relatively muted event in the rainy British capital.

Brands are grappling with a reduced appetite for luxury products worldwide, while a slimmed-down schedule with several absentees has raised concerns about London Fashion Week’s future.

Still, there was room for spectacle — from striking silhouettes in designer Harris Reed’s opening show and hats made of glass by master milliner Stephen Jones.

On the catwalks, the bubble skirt from the 1980s in several forms was one of the trends spotted.

Meanwhile, Irish designer Sinead O’Dwyer set out to show all women can be beautiful, no matter age and body type. Diversity was a common theme across many collections.

BURBERRY

Hopeful fashionistas have been holding out for the biggest name of the week — British megahouse Burberry -- which showcases its collection at 1900 GMT at the Tate Britain museum.

The fashion giant famed for its trench coats and signature tartan

print is going through a difficult period, and is the subject of rumours about the departure of its creative director.

Daniel Lee arrived a little over two years ago and has tried to give the British mega-house a facelift.

Lee could be replaced by English designer Kim Jones, who left Dior Men at the end of January after seven years, according to media reports.

Burberry, which has been experiencing months of financial difficulty, began an “emergency” refocusing on its iconic products such as the famous trench coat late last year in a bid to stave off falling sales.

Last month it announced a further decline in sales, hit by weak demand in China, but the troubled group was showing signs of recovery under new leadership and the decline was less severe than forecast.

SLIPPING BEHIND

Despite the presence of renowned designers such as Simone Rocha and Richard Quinn, and promising stylists such as S.S. Daley and Harris Reed, several fashion experts said London Fashion Week was falling further behind Paris and New York every year.

“There is a bit of a damp spirit, an empty feeling, to the London schedule at the moment,” Daley told The Guardian newspaper before his show.

Caroline Rush, the director of the British Fashion Council which organises London Fashion Week, acknowledged it was “a particularly challenging time” for British brands.

Brands have been dealt several blows following the pandemic, such as Brexit and last year’s closure of the global luxury online platform Matches Fashion.

This year’s event is almost a day shorter than the previous Autumn-Winter 2024 fashion week, with several designers opting for a dinner or presentation instead of a pricier runway show.

Buyers and influencers such as Beka Gvishiani of Style Not Com, an Instagram account that charts fashion news, did not make the trip, while Northern Irish designer Jonathan Anderson was also absent with his brand JW Anderson.

Rush, who is organising her last London Fashion Week, said London Fashion Week remains “so relevant because ... we have so many small independent businesses, they need a platform to be able to show to reach global audiences.” — AFP

How Geography and Society Shape Oman’s Creative Landscape

OMAN'S DIVERSE GEOGRAPHY AND SOCIETAL FACTORS SHAPE ITS CREATIVE LANDSCAPE WITH DR. BADAR AL MAMARI EMPHASISING THAT EDUCATION, FAMILY INFLUENCE, AND MODERN TECHNOLOGIES ARE IMPORTANT IN FOSTERING INNOVATION.

BY RUQAYA AL KINDI
Instagram: @ruqaya.alkindi

HUMANITY'S journey of creativity spans an astonishing 60,000 years, marked by milestones from the first knot tied by Neanderthals to the state-of-the-art Large Hadron Collider of the 21st century. This evolution speaks volumes about human ingenuity and adaptability.

Dr Badar al Mamari, Head of the Art Education Department at Sultan Qaboos University, underscores how upbringing and the surrounding environment play pivotal roles in nurturing creativity. While innate abilities contribute, the influence of our surroundings often explains why certain nations cultivate more creative minds than others. Oman's varied geography—spanning coastlines, plains, mountains, deserts, and valleys—profoundly influences the creativity of its people. Dr Al Mamari observes that this diversity shapes artistic expression, particularly within

the realm of visual arts. For instance, he notes, “Artists from the desert often exhibit simpler palettes and less detail in their work, while those from urban areas and mountains embrace intricate details and vibrant colour variations. Furthermore, urban artists usually excel in three-dimensional forms due to their constant interaction with structures and architecture.” This interplay between environment and creativity extends across time as well. Dr Al Mamari highlights that contemporary Omani artists are drawn to sharp geometric shapes, in stark contrast to the organic styles prevalent in art from the mid-20th century. The good news is that educational systems can be designed to cultivate creative generations. Dr Al Mamari advocates for modern teaching methods that emphasise practical learning, linking academic institutions to real-world applications. Unfortunately, traditional methodologies still linger. “Engineering colleges often cling to outdated auto mechanics curricula while the world shifts towards electric vehicles. Such gaps hinder our ability to foster creativity and innovation in education,” he warns. Effective educational practices should foster exploration rather than rote memorisation. “Course structures need to provide general guidance, allowing students the freedom to innovate and devise creative solutions,” he asserts. Equally important is the professional development of educators themselves. As Dr Al Mamari aptly puts it, “A teacher who fails to grow cannot inspire creativity in their students. Sticking to the same outdated strategies stifles innovation.” Beyond the classroom, families play an essential role in nurturing creativity. Parents are encouraged to let their children explore their curiosities safely. Dr Al Mamari emphasises, “Freedom fosters creativity; excessive control can diminish it.” The content children consume through media can significantly shape their perspectives. Experiences influence internal dialogues and values, which contribute to creative thoughts. Thus, it is vital to provide children with a variety of experiences while ensuring their safety. Nations can act as incubators for creativity by supporting small and medium enterprises focused on

innovative ideas. Effective policies will ensure that creative projects are viable and relevant in the marketplace. Moreover, urban planning plays a crucial role in fostering creative communities. Dr Al Mamari points out that cities designed with a people-first approach tend to inspire greater creativity. For instance, the planning of Sultan Haitham City in Muscat integrates green spaces and accessible facilities, nurturing an environment conducive to innovation. “By connecting green spaces and buildings, we cultivate a fertile environment for creative expression,” he explains. Every member of society can contribute to accelerating creative growth. When communities appreciate beauty and innovation, they create competitive environments that motivate individuals toward excellence. This, in turn, fosters a vibrant marketplace for unique products. To remain competitive, individuals must embrace ongoing learning and technological advancements, coupled with a willingness to take calculated risks. Technological innovations, particularly in the realms of computing and artificial intelligence, have significantly shaped creativity in Oman. Dr Al Mamari underscores the value of staying informed about global achievements to inspire local innovation. “Omanis have a golden opportunity to create and innovate based on what is currently being achieved across the globe,” he elaborates, citing the development of local computers, such as the Onsor, as a case in point. However, with technological advancements come challenges, such as intellectual property concerns and the risk of automation replacing human creativity. Dr Al Mamari advocates for a balanced approach to technology, emphasising collaboration between human creativity and technological tools to reap benefits while avoiding pitfalls. The interplay between environment, education, family, and societal engagement is vital in nurturing creativity in Oman. By acknowledging and supporting these interconnected elements, we can collectively drive forward the spirit of innovation that defines humanity and enriches society.

