

OMAN
Observer
DAILY

SUNRISE 06:34 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 05:18 AM

DHUHR 12:25 PM

ASR 03:44 PM

MAGHRIB 06:12 PM

ISHA 07:22 PM



2010000387405



11
**FERNANDES
INSPIRES MAN UTD
FIGHTBACK FOR
EVERTON DRAW**

INBRIEF

HM GREET'S LEADERS
ON NATIONAL DAY

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam, on the occasion of his country's National Day.

His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah for good health and happiness and the friendly people of his country to achieve their aspirations of further progress and growth in all sectors.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to His Majesty Emperor Naruhito of Japan on the occasion of his country's National Day. His Majesty wished the Emperor of Japan permanent success and successive achievements at all levels to meet all the aspirations of the friendly Japanese people in terms of constant developments and comprehensive growth, hoping that the relations of cooperation and partnership between the two countries would open new horizons in several fields.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Mohamed Irfaan Ali, of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, on the occasion of his country's National Day.

His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the president and the friendly people of Guyana for continued progress and development. — **ONA**

INFLATION RISES
BY 1% IN JANUARY



The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 1 per cent in January compared to the same period in 2024 for the base year 2018, according to data from the Consumer Price Index in the Sultanate of Oman issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The data indicated an increase in the prices of miscellaneous goods and services groups by 4.4 per cent, health by 3.2 per cent, transportation by 2.8 per cent, food and non-alcoholic beverages by 1 per cent, restaurants and hotels by 0.9 per cent, clothing and footwear by 0.6 per cent, recreation and culture by 0.6 per cent, furnishings, household equipment and household maintenance by 0.4 per cent and education by 0.1 per cent, while the prices of housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels; communications; and tobacco groups remained stable. **DETAILS ON P15**

Ramadhan likely to begin
on March 1 in Oman

SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
@shadadm

Observer that the first day of Ramadhan, in all likelihood, would fall on Saturday (March 1), because the moon will be on the horizon for around half an hour on the evening of Friday (February 28).

“On Friday evening, the 29th of Shaaban, 1446 or February 28, 2025, the sun will set at 6:09 pm and the moon will set at 6:40 pm. The moon will be on the horizon for around half an hour,

While the first day of Ramadhan is most likely to fall on Saturday (March 1), in the Sultanate of Oman, Eid al Fitr is expected to fall on March 31, according to astronomical data.

Abdulwahab al Busaidy, head of the observatory at Oman Astronomical Society, told the

Architecture initiative
to boost innovation

THE ARCHITECTURE Revival Initiative concluded at the Oman Across Ages Museum in the Wilayat of Manah.

Organised by the office of HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said between February 19 and 22, the Architecture Revival Initiative was aimed to raise awareness of the value of architecture and showcase architectural innovation.

The initiative came as a continuation of the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design in its first and second sessions and the design competition for the Sultanate of Oman's Pavilion at Expo Japan 2025 to enrich the architectural field in the Sultanate of Oman. The initiative targets various society segments interested in architectural design including specialists, experts and architecture students.

The initiative has received continuous follow-up and attention from HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, confirming the importance of achieving the objectives set for the initiative which include enhancing awareness of the value of architecture as a component of national identity and motivating the public to explore the Omani architecture and understand its cultural, social and economic impact. The initiative also aims to engage various society segments in debates about architecture and provide a conducive environment for creativity and leadership as well as enhancing opportunities for architecture specialists in the Omani labour market.

The initiative includes a corner for the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design, achievements zone and an interactive experience for architectural revival.

The corner allowed the visitors to view the stages of the first and second editions of the Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design and the winning



The initiative has received continuous follow-up and attention from HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said.

projects in the form of a three-dimensional model and the architectural design that won the competition for the Sultanate of Oman's corner at Expo Japan 2025.

The first edition of the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design targeted the development of the site of the Mina district in the Wilayat of Muttrah situated between the waterfront and the fish market with an area of 7,500 square metre. Muttrah Square project designed by Ahmed bin Mohammed al Jahdhami, Umaima bint Mahmoud al Hinaiyah and Abdullah bin Saleh al Bahri, won first place.

The second edition of the award aimed to design the Oman Maritime Museum in the Wilayat of Sur to document Oman's rich maritime history and highlight the brilliance of Omanis throughout history in their relationship with the sea. Mohammed bin Salah bin Ali al Balushi won first place.

The award also launched a competition for the design of the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion at Expo Japan 2025. A team comprising Bayan bint Muslim al Ramadaniyah, Ammar bin Abdul al Kiyumi and Nayera bint Khamis al Hinaiyah, won first place. The Achievements Zone takes the visitor on a journey through a visual presentation of the Bilarab bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design in its first and second editions and the award's contribution to developing the Omani architectural scene. — **ONA**

CBO unlocks RO 4.5 billion for home ownership by citizens

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) is poised to drive a substantive change in the landscape of home ownership for Omanis through transformative regulatory initiatives focused on mortgage lending. By significantly enhancing the framework governing personal lending from licensed banks, the central bank has unlocked over RO 4.5 billion Omani in lending capacity, enabling banks to meet the growing demand for home ownership among Omanis at competitive rates. This initiative is a cornerstone of the broader vision for a more stable and prosperous society, aligning with the aspirations outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

The emphasis on mortgage lending is crucial, as it directly addresses the need for affordable financing options, empowering families across the nation to secure homes that provide them with dignity and stability. This commitment reflects the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik — who advocates for the welfare and prosperity of all Omanis. By expanding access to



housing loans, the central bank is not only increasing home ownership rates but also enriching the quality of life for low-income individuals and retirees who have historically faced barriers to financing.

In parallel, the central bank is implementing significant measures to promote economic diversification and create job opportunities for Omanis. By directing a substantial portion of funds from the loan portfolios of licensed banks into vital non-oil sectors — such as tourism, manufacturing, renewable energy, education, agriculture, fisheries, renewable energy, mining, logistics and transportation, and healthcare — these initiatives are set to stimulate growth and development across the economy. With an estimated financing capacity exceeding \$25 billion to be allocated to these targeted sectors over the next five years, these efforts will empower banks to play a vital role in not only facilitating home ownership but also promoting a more sustainable and vibrant economic future for the Sultanate of Oman.

ADVERTORIAL

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN INTRODUCES TRANSFORMATIVE REGULATORY MEASURES

THE CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN UNVEILS TRANSFORMATIVE REGULATORY MEASURES DESIGNED
TO PROPEL OMAN’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION AGENDA



INTRODUCTION

In a bold and visionary step that aligns with Oman Vision 2040, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has launched transformative regulatory initiatives aimed at enhancing the Sultanate’s economic diversification efforts. These

strategic measures are designed to support the National Development Strategy and national priorities, with the goal of significantly stimulating non-oil GDP growth and job creation. This pivotal action underscores the CBO’s vital



role in promoting financial stability and fostering sustainable economic development in Oman. As Oman strides toward its developmental objectives, the CBO has taken proactive measures to ensure that banks allocate a significant

portion of their lending portfolios to key non-oil sectors identified as essential for economic advancement. This strategic focus is anticipated to unlock approximately USD 25 billion in new bank credit over the next five years, accelerating the nation’s transition to a diversified, knowledge-driven economy in accordance with Oman Vision 2040.

KEY IDENTIFIED SECTORS & UNLOCKING OF CREDIT TARGETED

The CBO’s new directives establish clear lending targets for banks, mandating increased credit allocations to critical sectors by 2030. These sectors encompass the following:



ENHANCING FINANCIAL ACCESSIBILITY AND SECTORAL GROWTH

To facilitate robust lending in these targeted sectors, the CBO has outlined several key initiatives for banks:

- **Competitive Interest Rates:** Banks are encouraged to offer attractive interest rates that reflect lowered funding costs resulting from capital relief measures.
- **Dedicated Credit Units:** Financial institutions are urged to create specialized teams focused on addressing the unique needs of the identified sectors.
- **Skill Development:** Banks must invest in training their staff to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the distinct requirements of these industries, enabling effective financing solutions.
- **Streamlined Approval Processes:** Banks

are directed to implement efficient approval procedures to ensure timely access to credit for businesses operating within these sectors.

- **Ongoing Monitoring:** Regular reporting requirements will allow the CBO to track progress and ensure accountability.

CAPITAL RELIEF MEASURES & RISK MANAGEMENT TOOLS FOR BANKS

To incentivize banks in achieving these sectoral lending targets, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has instituted sophisticated and strategic capital relief measures. This scientific approach aims to strengthen banks’ capital buffers, empowering them to enhance their lending capabilities to these crucial sectors. Furthermore, the CBO has provided banks with advanced liquidity management tools, enabling them to navigate market fluctuations with precision and effectively manage interest rate risks. This empowers banks to optimize their funding

structures, offering more competitive pricing to customers and contributing to the overall stability and growth of the financial ecosystem.

PROJECTED ECONOMIC IMPACT

The targeted financing of over USD 25 billion is poised to unlock substantial economic value, advancing Oman’s diversification agenda and potentially increasing non-oil GDP by over 50 billion dollars. This initiative will enhance the nation’s economic resilience and stability, positioning Oman for sustained growth.

ALIGNING WITH OMAN VISION 2040

This initiative is a critical milestone in realizing the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040, which envisions a sustainable and diversified economy. By channeling funds into sectors that drive innovation, infrastructure development, and job creation, the CBO is reaffirming its commitment to developing

a resilient financial system that underpins national prosperity.

CONCLUSION

The CBO’s plan is a transformative initiative designed to empower banks to expand credit, paving the way for a more diversified and resilient economy. By strategically directing financial resources toward essential non-oil sectors, this initiative not only aligns with Oman Vision 2040 but also ensures that the banking sector plays an active and constructive role in national development. As banks recalibrate their lending strategies and businesses seize new financial opportunities, Oman stands on the brink of a future marked by robust economic growth, innovation, and long-term sustainability. The CBO’s leadership in this endeavor highlights its unwavering commitment to national prosperity, marking a pivotal moment in the Sultanate’s economic trajectory and setting the stage for a thriving, diversified economy.

TRANSFORMING HOMEOWNERSHIP

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN UNLOCKS OVER **4.5 BILLION RIALS** TO EMPOWER CITIZENS IN ACHIEVING THEIR HOMEOWNERSHIP DREAMS



INTRODUCTION

AS part of the regulatory transformative measures adopted by the Central Bank of Oman, aiming to achieve a prosperous and sustainable economic future for the Sultanate of Oman in alignment with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, an important and substantial update and review has been carried out to the regulatory framework concerning personal loans/financing in the banking sector. The financing encompasses the portfolio of housing loans/financing and personal financing options offered by licensed banks.

OBJECTIVE

PROVIDING HOUSING FINANCING AND LOANS TO OMANIS:

The updated regulatory measures from the Central Bank directed at licensed banks within the Sultanate of Oman, are fundamentally designed to enable Omanis in securing the financing needed for homeownership and construction, thereby ensuring a dignified standard of living in alignment with the visions of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik - may God protect him. These measures also expand access to loans for low-income individuals and retirees,

The revised regulatory measures introduced by the Central Bank of Oman to enhance housing financing and loans are set to potentially unlock more than OMR 4.5 billion (4,500,000,000) within licensed banks.

enabling more citizens to benefit from these opportunities. Moreover, the anticipated rise in housing loans is expected to invigorate and drive growth in the real estate market across the Sultanate of Oman.

These revised regulatory measures introduced by the Central Bank of Oman to enhance housing financing and loans are set to potentially unlock more than OMR 4.5 billion (4,500,000,000) within licensed banks.

This substantial allocation for housing loans will not only improve access to financing for homeowners but will also bolster the capital adequacy ratios of these banks, enhancing greater financial stability throughout the sector.

GROWTH OF FINANCING CAPACITY IN LICENSED BANKS:

The measures are expected to enhance the financing ratios and lending capacities of banks in the area of personal housing loans, enabling them to effectively address the increasing demand among Omanis for homeownership and construction.

REGULATORY CONTROLS ENHANCING CONSUMERS' RIGHTS:

From a regulatory standpoint, the measures introduced by the Central Bank of Oman also grant banks

greater operational flexibility while ensuring adherence to principles of transparency, disclosure, and financial consumer protection for citizens seeking personal housing loans and financing. This approach aims to facilitate smooth repayment processes, enhancing the overall quality of banking loans and financing while reducing the default rate, ultimately supporting the goals of sustainable financial stability.

Furthermore, banks will have the option to include insurance and registration costs in the loan amount. Notably, there will be no processing fees for personal loan granted to pensioners with monthly pension below OMR 1000/-, and repayment charges will also be waived for this group.

CONCLUSION

The Central Bank of Oman is confident that the regulatory measures concerning housing loans will effectively meet their goals of enhancing homeownership among Omanis while stimulating and revitalizing the real estate market. These initiatives are designed to provide citizens with valuable opportunities to purchase and own housing units, thereby supporting the sustainable economic growth of the Sultanate of Oman.



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SHORT TAKES

OMAN, FAO TEAM UP TO ENHANCE BIOSECURITY FRAMEWORK

MUSCAT: Top officials from Oman's leading agricultural, environmental and health agencies will join forces with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to bolster the biosecurity framework. A three-day workshop, commencing tomorrow, February 24, will focus on FAO's Integrated Biosecurity Index (IBI) and marks the latest initiative in this collaborative effort.

With global trade, climate change and emerging biological threats placing increasing pressure on biosecurity frameworks worldwide, Oman is proactively addressing these challenges. The workshop will introduce participants to FAO's IBI, a self-assessment tool designed to help countries monitor biosecurity risks, enhance regulatory systems and develop coordinated response strategies.

The 3-day workshop will see government officials, scientists and technical experts to gain valuable skills in applying the IBI assessment tool. Participants will learn to identify biosecurity vulnerabilities and implement evidence-based improvements. A key outcome of the workshop will be the formation of a national panel of biosecurity specialists, which will contribute to shaping future policies and action plans in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. Oman joins a select group of countries, including Bahrain, Ethiopia and the Philippines, that have piloted or are piloting the IBI framework. As one of the first to implement it, Oman is positioning itself as a regional leader in biosecurity governance and intersectoral coordination to manage risks effectively. This workshop underscores FAO's ongoing commitment to global biosecurity as the organisation approaches its 80th anniversary. For eight decades, FAO has played a crucial role in international efforts to combat hunger, improve nutrition and strengthen agricultural systems. This initiative in Oman exemplifies FAO's continued dedication to supporting nations in safeguarding their food supplies, protecting their environments and building resilience against emerging threats.

Celebrating Japan-Oman ties on Emperor's birthday

IT IS with profound respect and warm regards that I extend my greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman on the occasion of the 65th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, celebrated on February 23.

The bond between Japan and Oman is a testament to the enduring strength of our relationship, grounded in mutual respect, understanding, and trust. This enduring partnership transcends not only historical and diplomatic ties but also reflects the close rapport shared by our imperial and royal families. As the Japanese community in Oman expresses its deep admiration and respect for His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, we also extend our heartfelt wishes for the continued prosperity of His Majesty, whose visionary leadership propels Oman's progress.

The Japan-Oman relationship holds great significance, with over five decades of collaboration marked by enduring ties. While Oman has broadened its engagement across Asia, its relationship with Japan remains distinctive and unparalleled. We eagerly look forward to further opportunities for royal and imperial visits, which will deepen our shared history and open new paths for cooperation.

Maritime security remains a cornerstone of collaboration between Japan and Oman. As maritime nations, both countries understand the critical importance of this domain, particularly in the complex regional landscape. Japan's Maritime



JOTA YAMAMOTO, Japanese Ambassador to Oman

The Japan-Oman relationship holds great significance, with over five decades of collaboration marked by enduring ties. While Oman has broadened its engagement across Asia, its relationship with Japan remains distinctive and unparalleled. We eagerly look forward to further opportunities for royal and imperial visits, which will deepen our shared history and open new paths for cooperation.



Expo 2025 poster

Self-Defence Force plays an active role in the region, and Oman continues to be a trusted partner. The recent Indian Ocean Conference in Muscat further underscored the importance of this partnership, with Japan's State Minister for Foreign Affairs actively engaging in discussions on maritime security.

Cultural ties between our nations continue to thrive. Last year, Japanese manga artists, invited by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth, engaged with Omani audiences, fostering artistic exchange. The Oman Japan Friendship Association (OJFA) recently hosted a Japanese orchestra at the Royal Opera House Muscat, further solidifying the cultural bonds between our nations. Additionally,

the OJFA plays a key role in advancing Japanese language education in Oman, with exceptional leadership from Chairman Sheikh Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan and the enduring contributions of Sheikh Mohammed Saud Bahwan.

The 'Ship for World Youth (SWY) Committee – Oman' has been instrumental in nurturing people-to-people connections. Through initiatives such as Oman-Japan Day and SWY Weekend, this committee continues to strengthen ties among young leaders from both countries.

In sports and business, our partnership continues to flourish. The MICE sector has enabled exchanges in sports such as table tennis, hockey, and golf, allowing Japanese athletes to experience the rich culture of Oman firsthand. Economically, Japan has been a valued partner in Oman's energy sector for over 50 years. As both nations pivot toward green energy, Japan is proud to support Oman's leadership in hydrogen projects. With eight major hydrogen initiatives underway, Japan is actively involved in two of these groundbreaking ventures.

Oman's proactive participation in Expo 2025 Osaka-Kansai, under the leadership of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, will further enhance business cooperation across multiple sectors.

On this momentous occasion, I extend my deepest gratitude to all those who contribute to the strengthening of Japan-Oman relations.



Tender

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
2/2025/PEIE/HQ-2	Water supply services and related facilities for Raysut Industrial City	09-03-2025	27-03-2025	Construction	First and above	1000

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted on line on given website. The Tenderer must enclose electronic copy of Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of **1%** of the Tender value validity for **(90)** days, and addressed to The Chairman of Tender Committee mentioned in above tenders.

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@gstb.gov.om and **+968 24402200**

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

Madaayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.



@madaaynoman

Oman honours educators on Feb 24

MUSCAT: Every year on February 24, Oman commemorates Teachers' Day in recognition of the tireless efforts and invaluable contributions of educators in shaping the nation's future. This day serves as a heartfelt tribute to teachers who dedicate themselves to nurturing young minds, instilling virtuous values, and fostering a culture of knowledge and progress.

To mark this occasion, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has declared Sunday, February 23, as a holiday for all public and private schools across the Sultanate of Oman, allowing educators and students to fully embrace the spirit of gratitude and appreciation.

The unwavering commitment of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the teaching profession has been evident through his ongoing efforts to enhance education in Oman. His Majesty has consistently ensured that educators receive the support they need to keep pace with evolving teaching methodologies, modern technologies and advancements in artificial intelligence. His dedication was particularly highlighted during his visit to Sultan Faisal bin Turki School for Boys in Al Amerat, Muscat, where he engaged with students and educators, emphasising the importance of equipping schools with state-of-the-art resources. Schools built in recent years have



Dedicating a day to teachers is a symbolic gesture of profound respect and appreciation for their role in nation-building

been provided with the latest educational tools, digital learning platforms and smart teaching techniques, reinforcing the Sultanate of Oman's vision for a knowledge-driven future.

Dedicating a day to teachers is a symbolic gesture of profound respect and appreciation for their role in nation-building, character development and academic excellence. It underscores the leadership's commitment to fostering a strong educational foundation that empowers teachers

and, in turn, prepares students for the future.

Furthermore, Omani Teachers' Day serves as an inspiration and motivation for educators, encouraging them to continue their journey of shaping young minds with renewed passion and dedication. By acknowledging their pivotal role, Oman reaffirms its commitment to enhancing the education sector, supporting teachers, and nurturing a generation that will lead the nation towards progress and innovation.

SHORT TAKES



Omani-Saudi Council explores investment in Al Dhahirah

IBRI: Members of the Omani-Saudi Business Council visited Al Dhahirah Governorate to explore investment and trade opportunities in the governorate. They were received by Najeeb bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah, along with walis, members of the Majlis Ash'shura and Municipal Councils and several officials from both sides.

During the meeting, the Governor highlighted Al Dhahirah's strategic advantages, including its historical significance, natural resources and proximity to the Saudi border. He also outlined key development projects and investment opportunities in the governorate. A visual presentation by 'Obaz' showcased the integrated special economic zone in Ibri, emphasising its potential as an industrial and logistical hub with attractive incentives for investors.

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) provided an overview of targeted sectors, digital infrastructure and investment benefits of Ibri Industrial City. Presentations also covered major projects such as Ibri View, Al Safa Resort, and initiatives by Al Dhahirah International Development and Investment Company. — ONA

MoHERI, SQU launch Innovation Accelerator Programme

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), represented by the Department of Incubators and Business Accelerators, in collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University, launched the training camp for the Innovation Accelerator Initiative (Itlaq). The programme will run for six months.

During the opening ceremony, Iman bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah, Director of the Department of Incubators and Business Accelerators at the Ministry, delivered a keynote speech introducing the training camp, outlining the services it offers, its objectives and key expectations.

Experts from SQU presented a visual briefing on their roles in the programme. This was followed by participating start-ups showcasing their ideas and projects.

The Itlaq Accelerator is an initiative by the MoHERI in partnership with SQU, aimed at empowering innovators and refining their skills during the research and development phase. The programme features an intensive six-month training camp designed to enhance participants' technical and commercial capabilities. This will accelerate the innovation development process, foster the creation of innovation-driven start-ups, introduce pioneering products to the market and bridge the gap between academia and industry. The programme targets innovators,



The programme aims at empowering innovators and refining their skills during the research and development phase

start-up founders seeking to enhance their products and develop their business models, and creative visionaries focused on transforming every product or service into an opportunity to revolutionise their industry. It offers flexible participation, allowing teams to attend training workshops.

Moreover, the accelerator provides participating start-ups with the opportunity to engage with a network of local and international experts, benefit from training courses and workshops, and connect with a broad range of investors, partners and entrepreneurs.

TRADITIONAL WEAPONS SHOOTING CHAMPIONSHIP CONCLUDES IN MUSANDAM



KHASAB: The third edition of the Traditional Weapons Shooting Championship concluded in Musandam Governorate, under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam. The event witnessed remarkable participation from skilled marksmen, reaffirming the significance of traditional shooting as a deeply rooted part of Omani heritage.

The championship saw fierce competition, with Idris bin Mohammed al Saadi securing first place, Said bin Zaid al Dhahouri claiming second, and Rashid bin Khadem al Shehhi finishing in third.

— ONA

Barka Desalination boosts community support

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, FEB 23

BARKA Desalination Company has launched a series of charitable initiatives at the office of the Wali of Barka. The event, held under the auspices of Sayyid Tariq bin Mahmoud al Busaidy, Wali of Barka, was attended by the company's CEO, Asim bin Ali al Rashdi.

These initiatives are designed to support families registered with the Barka Charity Team and the Zakat and Charity Committee, focusing on three key areas of food baskets, Iftar Saem (fast-breaking meals) and Eid support for orphans.

During the launch, Sayyid Tariq bin Mahmoud al Busaidy praised the company's efforts, emphasising that such initiatives set a precedent for other businesses to follow.

"This initiative will inspire other companies, particularly those operating in the region, to contribute to charitable efforts, especially as the holy month approaches and the needs of families increase," he said.

He highlighted the critical role of the private sector in supporting vulnerable communities, noting that these initiatives foster social cohesion and strengthen the values of generosity and giving.

Dr Saleh Hamed al Alawi echoed this sentiment, stating that such efforts reflect the company's evolving approach to corporate social responsibility.

"Barka Desalination Company maintains a strong connection with its community. It



The initiatives are designed to support families registered with the Barka Charity Team and Zakat and Charity Committee

is not just an isolated entity; it has become an integral part of the society in which it operates, playing a significant role in social support and religious observance during the holy month."

Dr Al Alawi emphasised the company's focus on empowering Omani entrepreneurs and small business owners, recognising their impact on economic and social well-being. CEO Asim bin Ali al Rashdi reiterated that community service remains a core pillar of the company's mission, ensuring that aid reaches those who need it most through collaboration with the Wali's office and local charities.

"We are committed to making these initiatives as impactful as possible by working closely with relevant authorities to maximise their reach and effectiveness," he said.

Operations Manager Sergyous Kirollos further stressed that social responsibility is embedded in the company's long-term strategy.

"Our commitment extends beyond direct assistance. We aim to support sustainable development initiatives that enhance the quality of life in the community," he noted.

With Ramadhan approaching, these initiatives will play a vital role in alleviating hardships for underprivileged families, reinforcing the spirit of giving and collective responsibility within Omani society. By encouraging other companies to take part in similar efforts, Barka Desalination Company hopes to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment, bridging the gap between the private sector and the local community.



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
85/ 2025	Implementing the national registry project for persons with disabilities	Companies specialized in the field of information technology and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree.	Friday 14-03-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 03-04-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
86/ 2025	Supply of paper recycling machine (for workshops) Al Wafa Center for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities at Salalah	Companies specialized in supplying office and educational tools, materials and supplies Registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Friday 14-03-2025 02:00 PM	Thursday 03-04-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	Not Applicable
87/ 2025	Purchase of vital signs measuring devices for severe and multiple disabilities (Dar Al Aman)	Companies specialized in the field of supplying medical supplies Registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Tuesday 04-03-2025 02:00 PM	Sunday 16-03-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	Not Applicable

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at theTender Board e-tendering digital portal link (**https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om**). On **Sunday 23/02/2025**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (**reg@tenderboard.gov.om**) tel. (**24402200**).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”

www.mosd.gov.om

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



183 male and female graduates are competing for the open positions

MoL HOLDS EMPLOYMENT TESTS FOR DHOFAR GRADUATES

SALALAH: The Ministry of Labour conducted recruitment tests at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Dhofar Governorate, to fill several vacant positions at the university. This initiative is part of the ministry’s ongoing efforts to employ Omani youth in various sectors across Oman. A total of 183 male and female graduates, holding university degrees in computer and network engineering or post-secondary diplomas in information technology, are competing for these positions. The recruitment tests are part of the ministry’s broader efforts to provide opportunities for national cadres who meet the qualifications required for specific roles. This initiative aims to support the growth and development of the governorates through employment in both the public and private sectors.

The tests reflect the Ministry of Labour’s continued commitment to enhancing the professional capabilities of Omani youth and contributing to the nation’s progress. — ONA

2025 GRADUATES FORUM



AL MUSANNAH: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), Al Musannah branch, hosted the 2025 Graduates Forum last week bringing together over 100 graduates from various academic disciplines. Held at Barceló Resort in Al Musannah, Al Batinah South Governorate, the event served as a dynamic platform for networking, experience-sharing, professional collaboration and strengthening institutional ties.

57 YOUTH HONOURED AT FAJR INITIATIVE AWARD CEREMONY

MUSCAT: The Fajr Initiative Award Ceremony celebrated the dedication of 57 young participants who successfully completed a 30-day Fajr prayer challenge. Held at Al Noor Mosque, Darsait, the event witnessed a turnout of over 130 attendees, including parents, community leaders and distinguished guests. Among them were Shaikh Salim al Ghammari, CEO of Muttrah Zakat Committee, and Shaikh Ibrahim al Wahaibi who presented awards to the young achievers, recognising

their perseverance and commitment to faith. The evening commenced with a recitation of the Holy Quran, setting a spiritual tone for the ceremony. The event underscored the vital role of parental and community support, with over 60 parents actively engaging in the initiative.

The Fajr Initiative volunteer team expressed gratitude to all those who contributed to the programme’s success, encouraging its replication across Oman’s mosques to strengthen Islamic

values among the youth.

A key highlight was the presentation of the initiative’s project report, which detailed its impact and future goals. Organisers emphasised that this was just the beginning, outlining ambitious plans to support knowledge-seekers and expand faith-based community initiatives. The young generation was urged to stay focused, embody good manners, and recognise that true success lies in both moral and spiritual excellence.

SQU Council holds key meeting for 2024-2025



Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah chaired the SQU Council meeting

THE Sultan Qaboos University Council convened for its second meeting of the 2024-2025 academic year, chaired by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. The meeting focused on the university’s progress, including updates on academic sectors and the implementation

of key decisions aimed at enhancing scientific programmes. The Council emphasised expanding specialisations and increasing academic offerings to boost the university’s scientific standing while meeting labour market needs.

Notably, the Council approved new PhD programmes in Law and in Operations

Management and Supply Chains at the College of Economics and Political Science. Additionally, the Council endorsed the Code of Ethical and Professional Conduct for the university. The meeting concluded with a reaffirmed commitment to improving academic performance and tracking the university’s strategic goals. — ONA

FSA, CBO LAUNCH AWARENESS PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT FINTECH GROWTH

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA), in collaboration with the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), has launched an awareness programme for fintech companies as part of their joint efforts to enhance financial literacy, foster innovation and promote knowledge-sharing to stimulate the financial services

sector. The programme features a series of training workshops designed to address key areas of interest for emerging fintech companies.

These sessions aim to equip participants with essential knowledge about Oman’s business environment, the role of the FSA in supporting fintech companies

operating within regulated sectors, and critical aspects such as licencing requirements, anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorism financing (CTF) frameworks, and best practices in securing funding for emerging projects. Additionally, the workshops will explore opportunities and challenges within the financial sector.

Industry experts from the FSA and CBO will lead the sessions, offering in-depth insights into the Fintech Co-Regulatory Sandbox, legislative frameworks for fintech firms, and

the importance of compliance with regulatory requirements to ensure long-term success and sustainability in the financial market.

Notably, fintech companies are at the forefront of digital transformation in the financial sector, leveraging technological innovations to provide advanced services such as e-payment solutions, digital lending and smart investment platforms.

These innovations enhance customer experience and improve the operational efficiency of financial institutions.

Technology, craftsmanship converge at Salalah Exhibition

SALALAH: The Technology and Handicrafts Exhibition, organised by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department, was concluded at the picturesque Hawana Salalah Resort in Dhofar Governorate. The exhibition, which began on Thursday, offered a unique opportunity to explore the convergence of Oman’s rich traditional crafts with cutting-edge technology. This event brought together 20 local entrepreneurs and artisans who present a stunning array of products that showcase the best of Omani craftsmanship, infused with modern innovations.

The exhibition featured a diverse range of handicrafts, including pottery and porcelain, intricately woven palm fronds, high-quality leather goods, luxurious cosmetics and perfumes, aromatic incense and frankincense, textiles, and delicate silver and gypsum creations. Each exhibit provided a glimpse into the artistic ingenuity of local craftsmen and entrepreneurs, offering both functional and decorative items

that are deeply rooted in Oman’s cultural heritage.

Mohammed bin Ahmed al Ghassani, Director of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department in Dhofar Governorate, in his insightful speech emphasised that the exhibition reflects the growing significance of Omani craftsmanship in both the economic and social spheres. Al Ghassani noted that the event serves as a marketing platform to showcase these products and promote them to local and international communities.

“The exhibition is a celebration of Omani craftsmanship, and it highlights the positive development of craft products that have evolved in response to modern market needs,” Al Ghassani explained. “Our aim is to continue supporting the growth of these industries and to enable Omani crafts to reach wider markets, both locally and globally. Through the exhibition, we can witness the positive impact of various craft training programmes, which have greatly improved the quality of products.”



The three-day exhibition offered a unique opportunity to explore the convergence of rich traditional crafts with cutting-edge technology

The Director further acknowledged that the combination of continuous training and modern technology has played a crucial role in the development of Omani crafts. The result is a collection of products that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also highly competitive in local, regional and international markets.

Shaima bint Hafeez Ba’alawi, a

second crafts specialist, highlighted the significant advancements in Omani handicrafts over recent years. She pointed out that the integration of modern technologies, along with consistent professional training, has contributed to the enhanced quality of Omani products, making them more attractive and marketable. This development has been instrumental

in positioning Omani crafts as contenders in the competitive global marketplace.

One of the major highlights of this year’s exhibition was the introduction of advanced technologies that are poised to elevate the handicraft industry. Among the groundbreaking projects featured are the use of 3D printing technology to develop new craft designs and the innovative smart mirror project, which offers an interactive marketing experience for visitors. These cutting-edge projects aimed to create a more engaging and modern way for customers to interact with the products, offering an immersive and futuristic approach to the world of handicrafts.

The exhibition also served as an important space for networking and collaboration between various stakeholders in the crafts sector, including entrepreneurs, government officials and private sector partners. It provides a platform for exchanging ideas and fostering growth through shared knowledge and resources. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



US President Donald Trump speaks in the Oval Office of the White House, in Washington. — Reuters file photo

TRUMP URGES MUSK TO BE ‘MORE AGGRESSIVE’ IN CUTS

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he would like his billionaire advisor Elon Musk to get “more aggressive” in implementing his reform agenda cutting back the federal government. “Elon is doing a great job, but I would like to see him get more aggressive,” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. “Remember, we have a country to save.”

Trump has put the tech entrepreneur in charge of the Department of Government Efficiency, tasking him with slashing public spending and tackling waste and alleged corruption. Musk has led the effort to fire swaths of the federal workforce. In the latest cuts announced on Friday, the US Defense Department will cut its civilian workforce by at least five per cent. Trump’s administration has already begun firing many other federal workers who are on probationary status. A judge on Thursday denied a union bid to temporarily halt the firing of thousands of people. The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is a free-ranging entity run by Musk, though the cost-cutting spree has been met with pushback on several fronts. — AFP

GERMANY HEADS TO ELECTIONS UNDER US-EU RIFT



People wave German flags as they attend a march of extreme right supporters, in Berlin. — AFP

BERLIN: German politicians made a final scramble for votes on Saturday on the eve of key elections in which conservatives hope to win despite the dramatic rise of the far right targeting a record score. Sunday’s vote is being held more than half a year ahead of schedule after centre-left Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s three-way coalition collapsed in early November.

The conservative CDU-CSU alliance, led by Friedrich Merz, has long had a strong lead in opinion polls on around 30 per cent, double that of Scholz’s SPD. The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) has been polling in second place on around 20 per cent, boosted by anger over a spate of deadly knife attacks and car rammings blamed on migrants.

With domestic tensions running high, two far-right demonstrations as well as a counter protest are expected to draw crowds in Berlin on Saturday. In a final TV debate with Scholz on Wednesday, the CDU’s Merz called on Germans to give him a strong mandate to “solve the country’s two major problems: migration and the economy”. — AFP

DISASTER FUNDING

California requests \$40 bn for fire aid



California Governor Gavin Newsom is asking Congress for nearly \$40 billion in disaster funding to help Los Angeles recover and rebuild areas scorched by last month’s devastating wildfires. “It’s going to take an all-hands-on-deck approach to rebuild from the devastating fires in LA,” Newsom said. “I’m asking Congress to have the back of the American people and provide disaster funding to help Californians recover and rebuild as soon as possible,” he added. — Reuters

FRANCE STILL SEEKING TO BLOCK EU-MERCOSUR TRADE DEAL

PARIS: France is still trying to assemble a “blocking minority” within the European Union to prevent a trade deal with four South American countries from coming into force, President Emmanuel Macron said on Saturday. The deal between Brussels and Mercosur bloc members Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay was announced as a “win-win” by EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen in December but is facing stiff opposition from France and

agricultural groups. “Our farmers cannot become an adjustment tool,” Macron told reporters at France’s Agriculture Show which opened in Paris. “Neither an adjustment tool for purchasing power... nor an adjustment tool for trade agreements,” Macron said. “This is also why we are opposed to the Mercosur accord in the form that it was signed.” Although negotiations have concluded, the EU-Mercosur deal

still needs to be approved by at least 15 of the European Union’s 27 member nations representing a minimum of 65 per cent of the EU population. Germany, Spain, Portugal and others have welcomed the agreement, but France, with backing from Italy and Poland, said from the start that it was not acceptable in its current form. Macron added that he will urge US President Donald Trump to avoid making allies “suffer” by imposing new tariffs on their goods. — AFP

Gaza war witnesses new release under truce

PALESTINIANS on Saturday freed six Israeli hostages, the last living captives to be released under the first phase of a fragile truce that is also expected to see Palestinian prisoners released. Freedom for the captives caps an emotional two days in Israel, where the family of another hostage, Shiri Bibas, earlier on Saturday confirmed receipt of her remains. Bibas and her two young sons had become symbols of the ordeal suffered by Israeli hostages since the Gaza war began.

At a ceremony in Nuseirat, central Gaza, masked Hamas members brought onto a stage Eliya Cohen, 27, Omer Shem Tov, 22, and Israeli-Argentine Omer Wenkert, 23. They waved while holding release certificates before their handover to the Red Cross, who took them away in a convoy after more than 16 months of captivity, a correspondent said. The military said they later were back home on Israeli soil. At a similar ceremony earlier Saturday in Rafah, southern Gaza, gunmen handed over Tal Shoham, 40, and Avera Mengistu, 38. Shoham was made to address the gathering, flanked by armed and masked fighters dressed all in black.

In the Israeli city of Tel Aviv, hundreds who gathered at a site known as “Hostages Square” applauded and some appeared to weep as they watched the releases. A sixth hostage, thought to be Hisham al Sayed, 37, was also later handed over to the Red Cross, Israel’s military said. “Our family has endured 10 years and five months of unimaginable suffering”, Mengistu’s



A Palestinian woman walks among Hamas fighters in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip. — AFP

Palestinians had prepared for a now well-practised ceremony, with stages in front of large posters promoting the militants’ cause or praising fallen fighters. Under a cold winter rain in Rafah, and in Nuseirat, Hamas staged a show of force after months of bombardment and strikes that killed the group’s top leaders.

family said in a statement. Relatives of Shoham wept and embraced as they watched his handover, video released by Israel’s government showed.

“We saw that Tal seems well considering the circumstances. An enormous weight is lifted from us,” the family of the Austrian-Israeli dual national said in a statement. The releases came under the first phase of a ceasefire deal which began on January 19 and is due to expire in early March.

At both locations the Palestinians had prepared for a now well-practised ceremony, with stages in front of large posters promoting the militants’ cause or praising fallen fighters. The Red Cross has repeatedly appealed for handovers to take place in a dignified manner. Under a cold winter rain in Rafah, and in Nuseirat, Hamas staged

a show of force after months of bombardment and strikes that killed the group’s top leaders. Some fighters held rifles, others rocket launchers, as nationalistic Palestinian music blared. The Palestinian Prisoners’ Club advocacy group said Israel freed 602 inmates, most of them Gazans arrested during the war. The ceasefire has so far seen 24 living Israeli hostages freed from Gaza in exchange for more than 1,100 Palestinian prisoners released from Israeli jails.

Hamas and its allies took 251 people hostage during the October 7 attack that sparked the war. There are 62 hostages still in Gaza, including 35 the Israeli military says are dead. The Hamas attack resulted in the deaths of 1,215 people. Israel’s retaliatory campaign has killed at least 48,319 people in Gaza. — AFP



LONDONERS MARCH FOR UKRAINE

LONDON: Hundreds gathered in London on Saturday to march in support of Ukraine, ahead of the third anniversary of Russia’s attack on Monday and amid increasing tensions between Washington and Kyiv. Protesters started at a statue of St Volodymyr, a national saint of Ukraine, in west London and marched towards the Russian embassy.

Britain has been a key backer of Ukraine since, sanctioning Moscow, providing financial and military support to Kyiv and opening its door to over 250,000 refugees. British public support for Ukraine is strong, with 67 per cent saying they want Ukraine to win the war. — AFP

PRODUCTIONS REVIVED

Syria’s northeast begins supplying oil



Authorities in northeast Syria have begun providing oil from local fields they manage to the central government in Damascus, Syrian oil ministry spokesman Ahmed Suleiman said on Saturday. It was the first known delivery from Syria’s oil-rich northeast to the government installed after former leader Bashar al Assad was toppled in December. Suleiman said the oil was from fields in the provinces of Hasakeh and Deir el-Zor but did not provide further details. — Reuters

PARLIAMENT DEAL

Austrian parties close to forming govt



The three biggest centrist parties in Austria’s parliament on signalled they were close to agreeing on a coalition government, almost five months after an election won by the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), which is now sidelined. A deal between the conservative People’s Party (ÖVP), Social Democrats (SPÖ) and liberal Neos would bring to an end the longest wait for a new government. A deal would yield Austria’s first three-party government since 1949. — Reuters

OPINION

How to finish everything you start



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

THIS year, I decided not to make any New Year’s resolutions simply because I have not completed many of last year’s, and I believe that I am not alone. According to a study from Columbia University, only about 25 per cent of people stay committed to their resolutions after 30 days and less than 10 per cent accomplish their goals. This made me think: Why do so many of us struggle to finish what we start?

For some, the answer can be explained by the different distractions of modern life. Emails, social media and countless obligations fragment our attention, leaving little room for sustained effort on any single task.

The book ‘How to Finish Everything You Start’ by Jan Yager suggests that the core challenges to completing our projects are not just external interruptions but also internal behaviours such as fear of failure, fear of success and over commitment. When we spread ourselves too thin, or let the fear of not being perfect hold us back, our projects languish unfinished, leading to mounting frustration both personally and professionally.

The author suggests that a critical first step

towards finishing what we start is reflecting on our habits.

Ask yourself: Are you overcommitting? Do you often get distracted or allow perfectionism to slow you down? Recognising these patterns is essential to transforming your approach. Instead of setting an overwhelming list of tasks, the advice is to focus on a single priority.

This method, encapsulated in the simple yet effective acronym FINISH, offers a road map by Focusing on one key task at a time rather than juggling multiple projects, ignoring interruptions from frequent phone checks to unnecessary emails by setting clear boundaries to reduce.

Now is the time to do it. So no more procrastination. Initiate strategies such as timers and rewards to jump-start progress. Stay on steady efforts even when the going gets tough.

And finally hail and celebrate every completed task, regardless of size, to build momentum.

The author also highlights the role of effective goal-setting in completing tasks. By defining goals with precision — using frameworks like SMART (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-

Modern life distractions such as emails, social media and countless obligations fragment our attention, leaving little room for sustained effort on any single task

related) — you transform vague aspirations into actionable targets.

Coupled with prioritisation tools such as the Time Management Matrix and Pareto’s 80/20 rule, you can identify the tasks that truly drive your progress. For example, rather than simply vowing to ‘be more productive,’ set a clear objective like ‘complete the market analysis report by Friday at 5 pm.’

An additional, often overlooked skill is learning to say no.

Overcommitting is a major roadblock to productivity. Politely declining requests that do not align with your priorities allows you to channel your energy towards the projects that matter most. This isn’t about shutting doors — it’s about protecting your time and ensuring that your commitments are sustainable.

In the end, finishing is not about ticking off every single task on your list. It’s about making intentional choices: deciding what to finish and, equally important, what to quit. By recognising your limits and focusing on what truly matters, you can transform the chaos of modern distractions into a structured pathway to achievement. This year, consider a new resolution — not to start everything, but to finish what counts.

NEPAL FIGHTS TO SAVE SACRED FORESTS

ANUP OJHA

A string of cable car projects in Nepal have sparked violent protests, with locals saying environmental protection should trump tourism development. In Nepal’s eastern district of Taplejung, the community has been torn apart by a \$22-million government-backed project many say will destroy livelihoods and damage ancient forests they hold as sacred.

Across Nepal, five cable car projects have opened in the past two years -- and 10 more are under development, according to government figures.

Critics accuse the government of failing to assess the environmental impact properly.

In January, protests at Taplejung escalated into battles with armed police, with four activists wounded by gunfire and 21 officers injured.

The protests calmed after promises construction would be suspended, but erupted again, with 14 people wounded on Thursday -- 11 of them members of the security forces. “We were in a peaceful protest but hired thugs showed us large knives and attacked us -- and we countered them,” protest committee leader Shree Linkhim Limbu said after the latest clashes.

He vowed to continue demonstrations until the project is scrapped.

Around 300,000 Hindu devotees trek for hours to Taplejung’s mountaintop Pathibhara temple every year -- a site also deeply sacred to the local Limbu people’s separate beliefs. In 2018, Chandra Prasad Dhakal, a businessman with powerful political ties who is also president of Nepal’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry, announced the construction of a 2.5-kilometre-long cable car to the temple. The government calls it a project of “national pride”.

Dhakal’s IME Group is also building other cable cars, including the 6.4-kilometre-long Sikles line in the Annapurna Conservation Area, which the Supreme Court upheld. The government deemed the project a ‘national priority’, thereby exempting it from strict planning restrictions in protected areas. The Supreme Court scrapped that controversial exemption last month, a move celebrated by environmentalists. But activists fear the project may still go ahead.

“We worship trees, stone and all living beings, but they are butchering our faith,” said Anil Subba, director of the Kathmandu-based play “Mukkamlung”, which was staged for a month as part of the protest.

The hundreds of porters and dozens of tea stall workers that support trekking pilgrims fear for their livelihoods. — AFP

Trump’s foreign policies: Confusing yet compelling

DURING his first election I supported Donald Trump not because I liked him, but because, compared to Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden, the world felt safer under his leadership. While the media obsessed over his tweets, I focused on results.

Before his potential re-election I set foreign policy benchmarks to judge whether a second Trump term would make the world safer: a ceasefire in Palestine, an end to the Ukraine war, and a nuclear deal with Iran in exchange for lifting US sanctions.

So far, we have a ceasefire in Palestine and Ukraine is edging closer to one. While Europe clings to its pro-Ukraine stance, Trump was right: this war should never have started. Russia had valid security concerns when Zelensky pursued Nato membership. Imagine if Mexico joined a Russian-led military alliance and stationed troops along the US border. Washington would lose its mind. So why is it so hard to understand why Russia reacted? Unlike the standard “Ukraine good, Russia bad” narrative, Trump’s stance makes sense.

The next big question is Iran. Will Trump strike a deal? He should. Getting Iran to commit to not pursuing nuclear weapons in exchange for lifting sanctions would ease Middle East tensions and shut down the neoncon dream of endless war. And let’s be honest if anyone can turn a nuclear negotiation into a real estate deal, it’s Trump. I can already hear him declaring “no Iran nukes, great trade deal, the best trade deal of the century. No one’s ever seen a trade deal like this.”

Then there’s Israel. Many assume Trump is fully on Netanyahu’s side, but he’s put him in a no-win situation. If Netanyahu avoids another Gaza attack, his far-right



US President Donald Trump speaks at the Governors Working Session in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP File



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a former Cambridge School Principal and an Interview Skills Advisor

base will turn on him. If he attacks without securing all hostages, mass protests could push Israel towards internal collapse. Meanwhile, Israel’s enemies aren’t just Hamas or Hezbollah anymore, global opposition is mounting. Even Syria’s instability could lead to a future government more hostile to Israel than Assad’s.

Domestically, I don’t agree with all of Trump’s policies. His statements can be reckless, even racist, and his ego is exhausting. Half the time, he sounds like he’s improvising. But on foreign policy, I’m seeing his logic again.

Economically, Trump has every

right to impose tariffs as he sees fit, but he must tread carefully to avoid making unnecessary political enemies. Those affected should recognise this as a negotiation tactic and not react impulsively. The EU often has grandiose delusions, but the reality is they need Trump more than he needs them.

My advice? Ignore Trump’s words and judge him by his actions. His rhetoric is like a rollercoaster: wild, loud, and sometimes nauseating, but his foreign policy decisions may lead to greater stability and the world might just be safer with him in charge than with that Biden and his warmonger Washington friends.

Are we just cannon fodder in environmental discussion?



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

I'M concerned for our environment, as I have been for quite some time now, yet never as a placard waving, demonstrating, protesting, 'greenie.'

I'm more of a home recycling, no littering, and try-to-do-the-right-thing-for the environment myself, and hopefully influence someone else to do the same. While that will never stop, due to me embracing my own awareness and responsibility within that do-the-right-thing ethos, a single image I saw this week has left me in me despair, when I think of our community, society, and even national efforts to save, or at least conserve the Earth.

The image was of the city, or mega-city, of Shanghai, in China. It was absolutely wreathed in an unhealthy smog, certainly to some extent poisonous, that lay on the city, suffocating to the extent that you could barely make out the contrast between its gigantic skyscrapers and its twisting, grey river. In fact, the entire image was just a hundred shades of grey, dirty, and disgusting, frightening in its asphyxiation, indiscreetly stifling, and I was horrified.

I thought to myself "What am I doing? What's the point?" Here I am, worried about a MacDonald's wrapper wafting in the wind, a plastic bottle on the beach, or a cigarette butt in the gutter. I'm worried, concerned, about trivialities, aren't I? In the greater scheme of things, what I'm doing, inspired by do-gooder

politicians who want their 'green' credentials franked, is an absolute waste of time!

Pollution, for those who don't know, is the undesirable integration of foreign substances into our land, water, or air that has a negative impact upon humans, animals, plant life, and soil. Excessive carbon monoxide in the atmosphere, results in respiratory ailments, nervous disorders, and cardiovascular disorders, while water pollution can lead to waterborne diseases, and harm to aquatic species.

When I look further, and see more images of Shanghai, and other Chinese cities, like Daqing, China's capital of oil production, Handan, and Suzhou, along with Moscow, New York, Istanbul, Seoul, London, Lagos, Mumbai, Sao Paulo, Johannesburg, Hanoi, Torino, Rotterdam, Osaka, Chennai, and Hamburg, suffering under the stultifying effects of the blanket of toxic smog, I'm absolutely devastated that world leaders have not done more.

In fact, it's a dystopian unpleasantry that national and local governments can place any value on control of the individual, even to the extent of prosecutions, when the same 'politicians,' turn a virtual blind eye to big business. Their level of collusion and corruption with manufacturers and industrialists, is such that it lets wholesale neglect occur. Ordinary Joe Bloggs gets the weight of the judiciary and the law down on him, while the 'big noters,' get barely a stern

Pollution, for those who don't know, is the undesirable integration of foreign substances into our land, water, or air that has a negative impact upon humans, animals, plant life and soil

word.

Why am I being made to feel badly about the exhaust emissions from my petrol-powered car in the face of the industrial poisoning of 'my' atmosphere, by the pharmaceutical company just a few miles down the road? I see this as a microcosm of what's happening around the world, and on a much larger scale.

Why do they allow it? Why do we put up with it? Why are we even a little concerned about such a comparatively minor issue when the big issue is standing right there in front of us?

So, excuse my cynicism, but when I got a pamphlet from my local council telling me to "recycle and reuse," to "conserve gas, electricity, and water," and to "avoid using paper," I nearly choked on my breakfast. I DO reuse, and I DO recycle. I pay for my utilities, so surely, I can decide how much I use, and let's face it, at those prices, it'll be no more than I must! And paper... well, that pamphlet could well have been a soft copy, emailed, couldn't it? Globally, local authorities are a meaningless carbuncle on the environmental landscape.

We are being 'conned' that we are the problem, therefore responsible for the solution to environmental pollution. We are not! But... if we don't keep doing our bit, being responsible individually, there is no chance of the hierarchy ever doing so, and that is so, so, disappointing.

HOW TRUMP CHOSE CAINE TO BE TOP US MILITARY OFFICER

IDREES ALI AND PHIL STEWART

Dan Caine may not have been on Washington's radar before Friday night. But President Donald Trump's fascination with the retired three-star general, his surprise pick to become the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, appears to go back to their first meeting in Iraq in 2018.

Caine, then the deputy commander of a special operations task force fighting IS, told the president that the militant group could be destroyed in just a week, Trump recalled during a speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference in 2019. Since then, he has retold the story about how he met "Razin" Caine multiple times — and the praise has only grown more effusive.

"He's a real general, not a television general," Trump said in Miami last Wednesday, two days before his Truth Social post catapulted Caine from retirement to a nomination to be the most senior active-duty officer in the US military.

If approved by the Senate, Caine will take over a military that is reeling from change in the first 30 days of the Trump administration and will inherit a Joint Staff rattled by Trump's surprise firing of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Air Force General C Q Brown.

Caine, a retired F-16 pilot, will be promoted to four-star general, and then have to undergo a potentially grueling Senate confirmation process to get a four-year term as the uniformed head of the nation's military. Caine's military career is a far cry from the traditional path to becoming the president's top military adviser. Previous generals and admirals have led a combatant command or a military branch of service.

Caine did not rise that high in the ranks before retirement. According to Trump, he was "passed over for promotion by Sleepy Joe Biden," whom Trump defeated in November's presidential campaign. "But not anymore!", Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Earlier this year Caine described on a podcast how as a young man he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his father, a fighter pilot.

"We started moving around as a kid. So I felt like this was something that I really, really, really wanted to do, was fly jets in the Air Force," Caine said. He graduated in 1990 from the Virginia Military Institute with a bachelor's degree in Arts and Economics.

Caine, who flew more than 2,800 hours in the F-16, was one of the pilots tasked with protecting Washington on September 11, 2001, when Al Qaeda hijackers slammed commercial jets into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center in New York City. Caine realised he might have to shoot down a hijacked plane if one crossed his path.

"I was very mindful that if we made a mistake or if we got it wrong or if we missed somebody and we did not shoot, the consequences of that could be catastrophic," Caine. — Reuters

Oman... A home to peace making

LAST week His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik was awarded the Prince Nayef Medal for Arab Security, excellent class, by the Council of Arab Interior Ministers. There is no surprise that the medal is the highest Arab decoration and badge of honour awarded to a great leader for his highly meritorious efforts in strengthening Arab peace and stability.

Over the last 50 years or so, Oman has maintained a state, which is not subject to change or fluctuation, of mutual concord with other peoples, governments and countries. This is due in part to the geopolitical position Oman occupies, but it must be emphasised that it is also due to the fact that the rulers of Oman descending from Al Busaid dynasty have at all times placed the interest, stability and prosperity of their country over any other considerations.

By nature, Omanis are famous for their social conduct governed by inherent rules of conduct as shown in the prevalent Omani customs. The manner in which Omanis conduct themselves is worth pausing to reflect on and commend.

While they are well known for their moral integrity, Omanis conform to a standard of right behaviour characterised by principles of right and wrong. Omanis teach their children from early childhood the conception of right behaviour in which good morals, respect for others, truthfulness, transparency and sincerity in actions and speech are the main features of the code of conduct of the society.

In Omani villages, children or neighbours do not encroach into the rights of others.

The award of this highest medal to His Majesty the Sultan is a formal acknowledgment of the great efforts towards maintaining peace within the Arab world and beyond.

The whole world should stand in reverence and admiration for His Majesty who possesses wisdom and keenness and depth of perception,



Oman has maintained a state, which is not subject to change or fluctuation, of mutual concord with other peoples, governments and countries.



DR MUSALLAM AL MA'ANI

The writer is Dean of Al Zahra College for Women

discernment, and discrimination especially in matters related to regional and international peace and stability.

What should also be acknowledged that His Majesty the Sultan draws his strength from the deep-rooted history and unwavering traditions of Al Busaid dynasty, a powerful family that maintains its position for a considerable time.

There is no doubt that His Majesty the Sultan deserves all the honour and esteem at a time it is regrettable to say that the Arab world does not have the political power nor does it exert the authority over many

crucial issues, and at a time many Arab countries are confronted with violent internal conflicts and unfortunate disagreements with their fellow Arab countries.

His Majesty the Sultan's strength and wisdom are rooted in a glorious past and an ancient legacy of Oman, passed on by the ancestors and predecessors.

The medal comes as an assertion of the unwavering commitment on the part of His Majesty the Sultan to continue playing a crucial role in the maintenance of peace, unity and stability in the Arab world, earning the Arab and global respect.

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



The new squad featured participation of many new faces to Red Warriors list

RASHEED PICKS SQUAD FOR DOMESTIC PREPARATORY CAMP

ADIL AL BALUSHI
IBRA, FEB 22

The head coach of Oman national football team, Rasheed Jaber, announced a 26-member Oman squad for the domestic preparatory camp which will take place in Muscat on Saturday and will run until March 3. The local gathering is part of the team's plan to gear up for South Korea and Kuwait matches on March 20 and 25 respectively as part of Group B games in the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26. The new squad featured participation of many new faces to Red Warriors list including three players from first division league like: Issa al Nabi and Mundher al Wahaibi (Muscat club) beside Ridhwan al Siyabi from Samayil club. The squad comprised also from five players from Al Shabab club including: Majid al Saadi, Khalid al Buraiki, Yousef al Malki, Mohammed al Ghafri and Hatim al Roushdi. Seeb players were excluded from this camp as they are gearing up to represent the country in the AFC Challenge League 2024/2025 when they will meet Kuwait's Al Arabi SC on March 5 and 12.

During the camp, Oman will play one friendly match against Niger on March 3 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. Niger team will hold a camp in Muscat during the first week of March which will be inline to the holy month of Ramadhan and the preparatory match will be played in a night during Ramadhan. The Red Warriors will aim to bounce back strongly in the qualifiers after their defeat against Iraq by 1-0 in last November through a goal scored by Youssef Wal Amaryn. Oman will face a challenging away fixture against group leaders South Korea in Seoul on March 20 and five days later they will meet Kuwait in Kuwait city.

Oman Squad: Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Ibrahim al Rajhi, Abdulmalik al Badri, Khalid al Buraiki, Ghanim al Habsi, Thani al Rushaidi, Majid Salim, Khalid al Ghatreefi, Musab al Shaqsi, Harib al Saadi, Abdullah Fawaz, Ahed al Mashaiki, Al Faraj al Kiyoumi, Ridhwan al Siyabi, Mulham al Sunaidy, Issa al Nabi, Ahmed al Kaabi, Yousef al Malki, Hussain al Shahri, Mohammed al Ghafri, Abdulsalam al Shukailli, Nasser al Rawahi, Mundher al Wahaibi, Nasser al Naimi, Mohammed al Subiai and Hatim al Roushdi.

OOC organises sports march in Al Hamra

ELHAM AL NUMANI
AL HAMRA, FEB 22

The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), represented by the Oman Sports and Active Society Committee, organised the sports march event in cooperation with Al Hamra Sports and Cultural Club and Al Hamra Mountain Sports Team, which witnessed wide participation from various segments of society in a distinctive sports and social atmosphere. The event was held on Saturday morning, under the auspices of Shaikh Sulaiman bin Said al Azri, Wali of Al Hamra, and in the presence of a number of officials and community and sports figures.

The participants set off on a 3-kilometre sports march, starting from Al Habl Park in Al Hamra next to the Eid prayer ground, passing by Shariat



The event included many accompanying activities that added a heritage and social character to the event.

Al Bashayer, Seeb clash for the Basketball Shield title today

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 22

THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE, Sports and Youth Basketball Shield Championship for the 2024-2025 season reaches its grand finale this evening, with the highly anticipated final match set to take place at 6:30 pm at the secondary hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The thrilling showdown will feature reigning champions Al Bashayer against Seeb, who are eager to reclaim their former glory. The match will be held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, President of Sultan Qaboos University, in the presence of Eng Khalfan al Naabi, President of the Oman Basketball Association (OBA), along with his deputy, board members, and representatives from various clubs and sports federations.

A FIERY ENCOUNTER BETWEEN AL BASHAYER AND SEEB

The highly anticipated clash promises excitement and intense competition for basketball enthusiasts. Al Bashayer, the defending champions, are determined to secure their fourth title, while Seeb aim to claim their third championship victory. Both teams enter the match fully prepared, knowing that winning the title demands an exceptional performance on the court.

Seeb, led by Tunisian coach Iskandar al Nabli, has devised a well thought out strategy to clinch the championship. The team boasts a blend of experienced professionals and young talents, including:

Marwan al Hadidi, Mazen al Hadidi, Noah al Amri, Keil Jordan, Abdulrahman al Shuaibi, Ahmed al Maamari, Zakaria al Wahaibi, Al Waqas al Hinai, Romeo Wilfred, Muawiya al Harthy, Hassan al Faraji and Rashid al Zuhaihi.

On the other hand, Al Bashayer, under the leadership of Serbian coach Dragan Vascanin, are eager to make up for their league shield loss by securing the championship title. Their squad includes a mix of local and international talents,



featuring: Osama al Riyami, Mahmoud al Souli, Ahmed al Halhali, Slavin Kopkovic, Bassam al Busaidy, Noah al Mahrouqi, Said Hassan, Hadeed Bait Bakhit, Said al Saadi, Samkelo Brian and Mazen al Hadidi.

EXCITING PRIZES AND ENTERTAINMENT FOR FANS

The excitement will not be limited to the game itself, as the Oman Basketball

Association has arranged cash prizes for the audience.

A basket shooting competition will take place during halftime, where participants who successfully score will be rewarded with prizes sponsored by several supporting companies, including Ittefaq Integrated Energy Services, Muscat Sports, Tutti Frutti and Shooting Star Academy.

Al Falaj, then the old neighbourhood and the old market, extending to the farms and reaching the water mill, and ending at the starting point in Al Habl Park. The event aimed to enhance physical fitness, spread awareness of the importance of sports and encourage individuals to adopt a healthy lifestyle, in addition to enjoying the beauty of nature and local heritage.

The event included many accompanying activities that added a heritage and social character to the event; where attendees enjoyed traditional folk games, a peg-catching show, in addition to a group of entertainment activities dedicated to children, which enhanced the atmosphere of joy and interaction between participants of different ages.

The event organisers

were keen to provide all means of support to make the event a success; where the path was secured and guidance was provided to the participants in cooperation with the relevant authorities, to ensure the smooth and safe running of the event.

The participants also interacted positively with the event, stressing the importance of such activities in enhancing community awareness of the importance of sports and its role in improving public health and strengthening social ties. This event comes within the ongoing efforts of the Oman Olympic Committee to promote the culture of community sports and encourage different age groups to practice physical activity, within the framework of a vision aimed at making sports a way of life.

SHORT TAKES



Manchester United's Manuel Ugarte celebrates scoring their second goal. — Reuters

FERNANDES INSPIRES MAN UTD FIGHTBACK FOR EVERTON DRAW

LIVERPOOL: Bruno Fernandes inspired a Manchester United rally from two goals down to avoid another damaging defeat for Ruben Amorim in a 2-2 draw at Everton on Saturday. United were headed for a ninth defeat in their last 13 league games as goals from Beto and Abdoulaye Doucoure put the Toffees 2-0 up inside 33 minutes. The visitors had not mustered a shot on target until Fernandes' free-kick pulled a goal back 18 minutes from time before Manuel Ugarte's equaliser salvaged a point for United.

More late drama was to come as Everton were awarded a penalty deep into stoppage time, only for referee Andy Madley to overturn his decision after a VAR review. A point edges Everton up to 12th, while United remain in 15th.

Everton were in a battle for survival when David Moyes returned for his second spell in charge last month, but they have taken 14 points from a possible 18 in their last six games to ensure their 71-year stay in the top flight will not come to an end. Amorim conceded before the game that Moyes, who himself was sacked after less than a season in charge of United in 2014, was doing a better job than he has managed since arriving from Sporting Lisbon in November.

When the sides last met in Amorim's first home league game, United cruised to a 4-0 win at Old Trafford, but he has managed just three victories in 13 Premier League games since.

Everton have just five more matches to come at Goodison Park before they move to a new 53,000-capacity stadium next season.

The home fans and team are determined to make the most of what is left at the club's home since 1892 and put a United side lacking in confidence under pressure from the off. — AFP

KUWAIT SC, AL ARABI SECURE SLOT IN THE FINAL

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 22

Kuwait SC and Qatar's Al Arabi secured slot to the final match of the 41st Gulf Handball Club Championship which is hosted by Oman Club in Muscat and underway at main hall of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. Kuwait qualified following their defeat over Qatar's Al Rayyan by 28-27 in a thrilling match while Qatar's Al Arabi stun Saudi Arabia's Al Noor by 28-27 in the semifinals on Saturday.

Earlier on the same day and In the placement match, Dibba Al Huson from UAE took 5th place after defeating Oman's Seeb by 34-26. Seeb will face the host team, Oman Club, in the 6th and 7th place match on Sunday.

The final match will take place on Monday at 6:30 pm. The concluding match will feature attendance of top dignitaries including presence of Nabil Ashoor, UAE Handball Association Chairman, Hassan Naser Hilal, Chairman of Saudi Arabia Handball Association beside other officials. The championship which started on last Saturday featured seven teams, divided into two groups. Group A featured from Al Rayyan (Qatar), Al Noor (Saudi Arabia) and Seeb (Oman) while group B: comprised from: Oman Club (Oman), Kuwait SC (Kuwait), Dibba Al Hosun (UAE) and Al Arabi (Qatar).



Scotland, Egypt set for championship clash today

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 22

EGYPT SECURED a spot in the final of the of the FIH Hockey Men's Nations Cup 2 , hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, after defeating the United States 4-2. Meanwhile, Scotland also advanced to the final after a 4-1 victory over Austria in the matches held at Hockey Oman Stadium in Al Amerat.

EGYPT DEFEATS US 4-2 TO ADVANCE TO THE FINAL
The match began with high intensity as the US took an early lead in the 6th minute through Kei Kaeppler's penalty corner, but Egypt responded immediately with Nasr Mohamed's equaliser. The US regained the lead in the final moments of the first quarter with Sekayi Charasika's goal, ending the period 2-1. Egypt struck back early in the second quarter, with Mostafa Ragab levelling the score at 2-2. Both teams created dangerous chances, but strong goalkeeping kept the score unchanged at halftime. The third quarter saw the US dominate possession, but missed opportunities, including a penalty corner by Kaeppler, left the score tied. In the final quarter, Egypt took the lead in the 50th minute when Mahmoud Mamdouh converted a penalty corner. The US pressed for an equaliser, but Egypt held firm, and Ahmed El Genini sealed the 4-2 victory with a late counterattack.

With this win, Egypt advanced to the final. Scotland Defeats Poland 4-1 to Secure Spot in the Final
Scotland dominated possession in the first quarter, creating chances but failing to break Poland's defensive setup, ending the period 0-0. The second quarter remained goalless, with Poland's Eryk Bembenek coming close in the final moments, narrowly missing the target. The third quarter followed the same pattern, with Scotland missing a key penalty corner opportunity, leaving the score unchanged. Scotland finally broke the deadlock in the final quarter, with Jamie Golden scoring from a penalty corner. Struan Walker doubled the lead in the 47th minute before Golden struck again (51'), making it 3-0. Poland responded in the 55th minute through Maximilian Kuperski, but Scotland held firm, and Golden sealed his hat trick in the final moments, securing a 4-1 victory and a place in the final. Austria Stages Comeback to Defeat Oman 5-3 in Hockey Nations Cup
Oman took an early lead in the 11th minute through Asama Barazahan's penalty corner and defended strongly to maintain their advantage, blocking five Austrian penalty corners to end the first quarter 1-0. Austria increased their pressure in the second quarter but failed to break through, keeping Oman ahead at halftime. Oman doubled their lead early in the third quarter with a stunning goal from Sanad al Fazari (35'), but Austria responded

quickly. Nikolas Wellan (39') pulled one back, followed by Fülöp Losonci's equaliser (43'), and Josef Winkler completed the comeback a minute later, giving Austria a 3-2 lead. In the final quarter, Austria extended their advantage through Peter Kaltenböck (55'), but Oman responded immediately with a goal from Maitham Al-Wahaibi (56'). However, Wellan struck again in the 58th minute, sealing a thrilling 5-3 victory for Austria.

AUSTRIA EDGES CHILE 3-2 TO SECURE KEY VICTORY
Austria took the lead in the 8th minute through Fülöp Losonci's penalty corner, but Chile responded late in the first quarter, with Juan Amoroso equalising from a set-piece to make it 1-1. Austria dominated the second quarter, earning multiple penalty corners before Nikolas Wellan converted one in the 22nd minute, giving them a 2-1 halftime lead. The third quarter remained goalless, with Austria controlling possession but failing to capitalise on three penalty corners, while Chile struggled to create real threats. In the final quarter, Austria extended their lead early through Adrian Fink's penalty corner goal. Despite missing several opportunities, Austria held their ground. Chile's Agustin Valenzuela pulled one back in the 57th minute, setting up a tense finish, but Austria held on for a 3-2 win. With this result, with this result, Austria will face China to determine fifth and sixth place, while Oman will play Chile to decide seventh and eighth place.

Al Nahda, Al Nasr, Sohar and Al Rustaq secure wins

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 22

Al Nahda claimed an important 3-0 away win against Bahla on Friday at Nizwa Sports Complex as part of Round 15 of the Oman Premier League (OPL). The first half saw both teams creating chances, but a lack of composure in front of goal resulted in a goalless draw at halftime. In the second half, Al Nahda intensified their attacks, and Haj Malik broke the deadlock in the 70th minute, capitalising on a rebound from the goalkeeper. Just four minutes later, he doubled the lead from the penalty spot. Bahla attempted to mount a comeback but failed to capitalise on the few chances they had. In the

89th minute, substitute Mohammed al Ghafri sealed the win with a well-placed finish from a precise cross. With this victory, Al Nahda climbed to second place with 34 points, while Bahla remained in sixth place with 18 points. Al Nasr Secures a Valuable 2-0 Victory Over Saham The first half was evenly balanced, with both teams battling for possession in midfield and exchanging opportunities without posing significant threats to goal. However, in the 40th minute, Osama Magdy broke the deadlock, putting Al Nasr ahead. Saham then attempted to push forward in search of an equaliser, but Al Nasr's defence held firm, ending the first

half with a 1-0 lead. In the second half, Al Nasr came out with greater determination to extend their lead and succeeded in the 69th minute, putting Saham under immense pressure to stage a comeback. Despite their relentless attacks, Saham could not beat Al Nasr's goalkeeper, Ibrahim al Rajhi, who maintained a clean sheet. With this victory, Al Nasr increased their tally to 20 points, surpassing Saham, who remained at 17 points after this defeat. Sohar Claims a Comfortable 3-0 Victory Over Sur Sohar secured a well-deserved 3-0 away victory over Sur in a match played on Friday evening at Sur Sports Complex. The goals for Sohar were scored

by Saud al Muqbali, Darwish al Saadi, and Abdullah al Balushi, ensuring their team earned three valuable points. Despite the win, Sohar remained in 11th place with 13 points, while Sur stayed at the bottom of the table in 12th place with just 9 points. Al Rustaq Continues Its Resurgence with a 1-0 Win Over Ibri Al Rustaq secured a crucial 1-0 victory against Ibri in a match held at Ibri Sports Complex. With this win, Al Rustaq increased their tally to 14 points, climbing to 10th place. Meanwhile, Ibri's points remained frozen at 18, placing them seventh, trailing Bahla on goal difference.

SPORTS

Andreeva beats Tauson in final to claim Dubai title



Russia's Mirra Andreeva poses for a picture with the trophy after winning the final alongside runner up Denmark's Clara Tauson. — Reuters



Russia's Andreeva celebrates with the trophy after winning the final against Denmark's Clara Tauson. — Reuters

RUSSIAN 17-YEAR-OLD Mirra Andreeva wrapped up a fairytale week in Dubai by becoming the youngest ever WTA 1000 champion with victory over Clara Tauson on Saturday.

After ousting three Grand Slam winners, including second-seeded Iga Swiatek, en route to the final,

Andreeva ended Tauson's own dream run at the tournament with a 7-6 (7/1), 6-1 victory against the Dane.

It was a performance that didn't just earn Andreeva a maiden WTA 1000 trophy, but also secured her top-10 debut with the Russian expected to rise to number nine when the new rankings are released

on Monday.

Tauson had been a giant-slayer herself this week, knocking out world number one Aryna Sabalenka on her way to the biggest final of her career.

LEADING THE TOUR
The 22-year-old entered the clash with Andreeva leading the tour with

15 match-wins so far this season.

She was looking to add a second title to her tally in 2025, and fourth overall, but Andreeva had other ideas, as she overcame her big-hitting opponent in one hour and 46 minutes of all-court prowess.

In the youngest WTA 1000 final since the category was introduced in 2009, Andreeva played a near-perfect

opening-set tiebreak to take the lead after 60 minutes of play.

She upped the ante in the second set, breaking twice for a 5-1 advantage and served out the win at the first time of asking.

On Monday, Andreeva will become the first 17-year-old to be ranked in the top 10 since Nicole Pietrangeli in 2007. — AFP





OMAN JAPAN FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

Congratulations and Warm Wishes
to the people of Japan on the occasion of the
65th Birthday of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito

Oman and Japan celebrate a long-standing partnership built on trust, respect and shared aspirations. From trade and innovation to culture and diplomacy, the two nations, continue to inspire and strengthen each other, shaping a future of prosperity and friendship.

At the heart of the ever-growing ties between Oman and Japan is the Oman Japan Friendship Association. Through its close collaboration with the Embassy of Japan in Oman, OJFA has played a pivotal role in nurturing people-to-people connections, fostering cultural and artistic exchanges and strengthening economic and social partnerships. This association has been instrumental in bringing our two nations closer, offering a dynamic platform where traditions, knowledge and aspirations are shared and celebrated.

Today, on this special occasion, the Oman Japan Friendship Association reaffirms its dedication to strengthening and deepening the cherished bond of friendship between Oman and Japan.

Two Great Nations One Inspiring Bond

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SHORTTAKE

Uzbek businesswomen set to explore trade opportunities in Oman

MUSCAT: A high-level delegation of Uzbek businesswomen is set to visit Oman on Tuesday, to explore trade and investment opportunities, further strengthening the economic ties between the two nations.



ABDULSALAM HATAMOV
Uzbekistan Ambassador



NODIRA SHAH TURSUNOVA

Vice-President of the Uzbek Chamber of Commerce

Led by Nodira Shah Tursunova, Vice-President of the Uzbek Chamber of Commerce, the delegation comprises around 20 entrepreneurs from diverse sectors, including real estate, design, electrical engineering, textiles, private education, healthcare and international trade. Abdulsalam Hatamov, Uzbekistan’s Ambassador to Oman, emphasised that the visit is part of a broader effort to enhance bilateral economic and cultural collaboration. The delegation, in coordination with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, will participate in business matchmaking sessions, high-level meetings with Omani

officials and site visits to key companies. A business forum will serve as the visit’s focal point, featuring discussions on investment opportunities, joint ventures, and trade facilitation between Omani and Uzbek business leaders. Additionally, the delegation will showcase Uzbek craftsmanship through embroidery workshops and a fashion show, highlighting the country’s rich textile heritage.

— ONA

PET recycling plant targeted for Q3 launch

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 22

OMAN’S biggest PET recycling project is slated for launch in the third quarter of this year, potentially unlocking an effective and sustainable solution to the longstanding problem of plastic waste ending up in landfills across the country.

The strategically significant project, offering a processing capacity of around 200 metric tonnes per day, is proposed to be established at a suitable location in Al Batinah North Governorate, within easy proximity of Sohar Port.

Spearheading the project’s implementation is Green Muscat Investment and Development Company, a Muscat-based enterprise with expertise encompassing circular economy solutions. A specialist in polymer compounding, Green Muscat focuses on research, development, production, and supply of high-quality polymeric materials and fibreglass mesh. The company also specialises in polymer compounding, offering solutions in HDPE, LDPE, LLDPE, PP, PVC, PET, and recycled polymers.

According to Dr Yasha Vassell, founder and CEO of Green Muscat, the state-of-the-art facility will, on the one hand, dramatically reduce



With an expected capacity of up to 200 MT/day and a strong ROI projection of 30-38% annually, this venture offers both environmental impact and financial returns. We are currently seeking investors to join us in this exciting project

DR YASHA VASSELL



As the biggest recycling facility of its kind in Oman, the Green Muscat project will make a positive impact on the environment.

plastic waste, and on the other, meet the growing global demand for recycled PET flakes. Eco-friendly PET flakes are used across various industries, including packaging and textiles.

“With an expected capacity of up to 200 MT/day and a strong ROI projection of 30-38% annually, this venture offers both environmental impact and financial returns. We are currently seeking investors to join us in this exciting project,” he noted in a post.

Plastic waste as raw material for the project will come from two key sources: Imports from mainly the Indian subcontinent

and the wider Gulf region, as well as a national collection-based system covering initially major cities, and eventually rolled out to cover the entire country. The latter option will also support SME development and employment generation, he said.

A site in Muscat has been identified for the aggregation of all kinds of plastic waste, before it is sorted, baled and transported to the plant site.

As for plant machinery, much of the hardware for the project is already on order with the overall project proposed to be developed in phases, he added.

Oman’s renewable energy push gathers momentum

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, FEB 22

Oman is making significant strides in its renewable energy and green hydrogen sectors, with a wave of projects pushing the country closer to its ambitious 2030 targets. According to a new report by Dii Energy Services, the country has already installed over 700 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy capacity by the end of 2024. Since the publication of the report, another 1 gigawatt (GW) of capacity was brought into operation earlier this year.

Under the Vision 2040 framework, Oman aims for renewables to account for 11% of its electricity mix by 2025 and 30% by 2030. To achieve this, the country has lined up several large-scale solar and wind projects, including 1.5 GW in various stages of development. Additionally, Oman has announced further plans for 2.1 GW of solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity, 400 MW of wind power, and 600 MW from concentrated solar power (CSP).

The report highlights that Oman’s green hydrogen ambitions are progressing at a rapid pace, largely driven by Hydrom, the orchestrator of Oman’s green hydrogen sector. Hydrom has set an initial production target of 1 to 1.25 million

Oman’s aggressive push into renewables and hydrogen signals its commitment to reducing reliance on fossil fuels while capitalising on the economic potential of clean energy exports



Oman has announced further plans for 2.1 GW of solar photovoltaic (PV) capacity, 400 MW of wind power, and 600 MW from concentrated solar power (CSP).

tonnes per annum (mtpa) of green hydrogen by 2030.

However, with eight major projects already awarded — five in Duqm and three in Salalah — the country is now poised to surpass its original target, with projections indicating a potential output of 1.38 mtpa by the end of the decade.

What sets Oman apart is its swift execution. Within just two years, the country has moved from identifying land for green hydrogen projects to holding international auctions and securing key agreements. A sister company to Hydrom has also

been established to oversee shared infrastructure, further streamlining the industry’s growth.

Oman’s green energy roadmap aligns with broader regional trends in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), where governments are increasingly turning to renewables and hydrogen as part of their long-term energy strategies. The report suggests that Oman’s competitive advantage lies in its vast desert landscapes and strong solar and wind resources, which make it a prime location for large-scale clean energy investments. With an estimated 38

to 55 GW of projected renewable capacity, Oman is emerging as a key player in the global transition towards sustainable energy. Additionally, its electrolyser capacity for green hydrogen production is expected to reach 17 to 25 GW, reinforcing the country’s ambition to become a major supplier of clean fuels.

The continued growth of Oman’s renewable energy and hydrogen sectors could attract billions in foreign investment, positioning the country as a hub for green industrial development. However, the report also underscores the need for further policy support, infrastructure expansion and international partnerships to ensure the timely execution of these projects.

As the global energy landscape shifts, Oman’s aggressive push into renewables and hydrogen signals its commitment to reducing reliance on fossil fuels while capitalising on the economic potential of clean energy exports. If these plans come to fruition, the Sultanate of Oman could solidify its role as a regional leader in the energy transition by the end of the decade.

ADVERTORIAL

SHORTTAKES



This year’s Tour of Oman featured six challenging stages over six days, welcoming 18 international professional teams and some of the biggest names in cycling

MG drives success at the 14th Tour of Oman as strategic sponsor

MUSCAT: The 14th edition of the Tour of Oman 2025 concluded on February 12, leaving behind a trail of unforgettable moments, fierce competition and a stunning showcase of Oman’s breathtaking landscapes. MHD ACERE, the official distributor of MG in Oman, proudly served as the Strategic Sponsor of this prestigious event, reinforcing its commitment to excellence, endurance and sporting innovation.

This year’s Tour of Oman featured six challenging stages over six days, welcoming 18 international professional teams and some of the biggest names in cycling. The race commenced with the Muscat Classic and culminated with the gruelling climb of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain) — a true test of strength and perseverance. Riders from over 30 countries competed, making this edition one of the most diverse and thrilling in the race’s history. The event once again highlighted Oman’s incredible natural beauty, from its pristine coastline along the Sea of Oman to the dramatic peaks of Al Hajar Mountains.

Reflecting on the success of the event, Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, stated: “We are honoured to have been the Strategic Sponsor of the Tour of Oman 2025, an event that not only brings the world’s best cyclists to our nation, but also highlights Oman’s incredible landscapes and commitment to international sporting excellence. The spirit of endurance, passion and innovation that drives this race aligns perfectly with MG’s values. It was inspiring to witness the determination of the riders and the enthusiasm of the fans, and we look forward to supporting such remarkable initiatives in the future.”

Since its inaugural edition in 2010, the Tour of Oman has established itself as a key fixture in the UCI ProSeries calendar, attracting elite cyclists and previous champions such as Chris Froome and Vincenzo Nibali. The 2025 edition once again proved why it is considered an essential early-season race, offering a mix of stunning coastal routes, gruelling mountain ascents and exhilarating sprint finishes.

MG’s involvement as Strategic Sponsor brought an added layer of excitement, engaging fans with interactive experiences and reinforcing its connection to performance, adventure and cutting-edge technology.

As the Tour of Oman 2025 ends, MG and MHD ACERE celebrate not only the achievements of the cyclists but, also the growing stature of Oman as a premier destination for world-class sporting events. Looking ahead, MG remains committed to fostering an active and dynamic lifestyle for its customers and the wider community.

SECURE FINANCIAL COMFORT AFTER RETIREMENT WITH BANKDHOFA R’S SAVINGS PLAN

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the second-largest bank in the Sultanate of Oman by branch network, is committed to serving all segments of society — from childhood to post-retirement. To support individuals in securing their financial future, the bank has introduced the Long-Term Retirement Deposit Account, designed to help customers grow their savings and achieve long-term financial stability.

Planning for a financially secure and comfortable retirement begins with setting clear goals — defining the desired lifestyle, location and activities. The next step is assessing financial needs, which involves estimating future income requirements in consultation with financial specialists while considering factors such as inflation, healthcare expenses,



The account is designed to help customers grow their savings and achieve long-term financial stability

education costs and travel plans. A well-diversified investment portfolio is crucial to financial stability during retirement. Individuals should consider a mix of assets such as bonds, stocks and real estate rather than relying on a

single investment type. BankDhofar provides tailored financial solutions, including the Retirement Savings Account, which offers substantial benefits. Customers can start saving with as little as RO 10, with flexible plans ranging from one to ten years and a competitive interest rate of up to 5%.

In addition to retirement-focused savings, BankDhofar offers a range of investment and deposit plans, including fixed and recurring deposit accounts and a long-term deposit account designed to help parents save for their children’s higher education.

The bank also provides specialised financial services for women, youth, children and high-income customers, including exclusive benefits for Al Riadah and Al Rifaa cardholders.

Go places and realise wishes in the Ford Expedition

THE Ford Expedition is an ideal SUV for adventurers combining spacious design with innovative features to make every journey enjoyable. With seating for up to 8 passengers, this SUV offers generous room for both people and cargo, making it perfect for weekend trips and long drives. The unique sliding second-row seat provides easy access to the third row without having to remove a child safety seat. Meanwhile, passengers in the third row enjoy ample legroom and reclining seats, adding comfort to longer journeys.

The Ford Expedition is a powerhouse when it comes to towing, leading its class with impressive capabilities. The Trailer Tow Class IV system makes hauling effortless, whether it’s for a boat, trailer, or additional cargo. Plus, with an available power lift-gate, loading and unloading gear is easier than ever.

At the heart of the Expedition is a robust 3.5-litre EcoBoost engine, offering up to 380 horsepower and 637Nm of torque. Coupled with a 10-speed automatic transmission, the Expedition delivers smooth, powerful performance on highways or rugged trails — all while maintaining best-in-class fuel efficiency.

Ford has built the Expedition with a focus on safety and ease of use. Features like Collision Avoidance Detection and the Blind Spot Information System add an extra layer of security, while the Control Trac with Electronic Limited Slip Differential provides superior handling on rough terrain.

Inside, the Expedition is equipped with cutting-edge technology. SYNC 4 with a 12-inch LCD touchscreen

The Ford Expedition is a powerhouse when it comes to towing, leading its class with impressive capabilities. The Trailer Tow Class IV system makes hauling effortless, whether it’s for a boat, trailer, or additional cargo



The Ford Expedition is a powerhouse when it comes to towing, leading its class with impressive capabilities.

keeps you connected, while multiple USB ports, a 220-volt power outlet, and wireless charging ensure devices stay powered throughout the trip. With Tri-zone Electronic Temperature Control and the Panoramic Vista Roof, every passenger can enjoy customised comfort and spectacular views. Those interested in experiencing the Ford Expedition can visit their nearest Ford showroom.

Vodafone Oman’s auction breaks record for highest sold number

MUSCAT: Vodafone Oman has once again set the benchmark for exclusivity and innovation with the success of its 777 live number auction. Held in collaboration with the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), this exclusive event provided customers the opportunity to claim some of the most sought-after mobile numbers in the Sultanate of Oman, with final bids closing at over RO 580,000 to support charitable associations and organisations across the country.

Building on the success of the company’s previous special gold and diamond numbers auction — which generated over RO 100,000 — the 777 series auction attracted overwhelming participation,

reaffirming the growing demand for unique mobile numbers that embody both status and rarity. This momentum continued as Vodafone reached a new milestone with the auction of the first-ever single-digit number (7777 7777) in the country’s telecom history, which sold for RO 429,500, setting a new record as the most valuable number ever sold in Oman.

Commenting on the impact of the auction, Eng Bader al Zidi, Vodafone Oman CEO, remarked: “At Vodafone Oman, we believe that every interaction with our customers should be meaningful; whether it’s through our services, experiences, or initiatives like the 777 auction. This event wasn’t



The 777 series auction attracted overwhelming participation, reaffirming the growing demand for unique mobile numbers that embody both status and rarity

just about offering rare numbers; it was about creating something truly memorable while making a tangible impact in the community. The overwhelming participation reaffirms that exclusivity can have a purpose, and we are committed to continuing to find ways to bring value to our customers beyond traditional telecom offerings.” He went on to add, “I would like to thank the TRA and our loyal customers for being part of this success.”

The event provided a seamless and interactive experience, allowing bidders to compete for some of the rarest numbers in Oman. While adhering to regulatory and data privacy processes, this auction

reinforced Vodafone’s commitment to setting new standards in customer engagement while ensuring fair competition through a structured and transparent bidding process.

Since entering into the Omani market, Vodafone Oman has consistently challenged the status-quo, introducing a bold and modern approach to telecommunications. Its commitment to a fully digital ecosystem has redefined accessibility and convenience, offering flexible solutions designed to meet evolving demands.

As it continues to grow, the company remains dedicated to pushing the boundaries and shaping the next era of connectivity in the Sultanate of Oman.

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



The most significant price increases were observed in personal goods and services, which rose by 4.4%

INFLATION RATE
RISES BY 1 PER CENT
IN JANUARY 2025

MUSCAT: Oman’s inflation rate increased by 1% in January 2025 compared to the same month in 2024, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information. The rise was driven by higher prices across several key categories, reflecting ongoing economic dynamics in the Sultanate of Oman.

The most significant price increases were observed in personal goods and services, which rose by 4.4%, followed by health services at 3.2% and transportation costs at 2.8%. Within the food and non-alcoholic beverages category, vegetable prices surged by 6.2%, while milk, cheese and eggs saw a 3.3% increase. Sugar, jam, honey and sweets also became more expensive, with prices rising by 2.8%. However, not all food items experienced price hikes; fruit prices dropped by 1.3%, while meat and fish prices declined by 0.4% and 0.5%, respectively.

Regionally, inflation rates varied significantly. Musandam Governorate recorded the highest inflation rate at 1.7%, while Al Batinah South had the lowest at 0.2%. Other governorates, such as Al Dakhiliyah (1.5%) and Al Sharqiyah South (1.4%), also saw above-average inflation rates. In contrast, Al Sharqiyah North recorded a modest 0.3% increase.

The data highlights the uneven impact of inflation across different sectors, underscoring the complexity of managing price stability in a diverse economy. While some categories, such as housing, water, electricity, gas and communications, remained stable, the overall rise in inflation reflects broader global and domestic economic trends, including supply chain dynamics and consumer demand shifts. — ONA

SOHAR PORT
ADVANCES
LNG PROJECT

MUSCAT: SOHAR Port and Freezone has commenced deepening works for the navigation channel of the \$1.6 billion Marsa LNG project, a strategic initiative to position Oman as a regional hub for clean marine fuel. The project involves removing approximately 4 million cubic metres of material to create a specialised navigation channel and a dedicated berth for LNG bunkering.

Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of SOHAR Port and Freezone, described the channel deepening as a pivotal step in establishing Suhar as a leader in sustainable marine transport services. The Marsa LNG project, set to be operational by September 2025, will produce 1 million metric tonnes of liquefied natural gas annually, powered by a 300-megawatt solar photovoltaic plant.

The project aligns with global environmental targets by providing low-emission marine fuel at competitive prices, thereby reducing the carbon footprint of maritime transport. It also supports Oman’s energy transition goals and reinforces SOHAR Port and Freezone’s role as a strategic hub for global trade and innovation. — ONA

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 22

Asyad Group, Oman’s global integrated logistics provider, has successfully partnered with Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be’ah) aimed at enhancing sustainable logistics solutions in the region. This partnership underscores both parties’ commitment to operational excellence, environmental stewardship, supporting

and empowering SMEs, and enhancement of in-country value (ICV) under the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) umbrella.

Dr Said al Touqi, Design and Engineering Manager at be’ah, stated: “We are proud of this partnership, which contributes to implementing major environmental projects in line with the best practices. Undoubtedly, our collaboration with Asyad enables us to provide comprehensive solutions for transporting essential

Vietnam-Oman Fund eyes tie
up in food security, logistics

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 22

A high-level delegation representing Vietnam Oman Investment (VOI), a joint venture between Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and the State Capital Investment Corporation of Vietnam (SCIC), was in the Sultanate of Oman last week to build on already substantive investment ties between the two countries.

Led by Nguyen Xuan Giao, CEO of Vietnam Oman Investment (VOI), the delegation accompanied First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam, Nguyen Minh Vu, and SCIC Chairman, Nguyen Chi Thanh, on a visit to the head office of Oman Investment Authority in Muscat.

“The visit aimed to deepen diplomatic ties and expand economic collaboration between Vietnam and Oman, with VOI playing a key role in bridging the partnership,” the Vietnamese-based Fund stated in a post.

Discussions between the two sides highlighted VOI’s pivotal role over the past 18 years as a “strategic investment platform”. Significantly, the Sultanate of Oman is the first and currently the only Gulf state with direct investment in Vietnam, underscoring the key contribution of VOI in fostering bilateral economic cooperation between the two countries.

Besides exploring opportunities to scale up cooperation between the joint venture partners, VOI is



Delegation featuring executives of Vietnam-Oman Investment (VOI) meeting with OIA officials in Muscat



The visit aimed to deepen diplomatic ties and expand economic collaboration between Vietnam and Oman, with VOI playing a key role in bridging the partnership

VIETNAMESE-BASED FUND

also keen to expand cooperation in food security, ports and maritime logistics, and technology. Additionally, it aims to position itself as a “gateway to attract capital from other Gulf nations into Vietnam”.

Established in 2008, VOI investments have focused on growth sectors that enjoy the competitive advantage of Vietnam and contribute to the long term sustainable growth of its economy.

The joint venture has invested around \$300 million in Vietnam, focusing on essential sectors namely high-tech agriculture, infrastructure, water treatment plants, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, and education. The Fund has also

acquired significant minority stakes in high-potential companies in Vietnam, providing active support for their growth and advancement.

In 2023, the Board of Directors of VOI approved the allocation of \$100 million for investment in public equity. Of this amount, \$34.6 million was pumped into five new public equity investments as of December 2023. The Fund’s Private Equity portfolio projects focused on 13 investments, earning a 5.2% IRR and 1.75 times of the investment value as of June 2023.

“As VOI continues to drive cross-border investments, we remain committed to fostering sustainable growth and economic connectivity between Vietnam and Oman,” the Fund added in its post.

Sovereign Sukuk lifts MSX trading to RO 20.6 million

MUSCAT: Trading activity on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) surged last week, reaching RO 20.6 million, a 26.3-per cent increase from RO 16.3 million in the previous week. The spike was primarily driven by the eighth issue of sovereign Sukuk, which alone accounted for RO 10.3 million, representing 50.2 per cent of total trading value.

The latest sovereign Sukuk issue, listed on the MSX on January 5, has a total volume of RO 282 million and an annual profit rate of 4.8 per cent. Last week saw the execution of a major transaction involving 100,000 bonds, with each bond trading at RO 103.560. This marks the first trading activity for this issue since its listing.

As a result, trading in the bonds and Sukuk market soared to RO 11.363 million, up from RO 1.131 million the previous week. In contrast, stock market trading declined from RO 15.1 million to RO 9.2 million. Among equities, OQ Exploration and Production led the activity with RO 2.1 million in trades,



The latest sovereign Sukuk issue has a total volume of RO 282 million and an annual profit rate of 4.8 per cent

followed by OQ Basic Industries at RO 916,000 and Bank Muscat at RO 896,000.

Investor sentiment remained cautious following the announcement of Asyad Shipping Company’s public offering approval. The company is set to offer 1.417 billion shares for public subscription from February 20 to 27, as part of its transformation into a public joint stock company. The retail

share price is set at 123 baisas, while institutional investors will participate within a price range of 117-123 baisas per share. The offering size represents 20 per cent of Asyad’s total capital of 5.208 billion shares.

Last week, the MSX saw declines in 35 securities, while 17 securities advanced and 25 remained unchanged. This downward trend pushed the MSX main index down by 34

points to close at 4443. Sectoral indices also recorded losses, with the financial sector shedding 58 points, the services sector down by 28 points, and the Sharia index dropping by 3 points. However, the industrial sector gained 10 points, closing at 5624, buoyed by gains in Voltamp Energy, Oman Cement, and Galfar Engineering and Contracting.

The overall market capitalisation of MSX declined by RO 57.1 million, closing Thursday’s session at RO 27.287 billion.

Among gainers, Gulf Hotels – Oman led the pack with a 10-per cent increase, closing at RO 3.850. Voltamp Energy climbed 4.5 per cent to 580 baisas, while Galfar Engineering and Contracting gained 4 per cent to reach 79 baisas.

On the losing side, Al Jazeera Services fell by 11 per cent to 170 baisas, Fincorp Financial Center dropped 9.6 per cent to 47 baisas, and Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing declined 8.7 per cent to RO 1.340. — ONA

Asyad Group announces partnership with be’ah



The partnership will enhance environmental stewardship.

materials to build modern engineering landfills, enhancing waste management efficiency and protecting the environment.” This project also involved local SMEs for material transportation, enabling Asyad to not only reinforce its dedication to (ICV), but also boost SMEs’ contribution to national economic development.

Juma al Maskari, Asyad Logistics Director, said: “We partnered closely with be’ah, leveraging our expertise to provide strategic

advice on INCOTERMS that delivered substantial cost savings and operational improvements. By aligning our practical solutions with their goals, we ensured the seamless and efficient execution of this critical project, setting a benchmark for collaborative success.”

Asyad Group and be’ah are not only reinforcing their roles as leaders in their respective fields, but also aligning their efforts with Oman Vision 2040, aiming to position the country as a global trade hub.

OPINION

Oman’s role in sustainable ammonia production



QASIM AL
MAASHANI

The writer is the
head of Oman
Observer Business
Section

AS the world transitions towards more sustainable agricultural practices, ammonia — a key ingredient in nitrogen fertilisers — has come under scrutiny due to its high carbon footprint. Oman, a significant exporter of ammonia-based fertilisers, stands at the crossroads of opportunity and responsibility in this global shift. With mounting international pressure to decarbonise production processes and the increasing volatility of fossil fuel markets, the Sultanate of Oman has a chance to position itself as a leader in low-carbon ammonia production while reinforcing its role as a key supplier to global agricultural markets.

Oman plays a crucial role in the global fertiliser supply chain, particularly in the Middle East, which is categorised as a net exporter of ammonia-based fertilisers. The Sultanate of Oman's ammonia exports are particularly significant for India, one of the world's largest consumers of nitrogen fertilisers, reinforcing strong trade ties that ensure food security for millions.

The country benefits from its strategic location and well-established port infrastructure, which facilitates efficient transportation of fertilisers to key markets.

THE SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE

Ammonia production is energy-intensive, with the global industry contributing approximately 1.3% of total greenhouse gas emissions due to its reliance on natural gas. While natural gas has long been the dominant feedstock, reliance on fossil fuels

exposes Oman to price fluctuations, supply chain disruptions and international climate policies that may impose stricter carbon reduction targets.

With global commitments to achieving net-zero emissions by mid-century, the ammonia industry is at a pivotal moment. Major importers, including the European Union, are increasingly prioritising low-carbon ammonia sources, and future trade agreements may require cleaner production processes.

OPPORTUNITIES IN LOW-CARBON AMMONIA

A new Low Carbon Ammonia for Sustainable Agriculture report outlines three primary alternatives to traditional ammonia production:

1. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS): CCS can reduce ammonia-related emissions by up to 70% while maintaining reliance on natural gas. Oman's existing oil and gas infrastructure makes it well-suited for integrating CCS into its industrial sector. By leveraging its expertise in enhanced oil recovery and underground carbon storage, the country could significantly cut emissions while continuing production.

2. Green Hydrogen and Electrolysis-Based Ammonia: Electrolysis-based ammonia production, powered by renewable energy, eliminates carbon emissions from the process. Oman's substantial investments in green hydrogen, including large-scale projects backed by international investors, indicate a readiness to transition towards

With mounting international pressure to decarbonise production processes and the increasing volatility of fossil fuel markets, the Sultanate of Oman has a chance to position itself as a leader in low-carbon ammonia production while reinforcing its role as a key supplier to global agricultural markets

clean ammonia production. Although electrolytic ammonia remains costlier than traditional methods, declining renewable energy costs and potential subsidies could make it more viable in the near future.

3. Biochemical Ammonia Production Using Biomass: Biomass-derived ammonia could further reduce fossil fuel dependency, but it requires significant land and water resources, making it less feasible for Oman given its arid climate.

POLICY AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

To solidify its role in the future of ammonia production, Oman should adopt a phased approach towards decarbonisation.

STRENGTHENING GREEN HYDROGEN INITIATIVES: Oman's existing hydrogen projects should integrate ammonia production to supply low-carbon fertilisers to global markets.

DEVELOPING CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE (CCS) CAPABILITIES: By investing in CCS, Oman can continue leveraging its natural gas reserves while complying with global decarbonisation standards.

EXPANDING RENEWABLE ENERGY CAPACITY: Solar and wind energy can power ammonia plants, reducing reliance on fossil fuels. With abundant solar resources, Oman has a strategic advantage in this transition.

ALIGNING WITH GLOBAL REGULATIONS: Oman must anticipate future carbon regulations and secure agreements with key trading partners to ensure continued market access for its ammonia exports.

CORPORATE
AMERICA IS CAUGHT
IN A DEI RATCHET

Corporate America was once eager to champion diversity in the workplace. Under hostile pressure from President Donald Trump’s administration, executives from Citigroup to McDonald’s are no longer so willing. This backsliding has taken many forms, but the threat of legal action is a ratchet forcing bosses in the same direction.

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies aimed at addressing demographic disparities proliferated among workplaces in recent years, especially following protests over George Floyd’s murder in 2020. Two-thirds of companies in the S&P 500 Index issued a statement, according to advocacy group As You Sow; by 2023, half tied executive compensation to DEI metrics, consultancy Mercer found.

Management is in a genuinely difficult position. The Supreme Court’s 2023 decision to end university admissions practices preferring certain backgrounds could, theoretically, apply to human resources departments.

That wave is now rolling back. On Thursday, Citi boss Jane Fraser said the bank will no longer require a diverse set of candidates for job interviews. Facebook owner Meta Platforms said it would end a similar hiring approach and mothball representation goals. McDonald’s is ditching diversity targets – and even the word “diversity” itself, favouring “inclusion” instead. Goldman Sachs dropped a requirement that boards it advises on initial public

offerings include women and minorities, the New York Times reported.

This might seem hypocritical. Take Walt for instance. The company led by Bob Iger once fought with Florida Governor Ron DeSantis over legislation that banned classroom discussion of gender. It held up diversity efforts as a reflection of its audience. Yet it’s now performing a McDonald’s-style linguistic switch-up: executives once compensated for “diversity and inclusion” goals will be rewarded for “talent strategy”.

Management is in a genuinely difficult position. The Supreme Court’s 2023 decision to end university admissions practices preferring certain backgrounds could, theoretically, apply to human resources departments. Exploratory lawsuits could become enormously consequential test cases. A suit lodged against Starbucks by the attorney general of Missouri this month over DEI policies refers to the college case; a group of investors sued retailer Target over its practices.

President Trump’s executive orders targeting diversity mandates both within the government and the companies it deals with adds to the pressure. — Reuters

How start-ups influence
economic diversification

A country famous for its culture and ideal location, Oman is putting in place strategic plans to aid in economic diversification aimed at lessening its reliance on revenue from oil and gas.

And to complement such a strategy, the country is also trying to promote the development of start-up companies in different sectors of the economy. Start-ups now play a crucial role in the improvement of Oman's economy by providing jobs, fostering innovation and increasing the competitiveness of Oman on a global scale. This article will examine the effect of start-ups on Oman's economic diversification alongside the opportunities and challenges present in this process.

Oman Vision 2040 clearly states the importance of economic diversification and strengthening the sustainable economy. Consistently, the government has sought policies for newly developed sectors such as Information Technology, Tourism, Logistics, Manufacturing and Green Energy. It can be concluded that start-ups are critical for oil sector transformation because they change its value chains and introduce non-oil sector's activities.

Currently, there is a rise in the number of start-ups in Oman because of the government's focus on entrepreneurship, availability of financial resources and an emerging culture of entrepreneurship. The Oman Future Fund (OFF) and Oman Investment Authority (OIA) opened the floodgates for Omani start-ups by establishing the National Business Centre (NBC) in Madayn which provided funding and the necessary infrastructure. These initiatives assist emerging entrepreneurs to transform their concepts into functional businesses thereby helping in the economic diversification.

MAJOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR
START-UPS

1. Technology and Digital



Currently, there is a rise in the number of start-ups in Oman because of the government’s focus on entrepreneurship, availability of financial resources and an emerging culture of entrepreneurship.

Innovation: Oman's ICT sector has witnessed considerable growth with start-ups coming up in fintech, e-commerce, AI and cyber security. These modern technologies foster economic and digital development.

2. Renewable Energy: With the government giving more focus to sustainability, start-ups in the renewable energy industry are actively working on solar, wind and other green technologies that help in reducing dependence on fossil fuels while promoting environmental protection.

3. Tourism and Hospitality: Start-ups in tourism use Oman's natural resources and rich cultural heritage to enhance ecotourism, adventure tourism and introspect digital tourism booking portals that would help increase the inflow of tourists to the country and uplift the local economy.

4. Logistics and Supply Chain: Due to its strategic positioning, new logistics start-ups that are offering creative trade, transportation and supply chain solutions have emerged in the country.

5. Agriculture and Fisheries: Agri-tech start-ups are well-positioned to deploy food agri-tech innovations aimed at improving

food and agricultural productivity and boosting the rural economy.

Challenges facing start-ups in Oman

While there is a healthy progress, several issues confront start-ups in Oman, including:

ACCESS TO FUNDING: Although a state-sponsored fund exists, more venture capital and private funding is needed to sustain early stage start-ups.

Regulatory Hurdles: The registration of a business and obtaining the necessary permits can be overly complicated and therefore prevent easy commencement and operation of a business.

MARKET SIZE: Due to the relatively small population of Oman, the potential for a domestic market is very limited, thus start-ups need to target other regions and countries for their products.

TALENT ACQUISITION: Difficulty in acquiring highly skilled workers in technology and other specialised fields can restrain effective business growth in scaling hands.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND POLICY INITIATIVES

To make it work, the government is implementing policies like the following:

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS REFORMS: Improving the processes for registering businesses and easing regulations to promote business start-ups.

INNOVATIONAL FUNDS SPENDING: Create Oman Future Fund type Incubators and Accelerators, responsible for offering a mix of mentoring, funding and networking.

PPP: Working together between new ventures and existing giants for new products and services.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT OF CAPITAL REDUCTION

IN accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. Al Saud Limited Projects Company (LLC), which is registered with the Commercial Registration No 1107547, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from RO 250,000.000 to 5,000.000. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

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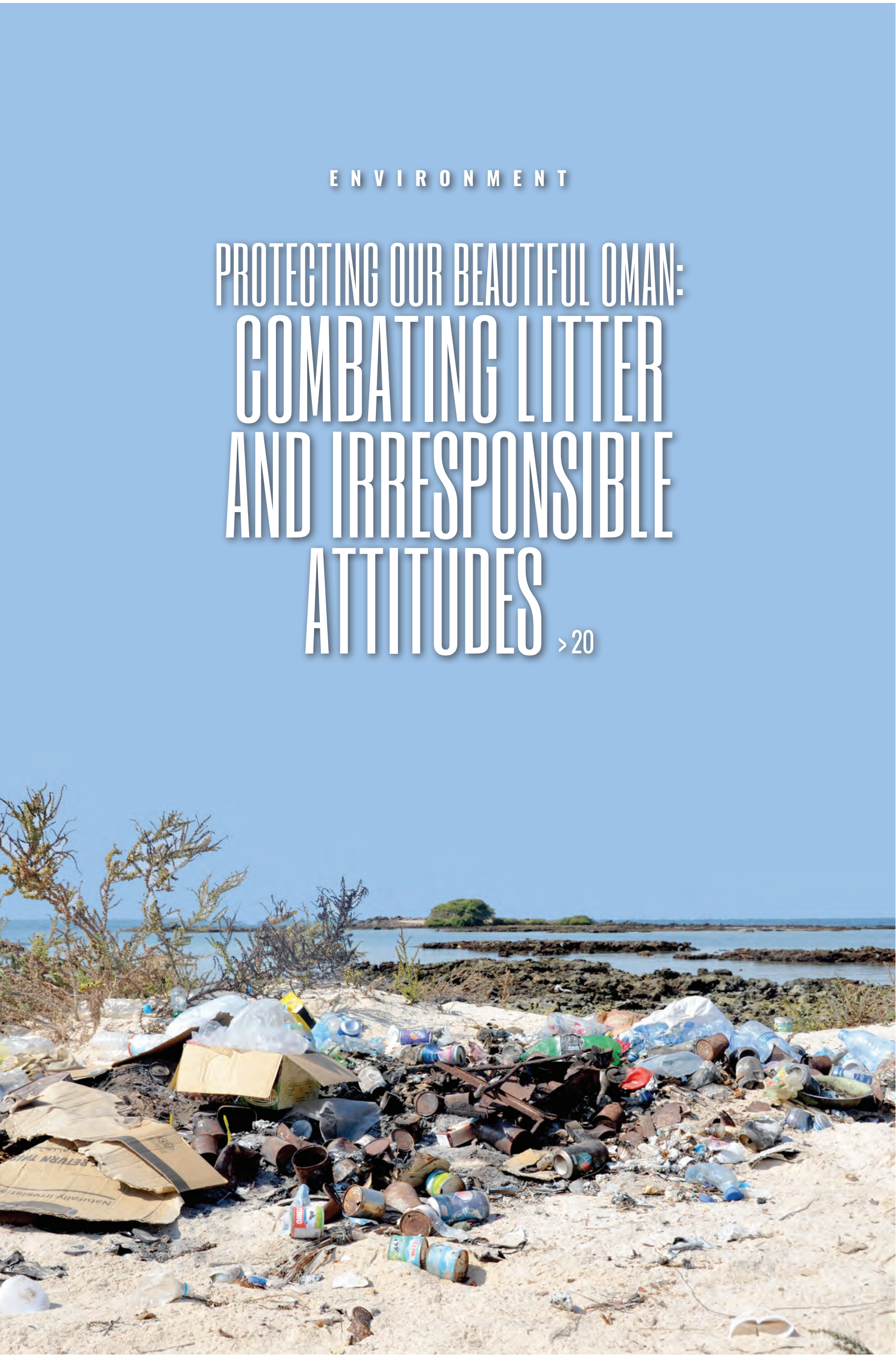
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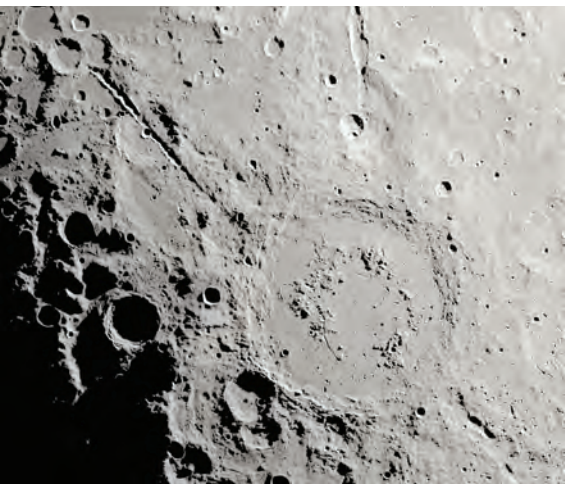


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DISCOVERY

Grand Canyons on the Moon Were Made in a Matter of Minutes



TWO REMARKABLE canyons, located near the Moon's south pole, challenge the Grand Canyon in both depth and length. These lunar formations, known as Vallis Schrödinger and Vallis Planck, contrast sharply with the winding expanse of the Grand Canyon in Arizona, appearing instead as straight channels that seem as if the Moon's crust was sliced cleanly.

Unlike the Grand Canyon, which was sculpted gradually over millions of years by the Colorado River, Vallis Schrödinger and Vallis Planck were formed in a matter of minutes. This rapid formation followed a cataclysmic event approximately 3.8 billion years ago, when a 15-mile-wide meteor collided with the Moon. The impact was so intense that it created a crater about 200 miles wide, penetrating as deep as 15 miles into the lunar crust.

The process that shaped these vast canyons was astonishingly quick, taking less time than it would to bake a frozen pizza. The meteor impact, reminiscent of the one that led to the extinction of the dinosaurs on Earth 66 million years ago, unleashed a barrage of rocks — referred to by planetary scientists as ejecta rays — that cascaded down in quick succession, sculpting the canyons, which measure over 165 miles in length and more than 1.5 miles in depth.

David Kring, a scientist from the Lunar and Planetary Institute in Houston, remarked on their extraordinary scale, highlighting that these formations were carved within ten minutes, compared to the 5 to 6 million years taken to form the Grand Canyon. In a recent study published in the journal Nature Communications, Kring and colleagues, including Danielle Kallenborn and Gareth Collins from Imperial College London, developed a mathematical model to analyse the sequential impacts of giant rocks that created the canyons, using Nasa's photographic evidence of craters along their paths.

Kring illustrated the violent nature of the impacts, comparing the striking of rocks between one and five kilometres in diameter hitting the Moon at speeds exceeding 2,000 miles per hour to a series of explosions. Their analysis determined that the energy required for the canyon formations was more than 130 times that of a simultaneous detonation of every nuclear weapon on Earth.

Interestingly, the canyons suggest that the impacting asteroid or comet struck at an angle, even though the resulting crater is nearly circular. The linear formations of Vallis Schrödinger and Vallis Planck radiate from the Schrödinger basin, but their projected intersection point lies to the south, indicating the meteor's trajectory and suggesting an absence of debris in the south pole area. This finding offers a positive outlook for Nasa's Artemis programme, which aims to land astronauts near the Moon's south pole. — NYT

QUICK FEATURES



FILM

Lidija Kordic of Montenegro reacts after receiving the European Shooting Stars 2025 award at the 75th Berlinale International Film Festival in Berlin. — Reuters



ART

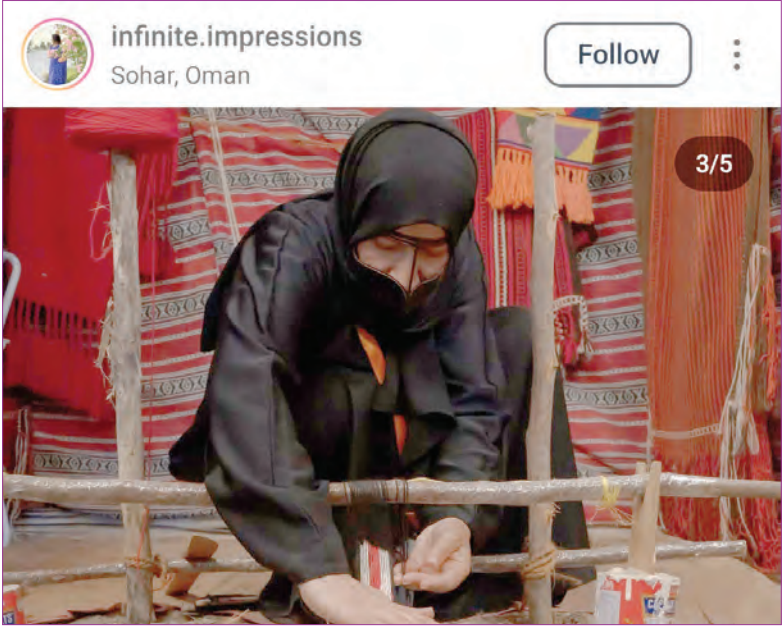
Auctioneer Matthieu Semont looks at French sculptor Camille Claudel's famous bronze sculpture "L'Age mur" (The Mature Age) in Orleans. — AFP



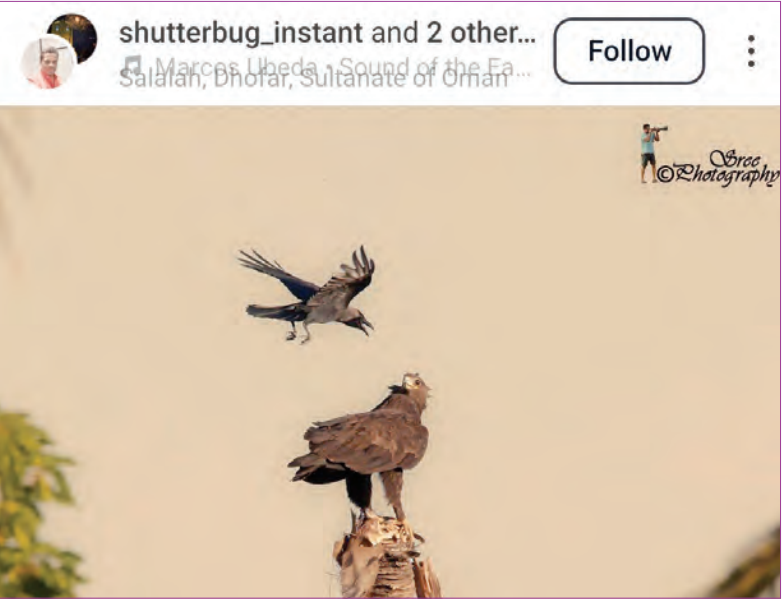
LIFESTYLE

A man dressed as a jester attends the Festival sur le Niger, also known as Segou'Art, as it occurs in the wake of Mali and its neighbours Niger and Burkina Faso leaving the Economic Community of West Africa States. — Reuters

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Appreciating Local Crafts



Beauty of Oman's Wildlife

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Greece to open museum of ancient undersea treasures



A NEW MUSEUM showcasing thousands of ancient archaeological artefacts found at sea will open next year at the Greek port of Piraeus near Athens, officials said. The EU-funded museum — the largest cultural project currently underway in Greece — has a budget of more than 93 million euros (\$97 million). Culture Minister Lina Mendoni said the new 26,000-square-metre (31,000-square-yard) building would display “thousands of finds emerging for years from the depths of the Greek seas”, without giving further details. Besides marine archaeology, the museum at the country’s largest port will also highlight Greece’s rich shipping history, she said. “Our country needed such a museum for decades,” Prime

Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said while on a visit to the site on Monday. The museum, expected to open in the summer of 2026, will occupy part of the Piraeus docks, incorporating some existing elements from a 1930s storage silo. According to the culture ministry, it will display more than 2,500 antiquities including many now in storage in Pylos, Rhodes and Paros. In antiquity Piraeus was the principal port of ancient Athens, from which its distinctive trireme ships would sail across the Mediterranean Sea. The city’s small archaeological museum currently has a bronze naval ram and marble eye from a 4th-century BC trireme on display. — AFP



‘The White Lotus’ Is Coming to Thailand. So Are the Tourists.

WHEN THE THIRD season of the hit HBO series “The White Lotus” debuted on Sunday, viewers were transported to the tropical island of Koh Samui, Thailand. And if previous seasons are any indication, many of them will soon be booking vacations there, too. The show, which takes place at a different fictional White Lotus luxury resort each season, centres on a group of wealthy tourists, their interpersonal dramas and the inevitable tension with staff and locals, all against a backdrop of paradise skewed. The travel industry has been anticipating the new season almost as much as fans have. Partly thanks to the so-called “White Lotus” effect, Koh Samui and Thailand have already emerged as top destinations. Koh Samui was one of The New York Times’ 52 Places to Go in 2025, and Thailand was Travel+Leisure’s 2025 destination of the year. With a wave of tourists set to wash ashore, the roughly 68,000 residents of Koh Samui are about to get a lot more familiar with the “White Lotus” effect. On the pristine white sand of Chaweng Beach one recent evening, Tey, 46, a local carpenter who declined to give his last name, said he didn’t really know much about the series. But then came a flash of recognition. “Yes, yes. Lisa’s show was filmed here,” he said. Lisa, or Lalisa Manobal, is a Thai member of the K-pop band Blackpink who makes her acting debut in this season of “The White Lotus.” Had he heard anything else about it? Tey shook his head. SELLING A TASTE OF LUXURY Koh Samui, an 88-square-mile gem in the Gulf of Thailand about 470 miles south of Bangkok, has long charmed visitors with its miles of beaches, tranquil waters, jungle-covered hills, restaurants and nightlife. Bookings at the \$2,000-a-night Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui, where a large part of Season 3 was shot,

have already jumped 40%. And once the new season begins streaming, Marc Speichert, the executive vice-president and chief commercial officer of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, said he expected demand to increase “exponentially.” “We saw a 10x increase in the properties in Maui and Taormina,” Speichert said, referring to the Four Seasons resorts in Hawaii and Sicily where much of Seasons 1 and 2 were shot. The high-end travel network Virtuoso said its data showed a 424% spike in sales to Sicily after Season 2. For visitors to Koh Samui who want a taste of the sweet “White Lotus” life but don’t have the bank balances to match, the Four Seasons offers day passes allowing use of the beach and access to restaurants if you spend at least 5,000 baht (about \$150), said Jasjit Assi, the resort’s general manager. Other businesses, local as well as global, are also banking on a boom. American Express is offering a White Lotus Thailand Experience package to certain card members. It includes three days at the Four Seasons resort and a full-moon party. Even about 200 miles west on the popular island of Phuket, where some parts of the Season 3 were shot, hotels are trying to cash in on “The White Lotus.” The Anantara Mai Khao Phuket Villas, for example, boasts that it offers a level of luxury similar to that of the Four Seasons, and unlike Koh Samui, Phuket is home to a Michelin-starred restaurant, Pru. Phuket, Bangkok and Koh Samui are all stops on the seven-night White Lotus Thailand trip offered by Unforgettable Travel Co., a luxury tour operator, for just under \$8,000 per person. It includes private tours of Bangkok and sunset cruises in Bangkok and Koh Samui. “I think it is going to be huge for Samui,” said Michael Brasier, the owner-manager of Nahm, a casual, airy fusion restaurant perched over the water near Koh Samui’s airport. Brasier already benefited from a “White Lotus” boon of his own: A

group of actors including Walton Goggins, who plays one of the resort guests, visited Nahm several times a week while filming, he said, and he had the photos to prove it. ‘GORGEOUS, LAYERED, COMPLEX’ The idea of “set-jetting,” or visiting the filming sites of favourite shows and movies, stretches back at least as far as the early 2000s, when the “Lord of the Rings” franchise flooded New Zealand with J.R.R. Tolkien-obsessed visitors. But the trend has taken off in recent years, with events like “Bridgerton”-style balls and “Emily in Paris”-inspired girls’ trips to the French Riviera. In 2023, the high-end travel provider Black Tomato began offering experiences like James Bond-themed private tours, including a speedboat race on the River Thames, for \$18,500 and up. But in the past, set-jettlers mostly visited places they had already seen in their favourite movies or shows. With Season 3 of “The White Lotus,” they’re not waiting. British actor Jason Isaacs, one of the stars of the new season, said he was surprised to hear that set-jettlers were already travelling to Koh Samui. “I didn’t realise that was a thing already,” he said. Isaacs, who spoke by phone as he was en route to the season premiere in Los Angeles, said he managed to do a little exploration of his own during the more than two months he was on Koh Samui for filming. He cited temple visits, waterfall hikes, massages and training in Thai boxing as some of the highlights. “Samui is a gorgeous, layered, complex place, full of incredible beauty,” he said. But he cautioned that the expected influx of visitors and the accompanying development will have downsides, too, echoing the haves-and-have-nots theme woven into the show. Despite the beautiful setting, there is “poverty and deprivation,” he said. “Visitors will see a lot if they are curious and keep their eyes open.” —NYT

FEATURES



BY KHALED ABDUL MALAK

THE BEAUTY of our country is a treasure that should be cherished, not tarnished by litter and waste. Unfortunately, many stunning sites have become dumping grounds for rubbish, threatening wildlife, ecosystems and the enjoyment of these natural wonders.

Trash and littering pose significant global environmental challenges, driven by consumerism, inadequate waste management and a lack of public awareness. One of the primary concerns is the environmental impact, as littering severely pollutes land, waterways and oceans. Plastic debris, in particular, threatens wildlife, as animals risk ingestion or entanglement, disrupting ecosystems and reducing biodiversity.

In Oman, similar issues surrounding trash and littering are evident, influenced by cultural practices and rapid development. The natural beauty of the country’s diverse landscapes, including mountains and coastlines, is increasingly compromised by litter. This aesthetic degradation poses a risk to the tourism sector, which is vital for the national economy.

To combat this irresponsible attitude, we must take a multi-faceted approach that includes education, community involvement and enforcement.

INVOLVE SCHOOLS IN CLEANUP INITIATIVES

Engaging students in cleanup activities can foster a sense of responsibility and connection to the environment. Schools can organise field trips to local sites where students can participate in cleanup efforts. This hands-on experience not only helps to remove litter, but also instils a sense of pride and ownership in their local environment.

There is also a need to incorporate environmental education into the curriculum by having students research the impact of pollution on nature and then take action through cleanups.

It is also important to create friendly competitions between schools to see who can collect the most litter, rewarding the winning team with recognition or prizes.

IMPLEMENT FINES FOR LITTERING

To deter irresponsible behaviour, local authorities should consider implementing fines for littering. Clear signage indicating the penalties for littering can serve as a reminder to outdoor goers about the importance of keeping the country clean. There is a need to increase the presence of park rangers or volunteers who can educate the public and enforce littering laws. Authorities also need to encourage community members to report littering incidents, creating a culture of accountability.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

Education is key to changing attitudes towards waste disposal. Communities can launch awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of keeping the environment

Protecting Our Beautiful Oman: Combating Litter and Irresponsible Attitudes



clean and the impact of litter on natural ecosystems. To ensure that the campaign works, there is a need to host events that educate the public about the effects of pollution on wildlife and the environment. Social media platforms should also be utilised to spread awareness, share statistics and promote upcoming cleanup events. Engaging visuals and compelling stories can inspire action.

PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Encouraging sustainable practices can significantly reduce the amount of waste generated in the natural environment. To make this happen, there is a need to ensure that adequate recycling and waste disposal options are available at access points. We should also encourage BYO (Bring Your Own) Initiatives where we promote the use of reusable containers, utensils and bags to minimise single-use plastics.

Environmental experts have raised concerns about the impact of plastic waste on Oman’s pristine coastlines. Marine life is at risk, with reports of ingestion and entanglement in plastic debris leading to diminished populations of vital species such as turtles and fish.

The picturesque beaches that attract tourists from around the globe are also

becoming littered with trash, threatening the livelihoods of those who depend on tourism.

In response to the escalating situation, the Omani government has announced initiatives aimed at improving waste management and reducing coastal pollution. These efforts include the introduction of stricter regulations on plastic use, increased funding for recycling programmes and community engagement campaigns to educate the public on proper waste disposal practices.

“We are committed to preserving our natural heritage,” said Ahmed al Mahrouqi, an official from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Water Resources. “However, we need the support of our citizens to create a more sustainable environment for future generations.”

The degradation of our beautiful Oman due to rubbish is a pressing issue that requires immediate action. By involving schools, implementing fines and promoting education and sustainable practices, we can foster a culture of respect for our natural environment. Together, we can restore the beauty of our landscapes and ensure they remain a source of joy for generations to come. Let’s take action today to protect our beautiful Oman!