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PASSIONATE
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CHAMPIONS HANDMADE
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INBRIEF

HM GREETINGS
TO KAZAKHSTAN
PRESIDENT



President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan received at the Presidential Palace in the capital, Astana, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

During the meeting, the minister conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and best wishes of good health and well-being to the President of Kazakhstan, further progress and prosperity for the people of his country and further development and growth for the bilateral relations between the two countries.

On his turn, the President of Kazakhstan asked the minister to convey his greetings and best wishes of permanent success and happiness to His Majesty the Sultan, further welfare for the Omani people and further progress and prosperity for the relations between the two countries.

LAND BORDER POINT
AT DIBBA OPENS



The Royal Oman Police (ROP) announced the start of operations of Dibba Border Checkpoint which connects the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The move comes within the framework of the security system plan to manage land, air and sea ports to facilitate movement and transportation.

5-YEAR DEAL SIGNED
ON ENVIRONMENT

The Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) as part of a 5-year executive programme in the field of environment conservation.

The MoU was signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, and Abdulaziz bin Ahmad al Mahmoud, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of the State of Qatar. **DETAILS ON P2**

RO 200 million Chinese
industrial complex soon

Reinforces Khazaen’s position as leading investment destination

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

WITH AN investment of around RO 200 million, Khazaen Economic City signed an investment agreement to establish an integrated Chinese industrial complex on an area exceeding 160,000 square metres. Muscat Changming Investments is investing in the development of the industrial complex, reinforcing Khazaen's position as a leading investment destination in Oman and the region.

The signing ceremony was held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, along with other dignitaries, investors, and representatives from local and international media. Eng Salim bin Sulaiman al Dhuhli, CEO of Khazaen Economic City, and Dr Mingliang Li, Vice-Chairman of Muscat Changming Investments, formalised the agreement.

The construction of the complex is set to commence in the second quarter of this year, and will comprise modern facilities including workshops and production lines designed to support the growth of light and medium industries across various sectors. The complex will also offer comprehensive business support infrastructures including house packaging areas, logistical warehouses serving as regional storage and distribution centres, office spaces, administrative buildings, and showrooms to bolster commercial and investment activities.

Additionally, it will include an automotive



Dignitaries at the signing ceremony on Tuesday.

repair centre offering maintenance services, spare parts, an innovative car showroom equipped with special lighting systems, a driving simulation area, and a dedicated space for new car launch events, along with a range of supportive services and facilities.

This project aligns with Khazaen Economic City's strategy to develop an integrated economic city that creates a world-class business environment, attracting local and international investments across strategic sectors, including logistics, manufacturing, food and pharmaceuticals, clean energy

and technology. Khazaen Economic City's strategic location on Al Batinah Expressway, coupled with its advanced infrastructure including Khazaen Dry Port and proximity to Muscat International Airport and Omani seaports like SOHAR Port, positions it as a vital hub for light and medium industries, logistics services, entrepreneurship and trade in the region.

“We are committed to fostering a competitive investment environment that drives Oman's economic diversification,” said Eng Salim bin Sulaiman al Dhuhli.

Shura approves draft laws
on state dues and tobacco

MUSCAT: The Majlis Ash'shura approved the draft law on Collection of State Dues and the draft law on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and referred them to the State Council. The council also approved the proposed draft Law on Combating Tobacco and its Derivatives, at its regular meeting held under

the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, on Tuesday.

At the outset of the meeting, the chairman of Majlis Ash'shura gave a speech during which he congratulated His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the advent of the holy month of Ramadhan, praying to Allah the Almighty to bestow His Majesty

with abundant blessings, good health, happiness and long life and prosperity and advancement for the Omani people and the Islamic nation.

Ahmed bin Said al Sharqi, Chairman of the Financial and Economic Committee, reviewed the committee's report on the draft law on Collection of State Dues and the committee's efforts in studying the draft law. The draft law comprises 79 articles distributed over five chapters. While studying the draft law, the committee hosted a number of specialists from government agencies. The committee also

held a joint meeting with the Legislative and Legal Committee during which it approved the consensus formula in most of the articles.

Mansour bin Zaher al Hajri, Chairman of the Health and Social Committee, discussed with the council members the committee's report on its study of the draft law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As part of its study of the draft law, the committee held a series of meetings with a number of community institutions in order to seek their views on the draft law.

New theatre to serve as hub for artistic and theatrical events

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information on Tuesday held a concert to mark the opening of the ‘Information Ministry’s Theatre’.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, and attended by senior government officials, members of the State Council, media persons, performers and culture specialists and enthusiasts.

Performances staged by the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra (ROSO) and the Royal Guard of Oman’s

inspirational chanting troupe reflected the deep-rooted beauties of the Omani national folk heritage presented in a magnificent blend of musical pieces and Arabic songs.

During the musical performance, the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra and the chanting troupes shone on the stage of the Ministry of Information. Their motions were in harmony with musical instruments.

A 3D hologram operetta themed “Omani Media - Back to the Roots” featured the basic concepts of Omani media and its connection



to Omani heritage, knowledge exchange and the progression of media methods in the Sultanate of Oman since 1970, right from the stages of print publications, to radio and television to the age of digital media.

Another visual display featured the efforts of the Ministry of Information in upholding the values and principles of the Sultanate of Oman. It showcased the ministry’s national, humanitarian and awareness message and its march of disseminating information and

knowledge. The display reflected the potential of trained media and technical personnel groomed by the ministry and equipped with the latest technologies enabling them to perform their national duty. It also exhibited indicators about the year 2024 accomplishments of different media outlets affiliated with the ministry.

The Ministry of Information’s Theatre, a 560-sqm facility equipped with state-of-the-art technologies, can accommodate 500 guests.

SEE ALSO P4

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



OMAN RADIO TO BROADCAST FOUR DRAMA SERIES

FAISAL AL ALAWI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

Oman Radio will broadcast 4 new series in Ramadhan combining Omani literary texts and radio drama with the aim of enriching drama works based on Omani literary works.

These include a radio adaptation of *Dilshad*, a novel written by the Omani writer Bushra Khalfan which won the Katara Prize for Arabic Novel 2022 in the published novels category and was shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (Booker) in the same year. The novel was prepared for radio drama by writer Nour el Din al Hashemi, and directed by Hamad al Wardi in an experience that reflects the importance of transferring Omani novels into drama.

Also to be broadcast in Ramadhan is the series ‘The Journey is Tough’ written by Zaher al Rashdi and directed by Hamad al Wardi. This is in addition to a series dubbed *Qala’id Al Yasmine* which translates to ‘The Jasmine Necklaces’ written by Shaikha al Fajri and directed by Ali al Ajmi as well as the series *Suwalif Al Jad Hamid* (Tales of Grandpa Hamid) written and directed by Mahmoud Obaid.

The series *Dilshad* was adapted for radio drama by Nour el Din al Hashemi and directed by Hamad al Wardi, starring Issam al Zadjali, Maryam al Farsi, Hilal al Hilali, Zuha Qader and Wafaa al Rashidi.

Regarding the impact of transforming the novel *Dilshad* into a radio drama and the impact this may have on the theme and whether she is concerned that the dramatic setting will affect the depth and complexities of the characters, she said this is a new experience and the radio drama is directed to a wide audience with varying taste and understanding and no doubt the dramatic setting takes those factors into account. She added: “Literary works when transformed into an audio or visual drama there would be a fear of altering the themes or the characters and this has happened more often which is why I was hesitant for a long time before giving my consent. However, I have great confidence in the scriptwriter Nour el Din al Hashemi, as he himself is a novelist.”

Director Hamad al Wardi said: “The novel features poverty and hunger that dominated people’s lives during a certain historical period in Oman where *Dilshad* faced great difficulties and challenges in his life starting with the death of his father then the hunger and poverty that plagued the region and his movement between the neighbourhoods and alleys in an attempt to make ends meet.”

OMAN, KAZAKHSTAN REVIEW MEANS OF ENHANCING COOPERATION

ASTANA: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met on Tuesday with Murat Nurtileu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing cooperation especially in economic, cultural and tourism fields. They also touched on means of boosting diplomatic cooperation between the two countries.

Both sides pointed out that they look forward to the upcoming meeting of the joint economic committee between the two countries during this year.

The two ministers discussed several issues and developments on the regional and international arenas. They also reiterated their backing of peaceful efforts that are exerted to achieve peace, stability and justice on the basis of international law.

Furthermore, the two sides signed a roadmap for cooperation between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries. This move aims to enhance joint coordination, develop partnerships in various fields of mutual interest and boost diplomatic relations to serve mutual interests.

The meeting was attended by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Bahrani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Kazakhstan, and several officials from both sides. — ONA



Oman and Qatar MoU to conserve environment

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, FEB 25

THE Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) as part of a 5-year executive programme in the field of environment conservation (2025-2029).

The MoU was signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, and Abdulaziz bin Ahmad al Mahmoud, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change of the State of Qatar.

The MoU was inked on the sidelines of Oman Climate Week currently being held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

According to the MoU, the two countries will establish joint cooperation projects, seek ways to finance the projects, cooperate in the field of related studies and research, organise visits to habitats of endangered wild animals and cooperate in combating invasive species.

The MoU also provides for the exchange



The two countries will establish joint cooperation projects and cooperate in the field of related studies and research.

of expertise in addressing land degradation and upgrading the restoration of vegetation. The two sides will conduct a joint study on successful models on the implementation of sustainable management plans for nature reserves, as well as proposals on twinning projects among wildlife reserves.

Dr Abdullah, speaking to the Observer, stated that there are ongoing discussions about the outcomes of previous climate

weeks that have resulted in strategic solutions and recommendations. The goal is to understand the methodologies of implementation, as well as the details of the implementation process and resolutions, in order to enhance awareness of environmental and climate change issues.

“All the efforts being made here in Muscat will have a positive impact on the region and the world. Scientific conferences are taking place, such as the Impact of Climate Change on Biodiversity and Sustainable Management of Solid Waste to Reduce Emissions. We are also having high-level strategic scientific and technical panel discussions,” he said.

The conference will run until February 27, featuring over 20 dialogue sessions, 15 specialised workshops and training programmes with the participation of more than 22 trainers discussing climate action.

The MoU is expected to enhance awareness in environmental sustainability, successful climate change governance, legislative perspectives, implementation mechanisms, modern analytical techniques in laboratories, quality control, radiation protection, and more.

RAM marks completion of Najiz programme

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidy, Chairman of the Supreme Court, fifty-nine heads of primary and appeal courts in the Sultanate of Oman completed the Najiz programme.

Provided by the Royal Academy of Management (RAM) in collaboration with the Supreme Judicial Council, the programme was specially designed to strengthen the skills and attributes deemed essential for heads of courts with adaptive leadership responsibilities in an ever-evolving landscape. In turn, the transformative programme is expected to have a long-term impact on the effectiveness of the nation’s judiciary system as a whole.



“The Najiz programme aimed to equip the participants with the tools and skills to enhance institutional performance and support the efficiency of judicial procedures that align with the highest quality and operational excellence standards. The participants also engaged with experts in judicial administration, shared local

experiences and gained insights into global practices. All of this, in turn, will enhance judiciary efficiency and strengthen the public confidence in the system,” said Dr Fathiya al Rashdi, Vice-Chairman of Programme Affairs at the Royal Academy of Management (RAM). The three-day Najiz programme has proven to be

an enriching experience for the participants and the leadership community they form.

“Our participation in the Najiz programme stems from the Supreme Judicial Council’s commitment to develop the skills of its judicial and administrative personnel.

Another participant, Dr Hamad al Jahwari, said, “It was an honour to take part in the Najiz programme, and in the presence of highly skilled trainers and distinguished administrative professionals, including former chief executives of leading economic and administrative institutions. The programme was an invaluable opportunity to gain new insights, exchange ideas.”

— ONA

OLA launches 12th edition of ‘Fak Kurba’ initiative

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabiyousef

The 12th edition of Fak Kurba, an initiative to release individuals involved in minor financial offenses, was launched under the auspices of Dr Hamad bin Hamdan al Rubaie, Chairman of the Board of the Omani Lawyers Association (OLA), on Tuesday.

This humanitarian initiative, organised by the OLA during the

holy month of Ramadhan, aims to help individuals detained for small financial offenses secure their release. Both Omanis and expatriates will benefit from this initiative.

Dr Al Rubaei, speaking to the Observer, stated that over the past 11 editions, the initiative successfully secured the release of more than 7,113 individuals who met the eligibility criteria. “This year, the initiative aims to secure the release

of approximately 1,300 individuals, with the participation of community members and various institutions



from across the country,” he added.

Al Rubaie emphasised that since its inception, the initiative has embodied the noble values and objectives upheld by Omani society. It reflects a remarkable story of cooperation and solidarity among individuals, civil institutions and official entities. “This has been evident in the statistics and achievements recorded throughout previous editions, as well as in assisting as many deserving

individuals as possible.”

Most of the people acquitted of minor and unintentional financial offenses in the past 12 years were those facing legal proceedings or detained for financial offenses. “In 2024 alone, we managed to secure the release of 1,219 people detained for financial offenses in various jails in Oman or facing legal proceedings in different courts in the country,” said Dr Mohammed al Zadjali, head of OLA.

SHORT TAKES



A range of topics of mutual interest were discussed including means of utilising modern technologies.

SAYYID KHALIFA RECEIVES EGYPTIAN DELEGATION

MUSCAT: Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidy, Chairman of the Supreme Court, on Tuesday received a delegation comprising members of the Public Prosecution of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The delegation was also received by Dr Rashid bin Obaid al Kaabi, Deputy Public Prosecutor.

During the two meetings, a range of topics of mutual interest were discussed, including means of utilising modern technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) in the work of public prosecutions. — ONA

OMAN TAKES PART IN WEB SUMMIT 2025 IN DOHA



The start-ups are supported by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in a bid to reach regional and international markets. — ONA

DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman is participating in activities of the Web Summit 2025, being held in Doha, the State of Qatar. From the Omani side, as many as 24 technology start-ups specialised in information technology are taking part in the event. The start-ups are supported by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology in a bid to reach regional and international markets.

The Sultanate of Oman’s participation in the Web Summit 2025, which is ongoing till 26 February 2025, focuses on artificial intelligence (AI), educational technologies, robots, Internet of Things (IoT) and health technology. — ONA

EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS VISIT MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE

MUSCAT: A delegation from the Military Academy for Postgraduate and Strategic Studies of the Arab Republic of Egypt on Tuesday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The delegation was greeted upon their arrival at the MSC by the Acting Head of the MSC. Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the Omani maritime environment.

They also toured the centre’s facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties. — ONA

DEVELOPMENT BANK PORTFOLIO GARNERS 509 EDUCATION LOANS

MUSCAT: The number of education loans in the Development Bank’s portfolio until the end of 2024 stood at 509 loans worth RO 18.8 million. The portfolio, aimed to serve all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, reflects the bank’s efforts to support private sector investments in educational fields.

As many as 138 loans, worth RO 12.8 million, were approved for the education sector during the year 2024, according to statistics issued by the bank.



Activities-wise, the general secondary education segment was accorded the greatest value of the loans (a total of RO 3.6 million for 13 loans), followed by the university colleges segment (RO 3.5 million for one loan), the training services segment (RO 588,000 for 4 loans) and the kindergartens segment (RO 257,000 for 26 loans).

Region-wise, the Governorate of Muscat occupied 65 per cent of the value of the approved loans (worth RO 8.3 million). — ONA

Connectivity crucial for Masirah tourism

VINOD NAIR
MASIRAH, FEB 25

TRANSPORT connectivity is key to exploring the potential of Masirah Island, located in the Arabian Sea off the east coast of the Sultanate of Oman.



The largest island in the country is part of Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

Currently, the population of the island is connected to the rest of the country through a ferry service that transports private vehicles to the Shannah Port on the mainland.

There is also a daily bus service from the capital, Muscat, to the Shannah Ferry Port. Additionally, there are twice-weekly flight services between Muscat and Masirah Island.

In an interview with the Observer, Abdullah bin Abdullah bin Abdulwali Baowain, Wali of Masirah, stated that the region has been attracting a large number of both foreign and domestic tourists, especially during the windy summer months. This time of year is the main attraction for activities like kitesurfing.

He also mentioned that a tender has been awarded for the construction of a multi-purpose port in Masirah valued at over RO28 million. This project, an

extension of the existing port, will include main and secondary breakwaters, fixed docks, floating moorings and modern facilities.

These improvements will enhance marine operations, fish production and marine transport efficiency. They will also allow for the use of larger and more advanced vessels, reducing current sea travel times.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has issued tenders for site selection studies, master plans, design and supervision for the development of an airport in Masirah.

Abdulhamid bin Ali al Abri, Deputy Wali of Masirah, noted that transportation remains a challenge for the island’s population, despite recent improvements in ferry and air services. There is no ferry

service available after 6 am, and individuals requiring emergency medical attention must be airlifted. For routine medical appointments in other parts of the country, residents must take a ferry to Shannah and then travel by road for hours to cities like Nizwa, Muscat and Sur. This often requires an overnight stay due to the limited same-day return options.

In addition to the local population, many government employees and workers from public utility companies (water, telecom and electricity) travel to Masirah for work during the week and return home before the weekend. The availability of air travel has made this commute more manageable, especially for Muscat residents who previously had to endure a lengthy road journey.

Workshop discusses children’s rights

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 25



The workshop was for psychologists, parents and representatives of the Omani Women’s Association.

The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) organised a workshop on children’s rights in Ramadhan under the slogan ‘A Conscious Vision’ for psychologists, parents and representatives of the Omani Women’s Association.

Noura al Subhi, MoSD’s Director of the Child Affairs Department, said: “The workshop aimed to raise parents’ awareness on children’s rights in Ramadhan, provide solutions to the challenges that children and their parents may face during the month, and develop the skills of parents and specialists in providing an appropriate and safe

environment for the child.”

The workshop included a number of working papers. ‘Our children between screens, gatherings, protection strategies

and balanced use’, presented by Ahmed Thabet Hilal, SQU, talked about the problems faced by the children like disturbed, insufficient sleep, obesity, behavioural problems, delayed development of language and social skills due to excessive use of social media. He also discussed strategies to reduce screen time, ways to become role models, involving children in decision making, earning trust, sharing numbers to call.

Ali al Ghailani, a social guidance supervisor at the Ministry of Education, in his working paper explained about the awareness of children’s rights in Islam, represented in care and upbringing, protection from violence, protection from exploitation, social care,

education, and the role of school staff in educating students the spirit of cooperation and solidarity during the month of Ramadhan. Yahya al Rashidi, a preacher at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, also explained the rights of the child in Ramadhan by educating them about the rulings, duties and conditions of worship, the importance of investing precious time in this blessed month, and instilling religious values.

Mawia al Baridi, a social specialist at the National Centre for Autism, said Ramadhan objectives can be invested in building social and emotional skills in children especially for those with autism spectrum disorder.

Artificial Intelligence can enhance Oman’s developmental plans

KABEER YOUSUF
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Incorporating Oman’s developmental plans through the five-year plans as well as Oman Vision 2040 with Artificial Intelligence can accelerate the speed of achieving results and contributing to society, according to AI specialists.

AI can significantly contribute to industrial and business growth,

giving a boost to the economy which will align with the growth plans of the country, according to industry leaders who attended the Microsoft Global AI Tour held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, recently.

Leaders in Artificial Intelligence were explicit about the innovations driving transformation and growth across the Sultanate of Oman at the



AI Tour. The event brought together industry leaders, developers and government officials to explore the transformative potential of AI in accelerating Oman’s digital transformation. Cutting-edge AI

solutions that enable organisations across industries to drive innovation, enhance efficiency and unlock new opportunities for economic growth were on display.

Shaikh Saif bin Hilal al Hosni, Country Manager of Microsoft Oman and Bahrain, told the Observer that businesses in Oman are increasingly recognising AI as a critical driver for innovation, efficiency and competitive advantage, with evident results.

“We are at the forefront of empowering organisations across all industries to effectively leverage the latest advancements in AI to tackle existing challenges and drive real business impact and our ongoing collaborations with leading Omani organisations reflect our commitment to equipping them with world-class AI and cloud solutions to shape the future of Oman’s digital economy,” Al Hosni said.



Information Ministry Theatre — a new era of cultural innovation

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 25

THE THEATRE of the Ministry of Information (MoI) opened on Tuesday as part of efforts undertaken by the ministry to promote arts, innovation, and highlight the role of media in portraying culture and thought in an advanced technical manner.

The theatre was inaugurated under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, and is set to be a hub that embraces artistic and theatrical events while contributing to the evolution of cultural and media activities in the Sultanate of Oman.

The 560-square metre theatre, which can accommodate 500 people, is equipped with the latest technology to enhance events in the best possible manner. It features a 150-square metre stage, special rooms for commentary, translation, advanced control, and external transmission units.

The theatre's opening ceremony included visual presentations, musical performances, national and Arab operettas.

Ibrahim bin Salim al Salmi, the official spokesperson for the Ministry of Information, stated that the ministry continues its efforts to support arts, creativity, and provide platforms that foster cultural, literary, and artistic events.

He explained that the opening of the theatre aims to enhance the cultural scene in the Sultanate of

“With a capacity of 500 seats and built on an area of 560 square metres, the theatre is equipped with special rooms for commentary and translation, in addition to fibre optic connections linking it to the television complex and outside broadcast vehicles, allowing events to be transmitted live through various audio-visual media outlets.

IBRAHIM BIN SALIM AL SALMI
The official spokesperson for the Ministry of Information



Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, at the event on Tuesday

Oman by providing a platform for a diverse range of events, including theatrical performances, musical concerts, art exhibitions, and creative workshops, contributing to the cultural and artistic movement in the Sultanate of Oman.

Al Salmi added that the theatre's design incorporates the latest technologies used in global theatres, equipped with the best audio and visual technologies, including advanced sound isolation and distribution systems, a flexible lighting system, and a stage design that meets the latest artistic standards. “Consideration was also given to facilitating access for people with disabilities to ensure a comprehensive experience for all visitors,” he said. “With a capacity of 500 seats and built on an area of 560 square metres, the theatre is equipped with special rooms for commentary and translation, in addition to fibre optic connections linking it to the television complex and outside broadcast vehicles, allowing events to be transmitted live through various audio-visual media outlets,” Al Salmi stated.

The opening ceremony included various cultural and artistic performances that reflected the richness and diversity of the Omani cultural scene. Al Salmi emphasised that the theatre will be a qualitative addition to the infrastructure of the culture and media sectors in the Sultanate of Oman.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



A man walks past a damaged building in Wad Madani, which was retaken by the Sudanese army a month earlier, in Sudan's Al Jazira state. — AFP

Army-aligned force accused of attack on central Sudan village

PORT SUDAN: Human Rights Watch accused a Sudanese army-aligned force on Tuesday of an attack on a village in the centre of the war-torn country that left at least 26 people dead.

The rights monitor said the Sudan Shield Forces “intentionally targeted civilians in a January 10 attack” on the village of Tayba in Al Jazira state, where fighting between the army and its rival the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has intensified in recent weeks. Tayba is located 30 kilometres east of state capital Wad Madani, which the army recaptured from the RSF last month after more than a year of paramilitary control. The attack, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said, left at least 26 civilians dead, one of them a child, and saw the systematic looting of property, including food supplies, as well as the burning of houses.

The Sudan Shield Forces are led by Abu Aqla Kaykal, who defected from the RSF last year and has been accused of atrocities against civilians both during his tenure with the paramilitaries and now on the army's side. — AFP

South Korea court hears in Yoon’s impeachment trial



A supporter of Yoon Suk Yeol waves a flag showing a picture of Yoon during a rally near the Constitutional Court in Seoul. — AFP

SEOUL: South Korean parliamentary lawyers seeking President Yoon Suk Yeol’s removal over his short-lived imposition of martial law compared him to a dictator in final arguments during his impeachment trial on Tuesday.

Yoon was expected to make a closing statement later in the hearing before the Constitutional Court reviewing his impeachment, as public hearings wrap up and his political fate is placed in the hands of eight judges.

Yoon faces being removed from office less than three years into his five-year presidency if the court upholds parliament’s impeachment, which accused him of declaring martial law on December 3 with no justifiable constitutional grounds.

Lee Kwang-beom, one of the lawyers for parliament, compared Yoon to previous autocratic South Korean leaders including Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan.

Yoon wanted to create a world where his every word would be written into the constitution, and sought to privatise the country and reign over the constitution, Lee argued. “We call this dictatorship,” he said. — Reuters

IRAN RULES OUT ‘DIRECT TALKS’ WITH US ON NUCLEAR ISSUE

Tehran: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Tuesday dismissed the possibility of direct negotiations with the United States on his country’s nuclear programme.

His remarks came a day after Washington announced fresh sanctions on Tehran targeting more than 30 vessels and people, including the head of the national oil company, accused of involvement in brokering the sale and shipment of Iranian oil.



Abbas Araghchi

The sanctions were the latest to be imposed since US President Donald Trump reinstated his “maximum pressure” policy towards Iran, reprising his approach during his first term.

“There will be no possibility of direct talks between us and the United States on the nuclear issue as long as the maximum pressure is applied in this way,” Araghchi said during a joint press conference with his visiting Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. — AFP

West Bank Palestinians fear Gaza-style clearance

ISRAELI bulldozers have demolished large areas of the now virtually empty Jenin refugee camp and appear to be carving wide roadways through its once-crowded warren of alleyways, echoing tactics already employed in Gaza as troops prepare for a long-term stay.

At least 40,000 Palestinians have left their homes in Jenin and the nearby city of Tulkarm in the northern West Bank since Israel began its operation just a day after reaching a ceasefire agreement in Gaza after 15 months of war.

“Jenin is a repeat of what happened in Jabalia,” said Basheer Matahen, spokesperson for the Jenin municipality, referring to the refugee camp in northern Gaza that was cleared out by the Israeli army after weeks of bitter fighting. “The camp has become uninhabitable.”

He said at least 12 bulldozers were at work demolishing houses and infrastructure in the camp, once a crowded township that housed descendants of Palestinians who fled their homes or were driven out in the 1948 war in what Palestinians call the ‘Nakba’ or catastrophe at the start of the state of Israel.

He said army engineering teams could be seen making preparations for a long-term stay, bringing water tanks and generators to a special area of almost one acre in size.

No comment was immediately available from the Israeli military but on Sunday, Defence Minister Israel Katz ordered troops to prepare for “a prolonged stay”, saying the camps had been cleared “for the



A man removes dirt and debris piled up in front of his residence along a street destroyed by Israeli bulldozers, during an ongoing military raid in the occupied West Bank refugee camp of Tulkarem. — AFP

coming year” and residents would not be allowed to return.

The month-long operation in the northern West Bank has been one of the biggest seen since the Second Intifada uprising by Palestinians more than 20 years ago, involving several brigades of Israeli troops backed by drones, helicopters, and, for the first time in decades, heavy battle tanks.

“There is a broad and ongoing evacuation of population, mainly in the two refugee camps, Nur Shams, near to Tulkarm and Jenin,” said Michael Milshtein, a former military intelligence official who heads the Palestinian Studies Forum at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies.

“I don’t know what the broad strategy is but there’s no doubt at all that we didn’t see such a step in the

past.” Israel launched the operation, saying it intended to take on groups including Hamas and Islamic Jihad that have been firmly implanted in the refugee camps for decades, despite repeated Israeli attempts to root them out. But as the weeks have gone on, Palestinians have said the real intention appears to be a large scale, permanent displacement of the population by destroying homes and making it impossible for them to stay.

“Israel wants to erase the camps and the memory of the camps, morally and financially, they want to erase the name of refugees from the memory of the people,” said 85-year-old Hassan al Katib, who lived in the Jenin camp with 20 children and grandchildren before abandoning his house during the Israeli operation. — Reuters



ICC PROSECUTOR ARRIVES IN DR CONGO

KINSHASA: The prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC) Karim Khan has arrived in the DR Congo, his office said on Tuesday, as the country grapples with an upsurge in fighting in the east.

The Rwanda-backed M23 has in recent weeks seized two major cities in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, giving the armed group a major foothold in the region since taking up arms again in late 2021.

“We are extremely worried about recent developments in Congo, we know the situation particularly in the east is acute,” Khan told reporters on his arrival in Kinshasa. — AFP

SNOWFALL

Japan warns of avalanches, icy roads



TOKYO: Japan will face more heavy snow after a two-week whiteout, the country’s weather agency said on Monday, warning people to be wary of avalanches and icy roads. The country’s regions facing the Sea of Japan experience heavy snowfall every year and are home to many ski resorts, drawing a growing number of tourists from abroad. But several cities have seen record snowfall this month, causing traffic disruption and fatalities.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

4 dead, 6 injured in Korean bridge collapse



SEOUL: Four people, including two Chinese nationals, were killed and six injured after a bridge collapsed at an expressway construction site in South Korea on Tuesday, authorities said. Local media aired dramatic footage of what appeared to be a section of the bridge collapsing, sending a massive cloud of smoke into the air. Four people were killed, five were seriously injured and one suffered a minor injury, the National Fire Agency said.

SEVERAL AREAS HIT

29 dead due to hail, rain in Afghanistan



KABUL: Twenty-nine people died in two provinces in southwestern Afghanistan due to hail and heavy rain. “Twenty-one people were killed and six others were injured” because of hail in western Farah province, Mohammad Israel Sayar, head of the province’s Disaster Management Department, said. The local disaster management department said eight people — including women and children — were killed in several locations due to heavy rain.

SHORT TAKES



The plan follows recommendations from a commission, which also recommended restricting the use of phones to those aged 13 and older.

Denmark announces plans to ban smart phones at schools

COPENHAGEN: Smartphones will be banned at schools under new legislation proposed in Denmark, the education minister announced on Tuesday. “We have decided to give the government’s support to this idea and that’s why we are starting to prepare a change in the law,” Mattias Tesfaye told the Danish daily newspaper Politiken. The details of the law have not yet been signed off but Tesfaye said “mobile phones and personal tablets will not be allowed at school, neither during break times nor during lessons”. “I believe screens are robbing many of our children of their childhood,” culture minister Jakob Engel-Schmidt said at a press conference. The plan follows recommendations from a youth well-being commission, which also recommended restricting the use of smartphones to those aged 13 and older. Rasmus Meyer, president of the commission, said the age restriction was “clearly not something that should be decided by law”. “As soon as a phone enters a child’s bedroom, it takes up all the space,” Meyer said. “It risks destroying their self-esteem. As soon as they have a gadget in their hands, their well-being suffers.” — AFP

MACRON TO BRIEF EU LEADERS ON UKRAINE TALKS WITH TRUMP

BRUSSELS: French President Emmanuel Macron will brief fellow EU leaders on Wednesday on his talks with US President Donald Trump, ahead of an emergency summit on European support for Ukraine. Antonio Costa, who heads the European Council representing the bloc’s 27 member states, announced on X he had convened a videoconference with Macron to prepare for the March 6 leaders’ talks. Europe has scrambled for a unified response since Trump two weeks ago declared his readiness to negotiate with Russia — and without European involvement -- on ending the three-year-old Ukraine war. Despite a veneer of cordiality, the transatlantic rift over Ukraine was on display during Macron’s talks with Trump on Monday — the third anniversary of Russia’s war. The French leader warned at the White House afterwards that peace cannot mean the “surrender” of Ukraine. “We want a quick deal but not a fragile one,” said Macron, who insisted any settlement must include US guarantees for Kyiv — to prevent any future Russian assault. — AFP

POPE FRANCIS ‘RESTED WELL’ BUT REMAINS IN CRITICAL STATE

ROME: Pope Francis “rested well” during his 11th night in hospital in Rome, the Holy See said on Tuesday. Despite a slightly improved condition, the 88-year-old head of the Catholic Church remains in a critical condition. Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin visited the pope again on Tuesday. According to the Vatican, the two discussed beatifications and canonisations. Francis was admitted to Rome’s Gemelli Hospital with a



respiratory infection and was later diagnosed with double pneumonia. He first caught the infection in mid-December. At 12 days, the stay marks his longest ever in hospital and there is so far no date set for his release. On Sunday, a statement said he had also developed a slight kidney insufficiency, though the Vatican said this is no cause for concern. The development followed an acute breathing crisis on Saturday, during which he was given oxygen. — dpa

US sides with Russia in UN resolutions on Ukraine

THE UN Security Council voted on Monday in favour of a US government resolution on Ukraine that calls for a rapid end to the war but does not name Russia as the aggressor. This is the first time that the most powerful UN body has reached a joint decision on the war. Ten countries voted in favour of the resolution and five abstained, thereby reaching the required majority. The United States voted with Russia and China, while all five European countries on the Council — Great Britain, France, Slovenia, Denmark and Greece — abstained. In theory, the British and French have the right to veto a resolution, but they have not used it since 1989. Resolutions in the UN Security Council are binding under international law. The adopted document, entitled “The Path to Peace”, does not name Moscow as the aggressor in the war and does not call for a Russian withdrawal, merely a swift end to the war. The British UN ambassador, Barbara Woodward, spoke out clearly against the resolution: “There can be no equivalence between Russia and Ukraine in how this Council refers to this war,” she said in a speech before the council that was also released as a statement. The vote came on the third anniversary of Russia’s full-scale war of Ukraine. “Today, we remember the millions of Ukrainians displaced, the tens of thousands of civilians killed, the lives destroyed by [Russian] President [Vladimir] Putin’s imperial ambition,” Woodward said. France’s UN ambassador, Nicolas de Rivière, said peace and security is not possible if aggression is rewarded. US ambassador Dorothy Shea said the resolution was a first step. “This resolution puts us on the path to peace,” she said. “It is a first step, but a crucial one, one of which we should all be proud. Now we must use it to build a peaceful future for Ukraine, Russia and the international community.” Earlier on Monday, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution with support



US Deputy Ambassador to the UN, Dorothy Shea, votes during a UN Security Council meeting on a US resolution on Ukraine on the third anniversary of Russia’s war of Ukraine, at UN headquarters in New York on Tuesday. — AFP

of European countries, but not the US, that identified Moscow as the aggressor in the war and demanded Russian troops withdraw from Ukrainian territory. Unlike the Security Council, resolutions in the General Assembly are not legally binding — but a vote in the UN’s largest body is seen as a global test of sentiment. Meanwhile, Russia attacked Ukraine during the night into Tuesday with a combination of combat drones and cruise missiles, a day after Moscow was

emboldened by the US at the United Nations. The cruise missiles were launched from four Tupolev Tu-95 strategic bombers over the Russian Volga region near Engels, according to the Ukrainian air force. Kiev changed its warning messages to the population every few minutes during the night because the cruise missiles changed direction several times over Ukraine, similar to combat drones. No information on missile impacts has yet been provided. — dpa

Countries lock horns over cash for nature at rebooted UN talks

ROME: The world’s biggest nature conservation conference will restart on Tuesday after negotiations collapsed in disarray last year, with the head of the meeting warning that increasing global “polarisation” was frustrating efforts to protect the planet. More than two years after a landmark deal on nature — including a pledge to protect 30 per cent of the world’s land and seas by 2030 — nations continue to haggle over the money needed to reverse destruction that scientists say threatens a million species. Negotiators meeting at the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization headquarters in Rome this week are tasked with breaking a deadlock on funding between rich and developing countries that saw COP16 talks in Cali, Colombia, end without agreement in November. The leader of the UN negotiations, Colombian Environment Minister Susana Muhamad, said countries

need to “substantially address these existential crises of biodiversity loss and climate change”. But she said progress in Cali was hamstrung by international rifts. “Why do we have such polarisation around that issue?” she told a press conference on Monday. “It has to do, I think in my perspective, with the changing landscape of power in geopolitics, and it has also to do with the requirements that armed conflicts are putting on finance of countries.” Susana did not mention specifics, but policymakers in wealthy nations are facing challenges from trade tensions to the war in Ukraine. The re-election of Donald Trump is also casting a shadow, despite the United States not having signed up to the UN’s Convention on Biological Diversity. Susana said she was “hopeful” that discussions since the Cali meeting have helped to lay the groundwork for a resolution in Rome.



A picture of an installation with flags of countries attending the COP16 biodiversity conference at the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) headquarters in Rome on Tuesday. — AFP

Countries have until Thursday to hammer out a plan to reach a promised \$200 billion a year in finance for nature by 2030, including \$30 billion a year from wealthier countries to poorer ones. The squabble in Cali was mainly over

the way in which that funding is delivered. Developing nations — led by Brazil and the African group — want the creation of a new, dedicated biodiversity fund, saying they are not adequately represented in existing mechanisms.

Wealthy nations — led by the European Union, Japan and Canada — say setting up multiple funds fragments aid. On Friday, the COP16 presidency published a new text that seeks to navigate around the “red lines” of each bloc of countries, according to Aleksandar Rankovic of the Common Initiative think tank. The document proposed kicking the ultimate decision on a new biodiversity fund to future UN talks, while suggesting reforming existing financing for nature conservation. Observers will be watching closely to see if developed countries, including those in budgetary crises like France and Germany, can be persuaded to agree. In 2022, nations identified 23 goals to be achieved within the decade, designed to protect the planet and its living creatures from deforestation, over-exploitation of resources, climate change, pollution and invasive species. — AFP

OPINION

Listen to your instincts, use your intellect



HYESHA BARRETT

The author is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat

INSTINCT versus intellect has been an intrigue of philosophers, psychologists and curious thinkers for centuries. While both play crucial roles in our decision-making processes — through understanding their dynamics, we can gain deeper insights into our intriguing human behaviour, and how we navigate through this fascinating world.

Instinct refers to the innate, subconscious responses that drive our actions. These are our gut feelings or intuitive impulses that arise unconsciously, often overriding our logical, conscious thoughts. Inborn, inherent and usually biologically driven, instincts are essential for our survival. They guide us through situations which demand immediate reactions, such as fleeing danger or nurturing loved ones. As instincts are deeply rooted in our evolutionary raising, they play a vital role in shaping human behaviours and actions.

Intellect, on the other hand, shapes our capacity for rational thoughts, critical analysis and problem-solving abilities, all of which allow us to decipher complex challenges and make informed decisions.

Intellect distinguishes us from all other species and enables us to plan for the future, reflect on our past and innovate in our professional fields.

Instinct offers immediate reactions, more heartfelt and intuitively driven, while intellect provides us a framework for understanding the broader implications of our choices. This duality is evident in our everyday life. For instance, we may logically think through a scenario, however once we take action, the course can change, depending on the factors at play and situation at hand. Intellect devises strategies for winning, usually to be executed “by the book”, conversely instinct can change the course of the game.

The interplay between instinct and intellect is indeed captivating. Solely focusing on one without the other will not procure the results we would wish for, professionally nor personally. Striking a balance between the two is vital, as the dance between both allows us to reach a more cohesive outcome. Relying solely on intellect can sometimes delay action, while relying solely on instinct may lead to hasty decisions.

Unlevelling your emotional intelligence,

Striking a balance between the two is vital, as the dance between both allows us to reach a more cohesive outcome

incorporating mindfulness and listening to your body can limit the hasty overthinking mind, bringing about the confidence necessary to listen to your gut, while connecting with your head as well.

Unfortunately, societal perspectives still place higher value on intellect.

Education systems still favour analytical skills, memorising texts and standardising tests, potentially overshadowing the individuals connection to their instinctual wisdom. This can be problematic as children who have their instinct quashed too often, unfortunately learn that shutting off their emotional and intuitive responses is what is required to move through the world. Sadly, this will not serve them long-term.

Instinct allows for authentic connections and immediate responses while intellect offers clarity and foresight — two essential components of our human experience that enrich our lives in different and complementary ways.

By cultivating both, we can navigate life's complexities with a more holistic approach, enabling better decision-making that considers our emotional and rational selves. Balancing these two influences will lead to a richer, more fulfilling life.

Latin American classics get the streaming treatment

NICOLÁS BIEDERMAN

Six decades after Latin America burst onto the international literary scene with magical tales that held up a mirror to the continent, its masterworks are enjoying a new moment as streaming platforms adapt them for the screen.

Netflix built the mythical town of Macondo, the setting of “One Hundred Years of Solitude”, from the ground up for the first-ever screen adaptation of the late Colombian Nobel winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s epic allegory of life in Latin America.

Another classic of Latin American literature, one which Garcia Marquez claimed to have learned by heart, “Pedro Paramo” by Mexican novelist Juan Rulfo, has also been made into a Netflix series. The political heirs of Marquez and Rulfo are also getting a look in, with the best-selling novel “Like Water for Chocolate” by Laura Esquivel, about the magical powers of food, finding a new home on Max.

Other adaptations in the works include Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa’s “The Bad Girl” and “The House of the Spirits” by Chilean-American writer Isabel Allende, which will premiere this year on Prime Video, with Allende herself and “Desperate Housewives” star Eva Longoria as executive producers.

For the Mexican producer, the leitmotif is that all “are very good stories” that “tell us very interesting things about the cultures of those countries.” While most of the series are based on novels, two famous Argentine comics are also getting the streaming treatment.

“Mafalda”, the satirical comic strip about an inquisitive six-year-old, who captured the hearts of Spanish speakers worldwide in the 1960s and 1970s, is being turned into a Netflix series by Oscar-winning film director Juan Jose Campanella.

Ditto the 1950s sci-fi comic “The Eternaut” about an alien invasion of Buenos Aires.

“These are two very specific works that have had international reach, so it is also about exporting (Argentine) culture,”

Ramos said in Buenos Aires during a press screening of the first episode of “The Eternaut”, which will premiere on April 30.

Argentine communication expert Leonardo Murolo said the two comics were well-chosen, as markers of popular culture that also have distinct political undertones. In a country where people debate politics “all the time and have a critical view of their history,” the two comics offer a “distinctive contribution” to the streaming tsunami, he said. — AFP

Let smart phones serve us and not vice versa

DURING the Covid-19 lockdown, I watched Disconnect (2012), a suspense thriller about strangers whose lives unravel through digital dependency. The film's haunting message — “We’re all more connected than ever, yet feel alone” — struck me as I scrolled through endless pandemic-era Zoom calls and grocery delivery apps. Little did I know that years later, its warning would mirror my own reality in the Sultanate of Oman: A world where smartphones promise connection but threaten to sever our autonomy when they fail.

Digital paralysis — the helplessness of losing smartphone access — is no longer fiction. As a Gen X professional in Muscat, with a high average of around 7 hours screen time daily, I learned this the hard way when my updating a number of main apps on my phone was taking longer than expected last month. Suddenly, I couldn’t make mobile payments bills, hail a ride, or recall my own contacts. Like the characters in Disconnect, I felt the chilling void of being untethered from the tool that had quietly become my lifeline.

Globally, 65 per cent of smartphone users report anxiety when separated from their devices (Deloitte, 2023). In Oman, where smartphone penetration hits 95 per cent, this dependency is acute. Apps like Otaxi-Yango, Talabat, Thawani and Bank Muscat streamline life but deepen vulnerability. A 2022 survey by Oman’s National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) found that 58 per cent of Gen X (ages 40–55) feel “moderate to high stress” when navigating new apps, compared to 22 per cent of those under 30. We’re caught between two worlds: old enough to remember landlines but compelled to embrace



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The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

Breaking free from digital paralysis requires strategy, not surrender. First, curate, don’t accumulate. Focus on mastering essential apps. Second, rebuild offline habits which foster resilience

AI-driven futures.

Ironically, the pandemic accelerated this shift. Lockdowns normalised app-based living, and Oman Vision 2040 now prioritises digitising healthcare, education and commerce. Yet, progress has a hidden cost. A 2023 World Bank study warns that poor tech adaptation among older adults could cost Oman’s economy \$300 million annually in lost productivity — a silent drain on national ambitions.

Disconnect’s plot revolves around a hacker who exploits digital naivety, leaving victims scrambling to reclaim their lives. The parallel to Oman’s Gen X is uncanny: We’re targets of phishing scams, overwhelmed by app updates, and often unaware of privacy settings. A 2023 cybersecurity report by Oman CERT revealed that 43 per cent of Gen X respondents had shared sensitive data accidentally, compared to 17 per cent of millennials. Without digital literacy, convenience becomes a trap.

But the film’s deeper lesson is psychological. One character, a journalist addicted to online validation, loses her job after a social media mishap. Another, a bullied teen, seeks solace in virtual friendships with tragic consequences. Their stories echo findings in Nature Human Behaviour (2022): excessive screen time reduces empathy and critical thinking — skills Gen X honed in pre-digital workplaces. As Oman pushes tech innovation, preserving these human strengths is vital.

Breaking free from digital paralysis requires strategy, not surrender. First, curate, don’t accumulate. Focus on mastering essential apps (e.g., government services, banking) rather than every trend. Oman’s Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology offers free workshops — leveraging these can



In Oman, where smartphone penetration hits 95 per cent, this dependency is acute.

ease the learning curve. Second, schedule “analogue hours” daily. During lockdown, I replaced evening scrolling with jogging along the beach; rebuilding offline habits fosters resilience.

Intergenerational collaboration is equally key. Millennials and Gen Z can mentor older colleagues on apps, while Gen X can share risk management skills honed in less automated eras. Apps themselves must adapt: Simplified interfaces, Arabic-language tutorials and “emergency access” features (e.g., backup codes for banking apps) would empower users. Malaeb, an Omani sports platform, recently introduced an “Easy Mode” for older adults — a model worth replicating.

Technology should expand choices, not limit them. Oman Vision 2040 envisions a digitally agile society, but agility requires balance. As Disconnect’s director, Henry-Alex Rubin, noted: “Technology isn’t the villain — it’s how we use it.” Let’s build a future where smartphones serve us, not the other way around. After all, the greatest connections — like those weathered stones on Salalah’s ancient port — endure even when the lights go out.

A day to reflect on the role of teachers



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

Our fast-moving journey of life, we often forget to express our gratitude and appreciation to teachers. Looking back, I'm confident that each of us can recall a teacher who had a profound influence on us, guiding us towards a path of strength and knowledge. A teacher enjoys a crucial position in society and commands a significant amount of respect. As such, February 24 is not just a date on the calendar for Oman, but it holds profound significance for Omani society. The day is a national occasion to recognise and appreciate the teachers' role in nurturing minds and moulding responsible Omani citizens. While Unesco celebrates World Teachers' Day on October 5 every year to pay tribute to the accomplishments of teachers, many countries observe this special day on different dates. Like the Sultanate of Oman, each country has its own historical or cultural significance attached to Teacher's Day. Teachers devote their lives to helping students, which is an honourable act by itself. Teachers are a blessing as they embody selflessness, kindness and compassion to illuminate knowledge for the betterment of their students. The Ministry of Education's celebrations of Teacher's Day, that too, with a holiday, reflect its high appreciation and confirm that

teaching is not just a job, but rather a noble profession. It is a calling. Teachers encourage, lead, teach and guide children, leaving lasting marks on every child's life. Since the beginning of the Omani Renaissance, the Omani leadership realised the importance of education in leading the comprehensive development of the country. As a result, the government directed its plans towards education, making it accessible to all. The current stage of the country's development means that the government's new priority is to improve the quality of education. Represented by its Education Ministry, the government employs best practices to ensure the sustainability of education and building a stronger and more flexible educational system to serve students. In this context, it is important for teachers to achieve sustainable development goals related to ensuring quality education and promoting equal learning opportunities for all by 2030. It also means that teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the new generation. Oman Vision 2040 emphasises that teachers should encourage critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving skills in classrooms so that a culture of curiosity and independent learning in students can be created to prepare them throughout their lives. They have a

Beyond classroom walls, teachers are an exceptional asset to our society, and we must value their hard work and dedication. By moulding young minds and instilling essential values, teachers contribute to developing well-rounded citizens equipped to navigate societal challenges

significant role in transforming those dreams into tangible realities. True, beyond classroom walls, teachers are an exceptional asset to our society, and we must value their hard work and dedication. By moulding young minds and instilling essential values, teachers contribute to developing well-rounded citizens equipped to navigate societal challenges. Therefore, dear teachers, continue your noble profession with confidence and determination. You are the torch that lights the path of generations, and you are the foundation upon which future visions are founded. Although the road ahead is full of challenges, with your dedication and passion for education, the Sultanate of Oman can overcome them all and build a bright future for its coming generation. Oman's wise leadership stands by you and appreciates every step you take towards achieving this noble goal. This trust is evident from what Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, said at a seminar a couple of years ago: "The responsibility placed on all of us is great, and the trust is immense. We are certain that you are worthy of bearing it and capable of performing it, exerting your utmost effort to advance the sons of your country and raise its status and progress."

TENSIONS RATTLE BOSNIA AHEAD OF COURT VERDICT

RUSMIR SMAJILHODZIC

Bosnia is on edge ahead of a court verdict for Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik, who is accused of defying the international envoy who oversees peace accords that ended the country's 1990s war. His trial marks a potential tipping point for the divided Balkan nation, with Dodik threatening to take his Republika Srpska (RS) out of Bosnia if the verdict goes against him. He is charged with refusing to comply with decisions made by Christian Schmidt, the international high representative for Bosnia who oversees the 1995 Dayton agreement that ended nearly four years of fighting that killed an estimated 100,000 people. A verdict is expected on Wednesday in the case against Dodik, president of RS, one of the two entities that make up deeply divided Bosnia. He has been on trial since February 2024. "Your verdict will determine the future of Bosnia," Dodik told the judge in Sarajevo as the trial ended last week, adding to reporters as he left the court that the ruling could deal a "fatal blow" to the country. Prosecutors demanded a jail sentence of nearly five years and a 10-year ban on holding public office. Dodik is not expected to be in court for the verdict and will have the right to appeal. The 65-year-old has repeatedly denounced the proceedings as a US-backed witch hunt aiming to "eliminate him from political life". Ahead of the verdict, institutions in the RS capital of Banja Luka have been put on alert and are "ready" to take action, according to Dodik. "The situation is tense enough that it could escalate... but I don't expect a physical conflict at this time," said Milos Solaja, a professor at the political science faculty at the University of Banja Luka. Since the end of the 1992-1995 war, Bosnia has been split between the semi-autonomous RS and the Muslim-Croat Federation. The two are linked by weak central institutions, and each has its own government. Dodik has said if found guilty, he will undo reforms adopted after the war to strengthen the central state -- including targeting the army, customs, taxes and law enforcement in RS. Several Bosniak Muslim leaders have reacted strongly. "These are threats to peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and they must be taken seriously," said Denis Becirovic, the Bosniak Muslim member of the tripartite presidency. Defence Minister Zukan Helez called on "international actors", notably European Union security forces in Bosnia, to be "ready to act to preserve peace and stability". "We are ready for all scenarios. Dodik cannot realise his dreams," added Bosnia's Foreign Minister Elmedin Konakovic. Political analyst Ranko Mavrak called Dodik's threats part of a "well-honed game" whose objectives are to "weaken the capabilities of the central state and thus create the conditions for secession". — AFP

Meltdown at Third Pole

THE United Nations has declared 2025 to be the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation, making it a fitting moment to confront the stark reality that the world's ice sheets are melting. Climate change is accelerating this trend, particularly in the Hindu Kush Himalayas, a region known as the Earth's Third Pole, because it contains the largest volume of ice outside of the Arctic and Antarctica. This mountain range, which stretches across 3,500 km and spans eight countries, from Afghanistan to Myanmar, is warming roughly three times faster than the global average. If temperatures rise by 3° Celsius above pre-industrial levels by the end of this century, up to 75 per cent of the region's glaciers will melt, reducing water availability, undermining food and energy security and exacerbating biodiversity loss. Glacial melt thus threatens irreversible damage to nearby communities and local economies. But it would also fuel instability around the globe by increasing migration, disrupting trade and causing food prices to rise. The 2021 flood disaster in Nepal's Melamchi River offers a glimpse of what is to come. Unusually heavy monsoon rains, coupled with excessive snowmelt, triggered a debris flow that wiped out thousands of hectares of agricultural land and destroyed critical infrastructure, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without access to water.

As the glaciers retreat, there will be too little water – a problem that is projected to afflict the Hindu Kush Himalayas by 2050. Dwindling river flows would make it more difficult to irrigate crops in an area that produces around one-third of the world's rice and one-quarter of its wheat. Water-supply and sanitation systems will become difficult to maintain, adding to the one billion people who already lack access to basic sanitation in the region. Food insecurity will almost surely worsen as well, while communities and even entire industries will likely need to migrate in search of fresh water. Asia's poorest and most vulnerable populations will be hit the hardest. The world must take urgent



The world must take urgent action to avert the disastrous effects of accelerating glacial melt in this region.



MASATSUGU ASAKAWA

The writer is President of the Asian Development Bank

action to avert the disastrous effects of accelerating glacial melt in this region. That means deepening our knowledge by investing in multi-hazard risk assessment, because the extent of the damage will largely depend on whether global temperatures rise by 1.5°, 1.8°, 2°, or 3°C. We must also strengthen integrated river-basin management by enhancing data collection, facilitating knowledge sharing, optimising water management and coordinating among people and communities living upstream and downstream. Ensuring that new and existing infrastructure is climate-resilient is essential for maintaining access to safe drinking water and energy security, as well as sanitation, irrigation and transport systems. It is equally important to protect ecosystems and promote nature-based solutions such as afforestation, reforestation, wetland preservation and flood-plain restoration. Every component of this strategy requires more financing. Development institutions must continue to scale up investment in the Hindu Kush Himalayas, and to work together to recast this glacial region and its river basins as a global public good, especially given their importance for agricultural and industrial activities. Lastly, the international community must advance the equitable use of shared glacial resources through cooperation and diplomacy. This would help defuse

potential tensions and promote sustainable development, ensuring that the region's glaciers serve as a force for peace rather than conflict. The Asian Development Bank (of which I am president) has taken steps to meet some of these goals. Together with the Green Climate Fund and country partners, ADB recently launched the Glaciers to Farms programme, which will mobilise \$3.5 billion to strengthen climate resilience in agriculture in Central and West Asia. Meanwhile, its Building Adaptation and Resilience in the Hindu Kush Himalayas-Bhutan and Nepal initiative is helping plan and design climate-resilient infrastructure and services. And ADB is also piloting new financing instruments, such as eco-compensation mechanisms, carbon markets and water trading, and sustainability-linked bonds. When Unesco and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) launched the International Year of Glaciers' Preservation last month, WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo said that it should serve as "a wake-up call to the world." The global community must do everything in its power – from building climate resilience to accelerating the green transition and promoting regional cooperation – to ensure a sustainable future for the billions of people who depend on glaciers and their related ecosystems. Failure to act now would have catastrophic consequences for us all. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

COACHING STRENGTH



OC HOLDS ICC LEVEL 2 COACHING COURSE WITH 21 PARTICIPANTS

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket successfully completed the first ICC Level 2 Coaching Course practical conducted globally, further strengthening the cricket coaching landscape in Oman. The interactive programme, conducted under the guidance of Aminul Islam, ICC Master Educator and Development Manager, Asia, along with Damith Warusavithana, Coach Educator and Desmond Berhardt, Coach Educator saw enthusiastic participation from 21 aspiring coaches including two female coaches committed to elevating the standards of cricket in the region.

The course, held at Oman Cricket Academy, provided a comprehensive curriculum covering advanced coaching methodologies, biomechanics in cricket, player development techniques and game strategies. The initiative aligns with Oman Cricket’s continuous efforts to develop world-class coaching expertise and nurture future generations of cricketers.

Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer of Oman Cricket, expressed enthusiasm about the achievement, stating, “Coaching is the backbone of player development and participation, and this programme is a significant step towards fostering skilled mentors for the future and encourage participants into the sport. The completion of the ICC Level 2 Course in Oman marks another milestone in our journey to enhance cricketing standards in Oman.”

The newly certified ICC Level 2 coaches will now play a vital role in mentoring players across different age groups and categories, ensuring a structured and professional approach to coaching. This initiative not only enhances local coaching capabilities, but also contributes to Oman’s growing reputation as a competitive cricketing nation in all arrays.

Oman Cricket extends its gratitude to ICC for its continuous support and remains committed to providing more such opportunities for coaching and player development in the future.

Participants: Parviz al Balushi, Ajay Lalcheta, Hemal Mehta, Nilesh Parmar, Tariq Hussain, Sultan Ahmed, Nisal Fernando, Golam Istiaq, Anil Kumar, Rashad al Balushi, Sijo TR, Zaman Quoraishi, Karthikeyan Venketeson, Nitish Raikar, Abdul Qayyum, Ganesh KPK, Pradeep CMR, Amir Ali, Shreyash Kankal, Hina Javed and Priyanka Mendonca.

RCA crowned champions of Eights tournament



The Royal Court Affairs (RCA) players celebrate with the trophy.

AHMED AL KAABI

THE ROYAL COURT AFFAIRS (RCA) team clinched the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth’s 2025 Government Institutions Football Eights Championship after a well-earned 3-0 victory over the Ministry of Education (MoE) team in the final match. In the third-place playoff, the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology secured the bronze medal by defeating the State Audit Institution team 1-0.

The final match was held at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, and in the presence of Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth.

From the opening whistle, the RCA team adopted an aggressive attacking strategy. They took the lead in the second minute, with Nooh al Battashi capitalising on a precise pass from Qasim al Abdulsalam to slot the ball into the net. The team dominated possession and nearly doubled their lead when Nooh al Battashi’s powerful shot just missed the right post. The MoE team attempted to hold their defensive lines and close spaces, but they struggled to keep up with the speed and movement of their opponents. Qasim al Abdulsalam played another dangerous pass to Al Battashi, but the MoE goalkeeper, Ghanem al Hasani, made a crucial save.

In the closing minutes of the first half, the MoE team pushed forward seeking an equaliser. Their best chance came in the 18th minute, when Yousuf al Hinai’s powerful shot was denied by goalkeeper Al Muhannad al Balushi, ensuring a 1-0 halftime lead for the RCA team.

As the second half began, the MoE continued to press for a goal, but the RCA team remained well-organised and solid at the back. In the 23rd minute, Aref al Balushi extended the lead with a low-driven shot into the net, making it 2-0.

Despite the MoE efforts to reduce the deficit, they struggled against the intense pressing from their opponents. The final blow came in the 30th minute, when Nooh al Battashi capitalised on a defensive error and fired a powerful shot into the net, sealing the 3-0 victory.

In the final minutes, the MoE team fought hard to score, but goalkeeper Al Muhannad al Balushi’s outstanding performance ensured a clean sheet and confirmed the RCA team as champions.

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS
The tournament honoured standout performances with Waleed al Abri of State Audit Institution (SAI) named Best Coach, and Khalid al Toobi of MoE awarded Best Administrator. Al Muhannad al Balushi of RCA won the Best Goalkeeper award, while his teammate Qasim al Abdulsalam earned Best Player of the Tournament. Murshid al Balushi of Ministry of Labour claimed the Top-Scorer title.

Ibrahim al Shibli, tournament director, expressed his delight at the event’s

success, noting that the tournament received significant interest from government employees, who requested more similar sporting events.

Al Shibli stated that the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth was keen to organise this tournament to enhance partnerships among government institutions and provide a sports platform that fosters social connections among employees through fair competition.

He also praised the high technical level of the final match and the strong audience turnout, which highlighted the enthusiasm of employees for such events. He further promised that next year’s tournament would see further improvements and enhancements to meet the expectations of participating teams.

Nasr al Wahaibi, head coach of the Royal Court Affairs team, expressed his pride in his team’s performance, stating: “I congratulate my players on this well-deserved victory. They showed an outstanding level throughout the tournament. As government employees, we truly need such sporting gatherings that strengthen our bonds. This event also allowed us to reunite with old friends from our school days, which is a great personal achievement.”

He added, “from the start of the tournament, our goal was clear: to win the title. Through teamwork and dedication, we achieved this. I sincerely thank the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth for their excellent organisation, and I hope such tournaments continue due to their great positive impact on employees.”

Oman advance to semis as Veterans Gulf Cup to conclude today

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

The Veterans Gulf Cup football tournament will conclude on Wednesday after four days of exciting gathering and friendly competition in Kuwait. The final match will take place on Wednesday while the semifinals were concluded late on Tuesday.

Oman team progressed into the semifinal following their crucial 1-0 win over the UAE on Monday night.

Oman team commenced their campaign in the tournament with a goalless draw against Kuwait. Then, they played out a 1-1 draw against Qatar in the second match. In the concluding game, they snatched a 1-0 win over UAE by a goal through Ismail al Ajmi in the first half to progress into



Oman team for the Veterans Gulf Cup. **RIGHT:** Oman and UAE players in action.

semifinals and met Bahrain team late on Tuesday. Oman topped Group A with five points while Qatar were second.

In Group B, Iraq led the pool

with seven points following their last win against Saudi Arabia by 1-0. Iraq and Bahrain finished their match by a goalless draw while Iraq also won against



Yemen to end as group toppers while Bahrain came second. The playing format of the event was based on group system from first round. The first and second

from each group qualify to the semifinals. Then, the winners from the semifinals will progress to the final match.

The next edition of Veterans Gulf Cup will take place in Saudi Arabia as part of the Arabian Gulf Cup in its 27th edition.

Oman squad: Ahmed al Mazroui, Ali al Habsi, Mohammed Rabee, Said al Raqadi, Mahfoudh al Oraimi, Ismail al Ajmi, Badar al Maimani, Ahmed Hadid, Abdullah al Saadi, Khalifa Ayel, Hassan Yousef, Mohammed Zayid, Fawzi Basheer, Ridwan Salim, Sultan al Touqi, Hashim Saleh, Imad al Hosni, Hani al Thabit, Hassan Rabee, Matar Khalifa, Mohammed Mubarak, Yaqoob al Mukhaini, Juma Darweesh, Nabeel Ashoor, Abdullah Kamoina, Ali al Ajmi, Mohammed al Mukhaini and Adil Fayel.

OMAN CRICKET LEAGUE



ISWK U11 won the Schools League.

ISWK U11, MCCC YELLOW U11 CLAIM CHAMPIONSHIPS

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket announced the successful completion of the Under-11 Schools and Academies OC Season 2024-25, an exciting tournament that showcased the remarkable talent and sportsmanship of young cricketers. The league served as a platform for budding players to hone their skills for the first time in their early days of playing cricket and embrace the spirit of competitive cricket.

ISWK U11 emerged champions winning six out of six league matches and ISM U11 A claimed runners-up spot winning five out of six of the schools tournament played among seven teams.

In the Academies League, MCCC Yellow emerged champions unbeaten in four matches while BSC AEC won three and claimed runners-up spot among five teams. The determination on the field, coupled with outstanding teamwork, set a high benchmark for the competition in the coming years. Oman Cricket remains committed to fostering young talent through structured competitive tournaments providing the youth to experience cricket, ensuring a bright future for the game from its grassroots in the Sultanate of Oman. The success of this league reflects the significance of grassroot cricket and youth development programmes and the unwavering passion for the sport among aspiring cricketers.

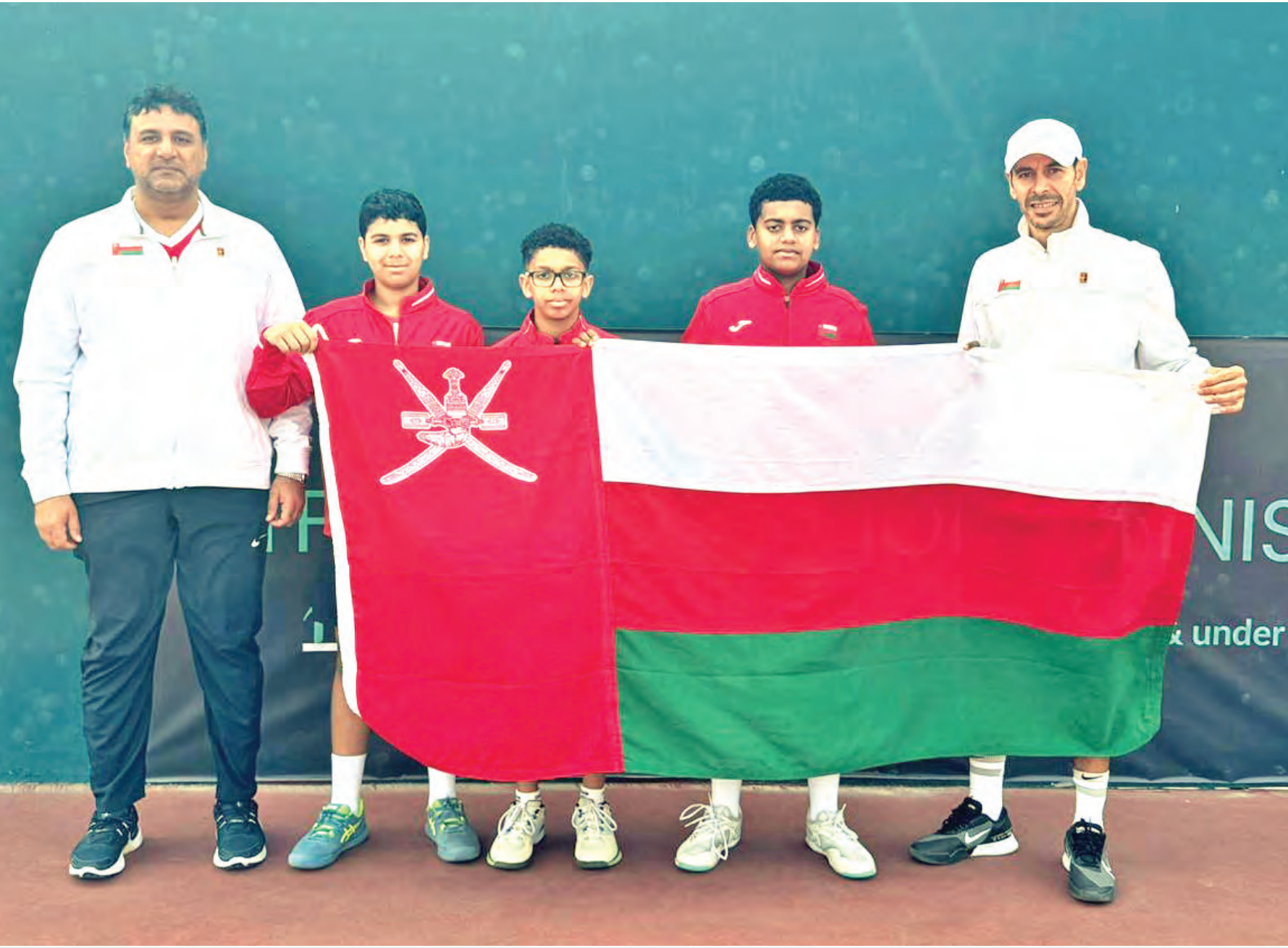
In the prize distribution, Alkesh Joshi, Treasurer, Oman Cricket, Kiran Asher, Board Member – Oman Cricket, and Duleep Mendis, Chief Development Officer, Oman Cricket, handed the accolades. For the Schools League, Aayansh Mistry claimed the Best Batter and Best All-Rounder award while Aarav Rahul bagged the Best Bowler. For Academies League, Ashbel Wilson Burboz claimed the Best Batter while Shubh Seth bagged the Best Bowler.

Alkesh Joshi said: “Oman Cricket is delighted to witness the enthusiasm and commitment displayed by these young players along with exemplary encouragement shown by the schools, academies and the parents. The U11 School & Academies OC Season 2024-25 has been a stepping-stone for future cricketing stars, and we look forward to more participation in such tournaments that shape the next generation of cricketers.” Oman Cricket extends its gratitude to all participating teams, coaches, parents and supporters who contributed to the success of the league.



MCCC Yellow U11 won the Academies League.

Oman beat UAE to kick off U14 Asia qualifiers



Oman kicked off their campaign with an exciting 2-1 victory over the UAE.

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

OMAN NATIONAL under-14 tennis team continues its journey in the preliminary qualifiers for the International Team Championship for Asia, currently taking place in Bahrain. The tournament is organised by the Bahrain Tennis Federation in collaboration with the International Tennis Federation, with the participation of 21 national teams.

On Wednesday, the team enters its second match of the tournament with high aspirations after securing a valuable victory in the opening encounter. The squad is determined to maintain its successful run and seize a qualification spot for the final stages.

Oman will face Kyrgyzstan, the fifth-seeded team in the tournament, in a crucial match within Group Five. The players aim to achieve their second consecutive win and strengthen their chances of advancing to the next stage, where only the top team from each group will qualify.



Oman will face Kyrgyzstan in a crucial match within Group Five.

OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE
Oman kicked off their campaign with an exciting 2-1 victory over the UAE. Azzan al Busaidy delivered an outstanding performance in the first singles match, defeating Rashid al Maini 6-3, 4-6, 6-1. However, his team-mate Moataz al Mazroui

fell to Mohammed al Ali 6-3, 7-6, leading to a decisive doubles match. In a thrilling contest, the Omani duo secured the win with a score of 5-7, 6-4, 10-8, earning their first triumph in the tournament.

Expressing his joy over the team's first win, Azzan al Busaidy said, “It was a tough and challenging match, but we managed to give our best and come out victorious. Now, we are fully focused on the upcoming match against Kyrgyzstan. We know it will be a difficult test, but we will give our all to secure another win and continue our journey in the tournament.”

Regarding the team's preparations before the qualifiers, Al Busaidy explained, “We participated in the Oman Open Tennis Championship, which helped us improve our physical fitness and refine our playing style under pressure. The matches we played during that event allowed us to reach peak readiness and develop our strategies.”

Al Busaidy also emphasised the role of team spirit and cooperation in their success, highlighting that “everyone is excited for the next challenge, approaching it with a fighting spirit and strong determination.”

Exciting conclusion to second season of Oman Super Series

MUSCAT: The second season of the Oman Super Series, the highest-paying badminton tournament in Oman, concluded with great excitement.

Over four days, more than 300 players competed in intense matches, attracting hundreds of spectators to the Oasis Badminton Academy in Ghala.

To ensure greater participation, the Open category featured nine divisions, in addition to a special category for Omani players, which saw a large turnout.

The tournament included singles and doubles competitions for boys and girls, as well as women's singles and doubles. Additionally, the Elite Doubles and Mixed Doubles categories added to the excitement.

In the senior category, Men's A, B and C divisions, Men's Premier,



Winners pose with the dignitaries and organisers of the second Oman Super Series.

Women's Doubles, Veteran Doubles, Omani Singles, and Women's Doubles saw a significant number of participants. There were also dedicated competitions for children and Omani children, making it a truly inclusive event.
A total prize pool of RO 6,000

was awarded to the winners and runners-up across 35 different categories.

The awards were presented by Dr Nasser al Saadi, Chairman of Bausher Municipality, Abdul Rahim bin Musallam al Daroushi, Chairman of Oman Racket Sports Committee,

Majid al Kharousi, CEO of Oman Tower Company, along with other prominent figures, including Said al Khalbani, Naif Al Jazasi, Ila Bhaktal, S Ramkumar, Narinder Singh, Shalini Verma, Wafa al Jazasi, Sandeep Koker, Sunil Kumar Gupta and Rassam Meethal.

BADMINTON CULTURE
Academy Director Yogendra Katiyar expressed his delight at the overwhelming response, saying, “The second season received even greater acceptance from both locals and expatriates.”

“The increase in the number of participants is proof that badminton is becoming more popular in Oman. This motivates us to organise more tournaments in the future.”

An official from Morning Star Badminton Club said: “This season's participation shows that Omanis and expatriates now take badminton as seriously as cricket and football. Even with a four-day tournament, we struggled to accommodate all players, so we will work on ensuring even greater participation in the future.”

SPORTS

Qatar 10-Hour Race to begin Ahmad’s 2025 FIA WEC challenge

Al Harthy more focused than ever for new FIA World Endurance season

Omani motorsport star eyeing strong and consistent start in Lusail, Qatar

Al Harthy and Valentino Rossi joined by Kelvin van der Linde for 2025 bid

Stunning Team WRT BMW M4 LMGT3 breaks cover in Prologue test

OQ Group and Sohar International providing headline support for Omani

LUSAIL INTERNATIONAL CIRCUIT in Qatar is the host venue for the eagerly awaited opening round of the new FIA World Endurance Championship season this week, where Oman's Ahmad al Harthy is set to mount a major challenge in the LMGT3 class of the spectacular series.

The Qatar 1812km, which runs over a scheduled 10 hours, will take place this coming Friday, February 28, and marks the beginning of Al Harthy's second FIA WEC season as team-mate to global sporting icon Valentino Rossi in the No 46 BMW M4 LMGT3. Joining the pairing in the Team WRT run car this year is highly successful GT racer, South Africa's Kelvin van der Linde.

Competitors took part in a two-day Prologue test in Lusail this past weekend where the striking new blue and yellow livery of the No 46 BMW M4 – which features Al Harthy's key partners OQ Group, Sohar International, Omantel, BMW Oman, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Experience Oman – broke cover.

Enjoying a good, consistent programme over the course of the Prologue, all thoughts and attention now turn to the start of free practice on Wednesday, ahead of qualifying



on Thursday.

After a strong first season with Team WRT and BMW last year in FIA WEC, where two podium finishes were achieved in LMGT3 on the way to sixth in the standings, Al Harthy is aiming much higher for the new campaign as he seeks to build significantly on the experience gained in 2024.

Moreover, the Bronze graded driver is thrilled to have such a talented pair of team-mates in silver graded Rossi and Platinum graded Van der Linde. Equally, though, none are underestimating the immense level of competition in LMGT3 this season.

Having long been a loyal ambassador for Oman, Al Harthy

was memorably awarded the Sultan's Medal of Appreciation by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik last year, a successful start to the new season in the Middle East would be a dream way to begin his 2025 challenge.

AHMAD AL HARTHY:
“After a long winter we’re back

in FIA World Endurance and absolutely ready to challenge as hard as we can in LMGT3. The car looks amazing in its new livery, it feels amazing to drive and, with a full season of experience of the car and the team from last year, I'm more confident we have a great package with which we can take the fight to a very competitive field.

“It's going to be fantastic teaming with Vale and Kelvin this year, we're all focused and determined to do the very best we can and we know we have an incredible team behind us at WRT.

We won't fully know where we are until qualifying begins later in the week, but we are looking forward to pushing for a good result to begin the new season.

“I always enjoy racing close to home in the Middle East, and we're expecting a lot of support from friends and family, so hopefully we can make the start we all want and proudly fly the flag for Oman here in Qatar!”

Following two free practice sessions in Lusail on Wednesday, a further free practice period will run on Thursday, prior to qualifying at 17.00 local time. The Qatar 1,812 km itself will begin at 14.00 local time on February 28. Follow the action at [www.fiaawec.com](#)

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Scheme Period: 23rd February 2025 to 23rd April 2025
Reliable International Automotive LLC. C.R. No. 1707183, Wattayah: 24579846/47; Al Mawelah: 93204360; Barka: 93201347; Nizwa: 99874368; Sohar: 92837722; Sur: 25546190/93204360; Rustaq: 92869449; Salalah: 23211460/99884217.
Saturday Showroom Timing: Muscat, Al Mawelah, Barka, Sohar & Salalah from 9.00 AM to 1.00 PM

VAT will be adjusted in the deal through a VAT Gift, equivalent to 5% of the vehicle price. This VAT gift is in addition to normal Cash Gift offer applicable on the model. VAT gift on select models such as K3, K5 PE (24MY), K8, Sonet, Seltos, Sportage 1.6T SMK & Sportage L, ## 1 EV6 Earth (24MY) Winnings are through Raffle coupons only. Raffle coupons to customers will be provided only after the finalization & approval of their standard deal by their FC companies/Banks. Raffle Date : 07/05/25 at the end of campaign. Subject to full payment of purchased car. The handover of the Raffle prize will be done after 15th May 2025 upon completion of all legal & financial documents towards purchase of new vehicle such as formal delivery note & Invoice and new vehicle ROP Registration. @1 year insurance & 1 year registration (as applicable) would be given on all models except Picanto to the extent of a private vehicle. Additional premium as per insurance norm would have to be paid by the buyer. For models where Insurance is offered as a benefit, additional cash gift can be availed by customer in lieu of Insurance. **Total applicable Service benefit will be from 5 Years/50,000Kms to 10 years/100,000Kms whichever is earlier. 50,000 Kms/ 5 years. On Picanto, K3, K5 PE (24MY), K8, Sonet (25MY), Seltos (25MY), all Sportage models, Sorento PE (25MY) & Carnival PE. 100,000Kms/10 years on Pegas, Cerato, K5 PE (25MY), Sonet (24MY) & Seltos (24MY), Telluride & Carens. The Service Benefit offer for EV vehicles is 105,000Kms/5 years whichever is earlier. \$ The film tinting will be of 3M colour stable (Side Glasses & Rr: Windscreen) & will be installed only in Sportage in 1.6T SMK & Sportage L. Trims only after the delivery & completion of invoicing of the vehicle. All the above benefits are not applicable on Ministry, Bulk fleet, Corporate & RAC deals. Scheme Period: 23/02/2025 to 23/04/2025 Vehicles may also include some Dealer Installed Accessories. Pictures & Colors are indicative. For further details, please visit your nearest Kia showroom.



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RO 700 million-worth projects to strengthen water infrastructure

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, FEB 25

NAMA WATER SERVICES has launched a series of 27 strategic projects worth over RO 700 million to enhance Oman's water and wastewater infrastructure. These projects, which contribute RO 193 million to in-country value (ICV), align with Oman Vision 2040, supporting sustainability and national development.

The company also announced a major Omanisation initiative, creating 885 jobs in contractor firms operating in the water sector. The announcement was made during a ceremony on February 25, 2025, under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud

al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

STRENGTHENING WATER SECURITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Qais bin Saud al Zakwani, CEO of Nama Water Services, highlighted the company's ongoing efforts to expand and modernise Oman's water infrastructure.

“Nama Water Services is implementing projects that strengthen water and wastewater networks across the governorates we serve — from Musandam to Al Wusta. These 27 projects, worth over RO 700 million, are essential for increasing network coverage beyond 72.80% and expanding service access to more than 937,970 subscribers,” he said.

The CEO also underscored the company's



These projects, which contribute RO 193 million to in-country value (ICV), align with Oman Vision 2040.

commitment to quality, achieving a 99.22% compliance rate in water quality. Additionally, Nama Water Services is aligning with Oman's carbon neutrality goals for 2050, supporting environmental priorities under Oman Vision 2040.

OMANISATION INITIATIVE: 885 NEW JOBS
As part of its national workforce development strategy, Nama Water Services has introduced an Omanisation initiative through long-term contracts with service providers, creating 885 jobs across partner companies in operations and maintenance. “This initiative, in collaboration with the Public Services Sector Governance Committee and the Ministry of Labour's Training and Development Centre, has increased Omanisation rates in these companies from 55% to 84%,” said Al Zakwani.

He added that the programme covers all governorates, with 200 jobs in Muscat and the rest distributed across other regions. The initiative is being rolled out in two phases, with the first phase already completed in

December, while the second phase will be announced soon.

SIGNING OF FOUR MAJOR PROJECT AGREEMENTS
During the event, four new project agreements were signed:

- a. Nama Water Services & Galfar — Water distribution networks in Ibri, Yanqul, and Dhank (Al Dhahirah Governorate — Package 1).
- b. Nama Water Services & Egyptian Contractors — Water networks in Ibri, Yanqul, and Dhank (Al Dhahirah Governorate — Package 2).
- c. Nama Water Services & Hona Global Industries — Water networks in Samayil and Izki (Al Dakhiliyah Governorate).
- d. Nama Water Services & Target Company — Sewage networks in Al Ansab (Package B7D). These projects mark a significant step in Oman's water infrastructure development, ensuring reliability, sustainability and enhanced service coverage for future generations.

Oman’s digital transformation progress reaches 73 per cent

MUSCAT: The National Government Digital Transformation Programme, known as “Tahweel,” has achieved an overall performance rate of 73% by the end of November 2024, a significant increase from 53% in 2023.

Government institutions demonstrated an average performance of 77% in meeting digital transformation requirements, while governorates averaged 71%. A total of 49 government entities and governorates were assessed as part of the transformation process.

According to the annual report on digital transformation issued by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, government institutions have made remarkable progress in implementing digital transformation requirements.

Four government entities — Muscat Governorate, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, the National Centre for Statistics and Information, and the Oman Investment Authority — achieved the advanced level for the first time, representing 8% of the total institutions evaluated.

Additionally, 38 government entities, accounting for 78%, attained above-average performance, while six institutions (12%) reached the average level. Only one institution (2%) fell below average and none were classified at the low level.



Government institutions have made remarkable progress in implementing digital transformation requirements.

The report highlighted the top-performing service institutions in digital transformation, with Muscat Governorate, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, and the Royal Oman Police leading the rankings.

Among non-service institutions, the Follow-up Unit for the Implementation of Oman Vision 2040, the National Centre for Statistics and Information, and the Oman Investment Authority were recognised as the best-performing entities.

These institutions have demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing digital efficiency and improving government services in line with international standards. — ONA

NBO Global Equity Fund

Investment Manager Report
For the year ending
31st December 2024

2024 marked the Federal Reserve making its first rate cut since 2020 providing some relief on global equity markets, policy shifts by central banks, increase in geopolitical tensions, and a market journey that balanced caution with opportunity.

The MSCIs Global and Developed indices decreased by 2.45%, 2.68% respectively while Emerging Market index decreased by 0.29% during the month. Among Developed Markets (DM), the S&P 500 Index (USA) decreased by 2.5% and the Nasdaq Composite (USA) increased by 0.39%. The Euro Stoxx 50 Index (Eurozone), UK and Japan fell by 0.21%, 2.97%, and 0.60% respectively. Among Emerging Markets (EM), the Korean and Indian markets fell by 7.47% and 3.19%, while the Chinese and Taiwanese markets increased by 0.04% 2.56% respectively (USD returns considered for all indices). The global Index has increased by 17% for the year ending 2024.

In the bond markets, the US 10-year saw yields increasing to 4.57% from 4.17% in November 2024. The new US government policies are generally considered inflationary by economists and market participants, and this led to the spike in yields after election results. However, the same normalized by the end of month. The Global Aggregate Bond Index ended the month by a decrease of 2.14%. For the year, the bond index is now down by 1.69%.

In December 2024, global markets remained volatile ahead of the holiday season and saw a downward trend in the final days of the year, following the best performance of the year in November. This decline was influenced by the US Federal Reserve's indication of a lower number of rate cuts moving forward, following its 25-basis-point (bps) rate cut during its December meeting. Global financial markets remain influenced by expectations around monetary policy, with more central banks, such as the European Central Bank, continuing with policy easing measures, as seen with its 25bps rate cut in December.

Our Fund return remained in-line with the global index, though slightly better. We made some adjustments to the fund positions as the market rally continued to broaden from large cap growth stocks to other opportunities. As of now, our exposure continues to tilt towards quality growth stocks from developed markets. However, we continue to assess opportunities in the emerging market space as well, in case suitable opportunities emerge going forward. We continue to remain optimistic entering 2025 about the growth potential of our fund's holdings, based on major headlines this past year. Our dual objectives are to preserve portfolio quality by refining our research and investment strategy, and to realize an above hurdle rate return through 2025.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	31 December 2024	RO
ASSETS		
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	3,607,115	
Cash and cash equivalents	39,573	
Dividend receivable	1,569	
Total assets	3,648,257	
LIABILITIES		
Accruals and other payables	12,431	
Total net assets attributable to the Unitholders	3,635,826	
Net asset value per unit	1.018	

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

	31 December 2024	RO
INCOME		
Net realised gain on investments at fair value through profit or loss	139,777	
Fair value changes in investments at fair value through profit or loss	(29,640)	
Dividend income	15,172	
Other income	2,088	
	127,397	
Expenses		
Brokerage commission	23,142	
Management fees	13,307	
Fund Management Body fees	4,200	
Investment advisor fees	5,068	
Administration and custodian service fees	5,019	
Foreign exchange loss	1,031	
General and administration	10,238	
	62,005	
Net profit and total comprehensive income for the period	65,392	
Net profit per unit	0.018	

Investment Manager

البنك الوطني العماني

NBO

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

ADVERTORIALS

NEWSTRATEGY



Takaful Oman continues to set new standards for speed, efficiency and reliability.

TAKAFUL OMAN DRIVES DIGITAL INNOVATION IN INSURANCE

MUSCAT: In its continuous pursuit of leadership in Oman’s insurance sector, Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG has launched its comprehensive digital transformation strategy to enhance efficiency, transparency and customer experience by leveraging the latest technologies. The strategy was unveiled during a press conference organised by the company to introduce its newly upgraded website and a suite of smart solutions aimed at streamlining policy issuance, claims processing and customer interactions, marking a significant advancement in the sector.

With over 200,000 digitally issued policies since 2023 on its digital insurance platform and more than 1,000 claims processed since December 2024 on its digital claims platform, Takaful Oman continues to set new standards for speed, efficiency and reliability. Its digital-first approach aligns with Oman Vision 2040, reinforcing its role in driving financial technology and national economic progress.

As part of its commitment to ongoing innovation, the company is also implementing a next-generation ERP system to streamline financial operations and improve efficiency at scale. Additionally, by leveraging data-driven insights, Takaful Oman is working towards hyper-personalised insurance solutions that cater to individual customer needs, ensuring a tailored and seamless experience. The company is also developing a next-generation policy administration system for life and medical insurance, reinforcing its foundation for future growth.

Sulaiman Hamed al Harthy, Board Chairman of Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG, stated, “Innovation is embedded in our approach. Our digital transformation is not just about operational improvements — it is about equipping our customers with secure, efficient and transparent insurance solutions tailored to their evolving needs thereby reshaping the industry and supporting Oman’s transition to a knowledge-based digital economy.”

Echoing this commitment, Neelmani Bhardwaj, Chief Executive Officer of Takaful Oman Insurance SAOG, added, “Our digital transformation is a testament to our relentless focus on customer experience. We are building an ecosystem where ease of access and security are paramount. This evolution cements our leadership in digital insurance and underscores our drive to set new industry standards.”

KHEDMAH PROMOTES EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING AND BOOST PRODUCTIVITY

MUSCAT: In line with its ongoing commitment to employee well-being, Oman Investment and Finance Company (OIFC) — Khedmah, a leader in electronic payment and collection services in the Sultanate of Oman, hosted a staff health seminar in collaboration with renowned healthcare provider KIMS.

The seminar provided essential health check-ups and aimed to raise awareness about key health issues. This initiative aligns with the company’s vision of creating



This initiative aligns with the company’s vision of creating a healthy work environment.

a healthy work environment that enhances productivity and motivates employees to be more active and successful in their roles.

The seminar offered vital health screenings, including diabetes tests, blood pressure checks and eye exams, giving employees the opportunity to receive immediate health assessments.

It also emphasised the importance of prevention and early detection in maintaining and improving overall health.

Unwrap the blessings of Ramadhan with Lexus

THIS Ramadhan, embrace the spirit of the blessed month with Lexus Oman’s incredible offer to own your dream Lexus vehicle.

Experience bespoke journeys with Lexus’ premium range of vehicles and enjoy up to 10 years/100,000 km of stress-free service benefits, along with first-year free registration. Those who make a purchase will also be entered into the raffle draw to win the latest iPhone 16 Pro Max.

The Lexus Ramadhan campaign runs through April 24, 2025. Now is the perfect time to experience true Japanese craftsmanship and drive the innovation that shapes unforgettable journeys.

Visit your nearest Saud Bahwan Automotive Showroom and explore its luxurious high-performance sedans, SUVs and hybrids.

Discover endless possibilities with a brand-new Lexus IS and let your ride take control of your on-road journey while you embark on your spiritual one.

Designed to appeal to



Available in two trims — the Lexus IS300 and IS350 F Sport — this sedan is set to transform the way you navigate cityscapes.

younger demographics, the stunning executive sedan offers unparalleled performance in a luxury setting inspired by the Tazuna Cockpit design concept. Available in two trims — the Lexus IS300 and IS350 F Sport — this sedan is set to transform the way you navigate cityscapes. In the IS300, experience an exhilarating response with a turbocharged 2.0L, 4-cylinder engine, delivering 241 HP at 5,800 rpm.

The IS is also available with a powerful 3.5L V6 engine F-Sport trim under its banner.

Make heads turn with a Lexus ES. The premium sedan boasts remarkable efficiency with smooth handling that makes every journey a breeze. Available in three powertrain options — the ES250, ES350, and the hybrid ES300h — the engine power and transmissions vary across trims.

The ES250 features a 2.5L

engine that produces 204 hp at 6,600 rpm and 24.8 kg-m of torque, while the ES350 boasts a larger 3.5L V6 engine, delivering an exhilarating 298 hp at 6,500–6,600 rpm and 36.3 kg-m of torque.

For a more eco-friendly experience, the ES300h comes with auto-charging capabilities and a self-charging electric engine, saving fuel during braking or deceleration.

All trims are mated to a Direct Shift 8-speed automatic transmission.

Embrace perfection while off-roading in the Lexus LX that is set to inspire confidence and joy with its four-wheel drive capabilities.

Explore the perfect balance between elegance and power with fine interiors and advanced technologies that keep you safe and ahead of every curve.

Available in 5 and 7 seating options, the LX600 comes with a 3.5-litre twin turbocharged engine producing 409 hp and up to 66.28 kg-m of torque. The LX exceeds expectations while making every moment count.

AHLIBANK SPONSORS SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PIONEERS FORUM

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing efforts to support the local community, ahlibank announced its role as the main sponsor for the Social Responsibility Pioneers Forum.

The forum aims to promote the concepts of community support and achieve a positive impact across various sectors and segments of society.

This step is part of a series of initiatives adopted by ahlibank as part of its commitment to



The forum aims to promote the concepts of community support.

creating a long-lasting positive impact on the community, further enhancing its position as a leading financial institution that prioritises the local community.

Jumana al Hashmi, AGM — Head of Marketing & Corporate Communications, stated, “At ahlibank, we take pride in our continuous sponsorship of initiatives and forums aimed at achieving a prosperous societal reality, which aligns with

our values and commitment to supporting sustainable development and contributing to the advancement of Omani society. We are working to unite efforts and continue progressing towards achieving Oman Vision 2040.”

ahlibank reaffirms its ongoing commitment to supporting the Omani community through initiatives and events that promote the values of social responsibility.

GAC, Fuso celebrate 50 years of success in Oman

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (GAC), a part of The Zubair Corporation, celebrated a landmark occasion — 50 years of partnership with Mitsubishi Motors and Mitsubishi Fuso Truck & Bus Corporation in Oman.

The grand anniversary event took place on February 16, 2025 at the prestigious Al Bandar Ballroom, Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah in Muscat. The evening brought together dignitaries, business leaders and industry pioneers to honour a legacy built on trust, innovation and an unwavering commitment to progress.

The event was graced by the presence of several distinguished guests, including the German Ambassador to Oman, Dirk Lölke, Chairman of Mobility & Equipment Sector within The Zubair



The evening brought together dignitaries, business leaders and industry pioneers to honour a legacy built on trust, innovation and an unwavering commitment to progress.

Corporation, Hani al Zubair, senior dignitaries from Mitsubishi Motors, Minoru Kinoshita — Corporate Office, Moteki Takahiro — GM, Middle Divisionand, Junya Takami — President MMMEA as well as Daimler Truck — Fuso, Michael Dietz, CEO & President MEA and Stavros Stavropoulos — Head of Network Development & Training, further underscoring the significance of this important milestone celebration.

Reflecting on the 50-year journey, Hani al Zubair stated, “Fifty years is not merely a measure of time; it is a testament to the enduring spirit of partnership, resilience and shared vision.

Together, we have built a foundation of trust and excellence that has shaped Oman’s mobility landscape. As we celebrate this milestone, we also look ahead with

renewed commitment to innovation and progress, ensuring that Mitsubishi Motors and Fuso brands remain the trusted mobility solutions for generations to come in Oman.”

Since 1974, when Mohammad al Zubair introduced Mitsubishi cars and Fuso trucks to Oman, this partnership has played a pivotal role in shaping the nation’s automotive landscape.

From the first Mitsubishi Galant to the legendary Pajero and Canter, Mitsubishi and Fuso vehicles have become an integral part of Oman’s roads, industries and everyday life.

Over the decades, this collaboration expanded its presence with state-of-the-art showrooms, service centres and industry-leading customer service initiatives, setting new standards in reliability, performance and excellence.

BUSINESS

CASESTUDIES



The panel discussion explored strategic interventions, policy levers and scalable solutions, spotlighting successful global case studies.

OMAN CLIMATE WEEK SESSION DELVES INTO DECARBONISATION CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

THE imperative of technological innovation, regulatory frameworks and adaptive business models in decarbonizing hard-to-abate industries was highlighted at a key session held as part of the Oman Climate Week Main Strategic Conference on Tuesday, February 25, 2025.

Taking part in the session, Faiza al Harthy, Head of Energy & Water Policy at Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), outlined strategies to bridge the gap between industrial operations and sustainability targets.

"Decarbonising hard-to-abate sectors necessitates a fusion of technological advancements, regulatory evolution and novel business approaches. By prioritising innovation, collaboration and strategic foresight, industries can dismantle barriers and advance towards a low-carbon future," Al Harthy said. Industries heavily reliant on energy-intensive and carbon-heavy processes face complex technical, economic and operational constraints in reducing their emissions. The panel discussion explored strategic interventions, policy levers and scalable solutions, spotlighting successful global case studies.

Al Harthy also emphasised the vital role of cross-sector collaboration in achieving meaningful climate action.

"Sustained investment in research and development, alongside coordinated efforts among industries, governments and stakeholders, is fundamental to overcoming the structural challenges in hard-to-abate sectors, particularly in oil and gas. While the transition is intricate, it remains indispensable for advancing global climate commitments and ensuring the long-term resilience of the energy sector," she noted.

Oman Climate Week, held under the auspices of the Environment Authority, serves as a pivotal forum for policy dialogue and industry engagement, aligning the Sultanate of Oman's decarbonisation and energy transition efforts with global sustainability objectives. The conference convenes policymakers, industry leaders and climate experts to drive actionable solutions in the fight against climate change.

Omani farm to ramp up broiler chicken output

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 25

A 'SAFFA Foods, one of the largest poultry producers in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced plans for a significant expansion of its broiler chicken production facilities at Thamrait in Dhofar Governorate.

The move, according to publicly traded A'Saffa Foods, is designed to meet "steadily increasing" demand for locally produced fresh and frozen poultry products even as the company presently operates at full capacity.

"To meet this growing demand, additional production volume is required," said Board Chairman Eng Ali Hilal Ali al Kuwari.

"In response, the Board of Directors has approved an expansion plan in December 2024 aimed at increasing the annual capacity for broiler chicken production from 48 million birds to 60 million birds.

The project will involve both expanding and optimising existing facilities. Ultimately, this growth will not only bolster the company's capacity to serve the market but also contribute to an increased market share and a stronger competitive position within the poultry sector," Al Kuwari stated in a report of the company's financial performance for 2024.

Notably, the planned expansion comes amid a significant upturn in the company's financial performance during 2024. Sales revenues for the year jumped 18.75 per cent to RO 63.951 million, up from RO 53.851 million in 2023. Consolidated net profit soared



Broiler chicken production is proposed to jump from 48 million birds to 60 million birds per annum.

for the first time in the company's 20-year operational history to RO 5.90 million in 2024, compared to RO 2.59 million in the previous year, representing a remarkable 128 per cent growth in profitability.

A key highlight of 2024, the Chairman noted, was the successful launch of a 7-megawatt solar project which commenced operations in July 2024.

"This initiative aligns with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises environmental sustainability and reducing dependence on traditional energy sources. The project aims to achieve these goals by transitioning to renewable energy, improving

energy efficiency and lowering the company's carbon footprint," Al Kuwari stated.

The Chairman however cautioned that regional geopolitical developments continue to somewhat cloud the outlook for poultry producers.

"The ongoing geopolitical situation and the continued disruptions in the Red Sea present a global risk to supply chains and trade flows, affecting the availability and transit times of containers, as well as driving price surges in commodities and goods. While Oman and the GCC have not been heavily impacted by this crisis thus far, the full impact on the global economy remains uncertain," he added.

ASYAD SHIPPING CONCLUDES NATIONWIDE IPO ROADSHOW

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

ASYAD Shipping, a global leader in maritime transport solutions and the maritime arm of Asyad Group, has wrapped up its nationwide IPO roadshow with a final event at the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) headquarters. The roadshow, which ran from February 20 to 25, 2025, spanned seven governorates, including Al Rustaq, Suhar, Al Buraimi, Salalah, and Nizwa, culminating in Muscat.

The roadshows aimed to highlight the details of Asyad Shipping's share offering and underscore the company's role in supporting Oman Vision 2040.

The sessions emphasised economic diversification, operational efficiency and transparency, while promoting inclusive investment opportunities for all target groups. The subscription period for the IPO concludes on February 27, 2025.

At the Muscat event, Asyad



Representatives of Asyad Shipping speaking at the company's concluding roadshow promoting its IPO.

Shipping's leadership team delivered a detailed presentation on the strategic importance of the IPO. They highlighted how the offering aligns with Oman Vision 2040 by driving economic growth, enhancing efficiency and creating a platform to attract both local and international investors.

The company's strong ties with the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) have solidified its position as a preferred maritime partner for OIA

subsidiaries.

As a key pillar of Asyad Group's logistics ecosystem, Asyad Shipping has leveraged the group's port operations and capabilities to achieve operational excellence. Financially, Asyad Shipping has demonstrated remarkable performance, securing future revenues of up to \$1.9 billion by the end of 2024.

The company's EBITDA margins stand at approximately 68 per cent,

outperforming the global maritime sector average.

This robust financial health has significantly boosted investor confidence in the IPO.

The offering has attracted strong interest from local and regional investors, including Mars Development and Investment LLC and Falcon Investments LLC, a subsidiary of the Qatar Investment Authority.

These investors have expressed confidence in Asyad Shipping's competitive edge, supported by its 2023 revenue of \$945 million and impressive profitability.

Trading of Asyad Shipping's shares on the MSX is expected to begin on or around March 13, 2025, marking a major milestone in the company's journey to becoming a global investment partner.

Established in 2003, Asyad Shipping operates 89 vessels across 60 countries, offering a full suite of maritime services, including liner shipping, ship management and chartering.

Forum explores local content's role in driving sustainable development

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, FEB 25

THE 13th annual Oman Forum, organised by 'Alam Al-Iqtisad magazine', was held at the Intercity Hotel Muscat on February 24, 2025, under the theme "Enhancing Local Content: The Path to a Sustainable and Diversified Economy."

The event brought together government officials, private sector leaders, experts and entrepreneurs to discuss the strategic importance of local content in strengthening Oman's economic future.

The forum was inaugurated under the auspices of Shaikh Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura. In his opening remarks, Shaikh Khalid emphasised the critical role of the National



The 13th annual Oman Forum was held under the theme "Enhancing Local Content".

Local Content Policy (2024-2030) in achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The policy is seen as a cornerstone for diversifying the national economy, boosting Omani industries, reducing dependency on imports and maximising the use of

local resources. It also aims to foster innovation, entrepreneurship and public-private partnerships.

A central feature of the forum was a panel discussion titled "Local Content: A Strategic Tool to Strengthen the National Economy." The session explored how the

National Local Content Policy aligns with Oman Vision 2040's goals, particularly in building a sustainable and innovative economic framework.

Panellists also addressed challenges in empowering the national workforce and proposed solutions through targeted initiatives and policies.

In his opening remark, Said al Maashani, Executive Vice President at United Media Services Oman (UMS) stated: "We are committed to fostering a sustainable environment for dialogue and the exchange of ideas, focusing on innovative solutions to strengthen the economy and elevate the quality of our products.

By bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise, we

aim to drive progress, inspire collaboration and achieve lasting impact for the benefit of all."

The forum showcased a series of working papers and visual presentations highlighting best practices and success stories in implementing local content policies.

These were delivered by specialists and representatives from key organisations, including the Oman Investment Authority, the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. Contributions also came from major industry players such as OQ Group, Daleel Petroleum, Credit Oman, and several small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

OPINION

City women demand tough harassment and bullying rules



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

THE Financial Conduct Authority’s impending rule changes must not loosen its crackdown on harassment and bullying, senior women in the financial district of London (known as the ‘City’) have urged.

Baroness Helena Morrissey said in the City & Financial Global culture and conduct forum earlier this month that regulations have “got to have teeth” and “really clear guardrails” to discourage bad actors. It was also important for people to see “actual results will happen” when bad behaviours are flagged.

The Diversity Project chair argued that there is a tendency to treat non-financial misconduct less seriously, “but this is why you get the Libor scandal — because you’ve got poor behaviour.”

Former KPMG UK chief executive Mary O’Connor said the FCA must ensure there are “clear expectations” about how boards and senior managers respond to and prevent non-financial misconduct.

FCA chief operating officer Emily Shepperd said the regulator had been updating its rules and guidance about non-financial misconduct following a consultation and would set out more detail “very shortly”.

She said the FCA supports the government’s position that growth is the number one objective for the UK, but “culture will continue to be regulatory concern.”

A landmark review by the FCA of non-financial misconduct found that 2,347 allegations of bullying, harassment and discrimination were reported in 2023 — a 40pc increase from 2022.

A Treasury Committee investigation into sexism in the City and a string of allegations involving powerful individuals and institutions led the FCA to launch in September 2023 a consultation on diversity and inclusion in financial services.

More than a dozen women accused hedge fund mogul Crispin Odey of sexual assault and there were also claims of misconduct at BGC Group. Both Odey and the broker deny the allegations.

Former Legal & General Investment Management CEO Michelle Scrimgeour said it was “shocking” that “firms are still talking about this” following the introduction by the FCA of the Senior Managers and Certification Regime and the “fit and proper” test.

“Some more examples (from the FCA concerning non-financial misconduct) would be fantastic, but accountability has to lie with the firms to get it right — or to be held to account if they don’t,” she added.

It was only in 2023, I recall, when news broke out of a scandal in the offices of CBI (Confederation of British Industry) and the group admitted it failed to sack staff, who sexually harassed female staff. CBI eventually

A Treasury Committee investigation into sexism in the City and a string of allegations involving powerful individuals and institutions led the FCA to launch in September 2023 a consultation on diversity and inclusion in financial services.

dismissed its director general, Tony Danker, following allegations about his conduct.

Danker claimed his sacking was unfair and that he was being made the “fall guy” for the crisis. An increasing number of firms had cut their association with the lobby group at the time. CBI then appointed, in April 2023, Rain Newton-Smith, as director general. She had worked with the firm as chief economist from 2014 to March 2023 when she joined Barclays.

O’Connor said harassment, bullying and other non-financial misconduct damages companies not only in terms of innovation and their ability to recruit top talent, but also because it is a material financial risk. She said it was up to the regulator to point out the “fallacy” that “having less than 30pc of your senior executives being anybody other than a white male is less risky”.

Morrissey said she hope(s) and pray(s) that the backlash against DEI” happening in the US “isn’t used as some sort of excuse not to tackle conduct and behavioural issues”.

She said even if some of the data collection “might be controversial”, the FCA should not drop its focus on non-financial misconduct.

“Please let’s make sure that we continue to work to improve culture and conduct.

This is the tenth (culture and conduct conference),” she said. “I don’t want to be celebrating the twentieth. I want us to have done something.”

OPEC+ RISKS LOSING CONTROL WITH MORE OUTPUT DELAYS

Opec and its allies face a tricky dilemma: should they start loosening oil production caps even though the crude supply and demand picture is unlikely to improve in the near future? They may well opt to again delay the crucial moment to keep prices steady, but they increasingly risk losing control of the market.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other major producers including Russia, an alliance known as Opec+, is scheduled to gradually start unwinding years of deep production curbs in April.

The group is holding back a total of 5.85 million barrels per day of output, or about 5.7 per cent of global demand, following a series of cuts made since 2022 to prop up the market.

The rollback of 2.2 million bpd of these cuts, announced in November 2023 for the first quarter of 2024, has since been delayed five times due to persistently weak oil demand and continued growth in global crude output.

Unfortunately for Opec, the market backdrop is unlikely to improve markedly by April.

In fact, it may get worse as increasingly fractious trade relations between the United States and other major economies weigh on oil demand growth.

US President Donald Trump has been urging Opec’s de-facto leader Saudi Arabia to bring down the price of oil. And Trump’s conversation with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and subsequent bilateral US-Russia talks in Saudi Arabia have raised speculation about the possibility of a ceasefire in Ukraine and easing of US sanctions on Moscow’s vast oil production.

Opec+ has been highly effective in maintaining relative stability in oil markets in recent years, largely because of members’ discipline. Benchmark Brent crude prices have stayed in a range of \$70 to \$100 a barrel since 2021, excluding a few months of volatility that followed Moscow’s war of Ukraine.

Yet by holding back significant production capacity, Opec’s market share — and, by extension, its ability to continue controlling the market — has steadily declined as non-member producers boosted output.

This includes drillers in the Permian shale deposits in Texas and New Mexico, where output has soared in recent years to make the US the world’s top producer. The US Energy Information Administration raised its outlook for US oil production slightly to a new record of 13.6 million bpd in 2025. And although the pace of growth has decelerated, production is likely to remain steady for years. — Reuters

Understanding the power of credit scores

CREDIT reports and scores play a significant role in your ability to attain financial goals. A credit score is used to evaluate an individual’s creditworthiness. Generally, the score is a 3-digit numeric summary of your credit history. It is based on your 24 to 36-month credit history. Individuals with higher scores tend to have better access to financial products and services, while people with lower credit scores end up paying higher interest rates besides denial of certain financial products.

Banks and financial institutions across the world use the credit score as a tool to evaluate personal finance proposals. Honesty, integrity and past credit behavior are the most important things they consider more than anything.

The repayment history (35 per cent), how much you owe (30 per cent) length of credit history (15 per cent) type of credit (10 per cent) and new credit (10 per cent) are generally used to arrive at the credit score.

A score of 750 and above shows responsible credit management. A higher credit score, as mentioned earlier will help an individual to get higher credit limits faster at relatively cheaper rates. This also helps to get flexible repayment terms and enhancements and opens the door for preferential financial products in the future.

Let us examine how a higher credit score benefits an individual on the pricing front. A & B approach a bank for a mortgage loan of say \$500,000 for 30 years. The credit score of A is 800 while the score of B is 600.

The Bank may offer a rate of interest of 5 per cent pa for A while B may be charged at 6 per cent p.a. The EMI for A will be \$2684 and for B it will be \$2998. While A has to pay a total amount of \$966,279 during the 30 years, B will end up paying \$1,079,191.

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR CREDIT SCORE
It is very clear from the above illustration, how important is a



Banks and financial institutions across the world use the credit score as a tool to evaluate personal finance proposals.



R MADHUSOODANAN

The writer is the Executive Advisor to the Board, Global Money Exchange, Oman

higher credit score. You can improve your credit score by maintaining a good credit history. A few strategies are discussed here:

Foremost is the importance of paying the dues on time, as late payments are viewed negatively by the lenders. Secondly, use your credit limits judiciously and try to keep it as low as far as possible, if necessary go a higher limit and keep the utilisation low. Thirdly, try to have a proper mix of both secured and unsecured loans. Too much of unsecured components viz credit card limit, personal loans, etc may adversely affect the score. Lastly, periodically review your score and ensure that no mistakes are there in the score.

Various agencies provide the credit score in each country. In Oman, Mala’a (Oman Credit and Financial Information Centre) is an independent agency under the supervision of the Central Bank of Oman that gives the report.

Mala’a provides Credit Reports for individuals and Corporates. The report contains information such as the probability of defaults, bounced cheques and guarantors.

Credit Information Bureau (India) Limited (CIBIL) is the most popular credit information company operating in India. CIBIL reports

are mandatory for availing credit facilities in India.

It may be noted that there are Credit Rating Agencies to evaluate the creditworthiness of corporates, business entities, governments and other organisations. The rating varies from AAA to D, while the Credit Score is for individuals that vary from 300 to 900. The purpose of both agencies is the same.

The credit score is getting important.

Indian banks are now insisting on the Credit Score of Indian nationals working abroad for evaluating their credit proposals. Indian expatriates in Oman are asked to submit the Mala’a report.

Therefore, financial discipline is very important. Remember, credit score is not limited to banks alone. Other organisations like, hire purchase companies, digital finance companies and government departments are using the techniques to assess the creditworthiness of individuals.

In short, a high credit score is valuable when seeking personal finances. Understanding the importance of it can help you to make smarter financial choices. By proactively building your score, you empower yourself to a better financial future.

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ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

PASSIONATE WOODWORKER CHAMPIONS HANDMADE CRAFTS & SOUVENIRS_{>20}

ENTERTAINMENT

Bond franchise shake-up moves spy into Amazon stable



IN A MOVE that looks set to shake — and maybe even stir — one of Hollywood’s most bankable franchises, Amazon MGM Studio is to take creative control of James Bond, as the fictional British spy’s long-time producers step back.

An agreement announced last week sees ownership of the rights to 007 shared between the movie behemoth and producers Michael Wilson and Barbara Broccoli, who are heading into retirement.

The news comes four years after the last Bond film, in which Daniel Craig bowed out as the secret agent, with fans left to fill the intervening time with speculation about who will replace him.

Now with Amazon at the helm, the audience may not have to wait too long for the next installment — or for spin offs.

Amazon founder Jeff Bezos wasted no time in soliciting opinions.

“Who’d you pick as the next Bond?” Bezos asked followers on X.

The agreement confirms that Wilson and Broccoli will not be involved in the Bond franchise after they signed off in 2021 with “No Time to Die” — the 25th James Bond movie, which earned \$775 million.

Wilson, whose career with 007 spans nearly 60 years, said he would focus on “art and charitable projects,” while Broccoli has announced plans to pursue other ventures.

“We are honoured to continue this treasured heritage,” said Mike Hopkins, head of Prime Video and Amazon MGM Studios, noting the franchise’s six-decade impact on film culture.

The deal builds on Amazon’s 2022 acquisition of MGM, which included distribution rights to Bond’s extensive back catalog. The new arrangement gives Amazon MGM Studios creative authority over future productions of the franchise, which has been closely guarded by the Broccoli family since Albert “Cubby” Broccoli and Harry Saltzman first brought author Ian Fleming’s character to theatres.

Barbara Broccoli, who has worked with four different actors in the role of 007 — Roger Moore, Timothy Dalton, Pierce Brosnan, and Craig — described her tenure as “dedicated to maintaining and building upon the extraordinary legacy” inherited from Cubby, her father. Wilson and Broccoli were steadfast in defending the James Bond character and brand and resisted spin-offs and licensing that they felt might have tarnished the franchise.

The financial terms of the joint venture were not disclosed. — AFP

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



ART

Syrian artist Sara Shamma attends an interview with Reuters during her retrospective exhibition, ‘Sara Shamma: Echoes of 12 years’ at Damascus National Museum in Syria. — Reuters



FILM

US actress Demi Moore and her dog Pilaf arrive for the Film Independent Spirit Awards 40th annual ceremony in Santa Monica, California. — AFP



FESTIVAL

Singer Satou Bamby performs on the stage of the Blaise Senghor Cultural Centre for the Dakar Music Expo, an event that brings together panels, exhibitions and concerts across the city. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Sunset Watching



Beauty of Remote Places

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Stash of 15th century coins discovered in Scotland



A STASH OF rare medieval coins has been discovered by metal detectorists in Scotland.

Keith Young and Lisa Stephenson discovered the haul of 30 gold and silver coins in the Capperleuch area of the Scottish Borders.

Archaeologists then excavated the site, finding five more coins.

The 15th century artefacts are a mixture of Scots and English coins, with English silver groats minted by King Henry V, King Edward IV and Scottish gold demys and half-demys minted by Kings James I and II.

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal announced the discovery on Wednesday and said it is likely the coins were deposited at the site in the early to mid-1460s. After discovering the coins, the duo reported them to the Treasure Trove Unit, which assesses all Scottish archaeological finds. It will then refer them to the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel, an independent panel which will assign the coins a monetary value, which will be paid to the finders.

Young said: "Lisa and I have

been lucky enough to have found some wonderful artefacts while metal detecting, but nothing quite prepared us for a find like this."

"Hopefully the hoard will go on public display for others to enjoy," he said.

Stephenson added: "The hoard is the find of a lifetime and being part of the excavation with the National Museum and Treasure Trove team was an amazing experience, something we'll never forget."

Antony Lee from the Treasure Trove Unit said: "Coin hoards containing a mix of both English and Scottish coins are not unusual, but we do not see many hoards from this period in Scotland, so it's a fascinating find."

"Keith and Lisa acted promptly and correctly in reporting it to us," he added.

"In turn we, along with archaeologists from National Museums Scotland, were able to attend and excavate the site, finding five more coins and documenting the circumstances of the hoard alongside the finders," Lee said. — PA Media/dpa



Nepal community fights to save sacred forests from cable cars

THEY APPEAR tranquil soaring above Himalayan forests, but 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 this week, 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 kukris (large knives) and attacked us — and we countered them," said protest committee leader Shree Linkhim Limbu 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 (1.5-mile) cable car to the temple.

The government calls it a project of "national pride".

— 'BUTCHERING OUR FAITH' —

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.

Taplejung is deeply sacred to local Mikkumlung beliefs and residents say that the clearance of around 3,000 rhododendron trees — with 10,00 more on the chopping block — to build pylons is an attack on their religion.

"It is a brutal act," said protest chief Limbu. "How can this be a national pride project when the state is only serving business interests?"

Saroj Kangliba Yakthung, 26, said locals would rather efforts and funding were directed to "preserve the religious, cultural and ecological importance" of the forests.

The wider forests are home to endangered species including the red panda, black bear and snow leopard.

"We worship trees, stone and all living beings, but they are

butchering our faith," said Anil Subba, director of the Kathmandu-based play "Mikkumlung", 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.

"If they fly over us in a cable car, how will we survive?" said 38-year-old porter Chandra Tamang.

The government says the cable car will encourage more pilgrims by making it easy to visit, boosting the wider economy in a country where unemployment hovers around 10 per cent and GDP per capita at just \$1,377, according to the World Bank.

"This will bring development," said resident Kamala Devi Thapa, 45, adding that the new route will aid "elderly pilgrims".

— 'MASSIVE DEFORESTATION' —

The cable cars symbolise Nepal's breakneck bid to cash in on tourism, making up more than six per cent of the country's GDP in 2023, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC).

Beyond the Pathibhara project, the government's environmental policy is in question — in a country where 45 per cent is forest.

More than 255,000 trees have been cut down for infrastructure projects in the past four years, according to the environment ministry.

"Nepal has witnessed massive deforestation in the name of infrastructure," said Rajesh Rai, professor of forestry at Tribhuvan University. "This will have severe long-term consequences".

Unperturbed, the cable car builder assures his project will create 1,000 jobs and brushes aside criticism.

"It won't disturb the ecology or local culture," Dhakal said. "If people can fly there in helicopters, why not a cable car?"

The argument leaves Kendra Singh Limbu, 79, unmoved.

"We are fighting to save our heritage," he said.

It has split the community, local journalist Anand Gautam said.

"It has turned fathers and sons against each other," Gautam said. "Some see it as progress, others as destruction". — AFP

FEATURES

BY ARWA AL HASHIMI

OMRAN al Raqadi is not just a woodworker; he is a passionate custodian of Oman's rich cultural heritage, crafting stunning pieces that blend art with tradition. Each creation tells a story, a testament to his dedication to preserving the artistry of Oman's past.

Omran's journey began with a deep appreciation for the beauty of Omani architecture. Drawn to the intricate details of traditional doors and windows, he recalls, "I was captivated by their elegance." That fascination ignited a spark in him, driving him to pursue woodworking and ultimately to join a two-month workshop through the Small and Medium Enterprises Authority. There, he honed his skills, building small ships and showcasing his work at several exhibitions.

Wood has long been a cornerstone of Omani culture, integral to both daily life and craftsmanship. Omran notes, "From the roofs that shelter us to tools that aid our agriculture, wood has shaped how Omanis live." He highlights tools like the 'Durba' for ploughing and the 'Mangour' used to draw water, showcasing the material's importance in various aspects of life.

The heart of Omran's art beats with the spirit of his homeland. He draws inspiration from the majestic forts and castles of Oman, weaving these influences into his creations. "I love capturing the essence of traditional architecture," he shares. One standout piece is a teak model of the "Sohar Watchtower," which has received accolades for its craftsmanship and authenticity.

In a world increasingly flooded with mass-produced, budget-friendly alternatives, Omran stands firm in his commitment to quality. "I want to create items that resonate with consumers while showcasing the uniqueness of handmade craftsmanship," he proclaims, infusing each piece with a personal touch.

In recent years, Oman has witnessed a shift in career aspirations among its youth. Many are moving away from traditional employment paths and embracing the idea of entrepreneurship, motivated by a desire for creative freedom and financial independence. This growing enthusiasm aligns with global trends where young individuals are seeking to create unique products and services that reflect their personal values and cultural heritage.

The SME authority plays a crucial role in this evolving landscape. Through various initiatives, the agency offers training programmes, workshops and funding opportunities tailored specifically for young entrepreneurs. By equipping these emerging business owners with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed, the authority is helping to cultivate a new generation of innovators capable of navigating the complexities of starting and managing a business.

Experts believe that this support is essential not only for personal development but also for the broader economic growth of the country. By encouraging entrepreneurship, Oman aims to diversify its economy, reduce reliance on oil and create job opportunities for future generations. Young entrepreneurs contribute to this goal by bringing fresh ideas to the market and addressing local needs in innovative ways.

At the heart of this movement is a commitment to developing independence among young Omanis. By taking control of their careers, they are not only building their businesses but also gaining invaluable life skills, such as leadership, problem-solving and financial management. This newfound independence empowers them to take risks and learn from their experiences, which is essential for personal and professional growth.

As interest in personalised entrepreneurship continues to rise, Oman is poised to benefit from a vibrant ecosystem of young businesses that reflect the nation's culture while paving the way for a sustainable economic future. With ongoing support from agencies like the



Passionate woodworker champions handmade crafts & souvenirs



SME Authority, young Omanis are well on their way to becoming the entrepreneurs of tomorrow, driving innovation and growth throughout the Sultanate of Oman.

Looking ahead, Omran is enthusiastic about the revival of traditional woodworking in Oman. He sees a bright future as more people embrace the charm of artisanal products. His passion extends to the next generation — he believes in imparting skills that have shaped his culture. "Patience and precision are essential," he advises aspiring woodworkers, reminding them that dedication is key. He even leads workshops for children, introducing them to the magic of woodworking from an early age.

Recognising the growing interest

in Omani handicrafts among tourists, Omran is excited about the potential for promoting his craft. "Tourists are eager for authentic Omani souvenirs," he notes, crafting miniature keepsakes adorned with traditional motifs and pen holders inspired by the iconic Sohar Watchtower, allowing visitors to take a piece of Oman home with them.

Through his artistry, Omran al Raqadi does more than create beautiful objects; he safeguards the traditions of his ancestors, ensuring that the legacy of Omani woodworking thrives. With each piece he crafts, he bridges the past and the future, bringing the beauty of Oman to a global audience, one exquisite work of art at a time.