

O M A N
عُضَائِل
D A I L Y

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SUNRISE 06:42 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:25 AM
DHUHR 12:26 PM
ASR 03:41 PM
MAGHRIB 06:05 PM
ISHA 07:17 PM



11

OMAN
OPEN U18
GIRLS FINAL
TODAY

INBRIEF

HM GREETINGS
CONVEYED TO
ALGERIAN PRESIDENT

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, of the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, received Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), as part of Omani delegation’s visit to Algeria, at the Presidential Building in the Algerian capital on Tuesday.

During the meeting, the chairman of the OIA conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Algerian President alongside his wishes for continued health and well-being and further progress and prosperity for the brotherly Algerian people. For his part, the Algerian President asked Al Murshidi to convey his greetings to His Majesty the Sultan along with his wishes of continued health and well-being and continued progress and prosperity for the Omani people.

WAYS TO ENHANCE
EDUCATION QUALITY

The Education and Research Committee of the State Council held a meeting under the chairmanship of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Sarmi, Head of the Committee, on Tuesday.

The members o the committee discussed a proposed study titled ‘Enhancing the Quality of Academic Achievement and Mastering Competencies and Skills in School Education in the Sultanate of Oman.’

During its meeting, the committee hosted Dr Saleh al Busaidy, Dean of the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), as well as some specialists from the college to discuss the topic.

DETAILS ON P2

‘EMERGING TALENTS’
INITIATIVE AT ROHM

February continued at the Royal Opera House Muscat with the ‘Emerging Talents’ initiative, which focuses on fostering young musicians and providing them with valuable learning experiences. A major highlight of the programme was the world-renowned baritone Thomas Hampson, who led a series of masterclasses for aspiring musicians in Muscat. These sessions offered in-depth demonstrations into vocal technique, performance practices and artistic growth. Included were 2 Omani opera singers in the masterclass out of 8 total.

Hampson performed a special concert at the Opera Galleria, providing both the public and participating musicians with the rare opportunity to hear him in an intimate setting.

Oman advances 20 places
in transparency ranking

E N H A N C E S C O U N T R Y ’ S A T T R A C T I O N F O R I N V E S T M E N T S

THE RESULTS of the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index revealed notable progress for the Sultanate of Oman as it is ranked 50th globally out of 180 countries, and fourth in the Arab world, advancing 20 places compared to its ranking of 70th in 2023, with a score of 55, up from 43 last year, marking an increase of 12 points.

This is according to the Corruption Perceptions Index, issued annually by Transparency International from its headquarters in Berlin. The progress reflects Oman’s commitment to adopting the best international practices in protecting public funds, improving their efficiency, and promoting integrity.

Dr Hamyar bin Nasser al Mahrouqi, spokesperson for the State Audit Institution (SAI), commented on the release of the index, saying: “Ranking in fourth place in the Arab world is important as it enhances the Sultanate of Oman’s reputation and affirms that the country is a good environment for work and investment. The index is considered a reliable global measure, as Transparency International follows a rigorous process to assess the perceived level of corruption in the public sector, covering 180 countries worldwide.” He added that Oman’s progress was the result of prioritising the protection of public funds and enhancing the values of integrity, which the State Audit Institution, in collaboration with other authorities concerned, has been focusing on.

This progress, explained Dr Hamyar, reflects the diligent, collaborative efforts between SAI and the National Competitiveness Office, as well as other

The progress reflects Oman’s commitment to adopting the best international practices in protecting public funds.

relevant authorities to improve Oman’s position in the index. SAI works on several fronts, including audit-related fields and enhancing institutional and community awareness of public funds and public office through awareness programmes and activities in accordance with the annual media plan, aligning with Oman Vision 2040 and the National Integrity Enhancement Plan, he added, pointing out that SAI also

continues to issue the Community Summary in both Arabic and English, accompanying the annual report submitted to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Dr Hamyar emphasised the importance of the participatory roles of relevant entities in strengthening Oman’s position in the index, as well as the societal roles in adhering to various legislations. He said; “This helps achieve continuous progress in the index”. **TURN TO P3**

GAZA TRUCE
UNDER
STRAIN AFTER
TRUMP
WARNING

GAZA CITY: The Gaza ceasefire appeared increasingly fragile on Tuesday after Hamas said US President Donald Trump’s latest warning ‘further complicates’ the agreement with Israel, which has so far led to five hostage-prisoner swaps. Trump said that “hell” would break out if Hamas failed to release all Israeli captives by the weekend.

The truce, in place since January 19, largely halted more than 15 months of fighting in Gaza but has come under strain in recent days. International efforts to salvage it intensified, with Jordan’s King Abdullah II expected to raise the

Men gesture as they stand by the remains of a collapsed building in the west of Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip on Tuesday. — AFP

issue during his meeting with Trump in Washington later on Tuesday. Tensions, which initially spiked after Trump proposed last month taking over Gaza and removing its more than two million inhabitants, have grown since his latest comments. “As far as I’m concerned, if all of the hostages aren’t returned by Saturday 12 o’clock — I think it’s an appropriate time — I would say cancel it and all bets are off and let hell break out,” Trump said on Monday.

Trump said that the remaining captives should be freed, “not in dribs and drabs, not two and one and three and four and two”.

AI development ‘needs rules’, says Macron

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron said on Tuesday there was a “need for rules” to govern artificial intelligence, in an apparent rebuff to US Vice-President J D Vance who had criticised excessive regulation.

“We need these rules for AI to move forward,” Macron said at a Paris summit shortly after Vance spoke there. Macron insisted on the “need to continue advancing international governance” of the technology, after Vance blasted European efforts at regulation.

World leaders gathered on Tuesday for the second day and plenary session of the Paris summit on artificial intelligence, as US willingness to sign onto a statement championing sustainable AI remained in

French President Emmanuel Macron bumps fists with a robot during a visit to Station F, as part of an event on the sidelines of the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris, on Tuesday. — Reuters

question. Hours after President Emmanuel Macron declared France was in the AI race and Europe was eager for business, representatives of nearly 100 countries including China, India and the US prepared to meet and determine if competing national interests could be reconciled.

US Vice-President J D Vance is leading the American delegation. Macron highlighted one difference on Monday night. When it comes to electricity, France would not adopt a “drill, baby, drill” approach, like US oil production policy, but instead tap its clean power so companies could “plug, baby, plug” to meet AI’s voracious power needs, he said.

One topic of political alignment, however, was that 2025 was not the year to regulate AI anew. **SEE ALSO P7**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The committee discussed the current policies and strategies followed by SQU in raising the quality of teacher preparation programmes.

STATE COUNCIL PANEL DEBATES QUALITY OF EDUCATION

MUSCAT: The Education and Research Committee of the State Council held a meeting under the chairmanship of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Sarmi, Head of the Committee, on Tuesday.

The committee’s members discussed a proposed study titled ‘Enhancing the Quality of Academic Achievement and Mastering Competencies and Skills in School Education in the Sultanate of Oman.’ During its meeting, the committee hosted Dr Saleh al Busaidy, Dean of the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) as well as some specialists from the college to discuss the topic.

The committee discussed the current policies and strategies followed by SQU in raising the quality of teacher preparation programmes, in addition to the mechanisms applied by the university for enhancing integration between teacher preparation and educational qualification programmes at the university. Also discussed at the meeting were the philosophy of education and teacher standards set by the Ministry of Education as well as the university’s evaluation outputs of teacher preparation programmes and their role in improving academic achievement in schools.

CHIEF OF STAFF MEETS MILITARY LEADERS IN IRAN



TEHRAN: Lieutenant General Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces, met with several military leaders in the Islamic Republic of Iran during his official visit. On Tuesday, he met with Major General Dr Mohammad Bagheri, Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the Iranian General Staff headquarters in Tehran.

An official reception ceremony was held upon the Lieutenant General’s arrival, with a group of the Guard of Honor saluting him. Subsequently, the Chief of Staff reviewed the Guard of Honor alongside the Chief of Staff of the Iranian General Staff.

The Iranian Armed Forces Chief of Staff warmly welcomed his Omani counterpart and their respective military delegations. They exchanged views and discussed areas of military cooperation between the two friendly nations. — ONA

‘Monday Market’ a platform to support student entrepreneurship

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, FEB 11

The fourth edition of ‘Monday Market’ was inaugurated at Sultan Qaboos University, with the participation of 68 student projects, under the patronage of His Highness Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU. The event, organised by the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Group, is held in the open theatre parking lot and will continue until February 12 from 4 pm to 9 pm. It serves as a platform that combines creativity and commerce, enhancing the culture of entrepreneurship among young people. The market operates under the umbrella of the Innovation and

Technology Transfer Centre, one of the initiatives that aim to provide a supportive environment for students to help them display and market their projects while preparing them for the labour market.

The exhibition showcased a variety of projects, including innovative ideas in technology, energy, handicrafts, and smart services. Participating students expressed their enthusiasm for the market experience, with some discussing the challenges and opportunities that the event provided for them. Ali al Rawahi, one of the students participating with his project in the field of environmental technology, shared his thoughts: “This exhibition



gave me a golden opportunity to test my idea in front of the audience, interact with potential consumers, and understand their requirements directly. I was

also able to communicate with investors interested in supporting my project, which I did not expect so quickly.” Another participating student who presented a project

in sustainable fashion expressed her happiness with the experience, saying: “It was not easy to start a private project while studying but the university provided us with great support through this event. I learned a lot about marketing and business management and realised the importance of continuity and development. I hope this market will be a step towards transforming my project into a real brand in the future.”

The ‘Monday Market’ is a practical model for supporting entrepreneurship among young people, providing them with an opportunity to gain experience, test their ideas, and communicate directly with the market.

Oman wins ‘Excellence, Innovation Award’ at Gulf Engineering Forum



The project that won the award aims to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable mobility. — ONA

combustion engine for trucks, using a blend of hydrogen and diesel. This contributes to 50 per cent reduction of emissions. The initiative is in line with Oman’s Zero-Neutrality Strategy 2050 to

achieve zero-emissions.

The 26th Gulf Engineering Forum brings together an elite group of experts specialised in the fields of environment conservation, energy and

industry. The forum elaborates on engineering issues related to energy transformation and the challenges posed to this specialty. It seeks to reach the best innovative solutions, technologies and modern designs to address these challenges.

A number of dialogue sessions and workshops will be held during the three days of the forum. The activities will see the participation of a group of engineers, researchers and academics, who will exchange visions on energy transformation, renewable energy, decarbonisation, technologies and innovations for devising a clean energy policy. — ONA

New road to Rub al Khali attracts more travellers

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
MUSCAT, FEB 11

RUB al Khali, or the Empty Quarter, has long been a bucket-list destination for European tourists visiting Salalah during the winter season. Previously categorised as an adventure destination due to its challenging terrain from Wubar to the Empty Quarter, many travellers hesitated to explore its vast beauty due to difficult road conditions. However, the construction of a new road has made access to the region easy, making it one of the most visited and cherished locations in the Sultanate of Oman.

“Earlier, it was a challenge to take tourists there, as the lack of a tarred road meant we had to carefully plan each trip, choosing the right vehicles and ensuring mandatory escorts for visitors,” said Mabrook bin Ahmed Masan, owner of the largest camping site in Rub al Khali. “Now, with the paved road in place, tourists can drive even in sedan cars, making the trip easier and more accessible than ever before.”

The impact has been significant. Footfall at Rub al Khali has increased exponentially, with the journey from Wubar to the Empty Quarter, once a slow and strenuous hour-long drive, now taking just 10 minutes. “The road has opened up a new world for visitors,” Mabrook added.

The Empty Quarter’s mystique has always fascinated European travellers, and with enhanced accessibility, their numbers have surged. Tour operators are currently receiving guests from several European countries, including those arriving via charter and cruise ships. Camping in the Empty Quarter is a top priority for many,



The Empty Quarter’s mystique has always fascinated European travellers, and with enhanced accessibility, their numbers have surged.

given its rich history and mention in numerous travel books.

Daniela Ricci, a tourist from Italy, expressed her excitement about her visit. “This is an extraordinary experience. The vast dunes, the silence, and the feeling of being in a different world—it’s something I’ve never experienced before. The night sky here is magical.” Similarly, Pavel Novak from the Czech Republic marvelled at the transformation. “I had read about Rub al Khali before, but seeing it in person is dreamlike.

The new road made our trip so comfortable, and the camping experience was unforgettable.” German traveller Ben Schneider, who visited the desert with a group of friends, was equally captivated. “The warmth of the people, the hospitality, and the stunning landscape — it’s all beyond words. We spent the night under a million stars, listening to traditional Arabic songs around the fire. This place has a unique

charm.” Miroslav Horák from Slovakia, who considers himself an adventure seeker, appreciated both the natural beauty and the improved infrastructure. “I’ve travelled to many deserts, but the Empty Quarter stands apart. It’s raw, untouched, and breathtaking. Thanks to the new road, we could reach it effortlessly and truly immerse ourselves in its splendour.”

Despite the infrastructural advancements, local tour operators remain committed to maintaining the authenticity of the desert experience. Mabrook, who has been hosting guests in his campsite, ensures that visitors enjoy the simple pleasures of desert life while still having access to essential amenities. “We take care of their food, stay, and basic facilities like toilets and water supply. But beyond that, it’s about embracing nature. Many visitors tell us they forget about the luxuries of modern hotels because the experience here is so unique,” he explained.

SHORT TAKES



The meeting was chaired by Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah, CEO of the OAAAQA. — ONA

OMAN-BAHRAIN MEETING FOCUSES ON QUALITY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

MUSCAT: Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) on Tuesday held a meeting with a team of trainers from the Kingdom of Bahrain’s “Education & Training Quality Authority” with the aim of enhancing cooperation between the two sides on ways to ensure the quality of school education and exchange expertise for achieving sustainable development goals. The meeting was chaired by Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah, CEO of the OAAAQA.

The meeting included a discussion on “external auditors preparation programme” scheduled to be implemented in three governorates of Oman from February 11 to 27, 2025. The programme seeks to develop external auditors’ capabilities to assess school performance according to approved global standards, as well as basic principles of performance evaluation in the Sultanate of Oman.

The programme, which will cover data collection and analysis, will help develop the participants’ skills in preparing accurate evaluation reports. — ONA

AL HARTHY MEETS PRESIDENT OF INTERNATIONAL ZHENG HE SOCIETY



The two sides touched on the historical dimensions of the Chinese traveller Zheng He’s visit to Oman 600 years ago. — ONA

Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, met here Zhang Lu, President of the International Zheng He Society, and her accompanying delegation during their current visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The two sides touched on the historical dimensions of the Chinese traveller Zheng He’s visit to Oman 600 years ago. The meeting stressed the importance of building on historical ties by strengthening the deep-rooted friendship of the Sultanate of Oman with Singapore (headquarters of the society) and China (homeland of the navigator). — ONA

Omani delegation visits Algeria to boost investment cooperation

ALGIERS: An official Omani delegation headed by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), began its visit to Algeria on Tuesday.

The delegation includes Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, in addition to a number of CEOs of the OIA affiliated companies.

The two-day visit aims to explore boosting economic and investment cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria. The visit also aims to discuss prospects for cooperation in the economic and investment fields between the two countries.

Abdulsalam al Murshidi, OIA Chairman



The two-day visit aims to explore boosting economic and investment cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria. — ONA

URGENT CALL FOR BLOOD DONATION IN MUSCAT

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 11

The Central Blood Bank in the Wilayat of Bausher has reported a significant shortage in several blood types, urging donors to donate at the earliest. According to a recent announcement, the Bank said it is experiencing a severe drop in O-, A-, B-, and AB-, while other groups, including AB positive and A positive, are also running low. The shortage poses a critical



challenge in meeting the needs of patients requiring urgent transfusions. Meanwhile, the Blood Bank is calling on the public to donate blood to support those in need. Donors can visit during the following times: Saturday to Thursday, 8 am to 8 pm, and on Fridays from 8 am to 2 pm.

The Central Blood Bank continues to emphasise the life-saving impact of blood donation, urging eligible individuals to step forward and contribute.

Social Protection Fund signs up 590,000 Omanis

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, FEB 11

THE Social Protection Fund has signed up around 590,000 Omanis as of January. The SPF is more than just an insurance network for support beneficiaries; it represents an effective tool to mitigate the economic challenges faced by individuals and families. The number of beneficiaries reached one and a half million across several main categories:

1. Children: The number of children benefiting from social protection benefits reached 1,237,770.
2. Orphans and widows: The number of beneficiaries is 16,338.
3. Senior citizens: 171,212 elders benefited from social protection benefits.
4. People with disabilities: The number of beneficiaries reached 42,912.

One of the most prominent benefits under SPF is family income support, which aims to improve the standard of living for families with limited income.

According to statistics, 42,688 families benefitted.

With regard to pensions disbursed, the total number of active pensions disbursed amounted to 124,750 pensions, including:



Thanks to these benefits, I was able to raise my children in better conditions. This support is invaluable, as it has enabled me to live a dignified life despite the challenges

AMINA BINT SALEM



The number of beneficiaries reached one and a half million

1. 193,459 life pensions provided to citizens who are experiencing financial or social difficulties.
2. 17,158 job security pensions paid to workers who lost their jobs.
3. 31,291 death pensions provided to the families of the deceased, reflecting the significant role played by the Fund in providing support to the families of deceased citizens.

The Observer spoke to a few beneficiaries of SPF.

Saeed bin Mohammed, a retired citizen, said: “The support provided by the state through the Social Protection Fund helped me secure my life after retirement. I did not expect to be able to continue

comfortably without the pensions I receive.” Amina bint Salem, a widow, said, “Thanks to these benefits, I was able to raise my children in better conditions. This support is invaluable, as it has enabled me to live a dignified life despite the challenges.” Nasser bin Saeed, a disabled person, said: “The disability grant made me feel valued and equal. The support I learn every month helps me cover the costs of treatment and daily needs.”

Khaled bin Salem said: “The family income support has had a positive impact on our lives. This monthly amount helps meet our basic needs such as food and education for my children.”

Oman advances 20 places in Corruption Perceptions Index

From P1

Moreover, efforts are under way to increase the number of institutions assessing Oman in this index, as well as engaging with international organisations that provided feedback on Oman’s ranking in this index, to identify the reasons and clarify the actions taken by the government to improve the working environment and address the causes of violations or leniency in this regard.”

Dr Hamyar noted that Transparency International is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to measuring corruption perceptions, with the aim of creating a change towards a world free of corruption. It works by placing anti-corruption efforts on the global agenda and collaborating with governments, businesses, and civil society organisations to develop and implement anti-corruption measures. The Corruption Perceptions

Index is one of the most widely circulated reports on measuring the perceived level of corruption.

Dr Hamyar added that six international data sources were used to calculate the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index. Transparency International consolidates the data and scores from these institutions and places them on the Corruption Perceptions Index scale.

The organisation follows several steps, including

identifying data sources that meet precise standards, standardising the data and scores from these sources on a scale from 0 to 100.

A score of 0 indicates the highest level of perceived corruption, while 100 indicates the lowest.

The final score is then calculated by averaging the points achieved by each country on the index, based on the standardised data provided by the sources. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT



DEFOG

YOUR
BRAIN

MANY PEOPLE struggle with brain fog, mental fatigue, or poor stress resilience. They also might feel the burden of anxiety and depression that is holding them back. These symptoms, while common, aren't simply normal parts of aging, but it means your body is asking for help.

“Brain fog isn't just forgetfulness or lack of focus; it's a sign of deeper problems at the cellular level in your brain. Similarly, the mental exhaustion you feel after simple tasks like reading, working, or driving is brain-related fatigue. And if you've noticed even small stresses leaving you anxious or drained, you're likely experiencing a breakdown in your brain's ability to handle and recover from stress,” said Dr Zaaima al Jabri, Assistant Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU).

These issues all stem from a common set of problems including neuroinflammation, oxidative damage, mitochondrial dysfunction and a leaky blood-brain barrier. These sound complex — and they are — but they boil down to your brain cells struggling to communicate effectively. This can be triggered by toxins, chronic stress, poor sleep, high blood sugar, or even inflammation elsewhere in your body.

These symptoms, fortunately, can be treated and the experiments have shown incredible transformations in people who commit to simple, actionable changes. You can start with your diet. “Stabilising your blood sugar levels is a game-changer. Prioritise eating protein and vegetables especially at the beginning of your meal. This not only helps control blood sugar spikes but also reduces the likelihood of anxiety and brain fog,” she noted.

Improve your sleep as well. “Your brain thrives on routine and rest, so turn off screens at least two hours before bed and aim for consistent sleep times. If you're relying on caffeine to get through the day, consider cutting back. Where overuse of caffeine can leave you feeling more drained in the long run,” she added.

Focus on reducing chronic stress as well. “I recommend incorporating “recharge rituals” into your day. This could be anything from a quick mindfulness exercise to a short walk outdoors. These moments of calm can do wonders for building resilience,” she said.

Take care of your gut too. She shared that the gut-brain connection is powerful, and healing your gut can directly reduce brain inflammation. Start by eating a whole-food, anti-inflammatory diet filled with colourful plant-based foods. Consider an elimination diet to pinpoint any food intolerances that might be affecting you.

She confirmed that the small changes add up. By addressing these key areas which are diet, sleep, stress and gut health, you can regain mental clarity, energy and resilience. “I've seen it happen time and time again and I believe you can experience it too. Your brain is capable of incredible things when it's given the support it needs. You don't have to live with these symptoms. Start small, stay consistent and watch your brain come back to life,” she said.

SHORT TAKES



Dr Said bin Saif al Ameri launches Roznamah

MOE LAUNCHES ‘ROZNAMEH’ FOR BETTER PLANNING

The Ministry of Education (MoE) launched Roznamah, a digital programme to enhance the efficiency of planning and organising educational events and activities. This programme comes within the framework of keeping pace with national aspirations for digital transformation and achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040. The inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Saif al Ameri, Head of the Office of the Minister of Education, in the presence of a number of advisers, and directors-general.

Dr Al Ameri said the importance of launching this programme, which is a qualitative leap in the mechanism of managing events. It also comes in response to an urgent need for an integrated system that allows the registration and monitoring of educational events of all kinds in an interactive digital environment that facilitates access to information and ensures coordination of efforts between various educational divisions and entities, which enhances the effectiveness of organisation and planning and contributes to improving the performance of educational activities and events to avoid duplication of work. He urged those in charge to enter data on a regular basis to ensure its continued effectiveness and achieve the desired goals.

Abdulaziz al Nabhani and Aisha al Mukhaini reviewed the details and contents of the programme.

UTAS MUSANNAH TO LAUNCH ‘OMAN IOT & AI CHALLENGE 2025’

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS) -Musannah announced the launch of the ‘Oman IoT & AI Challenge 2025’ to be held on Wednesday. The event aims to bring together innovators and pioneers in AI and the Internet of Things (IoT) from across Oman.

The competition highlights the university’s dedication to promoting technological innovation and supporting entrepreneurship.

The semifinal round will be held on Wednesday at the UTAS

Musannah campus, under the auspices of Dr Juma bin Khalifa al Busaidy, Member of the State Council. Students and entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to present their innovative projects to a specialised judging panel. The competition will culminate with the grand finale in May at Barceló Resort in the Wilayat of Al Musannah, where finalists will compete for the titles of ‘Best Graduation Project’ and ‘Best Startup’ in AI and IoT. Winners will

also have the honour of representing Oman at the ‘Arab IoT & AI Challenge’ in the UAE.

The competition consists of three main tracks: Graduation Project Presentations, where students present innovative solutions in AI and IoT; Startup Prototype Exhibition, giving entrepreneurs the opportunity to pitch their ideas to investors and experts; and Scientific Poster Challenge, focusing on new research ideas that could drive technological advancements.

Performance of local content plan reviewed

THE National Office for Local Content held a meeting at the Secretariat General of the Tender Board on Monday to introduce indicators of Local Content within the context of the institutional excellence concept.

More than 300 participants representing 50 government departments took part in the meeting.

The meeting outlined three main objectives: to enhance the performance of local content application governance; to establish a comprehensive regulatory system to monitor adherence to local content policies; and to identify opportunities for improvement in a manner that contributes to the realisation of the strategic goals of “supporting the national economy” and “enhancing the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs)”.

The organisers reviewed the local content achievements that have been made so far. Then, they identified the following: The mechanisms of applying indicators and methods, and measuring their performance; The mechanism of applying local content standards to government projects, purchases and contracts; The mechanism of measuring local content performance according to specific indicators based on institutional excellence.

The meeting enabled the participants to learn about the stages of local content development – right from the stage of planning, through the stages of follow-



The participants in the meeting also learned about the local content indicators. — ONA

up and to the stage of evaluation of performance.

The meeting also stressed the need to apply the “criteria of tender documents” to bids for projects/purchases/contracts and to assess competitors according to the local content plans that they submit in their bid.

The participants in the meeting also learned about the local content indicators, which cover three main areas: the “development project”, the “operational contract” and the “government unit and its purchases”.

Each area includes three main elements:

developing employment opportunities for citizens, enhancing the use of local goods and services, and supporting small enterprises and employers.

The above mentioned areas comprise 11 sub-indicators that seek to measure the performance of government units’ implementation of local content policies, as well as the extent to which they work towards the enhancement of local content in their purchases, contracts and projects – with the prime objective of maximising the local return from government spending. — ONA



جامعة السلطان قابوس
Sultan Qaboos University

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University announces their desire to sell used furniture in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used furniture in auction yard and receive the bidding on Sunday & Monday (16-17/02/2025) from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used furniture, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used furniture, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items on Tuesday & Wednesday (18-19/02/2025) from 09:00 am to 03:00 pm.
- The Used furniture are sold in their current condition and SQU is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the moving is not completed after the end of the sale (10) Omani riyals will be imposed for each day after 20/02/2025.

Notes:

- Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- Entering the auction stores through Gate No (2).
- For more information contact on 24141272.



INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONFERENCE HELD



MUSCAT: Dr Amitabha Chanda Sr Consultant and Director of Neurosurgery in his presentation mentioned that Neurosurgery has come a long way in the last 2 or 3 decades. He showed his operative videos to the doctors attending to visualise how all these latest techniques are used. He also showed the technique of “Awake Brain Surgery for brain tumours” a relatively novel technique for functional preservation of brain, in which the Patient is Awake throughout the operation.

Dr Ajay Kumar Consultant Trauma and Joint Replacement in his presentation said “Robotic Assisted” Hip and Knee joint replacement has been a phenomenal development in the field of joint replacement surgery. He showed the latest generation of Smith and Nephew robot (CORI) which can perform total hip replacement, Uncompartmentalised (Partial) Knee Replacement and Total Knee Replacement. He emphasised, Robotic assisted Total Knee Arthroplasty (TKA) reduces post-operative alignment outliers and improves gap balancing compared to conventional TKA. It reduces bone and soft tissue damage and improves early functional recovery. Concluding his presentation, he said C K Birla can coordinate with doctors in Oman to embrace the evolution in replacement surgery.

Sombarta CEO of CK Birla Group of Hospitals enumerated the facilities available in their Institute at a nominal cost.



الروبيان الطبيعي للإستزراع السمكي ش.م.م
Natural Shrimp Aquaculture L.L.C

الروبيان الشرقي للإستزراع السمكي ش.م.م
Oriental Shrimp Aquaculture L.L.C

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDER

Natural Shrimp Aquaculture LLC and Oriental Shrimp Aquaculture are subsidiaries of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) inviting you to share offers for the below table.

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Collection of RFP	Last Date of Submission	Tender Fee
NSA/ORA/001/2025	خدمة تقديم الطعام لمزارع الروبيان في قرون وخويمة Catering Services for Qurun and Khuweymah Farms	23 Feb 2025	3 March 2025	OMR 200
NSA/ORA/002/2025	توريد ميثايسلفيت الصوديوم درجة الغذاء (SMBS) BASF Supply of Sodium Metabisulfite (SMBS) Food Grade BASF	23 Feb 2025	3 March 2025	N/A
NSA/003/2025	شراء مركبة بيك آب ذات كابينة مزدوجة بوزن 1 طن Procurement of 1-Ton Double Cabin Pick-up Truck	23 Feb 2025	3 March 2025	N/A

Please note:

- All proposals should be submitted via email to bidopening_osara@nsa.om. Failure to submit the bid to this email address will automatically disqualify the submission, and no further correspondence will be entertained.
- Any inquiries regarding the RFP should be directed to purchase@oceanic.om. Responses to queries will be provided in writing and shared with all suppliers approached for this RFP.

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Onlookers gather after protesters stormed Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, at Dhanmondi 32 in Dhaka. — AFP file photo

KEY BANGLADESH PARTY WARNS OVER UNREST

DHAKA: Bangladesh’s powerful BNP political party has spoken out publicly for the first time against the interim government after a surge of unrest and a sweeping security crackdown. Police have arrested more than 1,500 people nationwide since Saturday as part of “Operation Devil Hunt”, targeting groups allegedly connected to ousted premier Sheikh Hasina, who was toppled in a student-led revolution in August. Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Bangladesh National Party secretary-general, met interim leader Mohammed Yunus late on Monday to “raise concerns over the incidents that have swept across the country”. Protesters smashed buildings connected to Hasina’s family using excavators — including a museum to her late father, Bangladesh’s first president — on February 5, six months to the day since she fled as crowds stormed her palace in Dhaka. Police stood by as protesters torched the building. “It all happened in front of law enforcement agencies, so the government cannot avoid its responsibility,” Alamgir said. — AFP



Pope Francis leaves after celebrating the mass for the Jubilee of the Armed Forces at St. Peter’s square in the Vatican. — AFP

POPE CALLS TRUMP DEPORTATIONS A ‘MAJOR CRISIS’

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis launched a stinging critique on Tuesday of US President Donald Trump’s deportations of undocumented migrants, describing it as a “major crisis” that “damages the dignity of men and women”. In a letter to US bishops, he urged Catholics and others “not to give in to narratives that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters”. “I have followed closely the major crisis that is taking place in the United States with the initiation of a programme of mass deportations,” he wrote on Tuesday. He acknowledged “the right of a nation to defend itself and keep communities safe from those who have committed violent or serious crimes while in the country or prior to arrival”. But he wrote that “the act of deporting people who in many cases have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the environment, damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families”. — AFP

BUSINESS MEASURES

Greece announces support for Santorini



Greece announced temporary measures to support workers on its popular tourism island of Santorini as earthquakes rattled the island for a second week. Greece’s labour ministry said it was taking steps to provide financial support to workers. Under the measures, businesses could suspend workers’ contracts until March 3 but layoffs were prohibited. At the end of the suspension period, businesses would need to retain the same number of jobs as before. — Reuters

S KOREA ELECTION OFFICIAL REJECTS IMPEACHED PRESIDENT’S FRAUD CLAIMS

SEOUL: The secretary general of South Korea’s National Election Commission defended the integrity of the country’s elections on Tuesday amid claims by impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol that votes may have been compromised. Kim Yong-bin made his remarks while testifying at a hearing in Yoon’s impeachment trial over the president’s decision to impose a short-lived martial law on December 3. “It is regrettable that the controversy over election fraud

continues,” Kim said, adding that the independent commission had taken steps to improve cybersecurity after vulnerabilities were found, including changing passwords and implementing multi-factor authentication. Baek Jong-wook, a former official from the National Intelligence Service, testified that the spy agency had discovered vulnerabilities on NEC servers during an investigation in 2023, but said their probe was limited to computer security and had no

findings on election fraud. The Constitutional Court will decide whether to reinstate Yoon, or remove him permanently from office after the opposition-controlled parliament impeached him on December 14. Yoon separately faces criminal charges for insurrection, and is in jail. Backers of Yoon have adopted “Stop the Steal” slogans popularised by US President Donald Trump’s supporters and said they hoped Trump would help their embattled leader. — Reuters

Gazans reject Trump plans as truce stumbles

WITH his Gaza home destroyed in Israel’s military offensive, Shaban Shaqaleh had intended to take his family on a break to Egypt once the Hamas-Israel ceasefire was firmly in place. He changed his mind after US President Donald Trump announced plans to resettle Gaza’s Palestinian residents and redevelop the enclave, and said they should not have the right to return. The Tel Al-Hawa neighbourhood in Gaza City, where dozens of multi-storey buildings once stood, is now largely deserted. There is no running water or electricity and, like most buildings there, Shaqaleh’s home is in ruins. “We are horrified by the destruction, the repeated displacement and the death, and I wanted to leave so I can secure a safe and better future for my children - until Trump said what he said,” Shaqaleh, 47, said via a chat app. “After Trump’s remarks I cancelled the idea. I fear leaving and never being able to come back. This is my homeland.” Palestinians fear that Trump’s plan would enforce another Nakba, or Catastrophe, when they experienced mass expulsions in 1948 with the creation of Israel.

Under Trump’s scheme, Gaza’s about 2.2 million Palestinians would be resettled and the United States would take control and ownership of the coastal territory, redeveloping it into the “Riviera of the Middle East”. “The idea of selling my home or the piece of land I own to foreign companies to leave the homeland and never come back is completely rejected. I am deeply rooted in the soil of my homeland



Children play with marbles near destroyed buildings at the Shati camp for refugees north of Gaza. — AFP

A Hamas official said on Tuesday Israeli hostages can be brought home from Gaza only if a fragile ceasefire is respected, dismissing the “language of threats” after US President Donald Trump said he would “let hell break out” if they were not freed.

and will always be,” Shaqaleh said. Any suggestion that Palestinians leave Gaza - which they want to be part of an independent state also encompassing the West Bank - has been anathema to the Palestinian leadership for generations. Neighbouring Arab states have rejected it since the Gaza war began in 2023. After Hamas said on Monday it was suspending the release of Israeli hostages set out in the ceasefire deal due to alleged Israeli violations, Trump said the Palestinian militant group should release all those it still holds by noon on Saturday or he would propose cancelling the truce and “let hell break out”. “Hell worse than what we have already? Hell worse than killing?” said Jomaa Abu Kosh, a Palestinian from Rafah in southern Gaza, standing beside devastated homes. A Hamas official said on Tuesday Israeli hostages can

be brought home from Gaza only if a fragile ceasefire is respected, dismissing the “language of threats” after US President Donald Trump said he would “let hell break out” if they were not freed. Hamas has begun releasing some hostages gradually but postponed freeing any more until further notice, accusing Israel of violating the terms with several deadly shootings as well as hold-ups of some aid deliveries in Gaza. In the occupied West Bank, Palestinians were also aghast at Trump’s words. The proposal shattered decades of US peace efforts built around a two-state solution and added pressure on neighbouring Egypt and Jordan to take in resettled Palestinians. Both countries, who receive billions in aid from the United States, rejected the plan citing concerns for national security and their commitment to the two-state solution. — Reuters



FRESH FIGHTING FLARES IN EASTERN DRG

BUKAVU: Fighting erupted on Tuesday in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo after a two-day lull, with M23 fighters attacking Congolese army positions in South Kivu province at dawn, local and security sources said. The resurgence comes after east and southern African leaders called at a summit on Saturday for an “unconditional” ceasefire within five days, fearing the conflict. The armed group, which claims to protect ethnic Tutsis, began advancing in South Kivu after taking control of Goma, the capital of neighbouring North Kivu province that borders Rwanda, at the end of last month. Clashes took place on Tuesday near the village of Ihusi, around 70 kilometres from the provincial capital Bukavu and 40 kilometres from the province’s airport, according to security sources. — AFP

SEVERE TEMPRETURE

Brazil heat wave suspends schools



A court has postponed the start of classes for thousands of schools in southern Brazil as a heat wave threatens temperatures of up to 40 degrees Celsius. The heat wave comes after historic floods that left more than 180 people dead. “In compliance with the decision of the Court of Justice of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, there will be no classes in the 2,320 schools of the state network,” the education secretariat said. — AFP

MILITARY SUPPLIES

N Korea gives Russia 200 artillery pieces



North Korea has given Russia 200 long-range artillery pieces, a South Korean defence ministry official said on Tuesday, as Moscow and Pyongyang deepen their military ties. The North has given Moscow “some 11,000 troops, missiles, 200 pieces of long-range artillery and a substantial amount of ammunition,” the South Korean official said. North Korea could “additionally supply troops, weapons and ammunition going forward”, said the official, asking for anonymity. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



People gather for a national minute of silence at a memorial site outside Risbergska School in Orebro, Sweden. — Reuters

SWEDEN MOURNS VICTIMS, SEARCHES FOR ANSWERS

STOCKHOLM: Government offices, schools and workplaces fell silent in Sweden at midday on Tuesday in remembrance of the victims of a mass shooting at an adult education centre last week when a gunman killed 10 people before turning his weapon on himself. Swedes were still stunned by the Feb. 4 attack, in which Rickard Andersson, a 35-year-old unemployed loner, opened fire on students and teachers at the Campus Risbergska school in the city of Orebro, some 200 km west of Stockholm. Those who could not escape barricaded themselves into classrooms and hid until police had confirmed Andersson had killed himself.

Social media posts on Tuesday showed buses and cars standing still on roads across Sweden at noon, while many of the country’s biggest employers paused work to observe the minute’s silence. In Orebro, thousands braved the cold, packing the central square to honour the dead and injured. Police say they still do not know why Andersson embarked on his killing spree and have found nothing to suggest any ideological motive.

— Reuters

COLOMBIAN MINISTER TO RESIGN



The resignation of Colombia Defense Minister Ivan Velasquez from President Gustavo Petro’s cabinet is definitive, the ministry said in a social media post on Tuesday, as Velasquez joins the environment and interior ministers in exiting the government. Petro asked all his ministers to present their resignations on Sunday, after a tense televised cabinet meeting last week led some officials to step down. “Based on information circulating in the media, we inform you that the minister of defense, Ivan Velasquez, presented his irrevocable resignation from the post,” the ministry said on X. Other ministers, including new finance minister Diego Guevara have or will present their ‘protocol’ resignations.

— Reuters

Russia hands lengthy sentences to alleged Ukraine collaborators, POWs

MOSCOW: Russia has sentenced two men to lengthy prison terms for allegedly aiding Ukraine’s army, the latest convictions in an unrelenting crackdown linked to Moscow’s military campaign. Moscow has opened dozens of treason, terrorism, espionage and sabotage cases against its citizens for allegedly cooperating with Kyiv or trying to undermine the Russian army’s full-scale offensive, launched in February 2022.

In the western Kirov region, a

military court sentenced a local resident to 21 years in prison after he was found guilty of setting fire to three electrical railroad structures, the state-run TASS news agency reported, citing the FSB security service. The FSB said he was acting on Ukraine’s orders. Russia’s vast railway infrastructure has been repeatedly targeted in a spate of sabotage and arson attempts over the last three years.

Russian courts also announced on Tuesday several captured

Ukrainian soldiers had been sentenced to years in jail. Moscow regularly tries Ukrainian soldiers for alleged crimes committed during the conflict, despite the prosecution of soldiers for taking part in hostilities being banned under the Geneva Conventions. A military court in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don sentenced five Ukrainian POWs to around six years in prison, the TASS news agency reported. They were accused of waging combat against civilians.

— AFP

Vance puts Europe, China on notice over AI regulation

US Vice-President JD Vance on Tuesday warned European allies against over-regulating the US-dominated artificial intelligence sector and China against using the technology to tighten its grip on power. The remarks by Donald Trump’s deputy to world leaders gathered in Paris to discuss AI did not put dozens of nations off signing a statement calling for efforts to flank the technology with regulation to make it “open” and “ethical”. “Excessive regulation... could kill a transformative sector just as it’s taking off” Vance told global leaders and tech industry chiefs at the French capital’s Grand Palais, calling on Europe to show “optimism rather than trepidation”.

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi had minutes earlier called for “collective, global efforts to establish governance and standards that uphold our shared values, address risks and build trust”. Future AI would need to be “free from biases” and “address concerns related to cybersecurity, disinformation and deepfakes” to benefit all, he added. Modi co-hosted the summit with France’s President Emmanuel Macron and his country will host the next meeting on advancing global rules.

Speaking after Vance, Macron said global rules were “the foundation, alongside innovation and acceleration, of what will allow AI to arrive and endure”, in an apparent rebuff to the US vice-president. China, France, Germany and India were among 61 signatories who agreed it is a priority that “AI is open, inclusive, transparent, ethical, safe, secure and trustworthy” under “international frameworks”. AI should also be “sustainable for people and the planet,” the text added. The United States and Britain, two leading nations for AI development, signed.

The US vice-president took a thinly veiled shot at China, saying “authoritarian regimes” were looking to use AI for increased control of citizens at home and abroad. “Partnering with them means chaining your nation to an authoritarian master that seeks to infiltrate, dig in and seize your information infrastructure,” Vance said. Chinese startup DeepSeek rattled the AI sector last month by unveiling a sophisticated chatbot that it says



World leaders and attendees pose for a group picture at the end of the plenary session of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit, at the Grand Palais, in Paris. — AFP

was developed on a relatively low budget. A growing number of countries have taken steps to block the app from government devices over security concerns.

Vance also pointed to “cheap tech... heavily subsidised and exported by authoritarian regimes”, referring to surveillance cameras and 5G mobile internet equipment widely sold abroad by China. Speaking after Vance, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said Brussels would push to mobilise 200 billion euros (\$206 billion) for AI investments in Europe, with 50 billion euros to come from the EU’s budget and the rest from “providers, investors and industry”.

Following Macron’s trumpeting on Monday of 109 billion euros of investment into French AI projects and a \$500-billion US “Stargate” programme led by developer OpenAI, the vast figure underscored the resources needed to compete on the latest technological wave.

A consortium led by Elon Musk, a Trump ally and the world’s richest man, has made a near \$100 billion bid to buy ChatGPT maker OpenAI, the Wall Street Journal reported. If successful, the deal would compound the tech influence of Musk, already boss of X, Tesla, SpaceX and his own AI developer xAI. Sam Altman, the OpenAI chief who was to speak in Paris on Tuesday, responded to the reported offer with a dry “no thank you” on X.

Vance did not comment directly on the prospective deal. He vowed to “ensure that American AI technology continues to be the gold standard worldwide”, but also took aim at heavyweight tech “incumbents” who he said pushed for regulation that could strangle emerging challengers.

OpenAI chief Altman has in the past invited regulation, including because of the “existential risk” some computer scientists believe superhuman AI could pose to human survival.

— AFP

Venezuela sends planes to fetch undocumented migrants from US

MAIQUETIA: Venezuela sent two planes to bring nearly 200 undocumented migrants back from the United States, saying it hoped for a “new beginning” in ties with Washington, which does not recognise Nicolas Maduro as the legitimate president. US President Donald Trump has pledged to carry out the largest deportation campaign in American history, vowing to expel millions of undocumented immigrants, many from Latin American nations.

The planes were sent on Monday after Maduro — keen for an end to crippling US sanctions — agreed with a visiting US envoy on January 31 to accept the return of deported migrants and also offered to provide transport. The flights, chartered by state carrier Conviasa, arrived late on Monday at Maiquetia international airport, which serves the capital Caracas. Some of the migrants had handcuffs that were

removed before they deplaned, with a couple raising their arms in celebration as they descended from the aircraft, according to an AFP reporter at the airport.

“Venezuela has always made it clear that any transfer of Venezuelans must be done with absolute respect for their dignity and human rights,” a foreign ministry statement said. It also stated the Venezuelan government’s hope for “a new beginning of relations between the two countries, based on respect.” Some of the deported included individuals with suspected ties to the Tren de Aragua gang, officials said, although Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said “very few” had criminal records.

All passengers would undergo a criminal record check, with those arrested for immigration violations in the United States released while the alleged criminals would be



Venezuelan migrants deported from US arrive at Simon Bolivar international airport in Maiquetia. — AFP

put behind bars for investigation, according to an interior ministry official.

The White House posted a photo on social network X of cuffed and shackled people boarding a Conviasa plane, stating: “Repatriation flights

to Venezuela have resumed, with Ambassador @RichardGrenell overseeing the first two flights. MAKE AMERICA SAFE AGAIN.” Trump repeatedly highlighted during his election campaign suspected crimes by undocumented

migrants, although immigrants are statistically less likely to commit crimes than native-born Americans.

The day after Maduro met Grenell in Caracas on January 31, Trump announced Venezuela “agreed to receive, back into their Country, all Venezuela illegal aliens who were encamped in the US, including gang members of Tren de Aragua.” “Venezuela has further agreed to supply the transportation back,” Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social.

Grenell had travelled to Caracas for the meeting despite Washington not recognising Maduro’s re-election to a third six-year term in a vote last year he is widely accused of stealing. The envoy returned home with six Americans who had been detained in Venezuela. It was not clear what Caracas had gained from the talks, after which Maduro had also called for a “new beginning” in bilateral relations.

— AFP

OPINION

IQ + EQ + SQ = A happier, more successful life



HYESHA BARRETT

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

INTELLIGENCE is a multi-layered concept, often measured by different criteria. Traditionally, the focus has been on IQ (intelligence quotient), which evaluates cognitive abilities and analytical thinking. However, in recent years, two additional forms of intelligence have gained recognition: EQ (emotional quotient) and SQ (spiritual quotient). Each of these measures plays a crucial role in shaping a person's capabilities and experiences, in both their personal and professional fields. IQ, which measures our rational thinking and intellectual potential, assesses skills such as logical and methodical reasoning, mathematical proficiency, verbal abilities and problem-solving capacities. A higher IQ typically correlates with academic and career success, especially in roles requiring cognitive skills, as it helps us learn to process information quickly and understand complex concepts. However, our IQ alone does not encompass the full spectrum of human intelligence. EQ is the ability to recognise, understand and manage one's own emotions as well as empathise

with and influence the emotions of others. It includes skills such as self-awareness (recognising one's feelings), self-regulation (managing sentiments), social skills (building relationships and effective communication), empathy (developing relationships and efficient communication) and motivation (using emotions to reach our goals). Those with a high EQ possess the capacity to navigate social dynamics and respond to the emotional needs of themselves and others, which is essential in both personal interactions and workplace environments. SQ, though less commonly discussed than IQ and EQ, refers to a person's ability to understand their purpose, values and the deeper meanings of life. SQ encompasses a wide array of concepts, including self-introspection, the ability to reflect on one's beliefs and the quest for personal meaning. Individuals with a high SQ have more inner peace and are often more resilient in the face of adversity, as they draw strength from their inner beliefs and values. They tend to exhibit greater compassion, integrity and a strong sense of connection to others and the world around them.

Employers are increasingly aware that success in the workplace is not solely dependent on cognitive skills, but also on emotional and spiritual capacities.

In various contexts, such as corporate leadership, education or personal development, recognising the importance of all three forms of intelligence can lead to a more fulfilling life. Employers are increasingly aware that success in the workplace is not solely dependent on cognitive skills, but also on emotional and spiritual capacities. While IQ has long been celebrated as a key indicator of intelligence, the inclusion of EQ and SQ provides a much richer and more comprehensive understanding of human potential. Embracing the interplay of cognitive, emotional and spiritual intelligence allows us to lead a more rounded, grounded, effective and meaningful life. As we continue to explore the depths of human intelligence, creating a balance among these three quotients may hold the key to personal growth and societal progress. A wholesome balanced interplay of IQ, EQ and SQ will automatically generate a holistic view of intelligence. An integration of these three quotients will undoubtedly lead us to live a more fulfilling and successful life.

World may have entered era of 1.5C warming: Scientists

KELLY MACNAMARA

Last year's record-breaking temperatures could be a sign that the world is entering a new era above 1.5C of global warming, scientists say, one never before faced by modern humans. The Paris Agreement threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels is a small-sounding number with big implications for people and nature. It is a marker of risk, with more warming from planet-heating emissions linked to worsening floods, heatwaves and storms, as well as gradual effects like sea level rise and species extinctions.

"Every fraction of a degree beyond this level translates into more extreme weather, biodiversity loss, and human suffering," said William Ripple, Professor at Oregon State University. But when can we say 1.5C is officially crossed? That is the focus of two studies published Monday in the journal Nature Climate Change. Scientists sought to square the long-term Paris goals with the extraordinary heat seen in 2024, the first full calendar year above 1.5C, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

A single year above the limit does not mark a breach of the Paris deal, which is measured as a rolling average over 20 or 30 years, to smooth out year-on-year temperature variability. By that measure the world has so far warmed roughly 1.3C, warmer than it has been for the last 125,000 years, scientists say.

One team based in Germany and Austria used observational data and computer modelling to assess whether crossing 1.5C over one year might represent an "early warning" that the long-term limit is at risk. They found that historical patterns suggested the first single year that crosses a particular temperature threshold tends to fall within the longer-term 20-year period where that global warming level is reached.

"The calendar year of 2024 was announced as the first above 1.5C warming and, therefore, it signals that most probably Earth has already entered a 20-year period at 1.5C warming," the authors said. An official breach of the Paris goal would happen at the mid-point of the period — so within the next 10 years — unless "stringent" efforts are made to slash greenhouse gas emissions, they said.

"A year above 1.5C is not the time for despair, but a call to action," the authors said. In the second study, Alex Cannon of the Canadian Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change used a slightly different methodology, but reached a similar conclusion. Under a middle of the road scenario, a short term crossing of 1.5C in 2024 would suggest "long-term crossing would probably occur before 2029", he said. — AFP

When bullying wins everyone suffers

It begins with a choice: fight, flee, or submit. Bullying, whether in our schools, businesses or international relations, in its purest form, is the deliberate use of power to instil fear and force submission. It thrives on imbalance—one side dominates, the other retreats or complies. Whether in the schoolyard, the boardroom, or global politics, the mechanics remain the same: fear is manufactured, trust is eroded, and control is secured. As someone who experienced bullying and suffered its short and long-term consequences, I know that while the cost of submitting to power may seem smaller, there is always an unbearable, higher hidden cost of the cycle of fear.

This is not a modern phenomenon. Ibn Khaldun, the 14th-century historian and social thinker, observed cycles of power in societies, where dominant groups used coercion to sustain authority. Today, the methods may have evolved, but the process remains unchanged. The only difference is that bullying is no longer just a behaviour; it is a strategy. What was once condemned is now accepted, even admired. Strength is increasingly measured not by integrity, but by the ability to impose one's will on others.

The rebranding of bullying has reached new heights. The global stage has turned intimidation into an art form, a negotiation tactic, a way to win. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the leadership style of US President Donald Trump. His rise to power has been fuelled by an unapologetic use of bullying tactics: public humiliation, threats, and the relentless undermining of opponents. The logic is simple—make people fear the cost of defiance, and they will choose compliance over resistance. Another bullying example is the genocidal settler colonialism of the Zionist Occupation of



Fear has become the currency of influence, used to silence dissent, reshape narratives, and bend people to the will of the powerful.



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The writer is an innovator and an insights storyteller

Palestine, criminalised for almost 80 years by the United Nations, International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. This is not unique to one leader or country. Across the world, corporations, media influencers, and occupation regimes have learned the same playbook. Fear has become the currency of influence, used to silence dissent, reshape narratives, and bend people to the will of the powerful. In business, it manifests as workplace toxicity, where employees hesitate to challenge decisions, fearing retaliation. In politics, it breeds polarisation, where truth is secondary to power. In society, it deepens mental health crises, normalising cycles of abuse and submission. The consequences of this shift are far-reaching. When bullying is legitimised, the cost is not just personal — it is

structural. Institutions weaken as accountability erodes. Trust fractures as deception becomes routine. Fear spreads as people learn that speaking out carries risks. The worst consequence, however, is the loss of courage. When individuals believe submission is the only viable option, they stop resisting altogether. The antidote is not simply to expose bullies but to dismantle the conditions that empower them. Fear thrives in divided environments; unity disrupts its grip. Coercion depends on silence; speaking up challenges its authority. Manipulation succeeds when people lack critical thinking; knowledge renders it ineffective. The lesson from history is clear—bullying flourishes when submission is the norm, but every cycle of oppression eventually breaks. The only question is whether we will be the ones to break it.

Shaping the future of students’ learning journey



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

The world is changing and this is mostly seen in the lives of our children. Hi-tech devices have become a part of daily life. The turn of the century saw technology significantly changing the way children learn. Schools are now equipped with smart boards, projectors, smart tables and integrated learning systems. The communication between teachers, students and parents has transformed dramatically. The days are gone when teachers give lectures and children hurriedly take notes of them. Even in elementary classrooms, we find children glued to their computer screens, ears covered with headphones. There is no surprise if teachers wonder what their point was in being in the classrooms! My recent visit to a high school brought my memory back to my own education journey. Traditional classroom-based learning using printed textbooks and static resources is no longer the norm. The old classroom buzz and excitement were all missing! However, what is amazing is that children are acquiring academic excellence earlier than ever. “Even a six-year-old child is expected to be reading and writing well at the end of the year”, a teacher at the school said. Digital textbooks and online resources have replaced traditional materials, providing students with a wealth of information at their fingertips.

Learning programmes are becoming more advanced in the form of AI (artificial intelligence) and machine learning, which comes from the so-called “edtech” industry. Learning through AI-powered apps is a more enjoyable way to study both inside and outside the classroom. This makes it easier for teachers to engage their students. Instead of replacing textbooks, AI improves them, offering a more interactive and personalised learning experience. Ask any parent, especially those who struggle to help their children with their homework or test preparations and you will find them excited to explain how the AI has been supporting them. After all, parents all want to give their children the best. “Artificial Intelligence in education is not just about technology. It signifies a paradigm shift. It’s an evolution from rote learning to adaptive, personalised education”, points out Manchester Global School. However, concerns remain. Beyond a student’s performance in a particular course, experts also opined that overdependence on AI tools might reduce critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as students might become more reliant on automated systems for solutions. “Overdependence on AI for problem-solving can hinder students’ ability to develop critical thinking skills and develop

My recent visit to the school brought my memory back to my own education journey. Traditional classroom-based learning using printed textbooks and static resources is no longer the norm

independent learning skills”, reveals a report in MobileGuardian. An AI homework helper can provide solutions to complex math problems in seconds. However, “this deprives students of the opportunity to grapple with the problem themselves, develop logical reasoning skills and experience the satisfaction of arriving at a solution independently”, the report adds. AI may also increase risks to child safety, which is a key responsibility that schools must take to protect children from abuse, neglect and harm. Still, whether we like it or not, in the long run, AI technology is going to become a staple part of our lives, so rather than fight it, we need to move with it, use it to our advantage and adapt to it accordingly. Educators, who stay put, relying only on old methods, will find themselves increasingly at a disadvantage. According to HolonIQ, the global market for AI in education is expected to reach \$6 billion by 2025. Additionally, the average growth between 2020 and 2025 will increase by 47 per cent. Despite all challenges, AI is a valuable tool when implemented thoughtfully. What is more important is that parents should stay informed about these changes so that they can best support their children’s academic development as they move forward into this new era of education.

‘PROJECT 2025’ IN OUT OF COLD AS TRUMP TAKES OFFICE

FRANKIE TAGGART

During his campaign, Donald Trump shunned Project 2025, a radical governing blueprint that envisioned a humbled federal bureaucracy bending the knee to a nearly omnipotent White House. Seeing the Heritage Foundation’s 922-page brainchild as toxic to his election prospects, the canny campaigner said he didn’t even plan to read it, much less endorse it. Yet Trump’s embrace of Project 2025’s recommendations since returning to office — and his nomination for cabinet posts of many of its key architects — has alarmed critics and even raised some eyebrows on the right. The Heritage Foundation recommended reclassifying federal workers to make them easier to fire and stripping protections from civil servants perceived as disloyal. Trump ordered both reforms. On the law enforcement front, it reinforced Trump’s conspiracy theory about a “deep state” working to undermine Republicans as it called for an end to the “weaponisation” of government. And it demanded that intelligence chiefs undo the “damage” done by investigations into the Trump campaign and its coordination with Russia’s attack on the 2016 US election. Trump, who was indicted in 2023 by four grand juries, signed orders against weaponisation and ordered the FBI to identify agents who had investigated his involvement in the 2021 US Capitol insurrection. On national disasters Trump has also indicated that he is open to shifting response costs from the federal government to affected states — another Project 2025 idea. The Heritage Foundation was also an early proponent of Trump’s hiring freeze for career officials. Project 2025 called for the reinstatement of military personnel discharged for refusing Covid-19 vaccines. Trump signed orders reinstating vaccine-skeptical service members and declaring gender dysphoria inconsistent with troop “readiness” and “lethality.” Project 2025 also called for an end to “Marxist indoctrination” in the military, singling out diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in the armed forces and across the government. Trump abolished DEI offices funded by the defence and homeland security departments — along with “illegal” DEI initiatives in every department. He ordered an end to hiring practices based on “illegal racial discrimination under the guise of ‘equity’” and set US policy to recognise “male and female.” In education, Project 2025 pushed for parental choice and wanted the Civil Rights Act (CRA) invoked to end “gender ideology and critical race theory” in schools. Trump issued edicts prioritising “education freedom” and cited the CRA in an executive order withdrawing funding from public schools failing to respect parents’ rights and discrimination laws. — AFP

A reformed WHO should make its case to America

AFTER announcing his intention to withdraw the United States from the World Health Organization, President Donald Trump has indicated that he might be willing to reconsider. At issue is one of Trump’s favourite themes: reciprocity and fair burden-sharing. He believes that China contributes too little and exerts too much influence over the WHO. Trump is right to point out the importance of equitable burden-sharing. In fact, the WHO has already adopted measures suggested by its member states to address this imbalance. At present, only 26 per cent of the WHO’s approved budget comes from assessed contributions, a membership fee of sorts based largely on a country’s share of global GDP and population (United Nations Peacekeeping, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank also use this approach). But member states are now on a path to financing at least 50 per cent of the WHO’s main budget in proportion to their economic and population size by 2031. Under the current formula, America’s portion of the assessed contributions is capped at 22 per cent even though it accounts for 26 per cent of global GDP. China now pays 15 per cent and that percentage will continue to rise as the country’s share of global GDP grows. The more that the WHO is financed through assessed contributions, the more that China, India, the Gulf states and several Central European countries will be obliged to contribute, ensuring that all countries pay their fair share. Of course, owing to America’s generosity, the US government has made contributions that go beyond normal member-state dues — hence its position as the largest donor to the WHO. China, for its part, currently gives little beyond what is required, but this should also change over the coming years. Trump is equally concerned about China’s influence on the WHO and the country’s handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus shares some of



At present, only 26 per cent of the WHO’s approved budget comes from assessed contributions.



GORDON BROWN

The writer is a former prime minister of the United Kingdom, is UN Special Envoy for Global Education and Chair of Education Cannot Wait

these concerns. He has repeatedly called on China to investigate and disclose what happened in Wuhan five years ago and has drawn China’s condemnation by rightly insisting that, until that occurs, all hypotheses about the virus’s origin remain on the table. Ironically, given the torrent of falsehoods about it, the pandemic accord under negotiation at the WHO would improve international health coordination and prevent similar failures from happening again. If this proposed instrument, as well as the updated international health regulations, were to require earlier reporting, full information-sharing, and a more rapid response to health threats, we could avoid repeating past mistakes. But the US will lose all influence over these negotiations if it leaves the WHO, while the Trump administration could instead use its clout within the organization to reach an agreement that the US can accept. Trump also wants evidence of reform at the WHO. That means decentralisation, with country and regional offices gaining greater authority vis-à-vis what he sees as an overly bureaucratic Geneva headquarters. It also implies avoiding the mission creep that often arises from member-state

requests and earmarked funding designed to give priority to their own projects. The WHO must demonstrate progress on both issues in a transparent manner. In fact, all WHO member states have requested reforms — both these and others — to enhance the organisation’s performance, accountability and transparency, as a quid pro quo for agreeing to increase the percentage of assessed contributions. They want a guarantee that the money will be spent efficiently, with timely results and fully operational internal controls. The WHO has already made important progress. Tedros has, in fact, launched an ambitious plan to transform the organisation, including by bolstering and delegating more authority to country offices. Moreover, in response to the recommendations of the Agile Member States Task Group and following the Secretariat’s complementary implementation plan on reform, the WHO has become more transparent and accountable. It has improved internal controls systems and developed a process for designing and implementing programme budgets that involves member states to a greater degree and improves resource allocation, monitoring and reporting. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

OMANTEL LEAGUE



Seeb and Sur players in action.

SEEB EXTEND LEAD, OMAN CLUB AND RUSTAQ WIN

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 11

Oman Club claimed a crucial 3-0 victory over Al Nasr in the 14th round of the Omantel League at the Al Saada Sports Complex in Salalah on Monday. The first half saw a balanced performance from both teams, with each side exchanging opportunities but failing to break the deadlock. However, at the start of the second half, Oman Club asserted their dominance, with Azan al Tamimi opening the scoring in the 59th minute after capitalising on a precise pass inside the penalty area. Oman continued their pressure in the final minutes, with Faisal al Buraiki netting the second goal in the 85th minute before sealing the victory with a third goal in the 95th minute. With this win, Oman Club raised their tally to 28 points, maintaining their third place on the league table. Meanwhile, Al Nasr remained at 17 points in fifth.

SEEB BEAT SUR
Seeb continued their impressive run, securing an important 2-1 victory against Sur at Sur Sports Complex. Seeb started the match with strong attacking pressure, which paid off in the 37th minute when Amjad al Harthy scored the opening goal. The first half ended with Seeb leading 1-0. However, Sur came into the second half with renewed energy and managed to equalise in the 62nd minute through Foday Darbo. Despite the setback, Seeb bounced back in the final minutes, with Abu Kamara scoring the winning goal in the 85th minute, securing three valuable points for his team. With this result, Seeb extended their lead at the top of the table with 37 points, while Sur remained in 11th place with 9 points, keeping them in danger of relegation.

AL SHABAB HOLD AL NAHDA
Al Shabab managed to snatch a valuable point against Al Nahda, holding them to a 1-1 draw at Al Rustaq Sports Complex. Al Nahda started the match strongly, controlling the first half and taking the lead in the 36th minute through their professional player Al Haj Malik. The first half ended with Al Nahda ahead 1-0. However, Al Shabab improved in the second half and managed to level the score in the 57th minute through Mohammed al Ghafri. Both teams pushed for a late winner, but the match ended in a draw. Following this result, Al Shabab raised their tally to 17 points, climbing to fifth in the overall standings. Al Nahda have 32 points, maintaining second place but falling five points behind league leaders Seeb.

AL RUSTAQ OUT OF RELEGATION
Al Rustaq earned a 2-0 victory over Saham at Sohar Sports Complex. The first half was evenly contested, with both teams adopting a cautious approach and creating a few attacking chances that did not materialise into goals. In the second half, Al Rustaq took control, with Arseni Loko breaking the deadlock in the 51st minute. The team continued their dominance and Ammar al Shiyadi secured the win with a second goal in the 75th minute after a well-organised attacking play. This victory lifted Al Rustaq to 11 points, moving them up to 10th place after spending a long period at the bottom of the table. Saham remained at 17 points, dropping to eighth place.

UAE’s camels shine on 2nd day of Al Bashayer festival

WALEED AL JAHAWARI
MUSCAT, FEB 11

THE UAE’s ‘Hemloulah’, ‘Nawyed’, ‘Al Nader’ and ‘Najla’ snatched the top rounds of the category to win the cups, guns and cars on the second day of the Al Bashayer Camel Festival on Tuesday. ‘Al Madinah’, owned by Oman’s Said bin Salim al Jadaili, won the fifth car at the 18th Al Bashayer Festival for Purebred Arabian Camel Racing 2025, which continues for six days at Al Bashayer Square in the Wilayat of Adam from February 10 to 15. As many as 5,320 camels are taking part from Oman and GCC, competing in 84 rounds for valuable prizes including 20 cars, three daggers, three guns, seven cups and the golden and silver swords. The first day, February 10, was for the ‘Hagayeg’ category, two years old, for 4 km. Nineteen races will be in the morning with cash prizes for the top ten. In the afternoon, there were 8 main races with cars, a cup, and a gun as prizes for the winner and cash prizes for the top 10. The second day, February 11, was for the ‘Lagaya’ category, three years old, for 5 km divided into 15 races in the morning with a cash prize for the top 10. Seven main races were held in the afternoon, with five cars, two cups and a gun for the winners and cash prizes up to 10th place. The third day, February 12, will be for the ‘Yathaa’ category, 4 years old, for a 6 km race. Eleven races will be in the morning with cash prizes for the top 10. Four main races will be in the afternoon, and the winners will receive four cars, two cups, and a gun, in addition to the cash prizes for the top ten.

Morning rounds results:
Read as: Round, Winning Camel, Owner, Timing
1. Sahari / Hamad bin Mohammed al Wahaibi / 7:50:45
2. Sougah / Hamid bin Said al Neyadi / 7:48:27
3. Shaheen / Ali bin Said al Hashemi / 7:44:89
4. Jabarah / Gharib bin Saad al Kathiri / 7:45:91
5. Al Shahiniyah / Ali bin Said al Hashemi / 7:46:71
6. Lahab / Saad bin Hamad al Janibi / 7:45:77
7. Lamha / Mahmoud bin Mohammed al Wahaibi / 7:43:06
8. Raghad / Al Hamdi bin Salim al Daree / 7:48:21
9. Shaheen / Salim bin Sulyem al Jahafi / 7:39:55 (Best Time)



A winner celebrates with his cup.

Afternoon rounds results:				
Round	Winning Camel	Owner	Timing	Prize
1	Hemloulah	Hijn Al Ryasah (UAE)	7:29:10	Cup and a car
2	Nawyed	Salim bin Thaloub al Dare	7:30:36	Cup and a car
3	Al Nader	Jumaa bin Mohammed al Ketbi	7:27:63	Gun and a car
4	Najla	Atiq bin Matar al Qubaisi	7:37:99	Car
5	Al Madinah	Said bin alim al Jadaili	7:39:25	Car
6	Mardhiyah	Awad bin Ubaid al Wahaibi	7:59:35	Cash
7	Raddad	Hamad bin Mohammed al Wahaibi	7:48:35	Cash
10.	Wasfah / Ali bin Rashid al Amri / 7:50:49	13. Farhaa / Mohammed bin Saif al Harsoosi / 7:51:67		
11.	Al Dhab / Abdullah bin Salim al Wahaibi / 7:49:73	14. Al Shahiniyah / Hamad bin Said al Qanoubi / 7:57:88		
12.	Raoub / Ghasib bin Ali al Fazari / 7:50:61	15. Al Shumeimi / Mohammed bin Hamad al Bataini / 7:52:79		

Oman’s Ali secures slot at World Indoor Athletics

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 11

Oman’s Olympian sprinter Ali bin Anwar al Balushi secured a slot at the 20th World Athletics Indoor Championships which will be held from March 21 to 23 in Nanjing, China, after winning the Men’s 60m Final at the Meeting de Paris Indoor at the World Indoor Athletics (Tour Silver). Al Balushi managed to end the race in 6.53 seconds to take the gold on Monday. Reynier Mena of Cuba claimed the silver medal in 6.57 seconds while Mamadou Fall Sarr from Senegal captured bronze after he clocked 6.59 seconds. The French sprinters including Meba Mickael Zeze and Jeff Erius finished in the fourth (6.65 seconds) and fifth (6.68 seconds) positions respectively. In the last month, Ali al Balushi had claimed silver medal in the Men’s 60 Metres event at the Astana Indoor Meet in Kazakhstan. His victory came in the golden category after he finished the race distance in 6.60 seconds.



Oman’s Ali bin Anwar al Balushi won the men’s 60m final at the Indoor Tour Silver event in Paris.

The young sprinter is one of the top runners in the region in 60m indoor race events. He had focused previous years in these kind of races. He broke Omani record at that time as he had registered a timing of 6.58 seconds in January last year during a training camp in Turkey. Then, he had attended Asian Indoor Athletics Championships in Iran where he won first place clocking a time of 6.50 seconds to set both Omani and Gulf records. Ali, under technical guidance of his national coach Fahad al Mashaykhi, will aim for a top show in the upcoming events. His next assignment will be at the 20th World Athletics Indoor Championships in China and will look for an outstanding performance. Al Balushi took part in the last Olympic Games Paris 2024. He had concluded his Olympic debut at Paris 2024 Olympics with a positive performance finishing in sixth place as he clocked 10.26 seconds in the men’s 100 m first round event for heats 3 at Stade de France.

DECISIVE CLASH



Areen al Azkawi



Aisha al Busaidy

OMAN OPEN U18 GIRLS FINAL TODAY

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 11

The Oman Open Tennis Championship for the Under-18 Girls category concludes on Wednesday with the final between Areen al Azkawi and Aisha al Busaidy. This decisive clash will take place on the main court at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Over the past few days, the tournament has witnessed intense competition across various categories, with the remaining divisions advancing to the semifinals after thrilling matches. In the Under-18 Boys category, Saeed al Marjibi secured victory over Elias al Touqi 5-10, 7-5, 10-5. Meanwhile, in the Under-19 category, Hood al Hashmi defeated Savannah McCurash 5-0, while Omar al Shaibani overcame Hatim al Rahbi with a 5-1 win.

In the women's section, Aisha al Busaidy continued her impressive run by defeating Emily McCurash 6-3, 6-2. On the men's side, Younis al Rawahi dominated his match against Laurent with a sweeping 6-0, 6-0 victory. The professionals' category witnessed a strong battle, where Joseph Peter triumphed over Brendan Van 6-3, 6-3, before Muneer al Rawahi continued his winning streak by beating Joseph Peter 4-0.

In the Men's Over-65 category, Nasser al Rashid beat Madani al Barqi 6-0, 6-1, while Ian Lakin won against Thiagarajan 6-1, 6-0.

Faisal al Balushi, Director of the Oman Open Tennis Championship, emphasised that the tournament showcased advanced technical levels and fierce competition across all categories, reflecting the growth of tennis in Oman and the increasing interest in the sport. He noted that the championship provided a valuable opportunity for players to gain experience and compete against various local and international talents, helping to refine their skills and elevate their performance.

Al Balushi added, "the anticipated final of the Under-18 Girls category will be one of the most competitive matches of the tournament. Both have demonstrated exceptional performance throughout the competition, earning their place in this decisive stage through their strong gameplay and high concentration. The organising committee has ensured the best conditions for the success of the championship, both technically and logistically, and we are pleased with the enthusiastic audience turnout and engagement with the matches."

He further pointed out that the tournament achieved several goals, including promoting a culture of sports competition, raising the technical level of players, and creating a competitive environment that aids in skill development. He also praised the strong audience participation, which added to the excitement and elevated the level of competition on the courts.



The winners and participants with the chief guest and officials.

Fish clinches Assarain Golf Classic crown

RICHARD

Fish of Oman overcame a stiff competition from a strong field to emerge champion at the Assarain Golf Classic. The 29th edition of the Assarain Golf Classic was held at the Ghala Golf Club on February 7 and 8 with the participation of around 130 golfers.

A delighted Fish said: "The Assarain Golf Classic is a fantastic tournament and it feels great to win a competition of this stature. I would like to thank my playing partners over the last few days. It was a pleasure to be in this event and again I would like to thank the sponsor Assarain Group of Companies."

Ahmed al Farsi, General Manager of Ghala Golf Club, who managed the event, said: "The atmosphere was electric from the first day. I was truly amazed by the participation and overall feel of the 2025 Assarain Golf Classic. We were oversubscribed and had to have a cut off for players as we unfortunately could not fit all of them in, but overall, it was a tremendous occasion."

HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Chairman of the Oman Golf Association, was the guest of honour at the ceremony held on the final day that was graced by a host of dignitaries. The Assarain Classic ended with its tradition of raffling off a Hublot watch which was won by Mubarak al Hassani.

Commenting upon the success of the event, Ibrahim al Wahaibi, Director of Assarain Group of Companies, said: "I would like to congratulate all the winners in the



Richard Fish won the men's gross section.

respective categories and would like to thank all the participants. With the success of the 2025 event, we are committed to making the Assarain Golf Classic Tournament bigger and better in the coming years while maintaining our strong professional standards of hosting one of the oldest golf tournaments in the Sultanate of Oman."

The Assarain Classic is also supported by Hublot from Mistal and The Bodyshop.

ASSARAIN GOLF CLASSIC RESULTS
Men's Gross: 1. Richard Fish (80+75) 155 Gross, 2. Ahmed al Wahaibi (81+75) 156 Gross, 3. Azaan al Rumhy (74+83) 157 Gross, 4. Krish Pawani (78+82) 160 Gross C/B
Men's Net: 1. Radhakrishnan Margabandhu (75+70) 145 Net, 2. Ahmed al Zakwani (73+73) 146 Net C/B, 3. Hussain Dad al Balushi (74+72) 146 Net
Ladies Gross: 1. Lynn Casey (77+71) 148 Gross, 2. Emma Merrit (91+95) 186 Gross
Net: 1. Jameela Daud (69+74) 143 Net, 2. Suna Jackson (79+80) 159 Net
Junior Gross: Yusuf al Rumhy (85+89) 174 Gross
Net: Taimur al Busaidy (71+84) 155 Net

ON COURSE FEATURES:
Day 1: NTP 2nd Hole: Charlie Dolphin, NTP 5th Hole: Karl Armstrong, NTP 12th Hole: Simon Dixon, NTP 15th Hole: Majid al Toky, 2nd Best Shot 18th Hole: Ahmed al Balushi, Longest Drive Hole 3: Ruwan Jayasinghe
Day 2: NTP 2nd Hole: Navaid Ahmed, NTP 5th Hole: Yusuf al Rumhy, NTP 12th Hole: Naresh Chandwani, NTP 15th Hole: Vishal Dhawan, 2nd Best Shot 18th Hole: Lynn Casey, Longest Drive Hole 13: Lynn Casey
Day 1 Best Net - Mike Cuddihy 65 Net
Day 2 Best Net - Mohammed bin Sulieman al Wahaibi 71 Net
Day 1 Best Gross - Bader al Amri 76 Gross
Day 2 Best Gross - Rashid al Harthy 78 Gross

Oman Club, Seeb look to impress at Gulf Club handball

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 11

The 41st Gulf Club Handball Championship will begin in Muscat on February 15 as the opening ceremony will take place under the auspices of HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Salim al Said, in the presence of distinguished guests, Moosa al Balushi, Oman Handball Association (OHA) Chairman and Organising Committee Chairman Jihad al Shaikh, besides other officials. Oman's representatives, including Oman Club and Seeb, are under a comprehensive preparatory programme. Oman Club players are currently concluding their external training camp in Bahrain, where they played two friendly matches.

Oman Club secured victories in both encounters, defeating Bahrain's Al Ahli club by 32-25 and Bahrain's Al Dair club by 33-30. Both matches provided a valuable opportunity for head coach Ibrahim Bouderbali to assess his squad's performance, test different combinations and refine tactics ahead of the competition.

"We aim to represent Oman in the best possible way and will give our utmost effort in every match. Despite some injuries, we have a squad with talented players who can step up when needed. Our focus is on maintaining high morale and achieving positive results," Bouderbali said.

Oman Club squad featured three professional players, including



Seeb team



Oman Club team

Ali bin Abdullah (Bahrain), Qam bin Mohammed (Bahrain) and Mohamed Ihab Brouis (Algeria).

On the other hand, Seeb Club raised their preparatory and training sessions ahead of the tournament. The team has a rigorous two-session daily programme under the supervision of national coach Nabil al Balushi. The team aims to deliver a strong performance in the championship, building on their impressive domestic league campaign, where they currently hold second place. Seeb have also strengthened their squad by signing Bahrain's Ahmed Redha and acquiring Muhannad al Zarafi from Ahli Sidab.

The championship will feature eight teams from across the Gulf,

including Oman Club and Seeb Club representing the Sultanate of Oman. The teams have been drawn into two groups. Group A features Al Rayyan (Qatar), Al Najma (Bahrain), Al Noor (Saudi Arabia) and Seeb (Oman), while Group B comprises Oman Club (Oman), Kuwait SC (Kuwait), Dibba Al Huson (UAE) and Al Arabi (Qatar).

The official technical meeting will be held on Friday at 7 pm at the Radisson Hotel Muscat - Panorama Hall. The meeting will be chaired by OHA Chairman Moosa al Balushi and attended by technical committee members and club representatives. The meeting will finalise key details, including teams' squads, jersey colours and other competition regulations.



Visma-Lease a Bike team's Belgian rider Olav Kooij (C) competes to win the fourth stage of the Tour of Oman race from Oman Across Ages Museum to Oman Convention Centre on Tuesday. — AFP

Flying Dutchman Kooij takes double

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
@anuroop_ath

SPRINTERS TOOK full advantage of the flat course of Tour of Oman's Stage 4 as Olav Kooij (Visma-Lease a Bike) prevailed in the bunch sprint to claim his second stage win on Tuesday.

Winner of Stage 1, the Dutch rider came on top as 74 cyclists out of 115 who completed the 181.5 km race from Oman Across Ages Museum to Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, clocked the same time of 04:31:35.

Ahead of the 138.5 km concluding stage from Imty to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain), David Gaudu of Groupama-FDJ held on to his red jersey with a six seconds difference of second-placed Adam Yates (UAE Team Emirates XRG). Damien Craig Howson of Q36.5 Pro Cycling Team was overall third with a 12 seconds difference over the topper.

In the drag race to the finish line at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Kooij outsmarted Giacomo Nizzolo (Q36.5 Pro Cycling Team) and Orluis Aular (Movistar Team), who finished second and third respectively. "I think everyone did a lot of work (Monday). (Tuesday) was actually quite an easy day, we controlled again in a good way and got myself in a good position. Thanks to the boys!" Kooij said after winning the stage. "We knew the last kilometre would be important to get in a good position. I could then follow the right wheels to start my sprint at exactly the right moment," he added.

Norway's Erlend Blikra (Uno-X Mobility) launched the sprint on the

uphill drag to the finish line, but could not keep the pace in the final 200 metres and finished fourth. Max Kanter (XDS Astana) took fifth place.

116 RIDERS ON SADDLE

The futuristic backdrop of Oman Across Ages Museum witnessed 116 riders on the saddle for Stage 4. Three riders jumped clear as Kongphob Thimachai (Roojai Insurance), Abdulrehman al Yaaqubi (Omani national team) and Muhammad Mohd Shabri (Terengganu) all featured in the breakaway for the first time in the event. Their advantage peaked at 9'15" at km 35 of the 181.5-km stage, the widest gap so far in the 14th Tour of Oman.

The average speed was 39 km/h at the halfway point. Al Yaaqubi sat up with 90 km to go, leaving just two riders out front. Seven kilometres later, as the road twisted through a maze of ochre mountains, Mohd Shabri suffered a puncture, only narrowly avoiding a crash thanks to his impressive bike-handling skills. Thimachai waited for his fellow escapee to continue the adventure as a duo, while the peloton slashed its deficit to two minutes thanks to Visma-Lease a Bike's efforts to position the big favourite, Olav Kooij, for a repeat win after Stage 1.

The gap edged back out to 2'40" at the second intermediate sprint in Ad Dasur (64 km to go), where Mohd Shabri took the top spot, just as he had done earlier in Al Alya (118 km to go). Embret Svestad-Bardseng (Arkea-B&B Hotels), 11th overall, won the sprint for third from the peloton.

With 45 km to go, Mohd Shabri was back with the main group, leaving Thimachai out on his own



The overall leader Groupama-FDJ team's French rider David Gaudu (2ndR) competes during the fourth stage of the Tour of Oman race from Oman Across Ages Museum to Oman Convention Centre. — AFP

two minutes up the road. Behind him, sprinter's teams including Picnic-PostNL and Visma-Lease A Bike led the peloton ahead of the expected bunch finish.

Thimachai battled on alone into the final 20 km, hanging on to an ever-decreasing gap before finally being brought back at 13 km to go. From there, it was all up to the sprint squads. Soudal-QuickStep and UAE Team Emirates-XRG hit the front, while Groupama-FDJ and Uno-X Mobility also had spells in front in the final five kilometres.

Diego Ulissi of XDS Astana Team did not complete the race.

TOUR OF OMAN STAGE 4 RESULTS				
RANK	RIDER	COUNTRY	TEAM	TIME
1	Olav Kooij	Netherlands	Team Visma – Lease a Bike	04:31:35
2	Giacomo Nizzolo	Italy	Q36.5 Pro Cycling Team	04:31:35
3	Orluis Aular	Venezuela	Movistar Team	04:31:35
4	Erlend Blikra	Norway	Uno-X Mobility	04:31:35
5	Max Kanter	Germany	XDS Astana Team	04:31:35
6	Pavel Bittner	Czech Republic	Team Picnic PostNL	04:31:35
7	Emilien Jeanniere	France	TotalEnergies	04:31:35
8	Ivan Garcia Cortina	Spain	Movistar Team	04:31:35
9	Amaury Capiot	Belgium	Arkea-B&B Hotels	04:31:35
10	Florian Vermeersch	Belgium	UAE Team Emirates – XRG	04:31:35



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MSX unveils investment initiatives

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, FEB 11

THE Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has affirmed its commitment to stimulating the market and enhance the investment environment to attract more local and international investments, thereby contributing to the overall growth of the Omani economy.

Addressing the local media on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, Haitham al Salmi, CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange, stated, “We are currently undergoing a crucial phase in the transformation of the Muscat Stock Exchange, transitioning from a government structure to a company owned by the Oman



MSX CEO Haitham al Salmi addressing the media on Tuesday.

Investment Authority. This follows the restructuring of the Muscat Securities Market into the new Muscat Stock Exchange in 2021.”

He highlighted that one of the key objectives is to attract large-cap companies that align with

global standards.

The focus is on companies with a market capitalisation over RO 1 billion, as this is a necessary criterion for inclusion in global market indices.

He added that new electronic services will soon be introduced by brokerage

firms, enabling investors to complete all trading transactions digitally – from account opening to financial transfers, payments and receipts – directly through the online system. The exchange is also working on developing various projects, including a business model that brokerage firms can leverage to offer innovative services.

During the gathering, several initiatives and projects currently being implemented by the exchange were discussed, with a particular focus on attracting large-cap companies that meet global standards.

Efforts are being made to enhance market liquidity by establishing liquidity stabilisation contracts with the ten largest listed companies. Additionally, a development fund has been set up to improve liquidity through government contributions.

Al Salmi emphasised that MSX has collaborated with other

market exchange platforms to expand liquidity sources across different markets, including Abu Dhabi, Bahrain and Kazakhstan.

Agreements have also been signed with other markets such as Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and Armenia. This network of multiple markets provides diverse liquidity options for investors.

Looking ahead, MSX will place particular focus on emerging markets such as Kazakhstan, presenting an opportunity to attract new investors.

These exchange platforms have also facilitated the entry of foreign investors through local brokers.

Regarding liquidity, Al Salmi noted that discussions are underway with international market-making firms. He expects to see increased foreign capital inflows that will contribute to providing the necessary liquidity for local companies. Currently, there are three licensed market-making firms operating in Oman.

Local hotelier earns lofty recognition



Highlighting aspirations for professional excellence in Oman's hospitality sector, a senior executive from Sheraton Oman Hotel has become the youngest industry professional from the Sultanate to successfully graduate from Marriott International's prestigious General Managers Track Programme.

Justin Jacob, Revenue Director of Sheraton Oman Hotel, was the sole candidate from Oman selected for the Track Programme, conducted in collaboration with Cornell University, one of the world's top-ranked institutions. Enrollment in the programme is by nomination only, with candidates chosen through a rigorous talent screening process. Justin was among 15 candidates selected from Marriott properties across the GCC.

The programme provides a comprehensive 360-degree assessment, featuring coaching by industry-renowned speakers and

culminating in an on-campus immersion experience. It focuses on developing critical competencies and skills essential for success, while also enlisting graduates in a talent pool for potential leadership placements.

This latest qualification adds to Justin Jacob's distinguished career, which spans over 14 years across the hospitality sectors of India, Kuwait, the UAE, and Oman. With over 20 awards and nominations to his name and backed by 10 promotions, Justin considers himself fortunate to have worked with esteemed brands such as The Oberoi, Hilton, Accor, and currently, Sheraton. He attributes his success to the mentorship of industry stalwarts, who played a pivotal role in shaping and accelerating his professional growth.

In May 2024, Justin was honoured with the prestigious Future Leader of the Year award by Hotelier Middle East. He has also been nominated this year by Sheraton Oman for the esteemed Stephen G. Marriott Award of Excellence for Culture. His credentials include eight certifications from renowned institutions such as Cornell and Harvard, covering industry topics like Global Business, Asset Management and Executive Leadership. Additionally, he has successfully led several cutting-edge projects that have enhanced operational efficiencies and elevated guest satisfaction.

Coming from a family with deep roots in hospitality – his father being a hotelier during the UAE's formative years – Justin developed an early passion and understanding of the industry's intricacies. “I am deeply committed to this industry, despite its rigorous demands and intense competition. I look forward to applying the insights gained from the General Managers Track Programme and leading from the front,” he affirms.

Unido highlights Oman's key role in energy transition

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, FEB 11

THE UNITED Nations Industrial Development Organization (Unido) has underlined Oman's significant role in the global energy transition.

Speaking at the Omani Industry Day celebrations earlier this week, Gerd Müller, Director General of Unido, shed light on some of the key challenges affecting the world. “The world is facing emerging challenges that are fundamentally reshaping the future and we must address them together. One of the major trends shaping our world by 2050 is population growth.

Every year, the global population increases by 80 million people, primarily in developing countries. In Africa alone, the population will double from 1.2 billion to 2.5 billion by 2050. This rapid growth, combined with rising living standards and the global fight against hunger, will drive food demand up by 50 per cent over the next three decades,” he shared.

The Director General further added: “Another major trend is climate action and the future of energy, which is particularly relevant to Oman.

As a key player in the energy sector, Oman has a vital role to play. By 2050, global energy demand is expected to increase by 70 per cent and while oil and gas remain important, hydrogen production will become increasingly significant.

At the same time, the world is experiencing resource scarcity, and the digital and energy economies of the future will require a vast supply of critical minerals.”

According to the Director General, the Sultanate of Oman possesses critical minerals crucial for the transition, which also present a huge market opportunity for the country's mining industry, “Oman possesses many essential critical minerals that are crucial for the green transition, clean energy, electric vehicles and hydrogen production. These minerals



Unido Director General Gerd Müller at the Omani Industry Day event.

present a tremendous market opportunity for Oman's industry, particularly the mining sector.

The extraction of critical minerals in Oman is expected to increase globally by 500 per cent over the next decade.

The challenges of climate change and resource scarcity make it clear that the future of industry is rooted in innovation,” he stated.

Earlier this week, the UN body announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Omani Government to establish a strategic partnership to support Oman's Industrial Strategy 2040.

“The country's economic progress and development are highly impressive, and at Unido, we take pride in supporting the development of Oman's Industrial Strategy 2040. Industrialisation is the foundation for development, creating decent jobs and incomes, particularly for the younger generation,” Müller added.

Concluding his address, the General Director invited the Sultanate of Oman to join Unido's green mining initiative which aims to address stabilising supply chains in the sector.

“Unido launched the Global Alliance for Responsible and Green Mining. Through partnerships, we aim to establish a fair global framework for mining and mineral processing.”

ADVERTORIALS

NEWINNOVATION



The launch event captivated attendees with a dynamic showcase of the ROX 01, a new generation all-terrain luxury SUV .

MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL AUTOMOBILES UNVEILS ROX BRAND IN OMAN

MUSCAT: In a momentous event at the luxurious Al Bustan Palace Hotel, Muscat International Automobiles unveiled the revolutionary ROX Motors, setting a new benchmark in automotive excellence. The exclusive gathering of industry leaders, media representatives and distinguished guests celebrated the arrival of this cutting-edge innovation, a true game-changer for Oman’s automotive landscape.

The launch event captivated attendees with a dynamic showcase of the ROX 01, a new generation all-terrain luxury SUV — a fusion of cutting-edge technology, unparalleled performance and futuristic design. Engineered for power, efficiency and sustainability, this groundbreaking vehicle is set to redefine the driving experience for modern motorists.

The Full-size Range Extended EV SUV ROX 01 impresses with its dimensions, which emphasise its status as a powerful and comfortable SUV. With a length of 5295 mm, a width of 1980 mm and a height of 1869 mm, the car provides a spacious interior and excellent maneuverability on the road.

The wheelbase of 3010 mm contributes to stability and smoothness of the ride, the ground clearance of the vehicle is 205 mm which is especially important when overcoming difficult routes, crossing wadis and other all-terrain conditions.

It has 22.2° Approach angle, 19.7° Longitudinal angle and 25.1° Departure angle which is especially important for overcoming difficult routes. These parameters make the ROX 01 an excellent choice for both long distance and everyday urban driving.

The design of the car was developed by the famous Italian studio Pininfarina, for ultra luxury sports models. At the same time, the aesthetics of the Celestial Empire are also visible in the details: the inspiration for the design of the head and rear optics, as well as the front LED Headlights, was the Chinese character (stone), symbolising strength and durability.

The ROX 01 is equipped with a sequential range extended system that combines high power and environmental friendliness. Under the hood is a 1.5-litre turbocharged engine that works in tandem with two electric motors. The internal combustion engine in this bundle acts as a generator. WLTC driving range 880 kms.

The CATL 56.01 kWh Lithium Battery with heat insulation and flame retardant design offers WLTC driving range 235 kms.

The overall system allows the car to develop an impressive torque of 740 Nm and accelerate to 100 kilometres per hour in just 5.5 seconds. Despite such dynamics, the hybrid system allows for impressive efficiency — the ROX 01’s range reaches 1,115 kilometres as per WLTC standard.

NBO, DAR GLOBAL SIGN MOU TO DEVELOP AIDA OCEANA PROJECT

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) has signed a Credit Facilities Agreement with Dar Global to support the development of AIDA Integrated Tourism Project in Yiti, Muscat. Abdullah al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO, and Ziad El Chaar, Chief Executive Officer of Dar Global signed the agreement at a ceremony held at the NBO Head Office, attended by the legal counsel Addleshaw Goddard

The Agreement complements business growth through tailored financial solutions for this state-of-art project, highlighting NBO’s efforts in strengthening Oman’s real estate and tourism sectors in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

Additionally, the Credit Facilities Agreement provides partial financing for the development



Abdullah al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO, and Ziad El Chaar, Chief Executive Officer of Dar Global sign the agreement.

of ‘AIDA Oceana’, a landmark project that is an integral part of the Yiti Master Development Plan.

Speaking on the agreement, Ghadeer Iqbal al Lawati, Assistant General Manager — Head of Project Finance & Syndication at NBO, said: “We are proud to partner with Dar Global on this transformative project which not only redefines the concept of luxury tourism and community living in Oman but also contributes to the Sultanate of Oman’s economic diversification goals. The AIDA project represents an important milestone in Oman Vision 2040 and our financial support underscores NBO’s focus on promoting sustainable development and new investment opportunities in the real estate and tourism sectors.”

Lexus RX: Redefining luxury and experiences

THE Lexus RX delivers a confidence-inspiring drive for those who seek perfection on the road. With its intuitive technologies and high-performance capabilities, the RX appeals to both families and corporates, making it one of Lexus’ best-selling utility vehicles.

At first glance, the RX makes a bold statement on the road with its outclass rear and bumper design seamlessly blending into the L-shaped combination lamps and LED headlamps. Diving deeper under the hood, the RX is available in three fuel-efficient trims: the gasoline-powered RX350, the hybrid-electric RX350h and the RX500h F Sport.

The RX350 is powered by a 4-cylinder, 2.4-litre turbocharged engine that produces 275 HP and 430 Nm of torque and is paired to a new 8-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission.

Whereas, the RX350h features a hybrid-electric



The RX appeals to both families and corporates, making it one of Lexus’ best-selling utility vehicles.

system combining a 2.5-litre petrol engine and electric motor to produce 247 hp paired to an electronically controlled continuously variable transmission delivering an impressive fuel consumption of 20.7 km/L.

Similarly, the RX500h F Sport version runs on a hybrid-electric system, pairing a powerful 2.4-litre turbocharged engine with an electric motor

generating a combined power of 366 HP. This trim is mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission.

Inside the plush cabins, the Lexus RX represents high-end class with its distinctive bold contours and stunning leather-coated premium interiors.

It features a multi-colour ambient lighting system, a comfortable 3-zone AC, panoramic sunroof, head-up display, panoramic view

monitor and a digital rear view mirror for keeping the driver focused on the road. Indulge in seamless connectivity with wireless charging trays, the Mark Levinson premium surround sound system, a 12.3” rear seat entertainment system with 2 pieces of headphones and the integrated e-latch system.

Lexus prioritises passenger safety and offers state-of-the-art safety features catering to minute details, such as headlamp cleaners for stark visibility during unstable weather conditions.

It is equipped with six airbags for the drivers and passengers, side curtains, an auto-braking system (ABS), Lane Change Assist technologies, a Blind Spot Monitor Adaptive Variable Suspension Lane Keeping Assist, a Lane Tracing + Vibration Illuminated Entry System, Multi-Colour Lexus Safety Sense, a Pre-Crash System, Adaptive Cruise Control, Lane Departure Alert and 4 Front and Rear Parking Sensors.

SOHAR ISLAMIC MARKS ITS PRESENCE AT THE 48TH BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL FAIR 2025



MUSCAT: Sohar Islamic — the Islamic banking window of Sohar International — recently extended its support to the 48th Baghdad International Fair 2025 as a Participating Partner. The prestigious event was held in Baghdad from February 1 to 7, 2025, under the auspices of Iraq’s Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia al Sudani.

The event also saw the participation of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, along with 22 leading Omani companies spanning diverse sectors.

As a key participant, Sohar Islamic had a dedicated exhibition stall, showcasing its innovative banking solutions designed to support cross-border transactions, facilitate investor services and attract international investment.

Bringing together high-level government officials, corporate leaders and industry pioneers from around the world, the fair served as a dynamic platform for economic engagement, investment opportunities and impactful collaborations.

The bank’s presence underscored its strategic goal of expanding its regional footprint and reinforcing its role as a trusted financial partner for businesses and investors engaged in international trade.

Commenting on Sohar Islamic’s involvement in the event, Abdul Wahid Mohamed al Murshidi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated, “As global markets evolve, financial institutions must support investors by offering tailored solutions that facilitate international trade.”

MHD ACERE hosts Defender curated drive experience

MUSCAT: MHD ACERE, the authorised distributor of Land Rover in Oman, successfully hosted the Defender Drive Experience on January 23-24, 2025, offering an immersive showcase of the Defender’s unmatched capability, versatility and luxury.

Designed exclusively for Defender owners and their families, this premium adventure seamlessly blended off-road exploration, cultural immersion and luxury hospitality.

The two-day journey took participants from Muscat to the



Designed exclusively for Defender owners and their families, this premium adventure seamlessly blended off-road exploration, cultural immersion and luxury hospitality.

Oman Across Ages Museum in Manah, culminating in a luxurious overnight stay at Alila Jabal Akhdar, where they experienced a carefully curated blend of bespoke activities, heritage and thrilling off-road escapades.

The experience began with a Meet & Greet at the Jaguar Land Rover showroom in Muscat, where guests gathered before setting off in their Defender vehicles for an unforgettable drive.

The first stop, Oman Across Ages Museum, offered attendees an interactive journey through

Oman’s storied past and ambitious future, enriched by awe-inspiring architecture and immersive exhibits.

After an insightful tour and a delightful lunch, the convoy continued towards the breathtaking landscapes of Alila Jabal Akhdar.

Upon arrival, guests were welcomed into a world of luxury and cultural heritage, participating in perfume making, date seed coffee roasting and pottery sessions before indulging in a gourmet dinner complemented by live entertainment.

BUSINESS

SURGEPORTFOLIO



The bank prioritises financing projects that leverage the governorate’s comparative advantages.

DEVELOPMENT BANK
LOANS IN AL BATINAH
NORTH REACH
RO 37.3 MILLION

SUHAR: The Development Bank’s loan portfolio in Al Batinah North Governorate reached RO 37.378 million by the end of 2024, accounting for 13% of the bank’s total portfolio. A total of 3,016 loans were issued, representing 14% of all loans provided by the bank.

The bank prioritises financing projects that leverage the governorate’s comparative advantages. The manufacturing sector received the largest share, with loans totalling RO 13.191 million across 647 projects.

This was followed by the tourism sector with RO 6.056 million (265 loans), the services sector with RO 5.596 million (651 loans) and the fisheries sector with RO 3.980 million (916 loans). Other key sectors included education (RO 3.234 million for 76 loans), agriculture and livestock (RO 3.185 million for 431 loans) and health (RO 2.124 million for 30 loans).

In a high-level meeting, Mahmoud bin Abdullah al Awini, Secretary General of the Ministry of Finance and Chairman of the Development Bank, along with CEO Hussain bin Ali al Lawati, met with Eng Saeed bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s Al Batinah North branch.

Discussions centred on the bank’s role in financing productive and service-oriented projects with subsidised interest rates, flexible repayment terms, and initiatives to support investment and entrepreneurship in the governorate.

A presentation highlighted the bank’s lending activities, their economic impact and the challenges faced by funded projects. It emphasised the role of development financing in promoting Omanisation, self-employment and local product exports.

Hussain bin Ali al Lawati reaffirmed the bank’s commitment to addressing challenges faced by SMEs, emphasising the strong demand for development financing.

He noted that the bank offers repayment facilities of up to nine years, reinforcing its support for sustainable economic growth.

— ONA

OMAN OIL
PRICE RISES
TO REACH
\$79.18 PER
BARREL

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil on Tuesday, February 11, for April delivery reached \$79.18 per barrel. The price of Oman oil on Tuesday witnessed an increase of \$1.17 compared to Monday’s price which amounted to \$78.01.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for February delivery reached \$73.16 per barrel, up 70 cents compared to the price for January delivery.

Meanwhile, international oil prices extended gains on Tuesday amid concerns over Russian and Iranian oil supply and sanctions threats despite worries that



The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for February delivery reached \$73.16 per barrel.

escalating trade tariffs could dampen global economic growth.

Brent crude futures were up 98 cents, or 1.3%, at \$76.76 a barrel by 1011 GMT, while US West Texas

Intermediate crude rose 92 cents or 1.3% to \$73.14.

Both contracts posted gains of near 2% in the prior session after three weekly losses in a row.

“With the US bearing down on Iranian exports and sanctions still biting into Russian flows, Asian crude grades remain firm and underpin the rally from yesterday,” PVM oil analyst John Evans said.

Shipping of Russian oil to China and India, the world’s major crude oil importers, has been significantly disrupted by US sanctions last month targeting tankers, producers and insurers. — Agencies

New flowline set to boost
operations at Yumna Field

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, FEB 11

MASIRAH Oil Limited (MOL) has successfully installed and commissioned a new flowline at its Yumna Field in Block 50 offshore Oman, marking a key milestone in the company’s ongoing efforts to enhance production efficiency. The new flowline became operational in late January 2025, allowing the seamless transfer of produced fluids from the field.

The installation follows previous infrastructure upgrades at Yumna, including the commissioning of a bulk water system and gas-lift systems in November 2024. These enhancements are designed to improve operating efficiency and optimise production capacity at the offshore complex.

MOL reported that its gross production from the Yumna



The new flowline became operational in late January 2025, allowing the seamless transfer of produced fluids from the field.

Field in January 2025 averaged 2,333 stock tank barrels per day (stb/d), demonstrating stable output following the commissioning of the new flowline.

The latest installation is particularly significant, as it addresses past operational challenges at the field.

In October 2023, production

was temporarily halted due to damage in the internal pressure liner of a larger flowline installed a month prior.

That flowline was introduced to replace a flexible line that had developed a leak but was later found to have compromised hose integrity, leading to a production shutdown until December 2023.

The new flowline is expected to enhance operational resilience and minimise risks associated with fluid transportation.

It also supports MOL’s broader strategy to maximise hydrocarbon recovery from the Yumna reservoir. As part of this strategy, MOL launched a major offshore drilling campaign in April 2024, partnering with Northern Offshore Ltd to deploy the Energy Emerger jack-up rig.

The campaign includes the drilling of a new in-field well and work overs of two existing production wells.

Since production began in February 2020, Yumna has been a core asset in MOL’s portfolio. With MOL holding a 100 per cent interest in Block 50 and with continuous investment in drilling and infrastructure upgrades, the company is positioning itself for sustained production growth in Oman’s offshore sector.

OMAN’S POSTPAID MOBILE SUBSCRIPTIONS SURGE BY 33.9%

MUSCAT: Oman’s postpaid mobile phone subscriptions surged by 33.9% by the end of December 2024, reaching 2,391,951, according to the latest data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Meanwhile, prepaid mobile subscriptions declined by 1.6% to 5,114,919. Despite this drop, the total number of mobile subscriptions — including both postpaid and prepaid — rose by 7.5% year-on-year to 7,506,870.

This included 3,889,244 subscriptions from operators and 1,225,675 from resale services.



Prepaid mobile subscriptions declined by 1.6% to 5,114,919.

Mobile broadband usage remained strong, with active subscriptions reaching 6,455,261. Fixed internet services also grew,

with subscriptions increasing by 2% to 574,730.

Among these, fixed broadband connections (above 256 kilobytes per second) reached 573,028, while low-speed internet subscriptions (below 256 kilobytes per second) stood at 1,702.

Fixed-line subscriptions saw a sharp decline, dropping 24.8% to 435,596. Analogue fixed-line connections, including both prepaid and postpaid, fell by 20.9% to 66,834. In contrast, Internet Protocol (IP) fixed-line subscriptions grew by 7.4% to 318,478.

Other telecom indicators showed mixed trends. Subscriptions to integrated digital network services declined by 0.2% to 49,634, while public telephone booths decreased significantly by 98.1% to just 127. Fixed wireless subscriptions also fell by 25.6% to 523.

Muscat Governorate accounted for the largest share of fixed analogue telephone lines (49.63%), followed by Al Batinah North Governorate (11.46%) and Dhofar Governorate (10.03%). The remaining governorates collectively accounted for 28.88%. — ONA

MENA region recorded 54 IPOs raising \$12.6 bn during 2024

MUSCAT: The Middle East and North African (MENA) market saw a total of 54 initial public offerings (IPOs) in 2024, raising \$12.6 billion in total. When compared to 2023, last year recorded a 12.5 per cent increase in the number of IPOs and a 17.6 per cent rise in proceeds, according to the EY MENA IPO Eye Q4 2024 report.

The year-on-year increase in proceeds for 2024 was impacted by a number of large-value IPOs such as Talabat Holding plc, OQ Exploration & Production and Lulu Retail Holdings PLC that were listed during the last quarter of the year.

Brad Watson, EY MENA Strategy and Transactions Leader, commented: “The year 2024 ended on a strong note with 54 IPOs in total, the highest in MENA over the past seven years. The region has been one of the busiest when compared to the global market.

The momentum is expected to



The IPO of OQEP was the largest to date in Oman.

continue into 2025, with companies from various sectors announcing their intention to come to market. In addition, regional exchanges are actively working on initiatives to promote family-owned businesses and small to medium enterprises, aiming to strengthen the capital markets infrastructure and boost future liquidity.

The market is also anticipating the Arena platform from the DFM, which is expected to launch in 2025.” During Q4 2024, 25 IPOs raised \$7.9 billion, which represents a 32 per cent increase in number and a 59.4 per cent surge in proceeds when compared to Q4 2023.

Talabat Holding plc, which listed on the Dubai Financial Market (DFM), raised the highest proceeds, contributing 25.8 per cent of the overall proceeds for Q4 2024. It was followed by OQ Exploration & Production, which listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX)

and raised \$2.0 billion — the largest IPO in Oman to date — and accounted for 25.3 per cent of the total quarterly proceeds.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) dominated the region’s IPO activity with 17 out of the 25 listings in Q4 2024, with total proceeds of \$1.2 billion. Five IPOs took place on the Tadawul Main Market with total proceeds of \$1.1 billion.

Arabian Mills for Food Products Company and United International Holding Company marked the highest proceeds at \$0.3 billion each. The remaining 12 IPOs, raising \$119 million in total, were listed on the Nomu — Parallel Market.

In the United Arab Emirates, the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) welcomed two IPOs in Q4 2024 with \$2 billion in combined proceeds. Lulu Retail Holdings PLC raised \$1.7 billion and ADN Catering PLC raised \$235 million.

OPINION

FCA urged to push diversity pay gap reporting



ANDY JALIL

The author is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

THE UK's financial regulator has been urged to provide guidance for firms in the financial district of London (known as 'the City') on reporting ethnicity pay gap data, as concerns mount that diversity initiatives once championed by company executives have taken a back seat.

The Financial Conduct Authority and Prudential Regulation Authority published its diversity and inclusion in financial services consultation in September 2023. This included proposals such as disclosing employees' age, or gender, ethnicity and religion. More than a year on and the founder of ethnic diversity campaign group Reboot has written to FCA boss Nikhil Rath

calling for urgent action. "This consultation marked an important step towards embedding diversity as a core regulatory priority," Noreen Biddle Shah said in the letter. The letter is also signed by Diversity Project chair Baroness Helena Morrissey. Biddle Shah said in the year following the FCA's consultation there had been "growing industry resistance to diversity, equality and inclusion initiatives".

The absence of timely regulatory action risks undermining the progress made thus far," said Biddle Shah. "Employees and industry leaders alike look to the FCA and PRA for clear guidance and accountability frameworks." Reboot is calling on the FCA to provide guidance on ethnicity pay gap

reporting — a mandatory measure referenced in July's King's speech for companies with more than 250 employees. Currently just 4 per cent of financial services firms disclose this information voluntarily.

"We want to see progress to further diversity and inclusion in the financial services sector and believe that regulators can play a part in accelerating this change," said an FCA spokesperson. "We also appreciate the important part of voluntary initiatives. We think these roles can be complementary and that we will be most effective in driving change where we work together."

The call to action comes amid growing concerns from financial services professionals that diversity drives have stalled. More than two thirds of the 800 respondents to a recent Reboot survey said their employers' ethnic and racial diversity efforts had not changed or had worsened over the past two years.

"We are definitely not where we need to be," said former KPMG UK interim chief executive Mary O'Connor. "As a former CEO and board member, part of the problem is seeing DE&I (Diversity, Ethnicity & Inclusion) as some kind of project. This clearly hasn't worked."

Nishma Gosrani, a partner in the financial services practice at Bain & Company, said voluntary measures designed to improve DE&I across firms have "not been sufficient

to drive substantial progress. "Mandatory reporting of ethnicity pay gaps could be a game changer," said Gosrani. "This would help catalyse progress by illuminating disparities and inequalities within firms, enabling targeted and data-driven interventions." Among the states in the European Union, Ireland has been one of the leading in matters of equality and diversity. According to a new study, the gender pension gap being experienced by Irish women could be eliminated by 2049. Currently, Irish women have 31pc less than men in their pension pots when they retire. This is for a variety of reasons, including being paid less and because motherhood usually leaves them with less recorded service during their careers. Women are also typically less likely to make additional contributions to their pension plans, both because they have less spare money than men and have other financial priorities. The study by The Future Laboratory, which was commissioned by AIR, concludes that, due to policy changes and social shifts, the already closing gender pension gap could be gone by 2049. The gap has fallen from 38 pc in 2018 to 31 pc today. This could accelerate due to the introduction of pension auto-enrolment this year, the impact of compulsory reporting on the gender pay gap by companies, as well as economic and demographic shifts, the study finds.

Reboot is calling on the FCA to provide guidance on ethnicity pay gap reporting — a mandatory measure referenced in July's King's speech for companies with more than 250 employees. Currently just 4 per cent of financial services firms disclose this information voluntarily.

WHY ELON MUSK IS A HEADACHE FOR BROADBAND BOSSES

BY JENNIFER JOHNSON

CEOs in the slow-growing, debt-heavy telecom sector are hardly short of problems. Elon Musk is giving them another one. The SpaceX boss's satellite-internet business, Starlink, is signing up millions of broadband customers worldwide.

The big question is whether the X owner and ally of US President Donald Trump is too politically contentious abroad, prompting a regulatory backlash against his company.

With almost 7,000 satellites in orbit, according to Harvard astronomer Jonathan McDowell, Starlink more than doubled its worldwide internet subscriber count to 4.6 million in 2024.

The division of Musk's SpaceX also said it had tripled the volume of its internet traffic, which beams down from space rather than travelling through underground cables or mobile networks.

Jeff Bezos' Amazon.com is trying to catch up with a similar satellite-based competitor, Project Kuiper. For some of the major incumbents — like \$130 billion US cable giant Comcast or France's \$30 billion Orange — there are reasons to remain relaxed.

It's tough for an object orbiting the Earth to deliver a faster or more reliable connection than a fibre-optic cable in the ground.

Customers in fibre-rich places arguably have no reason to switch to Starlink's service, which can cost \$120 per month plus several hundred dollars in upfront equipment purchases.

That's why many industry watchers argue that Starlink only makes sense in poorly served rural areas. In these places, broadband companies like Britain's \$20 billion could even use Musk's service to pad out their networks, meaning they don't need to dig up remote parts of the country.

Starlink could end up as an ally for mobile operators too: T-Mobile US, the \$280 billion group controlled by Deutsche Telekom, is launching a satellite-to-cell service that uses the SpaceX division's constellation.

There are holes in the telco optimists' argument, however. First, it ignores the fact that some of the world's biggest telecom markets still lack adequate residential broadband.

Take India, where there are only 41 million fixed-line internet subscribers compared with 904 million wireless users, according to the country's telecoms regulator. In other words, most people depend on mobile data for internet, meaning there's a gap in the market for home broadband providers like Starlink. — Reuters

The big question is whether the X owner and ally of US President Donald Trump is too politically contentious abroad, prompting a regulatory backlash against his company.

China is at the heart of Trump tariffs on steel

THE 25% tariffs President Donald Trump imposed Monday on all US imports of steel and aluminium will primarily hit US allies, but at their heart they strike at his longtime nemesis: China.

The top five suppliers of steel to the American market in January were Canada, followed by Brazil, Mexico, South Korea and Germany. Canada has also led in aluminium exports to the United States, while the United Arab Emirates, Russia and China are far behind.

China does not export a lot of steel or aluminium directly to the United States. A succession of presidents and Commerce Department rulings have already imposed many tariffs on steel from China. Tariffs have also gone up lately on Chinese aluminium.

Just last September, President Joe Biden raised existing tariffs on many Chinese steel and aluminium products up to 25%.

But China dominates the global steel and aluminium industry. Its vast, modern mills make as much of both metals, or more, each year as the rest of the world combined. Most of it is used within China's borders, to build everything from high-rises and ships to washing machines and cars.

Yet lately, China's steel and aluminium exports are on the rise because its economy is struggling, sapping domestic demand. Many of these low-cost exports have gone to US allies like Canada and Mexico, which in turn export significant shares of their own more expensive output to the United States.

Other Chinese metal exports have gone to developing countries like Vietnam, which now buys enormous quantities of semi-processed steel from China, finishes it and then reexports it as Vietnamese steel to buyers around the globe.

China's rising exports have upset producers and labor unions in the United States.

"China's overcapacity is swamping world markets and severely injuring US producers and workers," said Michael Wessel, the



A man works at a production base of CSCEC Steel in Meishan, Sichuan province, China. — Reuters



KEITH BRADSHER

The writer is the Beijing bureau chief for The New York Times, part of a team of Times reporters covering a wide range of news in China.

longtime trade adviser to the United Steelworkers of America.

China's Foreign Ministry had little to say specifically about the planned steel and aluminium tariffs at its daily briefing Monday. "Let me stress that protectionism leads nowhere. Trade and tariff wars have no winners," said Guo Jiakun, a ministry spokesperson.

The tariffs come a week after Trump imposed a 10% tariff on all imports from China. Last week, China announced that it would impose retaliatory tariffs, which took effect Monday, on liquefied natural gas, coal, farm machinery and other products from the United States.

China's steel glut arose from an extraordinary boom in steel mill construction that started during the early 1990s and lasted about 15 years, said Nick Tolerico, a senior steel trade official throughout the Reagan administration who then became the president of US operations for ThyssenKrupp Steel of Germany.

He is now a consultant advising investment firms and companies

that buy a lot of steel.

Not since the 1940s has any country commanded the world's steel industry on China's scale today. The United States made half the world's steel then, but its share has fallen since then to less than 5%. For years, China's construction industry used immense quantities of steel. A building boom produced abundant housing for the country's 1.4 billion people and enough empty apartments for another 300 million people.

The overhang of empty apartments has now propelled a housing market crash and an abrupt stall in construction. Desperate to avoid shutting down, China's mills have responded with a surge in steel exports to countries all over the world.

They have accepted lower and lower prices for their steel over the last several years, triggering a global erosion in prices.

The falling prices have hurt the American steel industry, a politically powerful constituency in key electoral regions.

— The New York Times

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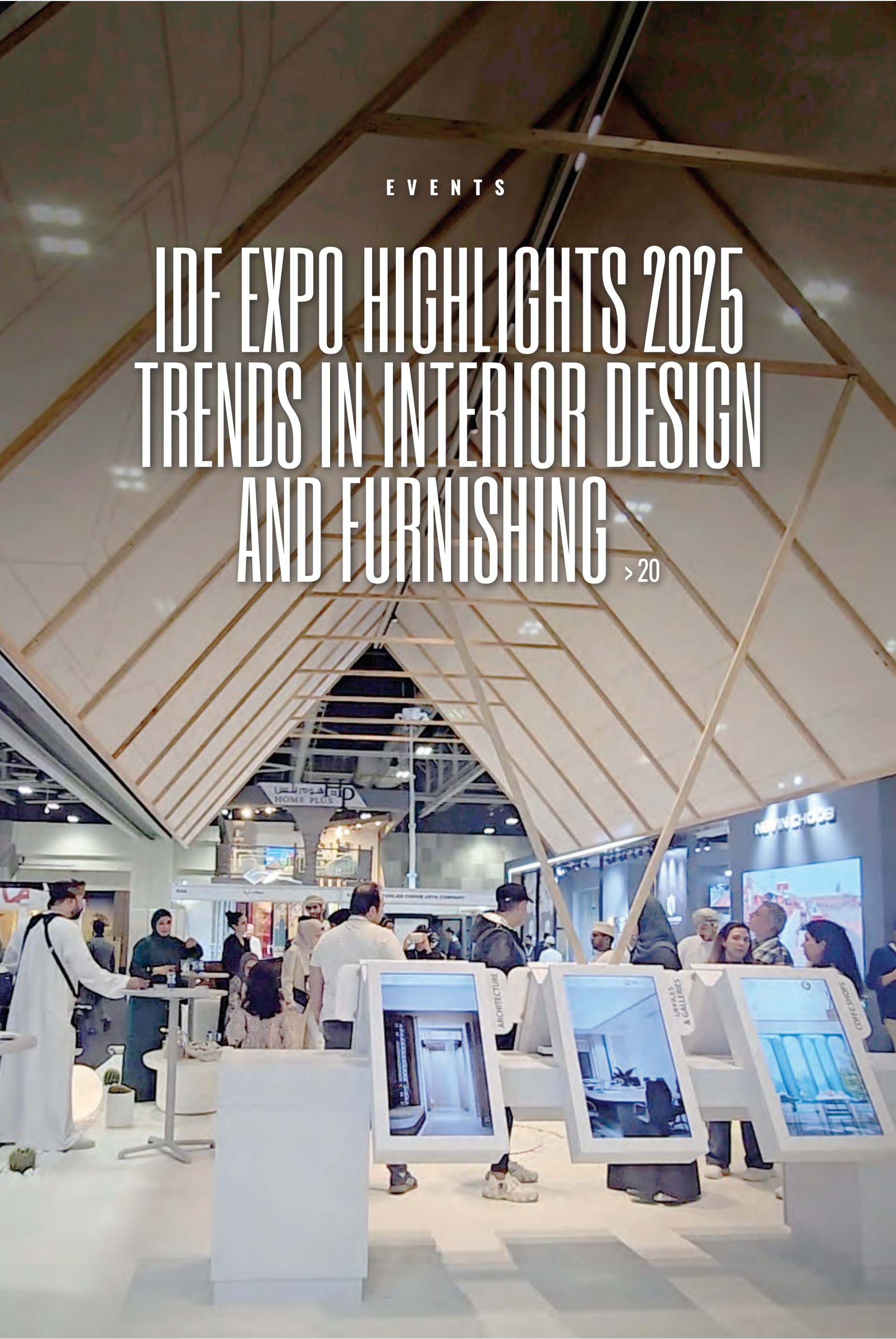
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ART/LIFE



LIFESTYLE

Gucci parts ways with Italian designer Sabato de Sarno



Luxury giant Gucci announced on Thursday it was parting ways with Italian designer Sabato De Sarno, who had been its creative director for two years.

De Sarno was appointed to the job in January 2023, succeeding Alessandro Michele, who had been Gucci's creative director for seven years.

"Gucci today announces the end of its collaboration with creative director Sabato De Sarno," the fashion brand owned by French luxury group Kering said.

"The Fall-Winter '25 fashion show in Milan on February 25 will be presented by the Gucci design office. The new artistic direction will be announced in due time," Gucci said.

De Sarno began his career at Prada in 2005, then moved to Dolce & Gabbana.

The designer from Naples joined Valentino in 2009, where he rose through the ranks to become fashion director.

"I would like to express my deep gratitude to Sabato for his passion and dedication to Gucci," Gucci chief executive Stefano Cantino said.

"I sincerely appreciate how he honoured Gucci's craftsmanship and heritage with such commitment."

Gucci accounts for nearly half of Kering's total sales.

Kering said in October that its 2024 operating profit could come in at half of its 2023 level after Gucci sales slumped, particularly in Asia.

Gucci enjoyed high-flying growth between 2015 and 2019, with revenue rising threefold over that period. Its sales topped 10 billion euros in 2022 under the direction of designer Alessandro Michele.

But Gucci sales declined six per cent in 2023, a massive blow to Kering as the brand accounted for almost half of its revenue and two-thirds of its operating profit.

A global slowdown in the luxury sector in 2024 exacerbated Gucci's challenges.

In October, Kering promoted Stefano Cantino, a former Louis Vuitton director, to the post of chief executive at Gucci to replace Jean-Francois Palus. Cantino had been named deputy to Palus just six months earlier.

In another leadership shuffle, Gucci announced the departure of creative director de Sarno last week. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

A model walks the runway during the Luar Fall/Winter 2025 show at New York Fashion Week. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Thai singer and actress Lalisa Manobal, known as Lisa, member of the K-pop group Blackpink, attends the season three premiere of HBO's "The White Lotus" at Paramount Studios in Los Angeles. — AFP



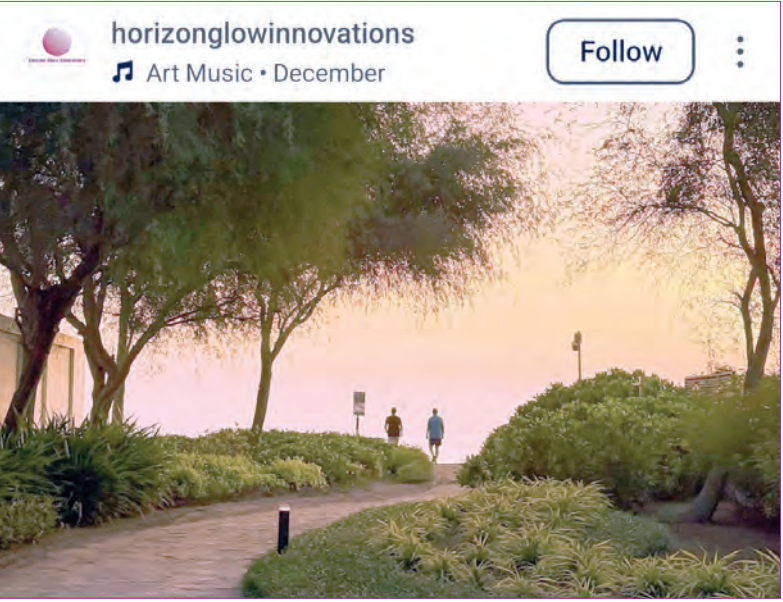
FESTIVAL

A general view of decorations at a lantern festival in Lvliang, Northern China's Shanxi province. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Elton John announces upcoming release of new studio album



ELTON JOHN said on Thursday he will release a new studio album in early April, a year-and-a-half after winding down his glittering live career with a global farewell tour. John, 77, described “Who Believes in Angels?” — a collaboration with US singer Brandi Carlile and co-written by John’s long-time songwriting partner Bernie Taupin — as “one of the toughest I’ve ever made.” The album was written and recorded from scratch in 20 days in October 2023 at the Sunset Sound recording studio in Los Angeles shortly after the end of the farewell tour. “It has given me a place where I know I can move forward. ‘Who Believes In Angels?’ feels like going into another era and I’m pushing the door open to come into the future,” John said in an Instagram post. The announcement comes

two months after the “Rocket Man” star revealed that an eye infection contracted last summer had severely affected his eyesight. In December he said the infection had left him with “only limited vision in one eye.” “I am healing, but it’s an extremely slow process and it will take some time before sight returns to the impacted eye,” he added. A headline set at the Glastonbury festival in 2023 was his last UK performance as part of his 330-date “Farewell Yellow Brick Road” tour, which ended with an emotionally charged show in Stockholm, Sweden. In January, he achieved his ninth UK number one album with “Diamonds”, a greatest hits compilation. “Who Believes in Angels?” will be released via Island EMI Records on April 4. — AFP



Kate Moss, Christy Turlington and the New Calvin Klein

THERE HASN’T been a Calvin Klein runway show in almost seven years. Calvin Klein himself has not attended a runway show for his brand in nearly two decades. But on Friday, the brand, now designed by Veronica Leoni and Klein returned. It was Day 2 of New York Fashion Week and the official unveiling of the Calvin Klein Collection, the high-end, high-fashion expression of the Klein look. The one that would prove it’s not just about jeans and underwear anymore. It was a homecoming in more ways than one. The show was held on the ground-floor gallery space at 205 W 39th St, the garment district headquarters where Klein moved in the 1990s and where the company remains. The space was white, as per the original Calvin minimalist aesthetic, with white benches and a white carpet displaying a new logo in the black typeface of the old Obsession perfume ads. Klein, 82, who sold his company to PVH in 2002 and has mostly been off the fashion grid since then, made his entrance in a natty, black three-piece suit and tie like a goodwill ambassador from another time. Seated next to him was his former wife, Kelly Klein and across the runway were his former muses, Kate Moss and Christy Turlington, in tailored black Calvin coats; Moss wore a slip dress beneath her coat. Nearby, Mario Sorrenti, who had photographed her naked Obsession ads back when they were a couple, was chatting to friends. “It’s very emotional,” Klein said of being back in his old office building and seeing his label back on the runway. It was a reminder of the heady days when Calvin Klein defined a certain kind of breathy, urbane American sportswear and drew the attention of the crowd to New York. The air was replete with nostalgia. So, for both good and bad, were the clothes. In an interview before the show, Leoni said that her goal was to pick up from the day Klein last walked out the door. She did so, with a dual-gender collection that acted as a warm-up run through the Calvin playbook of the late 1980s and ’90s: slick, clean-lined C-suite suiting (check); minimal, cocooning



outerwear (check); lingerie cocktail looks (check); grunge plaids and denim (check). You get the idea. There was even a CK One bottle, in honour of the 1994 perfume that once sold 20 bottles a minute, turned into an evening minaudière and a little pendant worn around the neck like a charm. Leoni proved she understood the heritage and embraced it. The problem is, since Calvin left and the label went through various iterations under his successor designers — and especially since 2018, when PVH abandoned the high-end collection — many other brands, big and small, have done their own versions of Calvin. Some of them very well. His influence helped shape the Row, Toteme, Phoebe Philo and smaller brands like Kallmeyer. At this point, when a romance with all things ’90s is a ubiquitous cultural phenomenon, it’s understandable that Leoni would want to pay homage to, and reclaim, the legacy that is rightfully hers. But it’s not enough. She needs to do more than simply engage with the past; she needs to take it into the future. Klein pushed boundaries in so many ways: with the provocation of putting his name on jeans and underwear,

with his overtly carnal ads, with his willingness to strip excess away. To really be true to the brand, Leoni should push forward, too. There were hints of this in her collection. In, for example, the just-rolled-out-of-bed silk pajama suiting for men and women, ice-blue silks that slithered around the body and made comfort dressing more come-hither. Likewise in the blanket-like wool coats and trenches clutched to the torso, including one terrific look made from hundreds of springy organza loops. Also in a strapless evening dress with a sweetheart neckline and a train of silk fringe looped around one forearm like a sheet hastily wrapped around the body because the doorbell had rung in a ... well, delicate moment. A gunmetal-gray long-sleeve T-shirt and skirt covered in enameled paillettes that could be brushed forward and back like a reversible sequin pillow offered decoration without frivolity. It practically begged to be touched. She should lean further into her own more twisted instincts. At the end of the show, Leoni took her bow and then ran over to Klein to pay her respects. He kissed her on both cheeks, delighted. They had staked their claim. It was a start. — NYT

FEATURES

BY YERU EBUEN

RICHLY textured materials and striking displays of innovative designs will greet an impressive 18,000 registered visitors, while more than 260 exhibitors showcase their cutting-edge offerings from 17 countries at this year’s 11th edition of the Interior Design Furnishing Expo (IDF).

Happening at the expansive halls 3, 4, and 5 of Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, the three-day expo will see not just a display of products but will also be highlighted by the presence of over 65 distinguished speakers set to lead the design dialogues.

The IDF is a prominent platform dedicated to showcasing the latest advancements in interior design and décor. Over the past decade, IDF Oman has become a cornerstone event for professionals and enthusiasts alike, providing insights into current and emerging trends while forging valuable connections among industry players.

This year, as Oman’s construction and tourism sectors rebound, the IDF presents fresh opportunities for partnerships and investments — an ideal backdrop for discussions on evolving spaces that cater to functional and aesthetic demands.

This year’s expo isn’t only about the exhibits; it hosts a series of accompanying events, including the Kitchen & Bathroom Show, the Tile & Stone Show, the Light Oman Show and the Smart Living & Workspaces Expo. Attendees can engage deeply with products and services essential for upgrading residential, hospitality, office and retail spaces.

USEFUL INSIGHTS FROM CREATORS AND DESIGNERS

This year’s edition features an impressive lineup of presentations designed to provide participants with insights into various facets of interior design. With expert speakers and engaging discussions, attendees can absorb inspiration; and explore forefront ideas and methodologies.

On Day 1, Sara Elmrabti, a lecturer from the Scientific College of Design, led a workshop on Ceramic Design, guiding attendees through the nuanced creative processes involved and discussing its importance in contemporary interiors. Following this, Dr Jerzy Wierzbicki delved into the art of Architectural Photography, emphasising the critical role visual representation plays in today’s design landscape. On Day 3, Architect Bushra al Asfoor explored the integration of artificial intelligence with human creativity in her talk on “The Future of Architecture: AI & Human Collaboration,” addressing both opportunities and challenges in the field.

In addition to these presentations, the event covers a range of significant topics, including developing aesthetic standards in interior spaces, a close examination of Zaha Hadid’s architectural contributions and insights into the essence of Italian design.

Discussions also addressed construction contracts and supply agreements, the role of project management in organisational success and insights from Ms Shaima Tariq of the Oman Society of Engineers regarding Engineers’ Accreditation.

The expo features panel discussions tackling critical design issues, including the preparation of future designers at higher education institutions, offering a vital dialogue on equipping design students with the necessary skills for success in the industry. Another panel will explore “A Window to Global Interaction through Omani Culture and Traditional Architecture,” fostering a thoughtful dialogue about the significance of Omani heritage in contemporary architecture.

GLOBAL TRENDS COMING TO OMAN

At IDF, it is evident that global interior decoration and furnishing trends are increasingly finding their way into the heart of Oman. One of the standout trends highlighted at IDF is the concept of minimalism with a cosy twist.

Home furnishings and décors available



IDF expo highlights 2025 trends in interior design and furnishing



at several booths allow homeowners and buyers to focus on aesthetics using natural materials and a neutral colour palette, complemented by soft textiles and warm lighting.

There is also a growing emphasis on textured walls and ceilings, with 2025 designs embracing features such as wallpapered ceilings, wood panelling, and decorative plaster finishes. This bold shift away from flat surfaces transforms homes into striking works of art, making texture a crucial element in every room.

As health and wellness become increasingly central to home design, the emergence of dedicated wellness spaces is significant. Attendees at IDF can explore concepts that encompass everything from compact yoga studios to luxurious, spa-like bathrooms. By incorporating natural light, calming colours and indoor plants, these areas are designed to maximise relaxation and rejuvenation. The integration of indoor and outdoor living spaces is another trend anticipated to gain traction at this year’s expo. As the boundaries between these realms diminish, outdoor kitchens and cosy seating arrangements will reflect the need for comfortable, stylish spaces that promote socialising and connection with nature.

Casually comfortable furniture is also a key attraction at IDF, featuring oversized sofas and deep-seated chairs that prioritise relaxation while remaining aesthetically pleasing. This blend of practicality and comfort caters to contemporary lifestyles where socialising and downtime are paramount.

Finally, artisanal and handcrafted pieces are celebrated at the expo, highlighting the value of unique, locally sourced items. These contributions not only enrich home décor but also support sustainable practices and local artisans. Natural stone accents, such as marble and granite, are generating buzz as buyers gravitate towards earthy, timeless qualities in interiors, adding luxury and permanence.

Attending the 11th IDF offers substantial benefits for all visitors. Whether you are an industry professional, a homeowner contemplating a redesign, or a student aspiring to enter the world of design, the expo is a treasure trove of knowledge and networking opportunities. Engaging with experienced professionals, exploring cutting-edge products, and participating in design talks equips attendees with fresh ideas and inspiration — crucial assets in today’s dynamic market.