

OMAN
Observer
دَائِلِي



VOL. 44, NO. 75
PAGES 20 · BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 06:49 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:31 AM
DHUHR 12:25 PM
ASR 03:33 PM
MAGHRIB 05:56 PM
ISHA 07:09 PM


2010000387405

11

INDIA'S BUMRAH
NAMED ICC TEST
CRICKETER OF
THE YEAR

HIS MAJESTY CHAIRS MEETING OF SUPREME JUDICIAL COUNCIL

Court of Investment and Trade soon

HM'S FULL
SUPPORT FOR
INDEPENDENCE
OF JUDICIARY

JUDICIARY'S
ROLE IN
UPHOLDING LAW
AND ORDER

NEED TO
CONTINUE
ACHIEVING
PROMPT JUSTICE

ACCUMULATION
OF UNRESOLVED
CASES TO
BE AVOIDED

IMPORTANCE
OF DEVELOPING
DIGITAL
INFRASTRUCTURE

PROMPT JUSTICE
IS NEEDED
AND ENHANCE
TRANSPARENCY

COMMITMENT
TO INTEGRITY
IN PERFORMING
DUTIES

INTENSIFY
PROFESSIONAL
TRAINING FOR
JUDGES

HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq chaired a meeting of the Supreme Judicial Council at Al Barakah Palace on Monday. At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan underscored the fundamental role of the judiciary in achieving justice and consolidating the principles of law and order. He stressed the need to regularly

update the justice system in a manner that suits the requirements of time and the aspirations of citizens and is in line with Oman Vision 2040. His Majesty the Sultan also stressed the need to continue achieving prompt justice by accelerating litigation procedures, diminishing adjudication time and avoiding the accumulation of unresolved cases.

His Majesty the Sultan underlined the importance of developing the digital infrastructure of the judicial sector to support the realisation of prompt justice and enhance transparency. In this context, His Majesty the Sultan commended the Supreme Judicial Council's strategy 2024-2040. He laid emphasis on taking instant action to implement the strategy's

operational plans. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his satisfaction with the 'qualitative shift' — the tangible transformation — in the functioning of the judiciary, which, he observed, broadly met the aspirations of citizens, residents and investors by providing high-quality judicial services using modern technologies. **DETAILS ON P2**

QATAR EMIR'S STATE
VISIT TO BOOST TIES

MUSCAT: Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, will pay a state visit to the Sultanate of Oman with effect from Tuesday. During this visit, the two countries will discuss matters of common interest, with the prime aim of realising their aspirations for a brighter and more prosperous future. The two countries will also engage in consultations about various issues of relevance to developments in the regional and international arenas. The Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar continue promoting their distinguished relations in various areas. — **ONA**

Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue opens

BALQEES ALORAIMI
MUSCAT, JAN 27

His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, on Monday presided over the opening of Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue. The two-day event, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), is organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, in cooperation with the International Science Council (ISC). The forum will be attended by more than 400 scientific, industrial and political figures from 132 countries around the world. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, underscored the importance of the event in exchanging knowledge and expertise to enhance

HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said on Monday presided over the opening of Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue.

cooperation between countries and peoples to face global challenges. She stressed the necessity of converting knowledge and innovative ideas to economic and social gains in a bid to achieve a knowledge-based economy in accordance with the objectives of Oman Vision

2040. The minister pointed out that Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue constitutes an ideal opportunity for more than 500 elite intellectuals, researchers, scientists, policy makers and partners from all over the world to discuss global challenges and predict the priorities of international cooperation in the

field of science. In his turn, Prof Sir Peter Gluckman, President of the International Science Council (ISC), underlined the importance of such dialogues and meetings in bridging the gap between science and policy within regional contexts. **TURN TO P3**

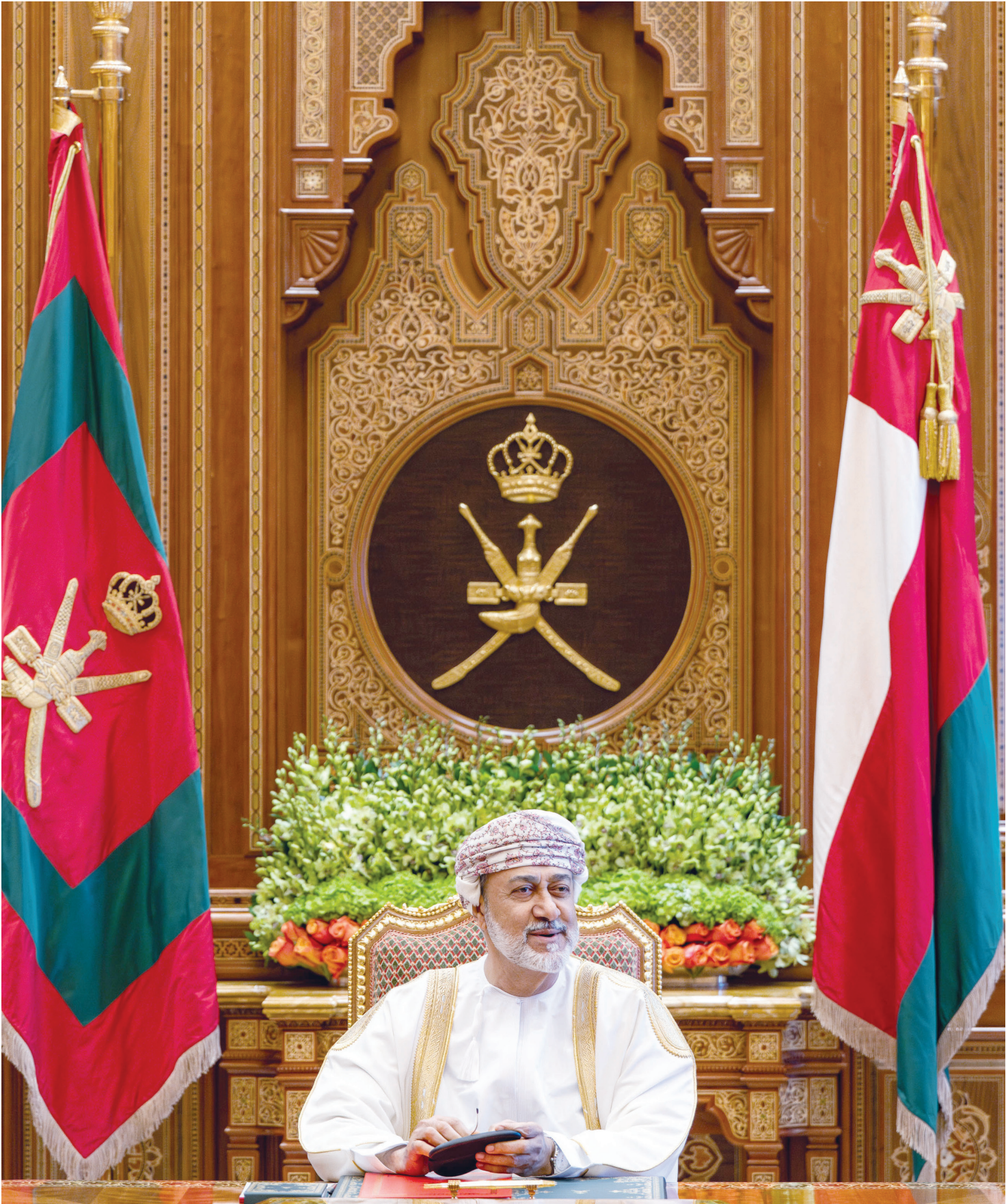
‘Ensure prompt justice, transparency’

HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN STRESSED THE NEED TO CONTINUE ACHIEVING PROMPT JUSTICE BY ACCELERATING LITIGATION PROCEDURES, DIMINISHING ADJUDICATION TIME AND AVOIDING THE ACCUMULATION OF UNRESOLVED CASES

HIS Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik chaired a meeting of the Supreme Judicial Council at Al Barakah Palace on Monday. At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan underscored the fundamental role of the judiciary in achieving justice and consolidating the principles of law and order. He stressed the need to regularly update the justice system in a manner that suits the requirements of time and the aspirations of citizens and in line with Oman Vision 2040.

His Majesty the Sultan also stressed the need to continue achieving prompt justice by accelerating litigation procedures, diminishing adjudication time and avoiding the accumulation of unresolved cases.

His Majesty the Sultan underlined the importance of developing the digital infrastructure of the judicial sector to support the realisation of prompt justice and enhance transparency. In this context, His Majesty the Sultan commended the Supreme Judicial Council's strategy 2024-2040. He laid emphasis on taking instant action to implement the



strategy's operational plans.

His Majesty the Sultan expressed his satisfaction with the 'qualitative shift' – the tangible transformation – in the functioning of the judiciary, which, he observed, broadly met the aspirations of citizens, residents and investors by providing high-quality judicial services using modern technologies.

His Majesty the Sultan lauded the efforts of members of the

Supreme Judicial Council and all other personnel, including judges, members of the Public Prosecution and notary publics.

His Majesty the Sultan valued the Supreme Judicial Council members' commitment to integrity in performing their duties. His Majesty gave his directives to intensify professional training and application of programmes for judges, Public Prosecution members and employees of the Supreme Judicial Council, to ensure that they keep pace with legal and technical developments. He also underlined the need to continuously provide the Council with specialised cadres.

Pursuant to his Royal keenness on the development and advancement of the investment sector and the consolidation of the investment environment in the Sultanate of Oman, His Majesty the Sultan gave his directives to finalise procedures for establishing the 'Court of Investment and Trade'. The court will be mandated to adjudicate investment and settle commercial disputes in a prompt and professional manner. His Majesty the Sultan pointed out that this step stems from the Sultanate of Oman's vision to promote the investment environment and attract capital by providing a specialised judiciary that supports the growth of commercial activities and ensures the protection of the rights of litigants.

His Majesty the Sultan also gave his Royal directives to complete procedures towards the issuance of the Supreme Judicial Council's organisational structure, so that the Council could continue to provide high-quality judicial services that consolidate confidence in the rule of law.

At the conclusion of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan reiterated his full support for the independence of the judiciary. He underlined the Council's role in enhancing stability and achieving sustainable development. He also stressed the importance of cooperation between state institutions to realise an integrated national vision in the field of justice. — ONA





The Fastest Internet in Oman

AMAZING OFFER! Complete coverage with Barqi Mesh

Get 3 Barqi Mesh Wi-Fi Devices **FREE** for the first year

Subscribe to any of AWASR's Fibernet Home packages through WhatsApp or the Website

Subscribe Now!

WhatsApp 8000 1000

Website: [awasr.om](#)





FREE

*Terms and conditions apply. *Offer valid for a limited time. *For new residential subscribers. *Subscriber pays Barqi mesh fees from year two.

SHORT TAKES



The meeting discussed the observations of business owners on the implementation of the Wage Protection System and associated fines. — ONA

OCCI committee studies Wage Protection System

MUSCAT: The Labour Market Committee of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) held its first meeting of the current year (2025) under the chairmanship of Mohammed bin Hassan al A'nasi, Head of the committee.

The meeting discussed the observations of business owners on the implementation of the Wage Protection System and associated fines.

The meeting affirmed OCCI's keenness to study the impacts of implementation of the Wage Protection System on private sector establishments.

The study of the issue, made in cooperation with the authorities concerned, seeks to reach practical solutions that consider the common interests of all parties, enhance economic growth and ensure the generation and sustainability of employment opportunities. — ONA

Recruitment of citizens at Medical City going in full swing



Applicants will be tested and coached, in their respective specialisations. — ONA

MUSCAT: Acting in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, the Military and Security Services Medical City is pressing ahead with the recruitment of citizens to the military service.

Applicants will be tested and coached, in their respective specialisations, by the recruitment committee until they reach the final stages of admission to the Military and Security Services Medical City. The Military and Security Services Medical City has harnessed all necessary capacities (in terms of specialised human resources and administrative and health requirements) to provide a proper environment to enable aspiring citizens to join the military service and perform their national duty. — ONA

FAO projects see 83 per cent value surge



In 2024, FAO's project portfolio in Oman reached a value of \$4,276,985, compared to \$2,335,819 in 2022. — ONA

MUSCAT: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has significantly enhanced its collaboration with the Sultanate of Oman, achieving an 83 per cent increase in the total value of its projects.

In 2024, FAO's project portfolio in the Sultanate of Oman reached a value of \$4,276,985, compared to \$2,335,819 in 2022. FAO's diverse range of projects, developed in partnership with the Omani government and private sector, aims to bolster food security and strengthen local capacities.

Royal directives significant step in judiciary of Oman

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 27

THE Supreme Judicial Council, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) underscored the importance of the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to complete the procedures for establishing the Court of Investment and Trade in order to provide a stable legal environment to attract foreign investments and raise the competitiveness indicators of the national economy.

Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council, said: "The Supreme Judicial Council will enforce His Majesty's directives regarding the implementation of the Supreme Judicial Council's strategic and operational plans in line with the current requirements and citizens' aspirations, and also in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the Royal directives to complement the procedures for issuing the organisational structure of the Supreme Judicial Council and establishing the Court of Investment and Trade."

The Royal directives to finalise the procedures for establishing the Court of Investment and Trade are an important step in the path of the Omani judiciary, Al Busaidy said, adding that the court will be competent to consider lawsuits involving traders and related to their commercial activities and disputes arising from investment contracts. It will reduce the burden on the courts due to the presence of specialised judicial cadres at all levels of litigation, given that commercial disputes are of a special nature that require



The Supreme Judicial Council will enforce His Majesty's directives regarding the implementation of the Supreme Judicial Council's strategic and operational plans in line with the citizens' aspirations, and also in line with Oman Vision 2040.

SAYYID
MOHAMMED BIN
SULTAN AL BUSAIDY
Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council



QAIS BIN
MOHAMMED
AL YOUSEF
Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion



FAISAL BIN
ABDULLAH
AL RAWAS
Chairman of OCCI

speedy judicial procedures, he added. Al Busaidy explained that the presence of a court specialising in investment cases would provide a stable legal environment and improve competitiveness indicators of the national economy, thus increasing the attractiveness of the Omani market for local and foreign investors and enhancing sustainable economic growth.

He pointed out that the Supreme Judicial Council seeks to improve investment indicators and attract foreign capital. He pointed out that the Supreme Judicial Council is working on a number of judicial and legislative projects that will raise the indicators of the judiciary, legislation and oversight by adopting the best international judicial practices, including specialised courts to improve the quality of judgements and provide a suitable environment for dealing with some commercial and investment cases in a manner consistent with contemporary legal challenges to guarantee the rights of individuals and societies in general.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said that the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to finalise the procedures for establishing the Court of Investment and Trade stem from His Majesty's keenness to develop the investment and trade sector and enhance the investment climate in the Sultanate of Oman in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The minister pointed out that the Royal directive aims to address many challenges facing the business sector, and accelerate the settlement of commercial and investment cases to ensure the efficiency and fairness of procedures and reduce the burden on public courts, as well as providing judges specialised in trade and investment laws to ensure the

quality and accuracy of judicial rulings. The Royal directives also enhance the stability of the business climate and encourage more investments. The Minister praised the pivotal role the judicial sector plays in improving the investment climate by ensuring legal stability, protecting the rights of investors, and combating corruption, which contributes to building a safe and attractive investment climate that supports economic development in the Sultanate of Oman.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), emphasised that the directives represent a significant step towards strengthening Oman's judiciary system and are a cornerstone in promoting and attracting investments and capital. He also highlighted the role of the court in empowering and ensuring the sustainable growth of the private sector by providing specialised judicial oversight in investment and trade matters.

Al Rawas noted that these directives reflect His Majesty's commitment to advancing the investment sector and enhancing Oman's investment environment. The Investment and Trade Court aims to resolve investment and commercial disputes efficiently, professionally, and effectively, aligning with Oman's vision of fostering an investor-friendly climate and attracting capital through a specialised judiciary that supports business growth while safeguarding litigants' rights. He added that the establishment of this legislative framework instils confidence among investors by ensuring the presence of dedicated entities for resolving economic and commercial disputes, thereby saving time and effort. These directives coincide with His Majesty's emphasis on achieving swift justice through expediting litigation processes, reducing delays and preventing case backlogs.

Muscat Global Knowledge Dialogue opens

FROM PAGE 1

Prof Gluckman pointed out that Oman is a role model in using science and education as a pillar of national development, saying: "Oman has proved to be an emerging and ambitious country, and has succeeded in understanding how science can form the basis for national progress and development. Its commitment to this forum reflects its pioneering role in science diplomacy."

On the other hand, Ruth Morgan highlighted the importance of science in building trust between societies and how to formulate the social contract for science in the current era. She said: "Science is an essential tool in building trust between governments and societies, and we must focus on how to enhance the role of science in society and achieve transparency in its use. The social contract for science today needs to be reviewed and updated in line with global changes."

In a related context,



Csaba Korosi added that the multilateral system is witnessing increasing pressures, but the goal of developing the sustainable development goals remains constant.

He said: "Despite the challenges facing the international multilateral system, we see that science can be a decisive factor in achieving sustainable development issues. Experience has proven that science can play a pivotal role in formulating public policies and achieving global goals."

During the event, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and the International Science Council

signed a letter of good intent to implement a special programme in the fields of science, technologies and innovation. The letter covers several areas of cooperation, namely exchanging official representation between the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and the International Science Council through the establishment of a regional office for the ISC in the Middle East headquartered in Muscat.

The letter of good intent was signed by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqi and Prof Sir Peter Gluckman.

Muscat Global Knowledge

Dialogue included several discussion panels covering a range of topics, such as the role of science in facing global challenges and the role of innovation and technology in achieving sustainability.

Dr Hassan Abdullah, one of the participants, said: "This forum is a wonderful platform for exchanging knowledge and experiences between scientists and specialists in various fields. In light of the challenges facing the world today, such as climate change and food security, the scientific community must work together to find innovative solutions that support sustainable development."

Sarah Jones, a participant at the forum, said "the forum represents an opportunity to unite global efforts to address the challenges of contemporary science. The challenges we face, such as artificial intelligence and information technology, require effective international cooperation and a clear regulatory framework to ensure their safe and beneficial use for humanity."

OMAN

SHORT TAKE



Al Hunainy is preparing for his next exhibition, focusing on wildlife.

CARACAL ON CANVAS: WINTER MAKES PERFECT TIME FOR AN ARTIST

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, JAN 27

January 2025 has brought pleasant weather, encouraging outdoor activities, and Al Falaj wadi in Ruwi turned out to be the ideal spot for an artist. The Observer spotted Abdullah al Hunainy, one of Oman’s established artists, painting in a natural setting. His subject: a Caracal and its kitten.

Al Hunainy is preparing for his next exhibition, focusing on wildlife. Retired, the artist is fully dedicated to painting and has his studio in Ruwi. With weather like this, the wadi is an ideal location to complete his painting of the Caracal. “The Caracal is an important national animal of Oman. I have chosen to depict a mother and cub in their natural habitat,” he said. In 2023, the rare Arabian Caracal, a wildcat species, was spotted in Musandam’s western mountain range in October.

This sighting was the result of the combined efforts of the Environment Authority’s National Biodiversity Survey Project team and the Environment Department in Musandam Governorate. About 45 trap cameras were strategically placed across Musandam, following global biodiversity survey techniques. A pair of twin kittens was also captured on camera in the Dhofar Mountains. The Dhofar Mountains and Al Hajar Mountains in Oman are known to be their natural habitats.

The International Union for Nature Conservation (IUCN) has classified this cat as critically endangered, as the population in Oman is sparse, unlike in the African continent where the population is more abundant. Experts note that Caracals require an abundance of natural prey for survival, and any changes in their environment can impact their survival and population. Often mistaken for a lynx due to their tufted ears, Caracals possess remarkable hunting skills, being able to run up to 80.5 km/h and jump as high as 10 ft.

Abdullah al Hunainy’s passion for nature is evident in his paintings. His wildlife paintings shed light on Oman’s biodiversity and emphasise the importance of conservation efforts and individual responsibility in promoting conservation.

“My brothers and I are preparing for our upcoming exhibition. They have different techniques, and I have mine,” he said. Together, the brothers Abdullah, Khamis, and Saud are known as the Hunainy brothers.

SAYYID SHIHAB CHAIRS SOCIAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE MEETING

MUSCAT: The ministerial committee entrusted with the Social Protection Scheme held a meeting on Monday under the auspices of HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs and Chairman of the Social Protection Committee.

The meeting was attended by ministers who are members of the committee. Several topics on its agenda were discussed, and appropriate decisions were made accordingly.

The meeting also reviewed key



indicators, including the number of beneficiaries of social protection benefits and the status of insured persons. In addition, the annual

plans of two related funds—the Social Protection Fund and the military and Security Services Retirement Fund—were discussed. One of the primary objectives of the Social Protection Committee is to evaluate and monitor the performance of the Social Protection Scheme.

The overall aim is to ensure the implementation of fair, functional, and sustainable insurance coverage for all segments of society while achieving the objectives set for the scheme. — ONA

Winter festivals boost tourism and local culture

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 27

THE Sultanate of Oman is currently hosting a vibrant series of winter events and festivals across its diverse governorates, offering visitors an array of experiences that highlight the country’s rich culture and heritage. These events contribute significantly to promoting domestic tourism, as they not only attract visitors from different regions but also provide them with an opportunity to enjoy distinctive cultural and entertainment experiences.

Moreover, these festivals and events help strengthen social ties within communities and offer a platform for local talents to emerge. The international agency, Fitch Solutions, has raised its positive expectations for the continued growth of the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman until 2026.

Several specialists also affirm that the winter festivals and events contribute to boosting commercial activities and advancing tourism by increasing the operating rates of hotel facilities and tourist camps.

A wide variety of activities further highlight the products of small and medium enterprises and local families, offering a unique opportunity to support and promote Omani craftsmanship and entrepreneurship.

In addition, these events provide a gateway for attracting tourists from around the globe, giving them a chance to immerse themselves in Oman’s rich heritage and traditions. By displaying Omani cultural elements, these



Oman has the potential to position itself as a leading winter tourism hub

events are not just about entertainment but also serve to introduce visitors to the country’s customs and way of life.

While the Sultanate of Oman is a distinguished tourist destination year-round, the winter season brings a special charm due to its natural and environmental diversity. With its variety of activities targeting tourists looking to escape the cold winter elsewhere, the Sultanate of Oman stands out as an ideal getaway. By taking full advantage of the pleasant winter weather across its various governorates, Oman is stimulating tourism, enhancing community welfare, and creating

new opportunities for economic growth.

The Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to investing in winter tourism ensures it continues to be a top-tier tourist destination, both regionally and internationally. With its splendid array of natural landmarks, from mountains to coastlines, and diverse recreational activities, Oman is poised to attract nature lovers and those seeking a temperate climate during the winter months. The combination of cultural experiences, natural beauty, and perfect weather makes Oman a prime destination for tourists from around the world.

Al Amerat Heights Health Complex opens

MUSCAT: As part of the Sultanate of Oman’s commitment to enhancing a sustainable healthcare system and ensuring community well-being, and in response to the growing demand for healthcare services, the Ministry of Health (MoH) celebrated on Monday the opening of the Al Amerat Heights Health Complex in the



Governorate of Muscat.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, in the presence of Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Planning and Health Organisation.

During the ceremony, Dr Samira bint Mousa al Maimaniyah, Acting Director-General of Health Services in the Governorate of Muscat gave a speech during which she pointed out that the opening of the health complex is part of ongoing efforts to provide high-quality healthcare services that meet the needs of both citizens and residents.

Izki walkway a blend of nature, health and heritage

AMAL AL RIYAMI
IZKI, JAN 27

In the heart of old village of Al Souq Al Qadeem in the Wilayat of Izki, the first phase of a new sports and health walkway project has been completed. The walkway runs alongside the historic Falaj Al Ghadeer. It provide visitors with a scenic path surrounded by lush palm groves. The initiative reflects the community’s commitment to health, sustainability, and preserving Omani heritage.

The project, supervised by Dr Suleiman al Fahdi, aims to create a safe and inspiring space to promote a healthier lifestyle. As part of the initiative, nine local families participated in a beautification



As part of the initiative, nine local families participated in a beautification competition. Each family was assigned a section of the path to decorate using sustainable local materials.

competition. Each family was assigned a section of the path to decorate using sustainable local

materials. This collaboration added unique artistic touches to the walkway and fostered a sense of

community pride and ownership.

The 2-km walkway has been paved with interlocking tiles to ensure accessibility for all age groups. The project was implemented in cooperation with the Sahwa Team and residents of the village. In the coming phases, plans include installing lightings, setting up of rest areas, and planting trees to offer shade along the path.

Dr Al Fahdi, the project supervisor, said: “Izki Walkway is an important step towards promoting public health and achieving sustainable development. It is not just a sports track, but a space that provides opportunities for social interaction, relaxation, and enjoying nature.

The project also enhances the attractiveness of the area to tourists and residents alike, opening up prospects for local investment in the future. Upon completion of its next phases, Izki Walkway will become a model for community development initiatives that achieve a balance between heritage and modernity that contribute to building a healthy and happy society.”

The Izki walkway is a significant step toward enhancing public health, promoting environmental sustainability, and creating a shared space for the community. Its location in a historic village not only highlights the area’s cultural richness but also positions it as an attractive destination for visitors.

SHORT TAKES



The conference will discuss applications of AI in the fields of education, medicine, industry, digital economy and energy. — ONA

SQU conference on artificial intelligence from February 3 to 5

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University, represented by the Unesco Chair for Artificial Intelligence, will organise the “International Conference for Artificial Intelligence: Applications, Innovation and Ethics” during the period from February 3 to 5, 2025. The event will discuss applications of AI in the fields of education, medicine, industry, digital economy and energy, as well as using AI in predicting tsunami waves and earthquakes. It will also review ethics related to AI. Fifteen discussion panels will be held during the conference with the participation of 80 researchers from different countries of the world. — ONA

Role of families in rehabilitation of disabled discussed



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

The Ministry of Social Development reviewed the role of families of people with disabilities in the first family guidance and counseling programme. Faisal bin Hamad al Hajri, Head of the Cerebral Palsy and Physical Disabilities Centre, said, “The first family guidance and counseling programme aims to provide support and assistance to families who care for their children with disabilities, by providing the necessary information and guidance to improve the quality of life and enhance social integration.” This programme comes to provide advice and guidance that helps in dealing with daily challenges and developing the skills necessary to achieve independence and self-reliance. It included a lecture by Safaa al Harthy, a researcher in psychological counseling, in which she addressed a number of topics such as understanding the spiritual meaning of affliction in religion, enhancing closeness to the Allah as a source of strength and tranquility, the role of prayer in relieving stress. Al Harthy also reviewed how to understand the needs of a child with quadriplegia, the importance of expressing love and support in a scientific way, in addition to involving the community in providing psychological and family support, and the role of caregivers. The programme concluded with Samira bint Suleiman Al Qarwashiyah, the guardian of a person with a disability, presenting her successful experience on the role of the family in accepting disability and the importance of the role of rehabilitation.

NDC delegation explores role of Majlis Ash’shura

MUSCAT: Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura, received Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College, along with the academic staff and participants of the 12th National Defence Course. The visit was part of the college’s academic programme, which includes field trips to key institutions in Oman, aimed at understanding their roles and functions as outlined in the Basic Statute of the State.

At the outset of the meeting, Al Maawali welcomed the delegation, commending the vital role played by the National Defence College in enhancing the skills of Omani professionals and refining their capabilities. He highlighted the college’s contribution to nurturing



Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura, and Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College, at the Majlis Ash’shura premises on Monday.

national talent, in line with the leadership’s vision for the development and empowerment of Omani human resources. The visiting delegation

expressed their interest in understanding the evolution of the Majlis Ash’shura, its significant contributions to Oman’s legislative process and

its oversight of governmental performance. They emphasised their admiration for the Majlis Ash’shura’s alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and its role in supporting the nation’s renewed renaissance. As part of their visit, the delegation toured the Majlis Ash’shura’s main chamber, where they were briefed on the electronic voting mechanisms and advanced digital systems utilised during deliberations. They also visited the Majlis Oman Library to gain a deeper understanding of the resources available to support legislative and oversight functions. The meeting was attended by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of the Majlis Ash’shura, along with several members.

Oman, India discuss ways of boosting economic ties

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, received Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and Industry of India, at Invest Oman lounge on Monday.

The meeting comes within the framework of the 11th session of the joint Omani-Indian Committee, held in Muscat.

During the meeting, they reviewed areas of cooperation in the fields of technology, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy and infrastructure.

They also touched on means of attracting Indian investments to Oman.

Both sides underscored the importance of the 11th session of the joint Omani-Indian Committee as a strategic platform to enhance bilateral cooperation.

The two ministers lauded the prosperity of economic relations between Oman and India. Trade exchange between the two countries in 2023 reached RO 2.05 billion. Meanwhile, the value of Indian investments in Oman reached RO 298.8 million.

Further, the Indian delegation toured Invest Oman lounge and were introduced to the services offered by the lounge to investors, as well as the prominent investment opportunities that are available in Oman.

The meeting was attended by several officials from both sides.

Meanwhile, the Sultanate of Oman and



Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef with Piyush Goyal in Muscat on Monday



The protocol was signed by Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority and Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman. — ONA

the Republic of India on Monday signed in Muscat an amended protocol for the agreement on avoidance of double taxation and prevention of financial evasion. The protocol was signed by Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority and Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman. Al Jashmi underscored the importance of signing this protocol in a bid to enhance economic relations between Oman and India. The signing of the protocol, he added, comes as a result of efforts exerted to boost bilateral cooperation in the field of taxation. — ONA

OMAN SEES A DROP IN NUMBER OF SOME NATIONALS

MUSCAT: There are around 1.1 million Indian and Bangladeshi expatriates in the country, at the end of 2024, making them the most prominent among foreigners in the Sultanate of Oman.

There are 637,152 Bangladeshi workers in the country (-11 per cent from 2023) followed by 506,630 Indians (-2.7 per cent), 317,296 Pakistanis (+10.1 per cent), 44,913 Filipinos (-3.2 per cent), 45,921 Egyptians (+10.3), 24,156 Sri Lankans (-12.1 per

cent), 331,110 Myanma (+41.9 per cent), 23,545 Sudanese (+16.1 per cent), 23,530 and Tanzanians (+23 per cent).

Total expatriates in the Sultanate of Oman are 1,808,940, down 0.1 per cent from 1.813.817 in 2023.

The total Population of the Sultanate of Oman as of December 2024 is 2,988,648 Omanis (56.68 per cent) compared to 2,284,336 expatriates.

There has been a decrease of 2.2 per cent in the number of births recorded in the Sultanate of Oman in 2024 compared to 2023, according to the Monthly Statistical Bulletin issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total number of births fell to 69,561, with the number of Omani newborns declining by 3.7 per cent, compared to expatriate births which showed an increase of 11.8 per cent.

MoE launches Renewable Energy awards in artificial intelligence

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 27

The Ministry of Education, represented by the Department of Innovation and Scientific Olympiad, and with the support of PDO, launched the seventh edition of the Petroleum Development Oman Company Renewable Energy Award. This edition of the award bears the title (Artificial Intelligence in Energy Sustainability) for 2025-2026,

targeting students of public and private schools for (7 – 12) grades. The launch of the award was accompanied by the screening of the award’s promotional film and promotional posters in Arabic and English, which encourage students to interact and participate. Afterwards, the registration link was launched for students wishing to participate according to the conditions required by the award. This version includes a competition



The final evaluation and announcement of the winners will be held at the Oman Sustainability Week at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in April 2026.

for the best promotional campaign for the award at the level of educational directorates in the governorates. A set of accompanying training programs will be presented with the award. The award goes through four stages, starting with the announcement of the award, then the initial screening of the advanced ideas, and the initial evaluation stage, from which the teams will be qualified for the final evaluation. The final evaluation and

announcement of the winners will be held at the Oman Sustainability Week at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center in April 2026. The award aims to raise awareness among school students on the importance of using renewable energy in daily life as an alternative to fossil fuels, innovate new ways to reduce carbon emissions that are harmful to the environment, and develop students’ capabilities in skill and technical aspects.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud meets with Italy's PM Giorgia Meloni in AlUla. — Reuters

ITALY, SAUDI ARABIA INK STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP DEALS

MILAN: Italy signed agreements worth around \$10 billion with Saudi Arabia as part of a strengthened strategic partnership, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said after meeting Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Among the deals, Italy's credit export agency SACE said it would provide loan guarantees worth 3 billion dollars for Saudi Arabia's NEOM real estate project.

"There is enormous potential in our cooperation and my wish is that this visit can open a completely new phase in our partnership," Meloni said following her talks with the de facto Saudi ruler in the Saudi oasis city of Al-Ula. "This is what the joint declaration we signed today foresees. It declares that our two nations can broaden their horizons and explore many new opportunities together." She cited infrastructure, energy, defence, sport, entertainment and tourism as areas where bilateral cooperation could become "stronger, more effective and deeper". Meloni said she backed Saudi Arabia joining the GCAP jet fighter programme, currently involving Italy, Britain and Japan, adding, however, that this would take some time. — Reuters

LEBANON TO EXTEND CEASEFIRE DESPITE ISRAEL'S FAILURE



Displaced residents lift a Lebanese flag as they sit on the rubble of their home in their southern Lebanese village of Yarin. — AFP

BURJ AL MULUK: Lebanon said on Monday it would extend a ceasefire deal with Israel until mid-February, even though the Israeli military failed to meet a deadline to withdraw its troops. The deadly violence recorded by health officials came as residents tried to return home as Israel was scheduled to pull its troops from southern Lebanon.

Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said that Lebanon had agreed to an extension of the ceasefire deal between Hezbollah and Israel until February 18, after the Israeli military missed Sunday's deadline to withdraw. Lebanon's health ministry said that fresh "Israeli enemy attacks while citizens attempt to return to their towns" had wounded two people on Monday in the village of Bani Hayyan, including a child. In the village of Burj Al Muluk, dozens of men, women and children were gathering in the morning behind a dirt barrier hoping to reach the border town of Kfar Kila, where the Israeli military is still deployed. — AFP

ENERGY REFORMS

Africa to connect 300 mn people to power



Several African nations committed on Monday to open up their electricity sectors to attract investors and light up homes of 300 million people currently lacking power in the next six years. The push aims to unlock at least \$90 billion in capital from multilateral development banks, private businesses and philanthropies. Nigeria, Senegal, Zambia and Tanzania were among a dozen countries that committed to reform their electricity companies. — Reuters

INVESTIGATION PROCESS

Türkiye arrests 19 over hotel inferno disaster



Turkish authorities have arrested 19 people as part of an investigation into a fire at a ski resort hotel that killed 78 people. Those detained include a deputy mayor for the town responsible for the Kartalkaya resort, a deputy fire chief and the head of another establishment belonging to the hotel owner. The investigation into the January 21 disaster has focused on the actions of the emergency services in the town of Bolu. — AFP

PRISON TERMS

Kazakhstan court jails 2022 riot leaders



Kazakhstan sentenced 45 people to prison terms of up to 20 years for their role in violent 2022 protests that left 238 people dead. In a major trial, a court in Almaty sentenced 45 people to between 18 months and 20 years in prison for organising and participating in mass unrest. Arman Dzhumageldiev, a powerful figure in the Kazakh crime world, was sentenced to 20 years in jail for organising riots and kidnapping. — AFP

SOUTH KOREA REPORTS INITIAL FINDINGS OF JEJU AIR CRASH TO ICAO

SEOUL: South Korea's authorities investigating last month's Jeju Air plane crash have submitted a preliminary accident report to the UN aviation agency and to the authorities of the United States, France and Thailand, an official said on Monday. The investigation into the deadliest air disaster on the country's soil remains ongoing, the report made available on Monday said, focused on the role of "bird strike" and involving an analysis of the

engines and the "localiser" landing guidance structure. "These all-out investigation activities aim to determine the accurate cause of the accident," it said. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the U.N. agency, requires accident investigators to produce a preliminary report within 30 days of the accident and encourages a final report to be made public within 12 months.

The report highlighted much of the initial findings by the South

Korean investigators that was shared with the families of the victims on Saturday, including the pilots discussing a flock of birds they spotted on its final approach. The exact time of a bird strike reported by the pilots remains unconfirmed, the accident report said, but the aircraft "made an emergency declaration (Mayday x 3) for a bird strike during a go-around." "Both engines were examined, and feathers and bird blood stains were found on each," it said. — Reuters

Palestinians return to north Gaza after breakthrough

MASSSES of displaced Palestinians began streaming towards the north of the war-battered Gaza Strip on Monday after Israel and Hamas said they had reached a deal for the release of another six hostages. The breakthrough preserves a fragile ceasefire and paves the way for more hostage-prisoner swaps under an agreement aimed at ending the more than 15-month conflict, which has devastated the Gaza Strip and displaced nearly all its residents. Israel had been preventing Palestinians from returning to their homes in northern Gaza, accusing Hamas of violating the terms of the truce, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said late Sunday they would be allowed to pass after the new deal was reached.

A Gaza security official said that "more than 200,000 displaced people have returned to Gaza and North Gaza" in the first two hours of the day. With the joy of return came the shock of the extent of the destruction wrought by more than a year of war.



Displaced Gazans ride in the back of a horse-drawn cart as they cross the Netzarim corridor from the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

The comments came after US President Donald Trump floated an idea to "clean out" Gaza and resettle Palestinians in Jordan and Egypt, drawing condemnation from regional leaders. President Mahmud Abbas, whose Palestinian Authority is based in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, issued a "strong rejection and condemnation of any projects" aimed at displacing Palestinians from Gaza, his office said.

Bassem Naim, a member of Hamas's political bureau, said that Palestinians would "foil such projects", as they have done to similar plans "for displacement and alternative homelands over the decades".

Israel had said it would prevent Palestinians' passage to the north until the release of Arbel Yehud,

a civilian woman hostage who it maintained should have been freed on Saturday. But Netanyahu's office later said a deal had been reached for the release of three hostages on Thursday, including Yehud, as well as another three on Saturday. Hamas confirmed the agreement in its own statement on Monday.

During the first phase of the Gaza truce, 33 hostages are supposed to be freed in staggered releases over six weeks in exchange for around 1,900 Palestinian prisoners held by the Israelis.

The most recent swap saw four Israeli women hostages, all soldiers, and 200 prisoners, nearly all Palestinian, released Saturday in the second such exchange during the fragile truce entering its second week. — AFP

DR CONGO 'S GOMA CLOSE TO FALLING

GOMA: Heavy artillery fire rocked the eastern Congolese city of Goma on Monday as France warned the capital of the mineral-rich region was on the brink of falling to group fighters and Rwandan troops. The M23 armed group and Rwandan soldiers entered the centre of Goma on Sunday night after weeks of advancing on the main city in the Democratic Republic of Congo's North Kivu province.

The city, close to the border with Rwanda, is home to more than a million residents and nearly as many displaced people, in a region that has been mired by internal and cross-border violence for three decades. The latest fighting has intensified a humanitarian crisis, displacing more than 400,000 people since the start of the year, according to the UN. — AFP

PUBLIC DEMANDS



Protestors and students wave to passing drivers from a highway bridge during a demonstration in Belgrade. — AFP

PROTESTERS BLOCK MAJOR ROAD IN SERBIA CAPITAL

BELGRADE: Thousands of student protesters blocked a major road junction in the Serbian capital on Monday, as demonstrators pile pressure on the government over a fatal collapse of a train station roof in November. The blockade in Belgrade -- which was set to last for 24 hours -- came after student organisers called for a general strike last Friday that saw lawyers stop work, and the closure of small businesses and schools across Serbia. There have been almost daily roadblocks and protests throughout the country since 15 people died in the northern city of Novi Sad on November 1 at a train station that had recently been renovated. Many in Serbia have blamed corruption and poor construction oversight for the tragedy.

Following Friday's strike, protests continued over the weekend with rallies held in nearly 20 cities on Saturday followed by a call on Sunday evening for Serbians to bang pots and pans and make noise from their open windows in support of the students. With pressure mounting on the government, President Aleksandar Vucic on Saturday called on the officials to publish all documents related to the fatal roof collapse -- a key demand by student organisers.

More than a dozen people have been charged in connection with the accident, including former transport minister Goran Vesic, who resigned days after it occurred. The government has released some documents regarding the tragedy, but experts from the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Belgrade say they are incomplete. Vucic also vowed to increase police presence at future protests following several attacks on protesters, including multiple car rammings. During the blockade at the Autokomanda junction on Monday -- which links several major roads and motorways in the capital -- thousands of mostly student demonstrators waved flags and held signs calling for transparency and end to corruption. "This 24-hour blockade is proof of our perseverance and seriousness as students, and we will not stop until these demands are met," said Uros Velimirovic, a 22-year-old student of electrical engineering. The president and his supporters regularly accuse demonstrators of being backed by foreign powers. Along with the release of documents, students are calling for authorities to drop charges against protesters arrested at rallies, an end to attacks on demonstrators, and an increase in government funding for the education sector. — AFP

DENMARK UNVEILS PLAN TO COMBAT RACISM AGAINST GREENLANDERS

COPENHAGEN: Denmark on Monday presented a slew of initiatives aimed at combatting racism and discrimination directed at Greenlandic people in the Scandinavian country, as the massive Arctic territory is eyed by US President Donald trump. Among the 12 initiatives presented were a right to a Greenlandic passport and improving access to interpreters, and getting help in Greenlandic to report discrimination. "It is important to the government that

Greenlanders can live in Denmark without being met with prejudice, which unfortunately is not the reality today," Integration Minister Kaare Dybvad Bek said in a statement.

Trump has been talking about a possible deal for years and told reporters on Saturday he believed the US would "get Greenland", which he has insisted his country needs for "international security". The island is strategically located between the US and Europe, as

melting ice in the Arctic opens up new shipping routes. Trump's son Donald Trump Jr. made a private visit to the autonomous Danish territory in January and later accused Denmark of racism against the Greenlandic people. "Recent events have clearly shown that racism against Greenlanders exists in certain circles and especially on social media," Aaja Chemnitz, who represents Greenland in the Danish parliament, was quoted saying in Monday's statement. — AFP

Colombia caves on Trump deportations after threats

COLOMBIA backed down and agreed to accept deported citizens sent on US military aircraft, hours after President Donald Trump threatened painful tariffs to punish the defiance to his mass deportation plans. Colombia's leftist president, Gustavo Petro, had earlier said he would only take back citizens "with dignity," such as on civilian planes, and had turned back two US military aircraft with repatriated Colombians. Trump, less than a week back in office, responded furiously and threatened sanctions of 25 percent that would quickly scale up to 50 percent against Latin America's fourth largest economy.

Petro initially sought to hit back and impose his own tariffs on US products, but by the end of the volatile he had backed down. Colombian Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo told a late-night news conference that his country had "overcome the impasse" and would accept returned citizens.

A White House statement said that Colombia has agreed to "unrestricted acceptance of all illegal aliens from Colombia returned from the United States, including on US military aircraft, without limitation or delay." "Today's events make clear to the world that America is respected again," it said. "President Trump will continue to fiercely protect our nation's sovereignty, and he expects all other nations of the world to fully cooperate in accepting the deportation of their citizens illegally present in the United States."

Trump said he would suspend implementation of the tariffs. It had been unclear even earlier how quickly Trump could impose tariffs on Colombia, historically one of Washington's closest allies in Latin America, which enjoys a free-trade agreement with the United States. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, whose wife is Colombian-American, suspended issuance of visas at the US embassy in Bogota and said visas would be revoked to Colombian government officials and their immediate family members. The White House said the visa measures would stay in place until the



People wait outside the US embassy after their visa appointments were cancelled in Bogota. — AFP

first planeload of deportees returns. Trump also vowed to subject Colombians to greater scrutiny at US airports.

Trump -- who during his campaign said that immigrants were harming the fabric of the United States -- took office with promises to round up and swiftly deport undocumented people. While some countries including Guatemala have accepted military deportation flights, Trump had faced resistance from Petro, a former guerrilla elected in 2022 as Colombia's first left-wing leader. "The United States cannot treat Colombian migrants as criminals. I forbid entry to our territory to US planes carrying Colombian migrants," Petro wrote earlier on X. The Colombian government earlier said it was instead ready to send its presidential plane to the United States to transport the migrants "with dignity." Petro also said there were 15,600 undocumented Americans living in his country and asked them to "regularise their situation," while

ruling out raids to arrest and deport them. Petro's initial hard-ball tactics infuriated his many critics in the historic US ally. Former right-wing president Ivan Duque accused Petro of "an act of tremendous irresponsibility" for refusing what he called Colombia's "moral duty" to take back illegal migrants and warned US sanctions would take an "enormous" toll.

Trump's deportation threats have put him on a potential collision course with governments in Latin America, the original home of most of the United States' estimated 11 million undocumented migrants. Brazil, which is also led by a left-wing president, voiced outrage over treatment by the Trump administration of dozens of Brazilian migrants deported back to their country on Friday. The migrants, who were deported under a bilateral agreement predating Trump's return, were handcuffed on the flight, in what Brazil called "flagrant disregard" for their basic rights. — AFP

Sweden intercepts Bulgarian ship over damaged Baltic cable

SOFIA: The Swedish coast guard seized a Bulgarian ship after a fibre-optic cable under the Baltic Sea linking Sweden to Latvia was damaged, its owner said on Monday. Latvia sent a warship on Sunday to investigate the damage, while Swedish prosecutors opened an "aggravated sabotage" investigation. Nations around the Baltic Sea have scrambled to bolster defences after the suspected sabotage of undersea cables in recent months, with some observers blaming Russia.

The Swedish coast guard on Sunday instructed the Bulgarian ship "to go into their territorial waters and it is now on anchor where an investigation ... is ongoing," Alexander Kalchev, CEO of Navigation Maritime Bulgare (Navibulgar), owner of the Vezhen, said. Images of the vessel published by Swedish media appeared to show a broken arm on one of Vezhen's anchors. Kalchev denied

involvement in any sabotage. "I am convinced that we cannot say ... that this was a malicious act," he added. The Malta-flagged vessel carrying fertiliser from Ust-Luga in Russia and headed for South America was sailing in "extremely bad weather" on Saturday based on the information given to him by the crew, Kalchev said.

An inspection found that "one of the ship's anchors was damaged and the anchor had dropped into the sea, which means that it was possible that it had dragged along the seafloor," he said, adding the anchor was then pulled up. The Swedish prosecutor in charge of the case, Mats Ljungqvist, said that "the ship suspected of aggravated sabotage" was currently located off the coast of Karlskrona, near the small island of Aspö, but would not confirm the vessel's name.

According to marine traffic websites, the Vezhen is anchored



The cargo ship Vezhen is anchored outside Karlskrona, Sweden. — AFP

at that location, with two Swedish coast guard vessels next to it. "Staff from several Swedish authorities" have been on board the vessel since Sunday evening as part

of the investigation, Ljungqvist said. "The case is primarily being handled by (intelligence agency) Sapo, and I am in charge of the preliminary investigation. We are

also receiving excellent assistance from the Swedish coast guard, the Swedish police's National Operations Department as well as the military," he said.

Prime Minister Evika Silina said Riga had notified the Swedish authorities and that the two countries were working together on the incident. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson confirmed he had been in contact with Silina, and said Sweden, Latvia and Nato were closely cooperating on the matter. Nato this month announced it was launching a new monitoring mission in the Baltic Sea involving ships and aircraft to deter attempts to target undersea infrastructure. European Union President Ursula von der Leyen expressed "full solidarity" with countries affected by the incident. "The resilience and security of our critical infrastructure is a top priority," von der Leyen wrote on X. — AFP

OPINION

Oman-Qatar partnership going from strength to strength



THE state visit of Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, the Emir of Qatar, to Oman today, marks a significant milestone in the historical relationship between the two nations. This visit is not merely ceremonial but rather symbolises a deep commitment to enhancing bilateral relations across various sectors including trade, investment and cultural exchanges.

Emir Shaikh Tamim's visit to Oman and his meeting with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik signifies a new chapter in Oman-Qatar relations marked by a robust commitment to mutual growth across multiple domains.

They include but not limited to political engagement, economic cooperation through trade and investment expansion, as well as cultural understanding.

The relations between the Emir of Qatar and His Majesty the Sultan are characterised by strong bilateral ties, mutual respect and a shared vision for regional stability and cooperation.

These relations are deeply rooted in historical connections, cultural affinities

and shared interests in fostering peace and development within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) framework.

Oman and Qatar have maintained a long-standing partnership characterised by mutual respect and cooperation.

The Oman-Qatar Joint Committee has been pivotal since its establishment in 1995, facilitating collaboration particularly in energy, manufacturing and tourism sectors.

Recent statistics indicate that trade between the two countries has seen remarkable growth.

By the end of 2023, bilateral trade reached RO 1.113 billion, with Omani exports to Qatar valued at RO 284.7 million and imports from Qatar at RO 828.6 million.

In 2024, as of November, trade volume continued to thrive with approximately RO 950.8 million recorded – RO 205.9 million in exports and RO 754.9 million in imports from Qatar.

This upward trend reflects both nations' commitment to fostering economic ties that benefit their respective populations.

Qatari investments in Oman have also

The relations between the Emir of Qatar and His Majesty the Sultan are characterised by strong bilateral ties, mutual respect and a shared vision for regional stability and cooperation.

experienced substantial growth. These investments span various sectors including food manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, education, banking, technology, construction, tourism, logistics, mining, real estate and insurance.

Beyond economic ties, cultural exchange plays a vital role in strengthening Oman-Qatar relations.

The visit of the Qatari Emir is expected to enhance cooperation across political and cultural spheres as well.

Officials from both countries have emphasised that this visit will provide an opportunity for dialogue on global challenges while reinforcing their shared vision for stability and prosperity within the region.

Looking ahead, both nations are keen on exploring new avenues for collaboration particularly in renewable energy projects such as clean energy initiatives and green hydrogen production.

Bilateral agreements are anticipated during this visit which will further open doors for private sector collaboration and investment opportunities.

TRUMP’S IDEA TO ‘CLEAN OUT’ GAZA THREATENS JORDAN, EGYPT: ANALYSTS

KAMAL TAHA

US President Donald Trump’s proposal to uproot Gazans to Egypt and Jordan is a “hostile” move against the two US allies and aims to “liquidate the Palestinian cause”, Jordanian analysts said.

The US leader on Saturday floated an idea to “clean out” Gaza after more than 15 months of war between Israel and Hamas had reduced the Palestinian territory to a “demolition site”.

“I’d rather get involved with some of the Arab nations and build housing at a different location where they can maybe live in peace for a change,” Trump added.

He said the displacement of Gazans to neighbouring Egypt and Jordan could be done “temporarily or could be long term”.

For Oraib Rantawi, director of the Al Quds Center for Political Studies in Amman, the idea is “a hostile position” by the new US administration towards Palestinians, Jordan and Egypt.

Jordan already hosts 2.3 million Palestinian refugees and has repeatedly rejected any project aiming to make the kingdom an “alternative homeland”. “Our rejection of the displacement of Palestinians is firm and will not change. Jordan is for Jordanians and Palestine is for Palestinians,” Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said on Sunday.

Rantawi said the idea was “a threat for the security and stability” of Israel’s two neighbours, seeing a “message of pressure” for Amman and a “poisoned gift” for Cairo. Such a plan would bring closer a wider displacement of Palestinians, particularly from the occupied West Bank, to Jordan and aim to “liquidate the Palestinian cause at the expense of Arab countries”, Rantawi said.

For Palestinians, any attempt to move them from Gaza would evoke dark memories of what the Arab world calls the “Nakba” or “catastrophe” — the mass displacement of Palestinians during Israel’s creation in 1948.

Trump’s proposal comes after the US issued a broad freeze on foreign aid except that destined for Egypt and Israel. Writer and political analyst Adel Mahmoud called Trump’s idea “unrealistic” and a reflection of “the position of the Israeli far right” made under “a humanitarian pretext”.

“Jordan and Egypt will not accept it,” he added.

Egypt has previously warned against any “forced displacement” of Palestinians from Gaza into the Sinai desert and on Sunday rejected any infringement of Palestinians’ “inalienable rights... whether temporarily or long-term”.

Saleh al Armouti, an MP with Jordan’s main opposition Islamic Action Front party, said Trump’s proposal was a “violation of Jordan’s sovereignty” and a “declaration of war”. — AFP

‘Our beloved Gaza is gone’

OVER the course of the war in the Gaza Strip, I’ve occasionally quoted a linguistics scholar in Gaza, Mohammed Alshannat, who is pretty much the opposite of Hamas.

In his writings before the war, Alshannat admired Western democracy, condemned suicide bombings and yearned for Arabs and Jews to live in peace and harmony. With the ceasefire, he is now trying to recover the bodies of relatives and bury them.

“Our beloved Gaza is gone,” he texted in English, adding that the survivors envy the dead: “They don’t have to see it.” I understand this exhausted man’s heartbreak, after months of hunger and homelessness and seeing his son injured. The ceasefire is welcome, but there’s no clear path forward and not much to celebrate.

“All I want to do is put my tent on the rubbles and cry,” Alshannat wrote. “Pray for us.” The Gaza war has been a tragedy and a failure for all. Hamas didn’t empower Palestinians but left them in misery. Israel then waged a war that killed tens of thousands of Palestinians without so far accomplishing its goals of completely dismantling Hamas or of freeing all the hostages. Americans enabled this killing by providing billions of dollars in weaponry without meaningful restriction, making a mockery of our lofty talk of a “rules-based international order.”

What has all this war achieved? Hamas is degraded militarily but remains in charge and continues to hold Israeli hostages. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israeli and Hamas leaders for suspected war crimes.

Thousands of Palestinian children are amputees and 377 aid workers have been killed. And the holy grail of a sustainable peace in the Middle East seems no closer.

Today, Hamas in Gaza appears



NICHOLAS KRISTOF

The writer is an American journalist and political commentator

under the control of Mohammed Sinwar, the hard-line younger brother of Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas leader killed by Israel in October. Hamas officers are again patrolling Gaza streets. Former Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a farewell speech that “we assess that Hamas has recruited almost as many new militants as it has lost.” Blinken emphasised that Israel needs to outline a post-conflict future for Palestinians and that “Hamas cannot be defeated by a military campaign alone.” I fear that the message about the futility of endless war hasn’t gotten through to Israel or Hamas.

A reciprocal process of dehumanisation has led each side to conclude that the only thing the other understands is brute force. So both have engaged in horrific violence, with credible accounts of torture, rape and atrocities by each side.

Too many people denounce the atrocities of one side while making excuses for those on the other. Hamas kidnapped an 8-month-old Israeli baby, Kfir Bibas. And Palestinian children have been “killed, starved and frozen to death,” the UN chief for humanitarian affairs, Tom Fletcher, said, with more than 3,000 children younger than 5 killed in Gaza, according to Save the Children.

Israel hasn’t shown much humanity towards the children of Gaza — a Times investigation found that Israeli authorities severely weakened protections for civilians during its bombings — but then neither has Hamas.

At one point, Yahya Sinwar suggested in private messages that Palestinian civilian bloodshed would benefit the cause, according to The Wall Street Journal. Now we have a ceasefire, but is it more than a pause? I normally corner the market for hope, but I find it hard to be optimistic about Middle East peace.

Violence has grown in the West Bank; settlers are out

of control, even as President Donald Trump has lifted sanctions on them; and there is more talk of annexation of the West Bank by Israel, which would most likely mean denying Palestinians democratic rights.

Meanwhile, negotiators on Gaza pushed the knottiest issues to later phases of this agreement. That’s what Middle East negotiators always do, because it’s the only way to get anywhere. But I fear we won’t reach the end of Phase 2 and Phase 3 of this ceasefire agreement, any more than we got to the end of the Oslo peace process.

If you squint just so, it’s possible to visualise a way through the minefield ahead with leadership by Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, using the leverage America has over Israel as a friend and arms supplier.

That would mean a road to a Palestinian state in exchange for Saudi recognition of Israel and I’m sceptical this will happen — but to Trump’s credit, it was pressure from him and his team that helped achieve the ceasefire.

Any architecture for a lasting peace will involve complex negotiations with Saudi Arabia and many other players, along with painful concessions by Israelis and Palestinians. Yet ultimately, any peace will require a moral foundation as well as a geopolitical one.

I don’t believe that Hamas and Israel are morally equivalent: On my visits to Gaza before the war, I always found Hamas to be repressive, misogynistic and homophobic, while Israel is better than Benjamin Netanyahu and has a rich civil society and a still vibrant democracy within its borders. Yet there is no hierarchy of human life: I absolutely believe in the moral equivalence of Palestinian, Israeli and American children — and a recognition of that shared humanity is the best scaffolding for lasting peace.

— The New York Times

Living in the world of Artificial Intelligence



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

WOULD AI take jobs? That is the question that has been pondered by many minds. But AI can find you jobs. That's what I found at the exhibition at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, which is part of the Oman AI Summit.

The AI system that supports recruitment and can even do a personality analysis while a video interview is being conducted. So today individuals who are scanning the job market for an opening must prepare themselves in communication and non-communication skills. It is not just a written resume that matters.

A potential company can ask as many questions as needed, and they will feed in the model answers, explained the representative from Elevatus. The AI will compare the given answer by the candidate with the model answer given by the company and grade accordingly. The personality report, on the other hand, grades openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability.

In fact, there is a lot more because just under general function comes intuition, patience, flexibility, outcome orientation, analytical thinking, active listening, working under pressure, results orientation, interpersonal skills, attention to detail, compliance, communication, teamwork, resourcefulness, discipline, budgeting, work ethic, delegation, dependability, decision

making, time management and the list goes on.

There are more than 1,800 psychometric assessments to assess top talent. The AI can screen 10,000 resumes instantly, at the same time job boards are integrated. No one can be perfect, but with the right attitude, organisations might be willing to provide the training.

According to Opendatasoft, "Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. Essentially it involves computer programs to reason on the same model as a human brain, by focusing on three cognitive skills - reasoning, learning, and self-correction."

So where does it leave human intelligence? The eight types of intelligence described by Howard Gardner include musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. Of course, this can expand further.

Emotional intelligence is gaining importance more than ever before. We can imagine how much emotions influence decision-making. With artificial intelligence, emotions will be very much under control. But we all know the world needs a lot more empathy as well as acceptance and understanding.

What will matter is who will write the model answer.

As generations evolve, it might be easier

The AI system that supports recruitment and can even do a personality analysis while a video interview is being conducted. So today individuals who are scanning the job market for an opening must prepare themselves in communication and non-communication skills

to adapt to the transformative process. There is one aspect that will be a permanent feature, and that is continuous learning and upskilling.

At the Oman AI Summit, I came across faculty and students from a vocational training college in Saudi Arabia. Students were eager to volunteer and participate. They wanted to learn more. They said the whole experience was different. At the same time, they were enchanted with Oman and wanted to experience more. They had two questions for the writer: Which is the best place to have dinner, and where can we buy gifts from Oman? Cannot mention the first answer because it would be promotional, and the second answer you would know - my all-time favourite place, Muttrah Souq.

These students too, by the time they are ready to graduate, could be answering questions that could be analysed by AI using psychometric measures. It won't be long before guides come up teaching us the ideal answers in line with the potential model answers.

But the beauty of the human mind is its feelings and emotions. We are definitely going through an interesting period. It is not just a generation gap. It is a continuous evolution moving from voice to text to data and so much more.

This is an era where your search engine knows what you need to read and your social media prompts whom you might want to follow.

An era where data rules.

AID CUTS LEAVE AFGHANS HUNGRY THIS WINTER

CHARLOTTE GREENFIELD

The head of the World Food Programme in Afghanistan says the agency can only feed half the millions of Afghans in need after cuts in international aid and an impending freeze in US foreign funding.

Many people were living on just "bread and tea", WFP Country Director Hsiao-Wei Lee said.

Afghanistan was tipped to the brink of economic crisis in 2021 as the Taliban took over and all development and security assistance to the country was frozen, with restrictions also placed on the banking sector.

Since then humanitarian aid - aimed at funding urgent needs through non-profit organisations and bypassing government control - has filled some of the gap. But donors have been cutting steadily in recent years, concerned by Taliban restrictions on women, including their order that Afghan female NGO employees stop work, and competing global crises.

Lee said shortly before finishing her three-year term in Afghanistan that funding cuts had meant that roughly half the 15 million Afghans in acute need of food were not receiving rations during this year's harsh winter.

"That's over 6 million people who are probably eating one or two meals a day and it's just bread and tea," she said in an interview on Saturday. "Unfortunately this is what the situation looks like for so many that have been removed from assistance."

Afghanistan's humanitarian plan was only just over half funded in 2024, according to UN data, and aid officials have flagged fears this could fall further this year.

The US State Department issued a "stop-work" order last Friday for all existing foreign assistance and paused new aid, according to a cable reported by Reuters, after President Donald Trump ordered a pause to review if aid allocation was aligned with his foreign policy.

It was not immediately clear how that would impact Afghanistan's humanitarian operations, which in 2024 were over 40 per cent funded by the United States, the largest donor.

"I think any potential reduction in assistance for Afghanistan is of course concerning... whether it is assistance to WFP or another actor," Lee said.

"The levels of need are just so high here in Afghanistan. I certainly hope that any decisions made, any implementation of decisions made take into consideration the needs of the people - the women, the children," she said.

Western diplomats and humanitarian officials have said aid is dropping to Afghanistan in part due to global emergencies in Sudan, Ukraine and Gaza and also because of concerns with Taliban restrictions on women. — Reuters

The key to narrowing the development gap

In 2015, United Nations member states unanimously pledged to work towards "peace and prosperity for people and the planet" by meeting 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Although the agenda was unprecedented in its ambition – end hunger, slash inequality, spur economic growth, achieve gender equality, arrest climate change, and ensure access to water, sanitation, and energy – many expected that the world would make significant progress. But the sad, hard truth is that only 12 per cent of the SDGs' 140 measurable targets are heading in the right direction, and more than 30 per cent are stalled or moving in reverse.

There is still hope, though. A single sector holds the key to closing half of the outstanding sustainable-development gaps: agri-food systems in Africa. The continent is home to over half of all people facing extreme poverty, and more than half of those facing acute food insecurity. One in five people in the region suffers from undernourishment, and nearly one in three children is affected by stunting. Africa is also home to around one-fifth of the global agricultural workforce and is projected to become home to 49 per cent of migrants displaced by climate shocks by 2050.

Thus, investing in African agri-food systems can have an outsize impact, allowing us to tackle a range of thorny issues – from hunger and poor health to poverty and undereducation – at the scale needed to keep up with the growth of Africa's population, which is expected to double, to 2.4 billion, by 2050. The biggest hurdle, of course, is financial. African agri-food systems are seriously underfunded: the sector receives less than 3 per cent of global development funds and under 5 per cent of total investments in Africa from public, private, and development funding combined. The average African farmer receives less than \$140 per year in total investment, far below comparable



PASCAL LAMY

The writer is a former director-general of the World Trade Organisation, is the vice chair of the Paris Peace Forum and co-chair of ATLAS



AGNES KALIBATA

The writer is a former Minister of Agriculture of Rwanda, is President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa



IBRAHIM ASSANE MAYAKI

The writer is a former prime minister of Niger, is the African Union Special Envoy for Food Systems and co-chair of ATLAS



Africa is home to around one-fifth of the global agricultural workforce.

figures for India (\$800), Brazil (\$1,800), or Thailand (\$2,000). Some Britons and Americans spend more on coffee in the space of a month. This chronic underfunding has taken a heavy toll. African agricultural productivity is 60 per cent below the global average, and food imports are projected to cost the continent \$110 billion annually by 2030. But with targeted capital and sustained attention, this can change. Boosting agricultural productivity would help feed a growing population, protect biodiversity, and restore soil health. Greater investments in the sector can secure the livelihoods of 250 million small-scale farmers and address the urgent need for climate resilience in a region disproportionately affected by global warming.

The benefits of investing in African food systems extend far beyond the continent. Africa's natural carbon sinks will continue to mitigate climate change, but only if they are preserved. And strengthened agricultural systems can stabilize global food supply chains against disruptions caused by pandemics, conflicts, and climate shocks, by helping to rehabilitate the continent's farmland, 65 per cent of which is degraded.

But unlocking global benefits requires global engagement.

Fortunately, African agri-food systems represent a compelling business opportunity. Aside from the fact that the continent boasts an increasingly skilled, youthful labour force and much of the world's remaining arable land, investments in its food systems are 2.5-3 times more effective in raising incomes than those in other sectors.

Investors also stand to gain by coupling agri-food investments with investment in infrastructure such as energy, water, and technology, which will transform African agricultural systems into major sources of growth.

Hundreds of small and medium-size enterprises are already moving inputs, providing services, and hauling hundreds of millions of metric tons of food between rural and urban areas every day. This is a strong base for investors to build on.

So, what needs to happen next? At the Paris Peace Forum earlier this year, we unveiled the Agricultural Transitions Lab for African Solutions (ATLAS), a permanent platform to advocate for increased investment, align priorities, and promote transparency and accountability in African agri-food systems. Since then, 30 organisations have joined, demonstrating real momentum behind the initiative.

©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

INDOOR MEET



Oman's Ali al Balushi clocked 6.60 seconds in men's 60 metres dash to win silver at the Astana Indoor Meet in Kazakhstan.

SPRINTER ALI CLOCKS 6.60 SECS TO WIN 60M SILVER IN ASTANA

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 27

Oman's young sprinter Ali al Balushi earned a silver medal in the Men's 60 Metres event at the Astana Indoor Meet in Kazakhstan. Al Balushi's splendid performance saw him finish the short sprint in 6.60 seconds. Kishane Thompson from Jamaica claimed the top spot with a timing of 6.56 seconds to clinch gold medal while Japanese sprinter Shuhei Tada got bronze as he ended third in 6.62 seconds.

Ali, under technical guidance of coach Fahad al Mashaykhi, was among the sprinters in round one at heat one. He finished third in the heat with a timing of 6.68 seconds while Kishane Thompson earned first place with 6.58 seconds and followed by American sprinter Demek Kemp with a timing of 6.65 seconds.

The action of Men's 60 Metres event took place at the Track & Field Complex Kazakhstan, Astana city. Omani sprinter Ali 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 first round of men's 100 m event in heats 3 at Stade de France.

Ali's journey was bright in 60m indoor race event as he focused during the previous years in this kind of races. He broke Oman record with 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.

He had several camps domestically from March to April last year besides some international athletics meets including the Grand Prix in Dubai and few camps in Europe including two camps in Greece, one in the Czech Republic and one in Germany achieving his best time of 10.17 seconds. Sprinter Ali had competed at Arab Youth Championships in Egypt last July where he managed to win two gold medals with timing of 10.00 seconds in the 100m event and 20.68 seconds in 200m.

Oman chess body honours age-category champions

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 27

THE Oman Chess Committee (OCC) celebrated the winners of the Oman Individual Chess Championship for Age Categories, held in the entertainment hall of the National Teams Affairs Department at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex from January 23 to 26, 2025. A total of 87 players, both male and female, from various clubs across Oman participated in the event.

The award ceremony was attended by Jaber al Shabibi, Director of the National Teams Affairs Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, as the event's patron, along with Musallam al Wadhahi, an OCC member, other committee members, and parents of the players. The championship was conducted in a seven-round Swiss system format, with each player given 60 minutes and an additional 30 seconds per move.

In the various age categories, participants achieved outstanding results. In the Under-8 category, Zaan al Maamari from Salalah Club claimed first place, winning the championship trophy and the gold medal. Anas al Lamki from Masirah Club secured second place and the silver medal, while Ahmed al Jabri from Nakhal Club took third place with the bronze medal. In the Under-10 category, Amjad al Riyami from Salalah Club won first place and the championship trophy along with the gold medal. Yousuf al Maawali from Masirah Club secured second place with the silver medal and Anas al Balushi, also from Masirah Club, took third place with the bronze medal.

In the Under 12 category, Ayoub al Riyami from Oman Club claimed first place, earning the championship trophy and the gold medal. Ilyas al Hinai from Salalah Club came in second, winning the silver medal, while Shehab al Jabri from Nakhal Club finished third with the bronze medal.

In the Under 14 category, Ahmed al Balushi from Masirah Club secured first place, winning the championship trophy and the gold medal. Al Muayyed al Bariqi from Salalah Club came in second, earning the silver medal, while Ammar al Maawali from Masirah Club finished third with the bronze medal.

In the Under-16 category, Waddah al Sabti from Masirah Club claimed first place, earning the championship trophy and the gold medal, while Mohammed al Riyami from Nakhal Club came in second,



The winners of the Oman Individual Chess Championship for Age Categories.



A winner being awarded the trophy.

taking the silver medal.

Musallam al Wadhahi expressed his happiness with the success of the Oman Individual Chess Championship for Age Categories, highlighting the wide participation and competitive level displayed by the players.

He added, "We are proud of the objectives achieved by this championship, as it has contributed to discovering promising young talents in chess. We look forward to supporting and developing their skills to represent Oman in international arenas. We also value the



A winner being awarded the trophy.

role of clubs and parents in encouraging players to participate and promoting a chess culture in Omani society."

Al Wadhahi emphasised that the committee remains committed to organising tournaments and events that contribute to advancing chess, focusing on age categories as the foundation for developing the sport in Oman.

Additionally, the Oman Chess Committee announced its continued preparations for the Oman Individual Women's Championship, scheduled from January 30 to February 2.

Over 200 players compete at Oman Open Tennis Championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JAN 27

The Oman Open Tennis Championship, organised by the Oman Tennis Association, continues to be exciting and competitive. More than 200 players of various nationalities and age groups are participating. The championship is being held at the tennis courts of Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher and will run until the 20th of next month. It is one of the most prominent annual sports events organised by the association, which aims to develop tennis in the Sultanate of Oman, encourage players to participate in distinguished competitions, and discover promising talents.

This year, the championship includes competitions across various age categories, making



it a comprehensive platform for all ages and skill levels. The participating categories include: Under-8, Under-9, Under-10, Under-12, Under-14 and Under-18, in addition to Men's Singles, Professional Men's Singles, Women's Singles and Veterans' Singles (45+, 55+, and 65+). This diversity reflects the association's



commitment to providing equal opportunities for amateurs and professionals to enhance their skills while highlighting and supporting local talent.

Competition Results

The first two days of the championship witnessed intense matches in the Men's Singles category. On the second day,

Younis al Rawahi secured a decisive victory over Kinan Raghavan with a score of 6-0, 6-0, while Said al Haddabi triumphed over Mohsen 6-1, 6-2. Additionally, Abdulrahman al Mirza defeated Al Waleed al Badi 6-2, 6-2 and Mundhir al Najjar beat Azan al Busaidy 7-5, 6-3. Laurent Frago overcame Abdulrahman al Balushi 6-3, 6-2 and Vishal Mirani defeated Ashish Gupta 6-0, 6-0.

On the first day, Ayman al Amri secured a thrilling victory over Samrat Vyas 3-6, 7-5, 13-11, while Sheyan Sukumar defeated Raman Nath 2-6, 6-1, 11-9. Mudhar al Najjar earned a well-deserved win against Mohammed al Kaabi 6-3, 6-4, while Ali al Masahli won his match against Hussain al Lamki 6-1, 6-2.

Faisal al Balushi, tournament director, stated, "The first two days of the championship

witnessed great excitement, and we look forward to more thrilling matches in the upcoming rounds across all categories. Our main goal is to promote tennis in Oman and provide a competitive environment for all players, while also preparing national team players for upcoming international competitions. This year's championship has attracted wide participation from various age groups and nationalities, reflecting the growing popularity of the sport."

Al Balushi added that organising this championship represents a unique opportunity to develop national administrative and technical staff. He confirmed that the matches will continue daily, with a temporary break due to court bookings, before resuming until the final day of the tournament.

71 WICKETS



INDIA’S BUMRAH NAMED ICC TEST CRICKETER OF THE YEAR

LONDON: India paceman Jasprit Bumrah was on Monday named men’s Test cricketer of the year for 2024 by the International Cricket Council.

The right-arm quick returned to the five-day format in late 2023 following a lengthy absence due to a back injury.

Bumrah, 31, was the leading wicket-taker in Test cricket in 2024, topping the charts with 71, well clear of second-placed Gus Atkinson of England (52 in 11 matches).

His average across the year was a breathtaking 14.92, and he ended 2024 with a strike rate for the year of just 30.1. “Test cricket has always been a format I hold close to my heart, and to be recognised on this platform is truly special,” said Bumrah.

“This award is not just a reflection of my individual efforts but also of the unwavering support of my teammates, coaches and fans who continue to believe and inspire me every day. “Representing India is a privilege I deeply cherish, and knowing my efforts bring smiles to people around the world makes this journey even more special.” Bumrah beat England batsmen Harry Brook and Joe Root, as well as Sri Lanka’s Kamindu Mendis, to the award, given by the game’s governing body. Smriti Mandhana made it a double success for India as she was voted women’s one-day international cricketer of the year for the second time. Afghanistan all-rounder Azmatullah Omarzai clinched the men’s ODI award. — AFP



Pakistan’s Sajid Khan (R) celebrates after taking the wicket of West Indies’ Jomel Warrican (L) during the second day of the second Test match between Pakistan and West Indies at the Multan Cricket Stadium in Multan. — AFP

Windies win Test in Pakistan for first time in 35 years

SPINNER

Jomel Warrican took five wickets as the West Indies won a Test match in Pakistan on Monday for the first time in nearly 35 years. The West Indies won the second Test in Multan by 120 runs on day three to draw the series 1-1.

Pakistan triumphed in the first Test by 127 runs, also in Multan.

Warrican finished with nine wickets in the match — 19 in the series — to give the hosts a taste of their own medicine on sharply spinning pitches.

The last time the West Indies won a Test in Pakistan was in Faisalabad in November 1990, having gone winless on their 1997 and 2006 tours.

“We haven’t played in Pakistan for a number of years, but we haven’t won here in a while, so to come here and do it as a young group is incredible,” said West Indian skipper Kraigg Brathwaite.

He praised the performance of star player Warrican, who scored 36 not out in the West Indies’ first innings of 163 and took both the man of the match and player of the series awards.

“Apart from his excellent bowling, he always says he’s one of the best players of offspin in the Caribbean, so it’s good to see him get some runs along with wickets.”

Pakistan skipper Shan Masood defended his side’s spin ploy.

“On the first day we were in the position we wanted — even better, maybe, when we



West Indies’ Kevin Sinclair (R) celebrates with his teammates after taking the wicket of Pakistan’s Babar Azam (L) during the second day of the second Test in Multan. — AFP

had them eight down,” he said.

Resuming on 76-4 and chasing 254, Pakistan’s hopes of victory rested on Saud Shakeel, but Kevin Sinclair had the left-hander caught in the slips for 13 to further dent the home team’s fading chances.

Babar Azam top-scored with 31 while Mohammad Rizwan made 25 as Pakistan were bundled out for 133.

Warrican bowled nightwatchman Kashif Ali with a straighter ball for one, leaving Pakistan in tatters at 76-6.

Rizwan added 39 for the seventh wicket

with Salman Ali Agha before Warrican dismissed the latter leg before for 15 and then bowled Rizwan to bring the tourists within two wickets of victory.

Gudakesh Motie, who took 2-35, removed Noman Ali for six while Warrican deservedly took the last wicket, bowling Sajid Khan for seven to seal the victory.

The defeat sent Pakistan crashing to ninth and last in the World Test Championship table, while the West Indies finished eighth.

Title-holders Australia face South Africa in the WTC final at Lord’s in June. — AFP

Owen equals record with fastest ton as Hurricanes win BBL title

HOBART, Australia: Mitchell Owen blasted a record-equalling century off just 39 balls to propel the Hobart Hurricanes to their first Big Bash League title over David Warner’s Sydney Thunder in Hobart on Monday.

Owen smashed 11 sixes in his 108 off 42 balls in an astonishing display of power hitting to guide the Hurricanes to an emphatic seven-wicket victory with 35 balls to spare.

Owen equalled the BBL record fastest century set by Craig Simmons for the Perth Scorchers in the 2014 season.

Thunder were thought to have made a competitive total batting

first with 182 for seven before Owen’s pyrotechnics rocketed the Hurricanes into an impregnable position, with Ben McDermott hitting the winning runs in his 18 not out along with Matt Wade’s 32.

Man of the Match Owen is bound to besieged with offers to play in overseas T20 leagues after his incredible knock, which had the Hobart crowd chanting his name with each prodigious six.

“It’s an amazing feeling, I’m lost for words,” Owen said.

“I tried to do what I did all season: get us off to a good start and take it easy up through the middle — and luckily it worked out.”



When Owen finally fell with another lusty blow to be caught in the deep in the 11th over, the Hurricanes needed less than a run a ball for victory.

It was the Hurricanes first BBL final in seven years, with the Thunder looking to win their first championship since 2016.

From a disastrous start to the BBL season, where they were bowled out for just 74, the Hurricanes finished the eventual champions after chasing down their target with ease and overs to spare.

Jason Sangha earlier smashed 67 off 42 balls studded with two sixes and five fours in Thunder’s 182 for

seven batting first.

Sangha shared in Thunder’s best opening stand of the BBL season with 97 along with David Warner 48 off 32 before the Hurricanes hit back, taking seven for 85.

Warner looked in good touch before was caught behind by Matt Wade off Ellis, who struck next ball when Matthew Gilkes chopped on to his stumps for a golden duck.

Englishman Sam Billings avoided the hat-trick and went on to club 20 from 14 before he was bowled by Riley Meredith. Skipper Ellis captured 3-23 and Meredith 3-27 to stymie Thunder’s scoring after the 10-over drinks. — AFP

SPORTS

KEEHAL, MULFETAH, MOHEMAH WIN GOLDEN DAGGERS IN SUHAR

THIRD-DAY MORNING RACES (CASH PRIZES) RESULTS:				
Round No	Camel name	Owner	Time	
1	Sahari	Hamad bin Mohammed al Wahaibi	8:07:86	
2	Damaah	Said bin Hamad al Jahafi	8:09:68	
3	Shaheen	Salim bin Sulyim al Jahafi	8:05:08	
4	Al Dhab	Mohammed bin Sultan al Deree	8:08:52	
5	Walem	Hijn Al Bashayer	8:04:04	
6	Al Shahiniyah	Ahmed bin Mohammed al Deree	8:13:86	
7	Suyoo	Mohammed bin Shalwaih al Junaibi	8:07:88	
8	Shaheen	Nasser bin Abdullah al Muharbi	8:06:42	
9	Mathayl	Hamoud bin Abdullah al Muharbi	8:21:20	
10	Najwa	Hamoud bin Abdullah al Muharbi	8:07:10	
11	Al Baheer	Hamoud bin Abdullah al Maharbi	8:05:52	
12	Jamriyah	Abdullah bin Masoud al Zaree	8:11	
13	Jalmoudah	Ali bin Said al Kaabi	8:09:58	
14	Hajam	Fadel bin Abdullah al Jahafi	8:08:84	
15	Asrar	Ali bin Mohammed al Wahaibi	8:07:36	
16	Al Faydhah	Hamdan bin Miftah al Hinai	8:12:22	
17	Mo'azzaz	Sultan bin Zayed al Jahafi	8:07:86	
18	Al Shahiniyah	Ali bin Said al Hashimi	8:12:80	
THIRD-DAY AFTERNOON RACES RESULTS:				
Round No	Camel name	Owner	Time	Prize
1	Keehal	Royal Camel Corps	7:48:46	dagger and car
2	Mulfetah	Humaid al Amri	7:50:00	dagger and car
3	Al Rasmee	Humaid al Deree	7:52:88	icons and car
4	Mohemah	Dheidan al Mari	7:54:50	dagger and car
5	Mahdi	Mohammed al Deree	7:52:42	icons and car
6	Areen	Humaid al Amri	7:59:22	car
7	Mo'awath	Salim al Hashimi	7:56:70	car



The six-day competition features 100 rounds with participation from camels representing the Sultanate of Oman and the GCC.



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JAN 27

KEEHAL, owned by the Royal Camel Corps (RCC), ‘Mulfetah’, owned by Humaid al Amri, and ‘Mohemah’, owned by Dheidan al Mari, clinched the cars and daggers in the main rounds of the ‘Laqaya’ category in the annual camel races in the Wilayat of Suhar on Monday.

Organised and supported by the Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF), the six-

day competition features 100 rounds with participation from camels representing the Sultanate of Oman and the GCC.

The event, part of the 22nd edition of the annual camel races for the 2024-2025 season, runs from January 25 to 30 at the Wilayat of Suhar camel race track.

This year’s event will see over 1,000 prizes, including 24 cars, 15 daggers, 6 icons, silver and gold swords, and cash prizes for the top ten winners.

The opening day on Saturday morning witnessed 15 rounds dedicated to the ‘Hagayeg’

category—two-year-old camels racing over a distance of 4 km—with cash prizes for the top ten winners.

On the second day, 15 rounds were held in the morning session for the same category, followed by 8 rounds in the afternoon. Prizes for the afternoon rounds included 8 cars, 3 daggers, and 2 icons.

The third day, Monday, witnessed 18 rounds with cash prizes for the ‘Laqaya’ category, for three-year-old camels over a distance of 5 km, while in the afternoon the category concluded with 7 rounds, offering 7 car prizes, three

daggers, and two icons.

The fourth day, Tuesday, will witness 13 rounds for the ‘Al Ythaa’ category, four-year-old camels racing over 6 km, while the main rounds will kick off in the afternoon with 5 rounds featuring four cars, two daggers, and two icons.

The Oman Camel Racing Federation announced certain participation conditions, which are limited to purebred camels, with the use of blood stimulants, stimulating substances, or electric shocks strictly prohibited.

Barcelona hit seven past Valencia to restore La Liga push

BARCELONA: Barcelona blew away a miserable Valencia 7-1 on Sunday to get back on track in La Liga with a ruthless victory.

Fermin Lopez struck twice for the Catalans in the first half, along with goals from Frenkie de Jong, Ferran Torres and Raphinha, which gave Barcelona a commanding five-goal lead at the break.

Hugo Duro pulled one back early in the second half before Robert Lewandowski pounced for Barca, followed by a Cesar Tarrega own goal, with the third-placed hosts earning just their second win in their last nine league matches.

Hansi Flick’s side trail La Liga leaders Real Madrid by seven points and second-placed Atletico Madrid by three. “I think in La Liga we were in a bad dynamic and we needed this win, it’s very important and now we have to keep fighting,” Lopez told DAZN.

“The coach says everyone in the team is important, and whoever is playing we have to be up to it — that’s what being a team is and that’s

how we can compete for the title.

“There’s still a long way to go and we will fight until the end.”

Flick shuffled his pack against Valencia in order to spark a response given the club’s poor domestic form.

The coach began with Lewandowski and Ronald Araujo on the bench, while Pedri was absent because of a stomach bug, leading to De Jong, Ferran Torres and the superb Lopez all starting.

It took just three minutes for De Jong to open the scoring, with teenage star Lamine Yamal crossing for him in the area virtually unmarked, and he fired home.

Barcelona soon had their second, with Torres tucking home from Alejandro Balde’s cross, in similar fashion to the first goal but from the opposite flank.

The hosts moved three goals ahead in the 14th minute when Lopez clipped a fine ball over the top for Raphinha to run onto.

The Brazilian winger rounded Giorgi Mamardashvili and rolled home for his 12th league goal of



Barcelona’s Spanish midfielder Fermin Lopez celebrates scoring his team’s fourth goal during the Spanish league match against Valencia CF in Barcelona. — AFP

the season. Valencia, without the suspended Cristhian Mosquera, were struggling badly in defence and Barcelona broke in seemingly at will.

Lopez collected a perfectly measured Pau Cubarsi long pass for the fourth, and although it was initially ruled offside, the decision was corrected by VAR.

Lopez rattled home the fifth on the volley before half-time when Raphinha’s effort hit the post and fell nicely for him with the goalkeeper stranded.

Hugo Duro pulled one back for Valencia before the hour mark from Diego Lopez’s low cross and Flick responded by sending on La Liga’s top goalscorer Lewandowski.

Earlier, Athletic Bilbao, fourth, could only produce a 0-0 draw at home against Leganes, and now trail Barcelona by two points.

Relegation-battling Getafe earned an impressive 3-0 win at Real Sociedad to climb to 14th, while Rayo Vallecano came from behind to beat Girona 2-1. — AFP



MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
4,561.065

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$81.36
BRENT \$77.29
LIGHT \$74.42





بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

2479 1111

www.bankdhofar.com



bankdhofar

نؤمن مستقبلك اليوم

مع حساب السيدات من بنك ظفار

ابدأ بالتوفير اليوم، مع حساب السيدات من بنك ظفار!
لمعرفة المزيد، تفضلي بزيارة [www.bankdhofar.com](#)

تطبيقات الشروط و الأحكام



CBO ALLOCATES RO 52.8 MILLION IN TREASURY BILLS



MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) announced the allocation of government treasury bills worth RO 52.8 million this week. According to a statement by CBO, treasury bills were issued across four

maturity periods:

- 28 Days: RO 2 million at an average price of RO 99.700, with an average discount rate of 3.91071 per cent and an average return of 3.92248 per cent.
 - 91 Days: RO 10 million at an average price of RO 98.945, with an average discount rate of 4.23159 per cent and an average return of 4.27671 per cent.
 - 182 Days: RO 40 million at an average price of RO 97.830, with an average discount rate of 4.35192 per cent and an average return of 4.44846 per cent.
 - 364 Days: RO 800,000 at an average price of RO 95.850, with an average discount rate of 4.16140 per cent and an average return of 4.34158 per cent.
- The interest rate on repurchase (repo) operations for these bills is set at 5 per cent, while the discount rate on treasury bill facilities stands at 5.5 per cent. Treasury bills, issued by the Ministry of Finance, serve as a short-term investment tool managed by CBO. They provide commercial banks with secure investment options and rapid liquidity through repurchase transactions.
- These bills also help establish a benchmark for short-term interest rates in the local financial market and offer the government a flexible mechanism to finance its expenditures
- Treasury bills can be traded among banks in the inter-bank market or discounted at the Central Bank, enhancing their liquidity.
- ONA

Oman preps new offshore acreage for exploration

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 27

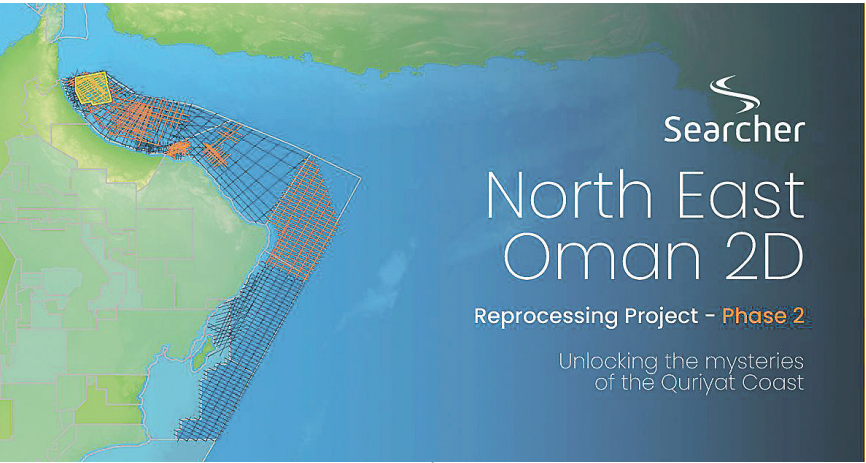
AUSTRALIAN seismic data

processing specialist Searcher has announced the start of a new phase of seismic data reprocessing covering large swathes of the Sea of Oman in preparation for the award of new offshore acreage for hydrocarbon exploration.

In a statement, the Perth-based firm said the reprocessing efforts are designed to unlock the prospectivity of three massive offshore blocks — 18, 41 and 21 — which are included in Oman's current Oil & Gas Licensing Round.

“Partnering with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals of Oman, we’re tapping into cutting-edge tech to uncover even more about the region’s geological potential and drive future exploration,” Searcher, a multi-client company specialising in subsurface data, stated in a recent post.

The announcement stems from a strategic partnership forged by the Ministry with Searcher in April 2022 aimed at the acquisition of several



Australian seismic processing specialist Searcher announces the start of a new phase of reprocessing of data covering swathes of acreage offshore Oman.

new seismic surveys and reprocessing of legacy seismic data both offshore and onshore Oman.

“Building on the success of Phase One in 2023, this next stage marks a significant step forward in unlocking the geological potential off the Qurayat coast.

With over 35,000 km and 2,700 square km of seismic data in the Sea of Oman, phase one saw the reprocessing of 4,100 line km of seismic data within Block 18, using a modern PSDM processing workflow and advanced multiple removal techniques,” said Searcher.

“Phase Two expands on these efforts, introducing an

additional 5,000 line km of seismic data from Blocks 41 and 21 — both included in the current acreage licensing round,” it added.

In recent years, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals has intensified efforts to promote its largely untapped offshore sector for investment.

As recently as in September last year, the Ministry announced the launch of a new package of oil and gas concession areas — representing a mix of onshore and offshore blocks — for exploration and development.

Included in the portfolio is Block 18, a mammoth 21,140 sq km concession

that ranks among the largest blocks currently on offer for investment.

Authorities revealed at the time that majority state-owned national oil company OQ Exploration & Production (OQ EP) would be entitled to a 10 per cent interest in Block 18, rising to 30 per cent upon a Declaration of Commerciality.

Significantly, offshore Blocks 41 and 21 are as gigantic as Block 18. Covering an area of 25,021 sq km, Block 41 overlooks a vast ocean expanse adjoining the Omani coast from just north of Muscat, all the way to Ras Madrakah. Located just south of this concession is Block 21, covering an offshore expanse of 20,018 sq km.

Commenting on Searcher’s support for Oman’s ongoing hydrocarbon quest, Alan Hopping, Managing Director, added: “Our collaboration with Oman MEM represents a shared vision to advance energy exploration through the highest quality geoscience data.

The success of Phase One has provided new perspectives on the subsurface geology and Phase Two will take us even further in illuminating opportunities off Oman’s coast. We’re proud to continue our work in this exciting region.”

AI to facilitate and enhance Oman’s economic growth

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JAN 27

EVENTS of the Oman AI Summit 2025 commenced on Monday in Muscat under the auspices of the Governor of Dhofar, His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said.

The 2-day forum, organised by Omani AI Startup Tazeez AI in collaboration with The Future Event, brings together regional and global industry professionals to address key topics in artificial intelligence.

In his keynote address, Hassan Fida al Lawati, National Programme Head for Artificial Intelligence & Advanced Technology at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), highlighted the significance of AI in the country.

According to the official, Artificial Intelligence, inspired by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq’s Royal Directives, is positioned as a tool to enhance and facilitate economic growth in the country. The Sultanate of Oman first launched the Artificial Intelligence executive programme in 2022.

However a revised version was



The 2-day forum Oman AI Summit brings together regional and global industry professionals to address key topics in artificial intelligence.

published in September 2024 to include generative AI and global advancements. The revision, according to the Programme Head, reflects a nationwide agenda rather than just an executive plan.

The plan, according to AI Lawati, aims to use AI as a tool to enhance the productivity of

economic sectors contributing to the local GDP, and developmental sectors such as education and health.

The current programme focuses on three main pillars: AI adoption, AI localisation and AI Governance. It currently underlines 32 initiatives serving each pillar to

be executed by the Ministry and other stakeholders.

Notable AI projects include the Omani Large Language Model (LLM), which aims to compile Oman’s national culture and heritage, the AI Studio which aims to bridge the gap between AI demand and supply in Oman while also fostering an AI ecosystem and the Open Data initiative which aims to provide open public data for AI training.

In his conclusion, AI Lawati emphasised that Oman does not aim to be only a consumer of AI, but a producer of AI as well.

Furthermore, according to Shuai Yi, CTO of Riyadh-based AI solutions provider SenseTime MEA, the size of the AI market including software and hardware is expected to grow by 7.6 times from \$233 billion currently to \$1.772 trillion in 2032.

He added that AI technology is projected to unleash a value of between \$29 trillion and \$40 trillion to the global economy by 2040.

In Oman, the sector is expected to reach a value of \$600 million by 2030, unleashing a potential value of \$10 billion to \$17 billion to the economy by 2040, he added.

Meanwhile, Pavel Vishnyakov, Senior Solutions Architect at Huawei Cloud Middle East, emphasised the importance of AI localisation.

“Large models that are generally available, like open models [such as] LLaMA, for example, [are all] trained on [vast] amounts of English datasets and they’re not performing very well when it comes to [local language-specific] and maybe local cultural context.”

He explained that the creation of industry specific AI models requires data privy to those industries, which can invoke security concerns. “Open data for general knowledge is always available, but industry-specific data sometimes includes know-how or commercial secrets that companies are unwilling to share.

This is especially true for governments, as training AI for the government involves sensitive data. When using a pre-trained model, it may involve working with both sensitive and confidential data,” he shared.

“This data should never leave the country and must stay inside. So, you have to keep control of this data. That’s why AI should be localised,” he added.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Chinese New Year holds a special place in Hakkasan's culinary calendar.

HAKKASAN MUSCAT CELEBRATES THE YEAR OF THE SNAKE

MUSCAT: Celebrate the auspicious arrival of the Year of the Snake with Hakkasan Muscat at The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, where fine Cantonese dining meets rich traditions. Renowned for unforgettable celebrations, Chinese New Year holds a special place in Hakkasan's culinary calendar.

Available from January 28 to February 12, this year's festivities promise to elevate the occasion with limited-edition dishes, desserts and beverages. Each guest dining will be given a bespoke wishing ribbon to write their aspirations for the year ahead before hanging them around the restaurant, a tradition that symbolises hope and prosperity.

The Year of the Snake is associated with wisdom, charm and elegance, which has been used as inspiration for the ingredients and design of the dishes to create a unique and standout menu. The limited-edition menu is available for parties of two or more and will run alongside the à la carte and signature menus at Hakkasan.

Highlights include Golden "Yuan Bao", Snake Fruit, Persimmon and Avocado Salad, Plum Braised Beef Short Ribs and Lucky Red Envelope. Additional standout beverages have been curated to celebrate the Year of the Snake, which surrounds a gold snake print ice cube designed to make every toast unforgettable.

LEVEL UP WITH THE ALL-NEW O PLUS BY OOREDOO



MUSCAT:Ooredoo just dropped a major upgrade to their postpaid plans and it is a game changer. Meet the all-new O Plus, where you get more value, for the same great price, with no limits.

Think unlimited local minutes, international calls, massive data options up to 2.050 TB and exclusive benefits. O Plus empowers you with data rollover, ensuring no byte goes to waste, exclusive gift card discounts and complimentary STARZPLAY subscriptions for all your binge-worthy moments.

In addition, for jet-setters, Roam Like Home lets you use your local data and voice across 30 countries seamlessly. It is everything you need in one plan.

TyrePlus announces special New Year discount on Michelin tyres

MUSCAT: TyrePlus, a division of MHD ACERE and the exclusive distributor of Michelin tires in Oman, is kicking off the New Year with an exciting offer for customers. The customers can enjoy up to RO 90 off on the purchase of two Michelin tires. This offer is valid till February 25, 2025.

This special New Year promotion is valid across all TyrePlus outlets in Oman, including its nine strategically located branches

in Al Wadi Al Kabir, Al Khuwair, Al Athaiba, Al Maabela, Barka, Suhar, Nizwa, Khat Al Batinah and Salalah.

Michelin tires are globally renowned for their quality, performance and durability, making them a preferred choice for drivers seeking superior handling, traction and longevity. This exclusive offer is designed to make Michelin's premium tires more accessible to customers in Oman.



This special New Year promotion is valid across all TyrePlus outlets in Oman.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

* The offer is valid only on Michelin tires for passenger cars (PC) and SUVs.

*The discount applies to DOT 2023 Michelin tires of selected sizes, available while stocks last.

*A minimum purchase of two tires is required to avail of the discount, with a 25% discount applied.

*The offer cannot be combined with any other promotions or

discounts.

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, commented on the initiative "At MHD ACERE, we are committed to delivering exceptional value to our customers by offering premium products and unmatched services.

This New Year offer on Michelin tires reflects our dedication to enhancing customer satisfaction and ensuring safe and smooth journeys for all drivers in Oman."

NBO MUZN ISLAMIC BANKING INTRODUCES CORPORATE RUNNING WAKALA FINANCING SOLUTION

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) Muzn Islamic Banking has launched its innovative Corporate Running Wakala Finance Product, offering a Sharia-compliant alternative to conventional overdraft facilities.

This solution empowers businesses of all sizes by addressing their critical working capital needs, receivable financing and other funding requirements.

Salima al Marzooqi, Assistant General Manager & Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO, said: "At Muzn, we continuously strive to enhance Sharia-compliant products to meet the evolving needs of our corporate clients. The Corporate Running Wakala Financing solution is a testament to our dedication to offer innovative and ethical financial services. This product caters to businesses seeking Sharia-compliant alternatives to



This solution empowers businesses of all sizes by addressing their critical working capital needs, receivable financing and other funding requirements.

conventional banking products. We are proud to support all businesses in Oman by providing flexible solutions that align with their operational and financial goals."

The solution offers several key benefits that make it a unique option for corporate clients. The product enables financing for a wide range of short-term requirements, including cash flow management and liquidity needs.

Additionally, the financing process is simple and transparent, designed to support business requirements effectively.

This innovative offering underscores Muzn Islamic Banking's commitment to pioneering Islamic financial solutions that tackle real-world corporate challenges.

It provides clients with a flexible arrangement, allowing them to focus on their core operations while benefiting from an efficient financial partnership. NBO Muzn leads the way in making its offerings widely accessible to benefit Oman's corporate sector.

SBA launches 18th Toyota dream car art contest

SAUD Bahwan Automotive (SBA) recently announced the 18th edition of the popular Toyota Dream Car Art Contest, a vibrant platform that invites young minds to unleash their creativity and imagine the car of their dreams.

With exciting prizes up for grabs, this annual competition has become a favourite among young artists across Oman. The deadline for submission is February 28, 2025 and eager participants can collect official drawing sheets from any Toyota showroom or service facility.

The 18th Toyota Dream Car Art Contest will be held across Saud Bahwan Automotive's Toyota showrooms in Oman and is open to all legal residents aged 15 years or younger. This inspiring initiative encourages children to dream big and translate their creative visions onto paper, fostering innovation and imagination in a fun and engaging way.

Speaking about this unique initiative, a spokesperson from Saud Bahwan Automotive said,



With exciting prizes up for grabs, this annual competition has become a favourite among young artists across Oman.

"At Toyota, we believe that every great innovation starts with a dream. The Toyota Dream Car Art Contest is a reflection of our commitment to nurturing the creative spirit of young dreamers in Oman. We are excited to see their unique ideas come to life and inspire the future of mobility".

Winners of the national competition will not only receive

thrilling prizes like Gift Vouchers of RO 100, RO 130 and RO 150 but also get a chance to compete on the world stage in the global contest. Participants can create their automotive masterpieces using water colours, markers, crayons, or any other hand-drawn medium.

Digitally created artwork is not permitted. Each submission should include a well-crafted

This inspiring initiative encourages children to dream big and translate their creative visions onto paper, fostering innovation and imagination in a fun and engaging way.

background and must be completed on the official entry forms available at Toyota showrooms or service centres.

A distinguished panel of judges will evaluate entries based on originality, creativity, artistic expression and use of colour. To ensure fair participation, each entry must be accompanied by a completed and signed form from a parent or guardian. The age categories are Under 8 years, 8-11 Years and 12-15 Years.

Since its inception in 2004, the Toyota Dream Car Art Contest has inspired young artists worldwide with the theme 'Your Dream Car,' encouraging them to imagine a brighter and more innovative future.

MEETHAQ SHARIA SUPERVISORY BOARD HOLDS 1ST MEETING FOR 2025

MUSCAT: The Sharia Supervisory Board (SSB) of Meeting of Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, convened its first meeting of 2025 at the Bank's Head Office. The meeting was chaired by Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Mubarak al Abri, Chairman of the Board and attended by other Board members, as well as senior representatives from the Sharia supervisory and audit departments.

During the meeting, the Board reviewed the financial statements for 2024, the internal technical audit report, the annual Sharia audit



report for the charitable fund and the activities of the Sharia Control Department. The Board also approved the annual Sharia Compliance report for 2024.

The SSB discussed several key items, including structured financing transactions and new products that Meethaq intends to launch during the coming period. It also endorsed the Sharia certificate for separation of Meethaq funds.

The regular meetings of the Sharia Supervisory Board play a vital role in deliberating on topics pertaining to Islamic transactions, business contracts and practices. These discussions enable the Board to formulate the necessary recommendations and resolutions to ensure compliance with Sharia principles.

BUSINESS

PIVOTALROLE



This move aligns with Oman Vision 2040 and the nation's target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

OETC UNVEILS GREEN FINANCING FRAMEWORK TO DRIVE LOW-CARBON ECONOMY

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 27

OMAN Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) has introduced its Green Financing Framework, a transformative initiative aimed at accelerating Oman's transition to a low-carbon economy.

This move aligns with Oman Vision 2040 and the nation's target of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Structured in collaboration with Citi Bank, the framework underscores OETC's commitment to environmental sustainability and adherence to high standards of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) practices.

The Green Financing Framework enables OETC to secure funding through green bonds, sukuks, and green loans, channeling these resources into sustainable investments. Key focus areas include electricity transmission, renewable energy, energy efficiency, green buildings, sustainable water and wastewater management, and pollution control. These initiatives are designed to reduce carbon emissions, enhance energy security, and improve grid reliability, supporting Oman's sustainable energy objectives.

OETC's competitive advantage lies in its role as a pivotal transmitter of clean and renewable energy across Oman. Its nationwide electricity transmission network is a cornerstone for enabling the country's green energy aspirations.

Eng. Saleh bin Nasser al Rumhi, CEO of OETC, expressed the company's commitment to fostering a sustainable future. "Launching OETC's Green Financing Framework is a significant and bold step. This initiative reinforces our position as a responsible industry leader and enabler of Oman's green transformation. It also contributes to achieving the broader objectives of Oman Vision 2040."

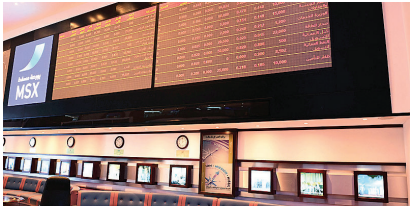
As a member of Nama Group, OETC is the sole entity responsible for electricity transmission across Oman.

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE INDEX EDGES UP 0.17%

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) 30 Index closed yesterday at 4,561.07 points, gaining 7.8 points or 0.17 per cent from the previous session's 4,553.31 points.

Trading activity saw significant growth, with the total trading value rising by 44.9 per cent to RO 2.3 million, compared to RO 1.58 million in the previous session.

The report from MSX noted a



slight dip in market value, which decreased by 0.006 per cent to approximately RO 27.63 billion.

Non-Omani investment activity

featured prominently: Purchases by non-Omani investors totaled RO 255,000, representing 11.11 per cent of the total value.

Sales by non-Omani investors amounted to RO 1.09 million, accounting for 47.5 per cent of total value.

As a result, net non-Omani investment registered a decline of RO 836,000, representing 36.39 per cent. — ONA

AI to secure Oman's sustainable future

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JAN 27

AS Oman moves forward with its ambitious Vision 2040 charter, artificial intelligence (AI) is set to play a pivotal role in transforming the country's public and private sectors.

With the aim of diversifying the economy, enhancing government services, and fostering sustainable development, Oman is strategically poised to integrate AI technologies into key areas of governance and industry.

This goal was the overarching theme of Oman AI Summit 2025, a two-day forum that began at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre here on Monday.

According to a number of experts in attendance, Oman Vision 2040 enshrines the government's commitment to digital transformation and technological innovation through the use of AI.

This technology is propose to be harnessed to help streamline processes, enhance decision-making, and optimise resource



One of the key objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in the realm of ICT, is to increase the contribution of the digital economy to the country's GDP.

management.

The Sultanate's infrastructure and growing digital capabilities provide a solid foundation for the widespread adoption of AI, positioning the nation to become a regional leader in technological advancement, officials stressed.

Hassan Fida al-Lawati, National Programme Head for Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technologies at the Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology, stated: "In Oman, there is a strong drive to encourage various sectors to

adopt AI as a tool to enhance productivity and add greater value to their operations.

One of the key objectives of Oman Vision 2040, particularly in the realm of ICT, is to increase the contribution of the digital economy to the country's GDP."

Government officials have already identified several sectors that can benefit from AI, including healthcare, education, transportation, and energy.

In healthcare, for example, AI could be used to improve patient outcomes through predictive analytics and enhance diagnostic

accuracy. In education, AI-powered tools could personalise learning experiences, while in transportation, AI systems could optimise traffic flow and reduce congestion.

Furthermore, AI's potential to drive efficiencies in government operations is undeniable. By automating routine tasks, AI can help reduce bureaucratic overheads and enable public sector employees to focus on more strategic, value-added activities. This aligns with Oman Vision 2040 of creating a more agile and transparent government that can respond to the needs of its citizens in real time.

The Omani government has already taken steps to cultivate the necessary ecosystem for AI adoption, including investments in education and training programmes aimed at building a tech-savvy workforce.

With its stable regulatory environment, commitment to innovation, and focus on fostering public-private partnerships, Oman is well-positioned to harness the power of AI as it moves towards its 2040 Vision.

OMAN OIL PRICE DIPS AMID GLOBAL MARKET VOLATILITY

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil for March delivery settled at \$81.36 per barrel on Monday, reflecting a 40-cent drop from last Friday's price of \$81.76.

The monthly average price of Omani crude for January delivery



was recorded at \$72.46 per barrel, marking a \$2.36 decrease compared to December's delivery price.

On the international stage, oil prices retreated as the United States reversed its initial threats of sanctions against Colombia, easing

immediate concerns over supply disruptions.

Brent crude futures fell by 60 cents (0.8%) to \$77.29 per barrel by 1300 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude slipped by 57 cents (0.8%) to \$74.42. — Agencies

Oman AI Summit highlights efforts to bridge AI gap in the Arab world

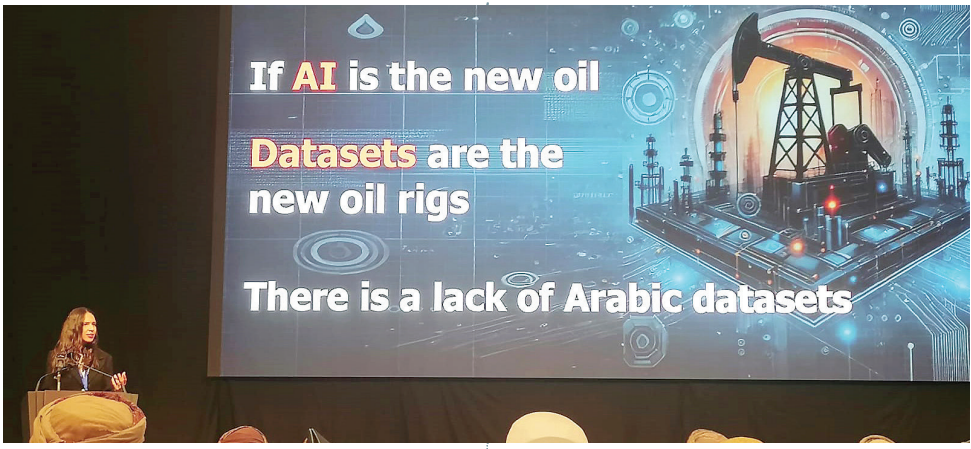
JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 27

EFFORTS to address the challenges and opportunities in bridging the gap between global AI advancements and the Arab-speaking world took centrestage at the Oman AI Summit, which began at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre here on Monday.

Nour Taher, Founder and CEO of intella, highlighted the critical role of localised solutions, education, and collaboration in unlocking the region's AI potential.

intella, a leading AI company based in the Middle East, specialises in Arabic natural language processing (NLP) and artificial intelligence solutions. Founded with a vision to revolutionise Arabic language AI, the company has gained recognition for its innovative approach to addressing linguistic and cultural complexities in the region.

In an interview with the Observer, Taher identified three primary obstacles limiting the Arab-speaking world's potential in



Nour Taher, Founder and CEO of intella, speaks during the Oman AI Summit.

AI: the scarcity of labeled Arabic datasets, the diversity of dialects, and the inherent complexity of the Arabic language.

"Although Arabic is the fifth most spoken language globally, less than 1% of online content is available in Arabic," Taher explained.

She also highlighted the unique challenges posed by Arabic's phonetics and dialectal diversity, with over 25 major dialects and 80 sub-dialects lacking adequate

representation in datasets.

To overcome these barriers, Taher stressed the importance of creating localized labeled datasets. "If AI is the new oil, we really believe that labeled datasets are the new oil rigs," she said, underscoring the need for natural language understanding (NLU) models tailored to Arabic.

EDUCATION AND TALENT: A KEY TO THE FUTURE

Taher also emphasised the critical

role of education in closing the AI gap. She noted that much of the region's education is English-dominated, limiting the development of AI expertise in Arabic.

"Talent is there. We have some of the brightest minds globally. However, it's about how we utilise and what opportunities we grant those individuals," Taher stated. She advocated for the inclusion of Arabic-based curricula to empower future generations and foster AI innovation.

SECTORS AND POLICIES: DRIVING AI ADOPTION

When asked about sectors best positioned to benefit from AI, Taher described AI as a disruptor across all industries.

Public sectors, banking, telecom, and traditional industries are already leveraging AI to innovate and remain competitive.

However, she emphasised that governments must create policies that foster innovation while ensuring ethical AI use.

"AI is a tool. It's your use of the tool that has to be governed

and regulated," she remarked, comparing AI's evolution to the adoption of calculators in education.

Taher also called for stronger collaborations within the region to enhance the global integration of Arab-speaking countries into the AI ecosystem.

"If you flourish in the region, you can flourish globally," she said, urging startups, governments, and large enterprises to work together.

A REGION OF EARLY ADOPTERS

Despite challenges, Taher praised the Arab-speaking world's openness to technology. "We are a region of early adopters, keeping an open mind to trying new things," she said.

However, she noted that global technologies often overlook the region's unique needs, which hinders localised innovation.

Taher's insights at the Oman AI Summit underscored the critical steps needed to bridge the AI gap and positioned Intella as a key player in advancing Arabic language AI solutions.

Is AI approaching human-level intelligence?



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The author is the founder of Knowledge Oman

LAST week we discussed whether the artificial intelligence (AI) will replace all our jobs. I concluded the article that AI would act as a companion, partner and/or a supporter but not take all our jobs away (at least for those who regularly continue to upskill and update their knowledge and skill base).

Some jobs will be taken away, YES, but more would be created as a return too. Please note the word “all” in my last article.

My emphasis is that jobs would be replaced, but not all and mostly the jobs that can be autonomous, routine and/or repetitive at most. Others would probably gradually be replaced as the technology heavyweights (eg, OpenAI, Google, Microsoft, NVidia, etc.) continue to advance their AI models.

I will focus on the type of jobs that may be replaced in my future articles, but for today, I would like to focus on whether AI is literally approaching human-level intelligence.

Would AI reach our human intelligence? Particularly in the way a context is understood, common sense is reasoned, learning is undertaken, creation or innovation is made and lastly the most questioned area of all, the emotional intelligence of a machine—ie, do they actually have any feelings?

Given a context (situation, event,

circumstances, etc.), a human would understand and may deal with it based on an experience that happened in the past and/or emotions that he/she felt during the same; however, a machine (powered by an AI, of course) would deal with it based on some rules and algorithms taught by us, humans.

It would not go out of the boundaries of data/learning/rules it was trained upon. The same applies to common sense. Machines would only deduce or conclude a matter based on what it has been programmed to understand (again via the massive data it was trained with).

Humans would utilise real-life experience without actually having knowledge of the same, based on a common sense that a machine lacks.

What more? Machines would require a lot of data, lots of training and lots of examples to be even considered smart, as to the level you mostly see and experience today out of all the AI applications available in the market.

Humans may require a few good sources to learn and generalise (of course utilising experience too). Moreover, humans have real feelings, yet machines act based on algorithms. They (AI) too cannot understand or take unspoken words as inputs for their operation.

Lastly, while AI can truly generate beautiful

Particularly in the way a context is understood, common sense is reasoned, learning is undertaken, creation or innovation is made and lastly the most questioned area of all, the emotional intelligence of a machine—ie, do they actually have any feelings?

content (be it video, voice, picture, etc.), it depends on patterns of existing massive amounts of data and not original/new things as humans can do and come up with.

Machines lack the capacity to think beyond their programmed or learned data, period.

In brief, artificial intelligence can mimic, act and assist human intelligence in many ways, but it doesn't replicate the depth of human natural abilities.

To conclude my article this week, I would like to note that while AI has indeed made significant progress and remarkable strides (eg, OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google's Gemini as proof in the pudding), it is still not yet at the level of intelligence that humans possess.

AI operates and is trained on data (supplied by humans), works and bases on algorithms (created by humans) and computes using hardware (again created by humans).

Whereas we humans have emotions, experience and real creativity, to name a few things that AI cannot truly replicate today.

While some researchers predict that AI will catch up with the intelligence in the not-so-near future, the prediction remains uncertain as of this date. Until we catch up again next week, continue upskilling and don't worry about AI catching up to your excellence. You're human; it's just a smart robot.

DAVOS PRESENTS ELITES WITH ECONOMIC RORSCHACH TEST

IT'S BECOME something of a cliché for delegates at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting to quiz each other about “the mood in Davos”.

The nearly 3,000 political leaders, executives, financiers and policymakers who descended on the Swiss mountain resort last week offered differing answers to that theme.

Given it coincided with Donald Trump being sworn in for his second term, Davos presented the global elites with an economic Rorschach Test.

Much like the psychological exam that logs a subject's perceptions of inkblots, the US president divided opinion. Business leaders and top bankers in Davos were eager to praise the Trump administration's promises to lower taxes and sweep away excessive regulations.

Some lined up to congratulate the commander-in-chief, perhaps conscious that they missed his inauguration, where tech leaders including Apple's Tim Cook and Mark Zuckerberg of Meta Platforms were seated in front of the president's cabinet nominees.

Yet Brian Moynihan on Thursday learned the limits of obsequience. In front of a packed crowd in the Davos Congress Hall, the Bank of America boss received a public dressing down from Trump. Speaking by video link, the president repeated unfounded accusations that the bank and its large rivals refuse to open accounts for conservatives.

“What you're doing is wrong,” he said. Moynihan responded by promising to sponsor the 2026 World Cup.

Behind closed doors, investors pointed out that Trump's plans to lower taxes, impose tariffs on US exports and deport illegal immigrants would push up inflation, raising interest rates and testing high share prices. Some believe the threat of a selloff will restrain the president. After all, “his main key performance indicator is the S&P 500 Index,” one senior banker observed.

Other global financiers mused on how the president might attempt to cut a grand bargain with China to shrink the trade deficit as an alternative to imposing sanctions. They mapped out a contrarian path to strong returns in the People's Republic, supported by Beijing's own measures to stimulate the world's second-largest economy.

Chinese investors were more despondent, arguing that Trump's security hawks would pull him back from any such deal. — Reuters

The Federal Reserve is running scared of Trump

DONALD Trump is back in the White House and the technocrats are running for cover. Trump has made clear his desire to dismantle the “deep state,” which he depicts as a shadowy network of bureaucrats who “weaponise” the “power of the state” to “persecute political opponents” and thwart their agendas.

But the professional officials, administrators and policymakers Trump is poised to target play a critical role in government, including by advising leaders, regardless of their political leanings, on how they can achieve their goals legally and constitutionally.

These officials must stand their ground. The Federal Reserve is perhaps the most significant independent economic actor in the United States, given the scope of its monetary and supervisory responsibilities and the global importance of the US dollar.

Unfortunately, rather than preparing to defend its positions and prerogatives, it has preemptively surrendered to Trump: on January 17, three days before Trump's inauguration, the Fed Board withdrew from the Network for Greening the Financial System.

The NGFS brings together central banks and supervisors to improve environmental- and climate-risk management in the financial sector.

Participation in the group amounts to a recognition of the importance of understanding climate risks, as well as an implicit acknowledgment that these risks fall within central banks' mandate, because they threaten economic and financial stability.

It is hardly a radical position. All major central banks are represented among the NGFS's 143 members: the Bank of England (BOE), the Banque de France, the Bank of Japan, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the People's Bank of China (PBOC).

Until the Fed's withdrawal, the NGFS covered 100% of global systemic banks and 80% of the internationally active insurance groups. But the Fed has now broken



The Federal Reserve is perhaps the most significant independent economic actor in the United States, given the scope of its monetary and supervisory responsibilities and the global importance of the US dollar.



STUART P M MACKINTOSH

The author is Executive Director of the Group of Thirty.

with its peers and headed for the exit, arguing that the scope of the NGFS extends beyond its mandate.

The idea that central banks should not account for mounting climate risks is plain wrong. Economic and financial stability depend on ecosystem and climate stability.

With greenhouse-gas emissions continuing to grow, atmospheric carbon-dioxide levels have reached record heights and global temperatures are on track to rise well past 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The impact of climate change — more frequent and intense storms, floods, droughts and wildfires — is already apparent.

While estimates of the precise economic and financial costs vary, the overall picture is sobering. The Institute and Faculty of Actuaries forecasts that climate change will mean global GDP losses of 50% between 2070 and 2090. Prefer a lower estimate? Swiss Re predicts GDP losses of 18% by 2050 if no action is taken.

Whichever forecast you choose, there is no doubt that the costs of climate change are rising — and not at a steady pace.

Instead, costs rise gradually, then sharply, propelled by climate-related disasters. In a bleak but telling coincidence, the Fed's withdrawal from the NGFS comes at a time

when California is experiencing this firsthand, as wildfires turn thousands of homes, businesses and ecosystems to ash.

The micro-prudential risks are obvious. Those burned structures were mostly under mortgage. But insurance is unlikely to cover the full cost of rebuilding even for those with coverage and many property owners were under- or uninsured, precisely because rising risks due to climate-fuelled disasters have driven up rates and caused some insurers to refuse to offer coverage.

If the destroyed properties are not rebuilt, the associated mortgages will not be repaid and the local and national banks that issued the loans will suffer heavy losses.

This observation cannot be dismissed as tree-hugging political correctness. On the contrary, given its potential to destabilise the financial system, it clearly warrants central bankers' attention. That is why the BOE and the ECB are stress-testing supervised firms, banks and insurance companies for climate risk, and imposing standards for climate disclosure, methodologies, processes and governance. The PBOC, for its part, is incorporating climate change into financial regulation and oversight and developing green lending rules.

© Project Syndicate, 2025

CLASSIFIEDS

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC
The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalar, Massage Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care
Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com



**UMP**
UNITED MAWA PROJECTS

Auditors & Accountants
• Audit & Accounting • CFO Services • Secondment
• VAT & Tax Return Filing • VAT Refund Assistance
Contact: 92182750 • Email: contact@umpauditors.com

Driving School
Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)
Contact No: 99074072



BUSINESS

LOOKING for an Investor to start a local business.
Contact: 78501743

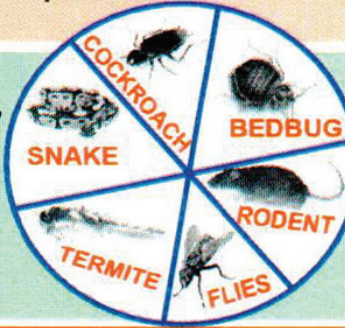
FOR RENT

Ajib Trading LLC
Opal Spec
Portacabin
Rental 20 to 150
Man Camp Setup.
Contact: 99036395 - 99411263

IN Ruwi, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, hall, kitchen, with car parking. RO 150 monthly only. Tel: 94402003.

**PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.**

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA



PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

FOUR STAR TECHNICAL SUPPLIES LLC
(FORMERLY OMEIR NASSER AL FALAHY & PARTNERS TRAD. CO. LLC)
"Quality products defined by exceptional service"

**Our Products:**
ELECTRICAL, BUILDING MATERIAL, HARDWARE, OILFIELD INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT & TOOLS



KNIPPEX, DEWALT, Schneider Electric, Honeywell, DELTA, HITACHI, DORMER, Makita, BOSCH, Beta, Milwaukee, STANLEY, MOLYSLIP, IRWIN, MIK, OLFA, ALUMITE, Shindaiwa, Clarke, Drill Pocket, USAG, STEINEL, KLINGSPOR, PCE, SENCOR, DURACELL, KING TONY, OSRAM, Milano, ELORA, VICTOR, RIDGID, METZ CONNECT, CRC, Wercor, DEVCON, BLACK & DECKER

P.O. BOX 3897, P.C. 112, RUWI, MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN
Tel: +96824837874, Fax: +96824831341
Mobile: +96899354944
Email: onasser@omantel.net.om / nelson@onasser.com

SIT. WANTED

Seeking a new Job / Logistics & supply chain professional with 10-plus years experienced in Export & Import of Sea, Land & Air transport modes (Email: nouchimp1986@gmail.com, Mob: 79820286)

SENIOR accountant - Indian male above 11 years' experience (9years in Oman) NOC & D/L available. Contact: 78109909. Email: shinsjohn@gmail.com

A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, BSc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet). Contact: +968 98510880.

29 years old Indian female, MBA holder with 2 years experience. Seeking a suitable position. Currently in Muscat on visit visa. Contact: 78641071, shazashakeel@gmail.com

SALES & Marketing Expert, Indian, Have DL@ NOC, looking for a job in any sector. Contact: 78501743

ACCOUNTS/ Finance: Indian male (MBA Fin) having more than 19 years of experience in Oman accounts & finance looking for suitable placement, NOC available and can join immediately. Contact: 92076716

RETAIL Store Manager with 15 years of experience in Retail Fashion, Home, Decor, Perfume and Beauty. Currently working in Oman. Actively seeking new opportunities. Tel: 94126212 ehteshamzaidi@yahoo.in

B. COM. 35 years of experience in accounts, sales coordinator, admin, HR, personal assistant, document controller with Oman D/L, looking for a job. Contact: 92558734

Indian male (Mechanical Engineering) with 3 years experience in Diesel engine works (Gensets/ Engines), 2 years in Machine Maintenance, seeks job. Contact: 78022420

4 years experience as Sales Manager at automobile showroom in Kerala. Skilled in sales, customer relations & team coordination. Seeking roles in sales, operations ect. Willing to consider entry-level position with potential for career growth. Contact: 76986562, Age 27

SRI LANKAN Male — (CGMA ACMA+ CPA+BBA) Asst. Finance Manager/ Chief Accountant, 12+ Experience in Oman & GCC, Expert in Finan. Reporting (MIS), VAT, Audit, Cashflow, Budget, AR AP Recon, IFRS, Payroll, Banking. Contact: 78773250. Email: ali. mohamedown@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with overs 6 years of experience Detail-Oriented Financial Professional: Expert in Accounting, Audit Prep and Expense Management. Contact: +968 78320801, Ready to join immediately.

Indian Male /CPA, CMA, CA Finalist & BCOM/ 10+ years of Experience/ Currently Working as Finance Manager, Looking for Senior Management Roles in Finance. Contact: 78611653. Email: jobcpacma@gmail.com

Sales Consultant with 2+ Years of Experience in Luxury Retail Looking for job, A better Opportunity. Mobile: 00968 78753577 E-mail: ummerayazmj@gmail.com

INDIAN male 14 years experience light/ heavy driver. Looking for suitable opening currently in Oman. Contact: 77050986/ 91280205, email: kokkadmou@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with 5 years expertise in Accounts Payable, Receivables, Financial Reporting, VAT, Payroll, and Bank & Cash Reconciliation. Actively looking for new opportunities. Contact: 79791746 Email: Ibrahimsaw52@gmail.com

INDIAN Female, M-Tech in Environmental Engineering, B-Tech in Civil Engineering. 7 years of Teaching experience as Asst. Professor, 2 years of professional experience in civil construction and soil investigation. Seeking suitable job, now in Muscat. Contact: 95136664, 79620397 Email: mayakrish.1804@gmail.com

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving Licence. Contact: 78002582 Email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

**WJ Towell Group Company**

**Quality car rentals at competitive prices.**

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

**اوربیت ORBIT**
Car Rental & Lease

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

ANNOUNCEMENT

A Reputed MEP Company in Muscat is Hiring Urgently
1- Mechanical Engineers (HVAC/ Plumbing)
2- MEP Engineers.
3- Estimator (HVAC).

Exp-Level: 4-6 years (Oman Exp: Preferable)

Send CV to meemcollchr@gmail.com

**OMAN OBSERVER**
www.omanobserver.om



3,255 Posts 28.5K Followers 38 Following

30+ years of telling the story of Oman
Oman's leading daily English newspaper
For full story, visit our website
omanobserver.om
Available in Oman, Muscat, Oman
Followed by: sapteary and 3 others

Following Message Email

Sport IG Top Picks Weather Fashion

Looking for **Cyber Security Information Officer** (Omani national)

**Unimoni Oman Is Hiring**
Cyber Security Information Officer

Key Responsibilities:

- Develop cybersecurity strategies & policies
- Oversee Incident Response, Vulnerability Assessments & Operations
- Compliance with regulatory guidelines
- Conduct security awareness training program
- Collaborate with external agencies

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's in Information Security
- Bachelor's in Information Technology /Computer Science
- CISSP or CISA certification
- Omani National with 3+ years experience in Cyber Security

To Apply
Send your resume to careers.oman@unimoni.om with the subject line 'Cyber Security Information Officer' or visit our career page for more details

Customer Care: 8007 2242
customercare.oman@unimoni.om

**PTC Rent A Car**

**Travel & Tours**
9345 3444

HOTEL FOR RENT/SALE
PRIME LOCATION IN QURUM HEIGHTS
LUXURY HOTEL



7 STORIED BUILDING WITH 44 SUITES, BREAKFAST AREA RESTAURANT & OTHER FACILITIES.

CONTACT NOS:
99643760 / 92192020

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

**Advertise with us.**

Contact us on: 99639264

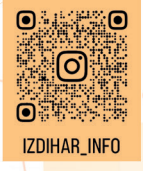
To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdihar_info izdihar.info

ازديهار izdihar



ART/LIFE



A R T

AL KHADRA SCULPTURE SYMPOSIUM GATHERS GLOBAL ARTISTS, EYES OMAN 'S FIRST-EVER CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE MUSEUM > 20

CHANGING WORLD

Save the world’s glaciers to save the planet: UN



Saving the world’s shrinking glaciers is a “survival strategy” for the planet, the UN said on Tuesday, a day after President Donald Trump announced the US would withdraw from the Paris climate accord.

United Nations agencies launched an appeal to scale up efforts to rescue the world’s 275,000 glaciers, which are rapidly melting away as the planet warms.

The UN’s educational, scientific and cultural agency Unesco and its World Meteorological Organization (WMO) weather, climate and water agency, pointed to the essential role these giant ice masses play, providing fresh water to more than two billion people globally. “The preservation of glaciers is essential for our ecosystems, our economies and our planetary health,” the WMO’s deputy chief Ko Barrett said as the agencies launched the International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation.

“Urgent and sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are vital,” she told the gathering in Geneva.

“But unfortunately we are heading in the wrong direction as levels of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases continue to rise.”

The world’s glaciers currently cover approximately 700,000 square kilometres (270,000 square miles).

Glaciers and ice sheets play a crucial role in regulating the global climate and store approximately 70 per cent of the world’s fresh water, which is essential for billions of people, the agencies said.

“Preserving our glaciers is therefore not just an environmental issue, it is a survival strategy for both people and the planet.” Barrett said.

But from the Alps to the Himalayas, these resources are melting away at an increasing pace under the effect of man-made climate change, sparked essentially by greenhouse gas emissions. Tuesday’s launch came after Trump announced he was withdrawing the United States — the world’s second-largest emitter after China — from the Paris Agreement.

Critics warn that the move undermines global cooperation on reducing fossil fuel use and could embolden major polluters like China and India to weaken their commitments. Global average temperatures already hit record highs in 2024, while over the past two years they temporarily surpassed a critical 1.5 degrees Celsius warming threshold for the first time. In 2023, glaciers suffered their largest volume loss in five decades, according to WMO. — AFP

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



FESTIVAL

Musician Cameron Leon performs with a didgeridoo during the Australia Day Dawn Reflection Ceremony in front of the Sydney Opera House. — AFP



EVENTS

Nguyen Dao Anh Khoi mixing sticky rice to make banh chung, a traditional Vietnamese lunar new year or Tet festival delicacy, in the frontyard of his house on the outskirts in Hanoi. — AFP



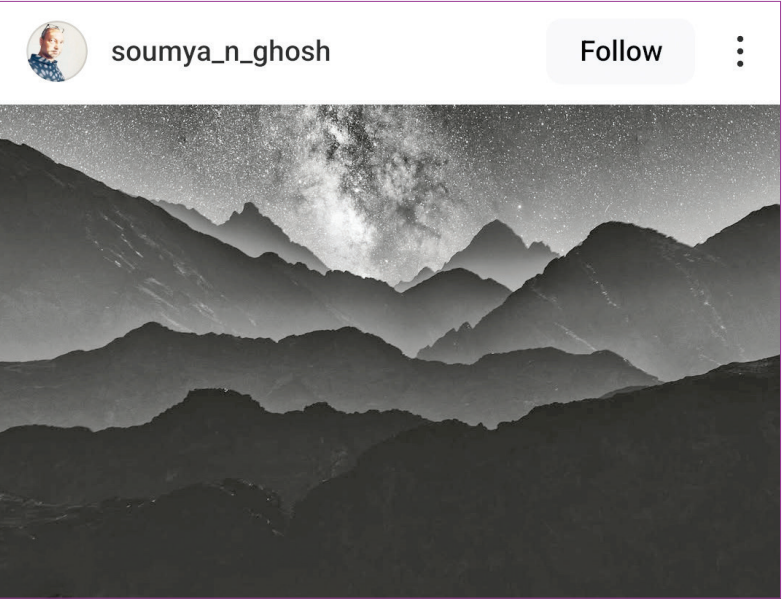
FILM

French Film director Bertrand Blier died aged 85 announced relatives on January 21, 2025. He is known for his distinctive style, often blending dark humour with themes of love and existentialism. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Appreciating Local Fauna



Beauty of Remote Places

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

Dior’s Kim Jones pares down embellishments for winter catwalk show



DIOR MEN’S artistic director Kim Jones kept embellishments to a minimum for his winter 2025-2026 catwalk show, putting the focus on silhouettes, including long, cape-like coats and cropped leather jackets. Held in a stark, indoor set at the Ecole Militaire in central Paris, the show for the LVMH-owned label kicked off with a series of all-black looks. Models descended a stark white staircase with slicked black hairdos and shiny patent leather shoes, some with blindfolds over their eyes. Jones added softness to the lineup with a silky, ivory blouse that was slit open in the back, tailored jackets in pale pink tones and a sprinkle of crystals on a few garments. There were also fabric bows on the back of coats and the tips of shoes.

Models criss-crossed the room before disappearing down a staircase leading underground. The front row stood to applaud Jones when he entered the set for his bow, greeting Dior CEO Delphine Arnault with a hug and kissing Helene Mercier, the wife of LVMH CEO Bernard Arnault, on both cheeks. Outside in the blustery weather, crowds gathered to see guests, who included actors Karry Wang, Joe Alwyn and Finnegan Oldfield, music producer DJ Snake and pianist Lang Lang. Paris Men’s Fashion Week runs through January 26 and is followed by Haute Couture shows. Globally, high-end labels have been grappling with a rare slowdown in appetite for fashion, with hopes pinned this year on the US market for growth. — Reuters



Young Danish chef eyes gold at gastronomy’s Olympic Games, the Bocuse d’Or

DANISH CHEF Sebastian Holberg Svendsgaard struggled at school as a child but loved competing — a skill he’ll put to the test when he goes for gold at gastronomy’s Olympic Games, the Bocuse d’Or. “Now it is my time to shine,” the 25-year-old shared before the competition in Lyon, France, on Monday involving 24 hopefuls. Holberg has been a member of Denmark’s Bocuse d’Or team since 2019 and won the European title in 2024. Raised in a small town southwest of Copenhagen, the youngest contestant in this year’s competition said he was often bored at school. “I was not good in school, not at all. I was in the bottom,” he said. “I was dyslexic, I had to get a lot of help. So I had to find my passion. I had to find something I was good at.” He spent a lot of time with his father, a butcher and amateur hunter and eventually his calling dawned on him. “When my dad shot a deer, at home we tried to cook it a fun way. I think I was 12 when I figured out, OK, I have to be a chef,” he recalled. Holberg left school in his mid-teens to enrol in culinary school. While on a study trip, he discovered his love of cooking competitions at student contests. “I remember the intensity... I said to myself, one day I have to be standing there.” Danish chefs have won the Bocuse d’Or three times, placing Denmark third in the overall standings behind France, with eight wins and Norway, with five. This year, the competition’s theme is “gastronomic heritage”. The requirements for the dishes the contestants must prepare are very detailed and restrictive this year, he noted. “But of course, the creativity can still be there.” — **MONTHS OF PREPARATION** — Holberg attributes Scandinavia’s culinary success to its chefs’ respect



for flavours. “For example, take an apple. We’ll figure out the best an apple can taste in respect of the apple. “But what makes apple better? Maybe a bit of horseradish, maybe a bit of kohlrabi. So we’re trying to keep the same flavour but give it the energy back,” he explained. For competition day, which lasts five and a half hours, Holberg insists he has “moved the limits for what is possible” — and has left nothing to chance. “We’re going to make all the food on the day but everything has been tested for seven months,” he said. “So by that time, the food is perfect. We know when we’re boiling a potato slice, we’ll slice it perfectly every time, three millimetres.” Christophe Parisot, France’s ambassador to Denmark, said he was impressed by the Danes’ dedication to the competition. “It’s interesting to see just how much effort Danes put into it,” he said. “They’ve understood the power and influence that gastronomy can have on a country,” he said, adding that haute cuisine “conveys a very positive image of France”.

— **VIKING ADAPTABILITY** — Francis Cardenau, a Denmark-based French chef and head of the Danish delegation at the Bocuse d’Or, said Denmark’s gastronomic breadth boils down to its chefs’ ability to adapt. “Scandinavians are very flexible, malleable. They’re Vikings. They’re used to travelling,” he said. “They go to other countries to see what tool boxes are being used, then they see if there is something they can bring back and use in their own tool box.” This curiosity and adaptability enables them to develop a food culture in a region that has little gastronomic tradition. “We are building the country’s culture,” Cardenau said. Once the Bocuse d’Or is over, Holberg has vowed to spend more time on life outside the kitchen. “This is the biggest thing I can do for myself and I can do in my professional career as a chef. I have to be good in Lyon!” he said. But after that, he will focus on a new chapter. “Afterwards, the new dream is to do everything for my son.” — AFP

FEATURES

AL KHADRA
SCULPTURE
SYMPOSIUM
GATHERS
GLOBAL
ARTISTS,
EYES OMAN’S
FIRST-EVER
CONTEMPORARY
SCULPTURE
MUSEUM

BY SIHAM AL SAIDI

UNDER THE endless blue skies of Al Sharqiyah North, the rhythmic sound of chisels striking stone resonates like a heartbeat, beckoning visitors to an extraordinary spectacle of art and culture.

The third edition of the Al Khadra International Sculpture Symposium has transformed this tranquil region into a vibrant open-air gallery, where 14 talented artists from 13 countries come together to breathe life into massive stone blocks. As they work tirelessly under the sun, each artist engages not only with the stone but also draws inspiration from the local culture and the shared human experience.

This annual celebration of sculpture, organised by the Al Khadra team and supervised by the Office of the Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, transcends mere artistry; it becomes a collage of cultural connection, sharing and storytelling.

Supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, alongside various public and private institutions, the symposium is emblematic of Oman’s broader vision to cultivate a creative and innovative society while projecting its cultural heritage to a global audience.

Artists from diverse corners of the world — including Russia, Spain, Argentina, Iran, India, Iraq, Egypt, Poland, Macedonia, Tunisia and Oman — convene, each bringing their unique techniques, traditions and philosophical perspectives.

Every sculpture crafted offers a glimpse into the artist’s inner world, resonating with themes universal to humanity: love, struggle, joy and resilience. The result is a powerful narrative about unity in diversity, constructed not just from stone, but from shared stories.

In the communal workspace, visitors observe with awe as artists transform austere, rough-hewn stones into exquisite forms, ranging from abstract creations that challenge perceptions to profoundly symbolic pieces steeped in cultural significance.

“Every sculpture is not just a piece of art but a voice that tells a story — a reflection of a culture, belief and experience,” explains Yousef al Rawahi, a key member of the supervision team.

“By inviting renowned sculptors to Oman, we’re exposing the world to the Sultanate of Oman’s rich heritage and timeless values, weaving a tapestry of shared understanding.”

Amidst the flurry of chiselling and the palpable excitement, the artists embark on personal journeys of discovery. Laura Marcos, sharing her enthusiasm for the symposium, believes that participating in the event has been illuminating. Not only has it been an opportunity to express creativity, but it has also allowed them, as



artists, to gain insight into Omani culture and its art. From the warmth of the people to the incredible flavours of the local cuisine, it’s a beautiful immersion.

Aleksandar Eftimovski and the other artists from abroad feel that collaboration lies at the heart of what they are doing here, with each learning from the other sculptors.

“Each cut I make carries a part of Omani spirit, intertwining our stories. Thus, the symposium becomes a living portrait of cultural exchange that transcends borders and barriers,” said one of the attendees.

As the days unfold, the sculptures begin to take shape, each unique piece standing as a testament to human creativity. Visitors flock to the site to witness the transformation; children giggle while adults show thoughtful appreciation as they study each piece. The symposium offers workshops where

attendees can try their hand at sculpting, guided by expert artists. This interactive experience enriches the festival atmosphere, creating a blend of admiration and active participation.

A local visitor, Ahmed, expresses his delight: “It’s been fascinating to see the different styles reflected in the sculptures! Each artist brings something special and it’s a rare opportunity to witness something so transformative.” This spirit of community engagement reinforces the symposium’s mission to make art accessible and relatable to everyone.

Looking ahead, the ambition of the Al Khadra International Sculpture Symposium doesn’t conclude with the final unveiling of the sculptures. The vision is to establish Oman’s first contemporary sculpture museum, a hall of creativity that will

showcase these masterpieces permanently. Abdulkarim al Rawahi, another key organiser, states, “This museum will not only enhance Oman’s appeal as a tourist destination but will position it as a global centre for cultural exchange. We hope it will inspire future generations and foster an ongoing dialogue about art.”

As the chisels are finally laid to rest and the dust settles, the sculptures stand proud, silent storytellers that will forever mark Oman’s cultural landscape. The Al Khadra International Sculpture Symposium transcends being merely an art event; it emerges as a celebration of creativity, resilience and unity. It reaffirms the idea that even the hardest stone can be shaped into something extraordinary — a poignant reminder of the beauty that emerges when cultures collide and connect.