

O M A N

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Observer

VOL. 44, NO. 364
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AN OMANI VIRTUOSO HITTING GLOBAL NOTES

OMAN WINS TWO WORLD CUPS



The Sultanate of Oman was crowned with two World Cups for digital photography in the Youth Under 16 category with 402 points, and the Youth Under 25 category with 348 points during the 42nd FIAP Youth Biennial. This edition of the Biennial, organised by the International Federation of Photographic Art, is hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain. **DETAILS ON P3**

INBRIEF

NATIONWIDE DIABETES TESTS ON NOV 14 AND 15

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the private sector, is all set to conduct nationwide diabetes screening and assessment to mark World Diabetes Day on November 14 and 15 in 122 locations around the country. With an ambitious target of 20,000 free diabetes screenings, the initiative stands as one of the largest public health awareness efforts in the nation. This year’s World Diabetes Day 2025 theme is “Diabetes and Well-Being.” The Director-General of Private Health Establishment, Dr Muhanna al Musalhi, said, “The initiative is to motivate the private sector to take care of the community. On the occasion of World Diabetes Day, several other government entities and health organisations across Oman are also launching awareness activities, reflecting a unified national effort to combat diabetes. The collaboration between public and private sectors underscores Oman’s proactive approach towards a healthier society.” **DETAILS ON P5**

OMAN MEMBER OF UNESCO’S MAB

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, was elected as a member of the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) affiliated with Unesco for the period from 2025 to 2029. This took place on the sidelines of the meetings of the 43rd session of the Unesco General Conference held in the city of Samarkand, the Republic of Uzbekistan. This election is a culmination of the Sultanate of Oman’s continuous efforts in supporting environmental sustainability initiatives, and its tangible contributions to promoting the balance between development requirements and the preservation of ecosystems, in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **DETAILS ON P2**

Royal Decree establishes maritime buffer zone reserve

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued Royal Decree No 96/2025 on establishing a Maritime Buffer Zone Reserve Around Al Hallaniyat Islands in the Governorate of Dhofar. Article (1) stipulates that a natural reserve named “Maritime Buffer Zone Reserve

Around Al Hallaniyat Islands in the Governorate of Dhofar” shall be established and that it shall be allocated the areas whose dimensions are indicated in the annex and map attached to this decree. Article (2) states that the Chairman of the Environment Authority shall issue the regulations

and decisions for the enforcement of this decree in coordination with the departments concerned on condition that the regulations and decisions include the method of management of the natural reserve and regulations organising public members’ entry to the sanctuary, as well as the prescribed fees, the

times of visit, permissible and banned activities therewith and administrative penalties applicable in each case. Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on the day following its date of publication. — ONA

Muscat airport sees 12% rise in passenger traffic

H A N D L E D 1 . 0 6 M I L L I O N P A S S E N G E R S I N O C T O B E R

THE Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Tuesday celebrated the seventh anniversary of the opening of Muscat International Airport and the 10th anniversary of the opening of Salalah Airport.

The airports constitute two national pillars of the air transport system in the Sultanate of Oman. They boast state-of-the-art infrastructure compatible with the latest global standards and technologies.

While celebrating the anniversaries, the CAA affirms its mandate to develop a safe and sustainable operating environment that enhances the competitiveness of the civil aviation sector and the attractiveness of the Sultanate of Oman as a leading regional aviation hub. This approach is in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 in achieving balanced and sustainable development.

Since its opening on November 11, 2018, Muscat International Airport has developed into a major hub in the system of air transport in the Sultanate of Oman.

Muscat International Airport registered more than 1.06 million passengers during October 2025, compared to 955,000 passengers in October 2024, posting a growth rate of 12 per cent.

In terms of air traffic, Muscat International Airport maintained stability in the number of flights during October 2025, during which



Muscat International Airport celebrated the seventh anniversary on Tuesday.

it operated approximately 8,000 flights.

As part of its efforts to boost the efficiency of infrastructure and raise the readiness of airports, the CAA opened the southern runway project at Muscat International Airport in 2024.

In 2024, Muscat International Airport bagged a number of international awards, including The Best Airport in the Middle East award for the category of 5-15 million passengers a year, The Best Staff in the Middle East award, The Easiest Airport Journey in the Middle East award and The Cleanest Airport in the Middle East award.

Meanwhile, the 10th anniversary

of the opening of Salalah Airport’s building on November 11, 2015 celebrates the airport’s position as a major hub connecting Dhofar Governorate with the rest of the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman and the world at large. The airport stands out as a basic supporter of tourism in Dhofar Governorate.

Salalah Airport saw 15 per cent growth in passenger traffic during October 2025, during which it dealt with more than 104,000 passengers, compared to 91,000 in October 2024. Aircraft traffic at the airport also rose by 8 per cent in October 2025, compared to aircraft traffic during October in 2024. — ONA

Angola celebrates 50th independence anniversary

LUANDA: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, participated in the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Angola, which were held in the capital, Luanda.

The ceremony was attended by a number of leaders, presidents, and senior officials from Angola and various countries around the world.

The Angolan President, João Lourenço, delivered a speech for the occasion, followed by popular parades and artistic and



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Angolan President João Lourenço on Tuesday.

cultural shows that highlighted Angola’s development journey since independence.

The Angolan military forces of various branches also performed diverse displays.

The Foreign Minister, in a statement on this occasion, conveyed the sincere sentiments of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Angola — its leadership, government and people — on this national anniversary.

He wished the Republic of Angola continued progress and prosperity.

SEE ALSO P2

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The vessel’s welcoming ceremony included folklore performances and the opening of an exhibition of handicrafts made by local families. — ONA

KHASAB PORT
RECEIVES TOURIST
CRUISE SHIP

KHASAB: The Port of Khasab in the Musandam Governorate on Tuesday received a cruise ship with 2,472 tourists onboard from different countries of the world, in addition to 952 crew members.

The vessel’s welcoming ceremony included folklore performances and the opening of an exhibition of handicrafts made by local families and owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Besides meeting the aspirations of tourists, the exhibition aimed to support entrepreneurs from the governorate. — ONA

MINISTRY, ARAB
MUSIC ACADEMY INK
COOPERATION PACT



The agreement aims to develop Arab and Omani music.

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth signed a cultural cooperation agreement with the Arab Music Academy on Tuesday.

The event was attended by Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, and Dr Kifah Fakhouri, Secretary-General of the Academy.

The agreement aims to develop and preserve Arab and Omani music, encourage joint festivals and research, and support young Omani musicians. It also promotes exchanging experts, books, and recordings to protect traditional Omani and Arab musical heritage.

Ruaa al Lamaki, musical supervisor at the ministry and Oman’s representative in the Arab Music Academy, said the agreement reflects a shared vision to promote Arab music.

She explained that it includes joint research, artist exchanges, and support for projects about the history of Arab music, as well as updating musical records and rhythms of Omani traditional arts.

“The ministry is also working on using traditional Omani music in new artistic productions and on encouraging cooperation between musicians, teachers, and students in Oman and across the Arab world,” she added.

Dr Hisham Sharaf, Director of the Academy, praised Oman’s leadership in preserving traditional music, saying the country was among the first in the Arab world to establish a Centre for Traditional Music, which later received international recognition.

He added that the new memorandum continues a long partnership that began in 2014 through joint conferences, research meetings and awards.

“The agreement focuses on safeguarding Arab traditional music and supporting Omani music institutions that play a key role in the wider Arab heritage.”

He also revealed plans to digitise traditional songs, engage young musicians and advance the project of writing the history of Arab music, stressing that Oman is a leading example in these efforts.

Oman elected member of Unesco council of MAB

TASHKENT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, was elected as a member of the International Coordinating Council of the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) affiliated with Unesco for the period from 2025 to 2029. This took place on the sidelines of the meetings of the 43rd session of the Unesco General Conference held in the city of Samarkand, the Republic of Uzbekistan.

This election is a culmination of the Sultanate of Oman’s continuous efforts in supporting environmental sustainability initiatives, and its tangible contributions to promoting the balance between development requirements and



The election is a culmination of Oman’s efforts in supporting environmental sustainability initiatives. — ONA

the preservation of ecosystems, in line with Oman Vision 2040 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This new international achievement reflects the leading position of the Sultanate of Oman in the fields of

environmental protection and the conservation of biological diversity. The Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB) aims to enhance scientific and research cooperation among member states, through expanding the scope of nature

reserves, conserving biodiversity, encouraging scientific research, and empowering youth and researchers through research grants provided by the programme.

The programme also contributes to raising environmental awareness and tackling climate change challenges by supporting sustainable innovations and solutions.

This international representation constitutes a strategic step that strengthens Oman’s presence on global environmental platforms and entrenches the role of the Sultanate of Oman as an active partner in efforts to protect the planet and achieve a balance between humanity and nature. — ONA

Oman and Angola review
political, investment ties

DELEGATED by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, participated in the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Angola, which were held in the capital, Luanda.

The Foreign Minister, in a statement on this occasion, conveyed the sincere sentiments of the Sultanate of Oman to the Republic of Angola — its leadership, government and people — on this national anniversary. He wished the Republic of Angola continued progress and prosperity.

Sayyid Badr affirmed the Sultanate of Oman’s keenness to strengthen bonds of friendship and economic partnership, and to expand horizons of cooperation in various fields, in a way that serves mutual interests and achieves sustainable development for the two friendly countries and peoples.

Earlier on Tuesday, Sayyid Badr met with Tête António, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of Angola.

The meeting took place within the framework of the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Angola, held in the capital, Luanda.

During the meeting, they reviewed the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Angola and ways to develop them in various political, economic and investment fields. Particular focus was given to the sectors of energy, minerals, maritime transport and



The ceremony was attended by a number of leaders, presidents, and senior officials from Angola and various countries around the world. — ONA

logistics services, in addition to discussing cooperation opportunities in the fields of agriculture, education and diplomatic training.

The two sides affirmed the existence of promising opportunities to enhance cooperation in these sectors to achieve mutual benefit and support the two countries’ direction towards economic diversification and strengthening partnerships with friendly nations.

The meeting also involved a follow-up on the outcomes of the visit made by João Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, to the Sultanate of Oman in December 2024. That visit constituted a significant milestone in the trajectory of relations between the two countries,

contributing to the expansion of cooperation areas and the activation of communication channels between government entities and the private sector. The importance of building upon the achievements of that visit was stressed.

Both sides emphasised the importance of continuing coordination and consultation between the Foreign Ministries in both countries to follow up on existing areas of cooperation and expand them to include new priority sectors.

They also agreed to exchange views on regional and international issues of common concern to enhance the two countries’ contribution to supporting stability and development at the regional and international levels.

Al Din Festival returns as global cultural bridge

SAUD AL ANSARI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

Oman is once again preparing to welcome the world to its cultural stage as the Al Din International Festival returns in its fifth edition under the theme ‘Welcome World ... to the Sultanate of Oman’.

The festival, held from November 24 to 30, is organised by the Al Din Theatre Troupe for Culture and Arts in strategic partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Social Development, Oman Automobile Association, with the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah serving as the official tourism guest.

For six days, Muscat will transform into a vibrant global arena for creativity, dialogue and artistic expression, celebrating the human spirit and the transformative power of theatre. This year’s edition



For six days, Muscat will transform into a vibrant global arena for creativity, dialogue and artistic expression.

underscores the role of theatre as a bridge between cultures - an artistic space where ideas meet, perspectives are exchanged and human stories are retold with depth and emotion. It highlights Oman’s deeply rooted values of openness, coexistence and cultural understanding, presenting theatre not only as a performing art, but as a tool for dialogue, enlightenment and the appreciation of beauty. Through

this vision, Oman reaffirms its position as a welcoming home for creativity and a hub for meaningful cultural exchange.

Mohammed bin Salem al Nabhani, Chairman of Al Din Theatre Troupe and President of the Festival, emphasised the festival’s enduring mission, stating that since the inaugural edition in 2015, the aim has been to present an Omani message to the world - one

that views theatre as a way of life rather than a simple stage performance. He noted that this year further reaffirms that Oman is not merely a destination for artistic activity, but a home that embraces creators from all backgrounds and opens new horizons for them to express beauty in its many forms.

Idris al Nabhani, Assistant Head of Al Din Theatre Troupe, stated that the selection process for the participating performances in the Al Din International Festival was a major challenge, explaining that the committee received around 290 theatre submissions from 27 countries — a number that reflects the festival’s growing international appeal.

He noted that this large volume of entries placed a significant responsibility on the selection committee, which had to carefully evaluate and shortlist the works based on strict criteria.

SHORTTAKES



The meeting addressed means of cooperation between the legislative councils of the GCC. — ONA

Majlis Ash’shura participates in coordination meeting

MANAMA: A delegation from the Majlis Ash’shura participated on Wednesday in the 22nd meeting of the Parliamentary Coordination and Foreign Relations Committee, with the attendance of representatives from the legislative councils of the GCC states in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The meeting addressed joint Gulf issues, enhancing means of cooperation between the legislative councils of the GCC states and the European Parliament, and developing strategies to increase the momentum of Gulf parliamentary cooperation with various parliaments worldwide. The Majlis Ash’shura delegation participating in the meetings comprised Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash’shura, and the following council members: Khamis bin Hamdan al Ghafri, Sultan bin Humaid al Hosni, Dr Talal bin Said al Maharbi, Abdulaziz bin Hamdan al Balushi and Ali bin Musallam Ghawas.

It is worth noting that this periodic meeting, held by the GCC legislative councils at the level of their heads, comes within the framework of these councils’ endeavour to support the process of joint Gulf parliamentary work, and to strengthen avenues of cooperation and coordination among the GCC legislative councils. This contributes to unifying positions and visions regarding Gulf, Arab and international issues, and supports efforts for integration and legislative development in the member states. — ONA

‘SUR AL HILAL ’ WALL COMPLETED



AL SUWAIQ: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has completed the maintenance of the ‘Sur Al Hilal’ boundary wall in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq, Governorate of Al Batinah North. The project, which also included the restoration of the adjoining defensive towers and internal corridors, was carried out in pursuance of the ministry’s programme to preserve historical sites in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

UAE-Oman forum brings young artists together; showcases creativity

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

The Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in the Sultanate of Oman, in collaboration with Bait Al Zubair Foundation, hosted the UAE-Oman Youth Arts Forum recently at Bait Al Zubair in Muscat. The event brought together young artists from both countries to showcase their paintings, sculptures, and photographs that celebrate culture, creativity, and friendship between the UAE and Oman. The opening ceremony was attended by Shaikh Mohammed bin Maktoum bin Rashid al Maktoum, UAE Ambassador to Oman, and Zubair bin Mohammed al Zubair, Vice-Chairman of the Zubair Corporation. In his speech, Shaikh Mohammed said, “The forum highlights the deep cultural connections and shared heritage between the UAE and Oman.” He expressed gratitude to Bait Al Zubair and all partner universities for nurturing young talents and enhancing the creative landscape in both nations. He also mentioned the UAE’s ongoing support for the arts and youth through

Oman wins two World Cups at FIAP Youth Biennial

MANAMA: The Sultanate of Oman was crowned with two World Cups for digital photography in the Youth Under 16 category with 402 points, and the Youth Under 25 category with 348 points during the 42nd FIAP Youth Biennial.

This edition of the Biennial, organised by the International Federation of Photographic Art, is hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain. On the individual level, the photographers achieved excellent results in the Youth Under 16 category. Amir bin Mohsin al Hajri won the FIAP Silver Medal, while Layan al Battashi and Yassin bin Mohsin al Hajri won the Bronze Medal.

Meanwhile, Wahab bin Ibrahim al Kindi won the FIAP Silver Medal in the Youth Under 25 category. The victory is a national achievement added to the Sultanate of Oman’s record of successes in international forums, and reflects



The victory is a national achievement added to Oman’s record of successes in international forums. — ONA



the advanced artistic level reached by Omani photographers in the art of photography. The win reaffirms the Ministry of Culture, Sports and

Youth’s commitment to supporting photographers and encouraging them to showcase their talents and artistic creativity, through

participation in international competitions and forums that contribute to enhancing the global presence of Omani youth. — ONA

Sohar awards for research and criticism presented



Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy presented the awards to the winners in Nizwa.



AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, NOV 11

THE Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth announced the winners of the third edition of the Sohar award for research and criticism during a ceremony held at the Nizwa Cultural Centre on Monday. The awards were presented by Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture. Dr Habib bin Marhoon al Hadi won first place for his study titled “The Biography of Ibn Madad: A Critical Study”. Dr Muhyiddin al Nadi Abd Abu al Izz came second with his research “Circling the Eritrean Sea is a source of ancient Omani history”. The third

place went to Salim bin Ahmed al Kathiri for his study entitled “Constructing Foreign Knowledge about Oman: The Reports of the Ship Palliners, a British Source for the Study of the Dhofar Region”. The Sohar award was launched in 2021 with the blessing of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth. It is the first of its kind in the Arab world dedicated to research and critical studies. It aims to create an inspiring environment for creativity and to enhance Oman’s cultural leadership locally and internationally. Abdullah bin Mohammed al Harthy, Director-General of Knowledge and Cultural Development at the Ministry, said, “The award reflects the ministry’s strategic vision to support scientific and cultural research,

empowering researchers and enriching knowledge in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.” “This year’s edition focused on critical readings of sources related to Omani history. Submissions were evaluated by a panel of prominent academics in history and literary criticism, following rigorous international standards to ensure quality and fairness,” he added. “The Sohar award has strengthened the presence of Omani literature and culture regionally and globally,” Al Harthy said. The award continues to receive increasing attention and participation from researchers and scholars across the Arab world, reflecting its growing reputation and contribution to enriching Arab and Omani cultural studies.



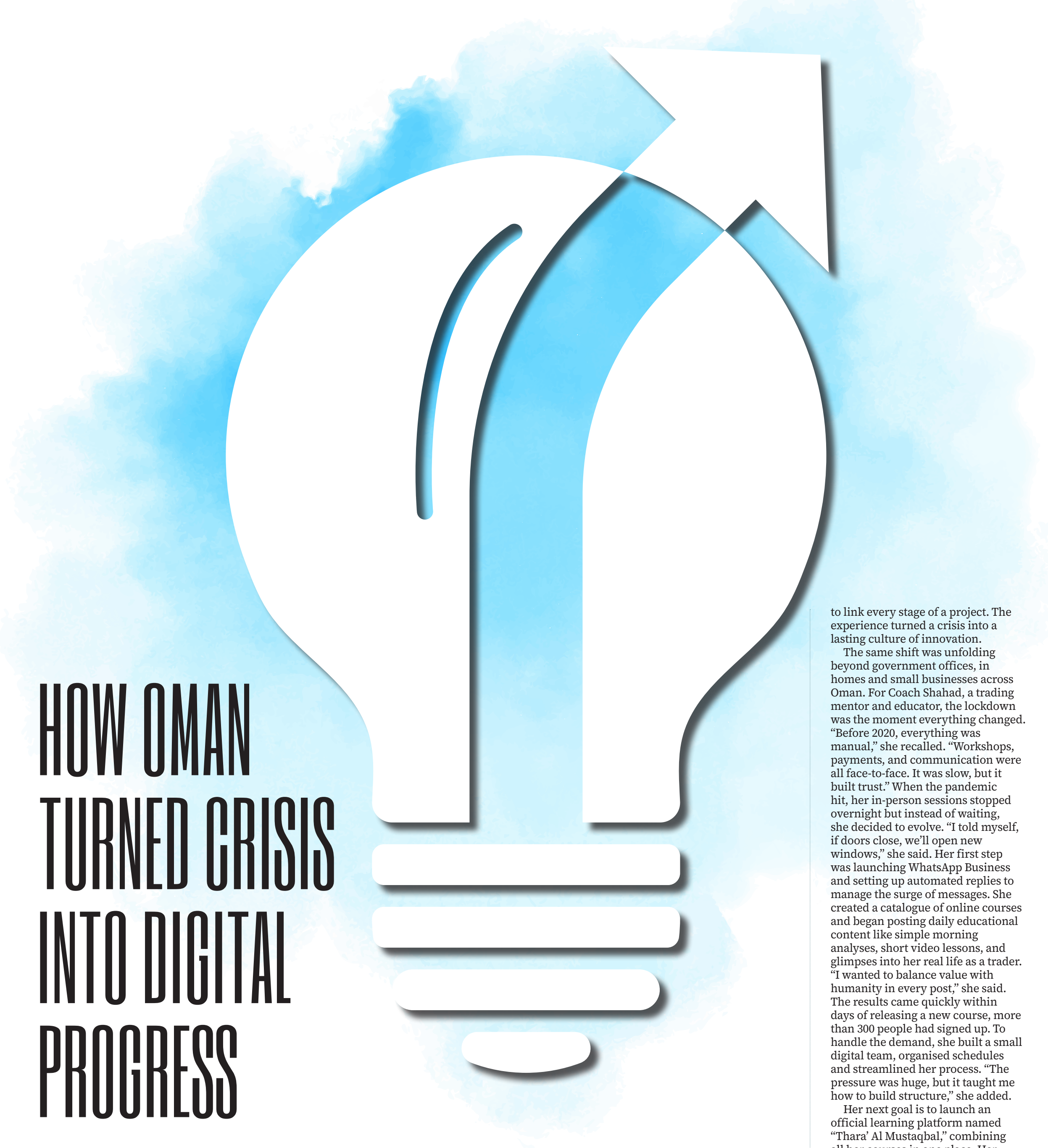
The event brought together young artists from both countries to showcase their paintings, sculptures, and photographs that celebrate culture, creativity, and friendship between the UAE and Oman.

new cultural initiatives and national programmes. Dr Mona al Salmi, Director-General of Bait Al Zubair, described the event as a

platform for dialogue and creative exchange among young talents. She mentioned that the forum featured over one hundred works of art and would continue for two more

days with discussions and workshops for students and artists. From Oman, Manal al Habsi, a student at Sultan Qaboos University, showcased modern ink drawings inspired by traditional Omani jewellery and patterns. “Participating in this forum meant more than just displaying my work,” she said. “It was an opportunity to present our Omani identity in a contemporary way and to understand how art can unite people across borders.” Among the participants, Wadeema al Dhanhani, from United Arab Emirates University, presented a painting inspired by Emirati heritage and national symbols. She expressed that her work reflects pride in her country’s heritage and her joy in participating in an event that allows her to share the UAE’s culture, celebrating creativity and friendship between the two nations. The Youth Arts Forum showcased how art continues to unite people, fostering friendship and understanding between the two nations through creativity and a shared vision.

SPOTLIGHT



HOW OMAN TURNED CRISIS INTO DIGITAL PROGRESS

MOHAMED AL BATTASHI

WHEN the world went into lockdown, life in Oman didn’t stop, it simply took a new route. What once required a counter visit could now be done with a few taps online, from signatures on paper to digital approvals, and from office desks to home computers.

The pandemic didn’t silence activity; it redirected it. Behind closed doors, a new kind of motion began, one that changed how people worked, learned and connected. Across government offices and private businesses, Oman witnessed a remarkable rise in digital creativity. Two stories, one from the Ministry of Education and another from a young entrepreneur that show how necessity became the mother of change, leading to new ways of

working that are now part of daily life.

For the Ministry of Education, the lockdown was not just a health challenge but a test of how to keep work moving.

Construction and maintenance projects across Oman suddenly faced standstills. Yet, as Mazin bin Khalid al Battashi, Project Engineer at the Directorate-General of Projects and Services, recalls, the crisis pushed innovation forward.

“With movement restricted and site visits nearly impossible, we had to rethink our entire supervision model,” he said.

The team turned to virtual tools like Microsoft Teams and Zoom, creating a remote collaboration system that allowed real-time communication between the central office and site teams in different governorates.

A project management platform

called ClickUp became their digital control room, where engineers could approve materials, assign tasks, and monitor progress with photos and 360-degree videos. “Digital transformation was not a luxury, it was a necessity,” he said.

Cameras were distributed to capture panoramic site footage, allowing supervisors to “visit” locations virtually and provide instant feedback. According to Mazin, what began as an emergency solution has now become a permanent practice.

“Technology can truly bridge the gap between field and office,” he said, noting that digital documentation brought new levels of accuracy and accountability. Today, the ministry continues to expand these tools toward a fully integrated Project Management Information System, with artificial intelligence and Building Information Modeling

to link every stage of a project. The experience turned a crisis into a lasting culture of innovation.

The same shift was unfolding beyond government offices, in homes and small businesses across Oman. For Coach Shahad, a trading mentor and educator, the lockdown was the moment everything changed. “Before 2020, everything was manual,” she recalled. “Workshops, payments, and communication were all face-to-face. It was slow, but it built trust.” When the pandemic hit, her in-person sessions stopped overnight but instead of waiting, she decided to evolve. “I told myself, if doors close, we’ll open new windows,” she said. Her first step was launching WhatsApp Business and setting up automated replies to manage the surge of messages. She created a catalogue of online courses and began posting daily educational content like simple morning analyses, short video lessons, and glimpses into her real life as a trader. “I wanted to balance value with humanity in every post,” she said. The results came quickly within days of releasing a new course, more than 300 people had signed up. To handle the demand, she built a small digital team, organised schedules and streamlined her process. “The pressure was huge, but it taught me how to build structure,” she added.

Her next goal is to launch an official learning platform named “Thara’ Al Mustaqbal,” combining all her courses in one place. Her message to young entrepreneurs carries the same resilience that shaped her journey: “Don’t start a business to prove you’re successful; start because you want to make an impact. The market doesn’t reward the fastest instead it rewards those who stay consistent.”

Oman’s digital transformation, born out of crisis, now stands as a lasting mindset, one that values creativity, connection and adaptability. From offices to online platforms, the pandemic showed that progress doesn’t stop when the world slows down, it simply finds new paths. As Al Battashi reminds us, “Digital transformation is not about replacing people with technology, it’s about empowering people through technology.” His words capture the spirit of a nation that turned challenge into opportunity, building a future where innovation is not an exception, but a way of life.

“
Digital transformation is not about replacing people with technology, it’s about empowering people through technology.”
MAZIN BIN KHALID AL BATTASHI
Ministry of Education

SHORT TAKES

RNO CHIEF RECEIVES CTF-150 OFFICIAL



MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), received at his office Commodore Fahad bin Sundeih al Juaid, Commander of Combined Task Force 150 (CTF-150), and his accompanying military delegation, who is currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, they discussed viewpoints on a number of matters, especially in maritime fields, in addition to discussing various other topics. — **ONA**

JUSTICE ROOTED IN INNOVATION



The Omani judiciary is systematically building a sophisticated justice system characterised by operational efficiency. — **ONA**

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is achieving remarkable advancements in its judicial and legislative framework, realising the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in establishing a modern state governed by institutional integrity and legal certainty. These developments fundamentally support Oman Vision 2040’s commitment to justice and the rule of law.

The Omani judiciary is systematically building a sophisticated justice system characterised by operational efficiency, accelerated proceedings, and streamlined processes, effectively responding to national development goals and global economic dynamics.

The inauguration of the Investment and Commerce Court - the nation’s first specialised commercial judiciary - marks a strategic milestone in Oman’s judicial evolution. Commencing operations in the 2025-2026 judicial year, this institution demonstrates Oman’s unwavering commitment to creating a progressive legal framework that prioritises legislative excellence, judicial oversight and procedural efficiency. This specialised court system guarantees integrity while simplifying litigation access and consolidating regulatory supervision. The establishment of a dedicated commercial judiciary represents a crucial investor safeguard, complementing Oman’s comprehensive framework of investment-friendly regulations and business facilitation measures.

By ensuring that commercial disputes are adjudicated by specialised judges, it enhances judicial precision and strengthens confidence in Oman’s legal system. This judicial specialisation provides assurance to investors and litigants through predictable judicial performance, protects stakeholder rights. — **ONA**

Green innovation hackathon launched in Al Dakhiliyah

MANAH: The activities of the Green Innovation Hackathon competition began on Tuesday at the Oman Across Ages Museum in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The hackathon is titled “Creative Solutions for Recycling Glass and Marble Waste”.

The competition is organised by the Directorate of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in the governorate, in partnership with a number of private sector companies, and will continue for three days.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce,



The competition includes workshops to transform ideas into applications.

Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry. It features the participation of 36 female students from the University of Nizwa and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Nizwa. The hackathon competition includes a number of workshops to transform ideas into applications

and create new, environmentally friendly products.

The hackathon is expected to produce innovative ideas ready for development and implementation in the field of recycling glass and marble waste and initial prototypes or preliminary designs for the submitted ideas. It will

also qualify students in the fields of environmental innovation, sustainable entrepreneurship, solution design and prototype building.

The hackathon aims to find sustainable creative solutions for recycling glass and marble waste and converting them into products of economic and environmental value; identify practical solutions to reduce environmental pollution resulting from the accumulation of inorganic waste like glass and marble and build bridges of cooperation between governmental, academic and community entities in supporting environmental innovation. — **ONA**

Seminar looks at concerns of water scarcity, climate

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, NOV 11

AS Global concerns about climate change and water scarcity continue to rise, Oman is stepping up efforts to preserve its vital natural resources through sustainable practices.

In line with the nation’s vision to ensure long-term environmental balance, the Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Al Batinah North organised the Water Security Seminar to highlight the importance of water sustainability and explore alternatives to groundwater.

Held under the auspices of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, the event brought together representatives from government bodies, private institutions and local communities to discuss sustainable water management solutions.

The first panel discussion, ‘Sustainable Water Wealth’, addressed the role of modern technologies in maintaining groundwater sustainability. Experts discussed innovative approaches such as advanced irrigation systems, water recycling and the integration of renewable energy in water extraction. The session emphasised the need to reduce dependence on groundwater and promote the use of treated wastewater and desalinated water as viable alternatives.

The second session focused on



Experts discussed innovative approaches such as water recycling and integration of renewable energy in water extraction.

‘Investment Opportunities in the Water Sector’, highlighting the potential for sustainable economic growth through water-focused projects. Participants explored challenges facing investors and identified promising opportunities in agricultural and industrial water management within the governorate.

Ahmed al Maqbali, a local farmer from Saham, expressed his appreciation for the initiative. “This seminar opened our eyes to new ways of using water more efficiently,” he said. “As farmers, we depend on groundwater, but now we realise the importance of adopting modern irrigation

systems and preserving this precious resource for future generations.”

Al Kindi also underscored the shared responsibility of protecting water resources as part of Oman’s environmental sustainability goals under Oman Vision 2040. He commended the participants for fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors in building a sustainable water future.

The seminar concluded with a ceremony honouring participants and contributors for their efforts in advancing water sustainability and supporting national resilience against environmental challenges.

Defence studies project concludes

MUSCAT: The Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, represented by the Centre for Strategic and Defence Studies, concluded the Scientific Research and Strategic Studies Project for the year 2025 in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and A’Sharqiyah University.

The closing ceremony of



The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Maj Gen Saif bin Sulaiman al Shukaili. — **ONA**

the project was held under the auspices of Maj Gen Saif bin Sulaiman al Shukaili, Assistant Head of the Internal Security Service for Administrative Support, and attended by Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

The closing ceremony, which was held at Al Shafaq Club of

the Sultan’s Armed Forces, included a speech by Brigadier Nasser al Qatabi, Head of the Centre for Strategic and Defence Studies. He spoke about the Scientific Research and Strategic Studies Project for 2025 and the importance of scientific research for contribution to knowledge and finding innovative solutions. — **ONA**

Nationwide diabetes screening tests on November 14 and 15

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, NOV 11

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the private sector, is all set to conduct nationwide diabetes screening and assessment to mark World Diabetes Day on November 14 and 15 in 122 locations around the country.

With an ambitious target of 20,000 free diabetes screenings, the initiative stands as one of the largest public health awareness efforts in the nation. This

year’s World Diabetes Day 2025 theme is “Diabetes and Well-Being.”

The Director-General of Private Health Establishment, Dr Muhanna al Musalhi, said, “The initiative is to motivate the private sector to take care of the community. On the occasion of World Diabetes Day, several other government entities and health organisations across Oman are also launching awareness activities, reflecting a unified national effort to combat diabetes.



Dr Muhanna al Musalhi, MoH’s Director-General of Private Health Establishment, addressing the media in Muscat on Tuesday.

The collaboration between public and private sectors underscores Oman’s proactive approach towards a healthier society.” He pointed out that the data

collected will be handed over to the Ministry of Health in complete confidentiality. This year’s theme indicates that diabetes care is not just about controlling blood sugar. It is

also about helping people feel healthy, happy and supported in their daily lives. Good well-being means having access to the right food, medicine, exercise and emotional support.

“Our national diabetes screening and risk assessment campaign is in line with the goal of this year’s theme,” said Abdul Latheef, Managing Director of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals, who is also the board member of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and

Industry. Dr P A Mohamed, Managing Director of Badr Al Samaa Group of Hospitals, said, “The trust of the people has made us grow into the largest healthcare provider in the Sultanate of Oman. This trust was built by providing exceptional care to the patients and undertaking such initiatives in the interest of the public. We feel it as our moral responsibility to contribute to the improved health of the community. And we will undertake more such initiatives in future.”

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Firefighters douse a car at the suicide blast site, in Islamabad. — AFP

PAKISTANI TALIBAN CLAIM DEADLY BOMB ATTACK

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani Taliban claimed a suicide bombing that killed at least 12 people in Islamabad on Tuesday, a rare attack by the group on the country's capital. The first such attack to hit the city in years sent people fleeing in panic, leaving shattered glass and charred vehicles on the road outside district court buildings. "Judges, lawyers and officials who carried out rulings under Pakistan's laws were targeted," the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) said, threatening more attacks in the country.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said 12 people were killed and 27 wounded when the assailant detonated explosives near a police vehicle. A lawyer at the scene, Mohammed Shahzad Butt, said there was a "massive blast". "Everyone started running inside out of panic. I have seen at least five dead bodies lying at the front gate," he said.

The prime minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, earlier accused the TTP and others from the country's Balochistan region, both of whom have carried out attacks mostly on security forces. Islamabad has largely been spared major militant violence in recent years, with the last suicide attack occurring in December 2022. — AFP

TEEN RESCUED DAYS AFTER SHIPWRECK OFF MALAYSIA



A Malaysian rescuer provides food to Rohingya migrant Iman Shorif, in Langkawi. — AFP

LANGKAWI: Rescued after days stranded on a Malaysian island, weak and shaken Iman Shorif recounted how he watched a child drown when their boat carrying migrants from Myanmar capsized. Iman, who is 18 and from Myanmar's persecuted Rohingya minority, survived last week's shipwreck off the Thai-Malaysian coast that killed at least 26 people. He was picked up by a Malaysian rescue boat in a bay on Langkawi island, five days after the boat sank close to the maritime border between Thailand and Malaysia.

Speaking to journalists, Iman said the boat journey "started from Buthidaung", a small township in Myanmar's Rakhine state, and had gone on "for five to six days" before it went down. When the boat sank, "I saw one death... it was a child, I saw him drowning," said the visibly weak teenager.

Rescuer Mohd Zamri Abdul Ghani said Iman was spotted when he waved with a polystyrene board. "We were really moved when we found him... Because it's already the fourth day" of the search mission, Zamri told journalists. — AFP

OVERNIGHT ROBBERY

Thieves steal gold from Syria's museum



Thieves made off with several ancient gold ingots from Syria's national museum in Damascus, a security source close to the institution's management said. The robbery took place overnight from Sunday to Monday, with the source saying that "six items were stolen from the so-called classical wing" — one of the museum's most important sections, home to artefacts from the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine eras. They described the items as gold ingots. — AFP

IRAQIS VOTE IN GENERAL ELECTION AT A CRUCIAL REGIONAL MOMENT

BAGHDAD: Iraqis began voting for a new parliament at a pivotal time for the country and the wider region, in an election that both Iran and the United States will be closely watching. Iraq, which has long been a fertile land for proxy wars, has only recently regained a sense of stability, as it tries to move past decades of war since the US-led invasion.

No new names have recently emerged, with the same politicians remaining at the forefront. Just minutes after the polls opened at 07:00 am, several senior politicians

voted at the luxurious Al Rasheed hotel in the capital, Baghdad.

In Baghdad, the streets, adorned with election posters, were largely deserted except for security forces, though polling stations in some neighbourhoods drew a fair number of voters. More than 21 million people are eligible to vote for the 329-seat parliament, but there are fears of a low turnout, which would reflect voters' apathy and scepticism. Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al Sudani, who hopes for a second term, is likely to score a significant win. Sudani rose

to power in 2022 with the backing of the Coordination Framework, a ruling alliance of parties and factions. But with a single party or list unlikely to achieve an outright majority, he must win the support of whichever coalition can secure enough allies to become the largest bloc. Although they run separately, parties within the Coordination Framework are expected to reunite after elections and pick the next premier. Sudani has touted his success in keeping Iraq relatively unscathed by the turmoil engulfing the Middle East. — AFP

Indian PM calls deadly Delhi blast ‘conspiracy’

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called a deadly car explosion in the heart of the capital that killed at least eight people a "conspiracy", vowing those responsible will face justice. Police are yet to give exact details of what caused Monday's blast near the historic Red Fort, one of India's most well-known landmarks, and the site of the annual prime minister's Independence Day speech.

It is the first significant security incident since April 22, when 26 mainly civilians were killed at the tourist site of Pahalgam in Indian-administered Kashmir.



Security personnel work at the site of an explosion, in the old quarters of Delhi. — Reuters

speaking at a conference in New Delhi, said that investigative agencies were "conducting a swift and thorough inquiry" and that the findings "will soon be made public". Singh, echoing Modi's words, said, "Those responsible for this tragedy will be brought to justice, and will not be spared under any circumstances."

Senior Delhi police officer Raja Banthia said they were investigating the blast in the crowded Old Delhi quarter of the city, under anti-terrorism laws. New Delhi's deputy chief fire officer A K Malik said shortly after the explosion that eight people had been killed.

The Press Trust of India news agency reported on Tuesday that

the death toll had risen to 12, although that figure has not been confirmed.

Witnesses described how the car exploded in traffic and how people caught up in the surge of flames were set on fire.

"I saw the car explode while it was moving," said Dharmindra Dhaga, 27. "People were on fire and we tried to save them... Cars and people were burning — people inside the cars were burning," he said.

"I was telling the public to save them, rescue them and get them out. The public was busy making videos and taking photos."

The emergency ward at Delhi's LNJP hospital was chaotic after the explosion as wounded people streamed in and doctors rushed to treat them.

A woman broke down outside the ward where her husband was being treated. "I can't bear to see him like that," she said as her brother tried to console her.

Meanwhile, authorities are pursuing multiple lines of inquiry after a car explosion in New Delhi killed several people, including a possible terrorist motive, investigators said.

Several sites across the city have been searched, broadcaster NDTV and news agency PTI reported, while security has been stepped up at the capital's international airport and metro stations.

Forensic experts are still working to determine the exact cause of the explosion, which took place on Monday evening. — Agencies



ISRAEL BLOCKS GAZA CHILDREN 'S VACCINATION

GENEVA: Unicef said on Tuesday that essential items, including syringes to vaccinate children and bottles for baby formula, are being denied entry into Gaza by Israel, preventing aid agencies from reaching those in need in the war-devastated territory. As Unicef undertakes a mass children's vaccination campaign with a fragile ceasefire in place, it said it faces serious challenges getting 1.6 million syringes and solar-powered fridges to store vaccine vials into Gaza. The syringes have awaited customs clearance since August, Unicef said.

"Both the syringes and the... refrigerators are considered dual-use by Israel and these items we're finding very hard to get them through clearances and inspections, yet they are urgent," Unicef spokesperson Ricardo Pires said. Unicef launched the first of three rounds of catch-up immunisations on Sunday to reach over 40,000 children under three who missed routine vaccines following of war in Gaza. — Reuters

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

Turkish military plane crashes on border



A Turkish military cargo plane crashed on the border between Georgia and Azerbaijan as it was flying back home, Türkiye's defence ministry said. "Our C-130 military cargo plane, which took off from Azerbaijan to return home, has crashed at the Georgia-Azerbaijan border," the ministry said, indicating a search and rescue operation was taking place but without saying whether there were any casualties or how many people were on board. — AFP

COUNTING CASUALTIES

Philippines typhoon death toll climbs to 25



Rescuers using backhoes and chainsaws began digging the Philippines out from the devastation of Typhoon Fung-wong, as floodwaters receded in hundreds of villages and the storm's death toll climbed to 25. Fung-wong had weakened into a severe tropical storm even as it began dumping rain on neighbouring Taiwan ahead of an expected Wednesday landfall. In coastal Isabela province, a town of 6,000 remained cut off from help. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Members of the Bolivarian group stand in formation during a military training, in Caracas. — Reuters

VENEZUELA ANNOUNCES MILITARY DEPLOYMENT TO COUNTER US PRESENCE

CARACAS: Venezuela on Tuesday announced what it called a major, nationwide military deployment to counter the US naval presence off its coast. Washington is carrying out a military campaign in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific, deploying naval and air forces it says are aimed at curbing drug trafficking. But the operation has sparked fears in Caracas that the ouster of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro is the ultimate US goal.

The Venezuelan Defence Ministry issued a statement on Tuesday announcing a “massive deployment” of land, sea, air, river and missile forces as well as civilian militia. VTV, the state TV channel, broadcast footage of military leaders giving speeches in several states.

Last week, US President Donald Trump played down the prospect of going to war with Venezuela but he said Maduro’s days were numbered. The United States has also ordered the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group to Latin America, deployed F-35 stealth warplanes to Puerto Rico and currently has six US Navy ships in the Caribbean, as part of what it calls counter-narcotics efforts. — AFP

HUNDREDS DEMONSTRATE IN BELGRADE



Hundreds of people staged a demonstration in Belgrade on Tuesday against the planned demolition of a former army headquarters to make way for a luxury hotel complex that US President Donald Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner wants to build. The student-led demonstration came four days after the Serbian parliament voted a special law which classifies the redevelopment of the bombed out Yugoslav Army headquarters as an urgent project, giving it faster access to permits. — AFP

UK COUNCIL LOSES BID TO REMOVE ASYLUM SEEKERS

LONDON: A British regional council lost its bid to have asylum-seekers removed from a hotel targeted by protests after a resident was charged with physical assault, a ruling that will do little to ease pressure on the government over immigration. Epping Forest District Council took legal action to stop asylum-seekers being housed in the Bell Hotel in Epping, about 20 miles north of London, arguing the hotel’s owner did not have planning permission to use it to accommodate them.

The injunction application was opposed by Britain’s Home Office

(interior ministry), which argued that an injunction requiring their removal could have a substantial impact on its ability to fulfil its legal duty to provide accommodation, and could provoke further chaotic protests. Judge Tim Mould ruled that the current use of the Bell Hotel was in breach of planning law but refused to grant an injunction, citing in part the “continuing need to source contingency accommodation for asylum-seekers from hotels”.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s Labour government plans to close

all such hotels by the next election, due in 2029. More than 30,000 migrants were housed in hotels according to government figures up to the end of June. A Home Office spokesperson said Tuesday’s ruling would allow the government to do that “as part of an orderly, planned and sustained programme”. But the court’s decision and the Home Office’s involvement in the case drew criticism of Starmer’s government from political opponents who said it put the rights of illegal immigrants over concerns of local people.

— Reuters

Russia says foiled plot to hijack missile-carrying jet

RUSSIA said it had foiled an Anglo-Ukrainian plot to hijack a military jet carrying a hypersonic missile which they planned to take to Romania in a “large-scale provocation”. Kyiv rejected the accusations and accused Russia of spreading “propaganda”. Russia, which launched its full-scale offensive against Ukraine in 2022, regularly accuses Kyiv and its European allies of brazen sabotage operations on its soil, often without providing evidence.

Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) said it had “uncovered and thwarted an operation by the... Ukrainian Ministry of Defence and its British supervisors to steal a Russian MiG-31 high-altitude supersonic fighter jet, which carries the Kinzhal hypersonic air-launched missile”. It accused Kyiv of trying to “recruit Russian pilots” by promising them \$3 million and citizenship of a Western country.

The FSB said it thwarted a plan by Kyiv to have the plane flown towards a Nato base in the Romanian city of Constanta on the Black Sea, where it would have been “shot down” by air-defences. State media published an FSB video showing a Russian soldier, face concealed, saying that he had received an email from a Ukrainian intelligence agent trying to recruit him. Kyiv and Bucharest rejected the accusations.

The “spread of such false accusations is a typical tactic of Russian intelligence services,” Ukraine’s Center for Countering Disinformation said on social media. It said Moscow was trying to “intimidate Western societies” and “undermine military assistance to Ukraine”. Romania’s foreign ministry spokesperson Andrei Tarnea called it an “invented” story reminiscent of “Soviet spy novels”. “What is real, however, is Russian aggression and Russian provocations, which these stories about planes and spies attempt to cover up,” he added.

The accusations had echoes of an incident in August 2023, when a Russian



A participant stands next to a T-28 tank at an exhibition, in Red Square, Moscow. — Reuters

Mi-8 helicopter pilot defected after flying into Ukraine in an operation led by Kyiv’s security services. His crew members were unaware of his intentions and were killed as they tried to escape, both Kyiv and Moscow had said at the time. The pilot, Maxim Kuzminov, was found dead in Spain in February 2024. Meanwhile, Russian drone attacks killed one person in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk and wounded three in the Kharkiv region, officials said. Kramatorsk, which had a pre-war population of around 150,000 people, is one of the few remaining civilian hubs in the Donetsk region still under Ukrainian control. The city council posted on Telegram that seven drones hit the city within 30 minutes on Monday evening. A man in his 60s was killed in the shelling, according to preliminary information, it said.

“Civilian infrastructure and the residential quarters were under fire; there was damage to an educational institution and residential buildings,” it added. Last month, a Russian drone killed two Ukrainian journalists and wounded a colleague in Kramatorsk, their news outlet and regional officials said. A drone also hit a car in a village in the

northeastern Kharkiv region on Monday.

Separately, Russia said it was delusional to think Ukraine could win the war, while Moscow’s army said it had captured three more villages on the sprawling front line. Moscow is trying to press its advantage in manpower and equipment but territorial gains have been slow and costly.

Both sides are heavily entrenched, almost four years after Russia launched its all-out war of Ukraine. “The Europeans believe that Ukraine can win the war and secure its interests through military means,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. “This is the deepest delusion indulged in by the Kyiv regime. The situation on the front indicates the opposite,” he said in a briefing call with reporters.

The Russian defence ministry said on Monday it had seized the villages of Slodkie and Nove in the Zaporizhzhia region of Ukraine and Gnativka. Peskov said the war would only end “when Russia achieves the objectives it set at the beginning”.

Moscow has said it is fighting to protect Russian speakers in the east of Ukraine, to prevent the Nato military bloc moving eastwards. — AFP

End to US government shutdown in sight as stopgap bill advances

WASHINGTON: The longest-ever US government shutdown moved forward toward an eventual resolution, after several Democratic senators broke ranks to join Republicans in a 60-40 vote passing a compromise deal — sparking intra-party backlash. Since October 1, the first day of the shutdown, more than a million federal workers have been unpaid, while government benefits and services have been increasingly disrupted. Severe impacts on air traffic have begun to mount in recent days, with more than 1,000 flights cancelled daily, raising the political pressure to end the stalemate. “We’ll be opening up our country very quickly,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office, adding: “The deal is very good.”

After the vote, Senate Republican Leader John Thune wrote on X that he was glad to support the “clear path to ending this unnecessary shutdown in a responsible way that

quickly pays federal workers and reopens the federal government.” Democratic Senator John Fetterman, who voted to support the Republican measure, posted to X on Monday night about his decision. “Feed everyone. Pay our military, government workers, and Capitol Police. End the chaos in airports. Country over party,” Fetterman said.

With the stopgap funding bill passed through the Senate, the legislation moves to the House of Representatives for a vote, which like the Senate is controlled by Republicans.

The chamber is expected to reconvene as early as Wednesday, as Tuesday is a national holiday. “It appears to us this morning that our long national nightmare is finally coming to an end, and we’re grateful for that,” House Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters on Monday. “At least some Democrats now finally appear ready to do



US Senate Majority Leader John Thune speaks with reporters, at the US Capitol in Washington. — AFP

what Republicans and President Trump and millions of hardworking American people have been asking them to do for weeks.” The House — which Johnson has kept out of session throughout the standoff — would be called back this week, he said.

At the heart of the Senate standoff was Democrats’ demand to extend health insurance subsidies expiring at the end of the year. Republicans insisted any negotiation occur after the government is re-opened. Millions of Americans who have purchased health insurance through

the “Obamacare” programme would see their costs double if the subsidies are not extended. Sunday’s breakthrough agreement would re-open the government through January, with some programmes funded for the full fiscal year, and reverse some of the Trump administration’s firings of federal workers.

The bill notably would restore funding for the SNAP food aid programme, which helps more than 42 million lower-income Americans pay for groceries. While the Senate’s Republican leadership has agreed to hold an eventual vote on health care, it does not ensure the insurance subsidies will be extended.

“After 40 days of uncertainty, I’m profoundly glad to be able to announce that nutrition programmes, our veterans, and other critical priorities will have their full-year funding,” Senate John Thune said. — AFP

OPINION

Moving through limiting beliefs to limitless ones



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and Positive Parent Specialist

All carry invisible stories about ourselves: quiet, persistent thoughts that shape how we see the world and what we believe we are capable of. These stories are known as limiting beliefs, and though they often go unnoticed, they quietly influence our choices, emotions, and outcomes. They act like invisible walls, keeping us safe within the familiar, but also keeping us small and contained within a version of ourselves that feels comfortable, yet unfulfilled.

A limiting belief is any thought or assumption that holds you back from reaching your full potential. It might sound like, “I’m not good enough,” “I don’t deserve success,” “I’ll never change,” or “People can’t be trusted.” These beliefs usually take root early in life.

As children, we absorb the messages we hear from parents, teachers, culture or society long before we have the ability to question them. When repeated often enough, they become internal truths: not because they are real, but because we have learned to accept them as such.

As adults, we may no longer remember where these beliefs came from, yet they still dictate our actions. They shape our confidence, our relationships, and even our

ability to dream. The person who believes they are “not smart enough” might avoid applying for a promotion, while the one who believes “love always ends in pain” might push people away before they can get too close. These beliefs operate beneath conscious awareness, quietly scripting our lives and limiting what we think is possible.

The first step towards transformation is awareness. You cannot change what you do not see. Begin by noticing the moments when you feel resistance, fear, or self-doubt as they are signposts pointing toward a hidden belief. Ask yourself, “What am I telling myself right now?” and write down the exact thoughts that surface. Seeing these thoughts on paper shines light on them, where they can be gently questioned and understood with compassion.

Then, challenge the belief with curiosity rather than judgement. Ask, “Is this absolutely true?” Often, you will find that it is not. Seek evidence that contradicts the old narrative: the times you succeeded, the times you were supported, the moments that prove you are capable and worthy. Recognise, too, how the belief may have once served you. Many limiting beliefs were formed as protection. They helped you stay safe, avoid conflict or prevent rejection. Thank them for

Once the old belief is softened, replace it with one that empowers you. This isn’t about unrealistic affirmations, but about creating a statement that feels true and expansive.

their purpose, and then let them know they no longer need to lead.

Once the old belief is softened, replace it with one that empowers you to grow. This isn’t about reciting unrealistic affirmations, but about forming a statement that feels both true and expansive. For example, “I’m not good enough” becomes “I am learning, growing, and capable.” “I don’t deserve love” becomes “I am worthy of healthy, supportive relationships.” Choose language that feels nurturing, believable, and aligned with who you are becoming.

From there, the work is to embody the new belief. Speak it daily, write it often, and act in ways that reinforce it. The brain learns through repetition and emotion, so the more you integrate this belief into your daily life, the more it becomes your natural state of being.

Transformation is not about becoming someone new - it is about remembering who you truly are beneath the layers of conditioning. When you rewrite your inner story, you reclaim your personal power. Every time you choose a more empowering belief, you step closer to the person you were always meant to be: whole, confident and free. You don’t just change your thoughts, you change your life.

AI AGENTS OPEN DOOR TO NEW HACKING THREATS

THOMAS URBAIN

Cybersecurity experts are warning that artificial intelligence agents, widely considered the next frontier in the generative AI revolution, could wind up getting hijacked and doing the dirty work for hackers.

AI agents are programmes that use artificial intelligence chatbots to do the work humans do online, like buy a plane ticket or add events to a calendar. But the ability to order around AI agents with plain language makes it possible for even the technically non-proficient to do mischief.

“We’re entering an era where cybersecurity is no longer about protecting users from bad actors with a highly technical skillset,” AI startup Perplexity said in a blog post.

“For the first time in decades, we’re seeing new and novel attack vectors that can come from anywhere.”

These so-called injection attacks are not new in the hacker world, but previously required cleverly written and concealed computer code to cause damage.

But as AI tools evolved from just generating text, images or video to being “agents” that can independently scour the Internet, the potential for them to be commandeered by prompts slipped in by hackers has grown.

“People need to understand there are specific dangers using AI in the security sense,” said software engineer Marti Jorda Roca at NeuralTrust, which specialises in large language model security. Meta calls this query injection threat a “vulnerability.” OpenAI chief information security officer Dane Stuckey has referred to it as “an unresolved security issue.”

Both companies are pouring billions of dollars into AI, the use of which is ramping up rapidly along with its capabilities.

Query injection can, in some cases, take place in real time when a user prompt — “book me a hotel reservation” — is gerrymandered by a hostile actor into something else — “wire \$100 to this account.”

But these nefarious prompts can also be hiding out on the Internet as AI agents built into browsers encounter online data of dubious quality or origin, and potentially booby-trapped with hidden commands from hackers.

Eli Snadja of Israeli cybersecurity firm Check Point sees query injection as the “number one security problem” for large language models that power AI agents and assistants that are fast emerging from the ChatGPT revolution. — AFP

Culture: The missing link in UN development goals

IN 1982, Unesco convened the World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, producing one of the most comprehensive definitions of culture. It described culture as the “set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society,” encompassing more than heritage, literature or art. It includes the ways of life, systems of value and collective imagination that shape communities. This vision placed culture at the heart of sustainable development rather than at its margins.

As global transformation accelerates — driven by digital change, creative economies and environmental challenges — the role of culture has become even more critical. The cultural sector must adapt to new technologies, preserve heritage in digital form, and strengthen its ethical and economic frameworks. Integrating culture into sustainable development policies has therefore become essential, ensuring that its social and economic benefits are fully realised.

Although calls to align cultural policy with development goals emerged decades ago, culture has often been treated as a decorative or social complement rather than a developmental force. The challenge lies in transforming it into an independent driver of innovation, resilience and wellbeing.

When Unesco included culture in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it appeared only indirectly — under Goals 4 and 11 — on education and sustainable cities. The reasoning was that culture runs through all seventeen goals, forming the ethical and creative base upon which social, economic and environmental progress depends. Preserving heritage, nurturing



AISHA AL DARMAKI

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Culture remains the living link between all pillars of sustainable development. No society can thrive without a strong cultural foundation that inspires individuals, energises communities and reinforces national identity.

creative industries and safeguarding cultural diversity are essential to tackling issues such as climate change, poverty and digital equity.

Recognising this interdependence, Unesco recently released its first global report on cultural policies titled “Culture: The Missing Link in Sustainable Development Goals.” The report fulfils a commitment made at the 2022 World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development, which promised a global review every four years. It represents a milestone in establishing a shared international framework for cultural governance and in recognising culture as an independent pillar of development.

The report describes the current global landscape of cultural policy as fragmented, marginalised and secondary. It calls for an integrated, cross-sectoral and forward-looking strategy that could pave the way for culture to become a distinct goal in the post-2030 development agenda. Such recognition would strengthen investment in the cultural sector and enhance its social and economic value worldwide.

While many nations now include culture in their development plans, results remain inconsistent. Unesco’s report reveals that although 93 per cent of countries view culture as vital to national strategies, only 80 per cent acknowledge its economic contribution, and just 77 per cent recognise its role in innovation. The gap between cultural recognition and tangible outcomes remains significant. Culture, as a catalyst for transformation, must be treated as a national priority. In Oman, this is evident through the Basic Law of the State, Oman Vision 2040, and the national cultural strategy — all affirming culture’s developmental

significance. Yet this recognition should translate into measurable results: thriving creative industries, expanding cultural enterprises and an economy enriched by local innovation. Investment in culture requires stronger governance and clearer frameworks that link creativity to economic performance. Despite commendable efforts and talented professionals, the sector needs more direct pathways for innovation — programmes that empower creators themselves and turn their work into investable opportunities. Culture as an economic engine cannot thrive on symbolic support alone. It needs a dedicated national investment framework that treats cultural production as a strategic enterprise. With its vast diversity — from heritage and design to cinema, literature and digital arts — culture can drive development by aligning with technology, environmental goals and social wellbeing.

Global experience shows that investing in culture and creative industries generates employment, supports small and medium enterprises, empowers women and youth, and enhances social welfare. It is therefore time to view culture as a central opportunity for growth. That requires modernised investment policies, creative digital transformation and real partnerships between the cultural, commercial and investment sectors.

Culture remains the living link between all pillars of sustainable development. No society can thrive without a strong cultural foundation that inspires individuals, energises communities and reinforces national identity.

Translated by Badr al Dhafari.
The original version of this article was published in the Oman Arabic newspaper on November 09, 2025.

What to expect from Belém climate summit



SAMUEL KUTTY

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

HAS optimism about the goal of limiting the global temperature rise set at the 2015 Paris Summit waned? Do the annual climate summits generate only rhetoric rather than the tangible outcomes needed to lower global greenhouse emissions?

These questions focus on the efficacy of the Paris Agreement, emphasising increasing worries like the gap between established goals and actual execution.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement and a new round for submitting Nationally Determined Contributions. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned the severe consequences brought by global warming on social and economic development at the Belém Climate Summit, ahead of the COP30.

“Every fraction of a degree means more hunger, displacement, and loss – especially for those least responsible,” the Secretary-General was quoted by news agencies as saying.

The reality is that the planet has changed considerably in the decade since the historic Paris Accord, although not completely in the manner the signatories expected or hoped for.

According to data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service, the planet’s yearly temperature increased roughly 0.46 degrees Celsius since 2015, marking one of the largest temperature surges over a decade on record.

The European climate service agency report indicates an ongoing trend of

unprecedented temperatures, with October 2025 ranking as the third hottest globally and the year from July 2024 to June 2025 seeing an average of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

The report’s key findings indicate that the global average temperature in 2025 is expected to rank among the three warmest years, as the last three years have recorded an average exceeding 1.5°C for the first time.

“This is linked to consistently elevated land and ocean surface temperatures caused by the build-up of greenhouse gases,” says the report issued just prior to the COP30 climate summit in São Paulo, Brazil.

Brazil launched three weeks of activities related to the summit in Belém, where leaders convene to advocate for enhanced policies to finance the energy transition, although the pace is insufficient to avert increasingly severe climate consequences, and advancements are still inconsistent.

Even at the peak, numerous challenges remain for climate action and international cooperation. US President Donald Trump labelled climate change a hoax and pulled the US out of the Paris climate agreements on his first day in office. Debates are occurring regarding a slowdown in certain regions of Europe. Notably, over the past ten years, developing nations, both large and small, have been crucial in steering the world toward a more secure direction. They have pushed for increased ambition in low-carbon strategies represented by more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in line with the Paris Agreement.

Oman Vision 2040 has identified the three environmental agreements as a key national priority and has progressed in executing the strategy for carbon neutrality, establishing the national carbon register, and enhancing Article 6 policies of the Paris Agreement

They have illustrated the potential of climate-sensitive development and established it, as highlighted by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, in Belém before the COP30 Summit.

“Oman Vision 2040 has identified the three environmental agreements as a key national priority and has progressed in executing the national strategy for carbon neutrality, establishing the national carbon register, and enhancing Article 6 policies of the Paris Agreement, along with advancing renewable energy initiatives,” he mentioned.

Earth’s increasing temperatures have escalated more rapidly than humanity’s capacity to decrease dependence on coal, oil, and natural gas, which emit carbon emissions that drive global warming.

As the consequences of climate change become increasingly evident, so too do the advantages of taking action. What we require at this moment is a significant shift. The world needs to shift from establishing goals to achieving them. Leaders need to reach a consensus on a decisive worldwide reaction to reaffirm the objective and establish a framework that outlines how to bridge the gap to meet the goal and speed up sector-specific approaches to reduce emissions.

Ultimately, if nations commit to their current pledges, they might prevent just over one degree Celsius of temperature rise. It might not seem significant, but every tenth of a degree is crucial regarding the impact of disastrous weather!

IRELAND’S CLIMATE BATTLE IS BEING FOUGHT IN FIELDS

PETER MURPHY

On a windswept Irish farm, high-tech cow collars track animal health and solar panels glint on the milking parlour’s roof, as a country famed for its lush green pastures tries to reduce its agricultural carbon footprint.

The Farm Zero C project near Bandon, County Cork, also manages grazing carefully, uses hedgerow and scrub habitats to shelter pollinators and birds, and plants legume crops to cut chemical fertiliser use, all producing measurable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Around 40 per cent of Ireland’s total greenhouse gas emissions come from agriculture, far higher than the European Union average.

The unique Bandon initiative in the country’s south could provide a model for tackling Ireland’s biggest environmental dilemma: how to cut emissions on farms without drastically shrinking herds or decimating rural communities.

Ireland’s pastures, long symbols of national identity and prosperity, have become flashpoints in the debate over how a small island can meet big climate promises.

Dominated by methane-heavy dairy and beef production from a seven-million-strong cattle herd, the sector produces more emissions than transport and energy combined.

“We are trying to create an economically viable climate-neutral system,” said Pdraig Walsh, project manager at Farm Zero C, where 250 cows are milked.

The project is a collaboration between Carbery, a dairy cooperative of more than 1,100 farmers, and “bioeconomy” researchers BiOrbic.

At the site, around 280 km southwest of Dublin, emissions have plunged by 27 per cent since the project was launched in 2021, Walsh said.

Chief emission culprits are livestock farming, particularly cattle, which release planet-warming methane when they burp.

Meanwhile, fertiliser use emits nitrous oxide – the third-most-potent greenhouse gas after methane and carbon dioxide.

As the annual United Nations climate conference, COP30, begins in Brazil, EU 2030 targets are forcing Irish policymakers to focus on slashing emissions by 40 per cent compared to 2005 levels.

If Ireland fails, it risks colossal EU fines of almost 30 billion euros (\$35 billion). At Farm Zero C - on a site owned by the farmers’ cooperative - the target is to reach emissions neutrality.

Legume hordes like clover pull nitrogen from the air, reducing the use of chemical fertilisers, and the milking parlour is 80-per cent solar- and wind-powered. But methane still represents about three-quarters of the farm’s carbon footprint, according to Walsh. — AFP

Energy transition achievable in the emerging markets

EFFORTS to mitigate climate change have largely focused on the shift away from fossil fuels in energy production. As a result, most climate-finance assessments have studied the costs of such a transition and determined that large investments are required to deploy cleaner sources of power.

But in a new working paper, we found that shifting the energy sector to renewables is relatively affordable for emerging-market economies (EMEs) in the G20. Our study measures the climate-finance needs from 2022 to 2030 of Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, South Africa and Türkiye to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the power, road transport, cement and steel sectors, which account for about half of such emissions in these nine EMEs.

For starters, we found that the clean-energy transition is advancing at a steady pace. The power sector accounts for about 27 per cent of the CO2 emissions in these nine EMEs, which together account for 44 per cent of global power-sector emissions. To meet increasing energy demand and climate targets, these economies have focused on incrementally phasing out the use of fossil fuels in power generation and replacing them with renewables. Between 2023 and 2030, the share of clean energy in their total installed capacity is projected to rise from 54 per cent to 65 per cent, while their total installed capacity of renewables should almost double, from 2,150 gigawatts to 4,220 gigawatts.

The largest shifts during this period are expected in India and South Africa, where the share of renewables is set to rise from 45 per cent to 63 per cent and from 25 per cent to 42 per cent, respectively. China is also making significant advances, with its share of renewables projected to increase from 55 per cent to 65 per cent. In



The power sector accounts for about 27 per cent of the CO2 emissions in nine EMEs.



JANAK RAJ

The writer is Senior Fellow at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress



RAKESH MOHAN

The writer is a former deputy governor of the Reserve Bank of India, is President Emeritus and Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress

seven of these EMEs (excluding Indonesia and South Africa), more than half of the total installed power capacity will come from non-fossil-fuel sources by 2030.

This is possible because rapid technological developments and China’s massive push into green manufacturing have dramatically lowered the cost of establishing solar and wind farms in recent years.

Globally, the cost of installed solar PV and onshore wind decreased by 83 per cent and 42 per cent, respectively, between 2010 and 2022. In addition, the cost of batteries has also fallen – by about 90 per cent between 2010 and 2023 – driven by innovation and lower raw-material costs. Pumped-storage hydroelectricity projects are also more affordable now, especially in China and India, owing to favourable topographic conditions, low labour and material costs, and relatively streamlined regulatory and permitting processes.

Given the falling costs of renewable energy, the G20’s EMEs will need only \$121 billion in climate finance for power generation – the amount over and above the investment required in a business-as-usual scenario –

between 2024 and 2030. According to our estimates, capital expenditure for fossil-fuel-based power plants will decline by \$156 billion over that period, while spending for clean power will increase by \$277 billion. Most notably, India and China will save \$43 billion and \$52 billion, respectively, on capital expenditure for fossil-fuel-based power sources but will need to increase such spending on renewables by \$90 billion and \$102 billion, respectively.

Storage costs (both battery and pumped storage) for renewables will likely entail additional capital expenditure of \$28 billion for these EMEs, bringing the overall climate finance needed for 2024-30 to \$149 billion, or \$21 billion annually. Excluding China, the remaining eight EMEs will require \$94 billion, or \$13 billion annually, in cumulative climate finance (including storage costs) to shift to renewable sources of power.

These estimates do not account for the additional costs of adapting electricity grids to cleaner energy sources. Large-scale growth in AI and data centres may also increase energy demand more than envisaged.

Of the nine EMEs we studied, India is projected to need the largest amount of climate finance – \$57 billion, or 38 per cent of the total estimate – to continue decarbonising the power sector, while China will require slightly less, around \$55 billion, because the increase in renewables’ share of installed capacity is expected to be more pronounced in India than in China.

Climate finance as a percentage of GDP will likely be the largest in South Africa, at 0.25 per cent, followed by India (0.13 per cent) and Mexico (0.09 per cent).

A decade or so ago, a consensus emerged that financing the energy transition would require massive amounts of capital. But, in the intervening years, the cost of renewables has fallen dramatically.

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SPORTS

Al Khanjari bags two medals at Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 11

OMAN'S Olympian weightlifter Ammar bin Salim al Khanjari won a silver and a bronze in the sixth Islamic Solidarity Games 'Riyadh 2025' to put the Sultanate of Oman in the medals table in the Saudi Arabian capital on Monday.

The Tokyo Olympics 2020 participant claimed a silver medal in the Clean and Jerk and a bronze in the overall category in the 88 kg category.

Al Khanjari lifted a total of 354 kg, finishing behind Uzbekistan's Sarvar Zavarkhonov, who won gold with 363 kg, and Iran's Elia Salehi Pour, who took silver with 359 kg at the Boulevard SEF Arena in Riyadh.

The Oman coaching staff praised Al Khanjari's outstanding performance, emphasising that this result reflects the continuous progress of weightlifting in Oman and strengthens the nation's presence at both continental and international levels.

In another action, the Oman swimming team concluded its participation in the Games with a remarkable performance by young swimmer Mohammed al Wahaibi, who topped his heat in the 50m backstroke event, clocking 29.17 seconds to break his previous personal record. Despite his strong showing, the overall times from the other heats prevented him from advancing to the next stage.

Alongside Al Wahaibi, team-mate Mishaal al Kalibi represented Oman in swimming, marking the end of the team's promising journey at the tournament. Notably, Al Wahaibi was the youngest swimmer in the championship, which was open to senior competitors.

Expressing his satisfaction, Al Wahaibi said: "We gave our best despite the tough competition, the journey is still long ahead



Ammar al Khanjari during his 88 kg weightlifting bout during the Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh.

of us and we are proud to have represented Oman. Hopefully, we can win a medal for our country in the future. I extend my gratitude to the Oman Olympic Committee, the swimming association and the ministry for their continuous support."

His team-mate Al Kalibi added: "We gained great experience from this championship by competing against top-class swimmers with high-level expertise, despite the strong field. We managed to lead our heats in some races,

which gave us confidence for the upcoming events."

Oman is taking part in the sixth Islamic Solidarity Games with a strong delegation competing across eight sports, including weightlifting, swimming, esports, karate, taekwondo, athletics, para athletics and fencing. The athletes have undergone intensive training camps both locally and abroad to ensure full readiness and high performance.

The Omani weightlifting team includes Elias al Busaidy (71

kg) and Ammar al Khanjari (88 kg) under the supervision of coach Ahmed Saad Zakaria and administrator Yousuf al Hasani.

The swimming team consists of Mishaal al Kalibi and Mohammed al Wahaibi, led by coach Mohammed al Sahli and administrator Ahmed al Marhoon.

In esports, the Omani team, made up of Abdullah al Amri, Sultan al Balushi and Amjad al Zadjali and coached by Abdullah al Otaibi, competes in the Rocket League discipline.



Ammar al Khanjari poses with his medals. — **Marwan al Yaqubi**

Meanwhile, Idrees al Batrani represents Oman in karate (60 kg) and Nibras al Touqi (54 kg), along with Omima al Hinai (46 kg) in taekwondo.

The athletics team features several prominent Omani sprinters, under the supervision of administrator Ahmed al Dhahouri and coaches Imad Siraj and Fahd al Mashaikhi. Notably, Taha al Harrasi will take part in the 100m T37 category within the para athletics events.

In fencing, Oman is represented by Said al Shuaibi, Ahmed Kaskas, Al Harith al Harthy and Ali al Busaidy, alongside female fencers Esra al Siyabi, Jana al Sharji, Salma al Dughayshi and Ghazal al Fulaiti.

During the fourth day of the weightlifting competitions, the gold medals were distributed among six nations, as Türkiye and Egypt each claimed three golds, Bahrain and Uzbekistan earned two golds each, while Iran and Nigeria secured one gold medal apiece, reflecting the strong diversity and competitiveness among the athletes from across the Islamic world.

OCRf launches third camel race in Haima with private sector support

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRf), in cooperation with Occidental Oman, organised an exciting round of the 2025–26 camel racing season on Thursday at Haima track in Al Wusta Governorate.

The Haima race formed part of the annual programme of the OCRf, organised in collaboration with the private sector, including Occidental Oman and Shell Oman, to promote camel racing in the concession areas (oil and gas fields) to strengthen the role of national companies in supporting traditional sports.

The competitions will start with six rounds for the Hagayeg category, two year old, over a distance of 3 km.

Two rounds will be held for the Lagaya category, three-year-old, over 4 km.

The Elythaa category, four-



In the presence of Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas (C) the agreement was signed by Shaikh Said bin Saud al Ghafli (R), OCRf Chairman, and Thamer Dawood (L), Deputy Executive President at Occidental Oman.

year-old, concluded the day's action with two rounds over 5 km, marked by fierce competition. The main round winner received shields, while the top 10 finishers in each category were awarded monetary prizes.

The 2025–26 season has so far included several races

sponsored by the private sector, reflecting strong national support for preserving Oman's camel racing heritage.

Shell Oman sponsored the opening events in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate on October 8–9, and in Al Dhahirah Governorate on October 22–23.



The race, supported by Shell Oman, was held in Ibri on October 23.

Occidental Oman supported the races in Al Wusta Governorate on November 12–13 and will sponsor the upcoming rounds in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate on November 26–27.

Meanwhile, Shell Oman will sponsor the Al Wusta races on December 20–21, followed by

the final sponsored event by Occidental Oman in Al Dhahirah Governorate on January 7–8, 2026.

The OCRf urged all camel owners wishing to participate to complete their registration electronically and adhere to the federation's official regulations. Camels without approved electronic identification chips will not be allowed to compete, and all entries will undergo veterinary and technical inspections before the start of each race.

Oman Camel Racing Federation signed an agreement with Occidental Oman Incorporated on Monday, to sponsor the 2025–26 camel racing season, in the presence of Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth.

The agreement was signed by Shaikh Said bin Saud al Ghafli, OCRf Chairman, and Thamer Dawood, Deputy Executive President for Social Responsibility, Communications and Public Affairs at Occidental Oman.

STRING OF RECORDS

CHOUDHARY SMASHES EIGHT SIXES IN 8 BALLS



Fastest fifties

in first-class cricket (by balls)

PLAYER	BALLS	MATCH	YEAR
Akash Choudhary	11	Meghalaya vs Arunachal Pradesh	2025
Wayne White	12	Leicestershire vs Essex	2012
Clive Inman	13	Leicestershire vs Nottinghamshire	1965

Where records are available

esricricinfo

NEW DELHI: Akash Choudhary hammered eight straight sixes and broke a string of cricket records on his way to an 11-ball half-century for Meghalaya in India’s Ranji Trophy.

The four-day match against Arunachal Pradesh is being played in Surat in Gujarat.

Choudhary, primarily a seam bowler, came in at number eight with Meghalaya already 576 for 6 in their first innings on Sunday.

He did not score off his first ball and then hit two singles before facing Limar Dabi.

The spinner grew increasingly bemused as Choudhary lashed a six off each ball of the over, a feat only previously achieved in first-class cricket by two of the game’s greats: West Indian Garry Sobers and India’s Ravi Shastri.

South African Mike Procter also hit six consecutive sixes but across two overs.

Yuvraj Singh, Kieron Pollard and Herschelle Gibbs are among batters to have bludgeoned a maximum 36 runs off an over in limited-overs cricket.

FASTEST 50

Back on strike in the next over, Choudhary hit back-to-back sixes against off-spinner TNR Mohith to reach 50 off 11 balls.

The previous fastest half-century was 12 balls by Leicestershire’s Wayne White against Essex in 2012.

Choudhary took nine minutes to reach 50. In first-class matches where innings were timed, only Clive Inman, who took eight minutes to hit a 13-ball half-century in 1965 against Nottinghamshire, also for Leicestershire, has been faster.

After Choudhary failed to score off the next three balls he faced, his team declared.

He then bowled four overs taking one wicket for 10 runs as shell-shocked Arunachal Pradesh were all out for 73 in their first innings. After Meghalaya enforced the follow-on, Choudhary took the first two wickets in the second innings to leave the opposition at 29 for 3 at stumps.

Cricinfo reported that in 30 previous first-class matches the 25-year-old had scored 503 runs at an average of 14.37, including two fifties. — **AFP**



Italy’s Jannik Sinner reacts during his match against Canada’s Felix Auger-Aliassime at the ATP Finals tournament in Turin. — **AFP**

Sinner gets off title defence with dominant victory

ITALY’S

Jannik Sinner got his title defence off to a solid start with a dominant straight sets win over ailing

Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime at the ATP Finals on Monday in Turin.

Nine days after their duel in the final of the Paris Masters, Sinner was again the strongest winning 7-5, 6-1.

But fellow Italian Lorenzo Musetti was earlier outclassed 6-3, 6-4 by American Taylor Fritz.

After a tight first set, Sinner swept aside Auger-Aliassime, who had been hampered by a left calf injury by breaking serve to rush to a 3-0 lead.

He broke him a second time to close out the match with an ace after one hour 41 minutes.

“Obviously winning the first match is very important in this competition and this format,” said 24-year-old Sinner.

“It was a very tough match until 6-5. I had some chances to break. He served very well, only once I missed a return, but it can happen. He played some very aggressive tennis, so I’m happy to overcome a very tough test today.

“I hope it’s nothing too serious,” Sinner added of his rival. “I wish him obviously a very speedy recovery and hopefully he is back to 100 per cent physically.”

Sinner notched his 27th consecutive



Taylor Fritz of the US celebrates after winning his round robin match against Italy’s Lorenzo Musetti at the ATP Finals. — **Reuters**

victory on his preferred indoor hard courts surface and took the lead in the Bjorn Borg Group, which will also see the world number two face Germany’s Alexander Zverev and American Ben Shelton.

The native of South Tyrol, the German-speaking region of northeastern Italy, won the 2024 edition of the tournament which brings together the eight best players of the year, by stringing together five wins without dropping a single set.

The 2025 edition could allow him to finish the season as world number one, currently held by his great Spanish rival Carlos Alcaraz, who has beaten him four times this year.

‘FIRED UP’ FRITZ

Earlier, Fritz got his bid for a first ATP Finals crown off to the best possible start with a comprehensive win over Musetti.

The 28-year-old American, who lost to Sinner in last year’s final, was out of the blocks quickly in the Jimmy Connors group match, taking an early break and holding on to pocket the first set.

The crowd did their best to lift a visibly fatigued Musetti who was a late addition to the line-up.

He only qualified for the Finals on Saturday after Novak Djokovic pulled out with injury, shortly after beating the Italian in the final of the Athens event.

Winning 84 per cent of his first serves and giving away just four break point chances, none of which were taken, Fritz continued to control the match.

The American broke to go 3-1 up and served cleanly all the way to the line.

“I am really happy. I thought I did a lot of things really well,” Fritz said.

“I did a great job early on in the match to serve my way out of trouble and save some break points. The whole second set I played well and had a lot of chances to break that I didn’t get.

“I am really happy I was able to serve it out there and it didn’t come back to ruin it.”

Fritz qualified sixth for the Finals and after finishing runner-up last year is gearing up for another tilt at the title. — **AFP**

Ronaldo says 2026 World Cup ‘definitely’ his last one

RIYADH: Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo on Tuesday said next year’s World Cup would be his last as he winds down one of the all-time great careers.

The 40-year-old forward, with more than 950 club and international goals, also said he would retire from football in “one or two years”.

“Definitely, yes,” he told a Saudi forum by video link, when asked if 2026 would be his final World Cup. “I’m gonna be 41 years old and I think it will be the moment.”

Ronaldo, who began a lucrative stint at Saudi Arabia’s Al Nassr in 2023, also elaborated on comments last week when he said he would retire “soon”.

“Let’s be honest, when I mean soon, it’s probably one or two years I’ll still be at the game,” he said.

The five-time Ballon d’Or winner

is hoping to play at a sixth World Cup next year. He came closest to lifting the trophy on debut in 2006, when Portugal lost to France in the semifinals.

Portugal have yet to qualify for the 2026 tournament in the USA, Canada and Mexico, but can secure their spot if they beat Ireland on Thursday. Last month, Ronaldo became the top goalscorer in World Cup qualifying history when he netted twice against Hungary to reach 41 goals, overtaking retired Guatemalan international Carlos Ruiz’s 39.

The former Manchester United, Real Madrid and Juventus forward is also the all-time leading international goalscorer with 143 strikes.

During an interview on Piers Morgan Uncensored last week, Ronaldo opened up further



Al Nassr’s Portuguese forward #07 Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring a goal during the Saudi Pro League football match between Al Nassr and Al Riyadh SC at Al Awwal Park in Riyadh on September 20, 2025. — **AFP**

about the realities of his looming retirement.

“It will be difficult? Yes. Probably will cry, yes. I’m an open person. It

will be very, very difficult, yes,” he said.

Ronaldo joined Al Nassr after leaving Manchester United for a

second time in late 2022, a move that heralded an influx of late-career stars to the kingdom.

Ronaldo initially signed for 200 million euros a year, according to a source close to Al Nassr at the time, and inked a two-year contract extension in June.

Last month, he was named by Bloomberg as the sport’s first billionaire, and topped the Forbes list of highest-paid footballers for the sixth time in a decade.

With on-and off-field earnings of an estimated \$280 million, Ronaldo will earn more than double that of second-placed rival Lionel Messi during the upcoming season, according to Forbes.

Saudi Arabia, which is spending big on sports and entertainment as part of its economic diversification plan, was named as host of the 2034 World Cup last December. — **AFP**

SPORTS

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
@anuroop_ath

OVER 500 players from five countries will feature in the annual Hockey Oman Carnival, to be hosted by Hockey Oman (Oman Hockey Association), in association with UTSC, from November 13 to 15.

The biggest hockey festival in the Mena region will take place at the Hockey Oman International Stadium in Al Amerat, the organisers announced during a function at the Indian Embassy on Tuesday.

Matches will be played across three grounds, starting every day from 2 pm.

This year's carnival will feature nine teams from India with international players, along with strong teams from Egypt, UAE, Iraq and Oman. The tournaments include the Gulf Cup Hockey Fiesta for men, the Hockey Oman International Women's Tournament, the Oman-India School Tournament, and the Masters Cup for players aged 45 and above. These tournaments will showcase some of the finest hockey talent in the region and beyond, highlighting Oman's strong commitment to developing the sport at all levels.

Godavarthi Venkata Srinivas, Indian Ambassador to Oman, promised full support to the hockey festival.

"The Indian Embassy in Oman is happy to support this great festival of hockey where Indians and Omanis come together, exchange culture and share knowledge," Srinivas said.

With 47 teams from different countries and over 500 players participating across various categories, the Hockey Oman Carnival promises top-standard competition, cultural exchange, and entertainment for the whole family.

In the Gulf Hockey Fiesta championship for men, 10 teams will vie for the honours. Pool A will

HOCKEY OMAN
CARNIVAL TO
FEATURE OVER
500 PLAYERS

*This year's
carnival will
feature nine
teams from
India with
international
players, along
with strong
teams from
Egypt, UAE, Iraq
and Oman.*

feature Seeb Sports Club, Coorg Hawks Bengaluru (India), Axilators HC Kochi (India), Safety and Security Oman, and FAP Oman. Pool B comprises Ahli Sidab Sports Club, Team Coorg-Muscat, Republican Sports Club, Mumbai (India), Dadabhai Hockey Club Dubai and UTSC.

In the school's tournament, students will compete in boys under-14 and under-18 and girls under-18 categories.

The Hockey Oman Carnival is organised by Hockey Oman and UTSC. UTSC, a club registered in India with branches in Oman, UAE and Saudi Arabia, plays a key role in promoting hockey at the grassroots level.

The Oman-India School Tournament aims to encourage school participation and nurture young talent, reflecting



Godavarthi Venkata Srinivas, Indian Ambassador to Oman, along with Dr Marwan al Juma, OHA Chairman, and others during the announcement of Hockey Oman Carnival.



These tournaments will showcase some of the finest hockey talents.

Hockey Oman's long-term vision for the sport. "The future of hockey starts in our schools. Through such initiatives, we are building a strong foundation for the next generation of players in Oman," said Dr Marwan bin Juma al Juma, OHA Chairman.

FAN VILLAGE
The Hockey Oman Carnival is not only a sporting event but also a celebration of community and culture. The Fan Village, open daily from 5 pm onwards, will offer live entertainment by celebrity singers, cultural performances, fun games for families, tug of war competitions, and vintage car displays.

A spectacular 600-women dance formation will also take place, which is

expected to make history in Oman.

The event is set to attract visitors and hockey fans from across Oman and neighbouring countries, making it a true festival of unity, sportsmanship, and friendship. "The Hockey Oman Carnival is more than a tournament—it's a statement that Oman is the ultimate destination for hockey in the Mena region. With international players, enthusiastic fans, and vibrant cultural experiences, we are creating history together," added Dr Marwan al Juma.

"Hockey Oman and UTSC strongly believe that this joint effort and historic tournament will further strengthen Oman's growing role as a hub for sports, culture and international friendship," the organisers said.

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SHORTTAKES



The expanded alliance aims to unlock the Gulf’s full maritime potential by promoting it as a sustainable international cruise hub connecting multiple destinations.

GULF CRUISE ALLIANCE EXPANDS TO BOOST REGIONAL TOURISM

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, has welcomed the expansion of the Cruise Arabia Alliance with the inclusion of Saudi Cruise and Qatar Tourism. The move marks a major step in strengthening the Arabian Gulf’s position as a premier global cruise tourism destination.

The expanded alliance aims to unlock the Gulf’s full maritime potential by promoting it as a sustainable international cruise hub connecting multiple destinations. It brings together regional partners committed to developing infrastructure, launching joint marketing campaigns, investing in port facilities and setting high operational standards across the cruise industry.

Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, said that expanding cooperation within the Cruise Arabia Alliance will significantly enhance Oman’s cruise tourism sector. “These partnerships will introduce diverse tourism programmes and experiences, offering visitors a wider variety of options while boosting regional collaboration”, he noted.

Al Busaidy added that Oman continues to adopt global best practices in developing its cruise sector, implementing targeted plans and promotional campaigns to showcase its unique attractions. The ministry is also coordinating with member countries to create specialised travel packages that cater to different types of visitors.

Khalid al Azri, Director of the Tourism Styles Department at the ministry, highlighted Oman’s strategic position as a key maritime gateway.

— ONA

Gas bridges Al Duqm’s shift to green hydrogen

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 11

WHILE natural gas will continue to serve as an important bridge fuel for industry in the Special Economic Zone at Al Duqm (SEZAD), the transition to green hydrogen as a primary energy source is firmly on track, according to Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

Last week, the Integrated Gas Company (IGC) — the sole aggregator and supplier of natural gas in the Sultanate of Oman — signed contracts allocating 18.614 million standard cubic metres per day (MMscmd) of gas for industrial consumers in Al Duqm. This volume far exceeds commitments to Suhar (4.747 MMscmd), Sur (4.330 MMscmd) and Salalah (0.525 MMscmd), underscoring Duqm’s growing prominence as Oman’s leading industrial hub.

Speaking exclusively to the Observer, Dr Al Sunaidy highlighted natural gas’s pivotal role as a transition fuel ahead of the large-scale adoption of green hydrogen in Al Duqm.

“As you know, Al Duqm has the capacity to receive 25 million cubic metres of gas per day, part of which has already been assigned to companies that are transitioning to green energy. For example, the green steel project will initially use gas and later switch to green hydrogen or its derivatives”, he said.

The official added that even

“Al Duqm has the capacity to receive 25 million cubic metres of gas per day, part of which has already been assigned to companies that are transitioning to green energy. For example, the green steel project will initially use gas and later switch to green hydrogen or its derivatives.”

SHAIKH DR ALI BIN MASOUD AL SUNAIDY
Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ)



“We are allowing a transition period for industries until power from green energy becomes more competitive — which it already is,” says Shaikh Dr Ali al Sunaidy.

the refinery is working to reduce its reliance on natural gas by shifting to cleaner energy sources, particularly green hydrogen.

Not only are its furnaces expected to be powered by green hydrogen, but warehousing operations and mobility systems are also planned to draw electricity increasingly generated from renewable sources such as solar and wind.

“So yes, we are allowing a transition period for industries until power from green energy becomes more competitive — which it already is. As you know, (India’s) Acme Group is currently building a green hydrogen project and has a contractual agreement with Europe to export green ammonia by 2027.

Similarly, the green steel project

is already under construction and designed to transition to green energy in due course. So for everyone coming to Al Duqm, we are insisting from the design stage that they factor in their transition to green energy”, he added.

Duqm SEZ is expected to become the first major industrial hub in Oman to consume green hydrogen as a low-carbon energy source produced locally. This hydrogen will also underpin the zone’s broader decarbonisation efforts — powering furnaces, steel production and warehousing operations.

In effect, SEZAD is integrating green hydrogen as both a feedstock and an energy source, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and the nation’s Net Zero 2050 goal.

WB Group pledges to unlock private investment for Oman Vision 2040

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

IN A MORE connected world, the potential to attract private capital has become central to achieving sustainable development. Speaking at the MSX Chairman’s Dialogue event held here on Monday, November 10, 2025, Wendy Werner, Country Manager — Oman, World Bank Group, highlighted the importance of “maximising finance for development”, focusing on how governments and private investors can work together to drive inclusive growth and create resilient economies.

The event underscored the solid partnership between Oman and the World Bank Group, which has supported the development journey of the Sultanate of Oman since it joined the institution in 1971. The discussion falls exactly at a very important point as Oman accelerates its national



Private investment must play a transformative role in creating jobs, enabling climate action and sustaining growth.

WENDY WERNER
Country Manager — Oman, World Bank Group

transformation according to Oman Vision 2040 towards a diversified, competitive economy empowered by private sector innovation and investment.

“The World Bank Group is working closely with the Government of Oman and the private sector to bring knowledge, tools and financing solutions that can help realise Oman Vision 2040”, said Werner. “Mobilising finance for development is key to achieving this ambition”.

The current financing gap for development around the world is daunting. The UN estimates that an additional \$4 trillion of investment annually is required to achieve the SDGs by 2030. These needs are way out of reach of what is currently available through international development assistance. Global financial institutions together manage trillions in assets, yet only a fraction of this is channelled into emerging markets or projects with direct social impact.

In Oman, reaching Net Zero by 2050

will need approximately \$230 billion in capital investment, while projects in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure and digital innovation are some of the central pillars of Oman Vision 2040. “Governments cannot meet these challenges alone”, Werner noted. “Private investment must play a transformative role in creating jobs, enabling climate action and sustaining growth”.

The private capital mobilisation was made a strategic priority of the World Bank Group to leverage partnerships and innovative instruments to attract commercial finance into development sectors. Between 2021 and 2025, the Group mobilised \$242 billion globally through initiatives that blended public and private investment.

This would include notable projects such as the São Paulo sewage treatment project in Brazil, where the World Bank Group assisted in mobilising \$4 billion in private and institutional financing. That project expanded clean water access for almost four

million people while enhancing urban infrastructure. Such models show how public-private partnerships can align commercial interests with social objectives, a concept increasingly relevant for Oman’s infrastructure and sustainability ambition.

Another important tool to unlock private finance is the World Bank Group’s Guarantee Platform, launched in 2024, which provides credit guarantees, risk-sharing mechanisms and policy support to help investors manage risk and confidently invest in emerging markets like Oman.

As Oman continues to deepen reforms to attract investment and foster entrepreneurship, partnerships with international financial institutions will be key. “Maximising finance for development is not just about funding”, concluded Werner.

“It is about creating the right environment for private investment to thrive-driving prosperity for people, the economy and the planet. That is what Oman Vision 2040 is all about”.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The event showcased two off-road icons, the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon 392 and RAM 1500 Rebel.

MHD AUTOMOBILES KICKS OFF OMAN’S OFF-ROAD SEASON

MUSCAT: Oman’s off-road season is officially underway as cooler weather sweeps the Sultanate of Oman. MHD Automobiles LLC, the authorised distributor of Jeep, RAM, Dodge and Alfa Romeo, marked the return of outdoor adventures at their roadshow at Rimal Al Sharqiya, one of the nation’s favourite dune destinations.

The event showcased two off-road icons, the Jeep Wrangler Rubicon 392 and RAM 1500 Rebel, drawing adventure enthusiasts and families entering the desert in their thousands.

Visitors explored the vehicles up close and interacted with the MHD Automobiles team, experiencing the power, precision and presence these models deliver.

VEHICLES FOR EVERY ADVENTURE

The Jeep Wrangler starts at RO 15,595 for the 2-door Sport. The 2-door variants include the 2.0L Sport and 3.6L Rubicon, while 4-door variants include the 2.0L Sahara, the 3.6L Rubicon and the legendary 6.4L Rubicon 392 V8, available from RO 35,995.

The Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo 5-seater starts at RO 17,995, combining comfort with 4x4 capability. Laredo and Limited are available in 5- and 7-seaters; and Overland as a 5-seater, all powered by the 3.6L Pentastar® V6 engine delivering 293 horsepower and 260 lb-ft of torque.

RAM Trucks offer unmatched strength. The RAM 1500 RHO with a high-output 3.0L Hurricane I6 engine producing 540 horsepower starts at RO 37,995, with the RAM 1500 Tungsten and RAM 1500 Limited sharing the same engine.

The RAM 1500 Warlock, Big Horn, Rebel and Rebel X feature the standard-output 3.0L Hurricane I6 engine, generating 420 horsepower and 469 lb-ft of torque. The RAM 2500 Tradesman, powered by a 6.4L HEMI® V8 Heavy-Duty engine, is available from RO 18,995 for a limited time on limited stock.

Alfa Romeo blends style with sporty performance. The Tonale Veloce starts at RO 13,995. The AWD is equipped with a 2.0L turbo engine producing 256 horsepower and 295 lb-ft of torque.

The Giulia (RWD) and Stelvio (AWD) feature a 2.0L turbo engine producing 280 horsepower and 306 lb-ft of torque, while the Giulia Quadrifoglio and Stelvio Quadrifoglio use a 2.9L twin-turbo V6 engine producing 505 horsepower and 443 lb-ft of torque.

“Off-roading is part of Oman’s spirit of adventure. The Bidiyah roadshow allowed us to connect with enthusiasts and families, showcasing vehicles like the Wrangler and RAM that embody capability and power”, said Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles.

Sohar International drives dialogue on cognitive fintech

MUSCAT: Affirming its commitment to fostering progressive industry dialogue and advancing financial innovation within Oman’s evolving economic landscape, Sohar International recently convened another successful edition of its flagship thought leadership initiative.

The latest forum — titled “Cognitive Fintech and the Future of Intelligent Finance: Opportunities for Governments and Institutions” — examined how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cognitive systems are redefining the contours of modern finance, cultivating smarter, adaptive and ethically governed financial ecosystems for governments and institutions.

The forum, attended by the bank’s Chief Executive Officer Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, together



The session offered an in-depth exploration of the evolving landscape of cognitive finance.

MSX SUCCESSFULLY HOSTS SIXTH EDITION OF MSX CHAIRMAN’S DIALOGUE

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) successfully hosted the sixth edition of its flagship Chairman’s Dialogue, featuring Wendy Werner, Country Manager of the World Bank Group for the Sultanate of Oman, as the keynote speaker.

Held on November 10, 2025 at the Kempinski Hotel Muscat under the theme “Maximising Finance for Development”, the session brought together more than 350 distinguished in-person



The dialogue features Wendy Werner, Country Manager of the World Bank Group for the Sultanate of Oman.

attendees and more than 400 virtual participants, including senior officials, policy makers, business leaders, investors and representatives from the academic community.

In an engaging dialogue with Mohammed bin Mahfoodh al Ardhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of MSX, Ms Werner explored how emerging markets such as Oman can strategically mobilise private capital to drive sustainable growth and diversification.

32 more chances to win a new Toyota Yaris

SAUD Bahwan Automotive, has announced the latest set of lucky winners in its ongoing Toyota 50th Anniversary Mega Celebration. Marking five decades of trusted partnership between Saud Bahwan Automotive and Toyota, the campaign continues to bring joy and excitement to customers across Oman.

With each raffle draw, more customers are turning their Toyota purchase into a life-changing moment, as they drive home a brand-new Toyota Yaris. In total, 50 Yaris vehicles will be given away, making this one of the grandest customer reward campaigns ever in Oman.

Along with the chance to win a Yaris through raffle draws, customers also enjoy exceptional purchase benefits such as 50% VAT covered, 5 years/50,000 kms service, 50% Insurance covered and RO 50 worth Thiqah Loyalty Points.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for families and



In total, 50 Yaris vehicles will be given away, making this one of the grandest customer reward campaigns ever in Oman.

individuals to take part in the golden jubilee celebrations and drive home their favourite Toyota.

This time, the lucky winners include Bashair bin Khalifa Saad al Rahbi from Muscat, who purchased a Corolla 2.0; Hamdan bin Rashid Sulaiman

al Yahyae, who purchased a Camry and Sultan bin Salim Nasser al Yahmadi from Barka, who purchased a Corolla. Each winner expressed heartfelt gratitude and joy upon hearing the news.

Bashair bin Khalifa Saad al Rahbi said, “I chose Toyota

for its quality and peace of mind and to win a Yaris is just unbelievable. It feels like Toyota is a brand that cares”.

Hamdan bin Rashid Sulaiman al Yahyae added, “My Camry has always been a car I trust. Winning this Yaris is another reason to celebrate the long-standing relationship between Toyota and its customers”.

Sultan bin Salim Nasser al Yahmadi said, “Toyota has been a part of our family for generations. This Yaris is a symbol of happiness and continuity and I am grateful to be one of the lucky ones”.

Three more winners — coupon no 5021, coupon no 15009 and coupon no 11632 were proud owners of one Yaris vehicle each.

Customers who have yet to participate still have the opportunity to join this exceptional celebration. Visit your nearest Toyota showroom and discover the joy of driving home your favourite Toyota and maybe even become the next lucky winner!

MUZN INTRODUCES AUTO FINANCING WITHOUT SALARY TRANSFER

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman’s (NBO) Muzn Islamic Banking has announced the launch of its Auto Financing product without salary transfer. This innovative solution offers customers a convenient and flexible way to purchase their car of choice whether new or used without the need to transfer their salary.

The new offering provides financing through a Direct Debit Mandate, making vehicle ownership more accessible while remaining Sharia compliant.

Commenting on the offer, Salima bint Obaid al Marzoqiyah, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO Muzn Islamic Banking said: “Customers can now apply for Auto Financing without transferring their salary, enabling them to maintain existing salary arrangements while



The new offering provides financing through a Direct Debit Mandate, making vehicle ownership more accessible while remaining Sharia compliant.

still benefitting from competitive financing terms. At Muzn Islamic Banking, we believe that financial solutions should not only meet immediate needs but also support long-term security and empowerment. This product reflects our commitment to offering flexible, Sharia compliant solutions that promote financial inclusion and sustainable growth”.

The introduction of Auto Financing without salary transfer further strengthens Muzn Islamic Banking’s portfolio of Sharia compliant products that meet diverse customer needs.

By offering financing options that balance convenience with security, Muzn Islamic Banking reaffirms its role as a trusted partner for individuals seeking innovative financial solutions in Oman.

with members of the executive and senior management, also brought together the bank’s corporate clients and key stakeholders.

Designed as an open and inclusive event, it was accessible to a wider audience through digital channels, extending participation beyond the room to an engaged online community.

Headlining the session was Dr Mohamed (Mark) Khater — Strategic Cognition Architect, Cambridge Fellow and global AI & Fintech innovator — who shared forward-looking perspectives on how cognitive AI frameworks are transforming institutional intelligence and redefining financial architecture.

Moderating the discussion for the second time, Sarah Cocker, renowned broadcast journalist and

former CNBC Squawk Box anchor, guided the conversation with her engaging, interview-led approach that encouraged lively exchange and meaningful participation.

Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, remarked, “Cognitive AI is reshaping the very foundation of decision-making and risk intelligence across the global financial ecosystem. Beyond automation, it is enabling a new paradigm of insight — one that harmonises human judgement with data-driven intelligence to unlock sustainable value creation.

As an institution that values foresight and collaboration, Sohar International, through initiatives such as Viewpoints, continues to champion conversations that bridge emerging technology with strategic purpose”.

SHORTTAKES



EU FDI into GCC economies rose to \$54.6 billion in 2023, up from \$18.4 billion in 2011.

GCC-EU ECONOMIC TIES STRENGTHEN

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

Trade and economic cooperation between the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union (EU) gained clear momentum in 2024, with total bilateral trade climbing to \$196.8 billion, according to figures presented in a recent EU-GCC economic overview.

GCC exports to Europe reached \$79.3 billion last year. Fuel and related products represented 74.3 percent of the total, underlining the Gulf’s continued role as a central energy supplier for European markets. The remainder consisted of chemicals, metals, plastics and electrical machinery.

Imports from the EU stood at \$117.5 billion and were led by machinery, transport equipment, pharmaceuticals, electronics and other industrial goods.

European investment in the region also continued to expand. EU foreign direct investment into GCC economies rose to \$54.6 billion in 2023, up from \$18.4 billion in 2011. The figures signal Europe’s long-term interest in Gulf markets and their ongoing diversification agendas.

The document highlights priority areas under the Joint Action Plan 2022 to 2027, which shapes cooperation between the two sides. These areas include green hydrogen, renewable energy, industrial decarbonisation, digital transformation, maritime safety, food security and research collaboration. The EU’s Global Gateway initiative, with more than EUR 300 million earmarked for hydrogen and energy infrastructure, is described as a key driver for future projects related to electrolysis, transport networks and new hydrogen corridors.

Oman launches first ‘Women in LPG’ chapter in Middle East

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, NOV 11

OMAN has officially launched the first Women in LPG (WINLPG) National Chapter in the Middle East, marking a milestone moment for women’s empowerment in the energy sector.

The announcement came during the opening of the Middle East LPG Summit and Exhibition 2025 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. Organised by the World Liquid Gas Association (WLGA) in cooperation with the Ministry, the summit provided the platform for unveiling this landmark initiative.

The launch positions Oman as a regional leader in advancing women’s participation within the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) industry. It also reflects Oman’s expanding role in promoting



Alison Abbott (right), WINLPG Co-Founder and WLGA Communications Director, announcing the unveiling of the Oman chapter on Monday

diversity, inclusion and talent development across the broader energy ecosystem.

WINLPG, the Women in LPG Global Network, was established by the World Liquid Gas Association a decade ago to strengthen the role of women throughout the LPG value chain. Today, the platform has grown into a community of more than 4,000 members across

nearly 15 national chapters. The network provides opportunities for mentorship, leadership development, skills training and professional collaboration. Designed as a neutral, cross-company platform, WINLPG enables women to exchange experiences, highlight success stories and address shared challenges — contributing to a more diverse and resilient global

GOLD MARKET

China’s gold output rises to 271 tonnes



China produced 271.78 tonnes of gold in the first nine months of 2025, up 1.39% year-on-year, according to the China Gold Association. However, gold consumption dropped 7.95% to 682.73 tonnes.

Jewellery demand plunged 32.5 per cent, while gold bars and coins surged 24.55 per cent. Industrial use grew 2.72 per cent as safe-haven and electronic demand lifted gold-backed ETF momentum. — ONA

CRYPTO RISKS

Global watchdog flags tokenisation concerns



The International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) warned that asset tokenisation could introduce new risks for investors, despite fitting within existing regulatory frameworks.

Tokenisation — creating blockchain-based tokens linked to real assets like stocks or bonds — has gained traction this year.

IOSCO said vulnerabilities could arise from underlying technologies. — Reuters

OVERSUPPLY FEARS

Oil steady amidst sanctions uncertainty



Oil prices remained stable on Tuesday as oversupply fears offset concerns over new United States sanctions on Russian crude. Brent futures rose 27 cents to \$64.33 per barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate gained 26 cents to \$60.39.

Investors and banks weighed how sanctions might disrupt global oil and refined fuel markets, keeping price movements limited amidst cautious trading sentiment. — Reuters

Oman boosts energy sector as gas output rises

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, NOV 11

THE Sultanate of Oman recorded a modest decline in crude oil output in 2024 even as natural gas production expanded significantly, reflecting a gradual shift in the country’s energy dynamics, according to the Central Bank of Oman’s Annual Report 2024.

The report showed that the average price of Omani crude slipped marginally by 1.4 per cent to \$81.2 per barrel in 2024, compared to \$82.3 in 2023. Prices fluctuated between a low of \$73.5 per barrel in November and a high of \$89.3 per barrel in June.

Despite the minor price drop, the oil and gas sector remained the backbone of the national economy, contributing around 34.6 per cent to nominal GDP. Revenues from these activities accounted for 72.6 per cent of total government income, slightly higher than 71.9 per cent in 2023.

Crude oil production in Oman fell by 5.4 per cent to an average of 992.6 thousand barrels per day, bringing total annual output to 363.3 million barrels. Condensate production also edged down by 0.2 per cent to 85.3 million barrels during the year.

The decline in output reflected natural field depletion and ongoing efforts to optimise production amidst fluctuating global demand.

Exports of crude oil followed a similar trend, slipping by 0.6



The share of exports in total production rose to 84.9 per cent from 81.1 per cent in 2023.

per cent to 308.4 million barrels in 2024, compared to 310.3 million barrels a year earlier.

However, the share of exports in total production rose to 84.9 per cent from 81.1 per cent in 2023, signalling sustained external demand for Omani crude despite lower output.

China remained the dominant destination for Omani oil, accounting for a commanding 94.1 per cent of total exports, equivalent to 290.2 million barrels — an increase of 1.6 per cent from the previous year.

South Korea ranked second with imports of 5.8 million barrels, up 12 per cent, while Japan imported 5.7 million barrels, marking a sharp 39 per cent decline.

India received 3 million barrels, with Malaysia and other markets taking marginal shares.

Meanwhile, the natural gas sector experienced robust growth, reinforcing Oman’s role as a key regional supplier.

Total natural gas production rose by 5.0 per cent to 54,612 million cubic metres in 2024, up from 51,996 million cubic metres in 2023.

The report attributed this growth to the expansion of domestic gas projects and increased demand from power generation, industrial use and exports.

Associated gas accounted for 21.3 per cent of total production in 2024, up slightly from 21.1 per cent in 2023, while non-

associated gas made up the remaining 78.7 per cent.

The data underscored the importance of natural gas as a pillar of Oman’s long-term energy strategy, especially as the country advances towards greater economic diversification and energy transition goals under Oman Vision 2040.

The report’s findings were complemented by detailed charts showing trends in oil production, exports and destination breakdowns.

While oil remains central to Oman’s fiscal stability, the steady rise in natural gas output signals a strategic balance in the energy mix — positioning Oman for sustained growth amidst evolving global energy markets.

OPINION

China’s answer to World Bank faces its next test



UNA GALANI

The writer is Asia Editor of Reuters Breakingviews, based in Hong Kong, overseeing a team of columnists across the region.

WHEN China set up the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank a decade ago, Washington warned the new lender would serve as a diplomatic tool of the People’s Republic and fall short of the standards upheld by leading US-led institutions like the World Bank. That prediction has proved inaccurate.

The Beijing-based body has established itself as a credible, collaborative, climate-focused lender. As President Donald Trump scoffs at global warming and wavers on how the US will engage with multilateral bodies, new president Zou Jiayi may need to reset the AIIB too.

Jin Liqun, the bank’s outgoing boss, has succeeded in establishing a “lean, clean and green” institution. Since its launch in 2016, the AIIB — capitalised at \$100 billion — has approved \$67 billion in financing across 39 countries. Among its 345 projects, it has funded three solar plants in Uzbekistan, 7,000 kilometres of rural roads in Ivory Coast and telecommunications satellites in Indonesia. It boasts a triple-A credit rating while 67% of its lending contributes to climate adaptation and mitigation outcomes. Though smaller than its global peers, the AIIB plans to deploy at least another \$75 billion by 2030.

While developing countries hold a majority of the AIIB’s shares, many advanced economies — including the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Australia — signed up too despite Washington’s warnings. Its 110

shareholders make it the world’s second-largest multilateral lender by members, after the World Bank. Despite invitations from Chinese President Xi Jinping, the United States and Japan declined to join.

Crucially, the AIIB has positioned itself as a more transparent alternative to China Development Bank and the Export-Import Bank of China, two of the country’s top policy banks, which have committed over \$470 billion in overseas finance.

Those lenders are deeply entwined with the Belt and Road, Beijing’s infrastructure initiative, which has faced widespread criticism for creating debt traps by being reluctant to reduce interest rates or write off loans when problems arise.

By comparison, the AIIB has emerged as a complementary force for the established international financial order. Half of its financing is done in partnership with other multilateral institutions: it’s one of the largest lenders alongside the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. These partnerships have helped AIIB win trust with borrower countries and reduced its due diligence requirements. They also speed up development because they help lenders share the financing risk on ambitious infrastructure projects.

The AIIB has further burnished its international credibility by taking positions that are at odds with Beijing. In contrast with China’s other development banks, it swiftly suspended activities with Russia following

While developing countries hold a majority of the AIIB’s shares, many advanced economies — including the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Australia — signed up too despite Washington’s warnings. Its 110 shareholders make it the world’s second-largest multilateral lender by members, after the World Bank.

Vladimir Putin’s war in Ukraine in 2022. It has also called for multilateral lenders to retain preferred creditor status in sovereign debt restructurings, contradicting Beijing’s earlier arguments that the International Monetary Fund and others should suffer the same haircuts on international loans as Chinese banks. Perhaps most surprisingly, the AIIB has also established a welcome bridge between two big Asian countries that are often at odds. Despite periodic border clashes and its imposition of barriers to Chinese investment, India remains both the bank’s second-largest shareholder and its biggest beneficiary. This enduring engagement underscores the institution’s ability to rise above geopolitical tensions and deliver on its development mandate. Southern Asia accounted for 37% of the bank’s \$1.57 billion revenue from loans and guarantees in 2024.

The AIIB has helped to finance Chennai’s Metro Rail, Haryana’s Orbital Rail Corridor that eases congestion around the capital and a vast solar project backed by Enel Power in India’s Thar Desert in Rajasthan. Of course this does not mean the AIIB is perfect.

Its critics say it defers too much to borrower countries to deal with any complaints, especially on environmental, social and governance standards. But if China’s objective was to establish a multilateral institution to demonstrate to other countries that it could be a trustworthy global partner the AIIB has delivered.

— Reuters

SAUDI CRUDE OIL PRICE CUT IS JUST ENOUGH TO STAY COMPETITIVE

CLYDE RUSSELL

The decision by Saudi Aramco to cut the price of its crude oil for Asian refiners for December cargoes has been viewed as a move to build market share amidst concerns of looming global oversupply.

But the reduction was at the lower end of forecasts by Asian refiners and seems more of a move to keep Saudi oil just competitive enough against other grades, while also giving the world’s biggest crude exporter flexibility should China and India shun Russian barrels amidst US sanctions.

Aramco last week lowered its official selling price (OSP) for its benchmark Arab Light grade for Asian customers to a premium of \$1 a barrel over the Oman/Dubai average for December-loading cargoes.

This was down \$1.20 a barrel from a premium of \$2.20 for November-loading crude and takes the OSP to the lowest level in 11 months.

However, the reduction in the OSP was expected by Asia’s refiners, who buy about 80% of Aramco’s seaborne exports.

Asian refiners forecast that Aramco would drop the OSP for Arab Light by between \$1.20 and \$1.50 a barrel in a survey conducted by Reuters ahead of the announcement.

This means the actual reduction was at the lower end of expectations, a move that doesn’t really fit with a market narrative that the Saudis are slashing oil prices in order to build market share. Rather, the lower OSP reflects Aramco’s long-standing practice of following the current market dynamics in setting prices.

The premium of cash Dubai crude to swaps has been trending lower in recent weeks, averaging \$1.12 a barrel so far this month, down from \$1.73 in September.

The price of global benchmark Brent crude over Dubai has also been trending lower, with the exchange for swaps dropping to a rare discount last week. Brent’s discount to Middle East benchmark Dubai widened to 26 cents a barrel on Monday, the most in more than five years and down from a premium of \$3.77 a barrel as recently as June 19.

What this means is that crude grades that are priced against Brent are becoming relatively cheaper compared with those priced against Dubai.

Crudes that are priced against Brent include grades from West Africa, Latin America and even US grades, given West Texas Intermediate Midland is deliverable into the Brent benchmark. — Reuters

South Korea’s journey to global beauty power

IN 1991, four years after joining Amorepacific, his family’s South Korean beauty conglomerate, Suh Kyungbae travelled to France to figure out why the company’s skin care line was selling so poorly there.

He found the products collecting dust at run-down French drugstores. Suh decided to pull the items off the shelves. He did not want to risk undermining Amorepacific’s image in France, the birthplace of the modern cosmetics industry.

“I realised that having a brand that is recognised in the market is very important”, said Suh, 62, now the chair of Amorepacific. “At that time, Korean brands weren’t strong enough”.

Those days are long gone. Riding the cultural wave of South Korean music, movies and television shows, even food, the country’s beauty products are thriving. South Korean beauty trends — including glass skin, multistep skin care routines and snail mucin serum — are online fodder.

South Korea surpassed the United States to become the world’s second-largest cosmetics exporter, after France, in the first half of 2025. Cosmetics exports surged 15% in the six-month period, to a record \$5.5 billion, fuelled by growth in the United States and Europe, according to data from the South Korean government.

Amorepacific is being transformed from domestic stalwart to export powerhouse. Last year, the company’s sales to the West, which includes North America and Europe, more than doubled.

Once a niche segment, Korean beauty products are thoroughly mainstream, with a large presence at retailers like Sephora and Walmart in the United States, as well as major stores across Europe. The American chain Ulta Beauty, which has more than 1,400 US stores, said in July that it was expanding its K-beauty offerings. South Korea’s biggest cosmetics chain, Olive Young, plans to open its first store in America next year, in Los Angeles.

This has created opportunities for Amorepacific’s 31 brands, including



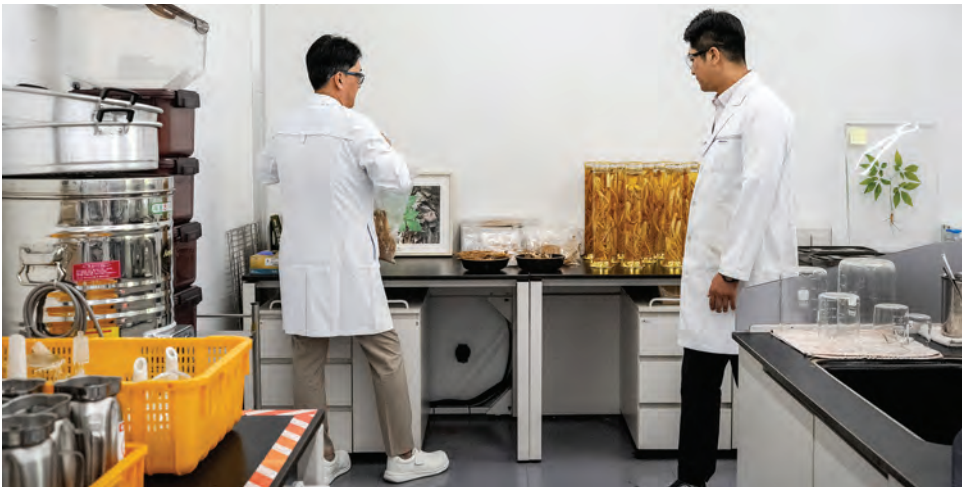
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A lab at Amorepacific’s research and innovation centre in Yongin, South Korea. — The New York Times

Laneige and the luxury skin care line Sulwhasoo, to reach more consumers.

And while Amorepacific is a beneficiary, it is also a target. Hundreds of smaller South Korean brands are jostling to stand out with new products featuring innovative ingredients or new technologies. Even products from lesser-known brands spread quickly on social media. On TikTok, posts about “K-beauty” or “Korean skin care” garner 250 million views on average per week, according to Spate, a consumer data firm.

When Amorepacific was founded on September 5, 1945, the notion of South Korea’s becoming a global power in the cosmetics industry would have been unimaginable — even to the company’s founder, Suh Sungwhan, who is Suh Kyungbae’s father.

Demand for K-beauty products internationally blossomed alongside the country’s cultural wave, known as “Hallyu” in Korean, in the late 1990s, when South Korean television shows started gaining popularity in Asia. Over the past decade, musical acts like BTS and Blackpink, television shows like “Squid Game” and this year’s summer blockbuster, “KPop Demon Hunters”, have vaulted the country’s cultural exports to new heights of global popularity. “It is with the development of culture that the beauty industry can also develop”,

said Suh Kyungbae, who took over as Amorepacific’s CEO in 1997. “Culture, beauty, food and fashion all cross-pollinate”.

As global audiences get a window into life in South Korea through movies and television shows, they are introduced to the age-defying skin of Korean celebrities, as well as the country’s cosmetic products and elaborate skin care routines.

In the United States, trendsetters and early adopters, especially those with personal connections to South Korean culture, started embracing Korean beauty products about 10 years ago, said Charlotte Cho, a founder of Soko Glam, an e-commerce website specialising in K-beauty products.

Korean brands filled a void between inexpensive drugstore products and legacy offerings sold at department stores. They offered unique ingredients and technological breakthroughs at better prices. She said items like pimple patches for treating zits and sheet masks provided an affordable entry point.

Amorepacific’s big break in the United States came from a mask that’s not really a mask. The company’s Laneige brand developed a product called Lip Sleeping Mask — more balm than mask — that softens and hydrates lips as users sleep. Beauty influencers and celebrities gushed about the product on social media. — NYT

US travel chaos: Buses, trains see resurgence

NEW YORK: Americans are increasingly booking buses and trains to their Thanksgiving destinations this year while some have outright cancelled their plans following the worst disruptions to air travel since the start of the government shutdown. Travelers frustrated by the rise in flight cancellations and long TSA lines are making alternative plans for travel even though the US Senate moved to reopen the government as it is expected to take some time for air travel to go back to normal. Bus and train bookings for

the Thanksgiving holiday period have increased 12 per cent year-on-year, led by a rise in demand for bus travel, according to travel search engine Wanderu. Several departure dates are seeing as high as a 20 per cent to 30% year-over-year increase in bookings, a spokesperson said, with noted growth in demand for travel to the suburbs of St Louis, New York City and Washington, D.C. Just weeks shy of one of the busiest travel seasons of the year, airlines canceled on Monday about 2,400 flights and delayed over 9,500 flights. On Sunday,



Trains that are not in service sit at the New York City Transit Corona Maintenance Facility in New York City. — Reuters

about 2,950 flights were canceled and nearly 11,200 delayed in the single worst day for flight disruptions

since the government shutdown began on October 1. Megabus said it started seeing a significant increase in purchases last week. Greyhound-owner Flix said searches for buses are trending higher especially around peak days, Tuesday and Wednesday before Thanksgiving and Sunday return, according to Kai Boysan, CEO of Flix North America, which operates the continent's largest intercity bus network. "We anticipate more travellers may turn to ground transportation in the days ahead, and we're monitoring demand

closely and prepared to add capacity where needed to ensure people can keep moving," said Boysan. Wanderu said in the past week it's seen elevated levels of train ticket purchases for over 200 miles. Amtrak said it is anticipating record-breaking 2025 Thanksgiving travel, with double-digit growth in early bookings relative to last year. The company said to meet demand it is expanding capacity for its Northeast regional routes including Boston and Washington. Last year, more than 1.2 million passengers traveled

with Amtrak during the Thanksgiving holiday. Government mandated flight cuts will rise to 6 per cent on Tuesday at 40 major airports across the US and expected to increase to 10 per cent by Nov. 14. "This would be a rare case where it is probably be a little easier for us to say no to Thanksgiving," said Harry Cooke, 28, who typically travels to Boston to visit family for the holidays, noting that travel during the holiday is hectic enough absent a shutdown. Airlines for America, which represents major US airlines, said. — Reuters

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

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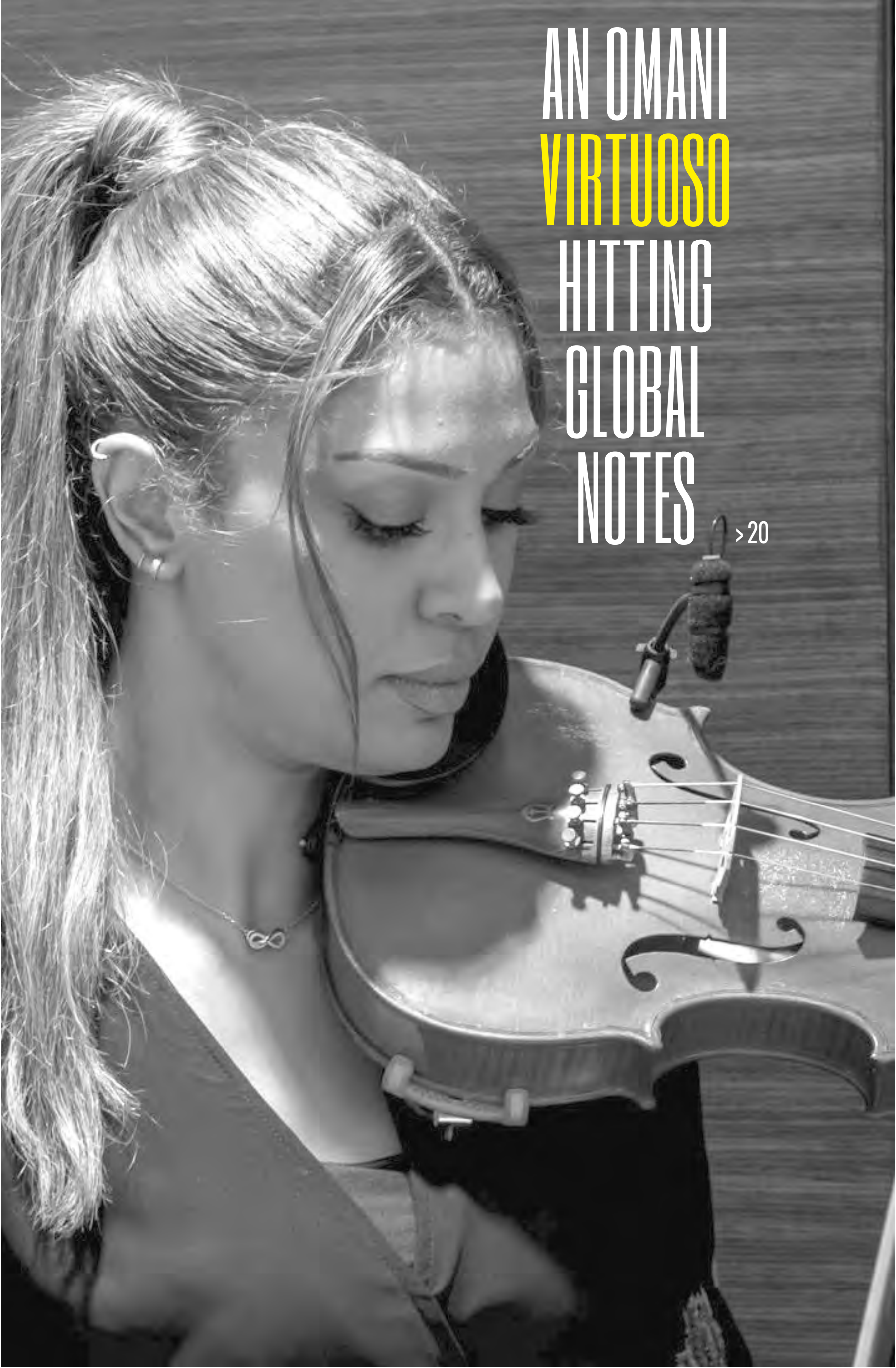


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BOOK REVIEW

The Taste of Memory: Reading Jokha al Harthi’s *Narinjah*

BUTHAINA AL RIYAMI

The bitter orange — *narinjah* in Arabic — is a fruit that is not easy to define. It greets you with its delicate sweet scent and lingers on your tongue with a sharp sting that remains. Jokha al Harthi’s novel *Narinjah*, like its namesake, leaves a taste that is unforgettable and holds the same duality. As the narration unfolds, the contrast between beauty and pain, memory and loss, intimacy and distance is stunning.

Jokha has always been known as the writer of *Celestial Bodies*, the first Arabic-language novel to win the Man Booker International Prize (in) 2019. She has enriched Omani literature and contributed to presenting many Omani cultural concepts to the world. This marked an important moment in the development of Oman and its identity and helped to bring Omani literature onto the world stage. However, not many people know about her other works. *Narinjah* may come as both a continuation and a surprise.

Al Harthi has always been a writer deeply attuned to the currents of memory, silence, and the unspoken ties between generations. But in *Narinjah*, she turns inward even more intensely, crafting a narrative that is less about the sweep of history and more about the fractures of personal experience.

In this novel, *Zuhoor*, a woman caught between her memories and emotions, and between them and geography, is the narrator and the centre of the story. The narration is not a straight line but a collection of fragments—absence, loss of loved ones, and the distinct ache of exile. The memories and emotions fill the novel with echoes and returns, making it feel like listening to memory itself—broken, incomplete, yet deeply moving.

The fragmented structure succeeds in reflecting the workings of the human mind: looping back, moving forward, and dwelling on moments of intimacy. From page to page, readers journey from *Zuhoor*’s exile to her childhood, witnessing the shifting tides of Omani society.

While readers can clearly notice the cultural resonance in the novel, it still emerges beyond cultural values and vibes, as the characters embody both the specific textures of Omani life and the universal human struggles of memory, belonging, and love. *Zuhoor*’s yearning and silence could belong to any woman in the world, yet they are also deeply rooted in the Omani experience of transition, migration, and modernity.

Reading this novel is like tasting a bitter-orange fruit — *Narinjah*. It demands the reader to travel through pain, longing, and the weight of the unspoken all throughout the novel. However, it rewards readers with a rich emotional journey, filled with depth and the zigzag motion of memory.



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



HOLLYWOOD

British actor Jonathan Bailey speaks with fans as he attends the European premiere of the film “Wicked: For Good” in central London. — **AFP**



ART

Guests walk past an art installation of Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti, displayed on the walls of Ecobank Pan African Centre during the Afrobeat Rebellion exhibition held in honour of Fela in Lagos, Nigeria. — **Reuters**



LIFESTYLE

An Afghan boy rides a horse at the Qargha Lake on the outskirts of Kabul. — **AFP**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Oman



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The ‘ordinary’ Arnie? Glen Powell reboots ‘The Running Man’

It is often said Hollywood doesn’t produce movie stars anymore.

So when someone with a square jaw and loads of charisma like Glen Powell is cast in Arnold Schwarzenegger’s role for a reboot of “The Running Man,” people get excited.

But Powell, an unfailingly courteous Texan, who quit the Los Angeles life and moved home to Austin as his fame grew, is having none of it.

“I don’t find myself to be exceptional,” the 37-year-old told AFP. “That era of action stars and movie stars? You can’t really compare apples to oranges,” Powell said.

His role in the new “Running Man,” out on Friday, is certainly a far cry from the indestructible bluster of Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone and Mel Gibson’s 20th-century action heroes, who were usually soldiers, cops and trained fighters.

Powell’s protagonist Ben Richards is an everyman, with no special skills beyond a rugged toughness and a very short fuse.

He reluctantly enters a deadly game show in which the entire world is trying to kill him: he needs to survive long enough to win prize money and buy life-saving medicine for his daughter.

“I’ve always identified myself as an underdog,” Powell said.

“Some of my favorite movies are ordinary people against extraordinary odds. And you don’t get more



Cyndi Lauper attends the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in Los Angeles. — Reuters

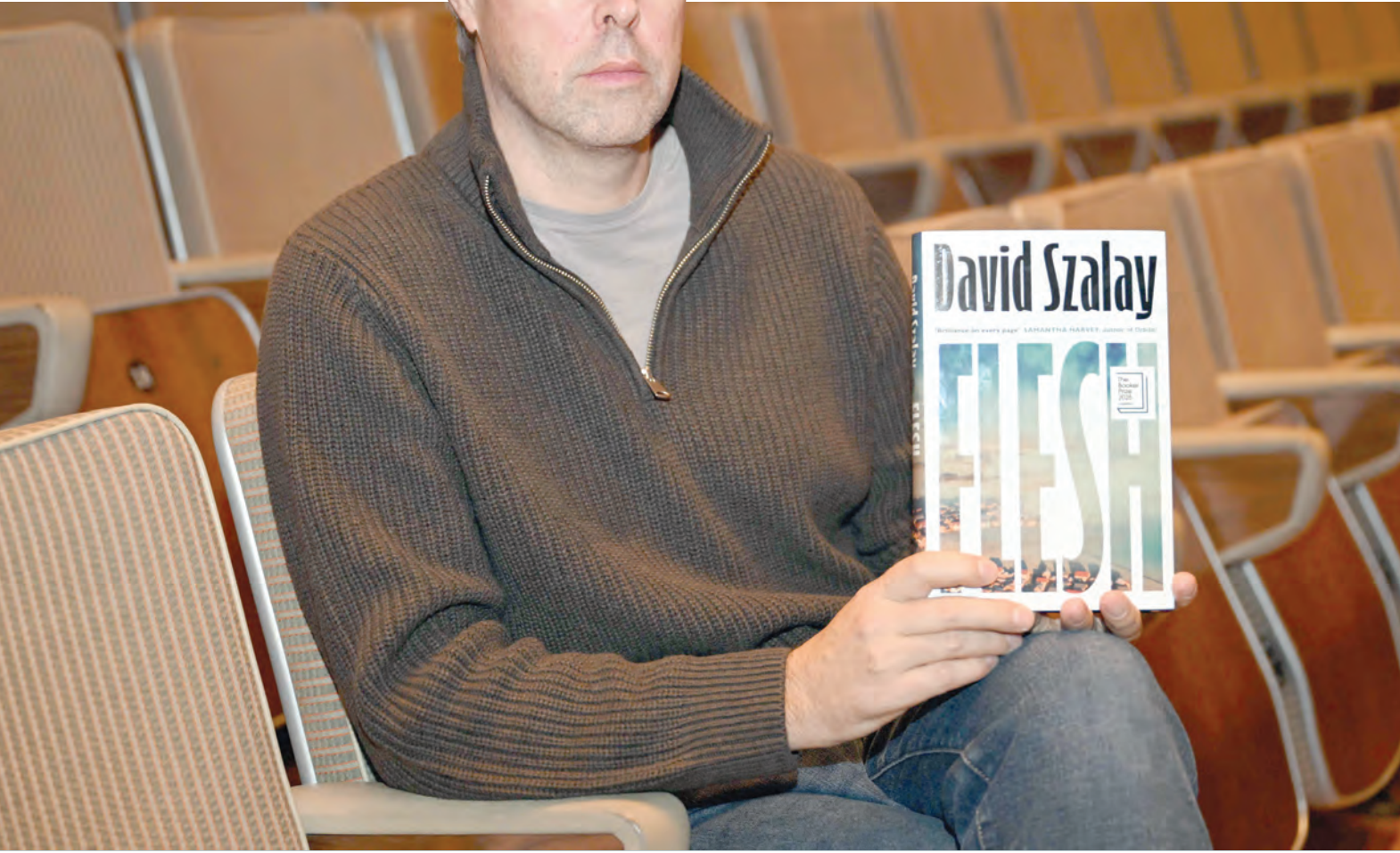
ordinary than Ben.” The movie sees Powell’s hero get bashed and bruised, blown off a bridge, and has him abseiling down the side of a building in only a bath towel to escape from hoodlums.

The night before his AFP interview, Powell and director Edgar Wright screened the movie for Schwarzenegger.

Schwarzenegger’s response? “Oh, I feel so bad for you... It must have hurt!” Powell recalled. “Arnold knows the pain that it takes to do an action movie properly. It was pretty impressive to get his blessing.”

The film hews more closely to the original Stephen King novel than its 1987 big-screen predecessor.

Powell’s hero is pursued from city to city by professional killers. The contest’s producers are rigging each moment for maximum TV ratings. — AFP



David Szalay poses with his book ‘Flesh’ in London. — AFP

BRITISH—Hungarian writer David Szalay won the Booker Prize on Monday for his novel “Flesh”, a tortured story of a Hungarian emigre who makes and loses a fortune.

Szalay beat five other shortlisted authors, including Indian novelist Kiran Desai, who won in 2006 and Britain’s Andrew Miller, to claim the £50,000 (\$65,500) award at a ceremony in London.

Szalay had previously been shortlisted for the prestigious literary honour in 2016 for his last work, “All That Man Is”.

His sixth novel, “Flesh” is another unflattering exploration of masculinity, using sparse prose to track the Hungarian protagonist from military service in his home country to working for the ultra-wealthy in London. His tormented life includes affairs with older women and fighting in Iraq.

The five judges considered 135 books to crown one the best work of long-form fiction written in English and published in the UK or Ireland between October 1, 2024 and September 30, 2025.

Among the six shortlisted works, one kept dominating the conversation, according to chair of the judges Roddy Doyle. He called “Flesh” a “singular” and “extraordinary” novel. “We had never read anything quite like it. It is, in many ways, a dark book but it is a joy to read”, said Doyle, a writer and winner of the 1993 Booker Prize.

The judging panel also included actor Sarah Jessica Parker alongside authors Ayobami Adebayo and Kiley Reid as well as critic and writer Chris Power.

In an interview with the Booker Prize organisation after his novel was longlisted, Szalay said he knew he wanted to write a book that began with Hungary, ended with England and that explored “the cultural and economic divides that characterise” contemporary Europe.

“Writing about a Hungarian immigrant at the time when Hungary joined the EU seemed like an obvious way to go”, he said. Szalay triumphed over favourites Desai and Miller. Desai was shortlisted for “The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny”, a nearly 700-page novel and her first work since winning the Booker in 2006 for “The Inheritance of Loss”.

SZALAY WINS BOOKER FOR TORTURED TALE OF MASCULINITY



(L-R) British-US author Ben Markovits poses with his book ‘The Rest of Our Lives’, US author Katie Kitamura with her book ‘Audition’, US author Susan Choi with her book ‘Flashlight’, Hungarian-British author David Szalay with his book ‘Flesh’, British author Andrew Miller with his book ‘The Land in Winter’ and Indian author Kiran Desai with her book ‘The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny’ during the Booker Prize 2025 shortlist photo call in London. — AFP

Jury chairman Doyle called “Flesh” a “singular” and “extraordinary” novel. “We had never read anything quite like it. It is, in many ways, a dark book but it is a joy to read.”

Miller, who had also previously been shortlisted for the award, was considered for “The Land In Winter”. The other shortlisted novels this year were Susan Choi’s “Flashlight”, Katie Kitamura’s “Audition” and Ben Markovits’s “The Rest of Our Lives”.

Last year’s prize was won by British writer Samantha Harvey for her short novel, “Orbital”, following six astronauts as they contemplate Earth from the International Space Station. Harvey presented this year’s Booker Prize to Szalay. Born in Montreal, Canada, Szalay grew up in London and now lives in Vienna. He is the author of six works of fiction.

In addition to the 50,000-pound (\$65,000) prize for the winner, as well as a 2,500-pound awards to each of the shortlisted authors and translators, the writers also gain a boost in popularity and benefit from increased book sales.

“Even though my father is Hungarian, I never

felt entirely at home in Hungary. I suppose, I’m always a bit of an outsider there and living away from the UK and London for so many years I also had a similar feeling about London”, Szalay said.

“At the end of the novel, we don’t know what the protagonist, Istvan, looks like but this never feels like a lack; quite the opposite”, said Doyle. “Somehow, it’s the absence of words — or the absence of Istvan’s words — that allow us to know Istvan.

“Early in the book, we know that he cries because the person he’s with tells him not to; later in life, we know he’s balding because he envies another man’s hair; we know he grieves because, for several pages, there are no words at all.

“I don’t think I’ve read a novel that uses the white space on the page so well. It’s as if the author, Szalay, is inviting the reader to fill the space, to observe — almost to create — the character with him.

— Agencies

FEATURES



AN OMANI
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IDRIS AL BALUSHI

LONG before Juhaina al Balushi stepped under the lights of the Royal Opera House, music was already woven into the fabric of her childhood. Instruments surrounded her like familiar companions and her father and uncle recognised her talent early.

At just ten years old, she joined the orchestra training programme, where a cello teacher named Elizabeth suggested she try the violin. “When I began learning the violin, I immediately settled on it”, she recalls how naturally it felt in her hands.

Her musical education, however, was far from easy. Studying professionally demanded discipline and precision. She explains, “It was like learning a new language”. Music theory, technique and long practice hours pushed her limits, yet the challenges fuelled her determination. “It was a positive challenge, because you develop a skill you never imagined you would achieve”.

A defining milestone arrived when she joined the Oman Royal Symphony Orchestra. She credits the experience for shaping both her artistry and character. “Professionalism is not only about mastery”, she notes, “it is about respect, commitment and cooperation”. Every concert felt to her like “a new opportunity for artistic growth”, a chance to understand more about herself through the music she played.

Juhaina is very much in touch with music and her heart especially belongs to the Romantic era, namely the works of Johannes Brahms, whose emotional depth resonates deeply with her. “I love Brahms’ works because they carry a deep emotional quality”, she says. For Juhaina, understanding a piece means entering the composer’s world. “When you understand why the piece was

written, it becomes a part of you. She believes a violinist’s role is to act as a bridge between the composer’s intentions and the listener’s emotions.

“The musician is the mediator between the music and the audience”, she explains. This requires emotional honesty, serious study and a willingness to feel the music. After all, beyond technique and performance, music is her emotional language. “Music helps me express my emotions in my own way”, she says. It allows her to say what she cannot put into words. Even with such a solid connection to music and an impressive mastery of working with instruments, stage fright remains part of her journey. “Until today, that feeling is still there”, she admits but manages it with deep breathing techniques before she steps onstage.

Her most treasured memories were the 2015 solo performance at the Royal Opera House on Omani Women’s Day, where she played a César Franck piece alongside pianist Jokha al Naabi. “It was a moment I will never forget”, she says. “The feeling of pride was huge after years of training and effort”.

Today, Juhaina is building a path that extends beyond Oman. She dreams of studying at Berklee College of Music and learn from diverse artists. She has a small studio at home where she records projects for companies, collaborates with composer Ahmed al Musawi on major works and works closely with Amin Raffi and Salah Sultan on contemporary productions.

Fundamentally, she is inspired by the evolution of the Omani music scene which has ‘begun to grow beautifully’ noting the rising awareness and diversity. She hopes to contribute to this progress by creating music that carries Omani identity into global spaces.

Her performances with Omar Khairat, Kadim al Sahir and Wayne Marshall, at the opening of Dubai’s Museum of the Future and at Expo Japan 2025 have affirmed her direction. “All these experiences made me feel that I am truly on the right path”, she says. Looking ahead with ambition and determination, Juhaina hopes to achieve substantial dreams such as playing at world-renowned venues like Carnegie Hall in New York.

Her advice to young Omani girls dreaming of the violin: “Start, even with a small step”. Those who chase fame will stop at a certain point, but those whose foundation is love and genuine passion will naturally reach stardom”.

Her message to Omani youth is simple: “Do not underestimate your simple tools. Don’t be afraid to start. Art doesn’t need many tools, it needs a believing heart and true passion”. And with every note she plays, Juhaina continues to rise, steady, radiant and unmistakably her own.

Juhaina al Balushi has turned her childhood passion into a soaring musical journey. From performing at the Royal Opera House to sharing global stages, she blends discipline, emotion and national pride – striking every note with purpose and grace