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LATHAM, YOUNG
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NEW ZEALAND IN
OPENER

VOL. 44, NO. 98

PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

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INBRIEF

HM CONGRATULATES KING OF JORDAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to King Abdallah II Ibn Al Hussein of the Kingdom of Jordan on the success of the surgery he underwent.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and well-being to King Abdallah, wishing him continuous success in leading the people of Jordan towards further progress, stability and growth.

RAFO CARRIES OUT EXERCISE RESPONSE



The Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) carried the practical demonstration of exercise Response 2025, under the auspices of Maj Gen Musallam bin Mohammed Jaaboub, Commander of the Sultan's Special Force (SSF), on Wednesday.

The exercise, simulates a crash of a military passenger plane, was part of efforts made to raise the level of readiness, enhance coordination between the competent authorities and ensure speed and efficiency of response to emergencies.

DETAILS ON P2

53,000 GET FAMILY INCOME SUPPORT

The Social Protection Fund has completed the disbursement of family income support benefit to more than 53,000 citizens whose applications met the conditions and regulations specified for eligibility.

The Social Protection Fund said that the beneficiaries received a total of more than RO 8 million and that the number of new cases eligible for the benefit stood at 30,810. The fund added that a total of 22,262 cases continue to receive the social security pension.

The fund said that 31,375 applications were submitted for eligibility during the period from October 20, 2024 until February 2025.

Oman and Mongolia keen to expand cooperation

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received at his office on Wednesday Battsetseg Batmunkh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Mongolia.

The meeting discussed means of promoting relations between the two countries in various areas to serve the joint interests. The two sides also exchanged views on a set of regional and international issues of common concern.

The meeting was attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Shaikh Khalifa bin Hamad al Badi, Secretary-General at the Office of HH Sayyid Asaad, Saif



bin Ahmed al Sawafi, Adviser at the Office of HH Sayyid Asaad and Bulgan Enkhtuvshin, Ambassador of Mongolia to the Sultanate of Oman.

Later, Sayyid Badr and Battsetseg Batmunkh discussed means of promoting relations between the two countries and exploring new horizons for cooperation in various diplomatic, commercial and cultural areas.

They also exchanged views on a set of regional and international issues of common concern. The foreign minister stressed the Sultanate of Oman's keenness to enhance cooperation with Mongolia in the fields of investment, trade exchange, tourism, technical and academic cooperation. SEE ALSO P2

Oman full member of Asian Parliamentary Assembly

THE Majlis Ash'shura participated in the 15th Plenary Session of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), which was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, under the theme 'The Role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Enhancing Multilateral Cooperation', with the participation of parliamentary delegations from various Asian countries.

Addressing the plenary session, Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, stressed the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in enhancing multilateral cooperation in Asia given its impact on the call for cooperation, solidarity and cohesion between countries, and regional and international organisations as it is the basic pillar of the requirements of understanding, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and keeping pace with the development and progress witnessed by the whole world in light of the increasing challenges.

He said that the Sultanate of Oman has applied for full membership of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), out of its belief in the importance of integration into Asia and its significant weight at all international and regional levels.

The 15th Plenary Session of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) ratified full membership of the Sultanate of Oman in the APA after it had been attending as an observer member for nearly 18 years which enhances the Sultante of Oman's presence in the regional and international



Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali stressed the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in enhancing multilateral cooperation.

parliamentary scene, and its participation in discussing issues aimed at achieving peace, understanding and coexistence among the world countries.

The chairman of Majlis Ash'shura called on the Asian parliaments to take a firm stance towards the rights of the Palestinian people who are an integral part of Asia, stressing the importance of dialogue leading to security and stability in the region by supporting the demands of the Palestinian people for their legitimate rights guaranteed by international law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Security Council resolutions, international norms and charters and their right to security, self-determination and the establishment of a fully sovereign state on their land.

Al Maawali stressed that the displacement of Palestinians and the forcible seizure of their lands has never been and will never be an option for peace, but rather undermines and destroys all forms of international security, stability and peace. — ONA

Do look up... How Earth can defend itself against asteroid

PARIS: There is a very small chance that an asteroid capable of taking out an entire city could strike Earth in less than eight years. But even if this asteroid is hurtling our way, humanity is now able to defend itself against such a threat, experts say.

The odds that the recently discovered asteroid will hit Earth on December 22, 2032 have now risen to 3.1 per cent, Nasa said on Wednesday, the highest probability for an impact by such a large space rock in modern forecasting.

"Don't panic," Richard Moissl, head of the European Space Agency's planetary defence office, said.

As astronomers gather more data, the odds of a direct hit are widely expected to edge upwards before rapidly dropping down to zero. However, even in the unlikely

event that the probability does keep rising up to 100 per cent, "we are not defenceless", Moissl emphasised.

Here are some of the ways that humanity could deflect or destroy the asteroid known as 2024 YR4.

Only one planetary defence strategy has been tried out on an actual asteroid.

In 2022, Nasa's Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) deliberately smashed a spacecraft into the 160-metre-wide Dimorphos asteroid, successfully altering its orbit around a larger space rock.

An advantage of this plan is that we could hit the 2024 YR4 asteroid with multiple spacecrafts, observing how each one changed its trajectory, Bruce Betts, chief scientist for the nonprofit Planetary Society, said.

The asteroid discovered in



The odds that the recently discovered asteroid will hit Earth on December 22, 2032 have now risen to 3.1 per cent.

December is estimated to be 40-90 metres wide -- roughly half the size of Dimorphos.

"You have to take care not to overdo it," Moissl warned.

If the spacecraft partially destroyed the asteroid, it could send "bits flying off" that still head towards Earth, he said.

If this kind of mishap changed the eventual impact site on Earth -- for example, "from Paris to Moscow" -- that would likely cause major problems back home, Betts added.

A separate idea called a gravity tractor involves a large spacecraft flying up near the asteroid and -- without touching it -- using its gravitational pull to tug it away from Earth. Another non-contact plan would put a spacecraft near the asteroid armed with thrusters that would exert

a "constant stream of ions" to shove the asteroid off course, Moissl said.

Scientists have also considered spray painting one side of the asteroid white, increasing its reflectiveness so it slowly changes trajectory. These subtler strategies would require reaching the asteroid sooner than for some more severe options.

Or we could also just blow it up with a nuclear bomb. Rather than drilling a nuclear weapon deep into an asteroid -- as depicted in the 1998 sci-fi action movie "Armageddon" -- this would likely involving detonating a bomb nearby.

Last year, US researchers testing out this theory on a marble-sized mock asteroid in the lab found that the x-rays from a nuclear blast would vaporise its surface and send it shooting off in the opposite direction. — AFP

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SHORT TAKE



The exercise, which simulates a crash of a military passenger plane, was part of efforts made to raise the level of readiness. — ONA

ROYAL AIR FORCE OF OMAN CARRIES OUT EXERCISE RESPONSE

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) carried the practical demonstration of exercise Response 2025, under the auspices of Maj Gen Musallam bin Mohammed Jaaboub, Commander of the Sultan's Special Force (SSF), on Wednesday. The exercise, which simulates a crash of a military passenger plane, was part of efforts made to raise the level of readiness, enhance coordination between the competent authorities and ensure speed and efficiency of response to emergencies. The exercise saw a wide participation from the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), the Royal Oman Police (ROP), the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, the Civil Aviation Authority, the Engineering Services of the Ministry of Defence, the Medical City for Military and Security Services and the Royal Flight of Oman (RFO). — ONA

رفضان مبارك
Ramadan Mubarak

بهجة رمضان
Ramadan Delights

Embrace the Blessings of This Holy Month.

العرض ساري من تاريخ ٢٠ فبراير ٢٠٢٥ إلى ٢٤ فبراير ٢٠٢٥
متوفر في ناستو هايبر ماركت

المخبلة الورق الكبير صناديق المخبلة الجيد، خبز
فوق القليل خبز المخبلة الجيد، خبز صنديق
صناديق، رطل ١٠٠٠

0.645 OMR
تفاح رويال جالا بولندا بالكيلو
Apple Royal Gala Poland Per Kg

0.290 OMR
برتقال فالنسيا مصر بالكيلو
Orange Valencia Egypt Per Kg

8.950 OMR
دجاج سيارا بالكيلو
Seara Chicken 10x1Kg

1.290 OMR
خبز موزاريلا بالكيلو
Shredded Mozzarella 2x200g

1.190 OMR
دجاج مملوون بالكيلو
Grilled Chicken Malabar Tandoori Flavour Per Pc

25.926% SAVE
1.000 OMR
صناديق خبز
A.Garden Bread Crumbs 2x425gm

41.757% SAVE
1.890 OMR
شامبو هابرزولونج ٢٠٠٠ مل
H&S Shampoo Shampoo Asstd 2X400MI

30.303% SAVE
0.990 OMR
بسكويت نيل ماري ٢٠٠٠ مل
Nabil Biscuit Marie 2x10x50gm

50.083% SAVE
2.990 OMR
مكسرات ممشكلة بالكيلو
Mix Nut Per Kg

32.576% SAVE
0.890 OMR
صابون امبريال ليكر
Imperial Leather Soap Asstd 6X125Gm

27.473% SAVE
0.990 OMR
صابون غسيل الاطباق بحر
Bahar Dish Wash Liquid 2X700M+400MI

46.607% SAVE
2.990 OMR
مسحوق غسيل
Bonux Washing Powder Asstd 9Kg

37.925% SAVE
3.290 OMR
لوز حامد كبير بالكيلو
Almond Raw 23-25 Big Per Kg

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Sayyid Badr receives Mongolian minister

SAYYID Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister received in his office on Wednesday Battsetseg Batmunkh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, within the context of her current official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed means of promoting relations between the two countries and exploring new horizons for cooperation in various diplomatic, commercial and cultural areas.

They also exchanged views on a set of regional and international issues of common concern.

The Foreign Minister stressed the Sultanate of Oman's keenness to enhance cooperation with Mongolia in the fields of investment, trade exchange, tourism, technical and academic cooperation.

On her turn, the Mongolian minister underlined her country's desire to boost the joint cooperation with the Sultanate of



Oman. She lauded Oman's vision in backing international peace and stability.

The meeting was attended by Bulgan Enkhtuvshin, Ambassador of Mongolia to

the Sultanate of Oman, Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Mohammed al Hosni, Head of the Asian and Pacific Department at the Foreign Ministry and several officials from both sides. — ONA

OMANI OBTAINS INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

MUSCAT: Dr Yusra bint Juma al Sinaniyah, Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum and Teaching at the College of Education in Sultan Qaboos University, has obtained the membership of the International Council on Education and Teaching (ICET), representing Arab countries. She earned the post at the ICET's 65th general assembly meeting held in Portugal.

Dr Yusra's accession to the ICET



DR YUSRA JUMA AL SINANI
Associate Professor

position reflects the prominence of Omani academic competencies and underlines their effective contribution to the development of education at regional and international levels.

The ICET is a US-based global non-governmental organisation that has a consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The ICET seeks to promote the quality of education around the world and to upgrade teacher coaching practices. — ONA

ITALIAN OFFICIAL VISITS MTC



MUSCAT: Lt Gen Stefano Mannino, President of the Centre for Higher Defence Studies in the Republic of Italy and his accompanying delegation today visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The Italian delegation was greeted upon their arrival at the MSC by Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the MSC.

Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the Omani maritime environment.

They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties. Meanwhile, the Italian military official and his accompanying delegation visited the Military Technological College (MTC).

Upon the delegation's arrival at the college, they were received by the Acting Commandant of the MTC.

Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the college's educational and service facilities and they toured its various facilities. — ONA

More dams to open soon: MoAFWR



Wadi Dayqa Dam in the Wilayat of Qureyat in the Muscat Governorate has a capacity of 100 million cubic metres.

Oman has nearly 27 flash flood dams, in addition to check dams, to protect against flood risks in several wilayats of Oman. The latest one, Wadi Al Jifnain Dam in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, will be opened on February 24, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR).

The dam, which will be inaugurated by His Highness Sayyid Harib bin Thuwaini al Said, Assistant Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers for Conferences, is 6.4 kilometres-long and 22 metres high.

The construction also

included the protection of existing utility lines that crossed the dam's path. It features two bottom outlets and two overflow channels, according to the Ministry.

Another dam, Al Jufainah Dam, constructed in the Wilayat of Al Amerat, will be opened by Dr Mohammed bin Said

al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, on February 26 in Al Jufainah, Wilayat of Al Amerat.

The construction of the Wadi Jifnain Flood Protection Dam was awarded to STRABAG Oman and consists of an earth and rock fill with a 20-metre-deep concrete sealing wall.

It also includes an excavation in soil of 560,000 m³, 50,000 m3 of plastic concrete core, and 110,000 m3 of reinforced concrete classes C30 and C40. The reinforcement is 6,400 tons with 6 electrical gates and 60,000 m2 of diaphragm wall as a cut-off wall.

While Wadi Dayqa Dam in the Wilayat of Qurayat in the Muscat Governorate has a capacity of 100 million cubic metres, the Al Salif Dam in the Wilayat of Ibbi has a capacity of one million cubic metres, and the Surur Dam in the Wilayat of Dhank has a capacity of 1.29 million cubic metres. The Sudairiyin Dam in the Wilayat of Yanqul has a capacity of 0.24 million cubic metres.

SHORT TAKES



During the meeting, the two sides discussed topics of common concern. — ONA

DEFENCE SECRETARY-GENERAL RECEIVES ITALIAN OFFICIAL

MUSCAT: Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, on Wednesday received Lt Gen Stefano Mannino, President of the Centre for Higher Defence Studies of the Republic of Italy, and his accompanying delegation, who is currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, the two sides discussed topics of common concern, within the context of promoting the joint cooperation to serve the common interests.

The meeting was attended by Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies (ASDS), Ambassador of the Italian Republic to the Sultanate of Oman and the military attaché at the Italian Embassy in Muscat. — ONA

SAF CHIEF RECEIVES US CAPSTONE DELEGATION



MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), received at Muaskar Al Murtafaa a delegation of the US Capstone Programme led by retired general John Kelly, Director of the programme, currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged cordial conversations on a range of topics of common interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Hamid bin Abdullah al Balushi, SAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, and Brigadier Badr bin Nasser al Kharousi, Director-General of the Joint Military Intelligence and Preventive Security at COSAF. It was also attended by the military attaché at the US Embassy in Muscat. — ONA

Al Dakhiliyah RO 7.7 million projects to boost quality of life

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, FEB 19

Al Dakhiliyah Governorate signed a series of agreements for development and service projects, with a total investment exceeding RO 7.7 million. The initiatives align with the governorate's strategic vision to achieve sustainable and comprehensive development across all wilayats while enhancing infrastructure, tourism and economic sectors.

In a significant move towards sustainable development, Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, signed these agreements alongside representatives from the implementing companies. He underscored the governorate's dedication to balancing the execution of development projects,

with a particular focus on meeting the distinct needs of each wilayat based on its unique advantages.

This approach, he noted, reflects a broader vision aimed at fostering sustainable growth and equitable resource distribution, ultimately strengthening economic and social cohesion across the governorate.

The agreements encompass a range of vital projects aimed at enhancing the quality of life for citizens and boosting the local economy, including the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding for project monitoring and management using artificial intelligence and drone technology. These cutting-edge technologies promise to revolutionise how project progress is tracked, offering precise and efficient measurements, ensuring better overseeing of the projects, and meeting goals within



The agreements encompass a range of vital projects.

established timeframes. As part of its ongoing infrastructure development efforts, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has also launched a series of road construction projects. These include the first phase of internal roadworks in the Wilayat of Samayil, spanning 13 kilometres, along with the paving of the Al Najid-Wadi Andam Road. These projects

are integral to the governorate's strategy to expand its road network, facilitating smoother connectivity between villages and creating greater economic opportunities. Additionally, new internal roads will be constructed in several residential areas, covering 20.5 kilometres in the Wilayat of Izki, 16.6 kilometres in the Wilayat of Adam and 11 kilometres in the Wilayat of Bahla. These developments are expected to enhance mobility for residents while supporting broader economic and social growth. The projects also include the establishment of parking spaces and public amenities to improve daily life for the local population.

As part of efforts to enhance the cultural and tourism identity of the governorate, the projects include the development of the Jibreen and Bisyah entrances in the Wilayat

of Bahla. This initiative aims to improve the area surrounding the historic Jibreen Fort, one of Oman's key tourist landmarks.

In the Bisyah area, the road leading to the Salut Centre will be developed with the installation of modern lighting, the addition of seating canopies and the creation of landscaped planters to enhance the area's aesthetics and natural appeal. Overall, the project aims to transform the area into a distinctive tourist destination while preserving its cultural identity and improving infrastructure to enhance the quality of life in the Wilayat of Bahla.

The governorate has also signed an agreement to establish a wellness walkway in the Wilayat of Izki, in partnership with Petroleum Development Oman. The project includes dedicated walking and cycling paths.

Research develops breast cancer detection accuracy

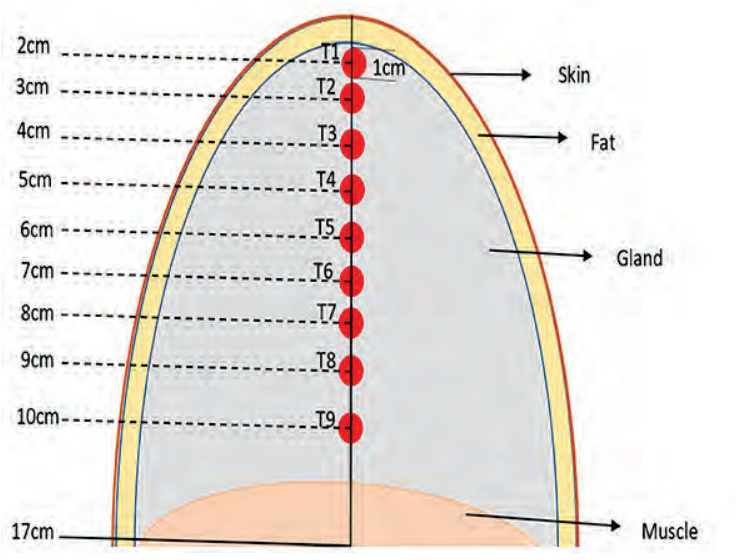
STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 19

AMONG many innovative research projects of the 11th National Research Award organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, 'Influence of Tissue Thermophysical Characteristics and Situ-Cooling on the Detection of Breast Cancer' was awarded in the Information and Communication Technologies field in the PhD category. This research is carried out by the principal investigator Dr Mohammed bin Abdullah al Husaini, Assistant Professor at Arab Open University Oman.

For this research project, Dr Mohammed al Husaini stated that the research developed a numerical simulation model using COMSOL software to investigate breast thermophysical properties. It focuses on how tumour size, depth, blood perfusion and thermal conductivity affect heat distribution in breasts of varying sizes.

Dr Mohammed elaborated that an emulation experiment with situ-cooling gel demonstrated improved thermal contrast, aiding early breast cancer detection. The objective is to enhance breast cancer detection accuracy by analysing temperature variations influenced by tumour properties and cooling techniques.

As for the main findings, Dr Mohammed mentioned the research



The objective is to enhance breast cancer detection accuracy by analysing temperature variations influenced by tumour properties and cooling techniques.



DR MOHAMMED AL HUSAINI

project revealed that tumours located deeper or smaller in size are harder to detect due to minimal temperature variation, with the highest skin temperature differences between tumour — and non-tumour-affected breasts could range from 2.58°C to 0.274°C. Moreover, larger breast sizes reduce thermal contrast, while small breast sizes may have difficulty detecting tumours smaller than 0.5 cm, as tumours located at greater depths in the breast layers do not produce significant temperature differences.

The results further showed that applying situ-cooling gel improves thermal contrast, particularly for deeper tumours. For example, for a

tumour located at a depth of 10 cm, a thermal difference of 6°C could be achieved using local cooling gel, an achievement that was not possible with the simulation model alone.

Through this study, Dr Mohammed recommended that further clinical studies are required to validate these findings, and that situ-cooling can be integrated as a complementary approach in thermography-based cancer detection. This research project was published in Applied Sciences in 2023. The research team consisted of Dr Mohammed al Husaini, Prof Mohamed Hadi Habaebi (International Islamic University Malaysia), Dr F M Suliman (King Khalid University), Prof Md Rafiqul Islam (International Islamic University Malaysia), Dr Elfatih A. A Elsheikh (King Khalid University), and Dr Naser A. Muhaisen (International Islamic University Malaysia).

Regarding his win, Dr Mohammed al Husaini mentioned that “winning this award is a great honour and recognition of the importance of our research. It highlights the significance of improving breast cancer detection using non-invasive thermography techniques and situ-cooling.

This recognition gives us the motivation and determination to continue our research, pushing the boundaries of innovation and striving to make a meaningful impact in early breast cancer detection and patient care.”

Symposium delves into Oman-India relations

NEW DELHI: The Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in New Delhi organised a historical cultural symposium on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of India.

The symposium dealt with the two-countries' commercial and cultural ties extending for more than 5,000 years.

The event, held in collaboration with Jamia Millia Islamia, highlighted the role of Omani ports like Muscat, Sohar and Qalhat in maritime trade, the impact of cultural exchange on language, arts and architecture and the role of Indian communities in promoting pluralism and



The symposium dealt with the two-countries' commercial and cultural ties extending for more than 5,000 years. — ONA

religious tolerance.

During the symposium, Ambassador Ashok Kumar Attri discussed his experience of living in Oman, reasons for the settlement of Indian families in Oman, his tenure as head of the Indian mission in Muscat and the strong ties binding the two

countries.

For his part, Shri L Prashant Pise, Deputy Director-General of the Indian Council of World Affairs, said that relations between India and Oman are deep-rooted in history. He added that the two countries' diplomatic relations are

based on friendship, civilised exchange of mutual benefits and coexistence.

Prashant Pise presented a research paper about the history of Omani-Indian relations and the impact of pluralism and culture of difference on mutual understanding.

Omani researcher Dr Saud bin Abdullah al Zadjali presented a working paper on historical reasons for the strength of relations — from western and eastern perspectives.

The paper dealt with India's strategic role as a permanent partner in the Arabian Gulf and its relationship with peoples, based on diversity that achieves the common interests and realises cultural communication. — ONA

SPOTLIGHT

RAMADHAN TRAFFIC WOES

A R E F L E X I B L E W O R K T I M I N G S A S O L U T I O N ?



BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, FEB 19

AS the holy month of Ramadhan approaches, concerns about traffic congestion in streets, markets and public places are renewed, especially during rush hours before Iftar. While flexible work and remote work policies helped reduce pressure on roads and facilities last year, many institutions have returned to traditional working hours.

Congestion in Ramadhan is a recurring phenomenon, as main streets and shopping centres witness heavy traffic, especially after the afternoon prayer and until Iftar time, in addition to the crowding of markets before Eid. With the rise in temperatures, this crisis becomes more difficult, imposing the need for solutions to ease pressure on roads.

Last year’s experience proved that applying flexible working hours and remote work helped reduce traffic density. “I was working remotely last Ramadhan, and the situation was more comfortable and productive,” says Khaled al Saeedi, an employee in the banking sector. “But this year, we are back to traditional working hours, and I feel that congestion will return, especially on the main roads leading to the offices,” he added.

Abdul Rahman Ambusaidi, a human resources manager at an insurance company, believes that the solution lies in combining flexible working hours and remote work. He says: “We can allocate specific days for remote work for jobs that do not require daily attendance, while dividing office attendance into two shifts, morning and evening, to reduce pressure on the streets.”

Another solution that could help alleviate congestion is promoting the use of public transportation, in addition to encouraging online shopping to reduce crowding in markets.

Umm Muhammad, a housewife, says: “Every Ramadhan I find it hard when going to the markets to buy Iftar supplies, as the parking lots are full and the queues are long. I think expanding delivery services and online shopping can alleviate this problem.”

Technology can also play an important role in organising traffic and reducing congestion. Through appointment booking applications, congestion at government agencies and banks can be reduced. Also, publishing real-time traffic updates via applications and social media helps drivers avoid congested roads.

The solution is not limited to government policies, but also requires a change in individual behaviour. To this note, awareness campaigns are a need of the hour to encourage advance shopping, using public transportation, online shopping and working flexibly during Ramadhan.

Ultimately, reducing congestion during Ramadhan requires concerted efforts between government agencies, companies and people to reach sustainable solutions that make the holy month experience more comfortable and smooth for everyone.

“
Every Ramadhan I find it hard when going to the markets to buy Iftar supplies, as the parking lots are full and the queues are long. I think expanding delivery services and online shopping can alleviate this problem.
UMM MUHAMMAD

RESILIENCEMANAGEMENT



Participants underwent rigorous evaluation stages, intensive practical training, and took part in crises and risk simulation exercises.

RAM CONCLUDES PROGRAMME IN RISK MANAGEMENT

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) recently concluded its Executive Programme in Resilience and Risk Management, a key initiative in RAM’s broader efforts to enhance the culture of crisis preparedness within government organisations.

Held under the auspices of Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, the specially curated programme was designed with the requirements of public sector leaders and the nation in mind as it took an effective leadership perspective on crisis and risk management and emergency preparedness.

The three-month, broad-based programme was delivered in collaboration with the Emergency Planning College (EPC), the United Kingdom’s national centre for resilience learning and development, and Takatuf Oman, a subsidiary of the Oman Investment Authority.

“This programme introduced me to best practices in business continuity planning and allowed me to develop and strengthen my ability to assess risks and address them in a flexible and effective manner. I benefited from the interactive lectures and practical exercises delivered by experts in this field, which have enhanced my strategic decision-making capabilities in today’s rapidly evolving work environment,” said Dr Hassan al Balushi, a participant in RAM’s Executive Programme in Resilience and Risk Management.

Khalsa al Kasbi, another participant in the programme, said, “The Executive Programme in Resilience and Risk Management has been an exceptional learning journey, combining knowledge and practical application in risk management, crisis response and business continuity.”

Pilot project to conserve environment



The ‘Blue Harvest’ project is a pioneering effort in Oman, aiming to produce Miscanthus fibres for applications in 3D-printable concrete and bioplastics used in indoor construction materials.

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, FEB 19

In a significant step towards promoting sustainability and environmental conservation, Sohar Freezone embarked on the ‘Blue Harvest’ pilot project. The main goal of such project is cultivate Elephant Grass (Miscanthus) over 2,000 square metres to produce renewable raw materials using sustainable agricultural methods.

The project aligns with Oman Vision 2040, reinforcing Sohar Freezone’s role as a hub for eco-friendly solutions and circular economy practices.

The ‘Blue Harvest’ project is a pioneering effort in Oman, aiming to produce Miscanthus fibres for applications in 3D-printable concrete and bioplastics used in indoor construction materials.

One of its most notable environmental benefits is its ability to capture 44 tonnes of CO2 per hectare annually, making it a powerful tool in combating climate change and reducing carbon emissions.

This ambitious project is the result of strong collaboration between local and international partners.

Wageningen University & Research in the Netherlands is leading the project, leveraging its expertise in sustainable agriculture. Additionally, Omani universities such as Sohar University, Sultan Qaboos University, and the German University of Technology (GUTech), along with the ELAF Technology Center, are key contributors.

Speaking about the project, Emile Hoogsteden, CEO of SOHAR Port, stated: “Blue Harvest is a major step forward in promoting the circular economy in Oman. This project not only strengthens our commitment to sustainability, but also contributes to improving soil and water quality while mitigating the effects of climate change. We look forward to expanding this initiative into more economically viable applications, reinforcing Sohar Freezone’s position as a leader in sustainable investment.”

Beyond its environmental impact, “Blue Harvest” enhances knowledge exchange between Oman and the Netherlands, focusing on sustainable agriculture, water resource optimisation and soil quality improvement.



Al Harthy thanked the ambassador for his efforts in promoting relations between the two countries, wishing him success in his future assignments.— ONA

AL HARTHY BIDS FAREWELL TO VIETNAMESE AMBASSADOR

MUSCAT: Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs received on Wednesday Dang Xuan Dung, non-resident Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to the Sultanate of Oman to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. Shaikh Khalifa thanked the ambassador for his efforts in promoting relations between the two countries, wishing him success in his future assignments.

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Economy Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees In Omani Riyals	Last Date For Tender Submission
2/2025	IT Asset Management & IT Service Management Project	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	31/ 3/ 2025

First

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender tender from the following website: [www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](#)

The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Second

Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system: [https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om](#)

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone :

etenderhd@mtc.gov.om
 + 96824402200

Ministry of Health

Announcement

The Ministry of Health (Ibri Regional Hospital) invites specialized companies to participate in following Tender :-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non Refundable)
561/2025	Retrofit of Bathrooms at Ibri Regional Hospital	Before 12.00 Am on Sunday 02/03/2025	Before 9.00 Am on Thursday 13/03/2025	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	- SME RO 10 - LO RO 25

Notes :-

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website : <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Regional Ibri Hospital is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accept or reject any tender.
- Declaration of commitment to the offer must be attached to the tender documents electronically and will not be considered if not submitted.

<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
Any Clarification you may contact via
Telephone: 24402200
Email id: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة

Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tender:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCit/ 177/2024/ RECALL-1	REPAIRING OF DAMAGE TO BATINAH EXPRESSWAY LIGHTING NETWORK IN SOUTH BATINAH GOVERNORATE	19-02-2025	05-03-2025	26-03-2025	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST & SECOND & THIRD CLASS)	(75/-) SEVENTY FIVE OMANI RIALS (LOCAL, REGIONAL) (15/-) FIFTEEN OMANI RIAL FOR SME NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200, e-mail: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

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WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Palestinians sit next to a fire among the rubble of buildings destroyed during the Israeli offensive, northern Gaza. — Reuters

HAMAS SAYS READY TO FREE ALL HOSTAGES AT ONCE

GAZA: Hamas signalled on Wednesday that it was willing to free all remaining hostages held in Gaza in a single swap during the next phase of the ongoing ceasefire agreement. “We have informed the mediators that Hamas is ready to release all hostages in one batch during the second phase of the agreement, rather than in stages, as in the current first phase,” senior Hamas official Taher al Nunu said. Nunu said this step was meant “to confirm our seriousness and complete readiness to move forward in resolving this issue, as well as to continue steps towards cementing the ceasefire and achieving a sustainable truce”.

Under the ceasefire’s first phase, 19 Israeli hostages have been released by groups so far in exchange for more than 1,100 Palestinian prisoners freed from Israeli jails in a series of Red Cross-mediated swaps. Wednesday’s offer came after Israel and Hamas announced a deal for the return of all six remaining living hostages eligible for release under phase one in a single swap this weekend. After the completion of the first phase, 58 hostages will remain in Gaza. — AFP

JAPAN MARKS ENERGY RETURN TO NUCLEAR POWER



International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director-general Rafael Mariano Grossi (2nd L) inspects the Interim Storage Facility site, in Okuma town, Japan. — AFP

TOKYO: The UN nuclear watchdog chief visited Japan’s stricken Fukushima plant on Wednesday, the day after Tokyo approved an energy plan that marks a return to nuclear power. As IAEA head Rafael Grossi arrived in Japan on Tuesday, the cabinet adopted a plan to increase reliance on nuclear power to help meet growing energy demand from artificial intelligence and microchip factories. “At a moment where Japan is embarking on a gradual return to nuclear energy in its national energy mix, it is important that this is also done in complete safety and with the confidence of the society,” Grossi said after meeting the foreign minister.

Japan had previously vowed to “reduce reliance on nuclear power as much as possible”. But this pledge was dropped from the latest Strategic Energy Plan -- which includes an intention to make renewables the country’s top power source by 2040. Under the plan, nuclear power will account for around 20 per cent of Japan’s energy supply by 2040, up from 5.6 per cent in 2022. — AFP

MIGRANTS COMPLAINTS

Spain accuses smugglers of killing migrants



Spanish police have arrested seven alleged people smugglers accused of killing eight migrants, including a baby, during a sea crossing to the Canary Islands. The police said they began investigating after a vessel docked at the island of El Hierro in December with 224 people aboard, including some who had suffered serious injuries during an altercation on the boat. A total of 46,843 migrants reached the Atlantic archipelago in 2024. — AFP

SUDAN BATTLE FORCES 10,000 FAMILIES OUT OF FAMINE-HIT CAMP

PORT SUDAN: Two days of fighting between Sudanese rivals have forced an estimated 10,000 families to flee a famine-hit displacement camp in the Darfur region, the UN migration agency said on Wednesday. The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) last week stormed Zamzam camp, home to at least half a million people, triggering clashes with the Sudanese army and allied militias, witnesses said.

The International Organization for Migration said the violence

since February 11 had displaced 10,000 families from Zamzam, just south of North Darfur state capital El Fasher. The agency cautioned that its data covers only the first two days of the reported attack as its collection capacity had been reduced due to funding constraints. Beyond the camp, a further “1,544 households were displaced from various villages” near El Fasher, the IOM said.

El Fasher is the only state capital in the vast western region of Darfur

that the RSF has not captured in its nearly two-year war with the Sudanese army. With the military on the verge of retaking the capital Khartoum following a multi-front offensive on central Sudan, the paramilitaries have intensified attacks on El Fasher in a bid to consolidate their hold on Darfur. But the RSF has not managed to take the city, its attacks successively repelled by the army-aligned Joint Forces but sending tens of thousands of people fleeing. — AFP

Zelensky accuses Trump of living in ‘disinformation’

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday accused Donald Trump of succumbing to Russian “disinformation”, deepening a rift between Kyiv and the new US administration. Speaking to reporters at a press conference on Tuesday, Trump echoed many of Russia’s talking points on the three-year war in Ukraine, blaming Kyiv for having “started” the fighting and suggesting Zelensky was hugely unpopular. Trump claimed his Ukrainian counterpart had a minimal approval rating in his country -- despite polls showing otherwise.

Zelensky hit back, saying that “unfortunately, President Trump, for whom we have great respect as leader of the American people... lives in this disinformation space.” Zelensky’s comments highlighted a growing rift between Ukraine and the Trump administration, which sent officials to meet with Russian negotiators on Tuesday in a high-level meeting in Saudi Arabia that excluded Kyiv. “I believe that the United States helped Putin to break out of years of isolation,” the Ukrainian leader added, in some of his sharpest criticism yet of the new US administration.

Russia has revelled in Trump’s remarks, praising him on Wednesday as the “only Western leader” who understood that “dragging Ukraine into Nato” was a cause of the conflict. “He is a completely independent politician,” Russian foreign minister Sergei



Director of a local lyceum Yurii Bilyk walks next to its building destroyed by a recent Russian air strike, in Dnipropetrovsk region. — Reuters

“Unfortunately, President Trump, for whom we have great respect as leader of the American people... lives in this disinformation space. I believe that the United States helped Putin to break out of years of isolation.”

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

Lavrov was quoted as saying by the state-run TASS news agency on Wednesday. Trump’s special envoy for Ukraine, Keith Kellogg, arrived in the Ukrainian capital on Wednesday morning in what he said was a mission to “sit and listen” to Kyiv’s concerns, after Ukraine chided the US for not being included in the Russian talks.

Trump has upended US foreign policy since taking office last month, making statements that have alarmed even Washington’s closest allies. His diplomatic overtures towards the Kremlin have alarmed Ukraine, which fears it will be forced to make massive concessions to end the fighting. In his press conference on Tuesday, Trump suggested that one such concession would be to hold new elections in Ukraine, one of Moscow’s demands

for a peace deal. “It’s been a long time since we’ve had an election,” said Trump. “That’s not a Russian thing, that’s something coming from me, from other countries.”

Trump’s latest comments are unlikely to allay fears among some European leaders, already worried that Washington will make serious concessions to Moscow and re-write the continent’s security arrangement in a Cold War-style deal.

Ukraine had been working on a deal to give the US access to vast amounts of Ukrainian natural resources in exchange for protection. “I am defending Ukraine, I cannot sell our country. That’s all,” Zelensky said. In Paris, France’s President Emmanuel Macron was to host another meeting in Paris on Ukraine. — Reuters

DRC CHURCH LEADERS PUSH FOR PEACE



NAIROBI: Congolese religious leaders are aiming to organise peace talks that would bring President Felix Tshisekedi’s government, Rwanda-backed M23 rebels and exiled opposition figures around the same table, two officials said on Wednesday. The effort would require getting Tshisekedi to abandon his position of refusing to sit down with the rebels, whom he brands terrorists.

“We, the two churches, Catholic and Protestant, are trying to get the whole world around one table,” Msgr. Donatien Nshole, secretary-general of the influential Catholic bishops conference (CENCO), said in an interview in Kenya’s capital Nairobi. — Reuters

RESUMING FIRE

Lebanon reports Israeli strikes in south



Lebanese official media said Israel struck a vehicle in the south on Wednesday, killing one person -- the first death since Israeli troops withdrew from most of the border area. “An enemy drone struck a vehicle... in the town of Aita al Shaab,” near the southern border, the official National News agency said, reporting one person was killed. The NNA also reported Israeli automatic weapons fire towards homes near the town of Shebaa. — AFP

HIGH REQUIREMENTS

Sweden throws out Thunberg lawsuit



Sweden’s Supreme Court threw out a class action lawsuit on Wednesday brought against the state by 300 young people, including climate activist Greta Thunberg, accusing it of climate inaction. The case demanded that Sweden take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to within the limits of what is “technically and economically feasible”. “The Supreme Court has now concluded that the case cannot be taken up for review,” it said in a statement. — AFP

Geostrategic analysis and planning: Why it matters

NASSER AL ABRI

UNDERSTANDING the global strategic environment is essential for analysing how countries cooperate or enter into conflicts. Security, politics, economy and social issues are all connected, shaping each country's position in the world.

Over time, power centres and global influence shift, making it necessary to constantly reassess international relationships.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the world has been changing rapidly, especially due to advancements in technology.

These changes have impacted political and security conflicts, influenced the formation of new alliances, and shaped global economic and security policies.

The way countries approach national security is no longer limited to military power alone. Today, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, digital transformation, economic stability, energy resources, environmental challenges and even public health are all part of a nation's security strategy. Governments must now consider a wider range of factors when planning for their future.

Globalisation and technological advancements have also introduced new security threats, such as cyberattacks, terrorism and pandemics. These challenges require more flexible and comprehensive

strategies to protect nations from emerging risks.

Is strategic planning only for major powers?

A common question arises: Is strategic planning only relevant for big and powerful nations, or do smaller countries also need to plan strategically? While major powers have greater resources and influence, smaller and medium-sized countries also have the ability to shape their own futures through smart planning.

A country's ability to strategise depends on factors such as its geographical position, economic strength, military capabilities and international alliances. Even nations with limited resources can improve their global standing by making well-thought-out decisions. For decades, experts in international relations have debated how power is exercised in a world where countries are increasingly interdependent.

Political scientists Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane argued that military force is becoming less effective in shaping international affairs. Instead, they introduced the concept of soft power - a nation's ability to influence others through culture, diplomacy and economic strength rather than military force. Today, this approach is more relevant than ever.

How strategies are made

Strategy is about making smart choices - deciding what to prioritise, what actions

Globalisation and technological advancements have also introduced new security threats, such as cyberattacks, terrorism and pandemics. These challenges require more flexible and comprehensive strategies to protect nations from emerging risks

to take first and how to reach important goals. It's a process that connects available resources with long-term objectives in a clear and structured way.

But who creates these strategies?

According to security expert Colin Gray, grand strategic decisions are made at the highest levels of government. However, detailed plans and policies are developed through discussions and cooperation between different stakeholders, including politicians, military leaders and economic experts.

Strategic planning is never done in isolation. It is shaped by debates and negotiations, often balancing different interests. For example, governments frequently face the challenge of choosing between security and economic development. Should they invest more in defence or in building a stronger economy? Finding the right balance is key to achieving long-term stability.

Conclusion

In today's interconnected world, strategic planning is not a luxury - it is a necessity. Whether a country is large or small, success depends on its ability to adapt to global changes, anticipate threats and seize opportunities. Nations that invest in strategic thinking will be better prepared to secure their interests, maintain stability and thrive in an unpredictable future.

UNIVERSITY CAREER FAIR: A GATEWAY TO EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES



DR AMANI AL JALBUBI

The writer is Head of Awareness and Guidance Section Centre for Career Guidance, SQU

University career fairs allow students, college graduates, and alumni to explore career opportunities, network with industry professionals, understanding job market, and prepare for professional fields. Career fairs are well-placed for students to make contacts with the firms that work in emerging sectors like renewable energy, and

artificial intelligence.

The most wonderful part of attending a career fair at one's university is that students get the chance to meet recruiters in person.

Unlike an online application process where a candidate is left feeling like just another name in a database, at a career fair, an actual face-to-face interaction can be made which may help set them apart in the eyes of the potential employer.

An employer can scout for talent, tender an internship, and in some cases, conduct a face-to-face interview on the spot. It gives students the opportunity to showcase their skills, ask relevant questions, and get immediate feedback.

Career fairs are of great importance in terms of skill development.

Most fairs offer workshops and training sessions during which speakers such as alumni or industry representatives will discuss the most valuable lessons learned, including resume writing, interview techniques, and personal branding.

These training programmes increase their employability.

Career fairs give students an indication of what is out there in terms of career opportunities, which oftentimes extend far beyond the traditional career paths.

In some cases, incubators and professional platforms are even mingling into less formal discussions with would-be entrepreneurs.

Students stand to gain through interaction with successful entrepreneurs on funding opportunities and mentorship.

The exposure brings in a wider horizon of career possibilities and also grooms their creativity with regard to different paths to pursue.

Fully taking advantage of the events helps a student in rapidly changing job market.

Career fairs are nothing short of a launch pad for very ambitious students who want to give back and benefit from the transforming world economy.

Communicate with wisdom

SCROLLING through my phone, not searching for anything specific, my mind wandered — busy with life's demands. Absentmindedly, my fingers kept scrolling through social media until, suddenly, an image pulled me back to reality. It wasn't just another post; it sparked a flood of thoughts, words, and reflections — events rising to the surface of the reality we navigate through.

We have all been in this situation, whether as the one experiencing it or the one causing it. At some point in life, each one of us has faced it, knowingly or not.

Before diving deeper, take a moment to observe the image with this article. It holds a powerful message beyond its simplicity.

Looking closely, we can all interpret the image in similar ways, yet some meanings resonate more strongly with certain individuals. The right side of the image represents lack of wisdom — shouting, loudness, miscommunication, misinformation, disrespect, and frustration. It embodies impulsiveness and chaos. The left side symbolises wisdom and logic — calmness, thoughtful listening, knowledge, clarity, and self-control. It highlights the strength of understanding over noise.

This contrast reflects an important truth: wisdom isn't just about knowledge; it's about how we apply it. In the face of ignorance and aggression, true wisdom remains unshaken, guiding us toward meaningful conversations and better decisions.

I used to be someone who would react instantly whenever I felt frustrated or misunderstood. The moment a situation got heated, I would find myself raising my voice, arguing back, and before I knew it, everything would escalate. It didn't take long to realise that this approach only made things worse. With time, I started to mature and develop a sense of wisdom. I learned to listen before responding, to pause instead of immediately



Communicate Yelling might demand immediate attention, but it doesn't lead to true understanding.



SARAH AL HAMZY

The writer works as a risk analyst with a passion for writing

reacting, and most importantly, to recognise that not every moment requires a response. There are times when the best decision is to step away, allow emotions to settle, and revisit the conversation later with a clear mind. When both sides are calm, the discussion becomes more constructive, and a real resolution can be reached. I also learned that silence can sometimes speak louder than words. Not every situation requires back-and-forth arguments; sometimes, choosing not to engage is the most powerful response.

This applies not only to adults but also to how we communicate with children. Imagine a parent constantly shouting at their child, thinking that loudness will get the message across. But the more they shout, the less the child understands. Children, like adults, respond better to calmness and reason.

If we want them to listen, we must show them how to communicate wisely. Yelling might demand immediate attention, but it doesn't lead to true understanding. When spoken to with patience, children grasp the message more clearly

and are more likely to respond positively.

Whether in our personal lives, the workplace, or relationships, the way we communicate defines the outcome. Speaking with wisdom fosters trust and respect, while reacting impulsively creates unnecessary conflict. In a world where people often equate loudness with power, it takes true strength to remain composed.

The ability to listen, process, and respond thoughtfully is far more powerful than any raised voice. Wisdom allows us to see beyond emotions, understand different perspectives, and find solutions instead of fuelling arguments.

The next time you find yourself in a heated conversation, pause. Ask yourself: Am I being wise, or am I just being loud? The answer might change the way you handle the situation. Wisdom isn't just about intelligence; it's about patience, clarity, and knowing when to speak and when to stay silent. Whether with adults or children, let's choose to communicate with wisdom. True power isn't in how loud we are — it's in how well we are understood.

OPINION

Biggest threat to global security is climate collapse



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

At the Munich Security Conference this week, world leaders gathered in polished rooms to discuss war, defence, and global stability. The usual topics filled the air, alliances, threats, military strategy. Then came a statement from the German government that should have shaken the entire room. Climate change, they said, is the greatest security challenge of our time.

The world is slow to connect these crises, but the pattern is unmistakable. War and climate collapse are not separate disasters. They feed each other, locked in a cycle of destruction. Climate stress fuels conflict, and conflict accelerates climate destruction. The war in Gaza has wrecked infrastructure, leaving people to fight for dwindling resources. The war in Ukraine has turned forests to ash and poisoned farmland. In Sudan, rising temperatures and prolonged droughts have made land disputes deadlier. In Syria, years of climate-induced drought helped create the economic desperation that preceded the 2011 uprising.

Conflicts do not begin with weapons. They begin with scarcity. A failed harvest, a disappearing water source, a coastline swallowed by the sea; these are the silent warnings before unrest. Studies have long warned that climate change acts as a threat multiplier, deepening instability in fragile regions with some showing that climate-

induced droughts and food shortages significantly increase the risk of armed conflict. The United Nations predicts that by 2050, more than 1.2 billion people could be displaced due to climate-related crises. What happens when those people have nowhere to go? What happens when the next war is not fought over ideology, but over access to land that can still grow food?

In high-level defense discussions, climate instability is still treated as an unfortunate backdrop to geopolitical struggles, rather than a defining force in shaping them. But that narrative is beginning to crack. When I was invited to Nato headquarters to discuss the intersection of war and climate, I watched as security experts mapped out future conflicts. Most of the conversation focused on weapons and borders. But when I raised the question of climate, there was a shift. Some of them were beginning to see what environmental scientists have been warning for years. Climate change is not a distant crisis. It is already shaping battlefields, redrawing borders, and driving new patterns of migration and conflict.

Security must be redefined. National defence strategies must recognise that water and food scarcity are not just humanitarian concerns but existential security risks. Governments must acknowledge that the deliberate destruction of natural resources is an act of war, one that should be prosecuted

like any other war crime. Future climate summits must account for war’s impact, ensuring that post-conflict rebuilding does not lock nations into further environmental collapse. The United Nations Security Council must formally recognise climate change as a security risk and integrate climate resilience into peacekeeping and post-war recovery efforts. The International Criminal Court must classify the deliberate destruction of water sources and agricultural land as a war crime. Future climate negotiations must include conflict zones, ensuring that rebuilding efforts are sustainable and not carbon-intensive.

This is not just about emissions targets or energy policy. This is about survival.

At the Munich Security Conference, leaders debated power struggles and military alliances, but the most urgent question remained unasked. What kind of world are we building?

One where climate disasters fuel endless war, or one where we finally see that peace and climate security are the same fight?

The battlefield is already changing. The only question is whether we will recognise it before it is too late.

The writer is an Omani environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development, focusing on climate change impacts in the Middle East and women’s empowerment in environmental solutions.

War and climate collapse are not separate disasters. They feed each other, locked in a cycle of destruction. Climate stress fuels conflict, and conflict accelerates climate destruction

MAJOR RISKS LOOM AS TRUMP UPENDS US RUSSIA POLICY

MATT SPETALNICK

When Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his war on Ukraine nearly three years ago, then-US President Joe Biden took a firm stand in solidarity with Kyiv, forged a bulwark of European allies and set veteran advisers to the task of isolating Moscow economically and diplomatically.

Washington’s approach changed dramatically with Tuesday’s initial meeting between US and Russian negotiators.

The officials met just a month after Donald Trump returned to the White House, with Ukraine and Nato partners sidelined by a relatively inexperienced team of Trump aides and Putin granted concessions even before the talks got under way.

Trump’s rush to impose an end to Russia’s war in Ukraine has stoked fears of a peace deal with Putin that could undermine Kyiv and Europe’s security and alter the geopolitical landscape.

“The really worrying fact is that Trump has taken Russia from pariah to prize partner in the time span of just a few days. That comes at a price,” said Brett Bruen, a former foreign policy adviser in the Obama administration.

The talks in Riyadh, the first time the US and Russia have met to discuss the deadliest conflict in Europe since World War Two, yielded agreement to form negotiating teams for future meetings and work to restore the normal functioning of each other’s diplomatic missions, reflecting a thawing of long-frozen relations.

Even before the talks, European politicians accused Trump of handing free concessions to Moscow last week by ruling out Nato membership for Ukraine and saying it was an illusion for Kyiv to believe it could win back the 20 per cent of its territory now under Russian control. Some critics condemned Trump for what they said amounted to appeasement.

Ukraine’s exclusion from Tuesday’s meeting marked a sharp departure from Biden and Nato’s mantra of “nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine.” Kyiv has said it will not accept any deal imposed without its consent.

And the absence of European representatives added to US allies’ anxieties about whether Trump might be willing to give up too much for little from Putin. That helped spur European governments to discuss the possibility of contributing peacekeepers to back any deal on Ukraine. — Reuters

India has arrived...

Last month, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced that the first official foreign visit of the commission in her second term would be to India. On the same day, Marco Rubio held his first bilateral meeting as US Secretary of State with India’s minister of external affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s two-day visit to Washington last week confirmed his country’s rising international profile. The visit ended with the promise of what Modi called a US-India “mega partnership.”

As part of that partnership, he has committed to double trade with the US by 2030, increase oil and gas imports, and expand US military sales to India.

India is the world’s most populous country, home to more than 1.4 billion people with a median age of 29.8 years, compared to 38.9 in the United States, 40.2 in China, and 44.5 in the European Union. This massive and relatively young population, together with a large and fast-growing information and communications technology (ICT) sector, is supporting an economic boom: India is now the fastest-growing major economy, with the International Monetary Fund forecasting a 6.5 per cent increase in GDP this year. India is expected to overtake Japan and Germany to become the world’s third-largest economy by 2030.

Despite its vast potential, India has long been overlooked by the West, both economically and geopolitically. But a fundamental global realignment is now under way. America’s “unipolar moment” has given way to an era of great-power competition that, unlike during the Cold War, features demands by emerging and developing economies for a more inclusive and representative



The visit ended with the promise of what Modi called a US-India “mega partnership.”



ANA PALACIO

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of Spain and former senior vice president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University

multilateral system.

In this multipolar age, both the US and Europe see India – a neutral foreign-policy actor and dynamic emerging economy – as vital to the future of their strategic priorities.

A founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, India has plenty of experience navigating precarious moments in world affairs. During the Cold War, it skillfully balanced its policies towards the US and the Soviet Union. When it engaged with the Soviet Union – from which it received considerable military assistance – it calibrated its approach to offset US support of Pakistan, without taking sides in the great-power competition.

India has since maintained this pragmatic balancing act, adapting its foreign policy to a shifting geopolitical landscape. Today, that means recognising its potential to shape global affairs, including by playing a leading role in building an efficient, realistic, and inclusive

multilateralism.

This is reflected in Modi’s pursuit of a more assertive, internationalist foreign policy. Beyond building new partnerships and strengthening old ones, Modi has sought to increase India’s influence in traditional and emerging multilateral fora. In 2023 alone, India held the presidency of both the G20 and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (a Chinese creation, comprising nine Middle Eastern and Asian countries). Moreover, India plays a leading role in the BRICS, which, in addition to Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, now includes Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates. India’s approach to the BRICS is characteristically nuanced: whereas Russia and, to a significant extent, China see themselves as disruptors of the existing order, India views itself as a reformer. This enables it to maintain strategic flexibility as it advances its economic and diplomatic interests. @Project Syndicate, 2025

Walking on eggshells, a nerve-wracking situation



SONIA AMBROSIO

The writer is journalist, academic and researcher in media studies

THE inflammatory language of threats, the eye-popping bullish determination to take over Gaza, and the imposition of sanctions and tariffs have put world leaders on edge. Nobody wants to lose face or engage in a confrontation with the President of the United States.

Political polarisation is spreading like wildfire across various issues and geographic locations. In a forceful approach to foreign diplomacy, Trump's offensives against several global players may speed countries' search for alternatives while forcing some wish-washed world leaders to take a less unambiguous stance on political matters.

From sending undocumented migrants, or as Trump phrased it, "the worst criminal illegal aliens threatening the American people" to the military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Trump's initiative is a slap in the face of human rights organisations. The expansion of the migrant detention facility in Guantanamo Bay has long been used to house immigrants. The atrocities allegedly committed inside the military prison housing terrorism suspects following the September 11 attacks may (theoretically) be repeated. From the war on terror to the war on migrants!

Within days of Trump's second term inauguration, regional anxieties were created in Greenland, South Africa, Taiwan, Canada, Brazil, Europe and the Middle East.

The uproar provides an ideal situation for changes to be implemented away from public scrutiny, such as a new US sovereign wealth fund that is expected to be operating within a year and is modelled on the experiences of Arab Gulf wealth investment funds. One of the questions is how the entity would be funded and what kind of relationships or ties it would have with the Arab Gulf governments.

Trump's coercive disposition jeopardises conventional business models in terms of security, economics, politics and ideology, as well as the potential collapse of international organisations. The Gulf countries and Latin America are strengthening their trade and investment connections in areas such as food security, agriculture, energy, mining and infrastructure. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have extended their ties with Brazil ranging from fertiliser to minerals, from exploration to commerce.

Trump's inclination to mix business and politics has kept him in close contact with Arab Gulf leaders throughout his four-year absence from the White House. It remains to be seen whether regional leaders will align with his approach to 'taking Gaza' and minimise Trump's disregard for human rights, notably the displacement of Palestinians while turning a blind eye to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Trump aims for the highest bidder, and Saudi Arabia is the true prize: the Israeli-Saudi

Political polarisation is spreading like wildfire across various issues and geographic locations. In a forceful approach to foreign diplomacy, Trump's offensives against several global players may speed countries' search for alternatives

normalisation.

In August 2024, during his presidential campaign, Trump remarked that Israel is a 'little spot compared to giant land masses' in the Middle East, implying that Israel should be expanded, which is a continuation of the Trump administration's "Deal of the Century" announced in January 2020. The plan envisions more than \$50 billion in international investment, Israel's annexation of areas of the West Bank and their renaming of Judea and Samaria, Palestinian relocation, and no refugee right of return.

The weakening of the world order is allowing other actors, such as Iran, Russia and China, to grow their influence in the region and elsewhere.

Gulf governments are also embracing a new role as political and economic power brokers, and they may come under significant pressure to choose sides.

Since the early 1930s, the United States has been a strategic partner for Gulf countries. Oil has been the primary link, in addition to American companies' support for infrastructure development and oil exploration, and the Gulf's reliance on the US for military support, weapons and security.

In the current changing context, the Gulf states need to calibrate their navigation between superpower adversaries. They must balance their national security interests and their partnerships. Expect lots of walks on eggshells.

Bangladesh shipyards brace for recycling boom

MD TAHMID ZAMI

On the southwest coast of Bangladesh, workers armed with gas torches, laser cutters and winches break apart the carcasses of the giant, old ships that are grounded on their sandy beach.

Thirty ship-breaking yards and thousands of scrap workshops are dotted along 15 km of the coastline of Sitakunda, recycling about 38 per cent of the world's dead ships and supplying steel scraps for Bangladesh's thriving manufacturing industry. "Cutting ships is one of the riskiest jobs on earth," said Jamal Uddin, 40, who works as a senior cutter in his local yard.

Over the last two decades, Uddin has seen many of his fellow workers in nearby yards suffer major burns and break limbs while dismantling steel vessels that are sent to Bangladesh from rich, ship-owning nations.

With many old ships now nearing their end of life, the industry is bracing for a big, new economic shot in the arm.

In the coming decade, about 15,000 ships - or one in eight of the entire global fleet - will come in for recycling: twice the amount of the past decade, according to a new report by the NGO Climate Group and consulting firm PWC.

These older ships are heavy emitters, spewing out pollutants and planet-heating emissions, which have hastened the industry's efforts to retire them, said Anand Hiremath, chief sustainability officer at GMS, which buys old ships and resells them to South Asian ship breakers.

Were it a country, the global fleet would have the dubious honour of being the world's No 6 emitter of planet-warming carbon dioxide. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has pledged to cut emissions by half by the year 2030, and turn it into a net-zero emissions industry by 2050.

New global regulations aim to ensure that the dismantling of ships grows more safe and environmentally friendly as part of an industry-wide push to a more sustainable model. But workers who cut and recycle ships said that the reform agenda does not promise them decent jobs or better pay.

"After a day's back-breaking work, we hardly get the wages to cover our doctors' costs or our kids' school fees," said Uddin, who chose not to name his employer, fearing repercussion.

Most of the coming surge will be handled by yards in the Sitakunda region of Bangladesh or Alang in India's Gujarat, which together account for about 70 per cent of global ship breaking.

Worker deaths are common, as is environmental harm with toxic chemicals seeping into the beach and water, harming marine life. When workers use high-temperature torches to gouge a ship's panels, accidents often happen, while exposure to hazardous substances such as asbestos risks long-term health impacts. — Reuters

AI from research revolution to operational dynamics

ALMOST every week at the local and regional level, we hear about new scientific breakthroughs in AI applications. This reflects not only a growing societal awareness but also the active engagement of research institutions and government funding, most recently focused on AI research. We have also witnessed the emergence of local start-ups and institutions in AI and digital systems, further highlighting the public's recognition of the importance of investing in advanced technologies and digital transformation.

These achievements go beyond the initial thrill of success. Our early hopes focused on building digital awareness within society, which later evolved into successful AI research. We have seen substantial efforts from supportive agencies and research teams striving for pioneering advances in digital systems, including AI. However, our vision has since expanded to a new, critical goal: achieving economic sustainability through AI and advanced technology projects.

In this article, we aim to identify our current gaps and recalibrate our economic compass considering digital developments.

It is clear that research excellence eventually bears economic fruit, albeit over time. This gives us hope that successive successes in AI research are essential steps towards building a digital economy, one grounded in digital systems. Yet, despite notable achievements in smart digital research, we cannot claim to have fully transitioned into a high-level digital economy. Many countries in our region still struggle to establish a firm foothold in the digital economy, with industries continuing to rely on traditional systems. A key objective must be the digital transformation of industry, the core and engine of the economy. Industrial sustainability depends on nearly complete reliance on digital systems for operational and production processes. While we have already seen successful examples



Successive successes in AI research are essential steps towards building a digital economy.



DR MUAMAR AL TOBI

The writer is Omani academic and researcher

of AI applications in industry, improving quality and reducing operating costs, these remain largely supplementary. We need to broaden our digital operations further.

More crucially, direct investment in digital systems through the development of intelligent algorithms and applications is essential. This requires the emergence of robust companies and institutions dedicated to digital systems. Although the Omani government provides significant support for establishing these emerging digital institutions -especially those rooted in national talent - global challenges often overshadow local efforts. Surveys, including one published by Oman newspaper on July 31, 2024, titled "AI Start-ups Face Challenges from Digital Giants", indicate that the dominance of large digital conglomerates over the digital economy forces investments along a narrow, monopolistic path. This unfair competition hinders the broader transition to a digital economy, despite strong local support, as global economic forces continue to influence us all.

We must recognise that while our research excellence is crucial, it must be transformed into economic reality by localising digital investment and converting industrial and economic operations into digital systems.

Achieving this shift requires moving from a focus solely on scientific research to one that embraces scientific and digital investment through real-world AI applications across all sectors of business and industry. We have reached a level of digital awareness that allows us to build high interactive capacities with digital systems, evident in our schools, universities and research institutions producing esteemed digital outputs. Yet much of this work remains confined to academic publications and archival records, rather than being translated into practical industrial applications.

To bridge this gap, educational institutions must collaborate with economic bodies to raise awareness of the economic importance of digital projects, linking research to planning, monitoring and implementation. It may be necessary to tie these digital projects to emerging national digital institutions, supported by the government.

Such measures would solidify the foundation of our digital economy, transforming general digital awareness into active digital investment and operational capacity. In turn, this would empower emerging digital institutions, boost their economic contributions and enable them to grow and face the global challenges ahead.

SPORTS

COACHSPEAK



Al Shabab head coach Hassan Rustam (c) and Khalid al Braiki attend the press conference.



Seeb head coach Nikola Djurovic and captain Eid al Farsi speak to reporters.

AL SHABAB, SEEB READY FOR HM CUP SHOWDOWN

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 19

Al Shabab are striving striving to create a new chapter in the club's history by securing their maiden HM Cup title, whereas four-time champions Seeb look to add a fifth one when they meet in the final in Ibra on Thursday.

Al Shabab head coach Hassan Rustam, who expressed his happiness at the team's qualification for the final, emphasised that everyone at Al Shabab want to make history by securing their first title. "We will give our best performance in the final to win the cup," Rustam told a press conference on Wednesday at Jawharat Bidiyah Resort in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

Rustam acknowledged the difficulty of facing Seeb, a club with a rich history in the competition, but he affirmed that his players are fully prepared, both technically and mentally. He added, "Seeb are a championship-winning team, but history has shown that teams reaching the final for the first time have also managed to win the title."

He pointed out that the club's successful signings have played a crucial role in the team's progress, emphasising that Al Shabab are ready to compete for 90 minutes with their own playing style. Despite the absence of their Brazilian professional player, there is a possibility that Ahd al Hudaifi will participate after recovering from his injury.

Meanwhile, Al Shabab player Khalid al Braiki confirmed the team's readiness for the final, describing it as a dream for every Omani player. He added, "we will implement the coach's instructions and give everything we have to win the title."

Al Braiki concluded by stressing the importance of fan support in this decisive match, considering them the "number one" factor in the final, and noting that their encouragement will be a major motivation for the players.

SPECIAL GAME FOR SEEB

Seeb head coach Nikola Djurovic said the final will be a special game for them. "This is a special game for me, my team, and the club. The His Majesty's Cup holds great significance, and reaching the final is a proud moment. We have worked tirelessly, and we will give everything to become champions."

Regarding the final against Shabab, Djurovic emphasised that it will be different from their previous league encounter: "We lost last time due to our own mistakes, missing several chances before conceding. However, my players are now in better shape, both physically and mentally. We are fully focused and determined to seize this opportunity."

On their only league defeat to Shabab, he admitted: "We created chances but didn't convert them, and in football, that gets punished. I take full responsibility. Fatigue was also a factor due to our tight schedule, but we have learned from that experience and are ready to move forward."

Seeb captain Eid al Farsi emphasised that the team's preparation for this match is completely different from other games, as it is the cup final. He stated, "after our victory against Sohar, our full focus has been on the final, and we will give our utmost effort to win the title."

HM Cup sets off positive vibes in governorates



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 19

HIS MAJESTY'S CUP football championship is considered as the top domestic football event where all the local clubs are vying to clinch the prestigious title.

Over the years, this major football event in the Sultanate of Oman played a key role in the development of football in the country.

In the last edition of the event, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) decided to host the final match of the coveted cup across the governorates in Oman in a step to provide the sporting and economy advantages from hosting this event.

The previous edition was hosted in the Khasab Sports Complex while this season the match will be held at Ibra Sports Complex which is one of the new sporting venues in Oman. This idea contributed positively to provide various advantages to the governorate not only at sports level but also to enhance the economy as the hotels and apartments will be occupied besides boosting businesses in various wilayats which will benefit from direct shopping and tourism activities.

Furthermore, HM Cup delivered a clear path to the local teams in terms of developing the skills of the players, coaches, referees, administration staff and uplifting their technical standard through training and preparation for matches during the whole period of the tournament. Many players in the local teams who showed top performances during the event received the chance to become important additions to the national teams.

MATCH REFEREE

Oman's international referee Omar al Yaqoobi will officiate the final match of the HM Cup between Seeb and Al Shabab which will take place on Thursday. The refereeing team will also feature Hamed al Ghafri, first assistant referee, and Mohammed al Ghazali, second assistant referee. Ali al Harthy is assigned as fourth referee while Azzan al Qutaiti as fifth referee. The Video Assistant Referee (VAR) will be managed by Mohammed Obaid Khadim from the UAE and assisted by Yasser al Majarfi. Abdullah al Jardani will review VAR umpires and Mohammed Maflah as supervisor of match referees.

AL SHARQIYAH NORTH VIBES

All the Wilayats of Al Sharqiyah North Governorate celebrated the HM Cup as the



trophy tour covered all the towns of the governorate. The last destination of the tour was Wilayat of Ibra as the host of the final match.

The trophy tour began on Friday in Wilayat of Al Qabil. On Sunday, the trophy reached in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi where it was warmly welcomed followed by a stop in Sinaw on Monday. Then, it went to Dima W'attayeen on Tuesday and arrived to the Wilayat of Bidiyah sands and Wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid on Wednesday. The tour featured many events and activities for the fans besides it was an introductory event for the community on the anticipation of the final.



"The trophy tour idea began in Musandam Governorate and it was continued in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. We are very impressed by the wilayats plans on receiving and welcoming the Cup. Al Sharqiyah North wilayats delivered amazing ideas where the competition will be tough for the next editions of the tour in the coming seasons," Hilal al Badi, in charge of the tour, said.

"The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) provided a vehicle with HM Cup branding and provided through one of the sponsors. Also, the Ministry announced to do raffle draw for two vehicles during the match for the fans who will attend the final," he ended.

OQ SPONSORS RACERS AHMAD, ABDULLAH FOR 2025 SEASON

OQ GROUP has signed two sponsorship agreements to support prominent Omani motorsports racers in international competitions throughout 2025. The agreements underscore OQ's commitment to advancing Omani sport and recognising the achievements of national athletes on the world stage as OQ Brand Ambassadors.

OQ will be the sponsor for Omani motorsport racer Ahmad al Harthy during the 2025 World Endurance Championship season. A separate sponsorship agreement will support Abdullah al Rawahi, winner of the opening round of the Middle East Rally Championship, throughout his rally season this year. These sponsorships reflect OQ's ongoing dedication to promoting Omani sport and encouraging athletes who achieve top rankings in international competition.

The agreements were signed by Eng Ali Mohamed al Lawati, Chief People and Technology Officer at OQ, Ahmad al Harthy and Abdullah al Rawahi.

Eng Ali al Lawati stated: "We take great pride in supporting racers Ahmad al Harthy and Abdullah al Rawahi in their international competitions, in line with OQ's strategy to advance Oman's sports



Abdullah al Rawahi during the signing ceremony.

sector and empower athletes to represent the nation at local and regional levels. This sponsorship aligns with the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik — may Allah protect him — and his commitment to nurturing Omani youth, enabling them to achieve their aspirations and reach their full potential. We remain dedicated to fostering meaningful and effective partnerships that support the growth of these talents."

Ahmad al Harthy expressed his

gratitude, saying: "I am incredibly grateful to OQ Group for their continued support in 2025. This sponsorship will be instrumental in my pursuit of top positions in the FIA World Endurance Championship."

He added that OQ's continued support of his international racing career has greatly contributed to the successes he has achieved in global motorsport, significantly enabling him to reach his current standing. It has also played a key

role in showcasing Oman on the international stage in world-class racing competitions.

COMMITMENT

Abdullah al Rawahi expressed his gratitude to OQ Group for sponsoring his international racing participation, which reflects its commitment to encouraging Omani sports and champions who achieve advanced positions in international sports forums, noting that this sponsorship will contribute to



Ahmad al Harthy during the signing ceremony.

enabling him to participate in races and their requirements to enhance his competition.

Ahmad al Harthy was awarded the Royal Commendation Medal by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in recognition of his sporting achievements in 2024.

Ahmad al Harthy's notable achievements include second place in the Jeddah round of the GT World Challenge Europe, a historic overall victory at Monza, Italy, and a recent win in the GT3 Pro-Am class at the Michelin 24 Hours of Dubai.

The 2025 FIA World Endurance Championship comprises eight rounds, beginning in Qatar and visiting Italy, Belgium, France, Brazil, the United States and Japan before the season concludes in Bahrain.

Abdullah al Rawahi made history in 2023 by becoming the first Omani and youngest racer to win the Middle East Rally Championship, an achievement for which he was recognised by the FIA.

He recently added to his success with a third-place finish in the second round of the 2025 championship, held in Qatar. Al Rawahi now looks ahead to the remaining rounds, which will take place in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon and Cyprus.

Latham, Young tons power New Zealand in opener

KARACHI: New Zealand made it four wins in a row against the hosts in Champions Trophy meetings, bowling them out for 260 in defence of 320.

The Mitchell Santner-led are off to a sizzling start in the Champions Trophy 2025, beating out hosts Pakistan with a sensational overall performance, powered by centuries from Will Young and Tom Latham.

Chasing a competitive target of 321, the host nation lost opener Saud Shakeel in the fourth over of the chase and from then on, the Mohammad Rizwan-led never really looked settled to chase down the daunting target.

An unbelievable catch from Glenn Phillips at backward point saw the Pakistan skipper walk back to the dugout for just three runs.

New Zealand's bowlers showed resilience throughout the powerplay, leaving Pakistan tottering at 22/2 at the end of the first 10 overs, paving the way for a solid win.

Fakhar Zaman (24) and Babar Azam took over the reins from then on, guarding both ends of the crease with their defensive strokeplay to pull Pakistan back but their effort was counter-attacked by sensational bowling from the Black Caps, led by sizzling three-wicket hauls from skipper Santner (3-66) and Will O'Rourke (3-49).



New Zealand's Tom Latham celebrates reaching his century. — Reuters

Salman Agha (42) stepped in along with Babar, taking Pakistan forward in the chase before the Black Caps struck twice off consecutive overs to take the upper hand in the game, dismissing the well-set Agha and Tayyab Tahir for 42 and 1 respectively.

Santner went on to grab his second of the night with the dismissal of Azam on 64, leaving the home side in deep trouble, after dismissing Tahir off his previous over.

Khushdil Shah fought fire with fire with a clutch 69-run knock despite Pakistan's earlier setbacks, but it wasn't enough to help his side cross the line as they were bowled out for 260 in 47.2 overs.

came to an end as Naseem Shah induced a miscued shot and substitute fielder Faheem Ashraf latched onto the catch.

Following Young's dismissal, Latham went on to stitch a strong fifth-wicket stand alongside Glenn Phillips — compiling 124 runs for the fifth wicket as New Zealand finished on a strong note.

Latham also went on to score a sensational hundred, finishing with 118 off 104 deliveries, comprising of 10 fours and three sixes.

The home side were also given an early scare after Fakhar Zaman was pulled off the field after a fielding attempt in the deep saw him in discomfort. "Fakhar Zaman is being assessed and examined for a muscular sprain and further updates will be provided in due course," the PCB said in a statement. — ICC

BRIEF SCORES

New Zealand 320-5 in 50 overs (T Latham 118 not out, W Young 107, G Phillips 61; Naseem Shah 2-63) v Pakistan 260 all out in 47.2 overs (Khushdil Shah 69, Babar Azam 64; W O'Rourke 3-47, M Santner 3-66)

Recall



Recall Date: 20/2/2025

Brand of Commodity		Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
Cadillac	Escalade Luxury	2023-2024	145
	Escalade ESV Luxury	2023-2024	8
Chevrolet	Silverado LD Crew Custom	2023	8
	Silverado LD Reg Custom	2023	4
	Suburban LS/FL	2023-2024	27
GMC	Tahoe LS/FL	2023-2025	567
	Sierra LD Crew SLE/Base	2023	15
	Sierra LD Reg SLE/Base	2023	1
	Yukon SLE	2023-2024	419
	Yukon XL SLE	2023-2025	14

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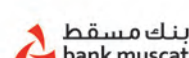
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CAR CITY, SAFARI PARK AMONG NEW INVESTMENT INITIATIVES UNVEILED



Many of the project initiatives seek to capitalise on the governorate's distinctive heritage.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 19

AN INTEGRATED Car Services City is among an array of commercial, tourist and leisure-related project proposals unveiled for investment in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Invest Oman, the investment facilitation arm of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, is playing a key role in promoting these project opportunities to local and international investors. A 50,000 m2 plot of land has been earmarked in the Wilayat of Samayil for the establishment of the Integrated Car Services City with an investment of over RO 4 million.

he project is envisaged as a “specialised automotive hub” providing a full spectrum of vehicle operations and maintenance services.

Elsewhere in the governorate, a 40,000 m2 plot in Nizwa has been offered up for development into a Heritage Resort with an investment of around RO 2.8 million. The project has been conceived as a “culturally immersive resort, showcasing Oman’s rich heritage with traditional suites, modern accommodations and curated experiences”.

Another landmark envisioned in the wilayat is the ‘Nizwa Eye’, for which a 2,400 m2 site has been allotted within The Boulevard at Al Dakhiliyah Square. The attraction is designed to enhance the governorate’s “tourism and leisure appeal”.

In the Asala area of Bahla, Invest Oman has outlined the potential for the establishment of an integrated tourism project on a 16,000 m2 site with an investment of around RO 8 million. The facility will offer a blend of “cultural authenticity with modern hospitality to create a distinctive destination”.

Oman-Saudi trade climbs to RO 2.18 billion in value

FAISAL AL AJMI
MUSCAT, FEB 19

THE Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in collaboration with the Oman-Saudi Joint Business Council, organised the Omani-Saudi Business Forum at the Intercontinental Muscat here on February 19, 2025. In attendance were high-level officials and business leaders from both nations exploring avenues to expand trade and investment relations across a range of sectors.

The event saw the presence of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Shaikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, alongside members of the Oman-Saudi Joint Business Council and business owners from both countries.

Opening the forum, Qais al Yousef highlighted its role in boosting economic cooperation. He noted that trade between Oman and Saudi Arabia reached RO 2.18 billion (\$5.66 billion) by the end of 2024, stressing that increased trade and joint investments would further strengthen ties.

Shaikh Faisal al Rawas echoed Al Yousef’s remarks, highlighting the deep ties between Oman and Saudi Arabia. He emphasised that the forum would strengthen economic bonds and align with Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030’s goals of economic diversification and growth.

“The forum reflects the strength of our historical and trade relations and reaffirms our mutual commitment to bolstering economic cooperation,” Shaikh Faisal said.

The forum covered a wide array of sectors crucial to both nations’ economic



Three agreements were also signed on the margins of the forum.

futures, including real estate, mining, oil and gas, logistics, healthcare and IT. The discussions also centred on enhancing the private sector’s role and addressing challenges related to border exports and logistics.

In a key development, the Oman-Saudi Joint Business Council convened its first meeting of the year during the forum, discussing the hurdles faced by businesses in exporting Omani goods to Saudi Arabia. The council, led by Shaikh Ali bin Hamad al Kalbani and Nasser bin Saeed al Hajri, continues to play a vital role in fostering communication and cooperation between the private sectors of both nations.

“The forum reflects the deep brotherly and economic relations between Saudi Arabia and Oman,” noted Nasser al Hajri, emphasising the importance of collaboration in driving sustainable development and investment opportunities in line with both countries’ national visions.

Three key agreements were signed at the forum, strengthening economic ties. Baydat Technology (Oman) and

Mujamid for Transport and Storage (Saudi Arabia) will establish a cloud-based warehouse system. Dr Sarhan al Raisi Law Firm (Oman) and Mohamed Al Balwi Group (Saudi Arabia) will provide specialised legal services in Oman. Dash Mass International (Oman) and Al Osoul International for Gold and Jewelry (Saudi Arabia) will set up a gold and jewellery manufacturing plant in Oman.

As part of the forum, several presentations were made on the investment advantages of both Oman and Saudi Arabia. Fatima al Balushi, Investment Promotion Specialist at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, presented Oman’s promising sectors, while Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ghawri from the Saudi Ministry of Investment outlined incentives available for investors in Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, key logistical developments were discussed, including the ongoing improvements at the Empty Quarter border crossing, which aims to further facilitate trade between the two countries.

Asyad Shipping IPO set to raise up to RO 128.1 million

MUSCAT: Asyad Shipping SAOG (under transformation) has announced the price range and subscription details for its initial public offering (IPO) on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX).

The offering, which is backed by strategic anchor investors, is expected to raise up to RO 128.1 million (\$332.8 million), valuing the company at RO 640.7 million (\$1.66 billion) at the upper price

The IPO comprises the sale of 1,041,748,856 existing shares, representing 20% of Asyad Shipping’s total issued share capital. The shares are being sold by Asyad Group SAOC, the company’s parent and sole shareholder.

Two major institutional investors have committed to the offering: Mars Development and Investment LLC will subscribe for 10% of the offer. Falcon Investments LLC, a subsidiary of the Qatar Investment Authority



The IPO comprises the sale of 1,041,748,856 existing shares, representing 20% of Asyad Shipping’s total issued share capital.

(QIA), will take 20% of the offer.

Both investors will acquire their shares at 123 baisas per share, reflecting strong confidence in Asyad Shipping’s market position and growth potential.

The offering will be divided into two categories:

1. Category I (Institutional

Investors) – 75% of the total offer size, with a price range of baisas 117 to baisas 123 per share, determined through a bookbuilding process.

2. Category II (Retail Investors) – 25% of the total offer size, with a fixed price of baisas 123 per share.

The subscription period

opens on February 20, 2025, with institutional investors’ subscriptions closing on 27 February and retail investors’ subscriptions closing on February 26. Asyad Shipping shares are expected to commence trading on March 12, 2025 on MSX.

The selling shareholder, Asyad Group, will retain a majority stake post-IPO. Following the listing, the shares held by Asyad Group will be subject to a 180-day lock-up period, while anchor investors’ shares will be locked for 90 days.

Sohar International Bank has been appointed as the Issue Manager, while Oman Investment Bank, EFG Hermes, Jefferies and JP Morgan will act as Joint Global Coordinators.

Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank and Société Générale will serve as Joint Bookrunners.

Asyad Shipping has outlined an attractive dividend distribution

plan to reward shareholders. Pre-IPO dividend: \$25.7 million (RO 9.9 million) will be paid to existing shareholders in February 2025.

Post-IPO dividends: \$58 million (RO 22.3 million) in March 2025 and \$75 million (RO 29 million) in September 2025.

2026 dividend plan: \$150 million (RO 58 million), split into two equal payments in September 2026 and March 2027. From 2027 onwards, dividends will be based on 95% of audited net income, paid in two tranches annually.

Asyad Shipping launched an investor roadshow in Oman on February 19, 2025 to attract local and international investors. With strong backing from key institutional players and a structured growth strategy, Asyad Shipping’s IPO is set to be one of Oman’s most significant public offerings, reinforcing the country’s ambitions to expand its capital markets and shipping sector.

ADVERTORIALS

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Lincoln’s Co-Pilot360 driver-assist suite adds to the ease, making every journey as effortless as it is luxurious. Beyond performance, the Corsair brings thoughtful design touches for an enhanced ownership experience, such as Lincoln’s signature illuminated entry features, dynamic LED lighting and premium ambient lighting.

Inside, the horizontal layout offers a calming aesthetic, while hand-selected materials add elegance and comfort.

With a 10-speaker Lincoln premium audio system, dual-zone climate control and intelligent access, the cabin offers an experience of true luxury.

At the heart of its tech suite, SYNC 4 delivers advanced voice control, a vibrant 13.3-inch touchscreen and navigation for seamless connectivity. The Lincoln Co-Pilot360 2.1 Vision further enhances safety with cutting-edge features like blind-spot detection, lane-keeping assist, a 360-degree camera and intelligent adaptive cruise control.

The Lincoln Corsair is designed for those who seek an exceptional driving experience, combining luxury, performance and advanced technology to elevate every journey.

In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC. Please log on to www.lincolnoman.com, or www.facebook.com/lincolnoman or www.instagram.com/lincoln_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

NESTO HYPERMARKET OPENS AL ANSAB BRANCH

MUSCAT: Nesto Hypermarket is all set to open its 17th outlet in Oman and 135th globally with the launch of its new Nesto store in Al Ansab, Muscat.

The grand opening ceremony will take today, February 20, 2025, and will be inaugurated by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash’shura, at 10:30 AM. The store will open to the public at 12:00 PM.

The new store, spread across three floors, promises a unique shopping experience with a wide range of products, from fresh groceries to electronics and lifestyle collections.

Ample parking facilities have been added to ensure convenience for shoppers. A press conference was held February 18, attended by key members of the Nesto management, including Mussavir Mustaffa (Group Commercial Head), Shahal Shukath (Country Head), Kareem and



Sameer (Finance Managers), Shaji (Regional Operations Manager), Noushad (FMCG Buying Head), Hamed bin Khalfan bin Abdullah al Wahaibi (HR Director), Mohammed bin Harib bin Amur al Maskari (Operations Manager), and Sayyid Al Baraa al Busaidy (HR Manager).

They shared details about the store’s innovative features and community-focused initiatives.

“We are excited to bring a new shopping experience to Al Ansab,” said Mussavir Mustaffa (Commercial Head). “This store reflects our commitment to quality and customer satisfaction, and we are proud to expand our presence in Oman and globally.”

OQEP awarded IPO deal of the year at IFN Awards

Exploration and Production (OQEP) has been awarded the prestigious Sharia-Compliant IPO Deal of the Year 2024, at the Islamic Finance News (IFN) Awards, recognising its commitment to ethical investment and leadership in Islamic finance.

The award was received by Ahmed bin Said al Azkawi CEO of OQEP on Tuesday, February 18, at Address Sky View, Dubai.

Ahmed al Azkawi, CEO of OQEP, expressed his gratitude upon receiving the prestigious award of Sharia-Compliant IPO Deal of the Year 2024 for its landmark RO 780 million IPO transaction, highlighting the company’s commitment to Sharia-compliant investment opportunities in oil and gas sector.

He emphasised that this achievement marks a significant milestone for OQEP, as it aims to deliver solid cash flow



OQEP continues to expand the Shariah-compliant investment universe, driving innovation and growth.

generation, as well as expand its assets, all vital for sustainable growth.

Al Azkawi thanked investors for their trust and acknowledged the banks that contributed to this success.

Looking ahead to 2025, he conveyed a sense of optimism and enthusiasm, stating that

OQEP is dedicated to leveraging this momentum to reach new heights, celebrate further achievements, and enhance shareholder returns.

He concluded by expressing a collective vision for a prosperous future. Notably, as the IFN Investors Forum highlights the vital role of Islamic banking

in the growing Islamic finance sector, we recognise the increasing demand for Shariah-compliant investment solutions. OQEP remains committed to fostering opportunities aligned with Islamic finance principles and strengthening our engagement with Islamic banks and a diverse investment base.

The subscription (IPO) of two billion shares offered by OQEP on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) stands as the largest in Oman’s history and marks the first IPO in the exploration and production sector.

The award highlights OQEP’s dual value proposition: offering Shariah-compliant investment opportunities while maintaining a rigorous, performance-driven business model.

This approach ensures strong returns for investors without compromising ethical values, addressing the growing demand for Islamic financial products across the GCC and beyond.

OOREDOO LAUNCHES O PLUS BUSINESS

MUSCAT: Ooredoo is redefining business connectivity with the launch of O Plus Business, a next-gen postpaid plan built to keep SMEs and enterprises connected, locally and globally. Designed for businesses that never stand still, this plan delivers top-notch communication, cost efficiency, and the flexibility to scale as operations grow.

Said al Lawati, Director of Business Marketing & ICT Solutions at Ooredoo said, “Designed to be flexible and scalable, our O Plus Business cater to both SMEs and large enterprises, providing adaptable solutions that grow with business needs.

With no hidden costs, we aim to empower businesses to plan their communications with



confidence.”

With high-speed connectivity and uninterrupted communication, O Plus Business ensures businesses stay ahead. Roam Like Home

allows customers to use their local plan benefits in 24 countries, including the GCC and key international destinations, without incurring additional roaming charges.

No more worrying about skyrocketing international costs, just smooth, hassle-free global connectivity.

There are also unlimited CUG calls, enabling free and unlimited communication between all company mobile and fixed lines, to ensure teams remain connected wherever they are.

For companies with international operations or frequent global interactions, the plans offer high international minutes, ranging from 500 to 1,000 minutes to destinations such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the GCC.

Sohar International named ‘Oman’s Most Trusted Brand 2024’

MUSCAT: Sohar International, Oman’s best bank, has been honoured with the prestigious ‘Oman’s Most Trusted Brand 2024’ award in the Local Bank category, underscoring its long-standing reputation as a trusted financial institution.

The award, which was presented at a distinguished ceremony on February 17, 2025, at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah, highlights the bank’s unwavering dedication to delivering exceptional financial services while maintaining the highest levels of integrity.

The event, attended by senior delegates, top executives, and industry leaders, celebrated 50 outstanding brands that have earned public trust. The award, determined entirely through public voting, underscores the bank’s focus on trust



The award highlights the bank’s unwavering dedication to delivering exceptional financial services.

and its relentless commitment to building long-lasting relationships with its customers.

Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, attended the event and accepted the award on behalf of the bank. The accolade serves as a testament to the bank’s transparency, reliability, and ongoing efforts to enhance the banking experience, thereby reinforcing its role in serving the financial needs of the Omani community.

Commenting on the achievement, Abdulwahid al Murshidi stated, “Earning the title of ‘Oman’s Most Trusted Brand 2024’ is a powerful endorsement of Sohar International’s unwavering commitment to setting new benchmarks in banking excellence. Trust is the cornerstone of sustainable financial leadership,

and this recognition reflects our strategic focus on innovation, customer-centricity, and long-term value creation.

As we continue to drive transformation in the financial sector, we remain dedicated to empowering individuals, businesses, and the national economy with forward-thinking solutions that inspire confidence and growth.”

The latest edition of the awards witnessed an exceptional response, with one million votes cast across various categories—underscoring the critical role of brand loyalty, market leadership, customer engagement, and corporate integrity in shaping brand equity. The recognition serves as a validation of public confidence in distinguished institutions, highlighting those that have set new benchmarks for excellence.

BUSINESS

SHORTTAKES



The agreement was signed in Muscat by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, and Nepal's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Arzu Rana Deuba.

OMAN, NEPAL
SIGN TOURISM
COOPERATION MOU

MUSCAT: Oman and Nepal have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen tourism cooperation, focusing on investment, infrastructure, and expertise exchange.

The agreement was signed in Muscat by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, and Nepal's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Arzu Rana Deuba.

Under the MoU, both countries will collaborate on tourism investments, hotel development, and facility enhancements. It also encourages direct engagement between travel agencies, participation in international tourism exhibitions, and knowledge exchange in hotel management.

Additionally, the agreement promotes cooperation within international tourism organisations, facilitates vocational training programs, and enables the exchange of tourism statistics, promotional materials, and technical expertise.

The initiative is expected to boost mutual tourism and enhance bilateral ties in line with the regulations of both nations. — ONA

OMAN MARKS WORLD
TOURIST GUIDE DAY

MUSCAT: Oman, through the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, will join the global celebration of World Tourist Guide Day on February 21, recognising the vital role of tour guides in enriching visitors' experiences with historical, cultural, and tourism insights.

Anwar bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Head of the Tourist Guidance Department at the ministry, emphasised that tour guides serve as ambassadors of Oman, offering visitors a deeper understanding of the country's diverse heritage, nature, and culture.

By the end of 2024, Oman had issued 1,175 tour guide licences, with English being the most common language. The country also has licenced guides in French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, and other languages to cater to the growing diversity of international visitors.

To meet market demands, the ministry is working to expand the number of guides proficient in foreign languages and adventure tourism. Currently, Oman has 52 licenced adventure tour guides, including six Omani women specialising in the field.

Overall, 101 Omani women are licensed as tour guides, reflecting the ministry's commitment to gender inclusion in the sector. The ministry continues to enhance training programmes and partnerships to empower tour guides and support the country's growing tourism industry. — ONA

OMAN-SAUDI BUSINESS COUNCIL SEES TRADE EXPANSION

MUSCAT: The Omani-Saudi Business Council convened its first meeting of the year in Muscat, focusing on boosting trade through the Rub' al-Khali border, a key commercial link between the two nations.

The meeting was chaired by Shaikh Ali bin Hamad al Kalbani, Head of the Omani side, alongside Nasser bin Saeed al Hajri, Head of the Saudi side, with participation from council members.

Shaikh al Kalbani emphasised the meeting's role in advancing Omani-Saudi economic integration, aligning with the strategic visions of both countries.

He noted that the Council



The meeting focuses on boosting trade through the Rub' al-Khali border, a key commercial link between the two nations.

seeks to foster stronger ties between the private sector and government agencies, ensuring a conducive environment for mutual investment. Al Hajri highlighted the significance of economic collaboration in achieving sustainable development, aligning with Saudi Vision 2030 and Oman Vision 2040.

He reaffirmed the Council's commitment to enhancing trade partnerships and unlocking new investment opportunities.

The meeting underscored the importance of addressing challenges faced by investors and expanding trade cooperation across various sectors. — ONA

Port of Salalah boosts
capacity to 6.5m TEU

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 19

THE Port of Salalah has successfully completed its \$300 million container terminal upgrade and expansion project, marking a major milestone in its strategic development.

The expansion, which increases the port's container handling capacity from 4.5 million TEUs to 6.5 million TEUs, enables it to accommodate the world's largest container ships, the Megamax vessels with a capacity of 24,000 TEU.

The project, part of Oman Vision 2040, strengthens the port's position as a critical hub connecting the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent, and East Africa. APM Terminals, the operator of the Port of Salalah, has made significant infrastructure enhancements, including upgrades to all six existing berths and an expanded container yard.

The investment in the Port of Salalah aligns with Oman's long-term economic strategy, supporting trade growth and regional connectivity. Muhanna bin Moosa bin Bager, Director-General of Ports at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, emphasised the importance of the expansion in achieving national economic goals.

"This expansion emphasises our commitment to advancing the Sultanate of Oman's economic objectives and supporting Oman Vision 2040," he stated.

"In collaboration with Salalah Port Company, strategic planning efforts are continuously underway to optimise the port's strategic location and robust infrastructure. This substantial investment aligns with the port's goal to stay ahead of rising maritime traffic, offering a competitive edge."

The \$300 million investment covers critical infrastructure enhancements, including a new access road, an electrical substation, and an upgraded electrical network. Additionally, a reefer expansion has been introduced, increasing capacity by 2,000 reefer plugs for refrigerated cargo.

To support the handling of ultra-large vessels, the port has acquired advanced



The expansion enables it to accommodate the world's largest container ships, the Megamax vessels with a capacity of 24,000 TEU.

equipment, including:

- * 10 new ship-to-shore (STS) cranes capable of handling 26 containers wide.
- * 12 hybrid rubber-tired gantry (RTG) cranes for efficient yard operations.
- * 30 terminal trucks and trailers to enhance cargo movement. Additional empty container handlers and reach stackers to improve operational efficiency.

Steven Yoogalingam, CEO of the Port of Salalah, highlighted the port's continued investment in enhancing its capabilities. "Our investment underscores our deep commitment to Oman and the region," he said.

"The new capabilities ensure a smooth and seamless operation from Port of Salalah and provide opportunities for local and regional growth and job creation – also with the close link to the Gemini-cooperation, where we are delighted to welcome the network from A. P. Moller - Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd as part of the hub-system behind the setup."

RECORD-SETTING GROWTH IN CARGO HANDLING

In addition to the container terminal expansion, the Port of Salalah achieved a new milestone in general cargo handling in 2024. The port handled 22.6 million metric tons of cargo, a 10% increase from the 20.7

million metric tons recorded in 2023. This growth highlights the port's operational efficiency and its increasing role as a logistics powerhouse in the region.

The improvements further strengthen the port's reputation for efficiency. In the 2023 Container Ports Performance Index (CPPI), the Port of Salalah was ranked as the world's second most efficient container port for the third consecutive year.

The latest expansion, combined with ongoing lean management practices, is expected to enhance efficiency and reduce port stay times for shipping companies.

SALALAH JOINS THE GEMINI NETWORK

The Port of Salalah is now an integral hub in the Gemini network, a new shipping alliance between A.P. Moller - Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd. The first Gemini vessel is scheduled to call at Salalah on February 18, marking the start of this strategic collaboration.

Yoogalingam described the port call as a significant moment for Salalah. "The port call marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in the network's operation, illustrating the strategic importance of Salalah in this global initiative. The Port of Salalah maintains world-class operations and is ever-present, with ongoing efforts to overcome challenges and expand our capabilities."

Nakheel showcases Oman's dates industry at Gulfood 2025

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, FEB 19

NAKHEEL Oman Development Company is making a strong statement at Gulfood UAE 2025, the world's largest and most influential food and beverage (F&B) sourcing event.

Announcing its participation, Nakheel Oman Development shared on social media, "We are excited to participate in Gulfood UAE 2025, now in its 30th edition! Join us at the world's leading F&B sourcing event, where industry

leaders, innovators, and global brands come together to shape the future of food."

In remarks to the Observer, Ismail al Rawahi, Sales Manager at Nakheel Oman Development, shared his insights on the company's participation and the growing demand for dates in the international market, "We are thrilled to participate in Gulfood 2025, a premier platform that brings together the brightest minds and most innovative players in the food industry.

As a Sales Manager, I am excited



Nakheel Oman's stall at Gulfood 2025.

to showcase the incredible potential of the dates industry, which continues to play a pivotal role in the global market.

Dates are not just a staple food; they are a symbol of heritage, health, and sustainability.

At Gulfood 2025, we look forward to sharing our expertise, forging new partnerships, and exploring opportunities to further elevate the dates industry on the world stage.

. Together, we can drive innovation, promote sustainable practices, and meet the growing demand

for this versatile and nutritious superfood."

With Gulfood attracting over 5,500 exhibitors and driving \$20 billion in trade deals, Nakheel Oman's participation underscores its commitment to innovation, quality, and sustainability.

As the global appetite for healthy and natural foods continues to rise, Oman's date industry is well-positioned to meet this demand, offering a product that is deeply rooted in tradition yet aligned with modern health trends.

OPINION

Why is global poverty on the rise?



HAIDER
AL LAWATI

haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI

At a time when some countries in the world violate international laws and move towards wars and the extermination of peoples, we find that many countries suffer from poverty due to the spread of these wars. Poverty is one of the most prominent global challenges that affect the lives of millions of people, whose number today exceeds 8 billion.

According to a World Bank report issued in October 2024, there are approximately 700 million people living in poverty, or 8.5 per cent of the world's population, on less than \$2.15 a day. It is expected that 7.3 per cent of the population will live in extreme poverty by 2030. There are undoubtedly many reasons for the spread of poverty, the most important of which are conflicts and wars that lead to the destruction of infrastructure, displacement of populations, and worsening economic conditions.

Also, climate change, and natural disasters such as drought and floods, affect poor communities, especially in rural areas that depend on agriculture.

Another cause of poverty is the lack of education and skills, which contributes to the continuation in this field. Some international organisations believe that the lack of basic infrastructure and the absence of basic services such as clean water, sanitation, and

health care hinders economic development and increases poverty rates, while economic inequality and large gaps between peoples in income and wealth between individuals and societies contribute to the continuation of poverty.

Also, the financial and economic crises, lead to job losses, declining productivity, and increasing poverty rates, while social and ethnic discrimination contributes to depriving certain groups of people of economic and educational opportunities, which contributes to the continuation of poverty.

These issues require addressing the causes by adopting comprehensive strategies that include enhancing education, improving infrastructure, supporting sustainable economic growth, and reducing social and economic inequalities to eliminate the causes that lead to the spread of poverty.

Persistent poverty also has many negative consequences that greatly affect individuals and societies. Poverty increases the likelihood of crimes such as theft, fraud and assault, due to individuals feeling unable to meet their basic needs or due to psychological stress resulting from harsh living conditions.

This also has an impact on public health, as individuals living in poverty are often vulnerable to diseases due to lack of proper health care, malnutrition and unsanitary

According to a World Bank report issued in October 2024, there are approximately 700 million people living in poverty, or 8.5 per cent of the world's population, on less than \$2.15 a day. It is expected that 7.3% of the population will live in extreme poverty by 2030.

housing conditions.

People living in poverty often suffer from social discrimination and face difficulty integrating fully into society, which exacerbates feelings of loneliness and isolation. These results lead to political instability in countries and increased political unrest, as the feeling of social and economic injustice can lead to cases of popular anger and demands for change, which may cause instability in societies and countries.

There are many other results of the persistence of poverty in countries, such as weak economic development and reduced purchasing power, which affects the economy as a whole, and the occurrence of psychological disorders in individuals, which increases levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

Therefore, poverty is not only an economic problem, but a comprehensive issue that affects all aspects of social, health and psychological life, and confronting it requires joint efforts from governments, international organisations and civil society.

All of these factors require the need to eliminate poverty and develop a comprehensive and integrated approach, strategies and areas of work aimed at improving the living conditions of individuals and societies.

EU JOINT DEFENCE DEBT HAS MANY HOOPS TO GO THROUGH

PIERRE BRIANCON

Europe's leaders are caught between the need to boost their defence spending in a hurry, and their tight finances. The European leaders gathered by French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday at a rapidly convened summit in Paris may have debated the creation of a joint borrowing vehicle that would help shore up their militaries while mutualising the associated fiscal cost. It may take some time before the idea sees the light of day.

A joint debt scheme would be built on the model of the 650 billion euros Recovery and Resilience Facility, created in 2021 to help European Union member states cope with the

economic impact of the Covid pandemic. But a European defence facility could hardly follow the model of the Covid scheme. Boosting military spending to 3% of GDP - compared to roughly 2% now - would cost the EU and the UK a combined 230 billion euros. Not all of it would be financed by joint borrowing.

But the difference with the Covid vehicle, designed for exceptional circumstances, is that the debt vehicle would have to finance a yearly effort, for as long as a major threat is identified at Europe's borders.

One of the first problems for its architects would be to decide what a joint

defence scheme should finance. Presumably it would be used to facilitate procurements and help restructure and shore up the defence industry, more than on soldiers' meals. Ideally it wouldn't get bogged down in national quarrels about the returns governments would expect for their national champions.

A joint debt instrument for defence will also not be supported by all EU members - pro-Russian member states like Hungary and Slovakia might not play ball, and neither might those geographically distant from eastern Europe, like Spain. It's unclear if Italy might join. And a joint pot would only make sense if both France and Germany agreed to take part. It would also be more efficient if open to non-EU countries, notably the UK.

That in turn raises the question of whether the EU Commission could then be the institution issuing the debt. Joint borrowing would not in any case lighten much EU governments' fiscal burdens over time. The Covid debt, which will have to be repaid from 2028 onwards to the tune of 30 billion euros a year, or 20% of the EU's budget, serves as a good reminder. — Reuters

Enabling GH2 markets and developing trade corridors

CURRENTLY, most hydrogen production and consumption—primarily derived from fossil fuels—occurs at the same geographic sites, particularly in ammonia plants and oil refineries. However, as industries shift toward sustainability, demand for hydrogen is expected to diversify, expanding into heavy industries, transportation, and power generation.

Unlike fossil fuel-based hydrogen, green hydrogen relies on renewable energy, often sourced from regions distinct from industrial hubs.

This geographic and economic disparity, combined with evolving regulatory frameworks, is driving the need for global trade corridors to transport hydrogen across borders.

Several nations are planning to import green hydrogen or its derivatives to overcome domestic constraints such as limited land, high production costs, and regulatory hurdles.

The European Union (EU), for example, aims to import half of its hydrogen demand, while South Korea, Japan, and Singapore have set ambitious import targets.

Major ports are now competing to become global hydrogen hubs. Key contenders in the EU include Amsterdam and Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Antwerp in Belgium, and Rostock in Germany. Oman, with strong ties to these nations, is strategically positioned to play a critical role in the emerging hydrogen economy. Recent visits by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Belgium, Singapore and Germany have further cemented bilateral cooperation, opening doors for joint investments in hydrogen and clean energy.

REGULATORY DRIVERS FOR GREEN HYDROGEN

Governments worldwide are enacting policies to accelerate the energy transition and reduce carbon emissions. The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), set to take full effect in 2026, will impose tariffs on high-emission imports, including steel, cement, fertilisers, hydrogen, aluminium and electricity.

Additionally, the EU Renewable Energy Directive mandates that by 2030, at least 42% of industrial hydrogen use must come from green hydrogen, with 1% of transport energy also sourced from hydrogen. Member states are required



Green hydrogen relies on renewable energy, often sourced from regions distinct from industrial hubs.



ENG
MUHANNAD BIN
AL-KHATTAB
AL HINAI

The author is Director of Hydrogen Policies and Strategies Department – Ministry of Energy and Minerals

to develop sectoral road maps and introduce financial incentives.

Germany, among other EU nations, has launched a domestic carbon trading system, increasing carbon pricing and imposing future penalties on industries reliant on conventional hydrogen. Meanwhile, Japan plans to cap carbon credits for high-emission industries starting in 2026, imposing fines for exceeding set limits.

GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES AND INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION

Beyond regulatory targets, governments are investing heavily in hydrogen production and infrastructure:

- The EU Hydrogen Bank has been launched to support the green hydrogen market through dual-bid auctions and the European Innovation Fund.
- Germany is developing 9,000 km of hydrogen pipelines by 2032, with a total investment of €19 billion.
- South Korea and Japan have introduced cost-gap subsidies to bridge the price difference between fossil fuels and clean hydrogen, boosting demand.
- As a result, green hydrogen projects are rapidly expanding, including:
 - Hybrit (Sweden) – A 700 MW green steel project in Boden.
 - Holland Hydrogen (Netherlands) – A 200 MW electrolyzer in Rotterdam.
 - Neom (Saudi Arabia) – Expected to produce 200,000+ tons of green hydrogen annually.
 - Mintal (China) – A green ammonia project with a capacity of 650,000 tons per year.

These projects are driving cost reductions and knowledge accumulation, accelerating the

global hydrogen economy. Future growth will depend on technological advancements, declining renewable energy costs, and global energy security concerns, including the impact of the Fukushima disaster and the Russia-Ukraine war.

THE RISE OF HYDROGEN AGGREGATORS

A new category of market players, Hydrogen Aggregators, is emerging to bridge the gap between producers and buyers. These entities—whether public or private—facilitate contracting, logistics, long-term purchase agreements, and market access for green hydrogen.

Aggregators cater to multiple sectors, including data centres, oil refineries, steel production, fertilisers, transport, gas grids, semiconductors, and sustainable aviation fuel. While individual demand may be limited, aggregators consolidate smaller needs into commercial-scale purchases.

For example, German companies EnBW and VNG are positioning themselves as hydrogen demand aggregators within the EU, engaging with industries and ports such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Rostock to develop a robust hydrogen market.

HYDROGEN INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS IN SOUTH KOREA AND JAPAN

To strengthen their hydrogen economies, South Korea and Japan are developing hydrogen industrial zones:

- South Korea plans three coastal hydrogen clusters in Samcheok, Donghae, and Pohang to streamline domestic hydrogen production, import logistics, and infrastructure development.
- Japan, through its “Promotion of a Hydrogen Society” Act, will designate eight to ten hydrogen clusters over the next decade, including three large-scale hubs at major ports and five medium-sized hubs in regional areas.

CONCLUSION

With global hydrogen markets taking shape, policy incentives, infrastructure investment, and technological advancements will determine the pace of development. Oman's strategic positioning, strong international partnerships, and growing hydrogen ecosystem position it as a key player in the emerging green hydrogen economy.

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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

Indian Male, Storekeeper / Document Controller 2+yrs of experience in GCC, Completed BCA, ready to join immediately. Email: swamierzhasouth@gmail.com GSM: +968 71818173

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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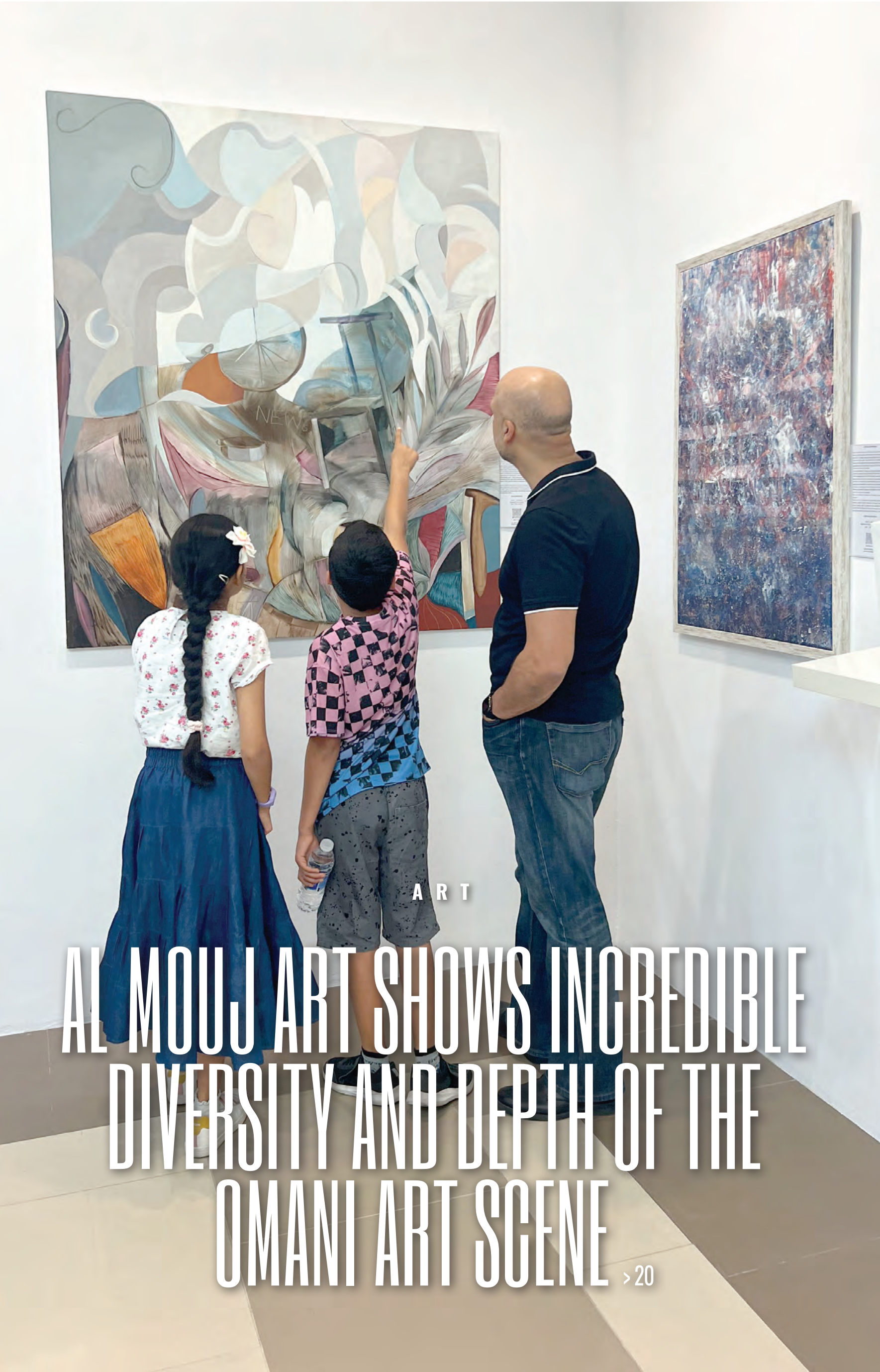


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ART/LIFE



CHANGINGWORLD

Why are teens in a rush to get driver’s licence?



BY SHADDAD AL MUSALMY

Shaddad is a seasoned Omani journalist and currently one of Oman Observer’s senior editors.

IN OMAN, the age of 18 marks a significant milestone for young individuals, as it is the legal age to obtain a driver’s licence. The transition into adulthood often brings a strong desire among young people to gain independence and mobility through driving. This is true for many teenagers, including my

son, who turned 18 last week. However, this eagerness raises concerns regarding road safety and the increasing number of accidents involving inexperienced drivers.

One of the primary reasons young people in Oman rush to learn to drive as soon as they reach 18 is the quest for independence. Driving provides them with the freedom to travel without relying on public transport or family members.

In a country where public transport options may be limited, having a personal vehicle becomes essential for socialising, attending educational institutions and pursuing job opportunities. This newfound autonomy is particularly appealing in a culture that values personal freedom and self-sufficiency.

Cultural factors also play a significant role in this phenomenon. In Oman, there is a societal expectation for young adults to become self-reliant upon reaching adulthood. The ability to drive is often seen as a rite of passage that signifies maturity and responsibility. Additionally, peer pressure can influence young individuals to learn to drive quickly; seeing friends or peers obtaining their licences can create an urgency to follow suit.

The availability of driving schools and training programmes further facilitates this rush. Many driving schools in Oman offer intensive courses designed specifically for new drivers, making it easier for young people to acquire their licences shortly after turning 18.

These programmes often emphasise quick learning rather than comprehensive education about road safety and responsible driving practices.

While the desire to drive is understandable, it raises serious concerns regarding road safety. Young drivers are statistically more likely to be involved in accidents due to several factors, including a lack of experience necessary to navigate complex traffic situations safely.

Research indicates that younger drivers tend to engage in riskier behaviours such as speeding, distracted driving — including using mobile phones — and not wearing seatbelts. This propensity for risk-taking increases their likelihood of being involved in accidents.

Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive training. While many driving schools focus on getting students licensed quickly, they may not provide adequate training on defensive driving techniques or a thorough understanding of traffic laws.

The rush among young people in Oman to learn to drive as soon as they reach 18 stems from various factors, including the desire for independence, cultural influences, and easy access to driving education. However, this trend raises valid concerns about rising accident rates due to inexperience and risky behaviour among new drivers.

It is crucial for stakeholders — including parents, educators, and policymakers — to address these issues by promoting comprehensive driver education programmes that emphasise safety alongside skill development.

QUICK FEATURES



FASHION

A model presents a creation by Ukrainian designer Yuliya Psaryova during the second Ukrainian Fashion Week since the beginning of Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv. —Reuters



MUSIC

Mexican singer Paquita la del Barrio, who gained fame for her ranchera and bolero music, died at her home in the state of Veracruz at the age of 77, the artist’s relatives announced. —AFP



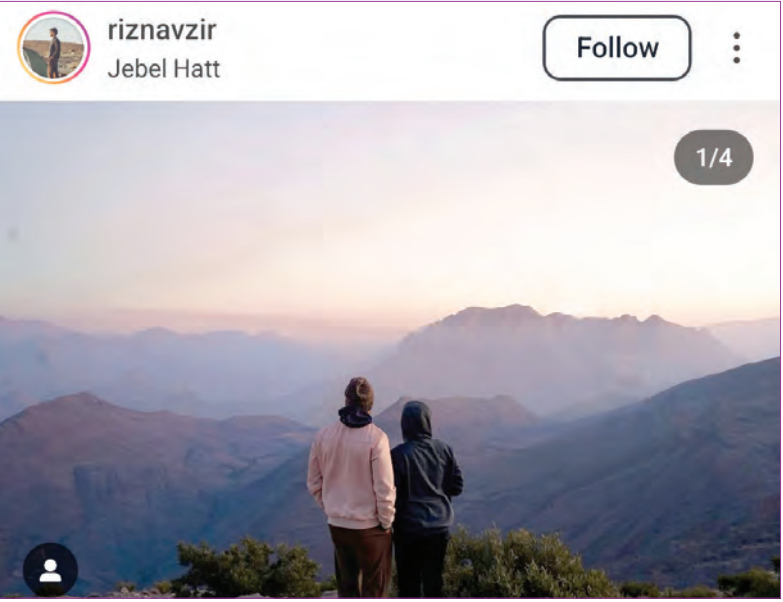
FILM

French film producer of the collective Agat Films - Ex Nihilo Muriel Meynard reacts as she receives the Producer’s Cesar 2025 during the Cesar 2025 diner of the producers, at the Hotel Intercontinental in Paris. —AFP

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Long-lost Camille Claudel sculpture fetches over \$3.2m at auction



A LONG-LOST sculpture by French artist Camille Claudel was sold at an art auction for \$3.2 million last week, the second highest sum ever paid for a Claudel work, according to the Philocale auction house.

The work, called “The Mature Age”, was originally estimated at between ? 1.5 and ? 2 million and was sold after a 20-minute bidding war.

The sculpture had not been seen in public since an exhibition at the Galerie d’Eugène Blot in 1907 and 1908. It was recently discovered by chance during an estate inventory, hidden under a cloth in along-abandoned Paris flat.

Created towards the end of the 19th century, the bronze work was inspired by Claudel’s painful break-up with French sculptor Auguste Rodin. Born in 1864, Claudel was over 20 years younger than Rodin and his lover, muse and student.

“The Mature Age” explores the cycle of life by depicting the three stages of age: youth, maturity and old age. The

work comprises three naked figures: an elderly woman dragging a man along, while a kneeling young woman pleads with him. This piece is one of only three known versions, with the others housed in the Orsay and Rodin museums in Paris and the Camille Claudel Museum in Nogent-sur-Seine.

Claudel was an important figure in the art world during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and is often recognised for her close relationship with the famous sculptor Auguste Rodin, who was both her mentor and lover. Claudel’s work reflects a distinctive style characterised by fluidity and expression.

She is celebrated as a pioneering artist, and her work has gained recognition over time, leading to renewed interest in her life and contributions to the world of sculpture. Exhibitions of her work and biographical accounts have helped to highlight her significance in art history.

— dpa



Artists try to make Cameroon sing a different tune

IN THE HUSTLE and bustle of Yaounde, Quartier Mozart is a unique artists’ refuge, which its creator hopes will free Cameroonians from the “self-censorship” they say is fuelled by the political status quo.

The lower level of the industrial-looking loft is sometimes a cinema or a concert hall. At other times it is a restaurant with bric-a-brac decoration.

Furniture is made from pallets and film posters cover the walls. A laundry basket acts as a lampshade and iron staircases cut through the soaring height of the ceiling.

One morning in December, Landry Mbassi, a well-known local art critic, plunged this corner of the centre in darkness for the day’s film club.

The screening was intended to be intimate — and for good reason.

The subject matter is “highly sensitive”, he joked as he introduced the session to the dozen or so artists, performers and other regulars gathered in the gloom.

On the bill were two previously censored Cameroonian films: “Um Nyobe, Unite Nationale” (“Un Nyobe, National Unity”) by Nabe Daone, the first episode of a documentary series about Ruben Um Nyobe, a key Cameroonian independence figure.

The second was “Le President” (“The President”), a 2013 fictional film by Quartier Mozart’s owner Jean-Pierre Bekolo, whose strangely close-to-reality plot has created controversy.

It paints a picture of an African president who has clung to power for 42 years — just like Cameroon’s actual President Paul Biya.

SELF-CENSORSHIP

“Cinema allows you to go where it’s impossible to go in reality,” the director told the small admiring audience via a microphone.

The 58-year-old film-maker is convinced that cinema must “allow things to change”.

He named the space “Quartier Mozart” in reference to his first film, which the Harvard University archive that mounted a retrospective of his work called “a comedy with a burlesque and fickle accent” and “social satire”.



Bekolo even went so far as to imagine his own local currency, the “Quartier Doll’Art”, to be used “exclusively for art, culture and artists”.

The smallest denomination would be a 10 million note to “give the impression to the person who holds it of being rich”, he said with a smile.

“As I don’t like Cameroon as it is... I created this space to have a Cameroon that I love and to attract people who are going to make me want to love this country,” he added.

The authoritarian government of Biya is regularly accused of corruption, bad governance and silencing dissent.

“Self-censorship has taken over to the point where the system no longer has to exercise it,” said Bekolo, who said he created the Quartier Mozart centre in 2019 as a “place of awakening and awareness”.

CHOOSE TO STAY

For artists, choosing to stay in the country can be interpreted as “a form of resistance”, Bekolo argued.

The film-maker, who said he “gained nothing from Cameroon”, lived for many years overseas and said he came back to the country of his birth even if it meant “living less well or having fewer resources”, so as not to be among those “who gave everything to the West”.

His vision is shared by the art critic Mbassi, who sees in Quartier Mozart “a place where ideas converge, where it’s possible to express a free, neutral and avant-garde voice”.

Such a cultural initiative is “rare” in Yaounde, the political capital of the country where “artistic dynamics are slowing down”, he added.

For Xzafrane, a rapper and Quartier Mozart regular, “it’s up to art and culture to reconnect Cameroonians” to their “deep DNA”.

Through his music, the artist calls on his compatriots, whose daily lives are undermined by poverty, unemployment and injustice, to “think collectively”.

He directly calls out Biya in several songs, among them “Rentre a la maison president” (“Come Home President”), released in 2024 during the ailing head of state’s long period of absence from the country.

Biya, who turned 92 on Thursday and is the world’s oldest serving head of state, could yet run for an eighth term of office at upcoming elections in October, potentially extending his four-decade rule.

Another of Xzafrane’s songs is simply titled “Degagez” (“Get Out”).

The rapper admitted that he knows the risk of such bluntness but said he was “more afraid for the future of his country than for his own life”. — AFP

FEATURES

BY AHMED AL KAABI

IN A FUSION of artistic experience and creative interaction, Al Mouj Muscat is hosting an art exhibition featuring 27 visual artists and four photographers, showcasing a diverse range of works that reflect their artistic visions and expressive techniques. Spanning over two weeks, the exhibition serves as a vibrant platform for art enthusiasts, offering them the opportunity to explore the diverse Omani art scene and engage directly with artists about their techniques and creative experiences.

The showcased works span various artistic schools and styles, highlighting the richness of Oman’s visual arts scene. The event underscores the significance of such exhibitions in supporting the artistic movement and providing artists with new opportunities to connect with audiences and present their creative endeavours.

Renowned visual artist Tahira Fida highlighted that her participation in the Al Mouj Art exhibition came at the invitation of fellow artist Trini, who established an art collective under the same name. Tahira explained that the group had met several times in a local café, where artists painted live in front of the audience, which eventually inspired the idea of organising this exhibition. She added, “We supported Trini in bringing the idea to life, as she selected the artworks, curated the artists, and organised the exhibition.”

Tahira expressed her admiration for three key aspects of the exhibition, highlighting its location in a lively, tourist-friendly area like Al Mouj, which provides both residents and visitors with the opportunity to discover and appreciate Omani art. She noted that many people often inquire about where to purchase authentic Omani artwork, as most available pieces tend to be imported, making this exhibition a unique platform for exploring and acquiring locally crafted art. Additionally, she praised the inclusion of artist profiles via QR codes, allowing visitors to learn more about the artists, browse their portfolios, and contact them directly for inquiries or purchases.

Speaking about her featured artwork, “Language of the Caves,” Tahira explained that it draws inspiration from ancient symbols that predate written languages, specifically those found on cylinder seals preserved in the National Museum of Oman. She elaborated, “I researched these symbols and sought to create a visual language from them, questioning how ancient civilisations communicated through such markings. This piece is my attempt to reconstruct and reinterpret that language through a modern artistic vision.”

To enhance the historical depth of the artwork, she employed antiquing techniques inspired by ancient Iraqi and Egyptian art. To achieve the desired effect, she imported special materials from abroad, stating that instead of using traditional brushes, she opted for a pouring technique to create a cave-like, aged appearance. Additionally, she used stencil techniques and relief tools to give the symbols a three-dimensional feel.

Tahira expressed her hope for the continuation of such exhibitions, emphasising their role in promoting Omani art both locally and internationally. She praised Al Mouj Art for providing artists with a platform to showcase their work to a wider audience.

Artist Sami al Siyabi captured the beauty of Omani traditional attire in his featured artwork, emphasising the deep appreciation Omani women hold for their cultural dress. He pointed out that each region in Oman has distinct designs and patterns that reflect its cultural identity.

Al Siyabi explained that he employed a realistic painting style to intricately depict the details of Omani clothing. Reflecting on his inspiration, he mentioned that he had previously participated in a competition with a painting showcasing the Omani headscarf (shaila), which won an award. This success motivated him to create a series of works focusing on the diversity of Omani attire.

Regarding the significance of art exhibitions for Omani artists, Al Siyabi stressed that such events offer a valuable opportunity to connect with artists from



Al Mouj Art shows incredible diversity and depth of the Omani art scene



different cultures, exposing them to new artistic ideas and techniques. Additionally, these platforms shine a light on Omani talent, helping to introduce their work to a broader audience.

Visual artist and academic Naila al Maamari participated in the exhibition with two paintings from her series “The Circle Element,” a visual study exploring the presence of circular forms in nature, animals, plants, and marine life. She explained that the series consists of 22 artworks, originally showcased in her fourth solo exhibition in Bahrain.

Al Maamari emphasised that the exhibited works are independent studies, rather than parts of a single piece. Each painting presents a unique artistic interpretation inspired by circular natural formations, particularly marine mollusks, from which she derives her colour palettes and compositions.

She further explained that the circle as an element carries profound meanings associated with vitality and continuity, noting that the universe operates in circular motions, from galaxies and planetary orbits to the passage of time itself.

Regarding her artistic method, Al

Maamari highlighted her focus on achieving visual balance, ensuring a harmonious distribution of colour masses and empty spaces to create artwork that allows the viewer’s eye to move freely without feeling overwhelmed.

Expressing her concerns about the decline in Oman’s artistic scene, Al Maamari voiced her desire for a revival of the country’s artistic movement, noting that the lack of exhibitions and competitions has significantly impacted local artists. She emphasised that organising more exhibitions and contests would encourage artists to innovate and produce new works, while also providing emerging artists with opportunities to gain experience and refine their visual skills.

She also called for the revival of major art events that were previously held in Oman, such as the “Young Artists Exhibition” and the “Annual Exhibition for Fine Artists,” which were once key platforms for artists to develop and showcase their creative experiences. Naila believes that these events not only foster artistic growth but also strengthen community ties and enhance cultural understanding among artists and the public.