

OMAN
عمان
DAILY
Observer

VOL. 44, NO. 81
PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 06:47 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:29 AM
DHUHR 12:26 PM
ASR 03:37 PM
MAGHRIB 06:00 PM
ISHA 07:12 PM

2010000387405

12

LEWANDOWSKI
EARNS BARCA
WIN TO PRESERVE
TITLE HOPES

INBRIEF

NON-OIL EXPORTS BOOST ECONOMY

The non-oil exports are one of the main pillars for realising sustainable economic development in the Sultanate of Oman as they contribute to diversifying sources of national income and reducing dependence on oil as a major source of revenue.

Promoting Omani exports provides opportunities to expand the base of the national production, stimulate growth in various economic sectors and generate more job opportunities. It also contributes to enhancing the competitiveness of Omani products on the global level, by improving quality, innovation, and benefiting from international markets. The non-oil exports witnessed remarkable growth, accounting for 33 per cent of total Omani exports at the end of the first half of last year (2024).

OMAN MARKS WORLD WETLANDS DAY



Represented by the Environment Authority, the Sultanate of Oman, on February 2, marked World Wetlands Day, which falls on this day every year. This year's theme, "Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future," underscores the vital role of wetlands in maintaining ecological balance and supporting biodiversity. The celebration also highlights wetlands' great importance in providing natural resources and environmental services that benefit human beings and human wellbeing. World Wetlands Day provides an opportunity to raise environmental awareness, with special emphasis on wetlands' significance in preserving life on planet Earth.

NEW PROJECTS IN AL BATINAH SOUTH



*The Governorate of Al Batinah South is set to witness a wave of developmental projects in 2025, reinforcing its commitment to infrastructure enhancement, tourism promotion, and economic diversity. One of the most significant projects is the Barka Waterfront Development, situated between the wilayats of Barka and Al Musannah. The final designs have been completed, and tenders were called for the project. **DETAILS ON P3***

Royal Decree promulgates Omani Nationality Law

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Sunday issued Royal Decree No 17/2025 on the promulgation of the Omani Nationality Law. The Decree reads as follows:

Article (1) stipulates that provisions of the Omani

Nationality Law attached to this Decree shall be enforced.

Article (2) states that the Minister of Interior shall issue the Executive Regulation and decisions necessary for the implementation of the provisions of the attached law. Until such

time, the existing regulations and decisions shall continue to be enforced in matters not specifically provided for in the attached law, without prejudice to its provisions.

Article (3) cancels Royal Decree No 38/2014 on the Omani

Nationality Law. It also cancels all that contradicts the attached law or contravenes its provisions.

Article (4) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from the day following its date of publication. — ONA

PACTS TO SUPPORT LOCAL CONTENT, JOB GROWTH

58 NEW INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES UNVEILED

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, FEB 2

THE General-Secretariat of the Tender Board on Sunday signed several agreements and memorandums of understanding and cooperation with government entities and private companies to adopt the outcomes of last year's landmark National Local Content Lab. The lab has resulted in 58 investment opportunities spanning five key sectors, including the military and security sector, healthcare, energy and minerals, construction and building and electricity and water services.

At the conclusion of its activities on Sunday, the National Local Content Lab identified 100 developmental opportunities, including 58 investment opportunities aimed at strengthening local content. These opportunities are expected to create numerous jobs across multiple sectors, with retained economic value.

The National Local Content Lab concluded after two weeks of intensive workshops involving over 50 government and private entities. The closing event was held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, and attended by Eng Badr bin Salim al Maamari, Secretary-General of the Tender Board, along with a number of ministers, dignitaries, and CEOs of various companies.

The agreements and memorandums of understanding were signed on behalf of the General-Secretariat of the Tender Board by Eng Badr bin Salim al Maamari, while representatives of the government and private sector entities, including undersecretaries,



Dignitaries at the signing ceremony on Sunday.

directors-general, and CEOs, signed on behalf of their respective organisations.

Speaking at the event, Salim al Rajhi, Representative of Participating Sectors at the National Local Content Lab, stated, "As we conclude this lab, we celebrate a pioneering seven-month national effort to maximise retained economic value through local content. This initiative reflects the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik emphasising the importance of implementing and monitoring local content policies for a sustainable, resource-based economy. The National Local Content Policy provides a strategic framework to boost reliance on domestic products, foster industrial growth, and drive innovation. The National Local Content Office ensures alignment across sectors, while this lab, uniting over 50 entities, has transformed these directives into actionable projects with

tangible economic impact. This lab has demonstrated the power of collaboration and integration, highlighting the potential to unify demand across sectors and strengthen local industries. As we conclude, we reaffirm the need for collective commitment to sustain this progress."

In a visual presentation at the event, Ghalib bin Amer al Hinaï, Head of the National Office for Local Content, stated, "We are entering a new phase — one where ideas become reality, opportunities turn into projects, and visions translate into tangible achievements that strengthen our national economy. A year ago, we received the Royal blessing of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the National Local Content Policy, setting the stage for economic empowerment. Since then, we have worked closely with various sectors to address strategic challenges and ensure local content becomes a key driver of economic growth.

Four Palestinians wounded in Israeli strike on a car in Gaza

CAIRO: At least four Palestinians were wounded in an Israeli strike on Sunday on a vehicle on the coastal road west of the Nuseirat camp in the central part of the Gaza Strip, medics said.

Medics first announced that a young boy had been killed in the strike, but later said they had managed to resuscitate him. The Israeli military said an Israeli aircraft fired on what the military described as a suspicious vehicle

moving towards northern Gaza outside the inspection route laid down by the ceasefire agreement.

"The IDF (Israeli military) is prepared for any scenario and will continue to take any necessary actions to thwart any immediate threat to IDF soldiers," it said, giving no details on the impact of the strike or any casualties. Several Palestinians have been reported killed by Israeli fire since a ceasefire agreement between Israel and



Smoke rises during an Israeli army operation in Jenin, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Sunday. — Reuters

Hamas took effect on January 19.

Hamas has described these incidents as violations of the truce. During the first phase of the ceasefire, 33 children, women and older male hostages as well as sick and injured, were due to be released. Of these, 18 have been freed so far.

More than 60 male hostages of military age will remain captive until a second phase is negotiated. Negotiations are due to start by Tuesday on agreements for the

release of the remaining hostages and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza in a second phase of the deal, which is intended to lead to a final end of the war in Gaza.

Later on Sunday, Hamas accused Israel of stalling over the implementation of the humanitarian part of the deal, saying Israel has yet to permit the entry of the needed medical, relief, fuel, and reconstruction supplies as per the agreement. **SEE ALSO P6**

OMAN

برجیل
burjeel
hospital
By Burjeel Holdings

MOH 3347873/2025

 24399777



Don't let your knee pain slow you down.
Treat it with our Sports Medicine Expert

Dr. Paul Antony Paramel
Sr. Consultant Orthopedic Surgeon
Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair

www.burjeelhospitaloman.com

SHORT TAKES



Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani with Jota Yamamoto, Japanese ambassador

GEN AL NUMANI MEETS OFFICIALS

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received in his office on Sunday Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate of Oman to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. The ambassador expressed his appreciation for the cooperation extended to him during his tenure. He also lauded the depth of bilateral relations between both countries.

On his turn, Al Numani lauded the efforts exerted by the ambassador in enhancing relations and the joint cooperation between the two countries. He also wished the ambassador success in his future endeavours.

Furthermore, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani also received Lyu Jian, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, to the Sultanate of Oman.

Al Numani wished the ambassador success in carrying out his duties. He also touched on the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The Chinese ambassador expressed his keenness to work on boosting bilateral relations to serve the interests of the two countries. — ONA

OMAN, IRAQ EXPLORE BUSINESS RELATIONS

BAGHDAD: Mohammed Shia Al Sudani, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, received Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and his accompanying delegation in Baghdad on Sunday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and explored ways to boost cooperation in various sectors, particularly in economic and business fields, to enhance partnerships and address economic challenges in the region. The Iraqi Prime Minister affirmed Iraq's keenness to achieve greater integration in economic and business relations with the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi meets Gen Thierry Burkhard.

SAF chief receives French counterpart

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Sunday Gen Thierry Burkhard, Chief of Defence Staff of the French Republic. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and reviewed several military matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Hamed bin Abdullah al Balushi, Assistant SAF Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, several senior COSAF officers and the military attaché of the French embassy in Muscat. — ONA



OMAN, FRANCE DISCUSS DEFENCE COOPERATION

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Sunday Gen Thierry Burkhard, Chief of Defence Staff of the French Republic, and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, both sides reviewed the bilateral relations between the two countries. They also discussed several topics of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by the Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), the Ambassador of the French Republic to the Sultanate of Oman and the Military Attaché of the French embassy in Muscat. — ONA

ITUC chief urges broader dialogue for decent work

NABHAN BIN AHMED AL BATTASHI, Chairman of the GFW Board of Directors, along with several board members and specialists from the General Federation of Oman Workers (GFW), welcomed Luc Triangle, General-Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), to discuss crucial issues regarding workers' rights and social dialogue in the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting delved into the state of human and trade union rights in the country, emphasising legislative provisions in the Labour Law and Social Protection Law.

The discussion reaffirmed the strategic partnership between GFW, ITUC and its regional affiliates while highlighting GFW's role in protecting workers' rights, improving working conditions, enhancing productivity and promoting social dialogue among tripartite partners.

During his visit, the ITUC General-Secretary engaged in talks with Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, and Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs.

The focus was on institutionalising social dialogue through mechanisms that ensure evidence-based labour market policies and sustained engagement of all partners for effective implementation.



ITUC General-Secretary holds talks with Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour.

The focus was on institutionalising social dialogue through mechanisms that ensure evidence-based labour market policies and sustained engagement of all partners for effective implementation.

Luc Triangle stressed the need to expand social dialogue with active GFW participation to ensure that economic, financial and social policies contribute positively to decent work in the Sultanate of Oman. He also emphasised the importance of advancing legislation to support trade union rights and freedoms, which would pave the way for the Sultanate of Oman's ratification of key ILO conventions.

The GFW has been a member of the ITUC since 2013 and has since collaborated on programmes aimed at strengthening trade union organisation and membership in the private sector.

The ITUC, representing 191 million workers across 339 trade unions in 169 countries, plays a key role in shaping global labour policy, advocating for fair wages, reasonable working hours and leave entitlements.

Through its Global Rights Index, the ITUC assesses workers' rights globally based on factors such as freedom of association and collective bargaining.

Judiciary Council reviews powers of Supreme Court

MUSCAT: Addressing a delegation from the National Defence College participating in the 12th National Defence Course, the Supreme Judiciary Council on Sunday elaborated on the roles and tasks of the judiciary and the powers of the Supreme Court.

Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidy, Chairman of the Supreme Court, delivered a speech in which he stressed that litigation is a protected and guaranteed right for all people and that the Omani judiciary enjoys complete independence and full and continuous support from the state.

Sayyid Khalifa explained



Sayyid Khalifa bin Said al Busaidy, Chairman of the Supreme Court, stressed that litigation is a protected and guaranteed right for all people. — ONA

the role of the judiciary in preserving the security of the homeland and enhancing national security. For his part, Issa bin Hamad al Azri, Secretary-General of the Supreme Judiciary Council, gave a presentation on the development of the judiciary in the Sultanate of Oman in terms of laws and the structure of the judiciary.

The event was attended by Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, and officials from the Supreme Judiciary Council. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information

AL BURAIMI HOSTS FIRST ARAB FORUM FOR TOURISM, INVESTMENT

AL BURAIMI: The First Arab Forum for Tourism and Investment explores means of enhancing tourism investments in Arab countries. It also focuses on highlighting economic and tourism components in the Sultanate of Oman.

The two-day event is organised by the Governorate of Al Buraimi in cooperation with Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s branch in Al Buraimi.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information.

Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi said in his speech that the forum constitutes an opportunity to augment Arab cooperation in the fields of tourism and investment. The Governorate of Al Buraimi, he added, has promising economic and tourism components that position it as a strategic gateway between Oman and the GCC states.

Two discussion panels were held during the first day of the forum. The first touched on means of developing and managing tourism destinations while the second panel reviewed the role of regional integration in achieving tourism integration. — ONA

‘ARTS WEEK’ KICKS OFF AT OMAN ACROSS AGES MUSEUM



MANAH: The activities of the Arts Week organised by Oman Across Ages Museum kicked off on Sunday.

The 5-day event, held in cooperation with a number of official and private establishments, includes many training programmes in various fields of art, in addition to guided tours and communication with a group of artists.

Eng Al Yaqdhan bin Abdullah al Harthy, Director-General of Oman Across Ages Museum, said that the event targets children, youth and people interested in the field of arts.

Al Harthy added that the event enhances inspiration and provides new ways to connect generations with their cultural identity through art.— ONA

RGO RECEIVES NEW BATCH OF RECRUITS

MUSCAT: The Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, on Sunday received a new batch of citizens to start the basic military training programme as new recruits after they passed the stages of acceptance, evaluation, tests and medical and physical fitness tests, on Sunday. The Royal Guard of Oman has employed its expertise and capabilities of specialised human resources and administrative and health



The move comes within the context of national efforts undertaken by the Royal Guard of Oman to recruit citizens.

requirements to provide an appropriate environment to accomplish seamless and speedy procedures for joining military service.

The move comes within the context of national efforts undertaken by the Royal Guard of Oman to recruit citizens in accordance with the plans and programmes designed to serve the proud nation and its beloved leader, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander. — ONA

Al Batinah South to launch key projects in 2025

SIHAM AL SAIDI
BARKA, FEB 2

THE Governorate of Al Batinah South is set to implement major development projects in 2025, focusing on infrastructure, tourism, and economic diversification. Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi, Governor of Al Batinah South, announced that the region will launch several initiatives across its wilayats, with the Barka Waterfront Development being a key highlight. Situated between the wilayats of Barka and Al Musannah, the project has completed its final designs and is now open for tendering. It will include retail outlets, restaurants, cafés, children’s play areas, open and enclosed sports halls, beach sports courts, cycling and walking tracks, a seaside promenade, and a public square. Additional facilities such as shaded family seating, kiosks, and an open-air theatre will enhance the recreational experience. The project aligns with Oman Vision 2040 and aims to boost tourism and entertainment while supporting economic growth. It is expected to be completed within 15 months.

Beyond the waterfront, the governorate is advancing several infrastructure and service projects. These include the second phase of the Niyabat of Al Hoqain development in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, the modernisation of the Rustaq Gate entrance, and the development of Ain Al Kasfa hot springs. In the Wilayat of Nakhal, upgrades to Ain



The Al Batinah South project has completed its final designs and is now open for tendering

Al Thawara hot springs and the creation of public gathering spaces are underway. Al Awabi and Wadi Al Maawil will see the construction of new markets and community halls, while the wilayats of Al Musannah and Barka will undergo road paving and other improvements, including the award-winning Rimal Park development under the Governorate Development Initiative.

Housing and sustainability projects are also a priority. Plans include an organic fertiliser project, a residential planning proposal for Al Aqda, and a site allocation for Oman Flour Mills.

The Al Batinah South Municipal Council,

chaired by Governor Al Hashimi, recently held its first meeting for 2025 to discuss infrastructure and community services. Topics included road improvements such as paving the Wadi Al Sahtan road in Al Rustaq, installing taxi shelters, enhancing drainage systems, and expanding street lighting. Other initiatives included establishing the Al Batinah South Creativity and Innovation Award in Wadi Al Maawil and launching a poultry waste recycling project in Barka.

The council also reviewed proposals from local representatives, including constructing community halls, improving flood protection measures and upgrading road networks.

Oman guest of honour at Baghdad Fair

BAGHDAD: The Sultanate of Oman takes part as a guest of honour in the 48th session of Baghdad International Fair.

The participation aims at enhancing trade and investment relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Iraq, and opening new horizons for cooperation in various economic sectors, in addition to backing partnership opportunities between Omani and Iraqi companies and utilising the available investment opportunities.

Oman’s delegation took part in the opening of the economic forum accompanying Bagdad International Fair, which witnesses the participation of 20 countries and more than 1000 companies. This huge



Oman’s delegation was headed by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. — ONA

participation makes the event as a major platform for showcasing products and services and strengthening business partnerships between business persons from different countries around the world.

Oman’s delegation was headed by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The Omani delegation met with Ghassan Farhan, Iraqi Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce. Members of the delegation also held a meeting with some Iraqi business persons to explore investment opportunities and discuss means of enhancing cooperation in the areas of trade, industry and logistic services.

In a statement, the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion stressed the importance of expanding trade relations, noting that the Iraqi market represents a promising opportunity for

investment.

In his turn, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) underlined the significance of enhancing economic partnership between business persons of the two countries. He pointed out that trade and investment cooperation would contribute to supporting joint economic growth and creating new opportunities for the private sector.

The Sultanate of Oman is participating in the fair with a pavilion that comprises more than 30 Omani companies representing various economic sectors, such as industry, trade, logistics, energy and technology. — ONA

RAM launches initiative for sustainable governorate development

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management, in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy, has unveiled the ‘Governorates’ Planning and Economic Capacity-Building Programme,’ under the esteemed auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy. This strategic initiative aligns with the Royal Vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, aiming to foster national leaders equipped with the dynamic skills necessary to achieve the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

Reflecting the Academy’s dedication



Participants of RAM, Ministry of Economy initiative on ‘Governorates’ Planning and Economic Capacity-Building Programme’

to enhancing governance, planning, and economic growth throughout Oman’s governorates, the programme is designed to equip local leaders with the tools needed for sustainable development and the effective use of resources, tailored to each governorate’s unique competitive advantages. By promoting administrative and economic decentralisation, the programme empowers executive department personnel to contribute more effectively to regional development efforts.

Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy of Management, highlighted

that this programme is part of a continuous effort to empower leadership across different levels. It strengthens integration among governorates and supports the executive departments in fulfilling their developmental, economic, and social roles, complementing the Academy’s other initiatives aimed at enhancing leadership within the governorates.

The programme focuses on skill development in areas such as strategic planning, budgeting, performance measurement, and applying national and international best practices.

SPOTLIGHT

A STEP TOWARDS A HEALTHIER FUTURE

COME 2026, PREMARITAL SCREENING BECOMES MANDATORY FOR MARRIAGES IN THE COUNTRY

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

OMAN implemented a voluntary premarital screening in 1999 to control genetic diseases and foster a healthy society. Come 2026, it will become mandatory for marriages in the country. The Observer spoke to doctors on this topic to dispel scepticism in some sections of the society.

Dr Jamila al Abri, a consultant physician and Director of the Women and Child Health Department, Ministry of Health, said premarital medical examination is an essential step in reducing the spread of sickle cell anemia and thalassemia, which are considered among the most prevalent genetic diseases in Oman.

According to surveys, the prevalence of hereditary blood diseases in Oman is 9.5 per cent, a high percentage that cripple the lives of individuals and their families. “It is important to ensure that premarital medical examination is not viewed as an obstacle, but rather as an opportunity to ensure the health of future generations. We also need to raise awareness among young people about the benefits of the examination, and provide them with the necessary advice to deal with the results.”

Al Abri said such patients face frequent hospitalisations and periodic blood transfusions. These challenges lead to psychological and economic pressure on families, making premarital medical examination an important step to reduce these burdens.

Dr Saleh al Hanai, senior physician, said the screening is not limited to detecting diseases, but also contributes to improving the health of the family and society in the long term. These examinations are available in MoH health centres, making it easier for citizens to obtain the necessary preventive health care.

Despite the health benefits, some citizens flag social stigma of the outcome of premarital checkup. Some may consider that these may lead to a decline in marriage opportunities or anxiety between spouses.

Mohammed bin Salim A, a citizen, says, “Premarital medical examination is a very important step, especially if there is a family history of genetic diseases. However, some people may feel pressure or social rejection if they discover that they have a genetic disease. It is better for these examinations to be provided in an awareness and educational context, rather than being just a routine procedure.”

Some others believe that premarital medical examination may not be the best solution for all cases. Fatima Lahnaiah says, “I support these tests, but I think that some people may have difficulty accepting the results if there are health problems. Perhaps we should work on raising awareness of how to deal with these and how to provide psychological support to those about to get married.”

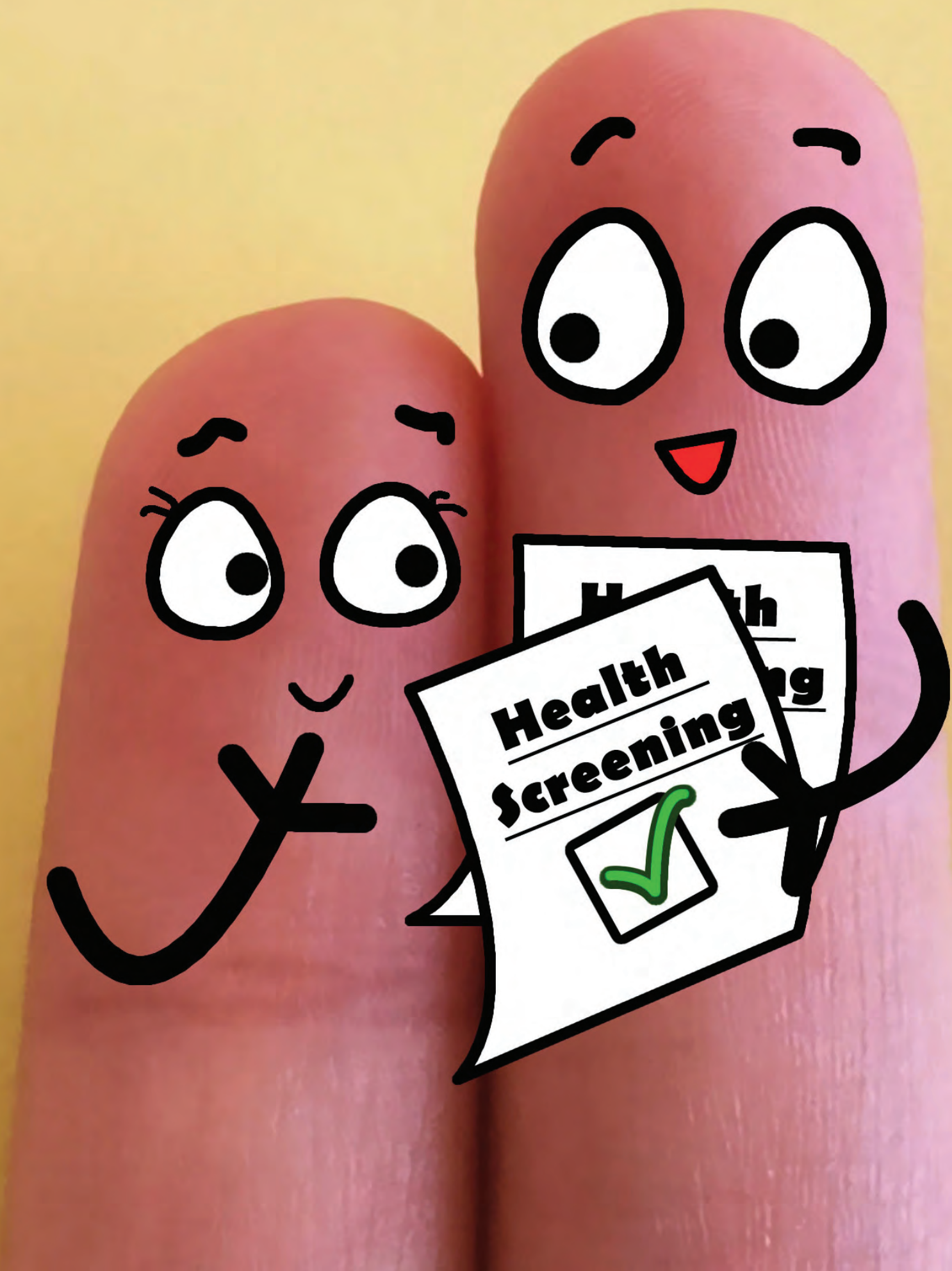
Suad al Maamari believes that the screening may not be acceptable to some people. “At first, I was hesitant about undergoing premarital checks, but after learning about the risks of genetic diseases, I became more convinced of the importance of this examination. However, the examination must be presented in a way that encourages acceptance of the results, and educates people about the available treatment opportunities.”

Many people voiced the need to reduce the fear or anxiety that may accompany the results of the examinations. Some believe that providing psychological support to couples about to get married can help them deal with the test results more positively.



It is better premarital medical examinations be provided in an awareness and educational context, rather than being just a routine procedure

MOHAMMED BIN SALIM
A citizen



SHORT TAKE



Visitors expressed admiration for the encyclopedia, noting its wealth of cultural diversity

‘Omani Encyclopedia’ draws visitors at Cairo Intl Book Fair

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion, the guest of honour at the 56th Cairo International Book Fair, continues to captivate visitors at the fairgrounds in New Cairo. As the exhibition runs until February 5, the pavilion witnessed a remarkable turnout on the fourth day, drawing attendees from all walks of life.

A major highlight was the Omani Encyclopedia, published by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, which attracted significant interest — particularly from young visitors eager to explore the rich tapestry of Omani heritage. Many paused to take souvenir photos in front of the display while learning about the encyclopedia’s extensive coverage of Omani traditions, including traditional attire, decorative clothing, cuisine, time-honoured customs, folklore, artisanal industries and other cultural aspects spanning the past and present. Visitors expressed admiration for the encyclopedia, noting its wealth of cultural diversity, which exceeded their expectations. Meanwhile, the display of rare Omani manuscripts also garnered considerable interest, drawing visitors who were keen to capture the moment with photographs.

To further enhance the experience, the management of the Sultanate of Oman Pavilion is distributing commemorative brochures featuring images that showcase the country’s breathtaking landscapes, rich heritage and vibrant tourism offerings. — ONA

MEETING ON BANNING BACTERIOLOGICAL, TOXIC WEAPONS HELD

MUSCAT: The first meeting of the national working group tasked with implementing the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxic Weapons was held.

The session was chaired by the Director of Operational

Requirements at the General Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces and attended by advisors and specialists from military, security and relevant government institutions. The meeting aimed to establish a framework for enforcing the convention and deliberated on key agenda items.

The convention is a landmark international agreement in disarmament and the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, reinforcing global security and peace.

The Sultanate of Oman ratified the treaty through Royal Decree No 17/92. — ONA

ISC General Assembly shapes science’s future

THE International Science Council (ISC) concluded its third general assembly meeting here on Saturday. The ISC’s general assembly meeting brought together members of the council, a group of international experts and representatives of global scientific organisations and initiatives.

The meeting reviewed the ISC’s strategic plan for the 2025-2028 period and its budget as well as reviewing the developments in terms of freedom and responsibility in science, defining a renewed scientific agenda, future visions for the council’s membership and discussing a number of urgent issues related to the future of science systems. It also reviewed the regional presence of the council by establishing new regional offices, final amendments to statute, among other topics.

Prof Sir Peter Gluckman,



Prof Sir Peter Gluckman, ISC President, thanked Oman for hosting the meeting

The general assembly brought together group of international experts and representatives of global scientific organisations and initiatives

President of the ISC, expressed his thanks to the Sultanate of Oman for hosting the meeting and its exceptional commitment that contributed to the success of the general assembly and other events, initiatives and forums accompanying this major global scientific gathering.

Dr Yousef bin Abdullah al Balushi, a member of the ISC Fellowship Council, said that the first in-person meeting of the International Science Council General Assembly was attended by some 400 scientists representing a large number of scientific organisations and science academies.

He noted that the most prominent feature of the GA meetings is the presentation of a comprehensive report by the previous Board of Directors and the voting and approval of several recommendations related to the activities of the ISC as a leader of the global science movement in addressing global challenges and issues related to sustainable development.

The GA meeting agenda presented an extensive review of a large number of policies that focused on enhancing the value of science in addressing challenges related to diplomatic cohesion and international cooperation, benefiting from the in-person momentum witnessed by the

discussions and sessions of the Global Knowledge Dialogue and the forums accompanying the third General Assembly meeting.

The General Assembly meeting affirmed the ISC’s commitment to ensuring that science remains the cornerstone of political and social decision-making by directing these discussions and their strategic directions to establish more initiatives and partnerships in the coming years to enhance scientific presence on the global stage, Al Balushi concluded.

Anik Bhaduri, Director, Asia Science Mission for Sustainability, Co-Chair-Future Earth Asia, said that this important scientific event brought together a group of scientists, decision-makers, and representatives of various science organisations to discuss ways to maximise the benefits of science urgently before many irreversible consequences and challenges come into effect in our planetary system.

He added that through regional science missions, we can make a significant positive change in science policies and practices in the region looking forward to strengthening cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in the fields of science and scientific research. — ONA

Preserving the National Identity for the future generation

MUSCAT: National Identity is the essence of a nation, the soul that distinguishes it from others. It defines a people’s character, worldview and unique cultural imprint.

Rooted in history, language and traditions, national identity is more than a concept — it is a living force that shapes societies, strengthens citizenship and preserves the legacy of generations.

Dr Hanan bint Mahmoud Ahmed, a researcher in National Identity, emphasised that Omani identity is built upon a rich tapestry of elements: the Arabic language, shared history, deep-seated customs and traditions, unwavering values, religious faith, a profound respect for knowledge and a geographical heritage that has shaped Oman’s interactions with the world. These elements, she stressed, must be cherished, safeguarded and passed down to future generations. “National belonging is the strongest shield a country possesses and fostering it requires inspiration, not intimidation,” she noted.

Dr Hanan underscored the vital role of researchers in embedding Omani identity within the youth, ensuring they develop the wisdom to distinguish between influences that align with



By blending cutting-edge technology with timeless storytelling, content creators ensure Omani history remains alive and relevant



DR HANAN BINT MAHMOUD AHMED
Researcher in national identity

their values and those that threaten them. She called for continuous efforts to address challenges facing Omani society, particularly those that undermine cultural stability and identity.

With the digital age rapidly reshaping narratives, she highlighted the power of

content creators in sustaining and promoting national identity. “Omani content creators have revolutionised the way heritage is shared with the world,” she said, citing their role in producing compelling visual narratives that celebrate the Sultanate of Oman’s rich culture. Through stunning photography, immersive documentaries and captivating short films, they breathe new life into ancient traditions, presenting them in dynamic, interactive ways that resonate with modern audiences. By blending cutting-edge technology with timeless storytelling, they ensure Omani history remains alive and relevant.

— ONA

جامعة صُحار
Sohar University

TENDER NOTICE

إعلان مناقصات

Sohar University announces the issuance of the following tender and invites specialized and certified companies with sufficient experience in the relevant field within government or private institutions to provide the services and perform the tasks outlined below:

رقم المناقصة Tender No.	عنوان المناقصة Tender Description	رسوم المناقصة (ريال عُمان) Tender Fee (OMR)	تاريخ بدء الحصول على وثائق المناقصة Tender Collection Start Date	آخر موعد للحصول على وثائق المناقصة Tender Collection Last Date	آخر موعد لتقديم العطاء Bid Submission Last Date
001/2025	توريد وتسليم أجهزة حاسب آلي Supply and delivery of desktop computers	200	04.02.2025	13.02.2025	06.03.2025

The tender document can be obtained from the Procurement and Contracts Department from 08:00 am to 03:00 pm at Sohar University campus in Sohar after payment of tender fees (non-refundable) at the cashier counter in the Al Khauboora Building/ Ground floor, or via bank transfer to account number 002020004411 at Sohar International Bank, Sohar Branch. The receipt of payment has to be provided to the Procurement and Contracts Department so that the tender document can be collected.

Tender offers must be submitted in closed sealed envelopes. The tender number should only be written on the envelope, no other indication shall be written. The deadline to submit offers is 3:00 pm on 6 March 2025.

Offers should be addressed to the office of Pro. Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance and deposited in the tender Box at PVCAF Office as details below during office hours 8:00 am to 3:00 pm, Sunday to Thursday.

يمكن الحصول على مستندات المناقصات من دائرة المشتريات والعقود من الساعة ٨:٠٠ صباحاً إلى ٣:٠٠ مساءً من حرم الجامعي في صُحار بعد دفع رسوم المناقصة (المبالغ غير قابلة للاسترجاع). يمكن الدفع مباشرة لدى المحاسبين في الدور الأرضي في مبنى الخابورة بالحرم الجامعي، أو عن طريق التحويل البنكي على حساب رقم ٠٠٢٠٢٠٠٠٤٤١١ ببنك صُحار الدولي - فرع صُحار. يجب تسليم إيصال الدفع إلى دائرة المشتريات والعقود لاستلام مستندات المناقصة.

يجب تقديم العروض في مغاريف مغلقة ومختومة. يجب كتابة رقم المناقصة فقط على الطرّف الخارجي للعطاء، ويجب عدم كتابة اسم صاحب العطاء أو ما يشير إليه. الموعد النهائي لتقديم العطاءات هو تمام الساعة ٣ مساءً من يوم ٦ مارس ٢٠٢٥م.

يجب تقديم العطاءات باسم مساعد رئيس الجامعة للشؤون الإدارية والمالية وتوضع العطاءات في صندوق بكتب مساعد رئيس الجامعة للشؤون الإدارية والمالية خلال ساعات العمل من الساعة ٨:٠٠ إلى الساعة ٣:٠٠ مساءً من الأحد إلى الخميس.

مكتب مساعد رئيس الجامعة للشؤون الإدارية والمالية
جامعة صُحار

صندوق بريد ٤٤، الرمز البريدي ٣١١، صُحار. سلطنة عُمان.
هاتف: ٢٦٨٥٠١٠٠ محول: ٤٢١ و ٢٨٩ (دائرة المشتريات والعقود)

Pro-Vice-Chancellor – Administration and Finance Office
Sohar University
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar. Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 421 & 289 (Procurement and Contracts Department)

The SU reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the bidders without assigning any reason.

su.edu.om

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



Internally displaced residents carry some of their belongings as they walk past the CBCA Mugunga Church, in Goma. — AFP

RWANDA ‘WELCOMES’ PROPOSED SUMMIT ON DRC CONFLICT

NAIROBI: Rwanda welcomed on Sunday calls for a summit of two African regional groups to discuss the escalating conflict in DR Congo. The M23 armed group, that the UN and several nations say is backed by Rwanda, have made substantial gains in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, taking the major city of Goma and vowing to march on the capital.

The 16-nation South African Development Community called for a summit with the eight-country East African Community to “deliberate on the way forward regarding the security situation in the DRC”. The Rwandan foreign ministry said it “welcomes the proposed joint summit”, adding in a statement it had “consistently advocated for a political solution to the ongoing conflict”. The SADC emergency session was not attended by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda -- which is not a member of the bloc -- but Congolese leader Felix Tshisekedi was present virtually. Earlier in the week, Kagame appeared at an EAC emergency session when the DR Congo president was absent.

— AFP

RESIDENTS NEAR JAPAN SINKHOLE URGED TO EVACUATE



A worker controls the traffic as rescue operations continue for a truck driver after his vehicle plunged into a sinkhole in Yashio. — AFP

TOKYO: Five households in the immediate vicinity of a massive, ever-widening sinkhole near Tokyo were urged to evacuate on Sunday, with efforts to rescue a man stuck inside reportedly halted. A 74-year-old truck driver was swallowed by the cavity which has since expanded to 40 metres across -- almost the length of an Olympic swimming pool. Requests were issued on Sunday for five households near the hole in the city of Yashio, Saitama region, to take shelter.

On Saturday, Japanese rescuers completed building a 30-metre slope to send heavy equipment and reach the truck driver. But a good amount of sewage water was discovered underneath the slope, which, combined with rain, led to the rescue mission being suspended Sunday, public broadcaster NHK said. With the walls of the hole eroding, rescue workers are unable to stay inside it for long. Around 1.2 million people living nearby have so far been asked to cut back on showers and laundry to prevent leaking sewage from hindering the operation.

— AFP

TREMORS ACTIVITY

Greece orders schools to close over quakes



Schools on the Greek tourist island of Santorini will remain closed today after more than 200 small earthquakes shook the region, civil protection authorities announced. The government ordered the move after a series of tremors in the sea around Santorini and surrounding islands, the site of one of the largest volcanic eruptions in recorded history. Some 200 small earthquakes have been recorded, the strongest so far with a magnitude of 4.5. — AFP

IRAQ PARLIAMENT APPROVES COMPENSATION PLAN TO RESOLVE KURDISTAN OIL DISPUTE

BAGHDAD: Iraq’s parliament on Sunday approved a budget amendment to subsidise production costs for international oil companies operating in the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region in a move aimed at unblocking northern oil exports, lawmakers said. The amendment sets the rate at \$16 a barrel, up from an earlier proposal for \$7.9 a barrel for transport and production costs, which was rejected as too low by the Kurdistan Regional

Government (KRG). The parliamentary approval marks a key step in resolving a nearly two-year dispute over Kurdish oil exports and in improving ties between Baghdad and Erbil. The resumption of exports is also expected to ease economic pressures in the Kurdistan region, where the halt has led to salary delays for public sector workers and cuts to essential services. “Parliament’s approval is very significant to resolve oil

dispute between Baghdad and Erbil and it will help expedite the resumption of Kurdistan oil exports to boost the country’s revenues”, said Kurdish lawmaker Rebwar Orhaman. Iraq’s oil ministry, in coordination with the KRG’s Ministry of Natural Resources, will appoint an international consultant within 60 days to assess fair production and transportation costs, lawmakers and oil ministry officials said. — Reuters

Warring parties urged to carry on Gaza ceasefire

QATAR’S prime minister on Sunday called on Israel and Hamas to immediately begin negotiating phase two of the Gaza ceasefire, adding that there is no clear plan for when talks will begin. “We demand (Hamas and Israel) to engage immediately as stipulated in the agreement,” Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani said at a press conference held jointly with Turkiye’s foreign minister in the Qatari capital Doha on Sunday.

According to the ceasefire agreement, negotiations on implementing the second phase of the deal should begin before the 16th day of phase one of the ceasefire, which is Monday.

Israel and Hamas last month reached a complex three-phase accord that has halted the fighting in Gaza. Hamas has so far released 18 hostages in exchange for Israel releasing hundreds of Palestinians held in Israeli prisons. There are more than 70 hostages still held in Gaza.

Negotiations on implementing the second phase of the deal should begin before the 16th day of phase one of the ceasefire, which is Monday. The accord is expected to include Hamas releasing all remaining hostages held in Gaza, a permanent end to hostilities and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the enclave.



Two boys standing by a coastal area hold Palestinian flags in Gaza City. — AFP

we start to see some movement in the next few days. It’s critical that we get things rolling from now in order to get to an agreement before day 42.” Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said he would begin negotiations on phase two of the agreement on Monday in Washington, when he is set to meet US President Donald Trump’s Middle East Envoy, Steve Witkoff. During his meeting with Witkoff, Netanyahu will discuss Israel’s positions in respect to the ceasefire, the prime minister’s office said. Witkoff will then speak with officials from Egypt and Qatar, who have mediated between Israel and Hamas over the past 15 months with backing from Washington.

Meanwhile, at least four Palestinians were wounded in an Israeli strike on Sunday on a vehicle on the coastal road west of

the Nuseirat camp in the central part of the Gaza Strip, medics said. Medics first announced that a young boy had been killed in the strike, but later said they had managed to resuscitate him. The Israeli military said an Israeli aircraft fired on what the military described as a suspicious vehicle moving towards northern Gaza outside the inspection route laid down by the ceasefire agreement.

Several Palestinians have been reported killed by Israeli fire since a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas took effect on January 19. Israel said its forces have opened fire in incidents where “suspicious” figures, sometimes armed, posed a risk to Israeli forces deployed at some areas of Gaza as stipulated by the phased deal. Hamas has described these incidents as violations of the truce. — Reuters



SYRIAN PRESIDENT MEETS SAUDI CROWN PRINCE

RIYADH: Syria’s transitional President Ahmed al Sharaa met Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh on Sunday on his first foreign trip as Syrian leader, Saudi state news agency SPA reported. Live TV footage showed Sharaa shaking hands with the crown prince in the Saudi capital before sitting down for talks.

The Saudi foreign minister visited Damascus on January 24 and said the kingdom was engaged in talks with Europe and the US to help lift economic sanctions imposed on Syria that had decimated its economy.

Arab countries have historically been concerned about Syria’s production and trade of captagon, an amphetamine-like drug used in the oil-producing Gulf states by party-goers and labourers alike. The Saudi crown prince is the second Gulf leader to meet Sharaa since the latter was declared president for a transitional phase last week. Qatar’s Emir Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani met Sharaa in Damascus on Thursday. — Reuters

IMPORTANT TALKS

Putin ally says he leaves for India talks



Vyacheslav Volodin, the chairman of Russia’s State Duma, the lower house of parliament, said that he was leaving for India for a series of ‘important’ talks. “We will be in New Delhi by nightfall, important meetings and negotiations are planned tomorrow,” Volodin said. “India is a strategic partner. We have long-standing relations of trust and mutually beneficial cooperation with it. It is necessary to develop contacts in all areas.” — Reuters

DEFENSIVE INDUSTRY

Iran unveils new advanced ballistic missile



Iran revealed a new ballistic missile that it said was capable of travelling 1,700 kilometres, unveiling it at a Tehran ceremony attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian. Images showed the missile, dubbed Etemad, or “trust” in Persian, calling it “the most recent ballistic missile” built by the defence ministry. “The development of defence capabilities and space technologies... aims to ensure that no country dares to attack Iranian territory,” Pezeshkian said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



British Home Secretary Yvette Cooper appears on BBC's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg in London, Britain. — Reuters

UK TO BECOME FIRST COUNTRY TO CRIMINALISE AI ABUSE TOOLS

LONDON: Britain will become the first country to introduce laws against AI tools used to generate abuse images, the government announced late on Saturday. The government will make it illegal to possess, create or distribute AI tools designed to generate abusing images of children, punishable by up to five years in prison, interior minister Yvette Cooper revealed. It will also be illegal to possess AI “manuals” which teach people how to use AI to abuse children, punishable by up to three years in prison.

“This is a real disturbing phenomenon. Online child abuse material is growing, but also the grooming of children teenagers online. And what’s now happening is that AI is putting this on steroids,” interior minster Yvette Cooper said on Sunday. She said AI tools were making it easier for perpetrators “to groom children, and it’s also meaning that they are manipulating images of children and then using them to draw and to blackmail young people into further abuse. “It’s just the most vile of crimes,” she added. — AFP



RUBIO ARRIVES IN PANAMA

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio arrived Saturday in Panama, where he plans to raise President Donald Trump’s demands for the Panama Canal, according to an AFP reporter traveling with him. Rubio, on his first trip as the top US diplomat, during which he will travel to four other Latin American countries, will tour the Panama Canal and meet President Jose Raul Mulino on Sunday, a US official said.

SERBIA STUDENTS TO END PROTEST BLOCKING MAIN BRIDGE

NOVI SAD: Students in Serbia on Sunday said they would end their protest blockade of a bridge in Novi Sad marking three months since a collapsed roof at the city’s train station sparked a nationwide anti-corruption movement. The demonstration which began on Saturday was the latest in a series of mass protests to rock the Balkan country in the wake of the roof collapse that killed 15 people in the northern Serbian city in November. After holding a vote with local

residents, student organisers said they planned to end the blockade on the city’s main bridge later on Sunday after cleaning the area occupied by demonstrators, according to a reporter on the ground.

On Saturday, thousands rallied in Novi Sad where they blocked roads and occupied bridges before converging on the city’s main crossing -- the Freedom Bridge -- for a day-long blockade. The university student-led movement

has put increasing pressure on the government, spurring the resignation of several high-ranking officials, including that of Prime Minister Milos Vucevic earlier this week.

The premier’s resignation came after an earlier 24-hour blockade at a major traffic intersection in the capital Belgrade.

It was preceded days before by a general strike that saw schools and small businesses close across the country. — AFP

Trump unveils sweeping tariffs on major partners

PRESIDENT Donald Trump announced broad tariffs on major US trading partners Canada, Mexico and China, claiming a “major threat” from illegal immigration and drugs — a move that sparked promises of retaliation. Canadian and Mexican exports to the United States will face a 25 per cent tariff starting on Tuesday, although energy resources from Canada will have a lower 10 per cent levy. Goods from China, which already face various rates of duties, will see an additional 10 per cent tariff. Trump’s orders also suspended exemptions allowing low-value imports from the three countries to enter the US duty-free. The announcement threatens upheaval across supply chains, from energy to automobiles to food. Trump invoked the International Emergency Economic Powers Act in imposing the tariffs, with the White House saying “the extraordinary threat posed by illegal aliens and drugs, including deadly fentanyl, constitutes a national emergency.” The aim is to hold all three countries “accountable to their promises of halting illegal immigration and stopping poisonous fentanyl and other drugs from flowing into our country,” the White House added.

China’s commerce ministry said in a statement it would take “corresponding countermeasures” and file a claim against Washington at the World Trade Organization. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum announced that her country would impose retaliatory tariffs. Sheinbaum said she had told her economy minister “to implement Plan B that we have been working on, which includes tariff and non-tariff measures in defence of Mexico’s interests.”

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau -- who spoke with Sheinbaum -- separately said his country would hit back with 25 per cent levies of its own on select American goods worth Can\$155 billion (US\$106.6 billion), with a first round on Tuesday followed by a second one in three weeks. “We’re certainly not looking to escalate. But we will stand up for Canada, for Canadians, for Canadian jobs,” he said, as he warned of a fracture



Canada’s PM Justin Trudeau is joined by Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly, and Minister of Public Safety David McGuinty, as he speaks during a press conference in Ottawa, Canada. — AFP

in longstanding Canada-US ties. British Columbia Premier David Eby announced that his province would specifically retaliate against “red” US states led by members of Trump’s Republican Party.

On Sunday, the finance minister of Japan — a major US trade partner — said they were “deeply concerned about how these tariffs could affect the world’s economy.” Trump has repeatedly expressed his approval of tariffs as a policy measure, and has signalled that Saturday’s action could be the first volley in further trade conflicts to come. This week, he also pledged to impose future duties on the European Union.

He has also promised tariffs on semiconductors, steel, aluminium, oil and gas. “Tariffs are a powerful, proven source of leverage for protecting the national interest,” the White House said.

“The tariff action announced today makes clear that our friends, neighbours and Free Trade Agreement partners are in the line of

fire,” said Wendy Cutler, vice president at the Asia Society Policy Institute and a former US trade negotiator. “The move today is an opening salvo on the tariff front,” she said. Economic integration between the United States, Mexico and Canada — who share a trade pact — means stiff tariffs will have “a strong and immediate impact” in all three countries, she said.

Imposing sweeping tariffs on the three biggest US trading partners in goods carries risks for Trump, who won November’s election partly due to public dissatisfaction over the economy. Higher import costs would likely “dampen consumer spending and business investment,” said EY chief economist Gregory Daco. Economists also expect growth to take a hit. Trump’s supporters have downplayed fears that tariffs would fuel inflation, with some suggesting his planned tax cuts and deregulation measures could boost growth instead. — AFP

Russia and Ukraine trade blame for attack on Kursk school

KYIV: Kyiv and Moscow traded blame on Sunday for a strike on a school in a Ukrainian-occupied town in Russia’s Kursk region, while Kyiv said new missile and drone attacks killed at least 18 people in Ukraine. Fighting in the nearly three-year war has shown no signs of easing despite US President Donald Trump’s promise to quickly reach a ceasefire after he took office on January 20. The Ukrainian Air Force said four people were killed in a Russian attack with a guided aerial bomb on Saturday on a former school building sheltering civilians in the town of Sudzha. It said four others were seriously wounded and 80 people rescued from the rubble. “Hitting civilians with bombs is a signature style of Russian criminals! Even when the civilians are local residents, Russians,” it said.

Russia did not give a toll, but accused Kyiv of targeting the school in a “crime that has no forgiveness

and no statute of limitations”. “The Ukrainian Armed Forces committed another war crime by launching a targeted missile strike on a boarding school in the city of Sudzha,” Russia’s defence ministry said. Russian investigators announced they had opened a criminal case against a Ukrainian commander who they said was behind the attack.

Kyiv launched a surprise operation into the Kursk region last August, seizing dozens of villages and small towns including Sudzha — home to about 6,000 people before the fighting. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called Russia “devoid of civility”, sharing a video on social media showing a heavily damaged building, as well as a wounded man lying on the ground. “They destroyed the building even though dozens of civilians were there,” Zelensky said in a post on X. “Russian bombs destroy Ukrainian homes the same way. And even



Rescuers work at a damaged residential building, a day after a missile strike, in Potlava. — AFP

against their own civilians, the Russian army uses similar tactics.”

Across Ukraine, at least 18 people were killed as Russian strikes pummelled the centre and east of the country overnight Friday into Saturday, according to regional

rescuers used cranes to comb the ruins of the smouldering building for survivors. Another three people were killed at the weekend in Sumy region, and one in Kharkiv, according to Ukrainian authorities. Each side accused the other of new attacks on Sunday. Ukraine said an elderly woman was killed in Russian shelling of the Kherson region. Russia said two people died in Ukrainian drone attacks on the Belgorod region.

Moscow has been advancing on the battlefield for over a year, and its attack of Ukraine will this month hit the three-year mark. The Russian military said on Saturday its troops had “liberated” the village of Krymske in the northeastern suburbs of the city of Toretsk. Toretsk in the eastern Donetsk region has been in the Kremlin’s sights for months, as its capture would enable Russia to obstruct vital Ukrainian supply routes. — AFP

OPINION

New forms of AI present fresh challenges to educators



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is a Associate Professor, Dept of English and Translation, SQU

THE Artificial Intelligence (AI) community has been in a hyperactive mode in the last few weeks with the introduction of DeepSeek, the Chinese AI platform that is said to be far more efficient than the ubiquitous ChatGPT, the previous favourite. The reason why DeepSeek took over the world by storm is because it is an open source LLM (Large Language Model) which is faster and cheaper to train. According to Reuters, Deepseek took just \$6 million and two months to build. It was also the most popular app to be downloaded on Apple devices in January. All of this has made educators think about the implications of using AI models in education once again. Just as the meteoric popularity of ChatGPT made educational institutions scramble to provide guidelines and train teachers on the ethical uses of AI, newer models are going to make teachers re-evaluate these platforms. On the positive side, the economics of DeepSeek has been seen to be an advantage for educational institutions

with smaller budgets, thus ensuring equity and participation. DeepSeek creates new information at record time and is effective in reasoning, generating code and solving sophisticated mathematical equations. Conversely, this new AI platform uses a style which is less conversational and interactive. It fares better in the reasoning criteria and less so when latest, real time data is asked for. Educators need to be aware of these differences when using AI platforms as their use will be popular with students. As with other AI platforms, DeepSeek can be used by students for research as it can efficiently use advanced algorithms to scan databases and online journals. This saves student’s time while giving sufficiently reliable information. DeepSeek also aids in personalised education by analysing individual study habits and giving practice study questions. Other features like notes organisation and deadline tracking also helps students organise their work and keep track of all deadlines. Educators will find it very challenging to decide on the extent and type of AI use which

The only reality is that AI is here to stay and educators will have to stay alert to changes that will transform the field of education in disruptive and creative ways

will be allowed by them. If the opportunities in the use of AI are varied, so are the challenges. Ideally, AI should be used to retrieve necessary information which is then analysed and applied based on individual experiences, requirements and contexts. An increasingly prevalent phenomena, however, is the use of AI platforms with little to no input by learners themselves. This defeats the purpose of education which is to teach students to think for themselves. If information is easily retrievable, the focus of education will have to be on other skills. What those could be will be for educators to decide, based on their areas, levels of students and purpose of teaching. The AI revolution has come quickly and at a pace with which it is difficult to catch up. No sooner do policy makers establish rules about the uses of such platforms, newer ones emerge which require a quick re-examination of existing regulations. Perhaps the only reality is that AI is here to stay and educators will have to stay alert to all the changes that will transform the field of education in disruptive and creative ways.

INDIA BUDGET OPTS FOR ECONOMIC SUGAR RUSH OVER REFORM

AFTAB AHMED & IRA DUGAL

India’s annual budget announcement was a bigger deal than usual this year: As the first full budget of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s third term, it will set the tone for how the world’s fifth-largest economy confronts slowing growth and sagging markets. But the year’s top economic policy event opted mainly for short-term economic relief through middle-class tax cuts, while passing up a chance to go big on reforms needed to reignite rapid growth — once the envy of the world at more than 8 per cent. The budget also scaled back the government’s emphasis on capital spending and infrastructure, another key driver for India’s growth ambitions since the pandemic. Without a strategy to regain high growth rates and assure jobs for India’s young population, the budget disappointed analysts and markets, alarmed in recent months by weak earnings growth and an exodus of foreign investors. “India is aspiring for 8 per cent growth but we don’t have a path to 8 per cent — a growth strategy is not there,” said Madhavi Arora, chief economist at Emkay Global Financial Services. The government has forecast India’s GDP growth will slip to a four-year low of 6.4 per cent in the current financial year to March 31 and stay close to that level next year as well, compared with 8.2 per cent in 2023-24. While the latest tax cuts may help urban consumers, who took some steam out of the economy as weak wage growth and high living costs curtailed their spending habits, economists see deeper problems that need to be addressed. “Eight per cent will require far deeper interventions in agricultural markets, human capital and ease of doing business,” said Dhiraj Nim, an economist at ANZ Research. Modi, who returned to power in July of last year with a weaker-than-expected mandate, has turned to appeasing politically important constituencies in the months since the election, analysts said. His party has reversed agricultural trade policies to favour farmers, offered cash handouts to women and, now, cut taxes for the middle class. Analysts noted that this is not the first time, however, that Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party failed to push economic reforms, which also got brushed aside in his previous two terms when the party had won more decisively and had greater political capital. “In 2019, the BJP got more than 300 seats and had a window (for reforms),” said Amit Ranjan, research fellow at Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore. — Reuters

How the world is reeling from Trump’s aid freeze

SUI-LEE WEE, DECLAN WALSH AND FARNAZ FASSIHI

IN famine-stricken Sudan, soup kitchens that feed hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in a war zone have shut down. In Thailand, war refugees with life-threatening diseases have been turned away by hospitals and carted off on makeshift stretchers. In Ukraine, residents on the front line of the war with Russia may be going without firewood in the middle of winter. Some of the world’s most vulnerable populations are already feeling President Donald Trump’s sudden cutoff of billions of dollars in US aid that helps fend off starvation, treats diseases and provides shelter for the displaced. In a matter of days, Trump’s order to freeze nearly all US foreign aid has intensified humanitarian crises and raised profound questions about the United States’ reliability and global standing. “Everyone is freaking out,” Atif Mukhtar of the Emergency Response Rooms, a local volunteer group in the besieged Sudanese capital, Khartoum, said of the aid freeze. Soon after announcing the cutoff, the Trump administration abruptly switched gears. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that “lifesaving humanitarian assistance” could continue, offering a respite for what he called “core” efforts to provide food, medicine, shelter and other emergency needs. But he stressed that the reprieve was “temporary in nature,” with limited exceptions. Beyond that, hundreds of senior officials and workers who help distribute US aid had already been fired or put on leave and many aid efforts remain paralysed around the world. Most of the soup kitchens in Khartoum, the battle-torn capital of Sudan, have shut down. Until last week, the US was the largest



Food aid funded by the US arrives in Bentiu, South Sudan. — The New York Times

Trump’s order to freeze nearly all US foreign aid has intensified humanitarian crises and raised profound questions about the United States’ reliability and global standing

source of money for the volunteer-run kitchens that fed 816,000 people there. “For most people, it’s the only meal they get,” said Hajooj Kuka, a spokesperson for the Emergency Response Rooms, describing Khartoum as a city “on the edge of starvation.” After the US money was frozen last week, some of the aid groups that channel those funds to the food kitchens said they were unsure if they were allowed to continue. Others cut off the money completely. Now, 434 of the 634 volunteer kitchens in the capital have shut down, Kuka said. “And more are going out of service every day,” he said. Many of the aid workers, doctors and people in need who rely on US aid are now reckoning with their relationship with the United States and the message the Trump administration is sending: The United States is focusing on itself. “It feels like one easy decision by the US president is quietly killing so many lives,” said Nah Pha, a

tuberculosis patient who said he was told to leave a US-funded hospital in the Mae La refugee camp, the largest refugee camp on the Thai-Myanmar border. Nah Pha, who fled Myanmar in 2007 to escape the fighting there, said the staff gave him a week’s supply of medicine and told him that was all they could provide. “Once my medicine runs out, I have nowhere else to get it,” he said. The public health implications of the aid freeze are broad, health workers say. In Cambodia, which had been on the cusp of eradicating malaria with the help of the United States, officials now worry that a halt in funding will set them back. In Nepal, a \$72 million programme to reduce malnutrition has been suspended. In South Africa and Haiti, officials and aid workers worry that hundreds of thousands of people could die if the Trump administration withdraws support for a signature US programme to fight HIV and AIDS. — The New York Times

Try doodling your feelings or thoughts



ABDULAZIZ
AL JAHDHAMI

The write is author,
translator and a
communications
professional

GRAPHIC design is a remarkable skill that requires both talent and a specific set of abilities to truly master it. Creating something from a scratch is not an easy deed, especially when it leads to stunning visuals and illustrations that leave a lasting impression. Since graphic design is not a skill everyone possesses, many of us turn into professional designers to help bring our ideas to life.

Design is more than just a craft; it is a way of seeing and understanding the world. It involves combining visual communication with creativity, technical know-how, and manual expertise. Additionally, technology and psychology play key roles in the design process. Designers, therefore, often have a very visual and insightful way of thinking. An artist needs a great idea, a source of inspiration and the drive to follow through on the project.

Inspiration plays a crucial role in graphic design. It is often said that design is “thinking made visual,” a tangible representation of intelligence and creativity. We all need a bit of inspiration now and then, a reminder of our inner strength and creativity, especially for graphic designers and artists who rely on it to fuel their work.

One of the most inspiring and enjoyable

forms of artistic expression is doodling. Doodle art, beloved by millions around the world, is gaining popularity for its simplicity and charm.

It offers a unique way for artists to express emotions and experiences through vibrant, playful designs. With doodling, one can create captivating illustrations, delightful sketches and beautiful, colorful paintings.

Doodle art, often seen as a casual or absent-minded activity, is a form of graffiti or scribbling, typically created in unexpected places like the margins of a notebook or during an otherwise mundane task like sitting in a meeting or lecture. Although doodling is sometimes dismissed as “just fun,” it is actually a brilliant way to explore creativity and improve drawing skills.

Doodling offers a unique glimpse into an artist’s personality and style, showcasing aspects of their creativity that might not be evident in other forms of art. Developing a personal drawing style takes time and practice. Over time, as doodling becomes a regular habit, creativity flows more naturally, bringing with it endless possibilities and fresh ideas that can be translated into impressive designs.

Historically, doodling has been associated with moments of distraction, such as during a meeting or lecture, but in recent years, it has gained recognition as a genuine art form.

Doodling offers a unique glimpse into an artist’s personality and style, showcasing aspects of their creativity that might not be evident in other forms of art

The beauty of doodling lies in its accessibility as it doesn’t require advanced skills or expensive tools. All it takes is a pen, paper and an open mind, making it an inclusive and enjoyable activity for people of all ages and backgrounds.

What makes doodling so captivating is its simplicity and versatility. It can take many forms, from intricate patterns and abstract shapes to random characters and illustrations. It marks a way for artists to experiment with different styles, express emotions, or just relax. Doodling doesn’t have strict rules or boundaries, which is why it has become a popular tool for artists and designers to tap into their creativity and refine their craft.

Doodle art can be applied to various objects like T-shirts, mugs, notebooks, walls and more. It adds a distinctive charm to everyday items, drawing attention and inspiring those who encounter it. Doodles not only capture the eye, but also resonate with the heart, offering a touch of personality and soul in every drawing. It is a quick and enjoyable way to combine thinking and making, allowing ideas to flow freely and effortlessly.

Whether you are looking to pass the time, relieve stress, or uncover your next great idea, doodling offers an endless world of possibilities.

FOR POOREST, FEARS FOR SETBACKS AFTER AMERICAN AID CUT

SHAUN TANDON

In Uganda, millions of schoolchildren have benefitted from a universal education programme backed by the United States. In South Sudan, US assistance has helped thousands of flood victims at risk of cholera. With one swoop of the pen, President Donald Trump froze the bulk of US foreign assistance for three months on returning to office, demanding a review to ensure all money meets his “America First” principles.

The Trump administration has since issued waivers for food and other humanitarian aid. But aid workers say uncertainty reigns — and that the impact is already being felt by some of the world’s most vulnerable.

Even if US assistance returns after the 90-day review, aid workers fear long-term consequences from the cutoff and some observers see a lasting blow to US credibility as China and other powers woo the developing world.

“Even if the funding eventually turns back on, great damage will have been done,” said Peter Waiswa, an accountant in Kamuli, Uganda who coordinates aid as part of a network known as the Compassion Connectors.

“Missing drugs for days for the HIV/Aids patients can cause death,” he said.

Waiswa said that some schools in the universal education programme that relied on US assistance have already given notices for children not to report to school.

In Aweil in the northern reaches of impoverished South Sudan, orphanage teacher James Akoon Akot said that 3,000 people who lost their homes in floods were promised relief by international groups backed by US assistance.

“The problem is that aid is used for both immediate relief and reconstruction,” he said.

“If this decision to cut off funds is not reconsidered soon, there is a very real possibility that people will begin to die of hunger and diseases in South Sudan,” he said.

The United States has long been the world’s largest provider of development aid, giving \$64 billion in 2023. Among its most prominent programmes is PEPFAR, the anti-HIV/Aids initiative started under former president George W Bush that is credited with saving some 26 million lives.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio in a memo signed on January 24 froze all US assistance with waivers for “emergency food” and, outside of development, weapons for Israel and Egypt.

In a follow-up memo, he exempted other humanitarian assistance including shelter and medicine, appearing to give the greenlight for anti-retroviral drugs funded by PEPFAR.

But Suzy Dzimbiri, a nurse in Zumba, Malawi, said she heard of people stockpiling whatever medicine they can and that one local charity that administered HIV/Aids treatment, named Lighthouse, quickly closed down. — AFP

Europe in Trump’s crosshairs

THIS year’s World Economic Forum in Davos was brimming with creative ideas about how to save the planet, reduce inequality and tackle urgent security needs. Overwhelmingly, though, the big takeaway was how depressed the Europeans are, about their economy and especially about Donald Trump.

Their anxiety is not baseless: Trump poses an existential threat to Europe in three key ways. First, he insists that Europe must take full responsibility for its own defence — a demand many political leaders find difficult to comprehend. In his Davos speech, delivered remotely from Washington, Trump once again called on European governments to boost defence spending to 5 per cent of GDP. Given that many EU countries like Italy are already struggling to meet the 2 per cent target they committed to during Barack Obama’s presidency, it is clear why Trump’s demand is a major source of anxiety.

Second, Trump seems determined to make good on his threats to impose sweeping tariffs, dealing a crushing blow to European exporters facing increasingly stiff competition from China. While Trump’s rhetoric appears to leave room for individual countries to negotiate lower tariffs, his record of fulfilling campaign promises suggests otherwise. Having reversed former President Joe Biden’s open-borders and DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) policies, he is likely to impose “beautiful” tariffs next, despite widespread opposition from economists. Trump’s proposed tariffs would have a particularly severe impact on Germany, Europe’s largest economy. After two consecutive years of recession, Germany’s export-led growth model appears to be faltering. If Trump imposes high import tariffs on German goods, a third year of recession is likely to follow.

The textbook approach would be for Europe to turn the other cheek, because the country that imposes tariffs often suffers the most from them. But try explaining that to voters. With a passive response



Trump poses an existential threat to Europe in three key ways.



KENNETH
ROGOFF

The writer is a former chief economist of the International Monetary Fund, is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Harvard University and the recipient of the 2011 Deutsche Bank Prize in Financial Economics

likely to be seen domestically as a sign of weakness, the temptation to confront Trump’s bullying and retaliate may be impossible to resist.

The outcome of such a confrontation is anyone’s guess. Trump, who views Europe’s chronic trade surplus with the United States as clear evidence of unfair competition, will not back down. Never mind that most economists argue that the surplus is largely due to Europeans’ preference for investing in US assets, which have consistently outperformed Europe’s and are widely expected to continue doing so. Third, Trump’s plan to shore up America’s energy supply puts Europe’s green movement in a difficult position. The European Union’s energy prices are several times higher than those in the US, largely owing to the Russia-Ukraine war and the cost of the bloc’s rapid green transition. High energy prices are making it increasingly difficult for EU industries to remain competitive, especially in critical emerging sectors like artificial intelligence.

So, what can Europe do? For starters, policymakers must stay focused and not allow Trump’s chaotic policies to distract them from their top priorities. Chief among these is finding ways to reduce energy prices, with small-

scale nuclear technologies offering a promising step forward.

Moreover, Trump’s climate-change denialism and “drill, baby, drill” agenda represent a significant challenge for the EU, already at risk of slipping into geopolitical irrelevance. While embracing clean energy is admirable, Europe’s efforts alone will have a limited impact on global warming, especially with China and India still generating roughly 60 per cent of their electricity from coal. To convince other countries to follow in its footsteps, Europe must prove that it can be both green and competitive; otherwise, it will become a cautionary tale.

In the face of Trump’s threats and growing Chinese competition, European governments would do well to temper their enthusiasm for regulation. As the saying goes, “The US innovates, China replicates and Europe regulates.”

UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves rightly views deregulation as a potential way to improve Britain’s growth prospects. But the United Kingdom will struggle to restore growth unless EU member states — particularly France — set aside petty grievances and offer the United Kingdom a Norway-style trade deal.

©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Sur vs Al Khabourah match

OMAN, AL RUSTAQ, SUR, AL KHABOURAH SETTLE FOR DRAW IN OFL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 2

Al Rustaq and Oman Club settled for a goalless draw in their clash on Saturday at Seeb Sports Stadium, as part of the 13th round of the Oman Football League. The match saw Oman Club dominate possession and dictate the tempo of play, relying on ball control and structured attacks, while Al Rustaq opted for long-ball tactics from the back to the front.

Oman Club came close to converting their dominance into goals during the first half, creating several dangerous opportunities. The most notable chance came in the sixth minute when professional player Itur Daniel struck a powerful indirect free kick, but luck was not on his side. On the other hand, Al Rustaq was not far from scoring either, as they threatened Oman Club's goal on multiple occasions.

However, the first half ended in a goalless stalemate. In the second half, both teams continued their efforts to break the deadlock, but the lack of attacking efficiency and solid defensive performances from both sides kept the score unchanged, resulting in a 0-0 draw.

With this draw, Oman Club raised their tally to 25 points, maintaining their position in third place in the league standings. Meanwhile, Al Rustaq reached eight points but remained at the bottom of the table in 12th place, still in the relegation danger zone.

ANOTHER GOALLESS DRAW BETWEEN SUR AND AL KHABOURAH

In another match, Sur and Al Khabourah also played to a goalless draw at Rustaq Sports Complex. Al Khabourah entered the match with an attacking mindset, utilising the speed of their wingers to penetrate Sur's defence.

They managed to create several clear chances, but Sur's goalkeeper showcased exceptional reflexes, including saving a dangerous header in the 35th minute that narrowly missed the post. On the other hand, Sur relied on counterattacks, taking advantage of the movements of their foreign striker.

However, they struggled with finishing in front of goal, missing a golden opportunity to score. The second half remained evenly contested, though Sur showed some improvement by increasing their offensive pressure on Al Khabourah's defence.

They came close to snatching a late winner, but Al Khabourah's defence and goalkeeper stood firm to maintain a clean sheet.

With this result, Al Khabourah increased their tally to 17 points, placing them fifth in the standings, just one point behind Bahla in fourth. Meanwhile, Sur climbed to nine points but remained in 11th place, still within the relegation zone.



Al Rustaq vs Oman Club match

Oman Open Tennis enters thrilling second week

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 2

THE excitement continues at the Oman Open Tennis Championship as it enters its second week, with competitions ongoing across various age categories, from juniors to professionals, at the tennis courts of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Decisive results in the final round of the first week. The conclusion of the first week witnessed thrilling matchups, with key results shaping the tournament. In the Men's Over-45 category, Laurent Fraf secured a victory over Farhan Ghafoor with a score of 6-0, 6-1, while Nasser al Rashid defeated Raja 6-4, 6-1.

In the Men's Over-65 category, Madi al Bakri triumphed over Thiagarajan with a score of 6-2, 6-0. In the Men's Open category, Muneer al Rawahi dominated his match against Ayman al Jahwari, winning 6-1, 6-0, while David Ivosch defeated Ahmed al Hinai in the professionals' category with a 6-0, 6-1 victory.

Among the women, Serpil Demir emerged victorious against Jocelyn with a 6-0, 6-1 scoreline, while Aisha al Busaidy defeated Salma al Riyami 6-1, 6-1. In the Under-18 category, Moataz al Mazroui defeated Roman Nath 6-0, 6-2, while Richard Peters won against Ahmed Ihab 6-2, 6-1. In the girls' Under-18 category, Areej al Azkawi triumphed over Jikisha Diuri with a commanding 6-0, 6-0 victory. Meanwhile, in the Under-12 category, Kavinraj Arunga defeated Dhuroof Hamlay 9-0, while Jackie Diuri edged past Hetty Mistry with a 9-7 win.

CHILDREN'S OPEN DAY—A FUN AND INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE

On the sidelines of the championship, the Oman Tennis Association, in collaboration with YONEX, organised the "Children's Open Tennis Day" at the main court of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

The event saw enthusiastic participation from children across various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, who enjoyed a series of entertaining games and interactive competitions designed to fuel their passion for the sport.

Participants had the opportunity to test their skills using professional equipment and compete for exciting prizes, making



The event concluded with an awards ceremony for the winners in a festive atmosphere that added to the excitement for the children and their families.



the event even more engaging.

The event also attracted a large turnout of parents who praised the significance of such activities in promoting tennis and encouraging its practice among younger generations.

The event concluded with an awards ceremony for the winners in a festive

atmosphere that added to the excitement for the children and their families.

Organisers confirmed their commitment to hosting more similar events to expand the tennis player base in Oman and develop young talents capable of competing in local and international tournaments.

Al Ain face must-win match against Al Rayyan

AL AIN resume their battle to retain their continental crown when the Asian Champions League Elite returns on Monday, with the club from the United Arab Emirates hosting Qatar's Al Rayyan in a must-win game for Leonardo Jardim's beleaguered side.

Al Ain lifted the Asian title in May with victory over Japan's Yokohama F Marinos under Hernan Crespo but have since put on a faltering defence that has seen the Argentinian replaced by Jardim and the club on the verge of elimination.

With just two points from six matches in the league phase of the competition, Al Ain sit three points adrift of the qualifying spots for the knockout rounds, with two matches to play in the recently reconfigured competition.

Under the Swiss league format, eight of the 12 teams in both west and east Asia advance to the last 16, with that phase to be played in



From the Al Ain and Al Gharafa match in the AFC Champions League Elite

March. Five knockout round berths have already been claimed in a competition dominated by Saudi Arabian clubs. Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr, as well as Al Hilal and Al Ahli, have confirmed their progress to the next phase in west Asia, where they will be joined by Al Sadd from Qatar and Al Wasl of the UAE, leaving the rest battling for the three slots left.

Iran's Persepolis, currently sixth in the standings, travel to Riyadh on Tuesday to play Al Hilal, who saw Brazil's Neymar leave last week, knowing a win will likely secure their progress, while Esteghlal meet Iraq's Al Shorta with similar ambitions.

Al Rayyan, meanwhile, will look to suppress Al Ain's efforts to revitalise their campaign and maintain their

own push for a place in the last 16.

Uzbekistan's Pakhtakor sit in ninth spot, one point behind Esteghlal in the final qualifying position, and take on 10th-placed Al Gharafa from Qatar, with both clubs' hopes also on the line.

The competition will resume on Tuesday after a two-month hiatus, while clubs in east Asia will return to action on February 10.

In that half of the draw, Yokohama F Marinos lead the standings on goal difference from South Korea's Gwangju FC and fellow J-League side Vissel Kobe, but none of the 12 teams have confirmed their progress to the next phase.

Only one club has been eliminated, with Australia's Central Coast Mariners stranded at the bottom of the eastern standings on a solitary point from six games, leaving them seven points adrift of the qualification spot with two games remaining. — Reuters

SHORTTAKES



YALLA SHABAB
GIANTS CLAIM
D50 TITLE

MUSCAT: The second edition of Oman Cricket’s Oman D50 concluded on Friday. The 19-day extravaganza of top-quality cricket played between the 6 premier division teams saw Yalla Shabab Giants beat Royal Oman Stallions by 6 wickets to lift the coveted trophy at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground.

The Yalla Shabab Giants , owned by Chaitanya Khimji, won the title finishing second in the league stage below Royal Oman Stallions who won 5 out of 5 in the league. The tournament was played in a single round-robin format followed by the top two locking horns for the Final.

Winning the toss and playing to their strengths, Yalla Shabab Giants (YSG) elected to bowl first. They started strong in the powerplay picking the top four of Royal Oman Stallions (ROS) within 15 overs. Small partnerships and Usman Ali Afridi’s 31 off 26 guided ROS’s total to a paltry 107.

In the 2nd innings, early strikes led by Hassnain Ali Shah put YSG on the backfoot but a 68-run partnership between Sanju Sajeew and Gowtham Sagar ensured they sail through without much turbulence to lift the trophy.

Mr Duleep Mendis, Head Coach and CDO – Oman Cricket reflecting on the tournament said, “ It was an excellent competition between six of the most competitive sides in Oman. We saw majority of the matches played through the 50-overs which displays top-notch batsmanship from the teams and our excellence in providing excellent tracks for quality cricket. We would congratulate the players and management of Yalla Shabab and Oman Stallions for claiming the Champions and Runners-Up berth. This tournament also served as an apt-preparation for the national pool of players for our upcoming ICC CWC League 2 starting early February between USA and Namibia.”



Mertens downs Li to
win Singapore Open

ELISE Mertens clinched her first WTA title in 17 months on Sunday as the second-seeded Belgian beat unseeded Ann Li in straight sets to win the Singapore Tennis Open. Mertens was beaten by McCartney Kessler in the Hobart International final last month but the 29-year-old was in fine form at Kallang Tennis Centre, landing 75 per cent of her first serves to overpower the American 6-1, 6-4.

Li did not drop a set during her run to the final but struggled with her serve early in the match as Mertens took full advantage, earning three service breaks to take the opening set in 26 minutes

The American was broken again in her first service game of the second set but dug deep to break Mertens for the first time in the next game and began to find her groove on her own serve.



However, while serving to stay in the match at 5-4 down, Li made a pair of unforced errors to hand the title to the Belgian after an hour and 22 minutes.

Mertens was delighted with her ninth career singles title on the WTA Tour and first since the Monastir Open in Tunisia in October 2023.

“It’s a really nice title at the beginning of the year – and especially after not getting the title in Hobart three weeks ago. I was very eager to win this one,” said the world number 32.

“I felt very comfortable on this surface and very comfortable in Singapore this week, so I took advantage of that and it gave me a lot of good energy.”

In the doubles final, second seeds Desirae Krawczyk of the United States and Giuliana Olmos of Mexico took the title after defeating the third-seeded Chinese pair of Wang Xinyu and Zheng Saisai 7-5, 6-0. — AFP

Five teams secure spots in final round in OVL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, FEB 2

The final round of the preliminary stage of the Omani Volleyball League (OVL) concluded on Saturday, witnessing dominant performances from Al Bashayer, Al Salam, Masirah and Majis. These teams have now secured their places in the final stage of the competition.

AL SALAM SECURES FIRST PLACE AFTER BEATING SEEB

In one of the most exciting matches of the season, Al Salam secured a crucial win against its rival Seeb, claiming victory in three sets to one in a highly competitive and intense encounter that lasted until the final moments.

Both teams entered the match with high focus and determination to claim the win.

The first set was closely contested, with both sides exchanging points in a fierce battle of attack and defence. Eventually, Al Salam managed

to edge out the set with a narrow 26-24 win after extra points. Seeb attempted to level the score quickly in the second set, starting strong and gaining a four-point lead thanks to fast strikes and solid defensive coverage. However, Al Salam made a strong comeback, showing great team cohesion and experience in handling crucial moments, eventually securing the set 25-22, putting Seeb under immense pressure.

Despite being down two sets, Seeb responded with a completely different performance in the third set, asserting full control and dominating by a wide margin. Capitalising on some defensive errors from Al Salam, Seeb took the set convincingly 25-16.

The fourth set turned out to be the most thrilling, with an intense exchange of points as both teams displayed high-level skill and concentration.

The set extended beyond 30 points, keeping the spectators on



the edge of their seats. In the end, Al Salam managed to secure the set 33-31, sealing the victory and finishing the preliminary round at the top of the standings with 20 points, while Seeb followed with 18 points.

Several players stood out during the match, particularly Al Salam’s

Iranian professional Arif Moradi, who was the team’s main attacking force, alongside setter Mohammed al Muqbali and strong hitter Majid al Shibli in position (4). On the other side, Seeb delivered an impressive performance led by Saud al Maamari in position (3) and Mahmoud al

Saadi in position (4), but their efforts were not enough to halt Al-Salam’s momentum.

RESULTS OF THE FINAL ROUND MATCHES

Al Bashayer defeated Saham in straight sets (25-15, 25-15, 25-15), dominating the game throughout. Masirah secured a well-deserved win over Al Shabab in three sets to one, with set scores of 25-19, 25-13, 21-25, and 25-16, as Al Shabab managed to steal the third set. While Majis overcame Sohar in straight sets (25-20, 25-21, 25-21), delivering a strong and consistent performance.

QUALIFIED TEAMS FOR THE FINAL STAGE

With the preliminary stage now concluded, the top five teams Al Salam, Seeb, Al Bashayer, Majis and Masirah have secured their spots in the final round. They will compete in a home-and-away format to determine the four teams that will advance to the semifinals and move closer to the league title.

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



TOUR OF OMAN 2025
TO BE UNVEILED
TODAY

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 2

The organising committee of the Tour of Oman 2025 will unveil the details of the 14th edition of the international race in a press meet which is scheduled to take place on Monday at Crown Plaza Hotel (OCEC) at 11:00 am (Muscat time) in the presence of domestic and international media representatives alongside the race officials.

The event is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in collaboration with the Oman Cycling Association and several other government and private entities. The race will take place from February 7 to 12, 2025. The Tour of Oman 2025 will kick off on Friday with the “Muscat Classic” which will be held for the third consecutive year. The official start of the competition will be on Saturday and will run until February 12. The Tour of Oman 2025 will witness five stages covering a total distance of 881.4 km, covering a variety of terrains and landscapes across Oman.

The opening stage will begin from Bausher until Bimmah Sink Hole for a distance of 177.7 km. The following route will start from Al Rustaq Fort to Yitti Hills with a total distance of 202.9 km, while the third route will begin from Fanja to Eastern Mountain, covering a distance of 180.8 km. The fourth round of the race will start from Oman Across Ages Museum - Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre with a distance of 181.5 km. The concluding stage of the tour will begin in Imty (Izki) and finish in Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain) for a distance of 138.5 km.

This edition will feature 18 world-class teams from Europe, Asia, America and Australia. The event will attract some of the top-ranked cyclists worldwide, as it remains one of the most anticipated races for elite competitors and cycling enthusiasts. Previous editions of the race have crowned champions such as Fabian Cancellara, Vincenzo Nibali, Chris Froome, and other legendary riders.

Since its inaugural edition, the Tour of Oman has gained widespread popularity both locally and internationally, securing its place on the global cycling calendar. The race has successfully attracted some of the most renowned cyclists and elite teams worldwide, making it one of the most prestigious international tours that draw the attention of professional riders across the globe.



Lewandowski earns Barca win to preserve title hopes



Barcelona’s Lewandowski celebrates after scoring first goal. — AFP

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI’S second-half strike helped Barcelona beat Alaves 1-0 on Sunday to cut the gap on La Liga leaders Real Madrid down to four points.

The Catalans, third, capitalised with a narrow victory after the champions slipped up across town at Espanyol on Saturday.

Barcelona trail second place Atletico by three points before the Rojiblancos face Real Madrid in a tasty derby clash next weekend, which could allow Hansi Flick’s side to make up more ground.

Lewandowski netted from a Lamine Yamal cross to settle a hard-fought match in which Alaves largely frustrated the hosts.

“Before the game we knew we had to win,” Lewandowski told Movistar. “For us it’s a moment in which we have less points than Atletico and Real Madrid, (but) first it’s important that we win and later we can think

about their points. “We have to play well, win and then we can look at the league table and see how many points we have exactly.”

Flick’s team struggled to get going in the early afternoon sunlight at the Olympic stadium.

The Catalans created barely anything of note in the first half as Alaves resisted stubbornly. One mazy Lamine Yamal dribble got home fans excited but there was little else to raise the pulse. Gavi and Tomas Conechny were both taken off after an ugly collision of heads.

‘PATIENCE’ PAYS

Lewandowski scuffed a shot narrowly wide and a low Pedri effort was comfortably fielded by Alaves goalkeeper Jesus Owono.

Flick brought on Frenkie de Jong and Eric Garcia at half-time to try and speed up Barcelona’s game in possession and the team looked sharper as a result.

Lewandowski sent a glancing header agonisingly wide of the far post soon before he broke the deadlock.

The veteran Polish forward produced a poacher’s finish from close range after Yamal sent a cross-shot spinning towards him at the back post after 61 minutes.

It was Lewandowski’s 18th goal of the league campaign, stretching his lead on Real Madrid’s Kylian Mbappe as the division’s top scorer to three. “A game like today is very important,” said Lewandowski.

“We can’t always win with four, five or six goals, sometimes teams like this come along who defend deep and well, but we have a chance if we play with patience, and in the end we scored one more goal than them so we’re very happy.”

Barca substitute Ferran Torres’s curling effort was pushed away by Owono at full stretch as the Catalans tried to make the game safe. — AFP



MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
4,554.198

BUSINESS



We help your deposits grow for a brighter future!

Higher returns on deposits for customers of the Ladies account at BankDhofar.



Scan to learn more



MARKET DEMAND



Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, addressing the Japan Cooperation Centre for Petroleum and Sustainable Energy Conference.

OMAN STRENGTHENS ENERGY COOPERATION WITH JAPAN

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, FEB 2

As part of Oman's efforts to enhance international cooperation in energy transition, Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, participated in the Japan Cooperation Centre for Petroleum and Sustainable Energy Conference.

In his speech, Al Hadhrami emphasised the importance of developing national competencies to meet the demands of the energy transition while highlighting the role of international collaboration in supporting these efforts.

This initiative contributes to achieving sustainable development and promoting the use of clean energy sources.

On the sidelines of the conference, the Under-Secretary met with several officials from Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. The discussions focused on the latest developments in energy transition, including Japan's policies in this domain, the role of renewable energy and hydrogen in electricity generation, heavy industries and the logistics sector.

The visit also included engagements with leading energy and technology companies. Al Hadhrami toured Mitsubishi Heavy Industries to explore the latest advancements in gas and hydrogen-powered electricity generation turbines, electrolysis technologies for hydrogen production and the role these innovations play in supporting the energy transition.

Additionally, he visited several iron and steel companies to discuss the sector's aspirations to utilise clean hydrogen in production processes.

In the transportation sector, the Under-Secretary visited Toyota to examine global and local trends in using hydrogen as a sustainable fuel.

He also met with Japanese trading companies importing Omani liquefied natural gas (LNG) to discuss the latest energy market developments and explore opportunities for future cooperation.

This visit aligns with Oman's ongoing efforts to strengthen international partnerships in sustainable energy and leverage the latest technologies to support its energy transition strategies. These initiatives are key to achieving the nation's energy and sustainability goals, contributing to economic and environmental resilience.

RO 45 million wastewater project launched in Salalah

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, FEB 2

NAMA Dhofar Services, part of Nama Group, celebrated on Sunday, February 2, 2025, the launch of the first phase of the Sahlounout sewerage network project in Salalah. Construction work on the project spanned over three years and cost around RO 45 million.

The inauguration was held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, in the presence of senior officials.

Eng Ali bin Issa Shamas, CEO of Nama Dhofar Services, stated that the current sewage network coverage in Dhofar Governorate stands at 70 per cent, with a total network length exceeding 1,200 km and around 60,000 subscribers.

The project is being executed in partnership with the Oman National Engineering and Investment Company (ONEIC) under a 15-year agreement, as part of the government's strategy to encourage private sector investment in infrastructure, particularly in wastewater management.

Shamas reaffirmed Nama Dhofar Services' commitment to sustainable development and infrastructure enhancement in the governorate.

The project currently serves around 4,000 subscribers, with expansion plans to increase the number to 5,500 in the first phase. A Sewage Treatment Plant built as part of this phase is designed to



Set on an area of 1,375 hectares, the project includes a 165-kilometre-long integrated sewage network.

accommodate 20,000 subscribers distributed around adjacent neighbourhoods, areas and the planned Salalah Future City, as well as handling both current and future wastewater flows in Sahlounout.

The project spans 1,375 hectares and includes a 165-kilometre-long integrated sewage network, 1,200 inspection chambers and approximately 6,000 household inspection chambers. Additionally, the project features a main pumping station with a daily wastewater inflow capacity of 18,510 cubic metres.

To keep pace with urban development and strengthen wastewater infrastructure in Dhofar, authorities have awarded a contract to expand the main treated water

plant in Raysut, increasing its capacity to 90,000 cubic metres per day at a cost of RO 35 million. Construction work commenced earlier this year, with completion expected by 2027.

The Sahlounout sewage plant project is part of a series of infrastructure developments aimed at improving the wastewater sector in Dhofar Governorate.

The region saw the establishment of Oman's first sewage treatment plant in 1992, reflecting the government's commitment to enhancing infrastructure and meeting increasing service demands driven by population growth and urban expansion, in line with the sustainable development goals of the governorate.

Oman's new policy to drive investments in energy storage

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 2

A new policy framework unveiled by Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals last week is expected to lend new impetus to the growth of integrated renewable energy capacity, encompassing not only generation and transmission, but crucially, energy storage as well.

Investments in energy storage, while a critical component of clean energy infrastructure, have lagged in the Sultanate of Oman, among other markets around the world, chiefly because of high, upfront capital costs, as well as concerns over energy efficiency. Regardless, their importance is never in doubt when it comes to securing constant renewable energy supply, ensuring grid reliability and power quality and enabling the scale-up of renewable capacity.

According to experts, the 'Electricity Self-Generation, Direct Sales and Wheeling Policy' — also referred to as 'New Renewable Energy Policy' — seeks to underscore, among other key objectives, the significance of electricity storage in achieving Oman's Net-Zero goals.

The policy document defines Electricity Storage as: "The conversion of electrical energy into another form of energy for storage in storage equipment such as batteries for a limited period of time and then reconvert it into electrical energy for direct consumption by the self-generator or delivery to the grid or direct sale and wheeling through the network."



The energy storage sector, currently in its infancy in Oman, is expected to receive significant impetus from the new policy. (Picture credit: Reuters)

Acknowledging the "absence" of energy storage technologies in Oman, notably because of the "high-costs" involved, the new policy nevertheless seeks to enable the deployment of economically feasible battery storage infrastructure and for these attendant costs to be recouped from large consumers benefitting from such investments.

In effect, two categories of developers stand to benefit from the policy initiatives advocating for the growth of energy storage infrastructure. In the first category are 'Self-Generators' — a reference to developers investing in renewable energy capacity, with the electricity output earmarked for captive consumption.

"Self-generators shall be permitted to establish, own and operate electricity storage equipment (storage batteries) whenever the economic feasibility of the storage technology allows it — as a sub-class

of generation — in accordance with the terms and requirements set by the Authority for Public Services Regulation," the Ministry explained in its policy framework.

In the second category are developers eligible to invest in renewable energy capacity for supply to large consumers via the 'Direct Sales' route.

Significantly, the new policy initiatives will help build on efforts by Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP), the single buyer of power and water output, to support the development of energy storage in the country.

Energy storage is a key objective of a strategic study being undertaken by PWP aimed at achieving an ideal mix of energy resources to sustain the country's energy requirements over the next 15 years.

However, some private sector entities have announced preliminary steps towards energy storage investments.

In March 2024, well-known Omani firm Nafath Renewable Energy signed an MoU with Takhzeen, a 100 per cent subsidiary of publicly traded firm ONEIC, to help introduce renewable energy supply backed by battery energy storage, particularly in rural parts of Oman.

Takhzeen represents leading Italian-based energy storage solutions start-up Energy Dome, which is backed by IDO Investments, the venture capital arm of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

Energy Dome has also revealed that it has signed an MOU with Oman Investment Authority to explore potential areas of collaboration in Oman.

ADVERTORIALS

REBUILDINGTRUST



OMINVEST CONCLUDES PARTICIPATION AT WEF ANNUAL MEETING 2025

MUSCAT: Oman International Development and Investment Company S.A.O.G (Ominvest), a leading investment company in the region, concluded its participation at the 2025 World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos, where it championed a bold vision for Oman and the GCC’s role in the global economy.

The discussions and outcomes from the Forum aligned closely with Ominvest’s vision of fostering economic resilience, innovation, and sustainability in Oman and across the GCC region.

The Forum underscored the importance of rebuilding trust in an increasingly interconnected and fast-evolving global economy.

Ominvest used the platform to highlight Oman and the Gulf region’s growing economic progress, its robust fiscal management, and its growing appeal to international investors. With a strong focus on transparency and collaboration, Oman is fostering a growing investment climate, enabling it to emerge as a key player on the global stage.

The conversations at the Annual Meeting further reinforced the vital role of innovation and diversification in driving sustainable growth. Oman’s recent successes – including record-breaking IPOs, a growing trade balance surplus, and falling public debt – demonstrate the nation’s commitment to creating a vibrant and diversified economy.

This remarkable progress underscores Oman’s potential to become a key driver of global economic development. Ominvest’s own strategic evolution mirrors this ambition. With 30% of its portfolio invested internationally across diverse sectors such as finance, healthcare, and technology, Ominvest is not only strengthening its own position but also demonstrating Oman’s capacity to contribute meaningfully to the global economic landscape.

Khalid Muhammad al Zubair, Chairman of Ominvest, said”: “Our presence at WEF’s Annual Meeting 2025 solidified our belief in the critical importance of cross-market collaboration to address global challenges. Oman’s economic transformation and our investments’ resilience have positioned us to actively contribute meaningfully to global dialogues and shape solutions that drive shared prosperity.”

Abdulaziz al Balushi, Group CEO of Ominvest, added: “The Annual Meeting provided an invaluable opportunity to connect with international leaders, share insights, and forge partnerships that will accelerate Oman’s development goals.”

ABRAJ STRENGTHENS GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH SONATRACH

MUSCAT: Abraj Energy Services, Oman’s leading oil and gas services provider, has solidified its international presence by signing two MoUs with the Algerian Institute of Petroleum and Sonatrach Management Academy.

These agreements, aimed at advancing human capital development and operational excellence, underscore Abraj’s commitment to elevating global industry standards through strategic collaborations.

These new partnerships are

built upon the comprehensive MoU signed with the Sonatrach Group in April 2024.

This foundational agreement has set a robust framework for creating new business opportunities and fostering integrated project management in the oil and gas services sector between Oman and Algeria.

Eng Saif Said al Hamhami, CEO of Abraj Energy Services, remarked, “This collaboration is a strategic expansion of our initial agreement with Sonatrach. It

amplifies our capability in training and development and showcases the international recognition and demand for our high-quality solutions. We are proud to set these standards of excellence and innovation in partnership with esteemed institutions like the Algerian Institute of Petroleum and Sonatrach Management Academy.”

Abraj’s leadership in forging meaningful partnerships aligns with its vision for sustainable development and commitment to growth and innovation.

The best-in-class all-new Kia Sportage L

OVER the years, the automotive arena has seen a significant shift in customer dynamics and their need for utility vehicles with the freedom to do more. If you are on the lookout for an SUV that caters for your needs, experience and ‘Make Space for Adventure’ in Kia’s all-new Sportage L, a classic reintroduction with two high-performance engines and a longer wheelbase.

Following Kia Sportage’s reputation among enthusiasts, Kia fulfils its longstanding commitment to innovation and sustainability.

Introducing the best-in-class Sportage opens wider avenues and adds more value to everyday life while addressing the customer’s needs. The longer wheelbase of 2,755mm and 543 litre luggage compartment guarantees more cargo space.

Built on Kia’s brand values ‘Opposites United’ the all-new Sportage is a bold and contemporary take on



Following Kia Sportage’s reputation among enthusiasts, Kia fulfils its longstanding commitment to innovation and sustainability.

modernity inspired by nature.

The striking Sportage L impressively shows what exciting possibilities await us in terms of space and enhanced utility.

The much-anticipated turbocharged engine in the all-new Kia Sportage L offers plenty of power and torque while optimising fuel consumption. The first trim is available

in a 2.0T engine churning 233 HP whereas the second trim features the 1.5T engine producing 197 HP.

Both mated to an 8-speed Shift-by-Wire transmission and the standardised Electronic Parking Brake for smooth and efficient performance.

Equipped with the AWD functionality, the SUV distributes power without

compromising on performance on tricky uneven terrains or wet surfaces. The Sportage L ensures robust power in all situations.

For everyday users, the Sportage L brings in countless benefits, emphasising Kia’s brand philosophy of creating spaces for people.

It largely meets the growing demand for convenient storage and comfortable head and legroom options for 5-member families.

Moreover, Sportage features cutting-edge technologies that empower the customers such as the smart power tailgate option with sensors for easy loading. A sporty D-shaped steering wheel has also been introduced in this trim.

For a more impressive experience, the dual 12.3” integrated cluster & infotainment system with wireless charging pad for compatible smartphones, ventilated front seats and unrestricted outside views from the panoramic sunroof create set the perfect mood.

MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS LAUNCHES ‘HEART TO HEART’ COLLECTION

MUSCAT: Ushering in the season of Love, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 375 showrooms across 13 countries has launched the ‘Heart to Heart’ jewellery collection.

The elegant array of adornments from the world-renowned jeweller comprises of over 100 heart-shaped designs with prices starting from just RO 85 that makes a perfect gifting option. The limited-edition collection can be availed across all showrooms of Malabar Gold & Diamonds until February 15.

Giving customers a wide range of options to choose from, the brand has incorporated numerous light weight & elegant designs in necklaces, pendants, bangles, bracelets, earrings & rings into the ‘Heart to Heart’ collection. With options available in both responsibly sourced



natural diamonds & 18K Gold, the brand has gone out of its way to ensure that the gifting needs of the entirety of its customer base are met.

“It is a well-accepted fact that the gift of jewellery is one among the most pristine and thoughtful gifts that one can present. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always strived to be the perfect gifting partner for jewellery lovers and as we step into the season of love, customers need not look further than our new Heart-to-Heart collection to find a gift that manages to express all your emotions. With a low starting price point, we have made it easier and more lucrative than ever to convey your love this season”, commented Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

In addition to the elegant array of jewellery, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also has a wide range of collections in gold, diamond & precious gem jewellery for those suited for the varied preferences of its multi-ethnic customer base.

Buy now, save big for Ramadhan: Mazda’s exclusive campaign

MUSCAT: Mazda has unveiled an exclusive campaign, offering significant benefits with the theme “Buy Now, Save Big for Ramadhan.” This campaign combines style, practicality and unmatched value, perfectly timed for the festive season ahead.

This special offer provides buyers of the Mazda CX-5 and CX-60 with a RO 500 shopping voucher and 1,250 litres of fuel. These thoughtful rewards ensure customers can enjoy added convenience as they prepare for Ramadhan.

Whether it’s shopping for the season or planning long trips to visit family, Mazda’s campaign ensures drivers are ready for everything the festive period demands.

The Mazda CX-5 AWD Premium, one of the most popular midsize



This campaign combines style, practicality and unmatched value.

SUVs, is built for versatility and elegance. Powered by a 2.5-litre Skyactiv-G engine, the CX-5 is designed to handle Oman’s varied driving conditions with ease.

From navigating the busy streets of Muscat to exploring the scenic mountain roads of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, the CX-5 offers

a smooth and efficient drive. Its sleek design is complemented by a refined interior featuring premium materials, advanced technology and ample space for both drivers and passengers.

Safety remains a key priority, with features like adaptive cruise control, lane-keeping assist and

blind-spot monitoring providing peace of mind on every journey.

For those who demand a more luxurious driving experience, the Mazda CX-60 offers an elevated blend of sophistication and performance. Available with 2.5-litre and 3.3-litre turbocharged engines, the CX-60 delivers power, efficiency, and dynamic handling.

Its bold and confident design makes a statement on the road, while the interior is a testament to Mazda’s commitment to craftsmanship.

With Nappa leather upholstery, real wood accents and state-of-the-art technology such as a 12.3-inch infotainment system, the CX-60 ensures that every journey is as enjoyable as it is stylish.

Whether for daily commutes

or long-distance drives, the CX-60 is a perfect choice for drivers who appreciate attention to detail and superior quality.

Mazda’s exclusive campaign is not only about owning a premium vehicle; it’s about making life easier for customers as they prepare for one of the most important times of the year.

The RO 500 shopping voucher is a thoughtful inclusion, allowing families to go for essentials or treat themselves to something special. The 1,250 litres of fuel, on the other hand, ensures that travel across Oman remains hassle-free, whether for festive gatherings or weekend adventures.

Behind Mazda’s success in Oman is its trusted distributor, Towell Auto Centre (TAC).

BUSINESS

MEDICALCARE



This agreement is aimed at providing immediate medical care and ambulance service to the Al Mouj Muscat community.

AL MOUJ MUSCAT PARTNERS WITH ASTER ROYAL AL RAFFAH HOSPITAL

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat, Oman’s leading waterfront destination, has recently partnered with Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital to deliver 24/7 emergency response services, reinforcing its commitment to providing an exceptional environment that prioritises safety, health and quality of life.

This agreement is aimed at providing immediate medical care and ambulance service to the Al Mouj Muscat community enhancing the sense of security and well-being for all who live, work and visit Al Mouj Muscat.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, “Our commitment to enriching the lives of those who call Al Mouj Muscat home, along with our valued visitors, remains steadfast. This partnership with Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital reaffirms our dedication to fostering a secure and vibrant community where residents and visitors can live with confidence and peace of mind knowing that emergency care is always within reach.”

Shailesh Guntu, CEO of Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, remarked, “This collaboration with Al Mouj Muscat exemplifies a shared vision of delivering safety and well-being to the community. By bringing our expertise to this vibrant community, we ensure residents have access to critical care when they need it most.

Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, renowned for its advanced medical technology and skilled professionals, is uniquely equipped to meet urgent medical needs of Al Mouj Muscat’s community. With a resident satisfaction rate of 92 per cent, Al Mouj Muscat continues to redefine urban living in Oman. This partnership further underscores its mission to foster a thriving and integrated community.

CEO TALK

Dare to dream, take risks and inspire innovation

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, FEB 2

“DARE to dream and take calculated risks. Leadership is about turning challenges into opportunities and inspiring others to see the potential in every problem,” says Said Abdul Ghafoor Saif Udeen, CEO of Star Drones. In a candid interview with the *Observer*, Udeen shared invaluable leadership insights drawn from his journey of turning a bold vision into reality.

His story is a masterclass in resilience, innovation and the art of empowering teams to achieve greatness, offering a road map for aspiring leaders navigating the complexities of modern business.

FROM PASSION TO PURPOSE

Udeen’s rise to CEO began with a deep passion for aviation, electronics and design. “My journey to becoming a CEO has been a blend of passion, persistence and curiosity,” he said.

Starting as a Database and Marketing Executive for Mercedes-Benz, he honed his skills in precision and innovation before transitioning into the creative world as a Senior Digital Artist.

However, it was his love for aviation that ultimately led him to found Star Drones. “Founding Star Drones was a way to bring my vision of combining art, engineering and innovation to life, turning dreams into tangible solutions,” he explained.

LEADING THROUGH CHALLENGES

Udeen’s leadership journey has been marked by significant challenges, from securing funding in a capital-intensive industry to navigating complex regulatory landscapes.

“Funding our research and development was one of the toughest hurdles,” he admitted.

“Regulatory challenges also tested



Invest in continuous learning, as the world of technology doesn’t wait for anyone. Most importantly, align your vision with a purpose and never forget the impact you can make on your community and beyond.

SAID ABDUL GHAFOOR SAIF UDEEN
CEO of Star Drones

our resolve, requiring constant dialogue with authorities to ensure compliance.”

Yet, Udeen’s ability to turn obstacles into opportunities has been a hallmark of his leadership.

“By forming partnerships, nurturing local talent and staying true to our commitment to innovation, we turned these obstacles into stepping stones towards our success,” he said.

EMPOWERING TEAMS TO INNOVATE

At the heart of Udeen’s leadership philosophy is a commitment to fostering a culture of innovation and teamwork. “I see my role as more than just leading; it’s about inspiring,” he shared.

“At Star Drones, we thrive on a culture of innovation and teamwork. I believe in leading by example — showing my team that no task is too small and no dream is too big.”

This approach has not only driven the company’s success but also empowered its employees to push boundaries and achieve their full potential.

“Empowering them with trust, providing them with the tools they need and celebrating their successes keeps the spark alive,” Udeen added.

A LEGACY OF NATIONAL PRIDE

One of Udeen’s proudest achievements is the creation of TARIQ, Oman’s first fully designed and manufactured drone.

“TARIQ is not just a drone; it’s a symbol of what’s possible when passion meets perseverance,” he said.

“Seeing a product crafted entirely by Omani hands soar through the skies is an indescribable feeling.”

This achievement embodies Udeen’s vision of combining innovation with national pride, positioning Oman as a contender in the global tech race.

“These milestones reaffirm our mission to position Oman on the global map of innovation,” he noted.

ADVICE FOR ASPIRING LEADERS

Udeen’s advice to the next generation of CEOs is both practical and inspiring. “Invest in continuous learning, as the world of technology doesn’t wait for anyone,” he urged.

“Most importantly, align your vision with a purpose and never forget the impact you can make on your community and beyond.”

He emphasised the importance of resilience and adaptability in leadership, urging aspiring CEOs to embrace challenges as opportunities for growth.

“Leadership is about turning challenges into opportunities and inspiring others to see the potential in every problem,” he said.

BALANCING LEADERSHIP AND WELL-BEING

Udeen also stressed the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance. “Balance, to me, comes from perspective,” he shared. “As much as I love leading and innovating, I remind myself of the importance of stepping back, reflecting and recharging.”

Whether it’s spending time with family or flying for leisure, these moments of respite are crucial for sustaining long-term success.

“Growth as a leader comes from understanding that personal well-being is key to sustaining professional success,” he said.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Looking ahead, Udeen envisions Star Drones as a global leader in drone innovation, with Oman at the forefront of this technological revolution. “My vision is bold yet simple: make Star Drones a global leader in drone innovation while helping Oman become a technological hub,” he said.

AI’s economic potential projected at \$320 billion in Mena region

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, FEB 2

THE ARTIFICIAL Intelligence sector could potentially contribute up to \$320 billion to the Mena economy, according to AI software company SenseTime MEA. Speaking to the *Observer* on the sidelines of Oman AI Summit, which concluded in Muscat last week, the team highlighted the transformative potential of the AI sector.

“In terms of economic impact, according to projections, AI could potentially contribute up to \$320 billion to the Mena economy.

The reason behind this is AI’s ability to reduce costs, increase efficiency and, in some cases, help create new revenue-generating streams.

From an economic perspective, there is significant potential across the entire Mena region,” shared Tina Wu, Product and Research Director of SenseTime MEA.

According to the Chief Technology Officer of SenseTime MEA, Shuai Yi, AI is set to revolutionise various key industries.

“Healthcare will see AI revolutionise diagnostics, patient management and telemedicine, addressing the region’s growing demand for accessible medical services. The energy sector, particularly in oil, gas and renewables, will



SHUAI YI
Chief Technology Officer



TINA WU
Product and Research Director



JOSEPH ZHANG
Associate Director

leverage AI for production optimisation and resource management.

Smart cities are another major focus, with AI enabling advanced urban planning, traffic management and public safety solutions.

Additionally, industries like transportation, tourism and education stand to benefit from AI-driven innovation and personalisation,” he shared.

The company attributes the growth of the sector in the region to strong government-led initiatives.

“I think there are several key factors driving AI growth here. Number one is government initiatives in Mena. As we can see, in Saudi Arabia, they have Vision 2030. The UAE has the National AI Strategy 2031, and in Oman, we have Oman Vision 2040.

These strong government initiatives are greatly fostering the development of AI, as well as the establishment of AI ecosystems.

Additionally, these government initiatives encourage increasing investment in technology infrastructure, innovation and beyond,” Wu added. Another key driver is the emergence of a tech-savvy generation.

The presence of a young, tech-savvy generation that is creating increasing demand for AI-enabled solutions. Many companies and regions have already started their digital transformation, making it the right time for AI integration,” she noted.

However, the region still faces various challenges. According to Tina Wu, infrastructure readiness is one of them.

“In some regions, infrastructure development isn’t fully mature yet. For example, data centres and Arabic-language data collection still need improvement.”

Furthermore, Wu shared that

varying data protection laws and regulations can potentially slow down. So can a talent shortage.

“There is a lack of AI talent in some regions, along with insufficient AI-focused educational programmes, creating a talent gap in the market.”

Significantly, Joseph Zhang, Associate Director of SenseTime MEA, has noted Oman’s interest in AI education.

“During our trip, we noticed that more people in Oman are interested in AI education than in other countries in the region. We believe that is an excellent approach. Cultivating a new generation that is AI-savvy will help address the fundamental talent shortage and make AI adoption smoother. This emphasis on education is a great strategy.”

Nonetheless, the company firmly believes that the challenges present great opportunities, describing the market as “fresh and ready for disruption.”

The Riyadh-based enterprise is a joint venture between the Saudi Public Investment Fund and SenseTime Group. Joseph Zhang stated, “We primarily focus on three areas: enhancing people’s experiences in entertainment venues through AI-driven systems. This includes venue operation systems, digital imaging systems and crop management systems.

Improving work efficiency

through AI involves smart city planning, smart building monitoring systems and smart office solutions. Focusing on the delivery side is also crucial. At the end of the day, delivery is the key part.

Being able to deliver solutions quickly and operate in an agile manner is very important.”

He further explained, “In this region, we aren’t just selling standard products; more importantly, we tailor solutions to customers’ demands. Many times, we co-create solutions based on customer needs to ensure they get exactly what they require.

Additionally, we closely collaborate with AI authorities in the region to explore industry standards and areas for improvement, helping to advance the overall AI ecosystem.”

Wu added, “When we entered the Middle East region, we partnered with local organisations to understand their needs quickly.

We’ve also been heavily investing in local talent development, working with governments, public and private sectors and academia to bridge some of these gaps.

Additionally, we emphasise the ‘privacy by design’ principle to ensure user data is protected from day one. While these challenges exist, they come with immense potential and opportunities.”

OPINION

Opec & the world’s oil market: Past, present and the future



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The author is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies in Muscat.

THE Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) was founded in Baghdad, Iraq, on September 14, 1960. Its founding member countries are Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Venezuela. It is a permanent intergovernmental organisation. The organisation was formed to safeguard the interests of oil-producing nations. During the founding days of Opec, significant global economic and political changes shaped the oil market.

Then, as post-World War II reconstruction ended, many newly independent states emerged and the “seven sisters” dominated the international oil market. The seven sisters were seven multinationals (BP, Chevron, Shell, Exxon, Mobil, Texaco) corporations that dominated the oil market from 1940 to the 1970s.

This mighty cartel controlled 85 per cent of the world’s oil reserves. Opec was formed as a counterattack to the economic and political power of the seven sisters

In 1960, multinational oil companies planned to reduce Middle East crude oil prices, immediately triggering Opec formation.

The decision angered the Middle East oil-producing nations and they decided to assert their sovereign rights over the petroleum resources to ensure a fair price and steady income for the oil-producing countries. The

seven oil corporations coordinated their activities to minimise taxes and royalties to the host governments. The MNCs benefitted from the support of the British and American governments in pressuring the host countries.

However, after 1970, the situation dramatically changed with global developments like the 1973 oil crisis, the nationalisation of the oil reserves by the producing countries, the rise of Opec and the beginning of state-owned oil companies in developing countries. By the 1990s, the industry consolidated with four dominant oil major-Chevron, Shell, British Petroleum & ExxonMobil.

Over the years, Opec has expanded to include 12 countries (Algeria, Angola, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudia Arabia, UAE and Venezuela), with headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

Today, members own 79.5 per cent of the world’s proven oil reserves. Opec accounts for 37 per cent of the global oil production and their decision on production levels substantially impacts global oil prices. Opec is the largest producer and exporter of crude oil and petroleum products.

In the early 2000s, the world energy market turned upside down due to the fracking revolution. The unique extraction technique enabled the extraction of oil and gas from

Opec accounts for 37 per cent of the global oil production and their decision on production levels substantially impacts global oil prices. Opec is the largest producer and exporter of crude oil and petroleum products.

rock formations, particularly shale. This development led to an increase in US oil production, altering the dynamics of the global oil industry and weakening Opec’s position.

Global shifts towards renewables, the Paris Agreement’s emission reduction targets, an increase in electric vehicles, energy efficiency improvements across industries and clean energy innovations are dramatically altering the landscape of the oil market and the future of Opec.

To address these challenges, Opec formed Opec+, a larger group, including non-oil countries like Russia, to coordinate and stabilise oil prices.

Some experts predict that global oil demand could peak before 2030, questioning Opec’s relevance.

They also argue that the rise of US shale oil would erode Opec’s market power. Opec finds itself at the centre of a complex geopolitical landscape as Opec’s decision to reduce production and artificially lower prices could cripple Russia and force them to end the war along with other implications.

Despite these challenges, the intergovernmental organisation Opec is in a strategic position in the global energy market with projections that it will reach 120 million barrels daily in the long term. They will remain crucial in the worldwide oil supply and demand in the foreseeable future.

CONSUMER GIANTS’ GROWTH NO LONGER INVOLVES FOOD

AIMEE DONNELLAN

Think of Unilever and the first products that come to mind are likely to be ones you eat — Marmite, Ben & Jerry’s ice cream and Hellmann’s mayonnaise. Yet the \$143 billion company is increasingly investing in other parts of its business, like beauty and well-being and not spending any of its M&A budget on growing its food empire. There’s a strong valuation case for doing so. Food was once an exciting revenue stream for the likes of Nestlé, Kraft Heinz and Unilever. The latter spent decades splurging on deals and expanding into new territories like Indonesia and India to gain market share. Shoppers, seduced by big marketing campaigns, were happy to pay over the odds for branded cereals like Cheerios and Heinz tomato ketchup.

Yet ever since inflation soared in 2022, consumers have shopped around for the lowest prices, complicating the delivery of consistent revenue and stable margins.

In November, Nestlé’s new CEO Laurent Freixe revealed how these forces have afflicted the world’s largest food manufacturer. Over the medium term, he is only aiming to deliver 4% revenue growth, excluding the effects of M&A and currency swings.

That’s closer to the lower end of the \$227 billion group’s previous target of mid-single-digit growth. Freixe is only aiming to keep operating margins steady at 17% over the coming years.

Consumer goods more generally are under pressure. In October, Kraft Heinz trimmed its sales and profit outlook for the year. The \$36 billion maker of Jell-O also posted a larger than expected hit to its third-quarter sales.

Compare that to the business of selling luxury beauty products. Swiss skincare firm Galderma expected to grow revenue between 8.8% and 9.5% in 2024, having delivered 9.2% in the first nine months of the year.

And \$204 billion French cosmetics giant L’Oréal is expected to boost sales by around 5% annually over the next three years, more than double the rate of food giants like Nestlé and Kraft Heinz during the same period, as per LSEG estimates.

The views expressed on this podcast are those of the participants, not of Rogers News.

Investors have noticed. Kraft Heinz and Nestlé’s enterprise values are roughly 10 times and 17 times the respective operating profit they’re forecast to deliver in 2025, using LSEG Datastream figures, which represents a sharp decline from their equivalent 12-month forward multiples of 14 times and 20 times at the start of 2023. — Reuters

Egypt’s economic crisis may not be over

EGYPT, a country long beset by structural and policy challenges that have resulted in low growth, high inflation, a misaligned exchange rate and worrying levels of unemployment and poverty, recently averted an all-out economic crisis.

Shortly after the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war, the Egyptian economy was pummeled by the Israel-Hamas war that erupted in October 2023. Specifically, the Gaza war cut deeply into Egypt’s foreign-exchange revenues, with tolls and transit fees from the Suez Canal declining by 60% in 2024 — a loss of \$7 billion. Investors were therefore less willing to meet Egypt’s large external-financing needs, which the International Monetary Fund projected to be around \$40 billion for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

For now, financial assistance from the IMF, the World Bank, the European Union, the United Arab Emirates and others has pulled the Egyptian economy back from the brink. Some of this support was conditioned on policy reforms such as abandoning the country’s unsustainable fixed-exchange-rate regime and changing subsidy and tax rules.

Perhaps most important, the government is obliged to loosen its grip on key parts of the economy. The military, in particular, owns large tracts of land, oversees construction projects, maintains privileged access to finance and receives tax exemptions.

As Ruchir Agarwal and I argued in a recent Peterson Institute for International Economics policy brief, the 2023-24 crisis is only the latest in a series of episodes since 1956 in which outside powers have helped Egypt stave off a full-blown economic collapse. The main reason for the influx of aid has been the international community’s interest in ensuring Egypt’s economic and social stability amid regional conflagrations and geopolitical uncertainties — the country has been too strategic to fail. The downside to this external financial assistance is that it has enabled



The Gaza war cut deeply into Egypt’s foreign-exchange revenues, with tolls and transit fees from the Suez Canal declining by 60% in 2024 — a loss of \$7 billion.



ADNAN MAZAREI

The author, a former deputy director at the International Monetary Fund, is a non-resident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Egypt to avoid the deep structural reforms needed to develop a strong, export-oriented private sector.

The Egyptian economy has traditionally been inward-oriented, state-controlled and highly regulated, and this has resulted in major public enterprises and rampant cronyism.

To maintain social stability and address youth unemployment, the government has provided considerable, though not well-targeted, food and fuel subsidies, and created a bloated public-sector workforce.

These massive outlays, coupled with inadequate national savings, have led to budget deficits and external imbalances, to which policymakers have responded by relying heavily on external and domestic debt and squandering central-bank reserves to fix or stabilise the exchange rate.

The new IMF programme has produced some successes. Egypt’s exchange-rate system was reformed; inflation, while still elevated at 24% in December 2024, has been slowing; and the debt-to-GDP ratio has fallen, although it remains high at 89% in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

But meaningful reforms to economic governance, including a loosening of the military’s control over the economy, the divestment of government assets and improved management of the vast public-enterprise system, have not yet been undertaken.

As a result, Egypt remains at risk of political and economic turmoil. The IMF has reduced Egypt’s growth forecast for 2025 from 4.1% to 3.6%, and revised down the programme’s fiscal-adjustment path. The most recent data from Egypt’s central bank show that the balance of payments recorded a \$991 million deficit in July-September 2024, down from a \$229 million surplus during the same period in 2023.

Popular discontent is high, owing not only to weaker growth prospects, but also to high inflation, lower food and fuel subsidies, and continued political repression. There is a general lack of trust in the government’s ability and willingness to reform the economy and fight cronyism and corruption.

Given the recent toppling of Bashar al Assad’s dictatorship in Syria, Egyptian authorities have clamped down harder on political expression over fears of a similar uprising. Simmering public anger could come to a boil.

©Project Syndicate, 2025

CLASSIFIEDS

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

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

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

SIT. VACANT

Sales executive Male
With driving License
Contact sangita@dhiyahilal.com
+968 93559800

■ **FOR RENT**

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

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

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.
Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]
Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

FOUR STAR TECHNICAL SUPPLIES LLC
(FORMERLY OMEIR NASSER AL FALAHY & PARTNERS TRAD. CO. LLC)
"Quality products defined by exceptional service"
Our Products:
ELECTRICAL, BUILDING MATERIAL, HARDWARE, OILFIELD INDUSTRIAL EQUIPMENT & TOOLS

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

■ **SIT. WANTED**

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

Finance Manager, CA, CPA, 20 years experience (Oman & India). Financial reporting, Budgeting, Taxation, Financial modelling, Feasibility, Valuation. Available to join immediately. 92148608

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indian male MBA , 20 years experience in Oman & GCC in Project sales/ Dealer market in All construction materials including Cables & Accessories having D/L looking for the post of Sales Manager/Assistant Manager. Contact : 00968 78099493

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

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

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

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

ACCOUNTANT with 5 years expertise in Accounts Payable, Receivables, Financial Reporting, VAT, Payroll, and Bank & Cash Reconciliation. Actively looking for new opportunities. Contact: 79791746 Email: Ibrahimshaw52@gmail.com

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

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

Looking for Cyber Security Information Officer (Omani national)

Key Responsibilities:

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

Qualifications:

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

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

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

NAME CHANGE

I ASMA KAUSAR MOHSIN UR REHMAN KHAN (holder of Indian Passport No: R4801104) daughter of Abdul Nabi Abdul Rehman having permanent residence in Dost Manzil, Mohd. Ali Road, Akola 444002, India and presently residing in Al Khuwair 114, 3938, Muscat, Oman, intend to change my name from **ASMA KAUSAR MOHSIN UR REHMAN KHAN** to **ASMA KAUSAR MOHSIN REHMAN KHAN** for all practical purposes.

Any objection towards my name change may please be communicated to Embassy of India, Muscat, Diplomatic quarters, Al Khuwair, P.O. Box No.: 1727, Postal code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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

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

Send CV to meemcollchr@gmail.com

Travel & Tours
9345 3444

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.
Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

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

BUSINESS

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

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

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

CONTACT NOS: 99643760 / 92192020

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



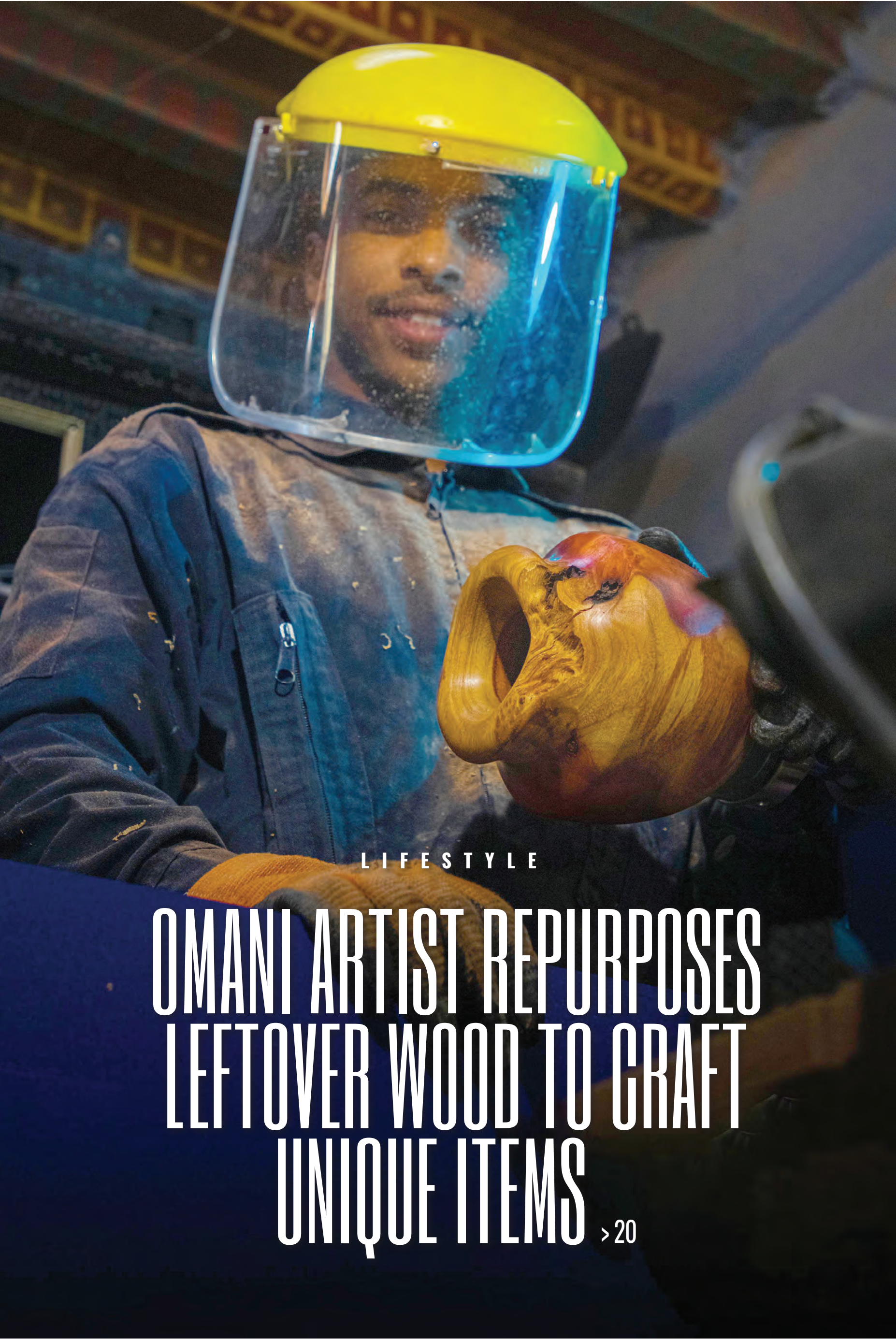
To advertise

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

ازديهار
izdihar



ART/LIFE



L I F E S T Y L E

OMANI ARTIST REPURPOSES LEFTOVER WOOD TO CRAFT UNIQUE ITEMS >20

ENTERTAINMENT

‘Mona Lisa’ to get its own room in the Louvre as museum gets face-lift



THE “MONA LISA” is to get its own new room at the Louvre art museum in Paris, allowing it to be shown off to even better advantage for visitors.

The legendary Leonardo da Vinci painting is to be given a room that better reflects its importance as part of an extensive renovation of the museum, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Tuesday.

The Mona Lisa is popular due to its exquisite artistry, enigmatic expression and masterful use of sfumato technique. Completed in the early 16th century, its fame grew over time, especially after being stolen in 1911, which captured global attention. The painting’s allure is enhanced by its historical significance, cultural references and the mystery surrounding the subject’s identity. Today, it remains a symbol of art excellence, attracting millions of visitors.

The Louvre, which is world’s most-visited museum, is also to get a new entrance to better manage the flow of visitors. The existing entrance under the central glass pyramid is to be redesigned and converted into new exhibition halls.

The project is to be implemented by 2031. The cost of the investment is estimated at several million euros. The number of visitors is expected to increase from the current 9 million per year to up to 12million.

The costs will be financed by the Louvre’s own income, donations and increased entrance fees. From January 2026 non-Europeans will have to pay more to visit the museum, though the amount was not specified.

The Louvre has been drawing attention to its desolate state for several years. Defects include damage caused by water infiltration, outdated technical facilities and disturbing temperature fluctuations that endanger the preservation of the works of art.

The central entrance under the large glass pyramid designed by Chinese-American architect IM Pei was first used in 1988 and was designed to cater for four million visitors. —dpa

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



FESTIVAL

A sadhu or a Hindu holy man adjusts sunglasses inside his tent during the Maha Kumbh Mela festival in Prayagraj. — AFP



FILM

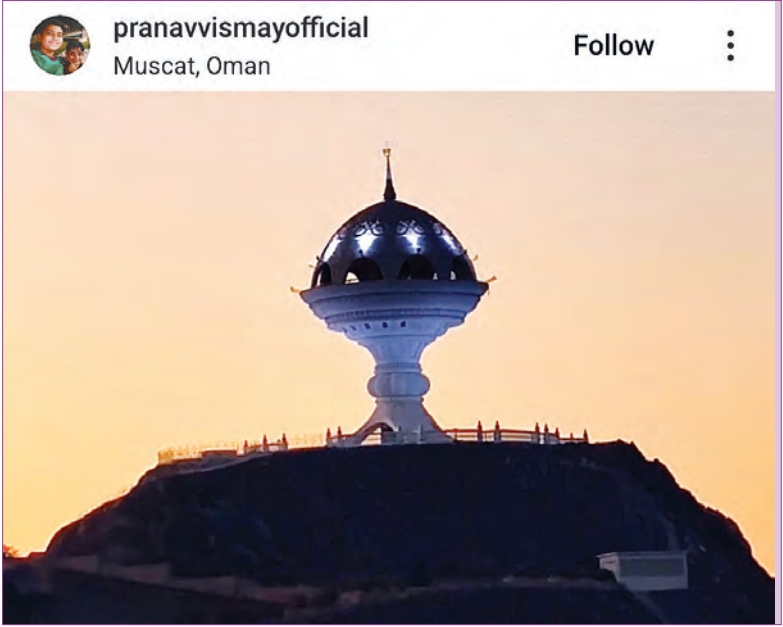
Actress and director Charlotte Vandermeersch poses during a ceremony unveiling her star, with the cast of the film “Comeback”, directed by Jan and Raf Roosens, on the opening night of the “Filmfestival Oostende” film festival, in Belgium. — AFP



MUSIC

US singer Yolanda Adams performs during the Recording Academy and Clive Davis’ Salute To Industry Icons 50-Year Anniversary of the pre-Grammy gala at the Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Appreciating Local Landmarks



Beauty of Remote Places

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

Britain’s King Charles to produce one-off Amazon documentary



Britain’s King Charles III is to produce a one-off documentary with streaming giant Amazon focusing on his “philosophy of harmony.”

The king’s charity The King’s Foundation described the collaboration in a statement as a “landmark film.”

A source at the foundation said: “The King’s Foundation is looking forward to working with Amazon on a one-off documentary to showcase His Majesty’s philosophy of Harmony and the work it has in turn inspired around the world to build sustainable communities and transform lives.”

“We are looking forward to sharing our mission and promote the benefits of Harmony more widely as we embark on this landmark film,” the source added.

The King’s Foundation, celebrating its 35th anniversary year, has its headquarters at Dumfries House in East Ayrshire,

Scotland and works to build sustainable communities and transform lives.

It also aims to promote the King’s philosophy of harmony which sees everything in nature as interconnected, including ourselves and advocates taking a holistic approach to the challenges facing the planet.

A quote from Charles shared on the foundation’s website says: “We have somehow abandoned our proper connection with nature. Somehow imagined that we can manage without, or we battle against her in every way — instead of understanding that the future lies in working in far greater harmony with nature.”

An amalgamation of Charles’s charities in the year he turned 70 created The Prince’s Foundation in 2018, which was renamed The King’s Foundation in 2023 to reflect his accession to the throne. — PA Media/dpa



Nostalgia and escapism: highlights from Paris Couture Week

NOSTALGIA-TINGED evening wear, fantasy-fuelled escapism and messages about world peace featured during a packed Paris Couture Week that also saw new changes on fashion’s artistic director merry-go-round.

Twenty-nine houses showed off collections during Couture Week, which wrapped up on Thursday, following Men’s Fashion Week last week.

— ‘PAST CENTURIES’ —

Dior chief designer Maria Grazia Chiuri said her Spring-Summer 2025 collection was inspired by “the creativity of past centuries”, making the Italian one of several artistic directors who was looking back for inspiration.

Retro draped skirts or short crinolines, as well as trapeze dresses and coats inspired by Yves Saint Laurent’s designs in the 1950s for the venerable Parisian brand, were highlights of a show watched by a star-studded audience at the Rodin Museum.

Daniel Roseberry, chief designer at Parisian house Schiaparelli, sent out models including Kendall Jenner in a range featuring corsets prominently, saying he had been inspired by ribbons he discovered from the 1920s and 30s.

In his notes accompanying the show he said he “wanted to travel through time, to create silhouettes that might conjure up the haute couture of the past”.

— ESCAPISM —

For many fans of haute couture, it serves as pure escapism, a celebration of beauty, creativity and craftsmanship.

But just like everyone else, designers have the rapidly shifting and unpredictable nature of our world on their minds.

Zuhair Murad, who has been working with his homeland Lebanon under Israeli bombardment, said his collection was inspired by the idea of a tropical island that would be a refuge from the harsh realities of life.

“The message of this collection



is about escaping from our hectic world. I imagined this beautiful island, far from the cities, far from technology, far from the world that we live in right now, a peaceful world,” he said.

— ‘OUT OF THE BUBBLE’ —

But as conflicts rage from Ukraine to Congo and Sudan, French designer Franck Sorbier tackled war and peace directly in a theatrical show that combined music, singing and dance.

Titled “Symphonie Barbare” (“Barbaric Symphony”), it featured bare-chested “barbarian” men and female “warriors of peace” dressed in trapeze gowns adorned with tassels or sequins.

It ended with a “peace” phase and concluded with Sorbier appearing in a black anorak bearing the words “peace and love”.

“The idea is not to get stuck in a bubble of haute couture,” he said to AFP afterward. “Even though we do haute couture, we can still talk about the news and worrying issues, without sounding like we’re lecturing people.”

Eccentric Dutch duo Viktor & Rolf riffed on technology and the advent of our worrisome AI-powered era by sending out 24 variations of the same outfit, announced each time

with the same slightly robotic voice. “It is a collection of 24 variations of the same dress, taken to the extreme. It is somewhat a human interpretation of the unlimited possibilities of artificial intelligence,” Rolf Snoeren said.

— CHANGE AT THE TOP —

Amid the ruffles and glitter, the game of musical chairs among top fashion houses continued this week.

British designer Stella McCartney announced on Monday her departure from the LVMH group, while Belgian designer Glenn Martens was appointed artistic director on Wednesday at Maison Margiela to succeed John Galliano.

Meanwhile, rumours continue to swirl about Grazia Chiuri at Dior, with speculation she is set to cede her place to British designer Jonathan Anderson from Loewe, which is also owned by LVMH.

Chanel is currently in flux, with its latest show crafted by the brand’s creative studio following the sudden departure of artistic director Virginie Viard in June.

Her successor, Matthieu Blazy — who made his mark at Italian leather goods specialist Bottega Veneta — was appointed in December but is not expected to present a collection before September. — AFP

FEATURES

OMANI ARTIST REPURPOSES LEFTOVER WOOD TO CRAFT UNIQUE ITEMS



BY RUQAYA AL KINDI
Instagram: @ruqaya.alkindi

IMAGINE stepping into a sun-drenched studio filled with the rich aroma of freshly cut wood, where the gentle hum of a lathe machine resonates through the air. Here, amidst shavings and sawdust, you find Almoayad al Rashdi, a master woodturner whose passion transforms local timber into stunning artistic pieces. From intricately designed vases to elegant candlesticks and unique plates, Almoayad skillfully brings the beauty of the Omani landscape into his art, captivating all who encounter it.

Almoayad's journey into woodturning is a tale woven with resilience and creativity. The challenges presented by the 2022 pandemic, particularly the closures threatening his livelihood, propelled him to innovate. "Finding a cage for my birds felt impossible, so I decided to depend on myself," he recalls. With offcuts from furniture and unwavering determination, he embarked on a remarkable month-long challenge to construct his first birdcage. This endeavour sparked a newfound passion for carpentry, leading him to create not only garden accessories but also to breathe new life into neglected furniture.

A pivotal moment in Almoayad's artistic evolution came after natural disasters struck the Wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. With fallen trees from swollen valleys at his disposal, he found new inspiration in recycling this wood, transforming it into beautiful artwork and ensuring that nature's gifts were not wasted.

For Almoayad, art is both a fulfilling hobby and a burgeoning profession. While many novices find it daunting to turn their passion into a financially rewarding venture, he emphasises the importance of marketing and creativity. "Linking your product to a specific value that piques interest can set you apart," he advises budding artisans.

History and culture are vital threads in Almoayad's creations. His travels to Shiraz, Iran, enriched his understanding of Persian artistry, influencing many of his designs. The crowning jewel of his collection is the Haddash Vase. Crafted from the rare Otam trees of Oman, this piece embodies an age-old legacy; the tree, nearly a millennium old, once thrived beside the revered Hadash Mosque. "Creating this vase was my way of preserving the memory of this remarkable tree," he explains, noting that it has found a home with an antique collector.

Nature is an endless wellspring of inspiration for Almoayad. He prides himself on melding luxury with the essence of the Omani environment; his vast, elegantly crafted vase echoes the intrinsic beauty of ancient Omani pottery. Such pieces not only pay homage to his heritage but also tell stories of the land itself.

Learning the intricacies of woodcraft was no easy feat for Almoayad. He dedicated



himself to local and international courses, investing both time and resources to hone his skills. These efforts bore fruit, allowing him to showcase his work at various exhibitions with the support of the SMEs Development Authority. Recently, he proudly represented Oman at the Banan International Exhibition in Saudi Arabia, where he mingled with 500 craftsmen from 26 countries and he dreams of expanding his global footprint in the art world.

For Almoayad, creating art is more than a profession; it's a ritual that fuels his creativity. "I find peace in the early mornings and late nights, where the focus is sharper and the melodies of classical music ignite my passion," he reflects.

As he looks towards the future, Almoayad



envisions international collaborations, prestigious awards and his own exhibition. He encourages the youth to embrace innovation in the arts and stresses the importance of preserving the rich heritage of handicrafts.

"We must reignite artistic evenings and events that enrich our society's understanding of art and craftsmanship," he urges, a testament to his commitment not only to his craft but to the cultural legacy of his homeland.

In the hands of Almoayad al Rashdi, wood is not merely material; it is a canvas for storytelling, a bridge between the past and the future. Each piece he creates is a reflection of his journey, an invitation for others to join in celebrating the beauty of art.