

OMAN

دَائِلِي

Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 19
PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 06:33 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:13 AM
DHUHR 12:01 PM
ASR 03:04 PM
MAGHRIB 05:25 PM
ISHA 06:39 PM



12
VERSTAPPEN
TRIUMPHS
IN QATAR

HM to participate in GCC Summit



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK will visit the Kingdom of Bahrain on Wednesday to participate in the 46th Session of the Supreme Council of the GCC countries.

A statement issued by the Diwan of Royal Court to this effect reads as follows: “In response to the kind invitation extended to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik from King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, His Majesty the Sultan will visit the Kingdom of Bahrain to participate in the 46th Session of the Supreme Council of the GCC countries, scheduled to be held in Manama on Wednesday, December 3.

The Royal participation stems from His Majesty’s keenness to meet with his brothers, Their Majesties and Highnesses, to strengthen the Council’s march and push it towards broader horizons of growth and prosperity.

The participation also aims to discuss topics that embody Gulf joint action and enhance its course in light of regional and international developments.

His Majesty the Sultan will be accompanied during the visit by a high-ranking official delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head of Private Office of His Majesty the Sultan, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, and Sayyid Faisal bin Harib al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Bahrain.” — ONA

HM, Belarus President discuss economic partnership

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday received Alexander Lukashenko, President of the Republic of Belarus, at Al Barakah Palace.

During the meeting, areas of investment and economic partnership between the two countries were reviewed, as well as means of enhancing them to serve common interests and contribute to the growth of the Omani and Belarusian economies.

The meeting was attended by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, and Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

The meeting was attended on the Belarusian side by the two sons of the President, Viktor Lukashenko, Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Belarus and President of the Olympic Committee, and Nikolai Lukashenko, along with a number of Belarusian officials. — ONA

SEE ALSO P2

HIS MAJESTY GREETES UAE, ROMANIA AND LAOS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on his country’s National Day.

In his cable, His Majesty the sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to Shaikh Mohammed in realising the UAE people’s aspirations of further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty the Sultan also sent a cable of greetings to President Nicusor Dan of the Republic of Romania, on his country’s National Day.

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to Romania for further progress and development on all spheres.

Furthermore, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Thongloun Sisoulith of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, on his country’s National Day.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his best wishes of success to President Thongloun in leading the people of Laos and realising further achievements. — ONA

STONE LAID FOR RO 1.7 BILLION PROJECTS



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Monday graced the ceremonial cornerstone laying for two landmark urban developments: the Yamal and Jood projects. These ventures, spearheaded by Talaat Moustafa Group (TMG) with a combined investment of RO 1.7 billion, were inaugurated at Sultan Haitham City and the coastal precinct of Al Manuma.

DETAILS ON P4

Oman Arab Bank and United Solar Polysilicon Sign Major Financing Agreement to Develop the Largest Polysilicon Plant in the region in Sohar Free Zone

SIGNING CEREMONY



In a landmark signing ceremony held during the **OAB CEO Summit 2025** on 17 November 2025 under the patronage of H.E. Salim bin Nasir Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced the signing of a financing agreement with **United Solar Polysilicon FZC SPC (USP)** to support the establishment of a state-of-the-art polysilicon manufacturing facility in **Sohar Free Zone**.

The agreement marks a milestone in Oman’s renewable-energy landscape, positioning the Sultanate as a key global hub for sustainable technology manufacturing. The project, valued at **USD 1.6 billion**, will feature a production capacity of **100,000 tons per annum (TPA)** of high-purity solar-grade polysilicon—making it the largest such facility in the region – Middle East, Europe and Americas.

Under the agreement, **Oman Arab Bank**, together with another Omani financial institution, has extended **USD 200 million in term financing** to support the construction and development of the project.

Mr. Sulaiman AL Harthi, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, commented: “This partnership demonstrates OAB’s ongoing role in financing projects that contribute to Oman’s diversification and renewable-energy ambitions, and also to open opportunities to employ Omanis employees and their skill development in this high technology project. We are proud to support initiatives that drive sustainable growth, attract foreign investment, increase Omanisation, and strengthen the nation’s industrial base.”

Mr. Longgen Zhang (“Sam”), Chairman and Founder of United Solar Polysilicon, stated: “United Solar Polysilicon is proud to partner with Oman Arab Bank in realizing one of the most advanced polysilicon facilities in the world. This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to sustainability, innovation, and the global energy transition.”

Supported by Future Fund Oman, part of **Oman Investment Authority** this strategic collaboration underscores Oman’s growing appeal as a destination for large-scale green-energy investments.

The signing at the CEO Summit took place among senior industry leaders, reinforcing Oman Arab Bank’s vision of fostering partnerships that align with national sustainability objectives and broader global energy transition targets.

OMAN

HM, LUKASHENKO REVIEW INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Monday received Alexander Lukashenko, President of the Republic of Belarus, at Al Barakah Palace. During the meeting, areas of investment and economic partnership between the two countries were reviewed, as well as means of enhancing them to serve common interests and contribute to the growth of the Omani and Belarusian economies. — ONA



SALE

20% - 70%

Terms & Conditions apply

Clarks

SHOEMAKERS SINCE 1825

CR. 1163077

Al Khamis Plaza, Qurum - Tel. 24560992 | Muscat Grand Mall - Tel. 24399930 | Al Hail South - Tel. 24558148
Al Khamis Shoes, Sohar - Tel. 26841178 | Al Khamis Shoes, Al Hail - Tel. 24543045 | [93894474](#)

AWASR

Experience Better

Their future starts today!

Change to AWASR, Fastest Internet In Oman

Get Ashel Educational Platform for free!

Unlimited data for all plans

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

WhatsApp

80001000

Website: [awasr.om](#)

Thank You

for Your Heartfelt Condolences

We extend our sincere gratitude to all individuals, organisations, and well-wishers who shared their comforting words and condolences over the past days.

Your prayers, messages, and presence have been a source of great strength to us during this difficult time.

Your kindness will always be remembered.

Omar Suhail Salim Bahwan Al Mukhaini
Othman Suhail Salim Bahwan Al Mukhaini
Ali Suhail Salim Bahwan Al Mukhaini

OMAN

Sayyid Theyazin graces cornerstone laying for investment projects

HH SAYYID THEYAZIN BIN HAITHAM AL SAID, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Monday graced the ceremonial cornerstone laying for two landmark urban developments: the “Yamal” and “Jood” projects.

These ventures, spearheaded by Talaat Moustafa Group (TMG) with a combined investment of RO 1.7 billion, were inaugurated at Sultan Haitham City and the coastal precinct of Al Manuma.

The realisation of these two visionary projects is a direct embodiment of national directives aimed at cultivating exemplary partnerships with world-renowned developers, whose proven mastery lies in crafting modern, holistic urban environments. This strategic initiative is in perfect consonance with the core priorities of Oman Vision 2040, which champions economic diversification, the empowerment of the private sector, the stimulation of investment and the enhancement of indigenous economic value.

The “Jood” project will rise upon a sprawling 2.7 million square-metre canvas, destined to become a smart and sustainable community. It promises over 7,000 diverse residential units, interspersed with verdant landscapes, and complemented by a full suite of educational, healthcare, commercial and recreational amenities, alongside a dedicated social and sports club.

The inaugural phase of this offering presents 600 units, marking the commencement of sales for this comprehensively planned community. The project’s name, “Jood”, draws inspiration from the quintessential Omani virtues of boundless generosity and magnanimity, reflecting profound human and social dimensions. It aspires to epitomise abundance, harmonious balance and an elevated quality of life within a modern, green city where the built environment exists in seamless synergy with nature.

Conversely, the “Yamal” project will command a majestic 2.2 million square-metre domain with an impressive 1,760-metre waterfront along the Sea of Oman. This premier coastal destination is set to feature an international marina, a collection of world-class hotels, a vibrant array of marine activities, and more than 6,000 residential and hospitality units offering panoramic views of the sea and marina.

The first phase introduces 700 units, forming part of a contemporary coastal

The realisation of these two visionary projects is a direct embodiment of national directives aimed at cultivating exemplary partnerships with world-renowned developers, whose proven mastery lies in crafting modern, holistic urban environments. This strategic initiative is in perfect consonance with the core priorities of Oman Vision 2040, which champions economic diversification, the empowerment of the private sector, the stimulation of investment and the enhancement of indigenous economic value.



enclave deeply inspired by Oman's timeless and profound bond with the sea. It seeks to express the enduring values of giving, discovery and openness that have forged the nation's distinctive maritime identity across centuries.

These monumental undertakings represent a tangible manifestation of the Sultanate of Oman's strategic vision to forge distinguished alliances with global development leaders. They underscore a commitment to establishing modern urban communities founded upon exceptional quality of life and sustainable planning principles. This endeavour operates within a cohesive framework aligned with the National Urban Strategy, the cardinal blueprint guiding the nation's urban future and a principal catalyst for the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040. The entry of eminent global developers into the Omani market signals the escalating allure of Oman's investment landscape. It affirms the robustness of the national regulatory framework in fostering sustainable urban ecosystems capable of accommodating growth and diversifying development opportunities, thereby curating a more competitive and enticing market for premium investments.

The comprehensive transformation currently underway in the Sultanate of Oman is predicated on elevating planning efficacy and synthesising governmental endeavours within a unified strategic outlook. This vision

opens expansive horizons for growth and underpins the sustainability of urban development across all governorates. It is a phase that solidifies Oman's standing on the world stage and attests to its capacity to attract high-calibre international partnerships and investments.

These projects are poised to deliver substantial added value to both the national economy and society by creating integrated communities that offer a globally benchmarked quality of life. They will provide advanced services underpinned by sustainability, meticulously designed to cater to the needs of generations to come.

The phased sales launch for the “Yamal” and “Jood” projects within Sultan Haitham City and the coastal Yamal city will commence tomorrow, Tuesday, as part of the initial offering stages for these pioneering developments.

Talaat Moustafa Group (TMG) is ranked within the elite top 6 per cent of companies operating in the emerging markets of Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, a testament to its international stature and vast, accumulated expertise in city-making and integrated community development. With a legacy exceeding 55 years in crafting holistic urban spaces, its projects are home to over 1.5 million residents. The Group's portfolio encompasses a land bank exceeding 115 million square metres, dedicated to residential, commercial and touristic

projects in numerous strategic locales. The Group's operational prowess is further evidenced by its management of several international hotels under the prestigious Four Seasons brand in Cairo, Sharm el Sheikh, and Alexandria, alongside historic properties and new hospitality ventures under development across Egyptian governorates. This demonstrates its profound experience and capability to deliver urban and tourism destinations that meet exacting international standards.

In recent years, the Sultanate of Oman has registered remarkable advancements across key economic and investment indicators. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) demonstrated robust growth between 22 and 23 per cent in the first quarter of 2025, accelerating to over 30 per cent by the end of the first half, with a total value surpassing RO 30 billion. This trajectory offers a clear testament to the global investment community's confidence in the resilience of the national economy and the stability of its financial architecture.

In the domain of business facilitation, Oman has achieved commendable competitive benchmarks.

The average timeframe for company establishment has been streamlined to a mere 4-5 days, necessitating only four principal procedures and eliminating minimum capital requirements.

This has significantly enhanced procedural fluidity and amplified the Omani market's appeal to new investors. — ONA

OMAN EMBASSY IN IRAN MARKS GLORIOUS NATIONAL DAY



The ceremony was attended by Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran. — ONA

TEHRAN: The Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the Islamic Republic of Iran held a reception ceremony on the occasion of the glorious National Day.

Sayyid Yarub bin Qahtan al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran, delivered a speech in which he pointed out the significance of the National Day, which embodies the Sultanate of Oman's pride in its ancient history, extending since the founding of the Al Busaid State on November 20, 1744, when the Founding Imam Ahmad bin Said al Busaidy united the nation's banner.

He emphasised the Omani diplomatic approach based on dialogue and respect for the UN Charter and international law, and the call to prioritise wisdom, contain escalation in the region and adopt peaceful means for dispute settlement.

The ceremony was attended by Abbas Araghchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran, a number of Iranian officials, and heads of diplomatic



missions. The event included visual presentations that highlighted the most important tourism and economic components distinguishing the Sultanate of Oman in all its wilayats and governorates, as well as documentary presentations narrating its history and promoting tourism and investment in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

وزارة الإعلام

Ministry of Information

ELECTRONIC BIDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Information shall be electronically bidding vehicles through on Mazad Oman (www.mazad.om) in accordance with the following statement:

Statement	Place of Inspection	Date and Timing of Inspection	Date of Electronic Bidding
Vehicles	Madinat Al Ilam	Wednesday 3/12/2025 Thursday 4/12/2025	From Sunday 7/12/2025 To Monday 8/12/2025
	Salalah	Between 8:00 am & 1:00 pm	

You may acquaint yourself with the terms and sign up through www.mazad.om

For further details, you may reach us through info@mazad.om

GCC leaders charting a future of better integration, prosperity

THE 46th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit on Wednesday in Manama embodies the collective aspirations of the member states' citizens for deeper cooperation, comprehensive integration and strengthened bonds across all levels. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will lead the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman participating in this pivotal gathering, alongside the esteemed leaders of the GCC member states.

The summit deliberations are anticipated to encompass a thorough review of the joint Gulf cooperative journey across all political, economic and security domains. This review will be guided by the directives of the Council's leaders. The agenda will also facilitate a strategic exchange of perspectives on current international and regional developments and their implications for regional security and stability. Furthermore, discussions will focus on the concerted endeavours of the GCC member states to propel initiatives aimed at establishing comprehensive peace in the region and forging unified stances in response to evolving regional dynamics.

Jassem Mohammed al Budaiwi, GCC Secretary-General, underscored the imperative to reinforce the various pillars of Gulf, regional and international collaboration.

He expressed his profound hope that the Bahrain Summit will yield constructive resolutions and recommendations, thereby contributing a new cornerstone to the illustrious edifice of the Council's blessed march. He affirmed that the substantive breadth and depth of these agenda items vividly reflect the Council's considerable regional and international stature. They also cement the reality that the achievements secured by the member states on the path to Gulf integration — a paramount objective of the Council's



The summit deliberations are anticipated to encompass a thorough review of the joint Gulf cooperative journey across all political, economic and security domains. This review will be guided by the directives of the Council's leaders. The agenda will also facilitate a strategic exchange of perspectives on current international and regional developments and their implications for regional security and stability. Furthermore, discussions will focus on the concerted endeavours of the GCC member states to propel initiatives aimed at establishing comprehensive peace in the region and forging unified stances in response to evolving regional dynamics



leaders — are advancing resolutely in the correct direction, fully aligned with the Gulf peoples' aspirations and ambitions for greater unity and shared prosperity.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Hashel al Maskari, Head of the Department for the Gulf Cooperation Council and Regional Neighbourhood, said Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, reiterates its unwavering commitment to bolstering the march of the Gulf Cooperation Council and strengthening the frameworks for collective action among its sisterly nations. He emphasised that the Council's cohesion and the unity of perspectives on shared regional concerns constitute indispensable pillars for safeguarding security and stability and propelling comprehensive development trajectories across the member states. This principled Omani stance, he noted, is consistently manifested through active and constructive participation in all GCC summits, ministerial meetings and specialised committees. This engagement springs from Oman's profound conviction in the imperative of deepening integration across all political, economic, social and developmental spheres — a commitment that amplifies the Council's collective capacity to navigate regional challenges and forge a more prosperous future for its peoples.

He further indicated that Oman Vision 2040 is strategically aligned with the overarching visions of fellow GCC states, all of which prioritise citizen welfare and quality of life at the heart of their joint endeavours. Oman places particular emphasis on collaborative projects in trade, services, connectivity

and infrastructure, recognising these as fundamental components of the Gulf economic integration journey. It is anticipated that these pivotal subjects will command prioritised attention in the deliberations of the leadership and specialised ministerial committees, thereby fulfilling the objectives of the common Gulf market and reinforcing all concerted efforts to advance economic and investment cooperation. The forthcoming summit is anticipated to concentrate decisively on advancing the agenda of economic integration and fortifying shared developmental frameworks, alongside the coordination of political positions regarding regional and international developments.

Dr Youssef Abdulkarim al Boujairi, Director-General of Legal Affairs and Human Rights of Bahrain, remarked that Bahrain has the honour of hosting the forty-sixth session of the GCC Supreme Council. This occasion follows nearly four decades of sustained joint Gulf action, a journey that has attained remarkable levels of solidarity and tangible achievement across the Council's diverse cycles.

"We look to this year's Bahrain Summit to fulfil a portion of the lofty aspirations of Their Majesties and Highnesses, the leaders of the GCC states, and to correspondingly meet the hopes of the Gulf peoples for greater progress, welfare and prosperity. We are presented with an extensive agenda encompassing social, economic, cultural and investment files. This is in addition to examining several axes of the strategic relations that bind the Council states to nations across the globe, alongside the promising future trajectories these relations entail." — ONA



Mujan
University
College

كلية مجان الجامعية

Notice and Invitation to
Attend the Annual General Meeting

The Board of Directors of MAJAN COLLEGE SAOG (the "Company") has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Thursday at 03:00 PM on 11/12/2025, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (online). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Annual General Meeting shall be held on Sunday at 03:00 PM on 14/12/2025, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (online) to discuss the following agenda:

1. Reviewing the Board of Directors' report on the company's activities and financial position for the financial year ended 31/08/2025 and approving it.
2. Review and approval of the Board of Directors' report on the management and operations of the Company for the financial year ended 31 August 2025.
3. Review and approval of the External Auditor's report on the audited financial statements of the College for the financial year ended 31 August 2025.
4. Approval of the attendance allowances for the Board of Directors and its sub-committees for the past financial year, and determination of the allowances for the financial year ending 31 August 2026.
5. Informing the General Meeting of the transactions carried out by the College with related parties during the financial year ended 31/08/2025.
6. Acknowledgement of donations made to support community services (Corporate Social Responsibility) during the financial year ended 31 August 2025.
7. Review and approval of the proposal to allocate OMR 10,000 to support community services during the financial year ending 31 August 2026.
8. Approval of the performance evaluation criteria for the Board of Directors for the financial year ending 31 August 2026.
9. Study of the proposal to distribute cash dividends to shareholders as of the date of the General Meeting at a rate of 7.2 Baiza per share and approval thereof.
10. Proposal to distribute bonus shares to shareholders as of the date of the General Meeting at a rate of 10% of the share capital, equivalent to one share for every ten shares, resulting in an increase in the company's total number of shares from 90,000,000 to 99,000,000 shares, and consequently increasing the share capital from OMR 9,000,000 to OMR 9,900,000, and approval thereof.
11. Appointment of an independent entity to evaluate the performance of the Board of Directors for the financial year ending 31 August 2026 and determination of its fee.
12. Appointment of the external auditor for the financial year ending 31 August 2026 and determination of its audit fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

1. Legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
2. Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information please contact on telephone No 24730408
or email: karim.essam@majancollege.edu.om



JASSEM AL BUDAIWI

Bahrain Summit will yield constructive resolutions and recommendations, thereby contributing a new cornerstone to the illustrious edifice of the Council's blessed march.



SHAIKH AHMED AL MASKARI

Council's cohesion and the unity of perspectives on shared regional concerns constitute indispensable pillars for safeguarding security and stability and propelling comprehensive development trajectories across the member states.



DR YOUSSEF AL BOUJAIRI

We look to this year's Bahrain Summit to fulfil a portion of the lofty aspirations of the leaders of the GCC states, and to correspondingly meet the hopes of the Gulf peoples for greater progress, welfare and prosperity.



University Medical City

ANNOUNCEMENT

University Medical City represented by Sultan Qaboos University Hospital announces their desire to sell a used vehicles and ambulances in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used vehicles in the auction yard and receive the bidding on Sunday and Monday 7-8/12/2025. from 10:00 AM to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (500) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used vehicles, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used vehicles, and put the envelope in the bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items.
- The used vehicles are sold in their current condition and UMC is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold vehicles if the shifting is not completed until 25/12/2025 and we applied (10) Omani riyals as a penalty for each day after 25/12/2025.

Notes:

- Prices will be sorted according to each vehicle and the higher price will be taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- The auction will be in the SQUH parking
- Entering the auction yard through Gate No (2-3).
- For more information, contact 24144023 /96771344/99233144.

OMAN

SHORT TAKES



Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy meets with Luigi Di Maio.

OMAN, EU REVIEW ASPECTS OF COOPERATION

MUSCAT: Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, met with Luigi Di Maio, the European Union’s Special Representative for the Gulf region, at the ministry’s headquarters on Monday.

The discussions provided a substantive overview of the diverse and expanding areas of cooperation between Oman and the European Union (EU), with particular focus on the strategic fields of energy, education and maritime security. The dialogue also encompassed a productive exchange of perspectives on pivotal regional and international matters of shared concern.

The meeting was attended by officials from the Foreign Ministry and the European Union (EU). — ONA

TWO OCCUPY TOP PLACES AT ‘VOICE OF THE SEASON’ CONTEST



A ‘National Operetta’ signalled the conclusion of the competition. — ONA

SALALAH: Omani contestant Khalid bin Salim al Amri claimed first place at the “Voice of the Season 2025” competition held during the closing of Al Sarb cultural festival, which marks Dhofar Governorate’s spring tourism season.

The competition, which began on October 9, was organised by the Dhofar Centre for Culture, Heritage and Creativity, affiliated to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The contest winners’ felicitation ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Salim al Said.

Omani contestant Said Al Shammali Zaabanoot occupied second place at the “Voice of the Season 2025” competition, while Kuwaiti contestant Abdul-Hadi al Murri ranked third. The results were based on a combination of scores noted by the adjudicating panel and a public vote.

A ‘National Operetta’ signalled the conclusion of the competition. It saw the participation of 8 finalists who presented thrilling chanting performances. — ONA

RAO celebrates graduation of officer batches

IZKI: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) celebrated on Monday the graduation of several batches of officers. These included the Candidate Officers Course, the Specialised University Officers Course, the Conversion Course for Medical and Allied Medical Professions Occupants, and the Limited Service Officers Course.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Oman.

The graduates presented varied military shows that embodied the skills of its personnel, highlighting the great attention and Royal care



The ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said.

bestowed upon the Royal Army of Oman by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander.

The celebration began with a military salute to the chief guest

of the occasion. Following this, the parade commander requested permission from the chief guest of the occasion to inspect the front row of the graduates’ parade.

The graduates then presented a military display with a military march passing the main dais of the celebration ground, led by the banner of Sultan Qaboos Military College.

Afterwards, HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said presented the Sword of Honour to Lieutenant Al Muhallab bin Rashid al Subhi of the Royal Army of Oman who achieved first place at the level of the Candidate Officers Course.

— ONA

Majlis Ash’shura discusses Draft State Budget for 2026

THE members of the Majlis Ash’shura on Monday listened to statements from both Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, and Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, regarding the Draft State General Budget for 2026 and the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030). This took place in a closed session as stipulated by Article (52) of the Oman Council Law.

This occurred during the Majlis Ash’shura’s third regular session of the third ordinary convening (2025-2026) of the tenth term (2023-2027), which was held under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash’shura.

Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, delivered the ministry’s statement on the Draft State General Budget for the Fiscal Year 2026, reviewing some positive economic indicators achieved in the national economy in recent years. He explained that the economic policies adopted by the government contributed to enhancing levels of financial stability and raising the efficiency of public financial resource management, which reflected in the improvement of the Sultanate of Oman’s credit rating and a significant decrease in public debt levels compared to previous years.

He pointed out that the structural reforms and fiscal balance programmes contributed to strengthening international confidence in the Sultanate of Oman’s economy and opened wider horizons for attracting foreign investments.

The Minister of Finance also reviewed the foundations and pillars upon which the State General Budget for 2026 was based, including estimates of public revenues, public spending, public debt management, the estimated oil barrel price in the budget, deficit and financing, and inflation rates. He highlighted development and investment spending for 2026. The discussion also touched upon the most prominent financial, economic and monetary indicators for 2025,



The estimates of the State General Budget for 2026 took into account providing coverage and social protection for various segments of society. — ONA

as well as the main potential economic and financial risks during 2026.

He added that the estimates of the State General Budget for 2026 took into account providing coverage and social protection for various segments of society, maintaining the level of spending on essential services such as education, health and housing, and stimulating the national economy by promoting the growth of companies and projects that support economic diversification activities and operations.

During today’s session, the members also listened to the statement of the Minister of Economy regarding the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030), which addressed the main themes of the project, the methodology for preparing the plan, its main features, the priorities of economic sectors, and development projects. The financial and economic framework of the plan and its key strategic programmes, in line with the goals and priorities of Oman

Vision 2040, were also discussed.

The statement by the Minister of Economy indicated that the plan aims to build a sustainable developmental economy by promoting economic diversification. It also seeks to transition towards clean energy and promote a low-carbon economy by increasing reliance on renewable energy projects and developing policies that incentivise investment in green hydrogen and alternative energy-related industries.

Furthermore, it aims to enhance economic decentralisation for the governorates, raise the efficiency of the labour market and employment, promote sustainable social development, and enhance governance and institutional efficiency.

He added that the methodology for preparing the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2026-2030) was based on a comprehensive evaluation of the performance of the Tenth Plan (2021-2025), and an examination of growth indicators in various sectors. — ONA

MoHT launches promotional workshops for Oman in Beijing

BEIJING: Promotional workshops organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) in China began on Monday in Beijing. The goal is to enhance Oman’s tourism standing in the Chinese market and attract travellers and tourists from the Chinese market.

Following Beijing, the ministry will continue its promotional tour in Shanghai and Guangzhou, lasting until December 5, with the participation of 22 Omani tourism establishments.

Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, affirmed that organising these workshops comes at a time when the Chinese market is witnessing

unprecedented growth in demand for outbound travel, making China one of the most promising markets for Omani tourism in the coming years.

He stated that Oman possesses natural and heritage components that make it an ideal destination for travellers seeking authentic experiences, in addition to the facilities it offers, including visa exemption for 14 days and the launch of direct flights between Beijing and Muscat.

Al Busaidy added that the ministry has worked during the past period to enhance Oman’s presence in the Chinese market through strategic initiatives and specialised partnerships. This promotional



MoHT to continue promotional tour in Shanghai and Guangzhou.

tour aims to present Oman as a unique destination that meets the aspirations of the Chinese tourists

seeking exceptional nature and diverse experiences.

He stressed that China is

considered one of the largest markets in terms of spending volume and number of travellers, and these events open new horizons for joint cooperation, supporting the development of specialised travel programmes and enhancing air connectivity, which contributes to increasing the flow of tourists to Oman.

The workshops in Beijing included introductory presentations about Omani tourism components, along with bilateral meetings between Omani companies and about 100 Chinese tourism companies, including tour operators and entities specialised in the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions sector. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The event celebrated the rich maritime and cultural heritage between the two countries.

OMAN, NETHERLANDS CELEBRATE 400 YEARS OF MARITIME TIES

MUSCAT: The closing ceremony marking 400 years of maritime relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands was held on Sunday. The event was organised by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry. It celebrated the rich maritime and cultural heritage forged over centuries of trade and cooperation between the two friendly nations.

In his remarks, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, lauded the enduring maritime ties and highlighted the growth and progress in bilateral relations across various fields.

Maartje Peters, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Oman, traced the origins of Omani-Dutch relations, noting the historic visit of the first Dutch ship to Muscat in 1624, a milestone that laid the foundation for cooperation that continues to flourish today. The ceremony was attended by officials, ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps. — ONA

OWA TAKES PART IN DOHA GULF FORUM



MUSCAT: The Omani Women’s Academy (OWA) participated in the Gulf Businesswomen Forum held in Doha, Qatar, organised by the Qatar Chamber, with the presence of leading entrepreneurs and decision-makers from across the GCC.

The Academy’s participation underscored its growing role in empowering Omani women and strengthening their contribution to the Gulf’s economic landscape. Through its presence, the Academy highlighted women-led innovation, exchanged expertise and explored partnerships with regional institutions supporting entrepreneurship.

Dr Fatma al Balushi, Chairperson of the Omani Women’s Academy, presented a working paper titled ‘The Role of Education and Capacity-Building in Enabling Gulf Women to Enter Modern Investment Sectors.’ She emphasised the value of leveraging Gulf experiences in empowerment programmes, business accelerators and innovation centres to help establish women-led startups with sustainable economic impact. Dr Al Balushi also presented key national indicators, including a recent statistic from the National Centre for Statistics and Information showing that Omani women helm 33 per cent of entrepreneurial projects, reflecting strong institutional support and steady growth in women’s entrepreneurship across Oman.

NIZWA INDIAN ASSOCIATION CAMP BENEFITS 150

NIZWA: The Nizwa Indian Association, in collaboration with Nizwa Hospital and Badr Al Samaa Hospital, organised a free medical and blood donation camp during the National Day holidays at the Karsha Industrial Area in Nizwa.

More than 150 patients benefited from the services provided.

Doctors who volunteered their expertise included Dr Haresh Basheer from Hatat Speciality Polyclinic, Dr Frank from Aqua Clinic, Dr R Nias from Nizwa Hospital and Dr Jenisha Varghese from Badr Al Samaa Hospital. The community-led initiative offered a range of services, including general medical check-ups, dental consultations, eye screening, blood sugar testing and blood pressure checks. A blood donation drive was also conducted as part of the camp.

OMAN, ALGERIA REVIEW COOPERATION IN FOOD SECTORS



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, on Monday, met with Yacine El Mahdi Oualid, Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Fisheries of the sisterly People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria, currently on an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

They reviewed existing cooperation between the two brotherly countries in the agricultural, fisheries and food sectors and discussed ways to strengthen and develop partnership to achieve common interests.

The meeting was attended by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and a number of officials from both sides. — ONA

Awareness on protecting children from abuse

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 1

UNDER the slogan ‘Our Children are a Trust’, the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, celebrated the International Day for the Protection of Children from Abuse.

The event aimed to foster a culture of child protection, raise awareness of various forms of abuse, highlight related laws and regulations, and emphasise reporting mechanisms. It also showcased the role of relevant authorities and care institutions in prevention, intervention, and providing psychological and social support.

The celebration featured a theatrical performance conveying a message on children’s rights, emphasising society’s shared responsibility to ensure a safe environment that preserves their dignity and promotes healthy development.

A child participant, Muath bin Khalid al Masrouri, presented a segment titled ‘A Child’s Message: We Are a Trust’, highlighting that protecting children is not only a legal obligation but a national responsibility, securing the future of Oman’s leaders, scholars and innovators.

Haitham bin Salem al Khadouri, Director of the Family Protection Department at MoSD, stated that



The Ministry of Social Development celebrated the International Day for the Protection of Children from Abuse.

The ministry continues to build an integrated child protection system by developing national strategies

the ministry continues to build an integrated child protection system by developing national strategies, activating abuse monitoring hotlines, collaborating with local and international organisations, and establishing specialised units to support children in coordination with all relevant sectors.

The event included two panel discussions. The first, ‘Integrating Roles Between Justice and Social Welfare’, featured presentations by: Naif al Adwani, legal researcher at MoSD, on the ministry’s framework for protecting children from abuse, Ahmed bin Nasser al Rashdi, Director at the Oman Human Rights Commission, on raising awareness of children’s rights and Lt Col Rashid al Khuzaimi, Director of the Criminal Investigation Department,

on police efforts in abuse cases.

The second panel, ‘Strengthening Community Partnerships for Child Protection’, included: Dr Bilal al Kaswani, Unicef Oman, on the child protection system’s pillars and best practices, and Dr Mona al Shukaili, child psychiatry consultant, on therapeutic interventions for abuse cases.

The Ministry of Social Development continues to prioritise child welfare, safeguard rights and enhance community-level prevention.

Last September, the ministry launched the ‘Child Protection Guide’, standardising national procedures for abuse and neglect cases, defining roles of authorities, and enhancing the capacity of child protection professionals to implement best practices.

Oman participates in Nairobi meeting

NAIROBI: The meeting of the Open-ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) discussed on Monday the preparations for initiating negotiations on the resolutions scheduled to be presented to the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) at its seventh session.

Dr Abdullah bin Ali Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, will chair the UNEA session.

The participation of the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, comes within the framework of its continuous preparations for



Dr Abdullah bin Ali Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, will chair the UNEA session.

chairing the seventh session of the Assembly, and its role in supporting international consensus on environmental issues and promoting pathways for sustainability at

the global level.

The meeting, held in the Kenyan capital Nairobi and continuing until December 5, is part of a series of preparatory meetings for the convening of the Seventh Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7).

The meeting is examining negotiation mechanisms on 16 draft technical resolutions that include enhancing climate action, combating pollution, protecting biodiversity, and supporting sustainable production and consumption policies, along with proposals related to the optimal management of mining and minerals and chemical management. — ONA

WORLD

PILINGPRESSURE



A combination of file pictures shows US President Donald Trump (L) and Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro. — AFP

TRUMP CONFIRMS TALKS WITH MADURO IN HEIGHTENED TENSIONS

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said that he would “look into” claims the military conducted a follow-up strike that killed survivors on a boat in the Caribbean, part of Washington’s anti-drug raids that have heightened tensions with Venezuela. The United States is piling pressure on Caracas with a major military buildup in the Caribbean, the terror designation of a presumed drug cartel run by President Nicolas Maduro, and an ominous warning from Trump that Venezuelan airspace is “closed.”

In the most recent controversy, The Washington Post reported last week that in an operation in early September, US forces hit a boat after seeing two survivors of an initial strike clinging to the burning vessel. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth had ordered troops to kill everyone on board, The Washington Post and CNN both reported, citing unnamed sources familiar with the operation. “The order was to kill everybody,” one of the sources told the Post.

Trump defended Hegseth, arguing the reports were false. “I’m going to find out about it, but Pete said he did not order the death of those two men,” the president told reporters aboard Air Force One on Sunday. When asked if he would have wanted a second attempt to kill the survivors, Trump said: “We’ll look into it, but no, I wouldn’t have wanted that — not a second strike. The first strike was very lethal.”

Hegseth has dismissed the reports as “fake news.” Washington says the aim of the military deployment that began in September is to curb drug trafficking in the region, but Caracas insists regime change is the ultimate goal. Trump confirmed on Sunday he had recently spoken with Venezuela’s Maduro. “I wouldn’t say it went well or badly. It was a phone call,” Trump said.

The New York Times reported on Friday that Trump and Maduro had discussed a possible meeting, while The Wall Street Journal said on Saturday that the conversation also included conditions of amnesty if Maduro were to step down. Republican Senator Markwayne Mullin said on Sunday on CNN’s “State of the Union” talk show that the United States has offered Maduro the chance to leave his country for Russia or elsewhere.

Washington accuses Maduro, the political heir to Venezuela’s late leftist leader Hugo Chavez, of heading the “Cartel of the Suns” and has issued a \$50 million reward for his capture. But Venezuela and its supporters insist no such organisation even exists. The United States also does not recognise Maduro as the legitimate winner of last year’s presidential election. Though Trump has not publicly threatened to use force against Maduro, he said in recent days that efforts to halt Venezuelan drug trafficking “by land” would begin “very soon.”

Venezuela says it has requested assistance from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), of which it is a member, to help “stop this (American) aggression, which is being readied with more and more force.” The request came in a letter from Maduro to the group, read by Vice President Delcy Rodríguez, who is also Venezuela’s oil minister, during a virtual meeting of OPEC ministers. — AFP

‘RAGE BAIT’ WINS OXFORD’S WORD OF 2025

LONDON: “Rage bait”, the slang term describing online content designed to elicit anger and drive internet traffic, has been crowned 2025 word of the year, Oxford University Press (OUP) announced on Monday. It said the word — chosen through a combination of public voting, sentiment and analysis of OUP’s “lexical data” — had “captured our emotions” this year.

Casper Grathwohl, president of OUP’s languages division, said the growing use of such words “reveal how digital platforms are reshaping our

thinking and behaviour”. “It feels like the natural progression in an ongoing conversation about what it means to be human in a tech-driven world — and the extremes of online culture,” he added in a statement.

Oxford defines “rage bait” as “online content deliberately designed to elicit anger or outrage by being frustrating, provocative, or offensive, typically posted” in order to increase web traffic or engagement. It beat out fellow shortlisted contenders “aura farming” and “biohack”.

The former was described as “the cultivation of an impressive, attractive, or charismatic persona or public image by behaving or presenting oneself in a way intended subtly to convey an air of confidence, coolness, or mystique”.

Meanwhile biohacking is an attempt “to improve or optimise one’s physical or mental performance, health, longevity, or wellbeing by altering one’s diet, exercise routine, or lifestyle, or by using other means such as drugs, supplements, or technological devices”. — AFP

Zelensky in Paris seeking support as US pushes plan

PRESIDENT Volodymyr Zelensky on Monday sought to reinforce European support for Ukraine at a potentially pivotal moment in Kyiv’s battle against the Russian attack, meeting President Emmanuel Macron in Paris as Washington pushed a plan to end the war. Zelensky was holding talks with Macron at the Elysee, with Ukraine weighing its options over the plan championed by US President Donald Trump but which European countries fear risks caving in to Russian demands. The situation has been further complicated by a corruption scandal that has rocked Zelensky’s inner circle and forced the removal last week of his top negotiator and chief of staff Andriy Yermak.

Over three-and-a-half years into Russia’s full-scale attack on its neighbour, Kyiv is also under pressure on the battlefield as Russia’s offensive grinds forward. US and Ukrainian negotiators held hours of what both sides called “productive” talks in Florida on Sunday, with Trump declaring on Air Force One “there’s a good chance we can make a deal”. “There are some tough issues that still have to be worked through,” Zelensky wrote on social media, following new talks by telephone on Monday with Finland President Alexander Stubb, who has warm relations with both the American and Ukrainian leaders.

Zelensky described the talks in the United States as “very constructive”, adding that decisions would be taken on Ukraine’s “further activities” once the delegation returning from there had been debriefed. “It could be a pivotal week for diplomacy. We heard yesterday that the talks in America were difficult but productive,” EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas added at a meeting of EU defence ministers.

Washington put forward an initial 28-point



France President Emmanuel Macron (R) welcomes his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, at the Elysee palace in Paris. — AFP

proposal to halt the war, drafted without input from Ukraine’s European allies and regarded as too close a reflection of Moscow’s maximalist demands on Ukrainian territory. It would have seen Kyiv withdraw from its eastern Donetsk region and the United States de facto recognise the Donetsk, Crimea and Lugansk regions as Russian. After talks in Geneva just over a week ago, the United States updated the original blueprint following criticism from Kyiv and Europe, but the current contents remain unclear.

Trump’s envoy Steve Witkoff is due in Moscow for follow-up talks and is expected

to discuss Ukraine with Putin on Tuesday. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters the Florida talks were “very productive” but “there’s more work to be done”. “There are a lot of moving parts, and obviously there’s another party involved here that will have to be a part of the equation, and that will continue later this week when Mr Witkoff travels to Moscow,” he said.

Trump also referred to political turbulence in Kyiv which saw Zelensky last week remove Yermak after a corruption scandal in the energy sector that has troubled Western allies. “Ukraine’s got some difficult little problems,” Trump said. — AFP



ASIA FLOODS DEATH TOLL TOPS 1,100

PADANG: The toll in deadly flooding and landslides across parts of Asia climbed past 1,100 on Monday as hardest-hit Sri Lanka and Indonesia deployed military personnel to help survivors. Separate weather systems brought torrential, extended rainfall to the entire island of Sri Lanka and large parts of Indonesia’s Sumatra, southern Thailand and northern Malaysia last week.

Much of the region is currently in its monsoon season but climate change is producing more extreme rain events and turbocharging storms. The relentless rains left residents clinging to rooftops awaiting rescue by boat or helicopter, and cut entire villages off from assistance. — AFP

MEDICAL VICTORY

Ebola outbreak in Congo declared over



An Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo is now over after the country went 42 consecutive days without recording a new case. Out of a total of 64 cases, 45 people died and 19 others recovered. From the early days of the outbreak, Congo used a revamped national surveillance system to enable authorities to rapidly map the affected area and contain transmission. The outbreak was the country’s first since 2022. — Reuters

CYBERSECURITY VIOLATION

S Korean police probe massive data leak



South Korean police said they were tracing IP addresses and looking into possible tech vulnerabilities at Coupang after the e-commerce giant suffered the country’s worst data breach in over a decade. The personal data of more than 33 million customers was leaked in a breach believed to have started on June 24 through overseas servers. South Korea’s Science Minister Bae Kyung-hoon said the perpetrator had “abused authentication vulnerabilities” in Coupang’s servers. — Reuters

ONGOING INVESTIGATION

Hong Kong arrests massive fire suspects



Authorities said they have made a total 13 arrests over Hong Kong’s deadliest fire in decades after the blaze killed 151 people last week. The arrests were made on suspicion of manslaughter as investigators work to piece together what led to the catastrophic fire taking hold so fast in a complex of apartments. Officials have been looking at factors including the styrofoam panels and bamboo scaffolding use in a renovation project at the site. — AFP

Oman committed to strengthening GCC collective action



THE 46th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit, scheduled to convene on Wednesday in Manama, Bahrain, is a pivotal gathering that will bring together the leaders of the GCC member states, including His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to deliberate on enhanced cooperation, comprehensive integration, and strengthened bonds across various sectors.

The summit's agenda is expected to cover a thorough review of joint Gulf cooperative efforts in political, economic, and security domains, guided by the directives of the Council's leaders. Discussions will also focus on regional and international developments, their implications for security and stability, and concerted initiatives to establish comprehensive peace and unified stances in response to evolving regional dynamics.

The last forty-fifth Gulf Summit, hosted by the State of Kuwait in December 2024, achieved consensus on several key fronts. These included expanding the adoption of clean energy, boosting the investments of Gulf sovereign wealth funds in technology sectors and the green transition, and reaffirming support for the trajectory of economic integration and the advancement of joint action in the fields of energy, food security, and climate.

The summit also saw the adoption of unified positions regarding emerging issues, the endorsement of several joint economic initiatives, and the approval of an executive plan for the GCC states' economic vision initiatives. This plan includes linkages to

strategic transportation projects, electrical interconnection grids, and artificial intelligence, while reiterating a commitment to financial stability and the development of harmonised policies to attract foreign investment. The GCC summits serve as the primary forum for crafting cooperative policies and strategic frameworks in security, economy, defence, and sustainable development, embodying the spirit of solidarity and integration that has defined the Council for over four decades.

The Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, remains committed to strengthening the GCC and collective action with the Council's cohesion and unified perspectives crucial for safeguarding regional security, stability, and comprehensive development.

This commitment is reflected in Oman's active participation in all GCC summits and ministerial meetings, driven by a conviction to deepen integration across political, economic, social, and developmental spheres.

Oman's principled approach to regional developments advocates for de-escalation and dialogue, believing its policy of moderation, positive neutrality, and mediation enhances regional security and stability. The complex regional challenges necessitate close coordination among Council members to safeguard collective interests, secure vital maritime passages, and uphold international law.

The Council states are actively considering a unified Gulf tourist visa, often referred to as

The Sultanate of Oman reiterates its unwavering commitment to bolstering the march of the Gulf Cooperation Council and strengthening the frameworks for collective action among its sisterly nations

the 'Gulf Schengen', which, once operational, will allow streamlined access to all member states with a single visa, significantly boosting tourism and economic circulation.

The GCC summits stand as the paramount forum for crafting cooperative policies and strategic frameworks among the member states across the critical domains of security, economy, defence, and sustainable development. These gatherings embody the enduring spirit of solidarity and integration that has been the foundation of the Cooperation Council for over four decades.

The Sultanate of Oman reiterates its unwavering commitment to bolstering the march of the Gulf Cooperation Council and strengthening the frameworks for collective action among its sisterly nations.

The Council's cohesion and the unity of perspectives on shared regional concerns constitute indispensable pillars for safeguarding security and stability and propelling comprehensive development trajectories across the member states.

This principled Omani stance is consistently manifested through active and constructive participation in all GCC summits, ministerial meetings, and specialised committees.

This engagement springs from Oman's profound conviction in the imperative of deepening integration across all political, economic, social, and developmental spheres — a commitment that amplifies the Council's collective capacity to navigate regional challenges and forge a more prosperous future for its peoples.

AUSTRALIA'S BAN OFFERS TEST ON SOCIAL MEDIA HARM

KATIE FORSTER

Australia's under-16 social media ban will make the nation a real-life laboratory on how best to tackle the technology's impact on young people, experts say.

Those in favour of the world-first December 10 ban point to a growing mass of studies that suggest too much time online takes a toll on teen wellbeing. But opponents argue there is not enough hard proof to warrant the new legislation, which could do more harm than good.

Adolescent brains are still developing into the early 20s, said psychologist Amy Orben, who leads a digital mental health programme at the University of Cambridge.

A "huge amount" of observational research, often based on surveys, has tracked a correlation between teen tech use and worse mental health, she said. But it is hard to draw firm conclusions, because phones are so ingrained into daily life, and young people may turn to social media because they are already suffering. "With technology, because it's changing so fast, the evidence base will always be uncertain," Orben said.

"What could change the dial are experimental studies or evaluations of natural experiments. So evaluating the Australia ban is hugely important because it actually gives us a window on what might be happening."

To try and shed light on the cause-and-effect relationship, Australian researchers are recruiting 13- to 16-year-olds for a "Connected Minds Study" to assess how the ban affects their wellbeing.

A World Health Organisation survey last year found that 11 per cent of adolescents struggled to control their use of social media.

Other research has shown a link between excessive social media use and poor sleep, body image, school performance and emotional distress, such as a 2019 study of US schoolchildren in JAMA Psychiatry that found those who spent over three hours a day on social media could be at heightened risk for mental health problems.

So some experts argue the right time to act is now.

"I actually don't think this is a science issue. This is a values issue," said Christian Heim, an Australian psychiatrist and clinical director of mental health. — AFP

EU must stop squandering the power of its purse

PUBLIC procurement accounts for about 14 per cent of the European Union's GDP, making it one of the bloc's most powerful tools for shaping markets and advancing its policy goals. But a recent evaluation by the European Commission confirms what many governments and businesses already suspected: the current framework has fallen short of making public spending simpler, more strategic, and greener. With over 75 per cent of public contracts still lacking environmental criteria, it is no wonder that spending is so poorly aligned with the EU's stated industrial and climate objectives.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has made procurement reform a central part of the EU's new strategic agenda, linking it to the proposed Industrial Accelerator Act and the goal of creating "Made in Europe" markets for clean technologies. In her latest state of the union address, she emphasised the need to boost domestic production and decarbonisation together, not at the expense of one another. Similarly, Stéphane Séjourné, a European Commission executive vice-president, has highlighted public procurement's potential as a lever for ensuring competitiveness, resilience, and economic security.

But to promote competitiveness and meaningful climate leadership, sustainability must become a requirement in public



LIESBETH CASIER

The writer is Lead of Public Procurement and Sustainable Infrastructure at the International Institute for Sustainable Development



JOREN VERSCHAEVE

The writer is Coordinator at the Alliance for Low-Carbon Cement and Concrete



CHRISTOPHE DEBOFFE

The writer is a partner at Neo-Eco, a circular economy consultancy

tenders, not an optional add-on. Otherwise, companies building clean steel plants or producing low-carbon cement will still lose out to cheaper, higher-emissions competitors.

These heavy industries are central to Europe's competitiveness and job creation, and they are doing exactly what Europe's strategies demand: decarbonising supply chains, investing in innovation, and creating skilled local jobs. But they need a stable incentive that rewards decarbonisation and fosters reliable markets for clean products. As the German Steel Association warns, Europe risks losing competitiveness unless public procurement creates reliable demand for low-carbon materials.

While many public buyers are trying to incorporate green criteria, the current legal framework remains too fragmented and complex to facilitate the mainstreaming of strategic, climate-aligned procurement. This leaves cleaner firms facing inconsistent demand and unclear expectations. Public procurement should be a strategic instrument that rewards performance, not just compliance. But outdated habits and administrative caution still hinder innovation, benefiting higher-emissions competitors.

Making matters worse, competition in EU procurement has declined overall, especially for smaller tenders. The European Court of Auditors found that single-bid contracts

rose from 24 per cent in 2011 to 42 per cent in 2021, while the recent Commission evaluation shows that large contracts still attract strong participation. Simplification is needed, not to lower standards, but to make green procurement easier and more consistent.

Other economies have moved more decisively. Under president Joe Biden's administration, the US Inflation Reduction Act used public spending to promote clean manufacturing and domestic resilience. And in the United Kingdom, a new procurement act embeds "social value" and climate considerations into public tenders, creating clearer incentives for innovation and sustainability. Both show how procurement can create "leading markets" for clean materials, a goal that is central to the Industrial Accelerator Act.

While that act aims to boost domestic demand for low-carbon technologies, the procurement directive should ensure coherence with sectoral legislation and translate these ambitions into consistent, implementable rules. Done right, this can promote a shift to procurement that rewards quality and innovation. Europe risks falling behind not for lack of technology, but for lack of alignment between its industrial, climate, and procurement policies. If implemented well, procurement reforms could unlock more competitive, consistent, and resilient public spending without raising budgets.

©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

FULLYPREPARED



The highly anticipated encounter will be played at Education City Stadium in Doha and it will kick off at 9 pm (Oman time).

OMAN TAKE ON SAUDI TODAY IN FIFA ARAB CUP OPENING MATCH

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 1

The Red Warriors are fully prepared for a crucial opening clash as they will take on Saudi Arabia on Tuesday in their first Group B match at Fifa Arab Cup. The highly anticipated encounter will be played at Education City Stadium in Doha and it will kick off at 9 pm (Oman time).

Head coach Carlos Queiroz and his technical staff concluded the team’s final warm-up session on Monday night, putting the finishing touches on tactical and physical preparations. The players went through an intensive training programme that included match simulation drills, fine-tuning defensive positioning, sharpening attacking transitions and working on the key details that Queiroz emphasised as essential for converting chances in high-pressure moments.

The national team will enter this match after growing confidence through securing a strong qualification win against Somalia, which sealed Oman’s place in the group stage. Earlier preparatory matches against Sudan and Ivory Coast also helped the players build rhythm, improving field chemistry and adapting to the tactical demands of Queiroz’s system.

Oman players are in high morale from their memorable 2-1 victory over Saudi Arabia in the last Gulf Cup semifinal on December 31, 2024, when Arshad al Alawi and Ali al Busaidy found the net in a thrilling performance. That historic win remained a motivating milestone for the squad as they prepared to face the Green Falcons once again on a major regional stage.

REAL CHANCE TO WIN

Speaking ahead of the match, coach Carlos Queiroz expressed confidence in his team while underlining the importance of focus and steady growth. “I am doing my best to prepare the players and also we are busy in developing the team as the set plan. We are working hard despite the short preparation period and the challenge of not having the full squad together in earlier camps,” he said. “The team showed good levels against the UAE and Qatar previously, and I am proud of the players for their commitment in the latest Fifa qualifiers. This is a new chapter and our full concentration is on the Arab Cup. We will give everything in the first match, then shift our focus to Morocco and Comoros. We have a real chance to win against Saudi Arabia but on the other side we are respecting them as they are one of the strong teams in the tournament but we must play with confidence,” the Portuguese coach ended.

Midfielder Abdullah Fawaz echoed the coach’s determination, saying, “we are here to win and to reach the final of this essential event. We know the fans expect more, and we promise to deliver a better performance in this tournament. Our goal is clear, and we believe we can achieve it,” he said.

Oman defender Musab al Mamari said that preparations have been comprehensive. “The coach focused on every details. The first match is always difficult, but we will approach it in the best possible way and follow the coach’s instructions. We hope the fans stand behind us and we need their support.”

Seeb claim HM Youth Cup, Salalah second, Saham 3rd



In the HM Cup for Youth awards, Seeb Club lifted the cup as champions, while Salalah Club came second, with Saham Club in third position. — Saleh al Sharji

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 1

AT THE behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, on Monday presided over a ceremony to announce the results of His Majesty The Sultan’s Cup for Youth. Seeb Club lifted the cup as the champions, while Salalah Club came second, with Saham Club in the third position.

In his speech at the ceremony, Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, affirmed that the competition aims to establish a comprehensive vision for developing club management based on the highest standards of quality, governance, and modern planning. This, he said, enhances the role of clubs as spaces that nurture youth, support cultural and sports activities, and contribute to fostering citizenship and volunteerism. He added that this year’s edition aligns with the Oman Sports Strategy 2040 — ‘Advanced Omani Sports and Global Achievements’ by developing the evaluation system, increasing prize values, and linking the competition to strategic sector projects such as the establishment of private-sector clubs, separation of merged clubs, converting clubs into specialised entities, privatisation and enhancing financial sustainability through TV broadcasting rights.

Al Rawas extended his gratitude to club leaders and the ministry’s partners from media institutions and public and private entities, noting that the competition has become a clear roadmap for club development and youth empowerment.

The ceremony included a visual presentation highlighting the evolution of the competition since its launch in 1998 and its role in strengthening institutional work within clubs, along with a review of past winning clubs. After the presentation, the Minister of Energy and Minerals, accompanied by Basil al Rawas, honoured the top clubs of the 2024 edition. Seeb Club received first place, the Sultan’s Cup for Youth, and a cash prize of RO 50,000. Salalah Club came second, receiving RO 35,000, followed by Saham in third place with RO 30,000. Oman Club finished fourth with a prize of RO 25,000, while Al Bashayer Club were placed fifth, securing RO 20,000.

STRATEGIC PILLARS

The ceremony also honoured the winning clubs in the strategic pillars of Oman’s sports system: Taqah Club won the Cultural, Sports and Youth Activities pillar. Qurayat Club received the award for the Economy and Development pillar. Fanja Club won the Governance pillar



The HM Cup for Youth awards ceremony.



and Al Amerat Club topped the Sports and Environmental Sustainability pillar.

This edition saw the participation of 50 clubs. Its renewed vision positioned the club as a cultural, sports, and youth platform that contributes to creativity, innovation, and financial sustainability. Meanwhile, its mission focused on achieving an integrated administrative model for clubs based on quality, governance and effective planning, reinforcing their role in nurturing youth and enhancing engagement.

The main committee adopted a new guideline featuring four key competition pillars, ensuring balanced performance across all fields rather than relying on a single area. Results were calculated through a precise formula linking each pillar’s percentage to the overall evaluation score. In case of a tie, rankings were determined according to performance in competitive sports or governance. The Cultural, Sports, and Youth Activities pillar is one of



the most significant, with 313 points distributed across awareness campaigns, physical activity celebrations, summer programmes, women’s activities, and programmes for persons with disabilities, with minimum participation requirements, media coverage criteria, and an approved annual plan.

Meanwhile, Yusef al Wahaibi, Vice-President of Seeb Club, explained that Seeb has consistently maintained its place among the top three over the past years due to a clear strategy covering administrative, financial, technical, and youth-focused aspects. He asserted that the competition has supported stronger governance, more active youth and community programmes, and improved cultural and sports initiatives, while contributing to the development of internal regulations and laws. Al Wahaibi praised the ministry’s efforts in developing and expanding the competition, affirming that Seeb Club will continue working to elevate its performance across all fields.

SPANISH LEAGUE



Real Madrid's Vinicius Junior in action with Girona's Arnau Martinez. — Reuters

REAL MADRID TITLE HOPES DENTED AT GIRONA WITH DRAW

BARCELONA: Real Madrid were held to a third consecutive La Liga draw in a 1-1 tie at Girona on Sunday, allowing Barcelona to retain pole position. Azzedine Ounahi fired the hosts into a surprise lead before half-time, with Kylian Mbappe earning Madrid a point from the penalty spot.

After Barcelona beat Alaves on Saturday to move top of the table, Madrid needed a victory at Girona to reclaim top spot but now sit second, a point behind the champions.

Earlier Alberto Moleiro helped Villarreal, third, move back ahead of fourth-place Atletico Madrid with a stoppage time winner in a 3-2 victory at Real Sociedad.

Real Madrid's draw increases the pressure on Madrid coach Xabi Alonso, after recent rumours suggesting his future is insecure in the Madrid dugout. "We are up there, it's all very even, it's a long season and we have to continue," Alonso said.

Madrid travel to face Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday for a fourth consecutive league match on the road, a game moved because of the club's participation in the Spanish Super Cup in January.

"The table will be hard-fought, there will be lots of movement," added Alonso.

Mbappe and Arda Guler fired off target for Madrid early on in a hotly-contested but scrappy clash, in front of a raucous home crowd. French superstar Mbappe had a goal ruled out for handball moments before Morocco international Ounahi fired Girona ahead, rifling home from just inside the area to stun their illustrious visitors.

Catalan minnows Girona, 18th, have twice beaten Real Madrid at Montilivi since making their top flight debut in 2017 and for a while it looked like they were going to manage it again.

Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois made a stunning save to tip away Vanat's drive across goal before Los Blancos fought back.

After having a goal disallowed for offside Vinicius was clumsily felled in the box by Hugo Rincon. Mbappe smashed the resulting penalty into the bottom left corner past Gazzaniga's dive for his 14th La Liga goal of the campaign.

"Absolutely not the result we wanted tonight, but the league is still on and very long," wrote Mbappe on Instagram social media. — AFP



The win against Afghanistan lifted Oman's tally to nine points, placing the team second in the Group 7 standings.

Oman U17 fall short of Asian Cup spot despite big win

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 1

OMAN national under-17 team concluded its campaign in the qualifiers for the AFC Asian Cup — set to take place in Saudi Arabia in April 2026 — with a commanding 4-0 victory over Afghanistan. The match was played at Thuwunna National Stadium in Myanmar as part of the fifth and final round of Group 7.

This win lifted Oman's tally to 9 points, placing the team second in the Group 7 standings. However, the national team missed out on direct qualification, as Myanmar topped the group with 10 points. Syria finished third with 7 points, Afghanistan fourth with 3, while Nepal ended at the bottom with no points.

Oman began the match with a clear attacking approach, maintaining possession and enjoying territorial control for most of the first half, while varying their attacking patterns through the middle and the flanks. Despite this superiority,

Afghanistan produced the first real threat in the 17th minute with a powerful shot that was deflected for a corner. Oman responded quickly through a valuable chance in the 19th minute, missed by Saleh Fakhri, followed by a serious attempt from Mohammed al Hashim in the 21st minute that went narrowly wide. Another effort came from Muadh al Hinai in the 24th minute, also missing by a small margin.

Oman continued their sustained pressure as Afghanistan retreated deeper, but the breakthrough did not come until stoppage time. In the second minute of added time (45+2), Abdullah al Saadi capitalised on a loose ball inside the box and finished confidently, giving Oman a well-deserved lead heading into half-time.

GREATER MOMENTUM
The Junior Red Warriors entered the second half with even greater momentum. Afghanistan created a modest chance in the 57th minute, but Oman extended their lead just three minutes later. In the 60th minute, Mohammed al Hashim delivered a superb

through-ball to Turki al Ghassani, who rounded the goalkeeper and slotted the ball home. Three minutes after that, Al Ghassani struck again, following up a rebound from the Afghan goalkeeper after a powerful shot from Al Saadi, making it 3-0.

Oman continued to dominate, with substitute Saad al Maamari nearly adding another in the 79th minute with a curling effort that was brilliantly saved. In the 85th minute, Mohammed al Hashim sealed the victory with a precise header, securing Oman's fourth goal of the night. The match then settled into a calmer rhythm, with four minutes of stoppage time added but no further changes to the scoreline, ending in a convincing 4-0 win.

Despite the big win and overall convincing performances throughout the qualifiers, Oman finished second behind Myanmar, ending the dream of direct qualification. Nevertheless, the team exited the competition with encouraging displays and promising young talents who showcased potential for a brighter future in upcoming tournaments.

Sixth disability sports fest opens with expanded programmes

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 1

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) inaugurated on Monday evening the sixth edition of the Festival for Persons with Disabilities, which will run for three days at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrrouqi-yah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, in the presence of several dignitaries, invitees and media representatives.

This year's edition features a wide range of sports competitions and cultural activities designed to empower persons with disabilities and enhance their participation across various fields.

The ceremony began with a speech delivered by Saud bin Badr Ambusaidi, Assistant Director-General for Sports Activities at the Ministry and Chairman of the Festival's Main Organising Committee. He affirmed that the annual event has become a national platform that embraces creativity

and willpower, reflecting Oman's firm commitment to human development without exception. He added that each year, Oman opens new windows of hope and presents a civilised model that views challenges not as obstacles but as catalysts for achievement.

Ambusaidi noted that the festival is not merely a sports or entertainment event, but rather a national message aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which emphasises the inclusion of all members of society in the nation's development journey. He explained that this year's edition is more comprehensive and diverse in terms of activities and training programmes, meeting the aspirations of participants across different disability categories.

He added that the festival's activities held over three days at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex reveal exceptional talents and inspiring stories that dissolve barriers and showcase participants' abilities. He emphasised that the festival is a key platform for talent discovery and for supporting



This year's edition features a wide range of competitions. — Abdulwahid al Hamadani

the national Paralympic teams, in addition to strengthening partnerships between government institutions, the private sector, and civil society to support training and rehabilitation programmes.

Ambusaidi further stated that organising the festival aligns with the national sports strategy, which aims to increase physical activity among persons with disabilities for recreation, health, and competitive purposes, in line with Oman Vision 2040's goals of building an aware, cohesive, and socially

and economically empowered society especially women, youth, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable groups. He pointed to the committee's early preparation efforts to ensure that this edition is more inclusive and responsive to the needs of the participants.

He highlighted that the festival, which began in 2008 with 1,300 participants, has grown significantly over the years, reaching over 3,316 participants in the 2024 edition — an indication of its success and its ability to attract new segments

of persons with disabilities and specialists. He added that the festival has established itself as an annual event eagerly anticipated for its human values and messages of integration, empowerment and participation. He concluded by affirming that disability is not the absence of ability, but rather a powerful presence of willpower.

3 SPECIALISED WORKSHOPS
In parallel with the festival, three specialised training workshops on officiating in Paralympic and Special Olympics sports concluded with strong participation from Omani youth aspiring to specialise in this field, and in the presence of a group of international experts and specialists. The workshops held at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex were more organised and comprehensive this year and covered three sports: boccia, table tennis (Special Olympics), and para-badminton. This came as part of the festival committee's efforts to qualify competent national referees capable of raising the level of local and international competitions.



Verstappen triumphs in Qatar, boosts hopes for fifth crown

RED BULL'S Max Verstappen won the Qatar Grand Prix, while McLaren blew it, to take the Formula One title battle with Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri to a season-ending showdown in Abu Dhabi next weekend.

Championship leader Norris finished fourth, behind the Williams of Spaniard Carlos Sainz, with the Briton's advantage slashed to 12 points as McLaren paid a heavy price for a strategy blunder when the safety car was deployed early on.

Verstappen's third win in a row in the night race moved the four-times world champion up to second in the standings, now four points clear of Norris's Australian teammate Piastri who started on pole but finished second.

The top three drivers each have seven wins for the season.

"We stay in the fight until the end," said Verstappen, who has been champion since a controversial 2021 Abu Dhabi Grand Prix duel with Lewis Hamilton.

"It's still possible now," added the Dutchman, who has staged an astonishing comeback from 104 points off the lead at the end of August when his hopes of remaining in the reckoning right down to the wire looked over.

MCLAREN STAY OUT AS ALL BUT OCON PIT
McLaren stayed out while everyone



McLaren's Lando Norris and Red Bull's Max Verstappen in action. — Reuters

else except Haas's Esteban Ocon pitted after Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg tangled with Alpine's Pierre Gasly on lap seven and triggered the safety car.

"I think in hindsight it's pretty obvious what we could have done," said Piastri of the strategy blunder.

"We lost the victory with Oscar and we lost the podium with Lando," was the verdict of team boss Andrea Stella.

Verstappen, third on the grid, passed Norris at the start to slot into second behind Piastri while Mercedes' George Russell plunged from fourth to seventh.

The pitstop dropped the Red Bull to fourth but that became third when Ocon was given a five-second penalty for a false start and pitted to serve it.

Norris had already questioned McLaren's strategy over the radio.

"We should have just followed him (Verstappen) in, no? If we knew the car ahead was staying out," he asked, with race engineer Will Joseph assuring him that "they have lost all flexibility for the remainder of the race."

It looked to others, however, that McLaren had paid a price for a determination not to favour either

driver in the title battle by having to stack them in the pits.

Piastri pitted on lap 24, coming back out in fifth and moving up to fourth when Norris came in a lap later and slotted back in behind.

The rest of the field had to pit on lap 32, due to Pirelli putting restrictions on how long cars could run on a set of tyres for safety reasons — a move forcing a minimum two-stop strategy.

That gave the stewards several unsafe releases to consider, with Haas's Oliver Bearman handed a 10-second stop-and-go penalty.

NORRIS PASSES ANTONELLI ON PENULTIMATE LAP
Verstappen returned to the track in third, only 7.7 seconds off the lead but set to go to the end while the McLarens had to pit again.

Piastri made a lightning 1.8-second stop on lap 43, rejoining in third with a target of making up 17.2 seconds on Verstappen in the closing 14 laps. He was 7.9 behind at the chequered flag.

Norris pitted on lap 45 and came out in fifth with Sainz and Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli ahead, passing the Italian on the penultimate lap.

Russell finished sixth with Fernando Alonso seventh for Aston Martin and Charles Leclerc eighth for Ferrari.

Liam Lawson took two points for Racing Bulls and Verstappen's teammate Yuki Tsunoda completed the top 10. — Reuters



MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
5,710.384

BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$64.26
BRENT \$63.45
LIGHT \$59.62





ظفار الإسلامي
DHO FAR ISLAMIC

LEARNING HAS NO LIMITS
with profit rates starting at

3.49%

on education financing.



[www.dhofarislamic.com](#) | 24775777

*Terms and Conditions Apply.

Oman is hydrogen-ready: Al Aufi

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, DEC 1

OMAN Minister of Energy and Minerals, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, stated that Oman is ready for the hydrogen transition despite what he described as a global “reality check” for the sector.

Speaking at the 4th Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO), Al Aufi addressed what he described the “dying hype” around hydrogen. “We are meeting today at a critical junction for the hydrogen economy . The global aspirations — or the hype, so-called at some point — is now settling down into something a little bit more concrete... It’s called realism, or a reality check.

We are seeing a lot of hype and now we’re seeing that hype curve flatten and steadily progress into something a little bit more realistic”, he said.



Oman is ready to advance to the next stage of green hydrogen development: Al Aufi

Sharing his perspective on the current global landscape, he added: “The market is challenging the cost, the market is challenging the supply chain, the market is challenging the regulation and the market, of course, is also challenging the form of derivative or the type of molecules that will be transported and consumed. All of which are legitimate challenges”.

He further added: “Some people are calling this a slow-down. In my dictionary, this is maturing — an economy that is moving very fast and maturing in its own right, already fast enough.

And we need this in order to understand why the energy transition takes a long time and how what we’re seeing today is not really a slow-down, but, in its own right, a very fast transition: from hype to maturity to getting projects moving”.

According to the official, major energy transitions have historically taken decades to materialise. In comparison, hydrogen

does not have that luxury, he said, noting that today’s slowdown is simply a pause to plan better, not a reversal.

“I think this so-called slowness is a very fast realisation that hype is not going to get us where we want. We need realism. We need markets. We need global collaboration in order to make this energy become the energy of choice — and it is already moving”.

In concluding, Al Aufi reaffirmed Oman’s readiness to advance to the next stage. “Oman is ready. The framework is ready.

Our national champions are ready. And if I look around this room, so are all the partners we’ve been talking to from all over the world.

I think the world is also ready. We just need to get the first few projects off the ground and demonstrate to everybody that hydrogen is coming — and it’s a matter of time, a very short time, before hydrogen becomes the energy of choice before we do anything else”, he shared.

Hydrom advances Oman’s hydrogen ambitions

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, DEC 1

HYDROM — the orchestrator of Oman’s energy transition — doubled down on its long-term ambitions on Monday, December 1, 2025, during the first day of the 2025 Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO).

Speaking at the summit, Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom, reflected on how quickly global sentiment shifted.

“Two years ago, during the last edition of Green Hydrogen Summit Oman 3, when we spoke about green hydrogen in Oman, the world was energised. The promise was enormous and the momentum was global and the expectations were sky-high”.

“As the months unfolded, reality set in. Markets cooled, timelines shifted and many around the world began asking hard questions about the pace of hydrogen transition”, he added.

For Oman, however, the response was measured and intentional. “But last year, around the same time, during Hydrogen’s Investors Day, Oman did something different. Oman decided to stay the course. While others paused to assess, we continued to move forward, not blindly, but steadily, deliberately and with clarity of purpose”.

Al Shidhani added, “Because from the very beginning, we understood something fundamental; green hydrogen is not a short-term opportunity,



ENG ABDULAZIZ AL SHIDHANI
Managing Director
Hydrom

it is a long-term national priority and a global necessity”.

In a statement, the Managing Director explained that Oman’s green hydrogen journey is guided by a long-term national vision that resolves the “competitive trilemma“ of global hydrogen production, balancing cost, execution and market proximity.

“While most markets are working to solve for two, Oman is building for all three. Our renewable resources deliver cost advantage, our governance and infrastructure bring execution certainty and our geographic position connects us directly to key demand centres.

This combination defines Oman’s strength and ensures that progress translates into real, lasting competitiveness”, he shared.

Some of the company’s most notable achievements include the signing of the world’s first liquid hydrogen corridor in Q2 of 2025, “We signed the world’s first liquid hydrogen corridor. It’s an end-to-end

liquid hydrogen export pathway formed by 11 partners representing the entire value chain — from the production of the molecules, to their liquefaction on the shores of Oman, all the way to shipping these molecules to Amsterdam, receiving regasification of the molecules and putting them back into the pipelines of the Netherlands and Germany’s hydrogen pipeline network, all the way to the end customers”, he shared.

Additionally, the MD unveiled that he is currently in the process of establishing the groundwork for an Oman-South Korea hydrogen corridor, following an MOU between the two nations in the field of green energy transition.

In regards to current hydrogen projects, the MD shared that despite the exit of two projects (BP Oman Block Duqm) and (POSCO-ENGIE Block), Oman is well on its way to achieving its target of producing 1 million tonnes of GH2 by 2030/2031.

“Our portfolio today consists of nine projects. Two have concluded by mutual agreement, while six remain under development and one is under construction. Our target to produce one million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030–31 remains fully intact.

The active pipeline now includes Amnah, YAMNA, ENACTUS, GEO, ACME, HyPort and Salalah H2, distributed across Al Duqm and Salalah”.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/2025/037	Provision of Financial Advisory Services for 18 months	24/12/2025	29/12/2025	Specialist	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -

Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply). - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om, using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om, under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of not less than Ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer. - A certificate confirming a minimum Omanization level of 30% within the organization is obligatory , bidder who fails to submit this certificate will result in exclusion from the tender evaluation process. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.
Incentives and exemptions	- Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements. - Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from registration fees on business opportunities platform and supplier registration with Nama Group.



ناماء
التزويد
SUPPLY

Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC
PO Box 1239, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24250800 | CR 1/71235/7
records@supply.nama.om | [www.supply.nama.om](#)



ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



BankDhofar’s Ladies Account continues to set benchmarks in customer experience and financial empowerment.

BANKDHO FAR’S LADIES ACCOUNT WINS ‘BEST BANKING PRODUCT FOR WOMEN’

MUSCAT: BankDhofar’s Ladies Account has been named the ‘Best Banking Product for Women’ at the 2025 edition of the Women’s Tabloid Awards, reinforcing its standing as Oman’s most trusted and empowering financial product for Omani and expatriate women.

Hosted by the UK-based Women’s Tabloid Magazine, the Women’s Tabloid Awards have emerged as a global platform celebrating the achievements of women and organisations that exemplify leadership, innovation and social impact. The prestigious awards recognise excellence across multiple sectors — including business, banking, technology, health and education — and spotlight initiatives that advance inclusion, equality and purpose-driven leadership.

Designed to meet the unique financial needs and aspirations of women across the Sultanate of Oman, BankDhofar’s Ladies Account continues to set benchmarks in customer experience and financial empowerment. The account offers an array of exclusive benefits, including Preferential interest rates on high-yield savings accounts and tailored lifestyle privileges through merchant offers.

Open to Omani nationals and expatriate women aged 23 years and above — or 18 years for those with salary accounts — BankDhofar’s Ladies Account exemplifies the bank’s commitment to inclusivity, innovation and customer-centric growth. Its broader strategy focuses on delivering exceptional value through distinctive, relationship-based banking services built on accountability, collaboration and performance excellence.

Beyond individual recognition, the Women’s Tabloid Awards represent a global celebration of progress and inclusion — honouring women who are redefining leadership, work and sustainability.

By recognising BankDhofar’s Ladies Account, the awards reaffirm Oman’s growing influence in the region’s financial innovation landscape and the bank’s enduring commitment to empowering women to thrive financially and socially.

BARE. LAUNCHES FREE TRADE-IN OFFER

MUSCAT: bare., the homegrown device protection brand, is strengthening its footprint in the Sultanate of Oman with the launch of a market-first activation offering customers a free upgrade on their screen protection.

With more than 13 years of experience, bare. has established itself as one of Oman’s most trusted names in premium full-body device protection, having safeguarded over 1.5 million devices across its expanding network in Oman, the



UAE and Qatar. To mark its strengthened presence in Oman, bare. is introducing “Trade-In Magic”, a first-of-its-kind activation in Oman, running exclusively at the Mall of Oman.

As part of the campaign, customers can trade in any existing screen protector, regardless of brand or condition and receive a free bare. Clear screen protector through a redeemable voucher. The activation will also feature exclusive giveaways available only during the event.

Pact to finance polysilicon plant in SOHAR Port

IN a landmark signing ceremony held during the OAB CEO Summit 2025 on November 17, 2025 under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) announced the signing of a financing agreement with United Solar Polysilicon FZC SPC (USP) to support the establishment of a state-of-the-art polysilicon manufacturing facility in SOHAR Port and Freezone.

The agreement marks a milestone in Oman’s renewable-energy landscape, positioning the Sultanate of Oman as a key global hub for sustainable technology manufacturing.

The project, valued at \$1.6 billion, will feature a production capacity of 100,000 tonnes per annum (TPA) of high-purity solar-grade polysilicon — making it the largest such facility in the region — Middle East, Europe and Americas.

Under the agreement,



The project, valued at \$1.6 billion, will feature a production capacity of 100,000 tonnes per annum (TPA) of high-purity solar-grade polysilicon.

Oman Arab Bank, together with another Omani financial institution, has extended \$200 million in term financing to support the construction and development of the project..

Sulaiman al Harthi, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, commented: “This partnership demonstrates OAB’s ongoing role in financing

projects that contribute to Oman’s diversification and renewable-energy ambitions; and also to open opportunities to employ Omanis employees and their skill development in this high technology project.

We are proud to support initiatives that drive sustainable growth, attract

foreign investment, increase Omanisation and strengthen the nation’s industrial base”.

Longgen Zhang (“Sam”), Chairman and Founder of United Solar Polysilicon, stated: “United Solar Polysilicon is proud to partner with Oman Arab Bank in realising one of the most advanced polysilicon facilities in the world.

This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to sustainability, innovation and the global energy transition”.

Supported by Future Fund Oman, part of Oman Investment Authority, this strategic collaboration underscores Oman’s growing appeal as a destination for large-scale green-energy investments.

The signing at the CEO Summit took place among senior industry leaders, reinforcing Oman Arab Bank’s vision of fostering partnerships that align with national sustainability objectives and broader global energy transition targets.

Outward Bound Oman empowers 100 young Omani women

MUSCAT: Outward Bound Oman, with the support of Renaissance Services, has concluded its “Jawhar” programme for Grade 12 and first-year foundation students. A total of 100 young women from government schools, universities and colleges across Oman took part in the three-day experiential learning expeditions in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

Mohana Prabhakar, Chief Communications & Corporate Affairs Officer at Renaissance Services, said: “We are delighted to partner with Outward Bound Oman on the Jawhar programme, which offers young women a rare chance to learn through real experiences that build character, leadership and confidence”.

Andrew Hill, Executive Director of



Outward Bound Oman, added: “Real growth happens when young people are challenged in meaningful, supportive environments. Jawhar allows young women to discover

their strengths, build resilience and develop the confidence needed to thrive in university and beyond”.

The programme included outdoor activities such as hiking, camping and guided discussions, all designed to build confidence, leadership, responsibility, independence and teamwork. Participants were also encouraged to explore their personal strengths through hands-on, experiential learning an approach central to Outward Bound Oman.

One participant shared: “This course significantly helped me develop my skills on both a personal and professional level. I gained more confidence in myself and learned new tools I can apply in my work, increasing my chances of growth and success”.

Bank Muscat supports Omani youth with job and training opportunities

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to providing job and training opportunities for Omani youth, Bank Muscat, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, participated in the recent Career and Training Opportunities Exhibition at the College of Banking and Financial Studies, which was inaugurated under the auspices of Khalid bin Salim al Ghammari, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Labour.

The exhibition saw the participation of more than 20 institutions representing various sectors of the workforce.

As part of its involvement, Bank Muscat’s dedicated booth at the exhibition introduced students to the job and training opportunities



Bank Muscat’s dedicated booth at the exhibition introduced students to the job and training opportunities available at the ban.

available at the bank, as well as the benefits offered to employees and its role in fostering a positive work environment.

Additionally, the Bank highlighted the types of job and training specialisations available; while also providing information on how to apply for the opportunities the Bank offers annually across various sectors of the banking industry.

Bank Muscat prioritises participation in job and training fairs organised by higher education institutions.

These exhibitions are crucial as they provide an excellent platform for students to meet with both public and private sector institutions under one roof, enabling them to learn about the respective recruitment

policies. The Bank is committed to engaging with students and providing them with comprehensive insights into the roles available.

The Bank continues to collaborate with a number of educational institutions — universities and colleges — to achieve its goals of sustainable human capital development. Since the beginning of this year 2025, Bank Muscat has provided 198 job opportunities and 616 training opportunities for students in disciplines related to the banking sector.

This annual initiative is designed to provide students with the best possible opportunities to develop their practical skills in various fields, especially in banking and finance.

SHORTTAKES



The projects are expected to raise industrial output by around RO 225 million by the end of 2026.

RO 906 MILLION INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS LAUNCHED NATIONWIDE

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is progressing with the launch of six major industrial projects across industrial cities, free zones and economic zones, with total investments exceeding RO 906 million.

The initiatives mark a significant step in strengthening the industrial sector’s contribution to the national economy and in attracting high-quality investments aligned with priority growth sectors.

Collectively, the projects are expected to raise industrial output by around RO 225 million by the end of 2026, create hundreds of job opportunities for Omanis, boost industrial exports and open new prospects in downstream industries, reinforcing local value chains.

Among the latest developments is the inauguration of the Al Ghaith Chemical Industries Complex in Sur Industrial City, with an investment of nearly RO 50 million. The complex will support the silicon and solar energy industries through the production of specialised chemicals, while also serving key sectors such as oil and gas and other industrial activities.

In SOHAR Port and Freezone, a polysilicon manufacturing facility with an investment of RO 615 million is scheduled to be launched this month, underscoring Oman’s strategic focus on renewable energy technologies, particularly solar cells.

In parallel, the SOHAR Port and Freezone will inaugurate a sugar refinery valued at RO 141.5 million, aimed at enhancing food security and strengthening domestic food-processing capabilities.

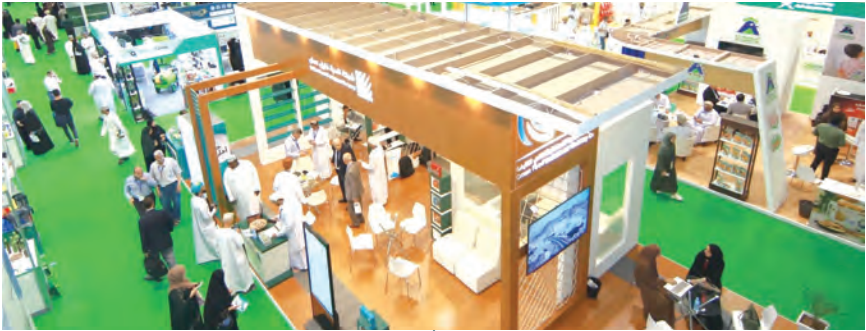
Further projects include the opening of an animal and fish feed factory in Khazaen Economic City, supported by an investment of RO 36 million, to meet the growing needs of the livestock and fisheries sectors. An industrial bread factory, with investments of RO 25 million, will also be inaugurated to support national food production and improve competitiveness. — ONA

OMAN AGROFOOD SHOWCASES INNOVATION AND INVESTMENT

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, DEC 1

OMAN AgroFood, the 7th International Trade Exhibition for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, was launched on Monday, December 1, 2025, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

Bringing together government decision-makers, international stakeholders, regional buyers, traders and experts, the three-day event serves as a dynamic platform for knowledge exchange, collaboration and the promotion of investment opportunities. It also



Oman AgroFood features a wide range of advanced products, cutting-edge technologies and solutions in the agriculture, fisheries and food sectors.

supports the Sultanate of Oman’s broader vision for transformative advancements and sustainable growth across the agriculture, food and fisheries sectors, while showcasing Oman’s expanding capabilities in innovation and technology-driven solutions.

Government efforts extend to specific initiatives like supporting small and medium enterprises in local medicinal and aromatic

plants, introducing water- and fertiliser-efficient technologies such as soilless cultivation and aquaponics; and implementing renewable energy solutions — particularly solar power — in net house operations to enhance sustainability and reduce costs.

The exhibition features a wide range of advanced products, cutting-edge technologies and pioneering solutions in the agriculture, fisheries and food sectors, offering visitors a comprehensive view of emerging innovations and investment prospects. It also highlights the rapid technological progress shaping these industries and the opportunities it creates for both local and international investors.

Green transition gains pace in transport sector

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 1

OMAN is making steady and strategic progress in decarbonising its transportation sector as part of the nation’s broader transition towards a low-carbon future, according to a senior government official.

From light vehicles and heavy trucking to shipping, port operations and aviation, the Sultanate of Oman is advancing a suite of green technologies and policy frameworks designed to cut emissions while positioning the country as a regional hub for clean mobility and sustainable fuels.

Speaking during a panel discussion on Hydrogen Ecosystems at the Energy Executive Circle on Sunday, Abdullah al Busaidy, Director-General of the Oman Logistics Centre at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), outlined the multi-mode strategy shaping Oman’s transport decarbonisation road map. He said the Ministry is leading the design of the national green transportation framework, covering policy development, investment incentives and coordination with public- and private-sector partners.

“When we began developing the road map two years ago, the path forward for



ABDULLAH AL BUSAIDY
Director-General of Oman Logistics Centre at MoTCIT

light vehicles was already very clear — we have moved decisively towards electric vehicles”, Al Busaidy said. “For heavy transport, the debate continues, which is why deeper engagement with the private sector has been essential. Sustainable decarbonisation must be commercial and feasible for operators and that requires collaboration”.

One of the ministry’s earliest milestones has been the development and local manufacturing of a co-combustion truck technology that allows existing diesel fleets to be retrofitted to run on hydrogen as well. Trials conducted in Oman have demonstrated a 53% reduction in CO₂ emissions, a breakthrough that Al Busaidy said meets transition objectives without imposing additional operating costs on logistics companies.

The Ministry is also preparing to designate green transport corridors — particularly linking the ports in Suhar and Al Duqm with concession areas — to support heavy mobility and future hydrogen-ready

logistics routes.

In the maritime sector, the ministry is exploring the potential for green bunkering based on the use of green methanol for shipping. An agreement to this effect was signed by the Ministry with an international consortium — HIF EMEA, ACCIONA & Nordex Green Hydrogen and Al Meera Investment — to explore a large-scale project to produce and supply green methanol for ships in Dhofar Governorate.

The initiative is expected to significantly advance Oman’s ambition to develop Dhofar Governorate as a major hub for green fuels and low-carbon bunkering in the Middle East.

Oman’s aviation sector is undergoing a parallel transformation. Al Busaidy announced the launch of the country’s first sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) initiative, developed in collaboration with private-sector partner Bauer Nimr.

Additionally, the Sultanate of Oman is in the final stages of formally joining the Heavy Transport Decarbonisation Alliance, further strengthening international cooperation and knowledge exchange.

“Our targets are clear, our commitment is firm and challenges always push us to find better solutions”, he added, emphasising localisation, collaboration and innovation as the three guiding pillars shaping the Ministry’s decarbonisation strategy.

OPAZ approves Regulatory Regulation for Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) held its fourth meeting for 2025, chaired by Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Board.

The Board approved the Regulatory Regulation for Al Wadi Al Kabir Industrial City, which is managed by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates “Madayn”. This is aimed at enhancing the service infrastructure and developing the services offered to investors and industrial projects.

The Board approved amendments to the Regulatory Regulation for Salalah Free Zone to make it more flexible and attractive to investors, thus contributing to the development of the economic sector in the region. The Board also approved the Draft Executive Regulation for the Law of Special Economic Zones and Free Zones and its implementing decisions. This aims to update

the regulatory and legal framework for the economic and free zones in line with economic developments and investment requirements. Furthermore, the Board approved the project for restructuring the subsidiaries of Oman Investment and Development Holding Company “Mubadrah” for the years 2025-2027.

The Board also adopted the organizational structure for the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

— ONA



Shaikh Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy presides over the meeting

MANUFACTURING SLUMP

Asia’s manufacturing sector weakens



Asia’s manufacturing sector stayed under pressure in November as weak global demand persisted and progress in US trade talks failed to lift new orders.

PMI data showed factory activity contracting in China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. In China, private surveys slipped back into contraction, echoing official data showing activity falling for an eighth straight month, though at a slower pace. — Reuters

SUPPLY SHOCK

Oil prices jump on disruptions



Oil prices climbed on Monday after supply fears intensified, following a drone attack that halted Caspian Pipeline Consortium exports and renewed US-Venezuela tensions.

Brent crude rose to above \$63 a barrel, while WTI gained more than 2%. Although OPEC+ agreed to keep output unchanged for 2026, traders remained focused on potential disruptions from the Black Sea region. — Reuters

CURRENCY MOVES

Yen gains on Bank of Japan signal



The yen strengthened on Monday after Bank of Japan Governor Kazuo Ueda signalled that a December interest-rate hike is under consideration, lifting expectations of policy normalisation.

He said the BOJ would weigh the pros and cons at its next meeting, with wages and data in focus.

The dollar eased meanwhile as markets increased bets on a US rate cut this month. — Reuters

OPINION

Towards sustainability: Oman’s journey in the blue economy



DR UMAIR WAQAS

The writer is Assistant Professor of Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Dhofar University.

THE story of Oman has always been written by the sea. From the ancient ports of Sumhura and Suha to the modern maritime gateways of Salala and Al Duqm, the ocean has carried not only trade but identity. For centuries, Omani sailors connected Africa, India and Arabia, shaping one of the most vibrant maritime cultures in the Indian Ocean.

Today, as the world turns to the concept of the blue economy, valuing oceans as engines of growth, innovation and sustainability, Oman stands at the brink of a new economic horizon.

With approximately three thousand kilometres of coastline, abundant marine biodiversity and strategic access to global shipping lanes, the Sultanate of Oman’s blue wealth remains one of its most underutilised national assets.

Oman Vision 2040 positions the nation as a diversified, knowledge-driven economy guided by sustainability and innovation. While green transition is visible in renewable energy and circular industries, the blue transition, the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, offers equal promise.

The blue economy is not confined to fisheries; it encompasses shipping, coastal tourism, offshore energy, desalination, biotechnology and marine data services. According to the World Bank, the global blue economy could reach three trillion US dollars

by 2030. Even a modest share of that could add billions to Oman’s GDP and generate thousands of high-skilled jobs in logistics, aquaculture, research and digital marine services.

Oman’s network of ports gives it a natural advantage in this transformation. The Port of Salala, positioned on the main East-West shipping corridor, already ranks among the world’s top trans-shipment hubs, serving as a critical bridge between Asia and Africa

The Port of Duqm and its Special Economic Zone are rapidly evolving into a ship-repair and maritime-services hub, complemented by renewable-energy integration and green-hydrogen projects.

SOHAR Port and Freezone, meanwhile, connects maritime trade to industrial and manufacturing clusters in Al Batinah North Governorate, demonstrating how blue infrastructure can merge seamlessly with industrial growth.

Collectively, these ports form a “blue triangle of competitiveness”, capable of positioning Oman as a regional centre for green shipping, marine technology and ocean-based trade facilitation. Equally promising is the potential of fisheries and aquaculture.

Although the fisheries sector currently contributes about two per cent of GDP, its value-addition potential is far greater. Sustainable aquaculture, integrating digital monitoring, eco-friendly feed and efficient

Today, as the world turns to the concept of the blue economy, valuing oceans as engines of growth, innovation and sustainability, Oman stands at the brink of a new economic horizon.

cold-chain logistics, can multiply export revenues while protecting fragile marine ecosystems.

The Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) initiative has already begun supporting modern processing zones and traceability systems.

By aligning these with global sustainability standards and blockchain-based certification, Oman can strengthen consumer trust and expand its market reach across Europe and East Asia.

This combination of digitalisation and sustainability could position the country as a trusted global supplier of premium, ethically harvested seafood.

Beyond ports and fisheries lies another dimension of blue prosperity: coastal and marine tourism. From the tranquil bays of Dhofar Governorate to the coral reefs of the Daymaniyat Islands, Oman’s coastline offers unmatched ecological diversity.

Promoting low-impact cruise tourism, diving experiences and coastal eco-resorts can diversify local economies and create inclusive opportunities for communities.

During the Khareef Dhofar Season, for example, marine tourism could complement land-based attractions, extending visitor stays and boosting regional income. With proper waste-management practices and community participation, tourism can become a model of blue stewardship, turning natural beauty into a sustainable livelihood.

DEUTSCHE BÖRSE FINDS TASTY MEAL IN EURONEXT SCRAPS

NEIL UNMACK

Deutsche Börse may find a palatable meal in Euronext’s leftovers. The German exchange operator has launched a 5.3 billion euro bid for funds distribution business Allfunds, a similar price to the offer made by its rival two years ago. Stephan Leithner’s firm at least has a better shot at completing the deal and making a tasty return. Despite listing just over four years ago, Allfunds has been a perennial takeover target. Its technology connects fund managers like BlackRock with distribution agents like banks. It’s a fast-growing niche on the continent, as it allows retail investors

Deutsche Börse’s offer is optically not that different from the tentative bid made by Euronext boss Stephane Boujnah in 2023, which was rejected.

been exposed to volatile asset prices, falling fees and more recently high interest rates, which pushed investors into cash. Deutsche Börse’s offer is optically not that different from the tentative bid made by Euronext boss Stephane Boujnah in 2023, which was rejected.

Leithner is now offering 8.80 euros in shares and cash, after factoring in an expected dividend, versus Boujnah’s 8.75 euros.

Still, Allfunds’ undisturbed price is now some 10% lower — it was trading before the news broke on Thursday at a multiple of just 14 forward earnings, versus around 19 in February 2023, using LSEG data. That said Leithner’s timing isn’t perfect: in April this year Allfunds was valued at less than 11 times.

It’s not yet a done deal, as counterbids could emerge from other exchanges — perhaps a fee-hungry bank, or even private equity. Deutsche Börse however has one big ace: it operates a similar distribution business, opening up the possibility of large savings from combining technology platforms.

The flip side is that any deal will probably invite lengthy scrutiny from the European Commission, as it brings together the top two European players in this niche. Allfunds’ role as a connector of cross-border investments may at least appeal to Brussels’ desire to better mobilise the continent’s savings.

The current price could just work for Leithner. By 2027, Allfunds might throw off perhaps 500 million euros of operating profit, per analysts’ forecasts polled by Visible Alpha. Assume Deutsche Börse can rip out savings equivalent to 35% of costs, as UBS analysts reckon. — Reuters

The solution is in the hands of the private sector

OMAN

stands today at a promising turning point. The country has built strong infrastructure and developed its human capital. A young, ambitious population is looking for chances to contribute and succeed. This is not a story of decline, but a story of potential that has not yet been fully unlocked — and the key to unlocking it lies in the hands of the private sector.

Today, Oman is entering a phase where future growth can no longer rely on the same tools that shaped its past. For many decades, it was natural for the state to lead development. In the early phases of nation-building, projects that were essential for progress — airports, ports, railways, power plants and heavy industry — were capital-intensive and carried low, uncertain financial returns. Private investors were not ready to take on such risk at scale.

Governments across the world stepped in, creating state-owned enterprises to anchor investment and lay the foundations for growth and social stability. Oman’s development story is no exception. The state built critical infrastructure and expanded social services. This legacy must be recognised and preserved. But the economic context that once justified heavy state leadership has evolved.

However, the environment has changed. Today, private companies — local and international — are more globalised, better capitalised and more capable than ever before. They can access international capital markets, partner with global firms and bring in cutting-edge technology.

Public-private partnerships allow private firms to lead investment in major projects while the government focuses on regulation, risk-sharing and ensuring public benefit. In this new phase, the private sector must become the primary engine of production, innovation, job creation and export growth. If the private sector is weak, no country can hope to attract



Today, private companies—local and international—are more globalised, better capitalised and more capable than ever before.



DR YOUSUF HAMED AL BALUSHI
yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

The writer is founder and CEO - Smart Investment Gateway, economists, board adviser & business transformation mentor.

sustained foreign direct investment or build competitive value chains. International companies will hesitate to enter markets where they feel they will compete not only with other firms, but also with powerful state-owned entities whose policies and privileges they cannot match.

A strong, empowered local private sector is therefore not a luxury; it is a precondition for successful diversification.

For the private sector to play this role, certain conditions are essential. Businesses need clarity of vision and policy, so that long-term investment decisions are not undermined by sudden changes.

They need regulatory stability and transparency, with predictable rules, efficient licensing and timely decisions. They need a level playing field, where private firms do not face unfair competition from state-owned companies receiving preferential treatment.

And they need access to finance and markets, including support for partnering with global players in technology and capital. This includes practical measures such as clear licensing timelines, transparent incentives and predictable regulatory updates.

Here the government’s role is crucial. Its job is to govern and build the ecosystem, not to compete with its own private sector. When government and private firms

operate side by side in the same commercial space, using policies the government itself sets, the private sector will always be at a disadvantage.

The state can and should remain a strong sovereign investor, particularly through sovereign wealth funds that are instrumental in government-to-government partnerships and de-risking large projects. But day-to-day business must be left to businesses.

At the same time, the private sector must also shift its mindset. In many oil-producing economies, including Oman, private companies have long relied heavily on government spending, contracts and the export of raw natural resources.

Too little attention has gone to processing, value addition and building competitive brands. Too often, firms have waited for the state to lead, instead of seeing themselves as nation-builders and partners in transformation. Competing globally today requires more than depending on government contracts; it requires initiative, innovation and long-term commitment.

The next phase requires a different attitude. Private sector leaders must recognise that the global model has changed: they are expected to invest, innovate, integrate into global value chains and create quality jobs at scale.

This will not happen through many small, scattered projects. It requires large, transformative investments in key sectors that can act as engines of growth.

Oman has clear opportunities in tourism, mining, logistics, fisheries, agriculture and related manufacturing and services. These sectors have the ingredients needed to achieve strong, sustained growth and to absorb large numbers of young job-seekers.

What is missing is a critical mass of anchor projects — major investments led by reputable companies that can attract suppliers, service providers and complementary activities around them.

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

INDIAN electrical
engineer more
than 20 years
experience in
"MEP" construction
field in Oman seeks
suitable job.
Contact: 92919281

ACCOUNTS/ SALES
Indian male (b com)
having 2+ years of
experience
in India accounts
sales looking for
suitable placement,
join immediately.
Contact: 76324360

LOOKING for
part time OR full
time Accounts/
Finance job.
20yrs experience
in Muscat. Upto
finalization & Audit.
Please contact:
92065499

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

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

CHIEF
accountant,
MBA finance, 9+
years experience
in financial
statements,
auditing,
budgeting, VAT,
tax, fixed assets,
reconciliation,
payroll.
Seeking a full-
time or part-
time position
in a senior
role. Contact:
akramhaniffa@
yahoo.com /
93988825.

SIT. VACANT

JOB VACANCY:

Operations
Manager
(Lifting Inspection
Company)
Required
Qualifications:
-ASNT Level
II (minimum
requirement).
-LLEA or ASNT
Foundation
certification.
-Diploma in Lifting
Accessories.
-Diplomas in
the following
equipment:
Mobile Crane
Overhead Crane
MEWP (Mobile
Elevating Work
Platforms)
Forklift
Gantry Crane
Additional
Advantage:
ASNT Level III
certification
Send all your CVs
& certificates on
below email:
pipe2566@yahoo.
com

LOOKING for
Pipeline Engineer
with 8 Years
Experience offer
salary: 200 OMR

Phone :
+96896965333

Email :
sultanalhabsi701@
gmail.com

URGENTLY REQUIRED
FOR CONTRACTING
COMPANY

1- Electrical Foreman.
2- Civil foreman
(Experience in Piping
work).
3- Civil Supervisor.

Contact @Mr.Mohmmaed
GSM : 92563101
send CV to
mohammed92563101@
gmail.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches),
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**

**Job
Vacancy**
URGENTLY REQUIRED FOR CONTRACTING COMPANY

- 1- Estimation Engineer (Civil) (10-12 Years Experience) - 1 No.
- 2- Business development Officer (Male/Female)
(10-12 Years Experience in Oman Market) - 1 No.
- 3- MEP Coordinator (10-12 Years Experience in Oman) - 1 No.
- 4- Division Head (ELV)
(10-12 Years Experience in Oman Market) - 1 No.
- 5- Junior Accountant (Male/Female) - 1 No.
- 6- Sales Coordinator - 1 No.

Please send your CV to **71739823**
and Email ID: **saleemmalik_123@yahoo.co.in**

FOR RENT/SALE

**Fish Plant & Accommodation Building
FOR RENT/SALE**

LOCATION: MULANDHA INDUSTRIAL AREA

3511 sqmt Plant with Cold Store / Blast Freezers /
Office & Other facilities

1663 sqmt with number of Offices

3084 sqmt Accommodation Block with Flats,
Restaurants, Stores & other facilities.

Contact Nos.: 99643760/ 92192020

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Muscat based Grade 1 Company is seeking for **talented
Civil Engineers and Estimation Engineer**
with a strong background in GCC construction projects.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Minimum 5-7 years of experience in the GCC region.
- Valid driving license.
- Preferably with experience in Ministry of Education (MOE) projects.
- Ready to join immediately.

Apply Now: muscatjob2025@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

A fresh Omani female graduate, having a
higher diploma in architecture & based in the
Wilayat of Al Amerat, is looking for a suitable
job. I do an AutoCad architectural designing,
buildings, environmental analysis basics,
architectural sketching and architectural
renderings. Kindly seek me through
atasneemmalma@gmail.com

INDIAN male, international MBA graduate
from Australia, valid Omani D/L, seeking job
opportunities, presently in Oman.
contact 77424205
Email: aj.internationalrelations@gmail.com

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

WJ Towell Group Company

**Quality car rentals
at competitive prices.**

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

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

**اوربیت
ORBIT**
Car Rental & Lease

Driving School

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

VACANCY

Sales Executive,
Laboratory Equipment Supplier,
Excellent Communication,
Science Graduate.

sales@alchemyarabia.com
+968-96654041

URGENT REQUIREMENT

1. Ready Mix Concrete (RMC) Plant Manager

Qualifications & Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree or Diploma in Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, or related field.
- Minimum 5-10 years of experience in Ready Mix Concrete / batching plant operations.
- Strong knowledge of concrete technology, batching systems, and plant maintenance.
- Experience in Gulf projects (GCC) will be an advantage.
- Good leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills.
- Ability to work under pressure and manage multiple tasks.

2. Ready Mix Concrete (RMC) Plant Supervisor

Qualifications & Requirements:

- Diploma or ITI in Civil/Mechanical or relevant field.
- Minimum 3-5 years experience in RMC / batching plant operations.
- Basic knowledge of concrete technology and plant equipment.
- Ability to supervise workforce and work under pressure.

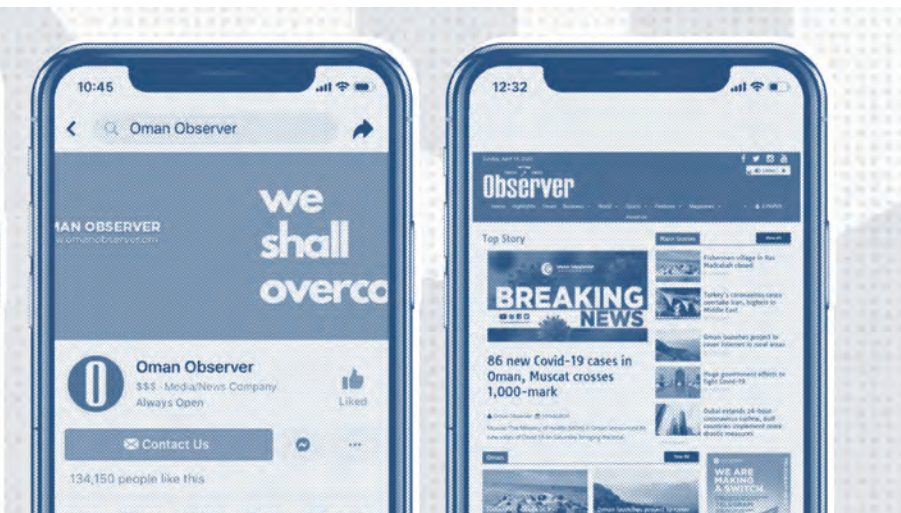
3. Furniture Manager (Gulf Experience Required)

- Oversee daily operations of furniture manufacturing and installation activities.
- Plan and manage production schedules to meet project deadlines.
- Supervise factory and site installation teams.
- Ensure quality standards for materials, workmanship, and finishing.
- Monitor inventory of raw materials, hardware, and fittings.
- Coordinate with project managers, designers, and clients.
- Handle site measurements, shop drawings coordination, and approvals.
- Resolve production, site, and client issues effectively.
- Enforce health and safety procedures at factory and site.
- Prepare progress reports and productivity reports.

4. Furniture Supervisor (Gulf Experience Required)

- Diploma/Certificate in Carpentry, Furniture Technology, or related field.
- Minimum 3-5 years of experience in furniture supervision (Gulf experience is an advantage).
- Strong knowledge of carpentry tools, joinery techniques, and furniture production methods.
- Ability to read and interpret technical drawings and plans.
- Strong leadership, communication, and team management skills.
- Good problem-solving ability and attention to detail.
- Knowledge of safety procedures and best practices.

Please submit your CV along with all qualification certificates to
muscatjobs05@gmail.com



To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

71455532- 71455531- 71455530

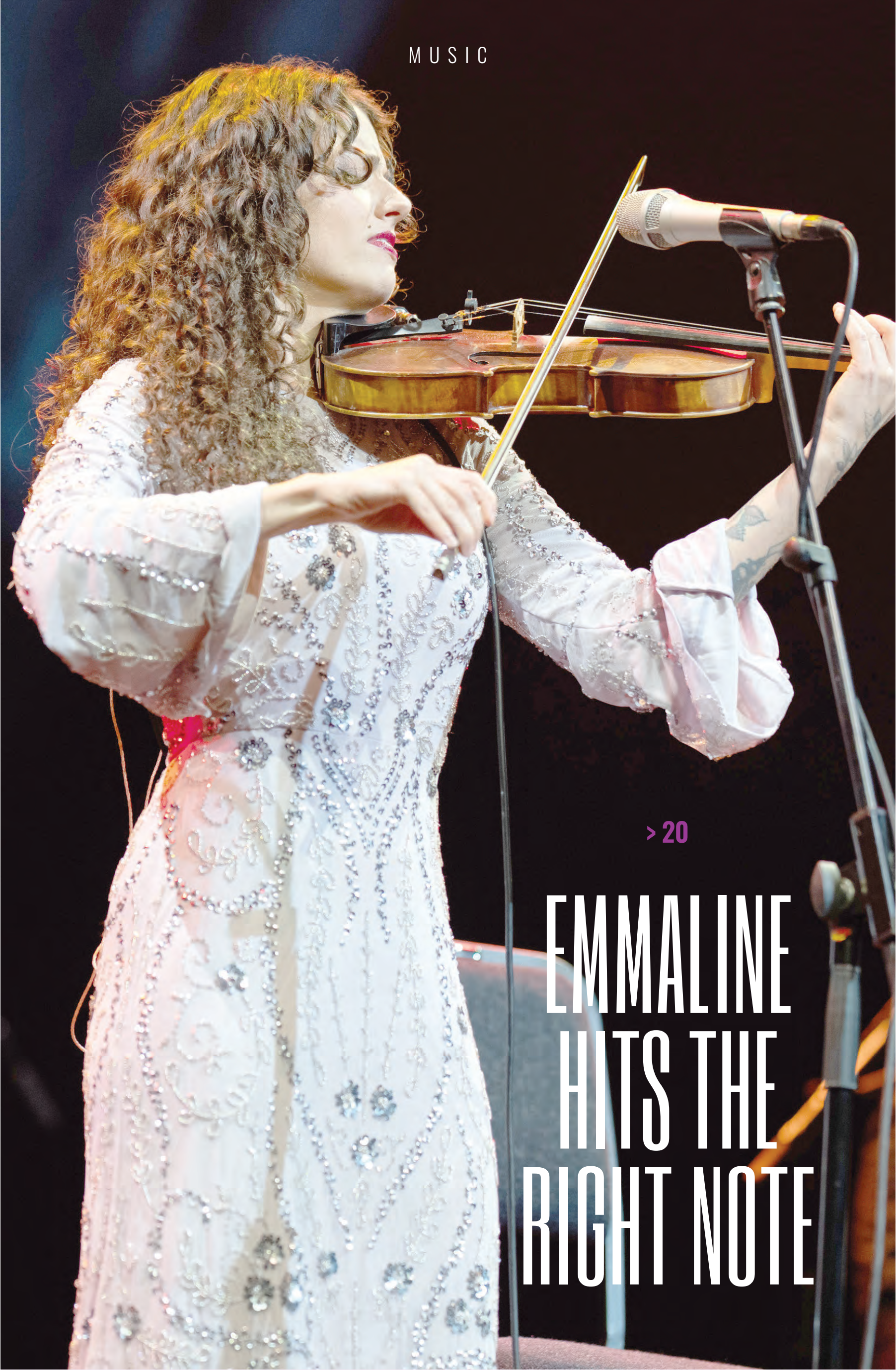
adv@omaninfo.om

izdihar_info izdihar.info

ازديهار
izdihar



ART/LIFE



MUSIC

> 20

EMMALINE HITS THE RIGHT NOTE

BOXOFFICE

DISNEY’S ‘ZOOTOPIA 2’ FUELS BOX OFFICE FRENZY WITH \$556 M WORLDWIDE



A park visitor takes a selfie with a character headband at Zootopia Land in Shanghai Disneyland ahead of the release of the movie Zootopia 2, in Shanghai. — Reuters

Walt Disney’s animated ‘Zootopia 2’ racked up an estimated \$556 million in global ticket sales over the US Thanksgiving weekend, providing a strong kickoff to Hollywood’s crucial holiday movie-going season. Nearly half of the film’s box office receipts from Wednesday through Sunday came from China, bucking a trend of Hollywood movies finishing behind locally made films.

The \$272 million tally made ‘Zootopia 2’ Hollywood’s highest-grossing animated movie in China, surpassing a record set by the first ‘Zootopia’ in 2016.

Also in theatres, Universal Pictures’ movie musical ‘Wicked: For Good’ claimed \$92.2 million worldwide in its second weekend, bringing its total to \$393.3 million after 10 days.

The fervor for the two films provided welcome news for movie theater owners who hope audiences will pack cinemas through Christmas, the second-busiest time of the year for moviegoing. Annual box office sales have yet to recover to the pre-pandemic levels seen in 2019.

‘Zootopia 2’ collected \$156 million of its worldwide total in the United States and Canada, making it the leader on domestic box office charts. The movie, set in a city of animals, tells the story of a bunny police officer, voiced by Ginnifer Goodwin, and her fox partner, voiced by Jason Bateman.

‘It’s a proud moment for Disney Animation and all of us at Disney, not to mention a great way to start the holiday season,’ Disney Entertainment Co-Chairman Alan Bergman said in a statement.

Year-to-date domestic ticket sales reached \$7.8 billion, up 1.2 per cent from a year ago but 23 per cent shy of 2019, according to data from Comscore.

Thanksgiving weekend sales are expected to rank among the top five of all time in the United States and Canada when final numbers come in, said Paul Dergarabedian, Comscore’s head of marketplace trends. Coming releases include James Cameron’s third ‘Avatar’ film just before Christmas.

‘Think about how many people were in theaters over the past week being exposed to theater marketing and trailers,’ Dergarabedian said. ‘Hopefully that creates the momentum that can give us a really solid home stretch of the year.’ — Reuters



QUICK FEATURES



ARTISAN

An employee works at the Le Roy Rene factory producing traditional pastries called calissons made with almonds in Aix-en-Provence, southern France. — AFP



SOARING

A seagull flies over a beach north of Kuwait City. — AFP



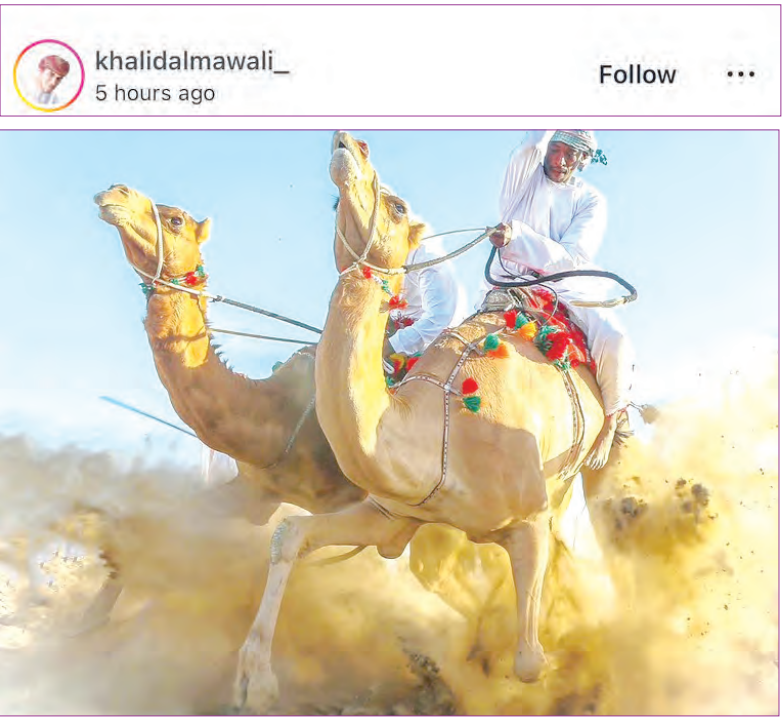
HOLIDAY SEASON

A diver dressed in a Santa Claus costume swims with a penguin at Sunshine Aquarium during preparations for the upcoming Christmas special event in Tokyo. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Exploring the treasures of Nizwa



Camel racing competition in Wadi Al Maawil

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE
We select photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver

‘END OF AN ERA’: MTV PULLING PLUG ON GLOBAL MUSIC CHANNELS

MTV kick-started a new era of music and pop culture in 1981, when it went on air for the first time, emblematically playing “Video Killed the Radio Star” as its debut music video.

More than four decades later, the channel, now owned by US media giant Paramount Skydance, will wind down its international music broadcasting by the end of the year as it struggles to compete with online streaming and social media.

MTV Music, MTV Hits and its 80s and 90s music shows will be shut down in the UK and other European countries in the coming months, sources at Paramount confirmed to AFP.

These music channels will stop broadcasting at the end of the year in France, Germany, Poland, Australia and Brazil as well, according to various media reports.

It has been declared the “end of an era” by dismayed fans and former MTV video jockeys — the beloved music presenters known as VJs who appeared on millions of screens at the height of the network’s popularity.

However, the conditions that made MTV “revolutionary” simply “don’t exist anymore”, said Kirsty Fairclough, a professor of screen studies at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The rise of digital streaming platforms like YouTube and TikTok has “completely refigured how we engage with music and images”, the researcher on popular culture said.

Hyman was at the heart



of MTV’s Party Zone — which celebrated dance and club culture and played up-and-coming techno, house and trance music alongside MTV VJ Simone Angel.

Both of them left the network when MTV Europe split up into regional subsidiaries and pivoted from music programming to reality shows in the early 2000s.

“I was heartbroken when it started to split up into different regions. To me that was like the beginning of the end,” Dutch presenter Angel told AFP.

According to British audience researcher Barb, MTV Music reached around 1.3 million UK households in July 2025. In comparison, Barb figures reported in 2001 showed MTV UK and Ireland’s package of music channels had reached over 10 million homes.

For Angel, MTV’s slow decline in popularity can be traced back to its move away from original, edgy music content key to helping smaller artists break out. — AFP

SCIENTISTS RECRUIT BED BUGS AS CRIME SCENE SLEUTHS



UNDER glaring laboratory lights, a research assistant extends his forearm and carefully inverts a mesh-topped container onto his skin to allow a wriggling mass of bed bugs to feed on his blood, all in the name of science.

Long-loathed as itchy household pests, the blood-sucking insects have revealed a darker, more intriguing potential as Malaysian scientists have discovered they can be turned into unlikely crime-busting allies.

A team from the Science University of Malaysia (USM) in northern Penang has found that tropical bed bugs can retain DNA from human prey for up to 45 days after snacking on an unwary victim.

This makes the tiny critters, who love to lurk in headboard cracks, mattress seams and pillow covers, ideal evidence resources when it comes to pinpointing suspects at crime scenes.

From a speck of blood, police investigators may one day be able to piece together the full profile of an offender, if the critters are present at a crime scene.

Analysing the insects could reveal gender, eye colour, hair and skin colour, entomologist Abdul Hafiz Ab Majid said. “We call bed bugs the ‘musuh dalam selimut’ (Malay for ‘the enemy in the blanket’),” Hafiz said, adding that “they can also be spies” to help solve crimes.

In a laboratory tucked deep inside USM’s School of Biological Sciences, Hafiz and postdoctoral researcher Lim Li have spent nearly half a decade studying tropical bed bugs.

The bloodsuckers, scientific name Cimex hemipterus, are the most common species found in Malaysia and the tropics.

The bugs are reared in containers under a laboratory bench, each wrapped in black plastic to mimic conditions the insects thrive in.

“We place folded pieces of paper inside the small containers so the bed bugs have something to climb on”, Hafiz said.

With the lab’s temperature kept at a constant 23°C to 24°C, the insects suck up 1.5 to 5.3 microlitres of blood at each feeding, an “amount less than a droplet”, Hafiz explained.

Researchers found DNA extracted from bed bugs that had fed on human blood could recover basic “phenotypic profiling”, a person’s observable traits, as well as gender for up to 45 days.

Using so-called STR (Short Tandem Repeat) and SNP (Single Nucleotide



Polymorphism) markers, specific DNA sequences extracted from the blood, researchers can determine the gender, eye, hair and skin colour of potential suspects, long after they have fled the scene.

The USM study called “Human profiling from STR and SNP analysis of tropical bed bug, Cimex hemipterus”, was published in Nature’s Scientific Reports two years ago.

It was the first documented forensic use involving tropical bed bugs.

Unlike mosquitoes and flies, bed bugs cannot fly and once they have fed, “become engorged and can’t move around that much”, Hafiz said, adding that they can only move



Entomologist Abdul Hafiz Ab Majid and his team observing bed bug eggs at a laboratory of the Science University of Malaysia in George Town, on Penang island. — AFP

within 20 feet of where they’ve fed.

“That’s what makes them unique. We can say they are perfect to use as a forensic tool compared to mosquitoes that... fly away”, Hafiz added. The bugs are particularly useful at crime scenes, where fluids have been wiped away to destroy evidence, as the critters are often well-hidden. Back in the lab, researcher Lim did not hesitate to demonstrate a feeding session, even joking that she had been a “willing victim” for science. — AFP

FEATURES



Photos by Khalid Al Busaidi

GEORGINA BENISON

THE Royal Opera House of Musical Arts came up trumps at the weekend with two sold-out, stellar performances from one of the world’s finest Jazz ensembles: singer, songwriter and violinist, Emmaline (rhymes with ‘Caroline’) Campbell brought her ensemble comprising three horns plus rhythm section.

Emmaline swept on stage in a stunning vintage silver-white long-sleeved dress, covering her signature left arm tattoo, for all the world a modern day, dark-haired Marilyn Monroe. She introduced herself to the audience in a long address, describing what she would play — a feature throughout the concert — a versatile mixture of jazz styles and original compositions.

She hoped her arrangement of Bobby Heb’s “Sunny” would be uplifting, letting positivity shine through its sparse, subtle funk. Immediately the pulsing bass-guitar riff from her younger brother, Trey Campbell, stood out against the punctuating horn trio — arranged by Trey. An expressive violin phrase from Emmaline was answered by tenor saxophonist, Chelsea Baratz. Guitarist, arranger and musical partner, Ryan Mondak, used a synthesised Fender sound-effect at times, enriching the ensemble’s texture. The following original, “All my Sweetest Dreams” was in a similar slow, funk style with the vocals firmly at the Nashville end of the Jazz spectrum. It had a catchy repeating chorus over an innovative bass line and off-beat rhythm.

In contrast came the more conventional, smooth swing of Bart Howard’s “Fly Me to the Moon” with moody, soul-infused vocals and beautiful counter-themes from the trumpet. Emmaline’s third record, the fine composition “Retro Kind of Love” was in a smoochy, 1940s style with R&B inflections. It featured a lovely violin solo and irregular time signatures.

Emmaline trained at Cincinnati-College Music Conservatory studying classical violin on a full-ride scholarship. She then decided to change direction to combine jazz voice and violin — influenced by her father, a jazz pianist. Her early struggles were recounted in a very open and honest way, baring her soul.



She explained that ‘Contrafact’ is a term from 1940s Bebop, meaning to write a new tune on a standard chord progression. Her first jazz composition was the slow, “Shy”, using modern lyrics to the changes in Errol Garner’s “Misty”. Introduced by a brilliant trumpet solo from Zach Douglas, the chart was recognisable and featured some mellow, if not technically challenging, fiddle playing.

Emmaline clearly has popular



appeal: youthful, glamorous good-looks and a vocal style between Blossom Dearie’s little-girl voice and Stacey Kent’s understated delivery. Further personal information revealed the inspiration for her catchy original, “Soft Spot”. It began like Jobim’s Bossa, “Desafinado”, telling a story about a breakup and using extended jazz chords on guitar, with impressive horn trio interjections. “Old Soul Love” was a successful

pastiche of a 1940s classic jazz ballad. Smooth, laid-back vocals evoked a sultry quality in a smoky jazz club, with Trey now on upright bass.

James Brown’s, “It’s a Man’s World” took the audience by surprise with Emmaline’s strong, feisty blues voice, singing from her soul. “I Got You (I feel good)” turned to more lyrical vocals in a funk interpretation of James Brown’s iconic hit. Baratz performed some

fearless modern jazz improvisation, alternating with high screaming trumpet solos over Isaiah Cook’s ever changing drum patterns.

“These Are the Memories” gained Emmaline 2nd place in a US songwriter’s competition — no wonder! The upright bass riff suggested “Girl from Ipanema” with a melody reminiscent of, “Then there was you”. Gorgeous, lush jazz chords from Mondak’s guitar reflected Emmaline’s talented versatility as a songwriter. “Everything’s Breezy” by siblings Emmaline and Trey Campbell is a love song to music. Returning to funk, some gutsy bass-guitar playing and punctuating staccato interruptions from the horns, Isaiah Cook finally had a chance to shine in a compelling, lengthy drum solo including woodblocks, bringing that section of the evening to an end.

Special guest of the evening, Anthony Strong appeared on stage, dapper in his blue check suit and black patent shoes. His slick, cool vocals in Gershwin’s “They Can’t Take That Away from Me” were accompanied by a convincing Grappelli-like fiddle solo. The final chorus ended in a subtle vocal duet, blending their voices beautifully.

The perfect rendition of Frank and Nancy Sinatra’s “Somethin’ Stupid” vocal duet was complemented by Baratz’s lush saxophone fills. Sam Cooke’s “Bring it On Home to Me”, arranged by Strong with tight vocal harmonies in 3rds and 6ths, was a refreshing change of style to Country Blues. The band’s new interpretation of Cole Porter’s “Just One of those Things” was a soulful, modern jazz fusion, featuring a startlingly high trumpet solo from Douglas with Strong’s dazzling improvisation technique.

Emmaline finally put her violin down and thanked the audience for coming, complimented the beautiful city and explained that her first ever collaboration with Strong would provide the encore. Crowded House’s “(Hey Now) Don’t Dream, it’s Over” was a final nod to funky rhythms with a classic vocal duet, showing off the entire ensemble at their very best. Unrelenting applause compelled the guests back for a curtain call and then the ensemble played the adoring audience out into the Maidan with toes still tapping to the rhythms.