

OMAN

دولة عمان

DAILY

Observer

CRACKDOWN
LOOMS ON
FAKE
MEDICINES

SUNRISE 06:36 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 05:16 AM

DHUHR 12:03 PM

ASR 03:05 PM

MAGHRIB 05:25 PM

ISHA 06:41 PM

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INBRIEF

HM’S GREETINGS TO FINNISH PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Alexander Stubb, President of the Republic of Finland, on the occasion of his country’s Independence Day. In his cable, His Majesty praised the strong relations between the two friendly countries, wishing the President continued success in achieving further accomplishments.

ROYAL FLIGHT SCHOOL MARKS GOLDEN JUBILEE

The Royal Flight School marked 50 years of foundation on Thursday. A celebration was held on the occasion under the auspices of Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs, at the school’s premises in the Wilayat of Al Seeb in Muscat Governorate, in the presence of a number of dignitaries, parents of students and invitees. Representatives of the school’s administration addressed the attendees outlining the school’s history, vision, mission and objectives. Omani students and others of various nationalities staged performances celebrating the occasion, showcasing a blend of Omani and other cultural traditions. A visual presentation highlighting the school’s journey and development was also screened. **DETAILS ON P2**

INDIA CAPS AIRFARES AS CRISIS PERSISTS



India capped airfares on Saturday as hundreds of passengers gathered outside Bengaluru and Mumbai airports after IndiGo cancelled 385 flights on the fifth day of a crisis at the country’s biggest airline that has crippled air travel. IndiGo has cancelled thousands of flights this week due to a shortage of pilots after it failed to plan adequately for new rules limiting pilots’ work hours. The government responded on Friday, announcing special relief for the carrier and the operation of additional trains to help clear the backlog. The Delhi airport posted on X on Saturday that flight operations were steadily resuming, but cancellations remained rife elsewhere.

Oman intensifies promotion efforts for winter tourism season

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has launched a package of promotional initiatives to enhance the Sultanate of Oman’s presence as an exceptional tourist destination in the region for the 2025/2026 winter season, which annually witnesses a growing influx of visitors and tourists seeking natural and cultural tourism experiences. As part of its strategic plans, the ministry aims to highlight the diverse tourism assets that distinguish the

Sultanate of Oman during the winter season. These include mild weather, a variety of tourism experiences and adventure sites, rich cultural and heritage experiences and advanced infrastructure all of which make the Sultanate of Oman an ideal destination for winter tourism. The promotional efforts included extensive digital campaigns targeting key markets in the Gulf region, Asia, and Europe, focusing on winter activities such as desert and mountain



The promotional efforts included extensive campaigns targeting key markets in the Gulf, Asia, and Europe.

camping, cave exploration, overland excursions, beaches as well as cultural and seasonal events that are held across Oman. The ministry also enhanced its presence at specialised international exhibitions over the last quarter of this year in cooperation with its partners and with the participation of a number of tourism companies, travel agencies and airlines. Furthermore, it has organised familiarisation trips for media professionals, influencers, and travel

agencies to showcase Oman’s tourism offerings firsthand and to promote it as a destination that seamlessly integrates natural attractions with cultural, heritage and adventure tourism. The ministry stressed that these efforts are aligned with the objectives of the National Tourism Strategy 2040, to achieve sustainable growth in the sector, increase its economic contribution to the GDP, and enhance Oman’s position on the global tourism map. **TURN TO P3**

Qatar, Egypt call for next steps in Gaza ceasefire

OMAN AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS AT DOHA FORUM

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN, represented by the Foreign Ministry, participated in the 23rd Doha Forum 2025, held under the theme “Establishing Justice: From Promises to Tangible Reality, on Saturday. The forum was opened under the auspices of Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar. The Omani delegation was headed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs.

Al Harthy held several meetings on the sidelines of the forum and participated in a closed session entitled Protecting Mediation during Armed Conflict, underscoring the Sultanate of Oman’s unwavering commitment to dialogue, fostering mediation efforts and adhering to peaceful solutions to conflicts. He highlighted the Sultanate of Oman’s experience in adopting positive and proactive neutrality and its significant role in fostering conducive environments for diplomatic endeavours and the building of trust between parties. The Sultanate of Oman’s participation in this international forum reflects its commitment to contributing to efforts aimed at enhancing regional and international peace and security. Meanwhile, Qatar and



A Palestinian girl carries a bag of bread as others gather in the yard of the UNRWA Deir Al Balah Joint School, in the central Gaza Strip. — AFP

Egypt, guarantors of the Gaza ceasefire, called on Saturday for the withdrawal of Israeli troops and the deployment of an international stabilisation force

as the necessary next steps in fully implementing the fragile agreement. The measures were spelt out in the US- and UN-backed peace

plan that has largely halted fighting, though the warring parties have yet to agree on how to move forward from the deal’s first phase. Qatari Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al Thani said on Saturday that negotiations on consolidating the US-backed truce in the war in Gaza are at a “critical” moment. Mediators are working to force the next phase of the ceasefire forward, the prime minister, whose country has been a key mediator in the war, said during a panel discussion at the Doha Forum conference in Qatar. Violence has subsided but not stopped since the Gaza truce took effect on October 10. “We are at a critical moment. It’s not yet there. So what we have just done is a pause,” Al Thani said. “We cannot consider it yet a ceasefire. A ceasefire cannot be completed unless there is a full withdrawal of the Israeli forces — (until) there is stability back in Gaza, people can go in and out — which is not the case today.” Talks on achieving the next stages of Trump’s plan have been continuing. The plan calls for an interim technocratic Palestinian government in Gaza, overseen by an international “board of peace” and backed by an international security force. — Agencies

Forum to focus on promoting decentralisation

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) will launch ‘The Local Administration Forum: Decentralisation and Empowering Governorates – Prospects for Comprehensive and Sustainable Development’ on Sunday. To be held under the auspices of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, and in partnership with the

ministry, the forum focuses on decentralisation and socio-economic advancement and will be attended by senior officials from the public and private sectors. In alignment with the strategic objectives of Oman Vision 2040, the forum is launched in recognition of the role the governorates play as partners in driving comprehensive development. It aims to strengthen

the principles of decentralisation and local governance and explores ways to enhance their effective implementation, thereby contributing to socio-economic development and facilitating sustainable growth across the governorates. The forum’s agenda focuses on administrative and economic decentralisation in the governorates;

mechanisms for promoting local economic development; activating the role of governorates in creating more job opportunities and fostering economic growth through local economic enablers and entrepreneurship; empowering national talent and building capacities; and the role of municipalities in effective local governance. **TURN TO P2**

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

OMAN AT DOHA FORUM



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GLOBAL EXPERTS GATHER FOR OMAN STROKE CONFERENCE



Oman will host the first edition of the new regional stroke forum in 2026.

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, DEC 6

The Oman Stroke Society, in partnership with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, inaugurated the eighth edition of the Oman Stroke Conference, held from December 4–6 under the auspices of Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage. During the event, Memorandums of Understanding were signed with Stroke Societies from Austria, Egypt, India, Iran, and other international organisations. Chaired by Dr Amal al Hashmi, Senior Consultant in Neurology and President and Founder of the Oman Stroke Society, the agreements aim to enhance training and education, support scientific research and coordinate joint conferences — strengthening medical capabilities and elevating treatment standards.

NEW AL SEEB BLOOD DONATION CENTRE OPENS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health has announced the launch of the Al Seeb Blood Donation Centre at Al Araimi Boulevard, starting Sunday, December 7. Aimed at promoting a culture of blood donation and ensuring the availability of blood units for patients, the centre will primarily serve the high-population Wilayat of Al Seeb, while also supporting



The blood centre at Al Araimi Boulevard will offer easy access

neighbouring areas such as Barka, Bidbid and Al Musannah. Equipped with six donor beds and all essential facilities, the centre offers a safe and comfortable environment for both male and female donors. Operating daily from 3 pm to 9 pm, it provides easy access for anyone wishing to contribute to this life-saving initiative.

RAM launches forum to boost decentralisation



The two-day event will bring together more than 150 national leaders

FROM P1

The forum will feature panel discussions drawing together leading local and global experts and speakers from Oman and abroad. The programme also includes workshops and shares significant local and international experiences on decentralisation and local administration. The two-day event will bring together more than 150 national leaders, including governors, as well as the heads of Muscat and Dhofar municipalities, senior officials from sectors relevant to the forum's themes. Participants will also include members of municipal councils, directors-general of municipalities, administrative and financial affairs, planning and investment

The forum aims to promote decentralisation and empowerment of governorates to support comprehensive and sustainable development



Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy

departments, and representatives from offices overseeing the implementation of Oman Vision 2040 in governorates and municipalities. The Royal Academy of Management continues to introduce high-impact programmes supporting decentralisation and local governance. The Academy previously launched the National Initiative for the Development of Local Administration, which includes the Governors Programme, the Walis Programme and the Municipal Councils Programme — all designed to strengthen governance capabilities, promote administrative and economic decentralisation and equip participants with best practices to support the development of governorates across Oman.

Muscat leads in digital govt transformation

MUSCAT: Digital transformation is advancing rapidly across the Sultanate of Oman, building an integrated digital ecosystem that enhances government efficiency, elevates service quality for citizens and residents and supports the nation's vision for an innovative, interconnected and sustainable future. Among all governorates, Muscat stands out as a model of excellence, achieving major milestones and pioneering projects that reflect strong investment in modern technologies and artificial intelligence. Dr Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Kharousi, Head of the Digital Transformation Team for the Muscat Governorate, stated that between January and October 2025, the governorate recorded a significant digital



Muscat stands out as a model of excellence, achieving major milestones and pioneering projects

leap, completing 234,251 digital transactions and digitising nine new government services. He noted that several key digital initiatives and projects were carried out during the same period. These included the completion of the first phase of consulting services for the Unified Municipal System and the tendering of its implementation, upgrades to the 'My Municipality' mobile application and the Muscat Municipality website, as well

as the enhancement of the SMS gateway and electronic payment platform. Additional advancements included developing technologies for the Muscat Communications Center, installing smart traps for Aedes mosquitoes, deploying electronic traps for stray animals and adopting modern irrigation systems. In the area of digital service enablement, Dr Al Kharousi highlighted the activation of electronic certification for lease contract registration, the use of artificial intelligence to monitor and issue violations for paid parking areas, the launch of a software development incubator environment, and a field inspection follow-up service. These steps, he said, strengthen digital oversight, accelerate service delivery, and ensure data accuracy. — **ONA**



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SHORT TAKES

His Highness Sayyid Harib bin Thuwaini al Said led the event

ABERDEEN SAILING ASSOCIATION WINS SAILING TROPHY

MUSCAT: The Aberdeen Sailing Association was crowned winner of the 13th edition of the Sultan Qaboos Sailing Award at a ceremony organised by the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) at Al Mirani Fort. The event was held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Harib bin Thuwaini al Said, Assistant Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers for Conferences. Attendees viewed a visual presentation tracing the award’s journey, followed by a film highlighting the 2025 International Sailing Tournament Programme.

Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, RNO Commander, underscored Oman’s deep and historic maritime legacy, which shaped its civilisational influence, and naval achievements.

James George, representing the International Sailing Association, noted that the award serves as a major incentive for sailing enthusiasts and trainees. — **ONA**

OMAN, INDIA HOLD CONSULTATIVE MEETING

The meeting reviewed cooperation in civil aviation, logistics, vocational training, mining and energy

MUSCAT: The 14th meeting of the Strategic Consultative Team between Oman and India was held in Muscat. The Omani delegation was led by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while the Indian delegation was headed by Arun Kumar Chatterjee, Under-Secretary of India’s Ministry of External Affairs for Neighbouring Countries and Consular Affairs. The meeting reviewed bilateral cooperation in civil aviation, logistics, vocational training, mining and energy, alongside discussions on consular matters and agreements between both countries. — **ONA**

Oman ramps up winter tourism promotion

FROM P1

The promotional programmes aim to increase tourist arrivals from target markets and boost hotel occupancy rates across the governorates.

They also highlight the diversity of tourist destinations, ranging from mountains and coastlines to deserts and historical villages. In addition, the programmes focus on encouraging local content sharing through influencers and content creators to showcase the unique experiences visitors can enjoy during the winter season.

The ministry has launched promotional activities and an

international campaign targeting European and Asian markets. These campaigns utilise diverse promotional messages tailored to the interests of tourists in the target markets, with a particular emphasis on countries that

contribute significantly to tourism spending.

This promotional campaign is expected to generate tangible tourism and economic returns, support various tourism-related sectors, and enhance the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a leading global winter destination that combines stunning natural beauty with authentic Omani hospitality.

Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said that the ministry continues to implement a wide range of tourism events during the winter season with the aim

of revitalising tourism across Oman’s various governorates. He added that these programmes build upon the tangible results achieved by events held in 2024, as statistics showed an increase in the number of visitors participating in local, sporting and cultural events.

He noted that the events organised by the ministry, including the winter festivals in Muscat and Al Dakhiliyah, the Muscat Marathon, the Tour of Oman, the Ironman event, and the Bashayer Camel Festival, witnessed remarkable public attendance, with some events attracting over 63,000 visitors.

— **ONA**

ENDOWMENTS POWER OMAN’S ECONOMIC GROWTH

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, DEC 6

Endowments are emerging as a strong pillar of Oman’s economic diversification efforts, according to the preface of the Oman Endowment Conference 2025, scheduled to be held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Oman, from December 9–10 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Organised by the Bausher Endowment Foundation in cooperation with the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, the conference — held under the theme

‘Endowments and the Promotion of Economic Diversification’ — will also be attended by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority.

Speaking to Observer, Dr Ahmed bin Ali al Kaabi, Director-General of Endowments, Funds, Mosque Construction and Quran Schools, said strengthening the endowment sector is a shared societal responsibility. “Endowments exist to support society, and empowering this sector reflects the collective commitment of civil society and endowment institutions,” he said.

With innovative Sharia-compliant investment vehicles such as the Ishraq Endowment and the recent Royal Decree establishing the Oman Endowment Foundation, endowment sector is experiencing sustained growth.

Representatives of the Bausher Endowment Foundation noted that Oman has thousands of individual endowments that help families and communities realise their aspirations.

Conferences and enhanced governance frameworks, they added, are enabling these endowments to deliver wider societal impact and drive development.

Experts: Fasting, walking may help control diabetes

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, DEC 6

FASTING AND regular walking are among the most effective ways to combat diabetes, according to Prof Peter Schwarz, President of the International Diabetes Federation (IDF). Speaking at the Oman Summit for Diabetes and Endocrine Across the Lifespan, he stressed that diabetes is rising at an alarming rate worldwide, demanding simple yet powerful lifestyle interventions.

Prof Schwarz told the *Observer* that overcoming physical inactivity and reshaping dietary habits remain crucial. “The consumption of fried carbohydrates is a major contributor. In many societies, this is cultural, so it is difficult to change,” he said.

He outlined two strategies that are socially and ethically sound in managing and preventing diabetes.

“Physical activity is number one. Every muscle you use burns glucose and lowers blood sugar. This benefits both pre-diabetics and diabetics,” he explained.

The second strategy, he said, is even more powerful: fasting. “Fat in the liver and pancreas destroys these organs and drives diabetes. Total fasting — not eating for two weeks — releases glucagon, which clears fat from the liver and pancreas. In more than 50 per cent of cases, diabetes disappears. Thousands have succeeded,” he said.

Both strategies, he noted, are accessible to everyone. According to Prof Schwarz, 53

The Oman Summit for Diabetes and Endocrine Across the Lifespan was held in Muscat last week.

per cent of people with diabetes achieve remission through fasting, while 93 per cent see the removal of fat from the liver and pancreas. “No drug or intervention achieves these results,” he added.

Future treatment, he said, could include measuring organ fat to determine the number of fasting days needed. The two-day summit spotlighted diabetes, obesity, and endocrine disorders, featuring the latest advances in diagnosis and management across adult and paediatric cases.

Sayyidah Dr Noor al Busaidy, Director of the National Diabetes and Endocrine Center and President of the Oman Diabetes Association, noted that rising diabetes and obesity levels mirror global trends driven by

lifestyle and genetics.

The Oman Diabetes Association continues to focus on public awareness and medical education. Its intensive diabetes courses, now in their fourth cycle, target private-sector physicians to ensure consistent standards with government healthcare.

The Association also runs an initiative titled ‘We Are With You,’ supporting children with diabetes from low-income families.

“Under the direction of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Ministry of Health provides continuous glucose monitoring devices for children up to 18 years. We focus on adults — college students and unemployed individuals — to bridge the gap,” the Secretary-General said.

SALE OF VEHICLE/EQUIPMENT

Leading Construction Company in Oman intends to dispose of their used Vehicles, Equipment and Crusher/Asphalt Plant in “as is where is” condition. The items identified are presently located at their Barka Khazaen Yard and will be offered for inspection to the public on 08/12/2025, 09/12/2025 & 10/12/2025 between 08.00am to 12.00pm and 03.00pm to 05.00pm.

Last date for submission of a closed tender is 10/12/2025 at 05.00pm at their Barka Khazaen Office.

Interested parties may contact
Tel: (+968) 26983777 / 26983767, Mob: (+968) 91354151

SPOTLIGHT

CRACKDOWN

LOOMS ON FAKE MEDICINES

KABEER
YOUSUF

OMAN

IS INTENSIFYING its crackdown on counterfeit and substandard medicines, with the Drug Safety Center (DSC) under the Ministry of Health reaffirming that every drug entering the country is subject to rigorous scrutiny, international protocols, and strict national regulations. A senior official from the DSC told the Observer that the Center maintains a zero-tolerance approach to pharmaceutical violations, ensuring that only safe, effective, and authorised medical products reach the Omani market. “All medicines undergo a detailed review – from data verification to QC lab testing – and must comply with international guidelines as well as local regulatory requirements,” the official said. “We ensure products are sourced from authorised suppliers, stored at appropriate temperatures, and manufactured under good practices.” All imported pharmaceutical products require DSC- issued registration certificates,

with their details already integrated into the national system before arriving at entry points such as airports.

Speaking during the launch of Oman’s first online platform for OTC medicines, vitamins, and daily essentials delivered to homes, the official stressed that the DSC’s mandate goes beyond inspection. The Center also licences pharmacists and pharmaceutical institutions, regulates medical devices, oversees post-marketing surveillance, and initiates strict action against violators when standards are compromised.

“We also support the growth of local pharmaceutical manufacturing and encourage investment and innovation through a clear regulatory framework,” he added. “Our goal is to strengthen public trust by continuously improving processes and applying robust quality management principles.”

The DSC offers a wide range of services, including pharmacist and medical representative licensing, licence renewals, transfers between institutions, good standing certificates, pharmacy establishment permits, temporary closures, and changes in institutional area specifications.

Through its digital portal, the public can access these services and report any malpractice in pharmacies or healthcare-related services.

“We spare no effort in ensuring that only high-quality medicines with valid expiry dates are in circulation,” the official emphasised.

Drug Safety Center (DSC) enforces strict checks on all medicines entering the country

Only authorised, quality-verified products meeting global and national standards are allowed

Public urged to use DSC’s digital portal to report malpractice and ensure medicine safety



We also support the growth of local pharmaceutical manufacturing and encourage investment and innovation through a clear regulatory framework.

AN OFFICIAL
FROM DRUG
SAFETY CENTER

SHORT TAKES



GREEN VOLUNTEERS CLEAN UP BAUSHER SAND DUNES

MUSCAT: Nearly 90 environmental enthusiasts from the Muscat Governorate, all part of the Oman Mountains Heroes Team, armed with grabbers and pickers to clean up the Bausher sand dunes — a popular spot for adventurers and motor enthusiasts.

The cleanup drive, organised by the NGO in cooperation with Centara Hotel, resulted in nearly 50 bags of waste collected in just three hours. The trash included aluminium cans, plastic bags, cups, bottles, and discarded motor parts, said Manar Allouzi, one of the key organisers of the initiative.

“We, at the Bausher Sands Cleanup Campaign, aim to raise environmental awareness and help preserve the beauty and cleanliness of this area. We regularly conduct cleanup drives across beaches and sand dunes,” Allouzi said, adding that the initiative welcomes anyone willing to contribute to this meaningful volunteer effort to keep Oman’s natural landscapes clean and beautiful.



GERMAN EMBASSY IN MUSCAT MARKS UNITY DAY

MUSCAT: The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Muscat hosted a reception to celebrate German Unity Day, the country’s National Day. The event was attended by officials from Oman, heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Oman, and representatives from the Foreign Ministry. Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, cut the cake along with Dirk Lölke, German Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA

National Day celebrated in Brazil



The ceremony highlighted Oman’s unity and prosperity, shaped by its rich heritage and forward-looking leadership

BRASILIA: The Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Brasilia, led by Ambassador Abdulghaffar bin Abdulkarim al Balushi, hosted a special ceremony to celebrate Oman’s National Day and honour the nation’s renaissance, achievements and sustainable development journey.

Oman’s National Day was commemorated in Brasilia last week. The Brazilian capital is the only city in Latin America to host an Omani embassy, reflecting the strong ties between the two nations.

The event highlighted Oman’s enduring identity, unity and prosperity, shaped by its rich heritage and forward-looking leadership. Images of the country’s golden dunes, ancient forts, frankincense trails and warm hospitality were evoked as symbols of its cultural depth.

The celebration also reaffirmed the strength of relations between Oman and Brazil — two nations geographically distant yet aligned in values of dialogue, development and mutual respect. Since establishing diplomatic

ties in 1974, both countries have deepened cooperation across political, economic and cultural spheres.

Oman remains one of the Gulf’s most stable and strategically significant countries, and an important trading partner for Brazil.

Oman imports Brazilian meat, sugar, iron ore, and processed foods, while exporting fertilisers, petroleum and derivatives — demonstrating a balanced and complementary economic partnership strengthened through missions, fairs and bilateral initiatives.

Students turn food waste into eco-friendly fertiliser

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, DEC 6

In a significant step toward environmental sustainability, students from Al Ghizayn Basic Education School in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah have developed an innovative project that converts discarded cucumbers and other food scraps into natural fertiliser.

The initiative, part of the community programme ‘A Green Society Without Waste,’ demonstrates how young Omani students are crafting practical solutions to local environmental challenges.

At the heart of the project is the Sustainability Factory, a student-designed model that transforms organic waste into high-quality compost.

Rather than allowing food remnants to accumulate in landfills, the team engineered a mechanism that speeds up decomposition, producing nutrient-rich fertiliser for school gardens, household use, and small-scale agriculture.

Project supervisor Rahma al Ajmi said the initiative began with a simple question: “How can we turn everyday waste



Al Ghizayn Basic Education School students developed a project that converts discarded cucumbers and other food scraps into natural fertiliser

The project serves as a model for how schools across Oman are integrating sustainability into education, aligned with the nation’s vision for a greener future

into something beneficial?” She noted that students researched global models, applied modern sustainability concepts, and developed a prototype supported by a preliminary feasibility study to explore production potential and community impact.

The idea, she said, could eventually grow into a small local enterprise.

Co-supervisor Jamila al

Quraini highlighted the project’s educational value, explaining that it exposed students to environmental science, engineering design, and civic responsibility.

She added that the Sustainability Factory gained strong backing from families, volunteers, and school partners — making it a truly community-driven achievement.

Parents also played a key role. Noura al Hosni, one of the participating parents, expressed pride in her children’s involvement. “This initiative taught our children that environmental protection begins at home,” she said. “They now understand the importance of reducing waste, recycling, and choosing natural products over chemicals.”

The project serves as a model for how schools across Oman are integrating sustainability into education, aligned with the nation’s vision for a greener future. With its blend of innovation, scientific thinking, and community engagement, the Sustainability Factory showcases how knowledge and economic awareness can work hand-in-hand — proving that environmental solutions can emerge from classrooms and benefit both society and the environment.

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
648/2025	Providing a medical services staff including general practitioners, a nursing officer, legal nurses, a nursing assistant, a physical and rehabilitation therapist, a nutritionist, and a pharmacist for residents of the Social Welfare Home at Rustaq	Companies specialized in Hospitals and care homes registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Tuesday 16-12-2025 02:00 PM	Sunday 28-12-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
649/2025	Providing support services and improving electronic services to the Ministry of Social Development	Companies specialized in the field of designing, installing and maintaining information programs and systems /equipping information data centers registered with the Projects, Tenders and Local Content Authority in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Tuesday 16-12-2025 02:00 PM	Sunday 28-12-2025 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Sunday 07/12/2025**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”

www.mosd.gov.om

WORLD

GUNFIRE EXCHANGE



A Taliban security personnel stands guard near the zero point border crossing between Afghanistan and Pakistan. — AFP

5 PEOPLE KILLED IN AFGHAN-PAKISTAN BORDER CLASH

KANDAHAR: An overnight exchange of gunfire and shelling at a major Pakistan-Afghanistan border crossing killed four civilians and one soldier, Afghan officials said on Saturday, the latest flare-up of fighting between the two countries despite a ceasefire since deadly clashes in October. Five other civilians were wounded, an Afghan government spokesman, Hamdullah Fitrat, said in a video statement. The local hospital at the Pakistani border town of Chaman said three people suffered minor injuries during the fighting.

Each side accused the other of launching “unprovoked” attacks at the crossing between Chaman and Spin Boldak, in southern Afghanistan. “Unfortunately, tonight, the Pakistani side started attacking Afghanistan in Kandahar, Spin Boldak district, and the forces of the Islamic Emirate were forced to respond,” Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid posted on X late on Friday.

Pakistan said Afghan forces fired first. “A short while ago, the Afghan Taliban regime resorted to unprovoked firing” along the border, Mosharraf Zaidi, a spokesman for Pakistan’s prime minister, said on X. Ali Mohammed Haqmal, head of Kandahar’s information department, said that Pakistani forces attacked with “light and heavy artillery” and that mortar fire had struck civilian homes.

Residents on the Afghan side of the border told AFP the exchange of fire broke out around 10:30 pm and lasted about two hours. “Light and weak firing started then the tanks started firing and the mortars hit our houses,” said Mahmood Khan.

Another resident, Shamsullah, who declined to give his last name, said his brother was killed by a mortar when trying to reach another room of their home. “We couldn’t pick him up because more mortars were coming,” he said, adding that he was later taken for treatment in Kandahar but died soon after he arrived.

On the Pakistan side, Muhammad Naeem, a labourer at the border, said that as the fighting intensified, “mortar shells began landing on houses and in the surrounding areas”. “Many people fled their homes, but because the gunfire was so heavy, we had no choice but to stay inside.”

Afghanistan and Pakistan have been locked in an increasingly bitter dispute since the Taliban authorities retook control in Kabul in 2021. Security issues are at the heart of the conflict, with Islamabad accusing Kabul of harbouring militant groups, particularly the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), that launch attacks on its soil. The Taliban government in Kabul denies the allegations.

More than 70 people were killed and hundreds wounded in the October clashes, which ended with a ceasefire brokered by Qatar and Türkiye. But several subsequent rounds of talks in Doha and Istanbul have failed to produce a lasting deal, and the border between the two South Asian neighbours remains closed. Kabul accused Islamabad last month of air strikes in a border area that killed 10 people, nine of them children. Pakistan denied the claim. Pakistan’s foreign ministry warned on November 28 that in light of “terrorist attacks” on its soil, “the ceasefire is not holding”. — AFP

SYRIA’S KURDS HAIL ‘POSITIVE IMPACT’ OF TÜRKIYE PEACE TALKS

ISTANBUL: Efforts to broker peace between Türkiye and the Kurdish group PKK have had a “positive impact” on Syria’s Kurds who also want dialogue with Ankara, one of its top officials said. Earlier this year, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) ended its four-decade armed struggle against Türkiye at the urging of its jailed founder Abdullah Ocalan, shifting its focus to a democratic political struggle for the rights of Türkiye’s Kurdish minority.

The ongoing process has raised hopes among Kurds across the region, notably in Syria where the Kurds control swathes of territory in the north and northeast. “The peace initiative in Türkiye has had a direct impact on northern and eastern Syria,” said Elham Ahmad, a senior official in the Kurdish administration in Syria’s northeast. “We want a dialogue process with Türkiye, a dialogue that we understand as Kurds in Syria... We want the borders between us to be

opened,” she said, speaking by video link to an Istanbul peace conference organised by Türkiye’s pro-Kurdish opposition DEM party.

She hailed Türkiye for initiating the peace moves, but said releasing Ocalan would speed things up. “We believe that Abdullah Ocalan being released will let him play a much greater role... that this peace and resolution process will happen faster and better.” She also hailed Ankara for its sensitive approach to dialogue with Damascus. — AFP

Russian strikes on Ukraine trigger heating, water cuts

RUSSIAN

Drone and missile strikes on Ukraine have targeted critical infrastructure, including energy sites and railways, triggering heating and water outages for thousands of households, Kyiv said. The latest wave of aerial strikes, through Friday night into Saturday, came as Ukrainian negotiators were to meet in Florida with American envoys for a third straight day of talks on the US-drafted plan on how to end the almost four-year war. Russia launched 653 drones and 51 missiles at Ukraine, Kyiv’s air force said on Saturday. “The main targets of these strikes, once again, were energy facilities,” President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media. “Russia’s aim is to inflict suffering on millions of Ukrainians,” he said.



People stand near a building hit during drone strike in Dnipro region, Ukraine. — Reuters

interconnection lines are close to their limit,” Moldelectrica said on social media. It said it had “requested emergency assistance from Romania as a preventive measure for the next few hours,” and urged citizens to “consume electricity rationally”.

Despite the US-led push to end the conflict, Russia has routinely targeted Ukraine’s power and heating grid, destroying a large part of the key civilian infrastructure. As with previous waves of attacks, the Russian defence ministry said its strikes had targeted “Ukrainian military-industrial complex enterprises and the energy facilities that support them,” and added that “all designated targets were hit”.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian and US officials will hold a third straight day of talks in Miami, with Washington saying the two sides agreed that “real progress” would depend on Russia’s willingness to end the war. President Donald Trump’s special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner have been meeting top Ukrainian negotiator Rustem Umerov and Andrii Hnatov, the chief of staff

of Kyiv’s armed forces.

The talks come after Witkoff and Kushner met Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin on Tuesday to discuss a US plan to end the conflict, but Moscow rejected parts of the proposal. “Both parties agreed that real progress toward any agreement depends on Russia’s readiness to show serious commitment to long-term peace, including steps toward de-escalation and cessation of killings,” said a readout of the Miami talks posted on X by Witkoff on Friday.

The US and Ukrainian officials “also agreed on the framework of security arrangements and discussed necessary deterrence capabilities to sustain a lasting peace.” Washington’s plan involves Ukraine surrendering land that Russia has not been able to win on the battlefield in return for security promises that fall short of Kyiv’s aspirations to join Nato. But the nature of the security guarantees that Ukraine could get have so far been shrouded in uncertainty, beyond an initial plan saying that jets to defend Kyiv could be based in Poland. — AFP



SRI LANKA UNVEILS CYCLONE AID PLAN

COLOMBO: Disaster-hit Sri Lanka has unveiled a major compensation package to rebuild homes damaged by a deadly cyclone, even as the island prepared for further landslides and flooding. The government has confirmed 607 deaths, with another 214 people missing and feared dead, in what President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has called the country’s most challenging natural disaster. Survivors will be offered up to 10 million rupees (\$33,000) to buy land in a safer location and build a new house, the finance ministry said in a statement. The government is also offering

one million rupees as compensation for each person killed or permanently disabled.

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said more than 71,000 homes were damaged, including nearly 5,000 that were completely destroyed by last week’s floods and landslides. Around 150,000 people remain in state-run shelters, down from a peak of 225,000. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said it was considering Sri Lanka’s request for an additional \$200 million, on top of the \$347 million tranche the country was already due to receive this month. — AFP

KEEPING STABILISING ROLE

Lebanon arrests 6 after attack on UN patrol



The Lebanese army has arrested six people after gunmen attacked UN peacekeepers patrolling in the south of the country. The UN force, known as UNIFIL, had reported that six men riding on three mopeds opened fire on a patrol vehicle without hurting anyone. Saturday’s statement said the army’s intelligence directorate had followed up on the attack and arrested six Lebanese suspects. The army said it would not tolerate attacks on UNIFIL. — AFP

SEEKING EXPLANATION

Bulgaria condemns leaving ship off coast



Bulgaria denounced the towing of a crippled tanker ship into the country’s waters. The tanker, the Kairos, was towed into Bulgarian waters then left there as the tow returned to Türkiye, said Rumen Nikolov, director general of rescue and relief operations for the Bulgarian Maritime Administration. “This is not normal,” Rumen said to press, adding that they were seeking an explanation for the towing action “through diplomatic channels”. — AFP

DISASTER PROBE

Indians, Americans to meet on Air India crash



India will send investigators to the United States next week to go over data gathered on the deadly Air India flight crash in June with the National Transportation Safety Board. Indian investigators plan to share findings, including any information gleaned from the plane’s cockpit voice and data recorders, the report said, citing people familiar with the matter. The report said that other parties, including Boeing, will be present. — Reuters

What scientists found in deep sea mining



SACHI KITAJIMA MULKEY

The author is a reporter covering climate and the environment for The New York Times

INDUSTRIAL MINING of the seabed could reduce the abundance and diversity of tiny animals living in the depths of the Pacific Ocean, a new study found. The study, published on Friday in the journal Nature Ecology and Evolution, was funded by The Metals Co., which is vying to become the first company to conduct commercial mining on the ocean floor. Researchers from the Natural History Museum in London analysed samples from the seafloor before and after a mining test and found that the number of worms, minute crustaceans and other small animals in the path of the mining vehicle fell 37 per cent. The variety of the creatures also declined by 32 per cent.

The data came from the Clarion-Clipperton Zone, an area in the Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and Mexico that is targeted for seabed mining because it is rich with potato-sized nodules that contain nickel, cobalt, copper and manganese. The metals are used in renewable-energy technologies and also have military applications. The Metals Co. has spent some \$250 million studying the environmental effects of seabed mining. The dozens of researchers involved had contracts that allowed them to independently analyse and publish their results. This emerging collection of work represents one of the largest and most comprehensive research efforts conducted in the Clarion-Clipper Zone to date.

More than a dozen countries, through state-owned entities or sponsored companies, hold

United Nations permits to explore more than 1 million square kilometres of deep seafloor around the world. The agency’s International Seabed Authority has not yet approved commercial mining. In April, President Donald Trump took a major step that would allow mining to begin by issuing an executive order to fast track commercial seabed mining. It instructed the US government to issue mining permits in national and international waters. The actions drew criticisms for circumventing the UN process.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is reportedly reviewing The Metals Co.’s permit application. A spokesperson for NOAA declined to comment on the permitting process. The Trump administration has also recently proposed expanding the area open to mining around American Samoa from 18 million acres to 33 million acres, despite a moratorium from the territory’s Polynesian leadership. Critics say not enough is known about the potential damage to the marine environment to allow industrial seabed mining. Nearly 40 countries have called for a moratorium or ban on seabed mining.

Scientists once assumed that there was hardly any life in the deep sea, believing that the environment was too extreme and devoid of nutrients. But research from the past few decades has increasingly shown that life in the deep sea is surprisingly abundant and diverse. The new study described 788 species of macrofauna, one subset animals that live in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone. “We’ve actually

Scientists once assumed that there was hardly any life in the deep sea, believing that the environment was too extreme and devoid of nutrients. But research from the past few decades has increasingly shown that life in the deep sea is surprisingly abundant and diverse

only sampled such a tiny proportion of the deep sea,” said Eva Stewart, a doctoral student and lead author of the new study. There could be thousands of species waiting to be discovered, she said. “We just haven’t seen them yet.”

Other research examining a 44-year-old deep sea mining test site found that the biodiversity losses from seabed mining can linger for decades. About 30 per cent of the small animals that live on the seabed are directly attached to the mineral-laden nodules that the mining operations would collect. Those creatures were not included in the new study, which surveyed macrofauna in the sediment around the nodules. The Metals Co.’s mining vehicles leave about 10 per cent of nodules behind, according to Michael Clarke, the company’s environmental manager. He said the 37 per cent reduction found in the study was not concerning because it was lower than expected and the company expects these populations to recover over time.

Understanding the natural variation of marine life in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone is one of the biggest challenges to studying potential effects of mining. Several research groups that have examined animal life in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone discovered that the ecosystem undergoes large changes year-to-year, even without any influence from mining.

Seabed mining involves reaching deep into the ocean with an autonomous vehicle to harvest nodules from the seabed floor and pump them up to a ship on the surface for processing.

2nd strike scrutiny obscures question about Trump’s attacks



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AS CONGRESS parses the details of a follow-on strike that killed initial survivors of President Donald Trump’s first boat attack on Sept. 2, a much larger issue risks getting lost: whether Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth have caused the military to commit crimes in a score of attacks. Adm. Frank M. Bradley, who commanded the operation, on Thursday showed lawmakers a video of the attack. The briefing was part of a congressional effort to understand his decision to order a second strike and determine whether the survivors of the first one remained “in the fight” or were technically shipwrecked, making it a war crime to kill them.

There have been shifting narratives emerging from the Pentagon, and the video showing the minutes before the second strike has been interpreted several ways. But each interpretation entails analogising the actions of suspected drug runners to actual combat activities. The comparisons are strained at best, legal experts say, because the laws of war were not written for and do not fit a drug smuggling situation. “Debate over when a shipwrecked crew member loses protection from attack misses the point,” said Geoffrey S. Corn, who was formerly the Army’s senior adviser for law-of-war issues. “The real problem here is the dubious and legally overbroad assertion that the United States is justified in using wartime authority against a criminal problem.”

As a matter of plain reality, an unarmed speedboat, even if it is carrying cocaine, is not a warship. And none of the 11 people aboard — not merely the two initial survivors, but also the nine people the US military killed in its first strike — were fighting anyone. The Sept. 2 boat attack was the first in Trump’s policy of directing the military to summarily kill people who are suspected of smuggling drugs at sea as if they are enemy



US Navy Admiral Frank “Mitch” Bradley, left, and US Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrive for a closed door classified meeting with lawmakers on Capitol Hill in Washington.

soldiers on a battlefield. The military has gone on to attack 21 more such boats, killing 87 people in all, according to the administration. The conversation about whether that campaign amounts to murder has largely taken place among experts in laws governing the use of armed force.

The United States has long handled the problem of maritime drug smuggling by using the Coast Guard to intercept boats and to arrest people. That echoes how it works on land: Police officers who believe people are dealing drugs arrest them, and if they are convicted, they serve time in prison. They are not executed. It would be a crime if officers instead simply gunned down suspected drug dealers in the street. Similarly, a military force is not allowed to target civilians, and being a suspected criminal does not make someone lose civilian status. In peacetime, targeting a civilian is murder. In an armed conflict, targeting a civilian is a war crime.

To justify the killings, Trump has declared that the United States is in a formal armed conflict against drug cartels,

The attack was the first in Trump’s policy of directing the military to summarily kill people who are suspected of smuggling drugs at sea. The military has gone on to attack 21 more such boats, killing 87 people

and that smuggling boat crews are “combatants” — all because he has “determined” so. While Congress has not authorised an armed conflict, a memo by the president’s appointees at the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel accepts his claim that there is one. Based on that premise, it says the drugs suspected of being aboard the boats are lawful military targets because cartels could use the profits to finance their purported war efforts, according to people who have seen the memo.

The White House has highlighted the deaths of tens of thousands of American drug users a year from overdoses.

But even if those deaths somehow amounted to an armed attack, the surge in overdoses over the past decade was mostly caused by fentanyl that comes from labs in Mexico, which use Chinese chemicals. The dramatic increase has not been fuelled by cocaine that comes on boats from South America.

The Trump administration has also suggested that it can use armed force against suspected drug runners as a matter of the

collective self-defence of other countries whose security forces sometimes clash with well-armed cartel goons, such as Colombia and Mexico. But the presidents of both those countries have condemned the boat attacks.

Against that backdrop, a broad range of experts in the laws governing the use of lethal force have called the administration’s armed conflict theory nonsensical. Trump and Hegseth, they argue, have been giving illegal orders to the troops under their command to commit crimes. With the notable exception of Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., most lawmakers who have been arguing that the boat attacks are murders have been Democrats, who do not control Congress.

To be protected as “shipwrecked,” naval combatants can’t take hostile actions. Could the attempt to flip the hull be interpreted as combat activity, on the theory they might have been trying to reach cocaine, which the administration has portrayed as a weapon? Soldiers on a battlefield can’t be killed if they “surrender.” Could their wave be seen as an offer to do so?

Such parsing of the details of the second strike could end up being a favour to the Trump administration. The idea that something was bad about that particular strike implicitly suggests the first one on that boat — and all the other attacks on other boats — was fine. And the exercise reinforces the premise that the situation should be thought about through the lens of an armed conflict.

The larger question now is whether the belated bipartisan interest in that particular strike will generate momentum for a broader look at the entire killing spree that Trump and Hegseth have led the US military to perform, said Rebecca Ingber, a professor at the Cardozo School of Law and a former State Department expert in the law of war.

OPINION

Rethinking well-being in Omani workplaces



DR HAMED
AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

SALIM, A 30-year-old employee in a private company, arrives late for his therapy session. He had just finished his evening master’s classes, a degree he had long dreamed of pursuing to advance his career. His employer could not release him for full-time study, so he enrolled in an evening programme, determined to manage both work and education. At home, his pregnant wife often expressed how exhausted she felt from caring for their two young children. Salim feels constantly guilty for not spending time with his kids before they go to bed. During weekends, while other families gathered for outings or rest, Salim headed to the library to work on his assignments. His wife continued to complain that he was never available for her or the children, and the tension at home grew. With time, Salim became more stressed. He started to feel persistently low in mood, slept poorly, and found it increasingly difficult to concentrate at work. The pressure mounted when his university grades dropped, pushing him into a deeper sense of failure and despair. He wanted help,

but he didn’t know where to start, and like many others, he hesitated. Many employees who juggle work, studies, and family responsibilities discover themselves overwhelmed yet reluctant to seek psychological support. Several misconceptions and fears keep people trapped in silent suffering, often for months or even years. One of the main misconceptions is believing that struggling emotionally is a sign of weakness and that one should ‘push through’ without seeking professional help. Others mistakenly link their anxiety or stress to weak faith, falling into a cycle of self-blame even though their difficulties may have nothing to do with religion. Stigma, or the fear of being labelled ‘mentally ill,’ is still an obstacle in Oman and other Arab cultures. This leads many employees to withdraw and shy away from seeking professional help; instead, they try to cope alone while their well-being and work performance deteriorate. Another common misconception is believing that psychological therapy is merely talk that anyone or any social media video can provide, which undermines the value of professional intervention and

Many employees who juggle work and family responsibilities find themselves overwhelmed yet reluctant to seek psychological support due to several misconceptions that keep them trapped in silent suffering for a long time

discourages people from seeking therapy. Even when a person decides to consult a health care professional, unhealthy behaviours such as procrastination and hesitation make them wonder, ‘Is therapy even useful?’ while their suffering stretches on. Sometimes, a single negative encounter with an inexperienced or unskilled therapist may lead a person to believe that therapy as a whole does not work, discouraging them from ever seeking the support they genuinely need. A few years ago, I attended a well-being at work summit Middle East in Muscat where corporate representatives evidence-based interventions that are truly effective, rather than merely serving as a checkbox for accreditation. I remember a presenter who shared his experience living with bipolar disorder while getting the right support from his manager which helped him achieve a higher position in his career. We need to shift the conversation toward what employees in Oman really need while benefiting from best practices elsewhere. So keep an eye on events and be part of the conversation.

INDONESIA FLOODS KILL OVER 900 AS STARVATION LOOMS

ALFATH ASMUNDA

Ruinous floods and landslides have killed more than 900 people on Indonesia’s island of Sumatra, the country’s disaster management agency said, with fears that starvation could send the toll even higher. A chain of tropical storms and monsoonal rains has pummelled Southeast and South Asia, triggering landslides and flash floods from the Sumatran rainforest to the highland plantations of Sri Lanka. More than 1,790 people have been killed in natural disasters unfolding across Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam over the past week. In Indonesia’s provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra, floods have swept away roads, smothered houses in silt, and cut off supplies. Aceh governor Muzakir Manaf said response teams were still searching for bodies in “waist-deep” mud. However, starvation was one of the gravest threats now hanging over remote and inaccessible villages. “Many people need basic necessities. Many areas remain untouched in the remote areas of Aceh,” he told reporters. “People are not dying from the flood, but from starvation. That’s how it is.” Entire villages had been washed away in the rainforest-cloaked Aceh Tamiang region, Muzakir said. “The Aceh Tamiang region is completely destroyed, from the top to the bottom, down to the roads and down to the sea. “Many villages and sub-districts are now just names,” he said. Aceh Tamiang flood victim Fachrul Rozi said he had spent the past week crammed into an old shop building with others who had fled the rising waters. “We ate whatever was available, helping each other with the little supplies each resident had brought,” he said. “We slept crammed together.” Aceh resident Munawar Liza Zainal said he felt “betrayed” by the Indonesian government, which has so far shrugged off pressure to declare a national disaster. “This is an extraordinary disaster that must be faced with extraordinary measures,” he said, echoing frustrations voiced by other flood victims. “If national disaster status is only declared later, what’s the point?” Declaring a national disaster would free up resources and help government agencies coordinate their response. Analysts have suggested Indonesia could be reluctant to declare a disaster because it would show it was not up to the task. Indonesia’s government insisted it could handle the fallout. Environmentalists and Indonesia’s government have also suggested that logging and deforestation exacerbated landslides and flooding in Sumatra.

— AFP

Life’s true wealth lies in the journey, not the destination

ONE WE sometimes rush through, eager to reach the ending without pausing to savour the story. Looking back, I realise that much of my life was spent turning pages too quickly, often skipping whole chapters, forever chasing the next goal, the next measure of success. I was more interested in knowing the end of the story than enjoying the whole story. When I was young, I was told that if I worked hard at my studies, I could earn a place at one of Oxford’s finest schools. I studied relentlessly, driven by anxiety over passing the exams. I succeeded, but instead of feeling fulfilled, I was told to aim higher. If I worked hard again, I could enter a good university. So I repeated the pattern — study, worry, achieve — and eventually I did. Then came the next promise: a good career would bring success and happiness. I became a teacher, believing that I was on the right path. Later, I opened my first school in Cambridge, convinced that if it became the best, I would finally feel accomplished. I worked tirelessly and one of my schools eventually topped a UK academic league table. I opened another and it too succeeded. Outwardly, I had achieved everything I strived for. Yet, behind the accolades, I was exhausted. Running two schools, constantly chasing those glittering prizes, the fool’s gold, and measuring my worth by external recognition left me drained. The stress became unbearable and eventually I sold my school. But the drive to achieve didn’t disappear. I turned to property development, determined to become a multimillionaire. Then another business followed. And another. People admired me. They called



The true richness of living is not in reaching the end of the book, it’s in cherishing every page along the way.



KARIM
EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author Life is a book.

Wisdom lies in balance. In learning to enjoy each moment without being consumed by what lies ahead

me successful. But somewhere along the way, I began to see the illusion. I had been living for the destination, not the journey. I had been reading the book of my life without ever truly absorbing its pages. Now I understand that life’s meaning isn’t found in the next achievement or the next milestone. It’s found in the quiet moments we so often overlook. The birds sing, the rivers flow, the sea speaks and moves with its waves, and the trees stand tall, not for a purpose but simply because they are. Nature does not strive, it exists. I am not suggesting that we abandon ambition or stop creating. Wisdom lies in balance. In learning to enjoy each moment without being consumed by what lies ahead. We should not take ourselves, or life, so seriously that we forget to live it. If I could turn back the pages, I would read them slowly. I would linger on each word, each moment,

each experience. I would stop to listen to the birds, to the waves of the sea. Because the true richness of living is not in reaching the end of the book, it’s in cherishing every page along the way. Now I am old I write books and occasional articles simply because I enjoy it not to achieve success. I read books slowly now, taking time to savour every page. I have a small boat and I find peace in being alone with Nature. I go fishing with no expectation of catching a fish. Sometimes I stop to listen to a bird singing or to admire the quiet beauty of a tree. When I head out to sea and look back at the houses on the shore, they seem like the prison I once built for myself, always striving for a bigger house or a more expensive car. My great regret is that I didn’t learn to take myself and life a little less seriously when I was young.

One bad apple...



RAY PETERSEN

The writer is a media consultant

THE classroom is a difficult environment in contemporary, first world, educational environments. Just ask any teacher. In fact, just ask any learner. TES, the respected mouthpiece for the education sector reports that as many as a quarter of teachers are walking away... not because of pay, but due to classroom behaviour.

The days of the classroom being the teacher’s ‘domain,’ are well past, and it’s incredibly disappointing, as schools are bent towards breaking by behaviours instilled through ‘snowflake’ ideologies. I’m not advocating a return to the ‘olden days,’ when corporal punishment in schools meant the pain and humiliation of the teacher’s leather strap on your hand, or their bamboo cane on your backside, but something must change to allow teachers to do what they are there to do, to teach, and return behaviours to home and parents.

A snowflake is a fragile hexagonal shaped crystalline structure of clear iced water suspended in the atmosphere, which then falls to the ground, changing shape by attaching to others, forming many diverse shapes, stellar, geometric, plate, and column patterns. A ‘snowflake,’ societally, is a derogatory colloquialism for an individual who has an ego-driven perspective of themselves, seeing themselves as unique and precious, superior. They have an extraordinary sense of entitlement, believing the world revolves around them, and their needs must be prioritised, ahead of all others.

They tend towards becoming emotional and offended when these needs are not prioritised.

Today’s pupil/learner snowflake is brought up with an inflated idea of their own importance, which prioritises their lack of tolerance, patience or respect for others. Their physiological, safety and security, and familial needs may well be met, however their confidence, respect for and acceptance of others, their morality, and the way others see them have either not been addressed or been over-inflated. They are an incredibly malignant influence on the classroom, with their constant, intrusive ‘me’-ness. They must go to the bathroom when they want, have ‘their’ movement break because they want, have ‘their’ curiosity or question answered now, and the teacher must stop another student whispering, behind them, and of course probably, about them. Everything is about them! But there’s no ‘I’ in class.

Now, if this were just one or two learners, most teacher’s classroom management, training and experience is such that they, and their class will still learn what they need. Unfortunately, there has been a sharp upswing in unacceptable classroom behaviours since the pandemic as determined in the findings of the Baroness Hallett Covid-19 Enquiry.

It is so difficult for teachers to redirect learning with authority and empathy, whilst being ignored, or worse, spoken over. In fact, teachers frequently report being undone by loud, antagonistic, disrespectful and arrogant

The days of the classroom being the teacher’s ‘domain,’ are well past, and it’s incredibly disappointing, as schools are bent towards breaking by behaviours instilled through ‘snowflake’ ideologies

students. The only two things any teacher can do, that make any difference, are listen and communicate. Of course, they are taught and trained, and gain experience in using patience, empathy, and goodwill, but these are not endless or inexhaustible, and they simply don’t elicit textbook responses from entitled students.

The blame must be attributed to poor parenting, as while understanding that the global pandemic, lockdowns, and their societal implications have negatively impacted upon many of our younger generation, the ill-mannered, disrespectful, entitled behaviours that are occurring daily across the education sector don’t absolve parents from being the ones to redress the situation. They must prepare their children for life in the real world that sometimes ‘isn’t fair,’ where excuses may not be reasons, where authority and supervision reject defiance, dissent and non-compliance, and where the word ‘no’ requires deliberation and consideration.

Why? Because parents can apply patience and discipline at home in ways that teachers cannot at school. They shouldn’t need to deal with issues and situations they must, but their greatest concern is that ‘one bad apple can spoil the barrel.’

And what if your child, your learner, is one of those who just goes to school to learn, but is ‘cheated’ out of the quality learning experience their teacher is trying to provide? How would you feel? More importantly... how do you feel for your child?

KIDNAPPING FEARS STRAIN FAMILY BONDS IN NIGERIA

AMINU ABUBAKAR

Abubakar Abdullahi has not seen his wife and five children in almost three months because he is too afraid to visit his home town for fear of being kidnapped by criminal gangs roaming Nigeria’s countryside.

He has remained in Minna, the capital of the central Nigerian state of Niger where he works as a civil servant. He has resorted to only calling his family living in the town of Kontagora, 200 km away. Kontagora is located halfway from Papiri where more than 300 school children were abducted from their dormitories two weeks ago in one of Nigeria’s worst mass kidnappings.

“I’m too scared to visit my family because of kidnappers,” the 45-year-old Abdullahi said at a restaurant in the city. “I only communicate with them on phone and send them upkeep money electronically at the end of each month,” said Abdullahi as he waited for his order.

He is yet to overcome the trauma of the kidnapping of his elder brother in 2022 from his Kontagora home and held for three months before he was freed after the family was forced to raise 50 million naira (\$35,000) ransom. Abdullahi’s dilemma is not peculiar to him, but shared by many residents of Minna, now separated from their families and friends in the countryside over kidnapping fears.

Mamman Alassan has not visited his village in Shiroro district since he moved to Minna three years ago. “We cannot go home to visit our people because nobody will risk his life,” said Alassan outside a jewellery shop. “Social interactions between us have become less.”

“We are a culturally and religiously mixed society with close kinship ties but the current security situation has made people stop going to see their people in the villages,” James David Gaza, a Catholic priest said after mass outside his church. “This is pulling us apart and destroying our social bonds,” Gaza said.

With families getting together for Christmas lunches and exchanging wrapped gifts in a few weeks, in parts of Nigeria these will be through phone calls and electronic money transfers.

“All social interactions with people in rural areas such as weddings, naming ceremonies, funerals have considerably reduced due to the prevailing situation,” said Isyaku Ibrahim Gada, a perfumer at the bustling Minna market.

Niger is one of several states in northwest and central Nigeria that have for years been terrorised by criminal gangs called bandits who raid villages, abduct residents and burn homes after looting them. Although they live in the forest, bandits keep track of people in communities through networks of local informants who spy on people and inform them about potential targets. — AFP

The massive costs of anti-immigrant policies

IMMIGRATION has become the central fault line in contemporary politics. Nowhere is this more evident than in the United States and the United Kingdom, where the rhetoric is becoming increasingly absurd.

The underlying economics, however, are remarkably straightforward. Most advanced economies are rapidly ageing, and with demographic decline comes a shrinking workforce. While automation and AI may ease some of these pressures, neither can meet the rapidly growing need for healthcare and elder-care workers or substitute for the educators, plumbers, and countless others whose jobs still depend on an irreplaceably human touch.

By contrast, the developing world has an enormous labour supply but not enough good jobs to absorb it. In Africa alone, more than 600 million people are projected to join the working-age population in the next quarter-century. Globally, the figure is closer to one billion.

The result is chronic youth unemployment that is all but certain to fuel political instability and civil conflict in many low-income countries. These strains are compounded by climate change, which is expected to hit developing economies the hardest and accelerate migration flows to richer countries. Economists have long argued that easing restrictions on cross-border mobility brings enormous benefits to both destination and origin countries. Yet one would never know it from the fierce anti-immigration backlash now sweeping the developed world. In Germany, Angela Merkel’s decision to admit a million Syrian refugees in 2015 is perhaps the most unpopular decision of her 16-year tenure as chancellor, however morally courageous it may have seemed at the time. Frustration over rising migrant populations was one of the main forces behind the UK’s 2016 decision to leave the European



Economists have long argued that easing restrictions on cross-border mobility brings enormous benefits to both destination and origin countries.

Union. And in Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has built his political brand on a hardline anti-immigration platform, becoming a lodestar for far-right provocateurs such as Tucker Carlson.

America’s trajectory over the past decade is particularly troubling. Historically, the country’s ability to attract ambitious people from around the world has been one of its greatest strengths, fuelling economic growth, innovation, and cultural vitality. American universities, in particular, have been magnets for global talent, attracting bright students who come not only to receive a high-quality – albeit very expensive – education, but also to build a life and career in the US. That approach has paid off handsomely, as nearly half of all Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children.

But that pillar of American dynamism is now at risk of unravelling. US President Donald Trump’s administration has effectively shut the border and made a public spectacle of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids and deportations, ostensibly to reverse former President Joe Biden’s so-called “open borders” policy.

The shocking images of Venezuelan migrants accused of gang ties being deported to El

Salvador’s infamous Terrorism Confinement Center – where they reportedly endured brutal and inhumane treatment – may have contributed to the subsequent drop in illegal border crossings. But this theatre of cruelty has also chilled legal immigration, discouraging many of the skilled and ambitious people who have long underpinned US innovation and growth.

The Trump administration’s crackdown on international students has been especially destructive. In one widely reported case, a 19-year-old Babson College student who had arrived in the US from Honduras at age seven was whisked out of a security line at Boston’s Logan Airport. Instead of flying home to Texas as planned, she was detained, sent to an ICE facility, and then, despite a federal court order that she not be removed from Massachusetts, deported to Honduras – separating her from her parents, who remain in the US.

To be sure, Biden-era policies triggered a surge in illegal immigration while narrowing legal avenues for economically beneficial entry. Between 2020 and 2024, roughly 11 million immigrants entered the US – and given the large numbers who crossed unmonitored stretches of the southern border, the actual figure may be much higher. Of course, Biden’s approach was itself a reaction to Trump’s restrictions during his first term, illustrating how US immigration policy has swung wildly between extremes rather than converging on a coherent strategy.

Given the entrenched divisions and dysfunction in Washington, the chances of Congress passing a bipartisan immigration reform bill are vanishingly small. Similar dynamics are playing out across much of the developed world, as Germany, France, and the UK all struggle to integrate far smaller immigrant populations whose cultural traditions differ markedly from those of most native-born citizens. ©Project Syndicate, 2025

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



Nizwa player controls the ball.

NIZWA AND SEEB WIN JUNIOR BASKETBALL LEAGUE

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 6

Nizwa and Seeb continued their strong form in the Junior Basketball League for the 2025–2026 season, with the former securing a valuable 58–44 victory over Masirah, while Seeb dominated Saham 60–19. Both matches were played at the secondary sports hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

NIZWA CONTROL THE GAME TO BEAT MASIRAH

In the opening match, Nizwa delivered a powerful performance, showing early readiness by controlling the first quarter, which they ended leading 12–7 thanks to solid defensive organisation and quick offensive transitions. Their dominance continued in the second quarter with varied attacks and high offensive pressure, adding 21 points against Masirah’s 9 to finish the first half comfortably ahead 33–16.

Masirah attempted a comeback in the third quarter, narrowing the gap by scoring 16 points while Nizwa added 14, ending the period at 46–30. The final quarter saw Masirah maintain its momentum, scoring 14 points to Nizwa’s 12. However, the large first-half advantage allowed Nizwa to secure the win 58–44 after an exciting contest marked by alternating momentum.

Nizwa’s standout performer was Al Mulham al Obaidani, who scored 25 points, while Neil Al Idki added 16 points, and Adam al Hinai contributed 7 points. For Masirah, Rashid al Isaai led the scoring with 17 points, supported by Saddam al Shezawi with 10 points, and Abdulrahim al Rashid with 7 points. The match was officiated by referees Taher al Amri (first referee) and Thabit al Hinai (second referee), with Salem al Hadeedi, Salem al Ghilani, and Jamal al Hilali handling table duties.

SEEB DOMINATE SAHAM

In the second match, Seeb demonstrated clear superiority, earning a convincing 60–19 win after controlling all four quarters of the game.

Seeb started strongly, setting the tone with a fast attacking pace and firm defensive pressure, closing the first quarter ahead 18–4. Their impressive performance continued in the second quarter, adding 12 points while Saham managed just 7, ending the half 30–11 in Seeb’s favour.

Seeb maintained their strong rhythm in the third quarter, scoring 11 points against Saham’s 4 to extend the lead to 41–15. The fourth quarter followed the same pattern, with Seeb adding 19 more points, while Saham only scored 4, sealing a comprehensive 60–19 victory.

Seeb’s top scorers were Ahmed al Maskari and Saif al Mughairi, both with 14 points, while Danil al Balushi impressed with 12 points. For Saham, Rashid al Jabri scored 5 points, and Azzam al Rashdi added 4 points.

The match was officiated by Al Mahdi al Alawi (first referee) and Hussein al Awamri (second referee), with table officials Jumaa al Hinai, Salem al Hadeedi, and Mahmood al Ajmi.



The championship continues until December 8, with final results to be announced during the closing ceremony.

Inaugural para sailing championship begins

THE Second day of the inaugural World Sailing Inclusion Championships 2025, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman and organised by Oman Sail, continued on Friday with intense competition and participation from around the world. The races, held at the Musannah Sailing School at Barceló Mussanah Resort, run until tomorrow, Monday, across four internationally recognised classes.

The championship showcases exceptional levels of skill and readiness, following a three-day specialist training programme delivered by World Sailing to develop the capabilities of sailors, coaches, and race officials, while reinforcing the core principles of inclusion and enabling athletes with different disabilities to compete from a unified starting line.

A distinguished lineup of world-class para sailing athletes is competing in Oman with strong ambitions for podium finishes. In the One Person Keelboat (Hansa 303) fleet, competitors include Chile’s Zaida Pérez, France’s Gauthier Brill, Britain’s Rory McKinna, Germany’s Jens Kroker, and Italy’s Alessandra Franchi — all prominent names in the global para sailing arena.

In the Two Person Keelboat (RS Venture Connect), Poland’s duo Piotr and Olga entered the competition with confidence, joined by Britain’s team led by Adam and Jazz, Norway’s Henriette and Sol, and Sweden’s Vea and Kro.

In the Visually Impaired (FarEast 28R) event for, Britain’s veteran Lucy Hodges leads, while Australia’s Kylie Forth and Spain’s Dani Pich are also expected to deliver some of the championship’s most exciting races.

The participation of these accomplished athletes brings exceptional competitive momentum to the inaugural edition, promising thrilling and high-stakes racing as they contend for places on the podium.

The second day of the 2025 World Sailing Inclusion Championships delivered strong performances and close competition across all four classes.

In RS Venture Connect, team Poland, featuring Piotr Cichocki and Olga



Gornas-Grudzien moved to the top of the leaderboard after a consistent and powerful showing. Team Norway represented by Stian Kristiansen and Elliot Finnestrand held on to second place following a series of tightly contested races.

Sweden’s Fia Fjelddahl and Patrik Rosenberg climbed into third, while Norway’s Henriette Smith and Solfrid Lindhjem Kvinnesland slipped to fourth despite a strong start on Day One.

In the Hansa 303 class, Great Britain’s Rory McKinna extended his lead with another standout performance. Japan’s Takumi Niwa remained close behind in second, and Portugal’s João Pinto held third with steady, strategic sailing.

In the ILCA 6 class for athletes with intellectual impairments, Great Britain’s Murray Macdonald continued to dominate, retaining first place. Hong Kong, China’s Tsz Hin Cheung moved into second, while the UAE’s Marwan Suloom impressed with results that pushed him into third.

In the FarEast 28RS fleet for visually impaired sailors, Great Britain’s team led by Lucy Hodges maintained first place thanks to exceptional coordination and technical skill. Spain’s Daniel Anglada Pich advanced to second, while the British team led by Karl Haines dropped to third. Another British crew, captained by Vicki Sheen, finished the day in fourth.

Justin Bridgemohan, from Trinidad and Tobago, said: “Everything is handled with great professionalism.

The services provided to athletes are excellent. The atmosphere is motivating, and the organisation makes it easy for sailors to focus fully on their performance.”

American sailor Dylan Young from



Seattle, competing in Hansa 303, described the event as: “A world-class championship in every sense. The organisation is exceptional, and the facilities are impressively accessible. Everything is prepared to ensure a smooth and comfortable experience.” Nawaf al Ghadhani, Deputy Head of Sailing Schools at Oman Sail and Event Course Race Officer, said: “The level of competition reflects the months of preparation undertaken by the organising committee.

The races are running smoothly and in full compliance with international para sailing standards.”

He added: “This first edition marks a milestone in the global journey of sailing for persons with disabilities. Bringing athletes of various disability categories together in one competitive environment promotes inclusion and supports the global development of this sport.”

Oman is represented by seven sailors from the SailFree programme in the RS Venture Connect and Hansa 303, delivering promising performances.

The championship continues until Monday, with final results to be announced during the closing ceremony.

The championships are powered by Oman Sail and Oman Maritime Sports Committee and supported by World Sailing’s global partners Musto and Kuehne+Nagel; Strategic Partners the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), Experience Oman, and the Al Batinah South Governorate; and Bronze Partners Barceló Mussanah Resort, OXY Oman, Visit Oman, Tanuf, and Mazoon Dairy.

SHORTTAKES



In the second set Sohar managing to level the match and take the set 25–23.

MAJEES WIN 5-SET BATTLE AGAINST SOHAR

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 6

Majees secured a dramatic victory in the Al Batinah North derby, defeating Sohar 3–2 in the fifth round of the 2025–2026 Oman First Division Volleyball League. It was an intense battle that stretched to five sets, reflecting the close level between both teams and their shared desire to claim all three points.

Both teams entered the match with great determination, accompanied by a lively crowd that restored the familiar derby atmosphere. Long rallies and fierce attacking duels at the net highlighted the game, with Majees ultimately celebrating a happy ending to a marathon match that was only decided in the final set.

The match was evenly contested, with both sides exchanging the lead throughout the five sets. In the first set, Majees made a strong start, imposing their attacking rhythm from the wings to win the set 25–23.

In the second set, the momentum shifted completely as Sohar improved their reception and offensive organisation, managing to level the match and take the set 25–23.

The third set saw even more excitement, with both teams constantly trading points and extending the set into extra points. Sohar demonstrated greater composure in the decisive moments, winning 28–26 to take a 2–1 lead in the match.

Majees refused to back down, roaring back in the fourth set with stronger blocking and more accurate serves, sealing the set comfortably 25–17 and forcing a decisive tie-breaker.

The fifth and final set held the crowd in suspense as the score remained tight until the final point. Majees held their nerve and prevailed 15–13, completing a 3–2 marathon victory over their rivals Sohar.

Majees led the match in total points with 114, compared to 106 for Sohar, indicating their better exploitation of key moments despite Sohar’s defensive superiority at the net with 15 block points against 9 for Majees. On the other hand, Sohar’s 39 errors significantly impacted their chances, compared to 32 errors for Majees.

In serve statistics, both teams recorded two direct aces, while Majees had the stronger offensive serves but committed 19 serve errors, versus 13 by Sohar.

TOP SCORERS – A STAR FROM EACH SIDE

Sohar’s professional player Younik Sasha shined as the match’s top scorer with 34 points, including 32 attacking points at a 47 per cent success rate, plus 2 block points, despite committing 7 errors.

For Majees, Waleed al Badi delivered a clutch performance in crucial moments, scoring 27 points including 24 attacking points at a 44 per cent success rate, along with 3 block points, making him the key factor in securing the victory even though he committed 8 errors.



The draw earned Oman their first point of the competition and keeps their hopes of advancing alive, though the qualification scenario is now more complex.

Queiroz regrets missed chances vs Morocco

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 6

OMAN head coach Carlos Queiroz expressed his both pride and frustration following team’s goalless draw against Morocco in their second Group B match of the Fifa Arab Cup on Friday night at Education City Stadium in Doha. Speaking in the post-match press conference, the Portuguese coach said the Red Warriors delivered one of their strongest performances in recent months but fell short in converting their scoring opportunities into goals.

“Our players showed clear dominance after the break, controlling the rhythm and forcing Morocco to defend deeply for long stretches. However, I admitted that the team struggled with composure in the final ten minutes, a phase of the match that felt Oman could have capitalised on to secure a crucial three points” he added

“The match was in our hands, but we could not convert the scoring attempts into goals,” Queiroz said. “We played against a tough opponent who came fully prepared for this tournament. Still, we succeeded in organising our defensive structure and

deploying a tight backline that made it very difficult for Morocco to find any real breakthroughs.”

Despite Morocco being reduced to ten men in the 53rd minute after Hamed Allah received a straight red card for a reckless challenge on Musab al Shaqsi, Oman were unable to take full advantage of the numerical superiority. The draw, however, earned Oman their first point of the competition and keeps their hopes of advancing alive, though the qualification scenario is now more complex. Oman must defeat Comoros on Monday at Stadium 974 and simultaneously hope for Saudi Arabia to beat Morocco to boost their chances of progressing to the knockout stage.

Queiroz complemented his squad’s overall discipline and fighting spirit, emphasising that their strong performance resonated positively with the fans. “I am very proud of the players’ show tonight. The performance was acceptable to our supporters even though we could not manage to score. I believe the fans appreciated the effort, the tactical discipline, and the commitment shown on the pitch,” he added.

When asked about player absences, Queiroz explained that certain injuries and incomplete physical readiness had

impacted his squad selection. “There are a few absences due to injuries, and some players are still not in full form. But those who played tonight gave everything, and I appreciate their dedication.”

On the refereeing, Queiroz offered a balanced assessment, stating: “The referee officiated the match well. As for the red card, it was not an intentional action from the Moroccan player, but these things happen in football. The match was tough with intense duels on both sides.”

Oman goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini, who delivered an outstanding performance and was deservedly named Man of the Match, echoed the coach’s sentiments. “We played a strong match but could not find the final touch,” he said. “Morocco are a tough opponent. Our qualification chances are still alive, and we must stay fully focused on our next match.”

Oman will now prepare for a decisive clash against Comoros on Monday knowing that only a victory will keep their ambitions of advancing to the next round alive. Later on Friday night, Saudi Arabia secured their spot into the quarterfinals after defeating Comoros 3-1 with six points from two matches.

Thunder roll to 14th straight NBA win, Celtics beat depleted Lakers

LOS ANGELES, United States: The NBA champion Oklahoma City Thunder powered to their 14th straight victory on Friday, beating the Dallas Mavericks 132-111 to push their record to an impressive 22-1.

NBA Most Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 33 points and Jalen Williams and Chet Holmgren added 15 apiece for Oklahoma City, who are off to the best start to a season since the Golden State Warriors opened the 2015-16 campaign 24-0.

Up by 30 through three quarters, the Thunder rested their starters in the final period, the Mavericks’ three-game winning streak ending with a thud.

Jaden Hardy scored 23 points off the bench to lead the Mavs on a night when star centre Anthony Davis scored just two points, making his lone basket of the night in an irrelevant four



Oklahoma City Thunder guard Ajay Mitchell (25) drives past Dallas Mavericks guard Brandon Williams (10). — Reuters

minutes on court in the final frame.

The oft-injured Davis had checked out of the contest in the third quarter after appearing to injure his left knee, sitting

on the bench with it wrapped before returning to the game.

The Boston Celtics, led by 30 points from Jaylen Brown, cruised past the short-handed Los Angeles Lakers 126-105.

The marquee clash lost much of its lustre with Lakers superstar LeBron James sidelined by the sciatica that caused him to miss the first 14 games of his 23rd season.

Luka Doncic was also absent, missing a second game for personal reasons. Austin Reaves scored 36 points to lead the Lakers, but Boston never trailed and led by as many as 29.

Denver star Nikola Jokic scored 30 of his 40 points in the second half as the Nuggets rallied to edge the Hawks 134-133 in Atlanta.

Hawks forward Jalen Johnson had a triple-double by halftime with 11 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists before the break and finished with 21 points, 18 rebounds and 16 assists.

But the Nuggets, who trailed by as many as 23 late in the first half, put up 80 points in the second half to charge back.

— AFP

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



The series has produced big scores after South Africa fell 17 runs short of India's 349 in the opener and then chased down 359 in the second match.

INDIA BOWL OUT SOUTH AFRICA FOR 270

VISAKHAPATNAM: India bowled out South Africa for 270 after opener Quinton de Kock hit a sparkling century in the third and deciding one-day international on Saturday. India finally won an ODI toss after losing 20 in a row as skipper KL Rahul broke the scarcely believable jinx and put South Africa in to bat in Visakhapatnam.

Wicketkeeper-batter De Kock made 106 off 89 balls and put on 113 runs for the second wicket with skipper Temba Bavuma, who made 48, as South Africa looked set for a big total in a high-scoring three-match series that was level at 1-1.

But India struck regular blows to dismiss South Africa in 47.5 overs as Kuldeep Yadav returned figures of 4-41 and pace bowler Prasidh Krishna also took four wickets.

Left-handed De Kock raised his seventh ODI ton against India with a six off Harshit Rana and finished his knock with eight fours and six hits over the fence.

Krishna struck twice in one over including Matthew Breetzke for 24 and Aiden Markram for one, before he bowled De Kock soon after the batsman's attacking hundred.

Dewald Brevis, who hit 29, and Marco Jansen (17) attempted to rebuild the innings in their stand of 35 but Kuldeep sent the two back in the space of three deliveries to once again swing the momentum in India's favour.

Kuldeep and Krishna combined to bowl out the opposition with Keshav Maharaj unbeaten on 20.

Earlier, Arshdeep Singh sent back Ryan Rickelton for a duck on the fourth ball of the match but De Kock and Bavuma steadied the innings and then took the attack to the hosts with regular boundaries.

The series has produced big scores after South Africa fell 17 runs short of India's 349 in the opener and then chased down 359 in the second match. — AFP



Fifa president Gianni Infantino presents United States President Donald Trump with the Fifa Peace Prize during the Fifa World Cup 2026 Final Draw. — Reuters



Draw for 2026 World Cup unveiled

TRUMP AWARDED FIFA'S INAUGURAL PEACE PRIZE FOR PROMOTING DIALOGUE

EVENT HELD AT WASHINGTON'S KENNEDY CENTER AT TRUMP'S URGING

TRUMP SAYS HE HAS SETTLED EIGHT WARS IN 10 MONTHS

HOLDERS ARGENTINA and leading contenders Spain were handed kind draws for the 2026 World Cup in a star-studded ceremony on Friday which saw US President Donald Trump receive Fifa's new peace prize. The event in Washington started the final countdown to the tournament, six months out from the first-ever 48-team World Cup, with much-fancied France among those receiving a harder task. Lionel Messi's Argentina will begin their defence of the trophy they won in Qatar in 2022 against Algeria, and will also face Austria and debutants Jordan in Group J. Heavily-fancied Spain, the European champions, will kick off their campaign against first-time qualifiers Cape Verde before also taking on Uruguay and Saudi Arabia in Group H. Thomas Tuchel's England will hope to win Group L that features beaten 2018 finalists Croatia as well as Ghana and Panama. Two-time winners France, meanwhile, face awkward tests against Senegal and Erling Haaland's Norway in Group I, which will be completed by an intercontinental play-off winner from either Iraq, Bolivia or Suriname.

2026 WORLD CUP DRAW - THE 12 GROUPS			
GROUP A Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, a qualifier		GROUP G Belgium, Egypt, Iran, New Zealand	
GROUP B Canada, a qualifier, Qatar, Switzerland		GROUP H Spain, Cape Verde, Saudi Arabia, Uruguay	
GROUP C Brazil, Morocco, Haiti, Scotland		GROUP I France, Senegal, qualifier, Norway	
GROUP D United States, Paraguay, Australia, a qualifier		GROUP J Argentina, Algeria, Austria, Jordan	
GROUP E Germany, Curacao, Ivory Coast, Ecuador		GROUP K Portugal, a qualifier, Uzbekistan, Colombia	
GROUP F Netherlands, Japan, a qualifier, Tunisia		GROUP L England, Croatia, Ghana, Panama	

The 2026 tournament will be held across the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19, with 16 more teams added to the global showpiece, up from the 32

nations involved in Qatar in 2022. That means a total of 104 matches, compared to 64 games last time. While the US will host the majority of matches including the final at the MetLife Stadium outside New York, three of the 16 venues will be in Mexico and two in Canada.

GREATEST EVENT IN HUMANITY Co-hosts the United States got a manageable draw, with Paraguay, Australia and a European play-off winner in Group D. The top two teams in each group advance to the last 32, joined by the eight best third-placed teams. "It will be the greatest World Cup ever, the greatest event that humanity has ever seen. We have three beautiful countries, 16 wonderful host cities, 48 excellent teams who will compete in 104 matches to become the one and only world champion," Infantino said. "This is like 104 Super Bowls in one month — this is the magnitude of what we are organising," he added of the tournament. Six finals berths are still to be decided in play-offs to take place in March. Because of the complexity, teams will only learn the full details of their match venues and kick-off times on Saturday, a day after the draw. — AFP

Arsenal rocked by Villa as Buendia ends leaders' unbeaten run

BIRMINGHAM: Emiliano Buendia shattered Arsenal's 18-match unbeaten run with the last-gasp strike that sealed Aston Villa's dramatic 2-1 win over the Premier League leaders on Saturday. Mikel Arteta's side fell behind to Matty Cash's first half goal at Villa Park before Leandro Trossard came off the bench to equalise for Arsenal after the interval. A pulsating clash featured squandered chances for both teams before Argentine winger Buendia capitalised on sloppy Arsenal defending to bag the winner with virtually the last kick of the game. It was Arsenal's first loss in all competitions since they were beaten for the only other time this season in a 1-0 loss at Liverpool on August 31.

Villa have been a thorn in Arsenal's side several times in recent seasons, taking points from them at crucial moments in the title race. This was another frustrating encounter with Villa's former Arsenal manager Unai Emery, whose team have emerged as unexpected title contenders following a flurry of seven successive victories in all competitions. Arsenal are just three points above second-placed Villa, with third-placed Manchester City able to close the gap on the leaders to two points if they beat Sunderland at the Etihad Stadium later on Saturday. Emery had dismissed any talk of his side being in the title race this week, calling Arsenal the strongest team in Europe.



Arsenal's Declan Rice in action with Aston Villa's Matty Cash. — Reuters

But this was a significant statement of intent from Villa, who went toe to toe with Arsenal and delivered a painful blow to their title charge. It was an ideal time to play the north Londoners, who

are dealing with a crisis at centre-back with William Saliba, Gabriel and Cristhian Mosquera all sidelined. Jurrien Timber moved from right-back to centre-back to fill the void alongside Piero Hincapie, but Arsenal

never looked completely comfortable. Arteta has said that Arsenal are "prepared" to do business in the January transfer window if there is an option to "improve" the squad. Defensive reinforcements and additional attacking options may be needed if Arteta is to lead injury-prone Arsenal to their first English title since 2004. **FRANTIC FINALE** David Raya almost gifted Villa the perfect start with a nervous, miscued clearance that forced Arsenal's keeper to scramble back to save. Ollie Watkins grew up as an Arsenal fan and the Villa striker nearly made his boyhood favourites suffer in the opening minutes. Youri Tielemans' flick gave Watkins a clear sight of goal, but Raya made a superb save

to repel his strike. Emiliano Martinez had to save from Bukayo Saka's curler moments later before Eberechi Eze's close-range finish was ruled out for offside. Arsenal had the momentum and they drew level thanks to Trossard in the 52nd minute. Martin Odegaard raced towards the Villa area and slipped in Saka, whose low cross reached Trossard for a clinical finish at the far post. Odegaard's long-range rocket was brilliantly tipped over by Martinez, while Villa's Donyell Malen fired just wide in a frantic finale. Arsenal were seconds away from escaping with a draw but Buendia netted with a ferocious blast into the roof of the net from 12 yards after the Gunners made a hash of clearing. — AFP

BUSINESS



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SHORTTAKES



A key strength is its advanced digital platform.

OMAN’S TAX FRAMEWORK BOOSTS INVESTOR APPEAL

MUSCAT: Oman’s tax system is increasingly regarded as efficient, transparent and attractive to foreign investors, largely due to its low compliance burden and growing digitalisation.

Medium-sized companies in Oman spend around 68 hours a year preparing, filing and paying taxes — far below regional and global averages of more than 200 hours — making the country a competitive destination for investment in terms of time and cost.

A key strength of the system is its advanced digital platform. Since March 2020, taxpayers have been required to submit returns and make payments electronically, eliminating manual filings.

This has simplified compliance, particularly for foreign companies, which can meet their obligations remotely.

The same system supports value-added tax (VAT), introduced in 2021 at a rate of 5 per cent under the GCC framework, with quarterly filings and clear sector-specific electronic guidance issued by the Tax Authority.

Oman applies a corporate income tax rate of 15 per cent, while personal income is not taxed. The total tax burden on companies is estimated at around 27.4 per cent of gross profits, which remains competitive by international standards.

Although some GCC countries impose no tax on foreign profits, Oman still compares favourably with many global and Asian emerging economies in terms of compliance efficiency and predictability.

The tax environment is further strengthened by its stability and simplicity. Oman operates a single income tax regime with no local taxes, allowing investors to plan long-term projects with confidence. — **ONA**

Oman plans three carbon capture ecosystems

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 6

OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) – the sole owner and operator of Oman’s natural gas transmission system – has unveiled plans for a nationwide CO₂ pipeline network to support industrial decarbonisation as part of the country’s Net-Zero pathway.

The strategy envisions three independent Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) ecosystems centred around major industrial hubs in northern, central and southern Oman.

More than 800 km of dedicated pipelines will transport captured CO₂ from emission sources to storage or utilisation sites.

Details of this nationwide carbon-management framework were outlined in an Information Memorandum issued by OQGN on Thursday, December 4, 2025, inviting local and international companies to register their interest in participating in the national infrastructure project.

“As part of OQGN’s efforts in alternative energy and our search for solutions to transport clean energy, and in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Oman Net-Zero Centre (ONZC), we are pleased to announce the launch of our Expression of Interest (EOI) for companies and institutions interested in a future carbon-dioxide network,” the majority state-



OQ Gas Networks’ strategy envisions three independent Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) ecosystems centred around major industrial hubs in northern, central and southern Oman (Picture for illustration only).

owned operator said in a post.

“Through this initiative, OQGN aims to develop Oman’s CO₂ infrastructure, connecting emission sources with storage locations. The network will be designed to support Oman’s goal of reaching net-zero emissions,” it added.

CCUS is a vital climate-mitigation technology for hard-to-abate sectors such as steel, cement and power generation.

It works by capturing CO₂ from industrial facilities — or directly from the atmosphere — and transporting it for permanent geological storage or productive use, thereby reducing overall emissions.

Following a CCUS strategy study and market forecast assessment, OQGN outlined plans for three distinct CCUS ecosystems.

The Northern CCUS Ecosystem is designed to decarbonise the expanding Sohar Industrial Area — Oman’s largest emissions cluster — and nearby regions such as Ibri.

It requires securing steady CO₂ supplies and transporting them via an estimated 300-km pipeline to storage or utilisation sites.

According to OQGN, once established, the ecosystem will allow the Sohar Industrial Area to grow while reducing emissions, attract investments in low-carbon industries, and help companies secure low-carbon premiums for their products. The Central CCUS Ecosystem is intended to serve existing and emerging emitters in Duqm, with potential storage sites in Oman’s largest oil concession, Block 6. The estimated pipeline length is about 200 km.

The Southern CCUS Ecosystem is planned for the Salalah Industrial Area, directing CO₂ to southern Block 6 storage sites within PDO’s concession through an estimated 300 km pipeline network.

For the Sur industrial hub, OQGN noted that analyses showed it is more cost-effective to route captured CO₂ to local sinks.

Accordingly, the operator is working with Sur-based emitters to identify storage or utilisation sites located closer to these emission sources.

Oman’s 10-Year Golden Residency Programme attracts global interest

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

THREE months after its launch, Oman’s 10-Year Golden Residency programme is gaining significant global attention, reaffirming Oman’s position as a stable and welcoming destination for investors seeking long-term residency, predictable regulation and access to emerging regional markets.

Introduced under the framework of Oman Vision 2040, the programme reflects the country’s ongoing commitment to economic diversification, talent attraction and strengthening the role of the private sector in national development.

The Golden Residency grants foreign investors long-term residency in return for a minimum investment of \$520,000 across seven clearly defined routes.

These include owning completed real estate units within Integrated Tourism Complexes; establishing a company registered in Oman; purchasing government development bonds; investing in securities listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange; or placing a fixed-term deposit in a licensed



Oman continues to strengthen its standing as a safe and attractive base for international investors.

Omani bank for at least five years.

Investors may also qualify by owning a company that employs 50 or more Omanis, or through nomination under the Foreign Capital Investment Law, provided the company’s capital meets the required threshold.

Officials note that the programme has attracted interest from a diverse group of international investors, many of whom

view Oman’s transparent regulations, long-standing political stability, and investor-friendly environment as compelling reasons to anchor their long-term plans in Oman.

The family-oriented nature of the residency framework further enhances its appeal: successful applicants can sponsor their spouse and children without age limitations, own an additional property outside tourism zones, employ up to three domestic workers, and benefit from fast-track immigration lanes and extended visit visas for relatives.

The application process is conducted entirely online, reflecting the government’s ongoing push towards digital transformation.

Applicants can submit documents, track progress and communicate directly with dedicated relationship managers through a unified digital platform. Migrate World, the programme’s operational partner, supports applicants with guidance and relocation services to ensure a smooth onboarding experience.

Oman’s strategic geographic position — linking Asia, Africa and the Middle East

— continues to strengthen its standing as a safe and attractive base for international investors.

With direct access to markets totalling more than 2.6 billion consumers, world-class logistics infrastructure, and one of the world’s most stable currencies, Oman offers a favourable environment for long-term economic and social stability.

Recent global rankings also place Oman among the leading nations for quality of life, safety and liveability, further reinforcing its appeal to internationally mobile families and high-net-worth individuals.

In line with national priorities, the programme contributes to Oman’s broader efforts to attract high-quality investments into priority sectors such as renewable energy, logistics, advanced manufacturing, tourism and mining.

Investment pathways requiring the employment of Omanis directly support workforce development, while the programme’s governance requirements promote transparency and strengthen institutional performance across participating companies.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The honour reflects NBO’s sustained momentum across its strategic initiatives, growth trajectory and digital transformation efforts

NBO NAMED BANK OF THE YEAR 2025 BY THE BANKER

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its pioneering position in the banking sector, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) has won the prestigious Bank of the Year Award for 2025 from The Banker. This globally recognised accolade is presented exclusively to the best-performing banks in 120 countries that meet the award’s stringent evaluation criteria.

The honour reflects NBO’s sustained momentum across its strategic initiatives, growth trajectory and digital transformation efforts, in line with national development and Oman Vision 2040. At a ceremony held in London on December 3, 2025, the global financial community came together to celebrate distinguished achievements in the banking industry.

NBO was represented by Brigadier Jamal bin Said al Tai, Board Member, and Abdullah bin Zahrn al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer, and Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager – Head of Products, who accepted the award on behalf of the bank.

NBO earned this recognition based on its strong financial performance, strategic direction, and continued investment in innovation and customer experience.

Among the bank’s key initiatives is the NBO Fintech Accelerator Programme, Oman’s first fully integrated banking accelerator designed to support high-potential fintech startups and bridge the gap between technology and traditional banking.

Through this programme and complemented by the NBO Hackathon, participating startups gained access to the bank’s infrastructure, regulatory support and mentorship, enabling them to run live Proof of Concepts within NBO’s environment and further strengthen the national fintech ecosystem.

The bank also continued to advance its digital capabilities through several enhancements to the NBO App, including fully digital credit card applications, digital personal loan top-ups, SIP applications, virtual debit card issuance and instant digital onboarding.

Beyond the app, NBO expanded its digital service network with solutions such as self-service cheque printing, instant debit card issuance and upgraded kiosk services.

The bank also introduced the mPOS solution and Full Function Machine (FFM), offering remittances and accessibility features such as voice-guided transactions.

Additionally, NBO launched Eid Note Dispensing Machines across key locations in Oman, providing convenient access to smaller denomination notes during the festive season and reinforcing its commitment to practical, customer-centric innovation.

OQ GAS NETWORKS EXPANDS PIPELINE ASSETS

MUSCAT: OQ Gas Networks has completed the acquisition of the 36-inch Ghazeer gas pipeline in Block 61 from the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, in a deal valued at more than RO 39.9 million. The transaction covers 65 kilometres of gas transmission infrastructure and represents a strategic expansion of the national gas network.

The inclusion of the Ghazeer pipeline strengthens OQ Gas Networks’ role as the unified owner, operator and maintainer of Oman’s



The transaction covers 65 kilometres of gas transmission infrastructure.

gas transmission assets. The move supports the company’s long-term strategy to improve the reliability, efficiency and resilience of the country’s energy infrastructure.

EngMansour bin Ali al Abdali, Chief Executive Officer of OQ Gas Networks, said the acquisition enhances energy system integration in Oman and reinforces the company’s vision of supporting economic and industrial growth through robust energy infrastructure. — ONA

Lexus Oman announces exclusive year-end offers

SAUD

Bahwan Automotive has unveiled an exciting range of year-end offers for Lexus customers in Oman, reinforcing the brand’s commitment to delivering unmatched luxury, innovation and value.

With exceptional benefits across popular Lexus models, the campaign highlights the brand’s pioneering hybrid technology and its dedication to creating extraordinary experiences.

Customers can now enjoy flexible service packages designed to ensure long-term confidence and convenience. 3 years or 30,000 km of service (whichever is earlier) for LC, LS, IS, ES, ES HEV, RX AND NX ; 5 years or 50,000 km of service for UX HEV, NX HEV, RX HEV and LX ; and an extensive 10 years or 100,000 km service package for LX700 HEV models and variants – each designed around 10,000 km interval.

Prospective buyers may be



Customers can now enjoy flexible service packages designed to ensure long-term confidence and convenience.

advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply.

Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details. In addition, free one year registration is offered across all Lexus models adding even more value to the ownership experience.

As part of these exciting offers, Lexus is providing comprehensive one year

insurance on select models including Lexus IS, UX HEV, NX, RX AND RX HEV. This added benefit not only reduces initial ownership costs, but also gives customers greater confidence as they step into world of Lexus luxury.

A senior spokesperson from Saud Bahwan Automotive said, “Our priority is to ensure that every customer enjoys exceptional value and a truly premium ownership experience. These offers have

been thoughtfully designed to make owning a Lexus even more rewarding, while giving customers the confidence of quality, innovation and long-term support.”

These exceptional benefits not only add remarkable value to Lexus ownership journey, but also provide customers with enhanced confidence and convenience.

By combining comprehensive insurance, complimentary registration and long-term service coverage, Lexus ensures that customers enjoy a worry-free experience from the moment they take delivery. The offers are designed to reduce upfront costs, support long-term vehicle care and allow customers to fully enjoy luxury, comfort and advanced technology that define every Lexus.

Saud Bahwan Automotive invites customers to experience the craftsmanship, hybrid leadership and premium ownership benefits that define Lexus.

Awasr wins company of the year – telecom sector award

MUSCAT: Awasr announced its recognition as the “Company of the Year – Telecom Sector” at the Times of Oman Business Leadership Summit 2025, an event held at the St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat under the auspices of HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Thuwaini al Said.

It brought together senior government officials, leading CEOs, industry specialists and over 200 business leaders to explore topics such as economic resilience, sustainability, and leadership amid rapid digital change.

Organised by Muscat Media Group and Gulf Leaders Circle, the summit was held under the theme “Leading the Future of Business”. It emphasised strategies for managing global uncertainty while fostering innovation, AI and new business models.

The summit featured keynote sessions, high-level discussions, and fireside conversations with



Awasr received an award in recognition of its leadership in enhancing digital connectivity nationwide.

influential leaders from Oman and abroad. Topics covered included digital transformation, sustainability, innovative growth strategies and leadership approaches that enable organisations to thrive amid disruption.

The day ended with the Times Business Leadership Awards, honouring companies and leaders who have shown outstanding contributions to business excellence and economic growth.

Awasr received the Company of the Year, Telecom Sector award in recognition of its leadership in enhancing digital connectivity nationwide, expanding high-speed fibre networks and driving forward Oman’s digital transformation agenda. Representing Awasr at the ceremony, Badriya al Ismaili, VP – HR & Support Services, received the award on behalf of the company.

Bank Muscat waives on credit card annual fee for customers with disabilities

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is celebrating the International Day for Persons with Disabilities by offering a first-year annual fee waiver for customers with disabilities on select credit cards, including Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum Credit Card, Bank Muscat Visa Gold Credit Card, the LuLu Bank Muscat Titanium Mastercard Credit Card and Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card.

The offer is available to all eligible customers registered with a disability until January 31, 2026 for both new primary and supplementary credit card applications.

This initiative is part of Bank Muscat’s commitment to enhancing

financial inclusion. Cardholders can enjoy various benefits and secure payment options both within Oman and abroad, providing a seamless experience.

Customers can apply for credit cards through Mobile Banking, Internet Banking or Bank Muscat branches with the option to have the card delivered to them directly via complimentary courier service.

Bank Muscat Visa Gold Credit Cardholders can make the most of free travel insurance, and the financial flexibility of the Bank’s Easy Payment Plan for their purchases.

The Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum Credit Card helps customers make the most of their travels with the exclusive reward of



The offer is available to all eligible customers registered with a disability until January 31, 2026.

earning 2 Sindbad Miles for every RO 1 spent with the card, as well as welcome bonus Sindbad miles with the first usage of the card.

The credit card also facilitates complimentary visits to airport lounges worldwide as well as complimentary chauffeur service to and from Muscat and Salalah airports.

Cardholders also have the unique benefit of being able to fast track to Sindbad Silver tier upon completion of 2 return trips through Oman Air within 6 months of getting the card.

Similarly, the LuLu Bank Muscat Titanium Mastercard Credit Card offers its own unique range of benefits that enhance cardholders’ everyday life, including the exclusive ability to earn 2% LuLu

reward points every time the card is used at LuLu Hypermarket in Oman and the ability to earn 0.5% reward points when shopping with the card at other local and international merchants.

Cardholders can also enjoy free travel insurance as well as exclusive offers.

The Al Jawhar Platinum Credit Card offers customers several benefits, including complimentary travel insurance services and access to a wide network of airport lounges worldwide, including lounges at Muscat, Salalah and Duqm airports. Cardholders can also enjoy a variety of discounted offers on services such as health, beauty, entertainment, travel and hotel bookings.

SHORTTAKES



The increase came despite a marginal decline in overall gasoline output compared with September 2025.

OMAN’S REFINERY OUTPUT RECORDS STRONG GROWTH

MUSCAT: Oman’s total refinery production rose by 10.9 per cent by the end of October 2025, reflecting solid growth across most fuel and petrochemical segments, according to preliminary data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

The increase came despite a marginal decline in overall gasoline output compared with September 2025.

Premium 95-octane gasoline recorded a stronger performance, with production rising by 21.1 per cent and exports surging by 117 per cent.

Diesel output grew by 10.3 per cent to 28.48 million barrels, supported by higher domestic sales and a 10-per cent increase in exports. In contrast, jet fuel production declined by 7.4 per cent, with both sales and exports registering year-on-year falls.

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) was one of the strongest performers, with production increasing by 14 per cent and exports jumping by nearly 63 per cent. In the petrochemical segment, benzene and paraxylene production posted moderate growth, while polypropylene output almost doubled.

Export volumes of paraxylene and polypropylene rose sharply, underscoring Oman’s expanding downstream and export-oriented refining sector.

— ONA

Oman investment presence in South Africa

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

OMAN has concluded a high-level investment mission to the Republic of South Africa, led by Invest Oman as part of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion’s broader efforts to expand Oman’s global economic engagement.

The visit comes at a moment of growing alignment between the two nations: Oman is accelerating its role as a stable logistics and investment hub linking Asia and Africa, while South Africa continues to position itself as one of the continent’s most industrialised economies with strong demand for strategic partnerships and reliable market access.

During the visit, the Invest Oman delegation held a series of intensive meetings with senior South African investors and business leaders, including a roundtable that brought together 18 companies operating across mining, advanced manufacturing, food security, technology and industrial services.

The delegation presented a detailed overview of Oman’s investment landscape, highlighting the country’s competitive advantages in infrastructure, free zones, and its integrated investor support system that unifies more than 20 government and private entities under one gateway.

Success stories of international companies operating in Oman were also showcased, reflecting the readiness of the national ecosystem to accommodate high-value projects and integrate



Invest Oman led a high-level investment mission to South Africa.

global investors into regional and international supply chains.

The discussions underscored a shared interest in expanding bilateral investment, particularly in sectors where both economies see clear complementarities. South African companies expressed strong interest in Oman’s strategic geographic position, its growing role in the connectivity between Asia and Africa, and the ease of doing business supported by facilitation services offered through Invest Oman.

Several investors announced plans to conduct field visits to Oman to examine industrial sites, free zones and opportunities linked to Oman Vision 2040’s priority sectors. The delegation also undertook exploratory visits within South Africa to assess market dynamics and identify areas where joint ventures and supply-chain collaboration can be accelerated.

Khalid bin Hamad al Kharousi, Director-General of Investment Promotion at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, affirmed that the visit marks a meaningful step in advancing Oman’s international investment agenda.

He noted that the strong level of engagement reflects rising confidence in the stability and competitiveness of Oman’s economy, adding that the outcomes of the mission support the long-term objective of positioning Oman as a regional hub for quality investments that align with the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040.

The visit also highlighted the growing trade flows between the two nations. Key Omani exports to South Africa include anhydrous ammonia, urea, polyethylene terephthalate (PET), ammonium nitrate

(aluminium grade) and calcined petroleum coke, while Oman imports non-alloy pig iron, oranges, high-purity copper cathodes, raw aluminium alloys and apples from the South African market.

These patterns reflect a solid foundation for expanding cooperation in food security, metals, industrial inputs and agri-processing — areas identified as priority opportunities for growth. Both sides concluded the visit with a commitment to continue exchanging commercial delegations, organising sector-focused engagements and developing structured pathways for investment partnerships.

The mission reinforced the long-term potential of Oman-South Africa economic cooperation and opened new avenues for mutual investments that support sustainable growth in both countries.

Sustainability Ambassadors initiative concludes at Yiti school

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 6

THE first edition of the “Sustainability Ambassadors” initiative concluded at Safana bint Hatim Al Tai School in Muscat over the weekend. The initiative was launched to instil the principles and practices of sustainability among the younger generation, as part of a joint collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group), The Sustainable City – Yiti, and Carbon 6, with the support of the Marriott Business Council.

The initiative brought together a series of interactive workshops and practical learning experiences over several weeks, aimed at instilling sustainable habits and

environmental awareness among young students.

Participants worked on school-based initiatives focusing on recycling, reducing waste, responsible consumption of water and energy, and applying simple, real-life sustainability practices aligned with Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Ali bin Salim al Shukaili, Director-General of the Directorate of Education in Muscat Governorate, said: “The success of the Sustainability Ambassadors initiative reflects the value of collaboration between national institutions in shaping environmentally responsible future generations.

“Experiential learning has proven essential in nurturing students who understand sustainability not



The initiative aimed at instilling sustainable habits and environmental awareness among young students.

only in theory, but as a mindset and lifestyle.”

Speaking on behalf of OMRAN Group, Mohammed al Rasbi, Social Investment Lead, commented: “Investing in people is at the heart of true social impact. Through this initiative, we aimed to empower students with the values and behaviours that build a sustainability-minded community.

“As part of OMRAN Group’s wider social investment agenda, the programme reinforces our commitment to nurturing positive environmental attitudes in the younger generation and supporting resilient communities.”

Mahmoud Shehada, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer at The Sustainable City – Yiti, added: “Our participation stems from our

social responsibility to support surrounding communities and encourage a culture of sustainability from an early age.

“The students demonstrated genuine creativity in transforming knowledge into meaningful environmental initiatives that benefit both their school and the wider community.”

From the delivery partner’s side, Abeer Ali, Founder of Carbon 6, the programme facilitator, noted: “We designed and delivered the programme with a hands-on approach to help students apply sustainability concepts in simple, practical ways. It was inspiring to see their mindset shift week by week, as sustainable thinking became a natural part of their daily routines at school.”

AGRICULTURE OUTLOOK

Global grain output set record



The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) forecasts global grain production to exceed 3 billion tonnes in 2025, up 4.9 per cent from 2024 and the highest level on record.

Gains are driven by strong wheat harvests in Australia, Argentina, Europe and the US, alongside higher outputs of barley and rice. FAO also reported a third straight monthly fall in food prices, despite higher wheat costs.

— ONA

RETAIL ACTIVITY

Italian retail sales rebound



Italy’s retail sales rose in October for the first time in three months, official data showed. Sales increased 0.5 per cent month-on-month, reversing a 0.4-per cent decline in September.

Both food and non-food sales recorded gains, while annual growth accelerated to 1.3 per cent from 0.7 per cent. Sales improved across most distribution channels, although small retailers continued to lag.

— ONA

ECONOMIC MOMENTUM

US spending loses steam



US consumer spending grew modestly in September after three months of strong gains, signalling easing economic momentum as high prices weighed on demand.

Consumer sentiment remained weak, with households citing cost-of-living pressures. Surveys indicated growing public frustration over inflation, adding to concerns about the sustainability of consumption growth.

— Reuters

OPINION

The impact of local content on employment in Oman



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert.

LOCALLY-sourced content in employment is a major concern in Oman and a principal part of the employment strategy. As Oman tries to diversify the economy away from oil and gas Omanisation is a key focus. Employment local content in simultaneously increasing the number of Omani employees but also building long-term economic resilience. Hence, developing the national profile and self-sufficiently leading and shaping the future industries of the country. The point of focus in Oman is the local content in employees in the positions as it facilitates the shaping of a competitive young national workforce. In the past, a number of key industrial components had specialised roles that were filled by expatriates as the Omani workforce was underdeveloped, leading to an industrial growth. To mitigate this gap, in a combined effort from the public and private sector in Oman, creation of educational offers employment is sustainable these initiatives also aimed to improve the employment of the local workforce and support the self-sustaining economy of Oman. Policymakers cite numerous interconnected benefits when it comes to the adoption of workforce development practices alongside national localisation strategies. Perhaps the most significant benefit is the ability to retain more value added in the

national economy. Work development and national localization strategies allow SMEs and the businesses they serve to retain and circulate more money in the domestic economy rather than the more damaging outflow of funds to other countries. This in turn stimulates new economic opportunities and feeds the more impactful streams of entrepreneurial and economic activity. This economic activity improves the living standards and employment opportunities within towns and more closely aligns with the national economic objectives of Vision 2040 which strives for inclusive and more diversified economic activity while widening the economic opportunities for all of its citizens. Workforce development in Oman lacks the required pace and extent of coverage in certain industries when compared to the opportunities and benefits they offer the economy. These include the oil and gas, logistics, manufacturing, tourism, and renewable energy industries. These sectors are the backbone of Oman's economy and its future growth. Companies are often required to meet Omanisation targets and go beyond mere compliance to develop academies, on-the-job training, and school partnerships to integrate the workforce into meaningful employment. These efforts benefit the economy because they help the vast number of Omani employees who enter the workforce to more

Policymakers cite numerous interconnected benefits when it comes to the adoption of workforce development practices alongside national localisation strategies. Perhaps the most significant benefit is the ability to retain more value added in the national economy.

fully engage to their benefit and that of the economy. The expansion of local content also has issues, though. One such issue is the balancing of the importance of fast-tracking the economic growth of the country by training local Omani workers and having to wait the lengthy amount of time it takes to train workers to the international standards. In some sectors, the workers to hone such specialized skills over the course of several years are needed, and companies are required to make huge investments into training and instructional resources. Making the construction of workplaces that inspire Omanis with long-term employees to develop their skills, instill job residence and advance professionally is also a challenge. In order to overcome these issues, the government, the private sector, and the education sector just need to work with each other. Given the circumstances, Oman is forging ahead and has made steady improvements in these issues. The vision of the country is long-term and the increasing number of Omani professionals in the technical, administrative and leadership positions is a good indication of that. The Local Content policies are aimed at building a developed, digital economy with the ability to compete at a global level, as with many other policies. Local Content operates within a specific area of employment, and in Oman, it has a critical influence on the overall economy.

RIDING THE TIDE:
WHY WAVE AND
TIDAL POWER ARE
GAINING MOMENTUM



NAJAH
AL RIYAMI

The writer is a Media and Communication Master's graduate.

FOR decades, wave and tidal energy lingered on the fringes of the renewable landscape. The technology was promising, yet too costly, too complex, or too fragile to rival solar and wind. In 2025, that narrative is shifting. Improved designs, advanced materials, AI-driven monitoring, and renewed investment are pushing marine energy into serious global conversations. The ocean, one of the world's most powerful and predictable forces, may finally be ready to contribute meaningfully to clean energy systems. One of ocean energy's greatest strengths is its predictability. Tides follow precise astronomical cycles that can be forecast years ahead, and wave patterns shaped by global wind systems provide steadier output than land-based wind. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the theoretical potential of marine energy exceeds 29,500 TWh annually, more than today's global electricity demand. Yet only a fraction is captured. Early devices were plagued by corrosion, storm damage, and high installation costs. These challenges discouraged large-scale investment and limited deployments to pilot projects. That pattern is now changing. Wave energy technologies, from long articulated offshore converters to hinged nearshore systems, are becoming more durable and efficient. Composite polymers and corrosion-resistant alloys have reduced maintenance demands, enabling devices to survive harsher conditions for longer. The European Marine Energy Centre reports that next-generation wave units can operate up to five years without major servicing, a significant improvement. Tidal technology is also advancing. Modern seabed-mounted turbines resemble underwater wind turbines. They rotate slowly to minimise risks to marine life while generating substantial power thanks to seawater's density. Scotland's MeyGen project, the world's largest tidal-stream array, has already produced more than 50 GWh of clean electricity and is now expanding commercially. Newer innovations include tidal kites, dynamic underwater wings developed by companies like Minesto, which boost energy capture in low-flow regions.

The real future of
hydrogen in Oman begins

FOR years, green hydrogen has been portrayed as the next great pillar of the global energy transition — a clean fuel capable of decarbonising heavy industry, transforming shipping, and reshaping global trade. Countries released ambitious roadmaps, investors crowded into conferences, and companies raced to announce billion-dollar projects. For a moment, the world seemed to believe that hydrogen's rise would be quick, smooth and unstoppable. Then the tone shifted. Over the past two years, major energy companies — including BP, Shell, Engie and Equinor — have scaled back or cancelled some of their most high-profile hydrogen ventures. BP's withdrawal from one of its planned green-hydrogen projects in Duqm mirrored similar moves in Europe, the UK, and Australia. It is one of two projects — the other being the HyDuqm venture backed by the ENGIE-POSCO-led consortium — that authorities recently confirmed had been shelved by mutual agreement. These announcements have prompted understandable questions: Is hydrogen losing momentum? Has the hype evaporated? The truth is far more interesting. What we are witnessing is not the collapse of hydrogen, but the collapse of unrealistic expectations. The sector is not dying — it is maturing. Global demand for hydrogen reached almost 100 million tonnes in 2024. Yet, as the International Energy Agency reports, less than one percent of that total is “clean” hydrogen produced from renewable energy. Most of the world's hydrogen still comes from natural gas and coal, serving long-established industries that have yet to transition. The new markets expected to spark a surge in demand — green steel, low-carbon shipping, clean industrial heat — are progressing, but not fast enough



Oman has taken a measured path: building renewable-energy zones, integrating hydrogen into future industrial plans, developing export corridors and aligning all of this with Vision 2040.



QASIM
AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of the Business and Politics department at Oman Observer.

to justify the pace of early project announcements. This disconnect sits at the heart of today's reset. Many of the large, ambitious projects launched between 2020 and 2023 were built on assumptions about rapid global uptake, generous subsidies and eager buyers. Yet buyers remain cautious, regulations are still evolving, and the infrastructure needed to transport and store hydrogen is far from complete. Without long-term purchase commitments, even promising projects struggle to attract financing. Costs reinforce this slowdown. Producing green hydrogen remains significantly more expensive than producing conventional hydrogen. Electrolysers are still costly, and renewable electricity prices — while falling in some regions — remain volatile. With high global interest rates and investors seeking stable returns, capital naturally flows toward sectors that offer immediate profitability. For major oil and gas companies, hydrogen is a strategic option, not an operational necessity. When financial pressure rises, optional ambitions are the first to be paused. Yet the withdrawal of some industry giants may ultimately be healthy for the sector. When

companies that treated hydrogen as a peripheral experiment step aside, they leave space for players with genuine long-term conviction. These include industrial companies seeking to decarbonise production, renewable-energy developers whose futures depend on the transition, sovereign wealth funds investing with 20- to 30-year horizons, and countries that are building integrated hydrogen ecosystems rather than chasing headlines. This shift helps filter the noise. The global pipeline of projects is now smaller, but those that remain are more serious, more grounded and more closely linked to real future demand. The hydrogen conversation has moved from marketing announcements to practical planning. For Oman, this transition is not a setback but a moment of clarity. The cancellation of a pair of projects does not change the fundamentals that make the Sultanate one of the most promising emerging hydrogen hubs in the region. Oman possesses exceptional solar and wind resources, modern deep-water ports, competitively priced land, a strategic maritime location and, most importantly, a transparent and structured regulatory framework under Hydrom. Unlike some countries that rushed to announce mega-projects, Oman has taken a measured path: building renewable-energy zones, integrating hydrogen into future industrial plans, developing export corridors and aligning all of this with Vision 2040. This approach recognises a simple truth — hydrogen is not a short-term opportunity, but a generational one. The decisive chapter of the hydrogen economy will unfold between 2035 and 2050. The coming decade will involve refining technologies, lowering costs, strengthening supply chains and gradually expanding industrial demand.

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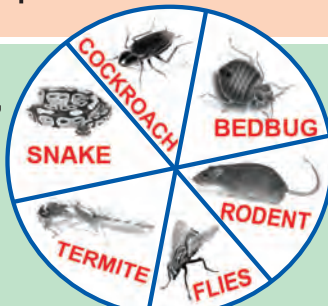
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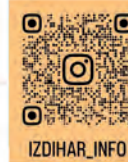
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ART/LIFE

ART



MOMENTS
THAT BECOME
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FAMILY DRAMA

WINSLET TEAMS UP WITH SON FOR DIRECTORIAL DEBUT ‘GOODBYE JUNE’



Kate Winslet with Joe Anders

OSCAR-WINNING actor Kate Winslet makes her directorial debut with “Goodbye June”, a holiday season-set drama about a family faced with loss coming together.

Winslet, who also stars in the film, directs from a screenplay by her son Joe Anders. The story was partly inspired by their personal experience of losing Winslet’s mother, Anders’ grandmother, to cancer in 2017.

“I loved being with those actors, I loved being with the children, to that extent, and also the collaboration with the crew, because it all has to work together, you all have to be a team, and it’s something that, it really just lifted me up,” she said. “I was so impressed by it and loved the dialogue — it was just phenomenal,” she said of her son’s script.

“And so when it came to the point that the script was ready to send out to directors, I just realised that there was no way we could possibly let it go.”

“I just wanted to make a film that felt authentic and real,” said Winslet, premiering the movie with Anders and the cast in London on Wednesday.

“I also didn’t want to make a story that was about someone who dies because it’s really not. It’s actually about the life that is given to the people who are left behind.”

“I’m just so proud of myself that I did, and I’m 50, and ha-ha, I did it,” she said. Winslet said she wanted to set the movie in Britain’s National Health Service space because it is “massively undervalued”.

“And we need to give credit and honour the people who do that incredible work, especially our palliative care workers,” she said. “It’s entirely fictional,” added Anders. “I think it just emotionally came from that place of sending my grandmother off.” Anders, whose father is filmmaker Sam Mendes, wrote the script when he was 19, and showed it to Winslet for feedback.

“I didn’t even know if I could write a screenplay. I just really wanted to give it my best shot. And the fact that it’s been made into a movie is insane,” Anders, now 21, said. In the film, family matriarch June (Helen Mirren) is hospitalised shortly before Christmas. Her husband (Timothy Spall), son (Johnny Flynn) and three daughters, played by Winslet, Andrea Riseborough and Toni Collette, and their offspring rush to her bedside, bringing with them conflict and personal struggles, but also joy and care.

“It’s such an honest look at the transition from life into the next. And it’s about family, the mess and the beauty of the dysfunctional family system,” said Collette. “Goodbye June” is released in select UK cinemas on December 12 and starts streaming on Netflix on December 24. — Agencies

QUICK FEATURES



AUTOMOBILES

A visitor looks at a KTM X-Bow GTC car at the Essen Motor Show in Essen, western Germany. — AFP



CULTURE

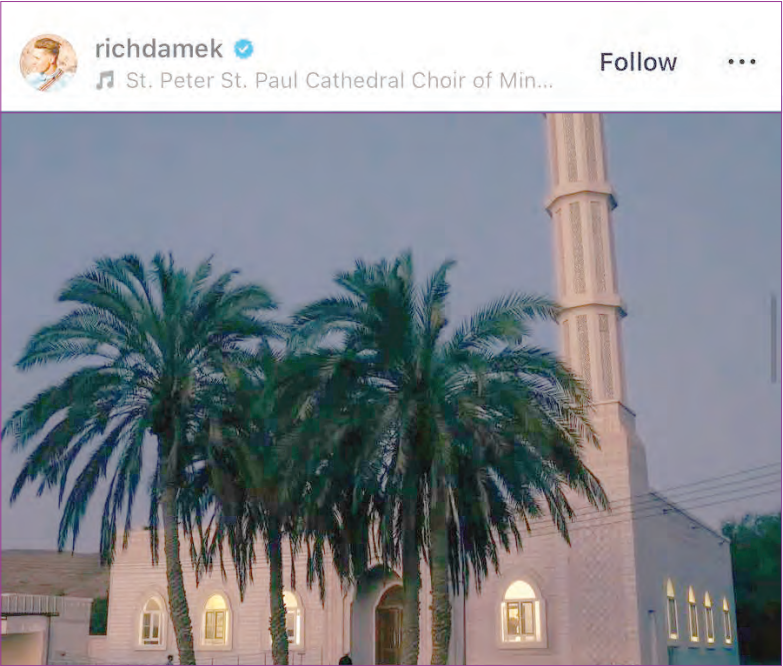
Colombian artists perform a dance during the International Cultural Folk Festival in Amritsar. — AFP



EVENTS

US actress Diana Silvers attends the premiere of Netflix “The Abandons” at the Tudum theatre in Los Angeles. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



The enchantment of old-money fishing villages.



Black beauty taking off for flight in Salalah.

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UK SENIORS FIGHT LONELINESS WITH TEA AND A TANGO



Ballroom dancers chat as they help themselves to tea and coffee in a side room during a Tea Dance, held in the Main Ballroom of Liverpool Town Hall, in Liverpool. — AFP

LONDON: All gloom was left outside as pensioners bustled into a room in Liverpool’s centuries-old town hall for a tea dance, a lively antidote to getting older in Britain. “Come to tea dances and avoid the NHS!” joked Davina Woods, 71, referring to the country’s creaking health system and the awareness the retirees have that as they age, they will likely come into increasing contact with the service. Woods, a former headteacher, said she loves the sessions for the chance to get dressed up and don high heels. It really “lifts your spirits”, she said. For some, the dancing provides a welcome chance to put aside the political tensions facing the country as it grapples with a host of issues, including weak economic growth and discontent over immigration. “We leave politics outside,”

said engineer David Easton, 65. “It brings people together. It brings us joy.” Tea dance, which evolved from the tradition of afternoon tea in the late 19th century, is enjoying a revival, especially since the Covid pandemic. This mirrors a trend seen with other traditional dances such as ballroom, with the BBC’s hugely popular hit TV show, “Strictly Come Dancing”, often cited as a key factor. One recent chilly Monday afternoon in the northwest city of Liverpool, 115 dancers paid £12 (\$16) to waltz, tango and cha-cha-cha under the chandeliers of the stunning 18th century town hall. Refreshments included tea and cakes. “It is very vibrant. It’s growing,” said organiser Jackie Williams, 53, who also started the company Ballroom Blitz in 2017. — AFP

DR AYAT BINT NASSER AL MATANI

LAST week, the familiar rhythm of lectures and practice rooms at the Department of Music and Musicology shifted into something entirely different. Instead of heading towards their usual studios, a small ensemble of students, led by me and Livie Kolmanova, lecturer in music, walked together towards the Children’s and Oncology Ward at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The visit offered students a unique, real-life experience of how music can function as a form of emotional support and compassionate care. The corridor leading to the ward was quiet, broken only by the soft hum of hospital machines. In the students’ hands were instruments rather than books: Livie Kolmanova and Dhuha al Hinai carried their cellos; Mohammed al Ajmi held his oud; Reem al Toubi and Waad al Salami brought their violins; Abdul Bari al Maamari carried his flute; Asad al Rusheidi walked in with his guitar; and Al Jabri and Murtadha al Ajmi held a set of gentle percussion instruments. Alongside them, students Zulfa al Hinai, Fatima al Maqbali, Maryam al Ghaithi, Marwa al Balushi and Noora al Rahbi carried toys, simple treasures meant to bring comfort and joy. Quietly, they entered the ward, knowing that each room held a story of treatment, courage and fatigue. Some children were sitting up in bed; others rested in wheelchairs, with parents seated close by. The first gentle notes of the cello and oud brought an almost imperceptible shift to the room. Faces drawn with tension began to soften. A young boy tapped his fingers on the side of his bed, matching the rhythm. A girl, still connected to her IV line, lifted her hand in a delicate imitation of a violinist’s bow. “This is the first time I’ve seen a melody change a child’s face,” one student later reflected. “We always discuss music therapy in class, but today it felt real.” Between musical pieces, students spoke softly with the children and their families, asking what songs they enjoyed or inviting them to hum or



SQU music students at the Children’s and Oncology Ward at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.



clap along. The flute and guitar added a playful lightness, while the percussion instruments created heartbeat-like patterns that helped even the shyest children join in. One of the nurses remarked quietly, “Every day we see these children in moments of pain and fear. Today, your music gave them a small holiday. Those smiles you saw, that is its own kind of medicine.” Beyond the emotional warmth of the visit lies a strong scientific foundation. A growing body of research demonstrates that music therapy provides measurable benefits for patients, especially children facing long-term or severe medical treatment. A study reported that music therapy significantly improved quality of life for children with cancer, helping to manage pain, reduce stress, and stabilise heart and breathing rates. All of which are signs of deeper relaxation. Research on chemotherapy patients similarly found that music-based interventions reduced anxiety and depression while improving overall well-being. The authors emphasised that music therapy is a safe, non-pharmacological treatment that can easily be integrated into routine clinical care (Nguyen et al., 2022). Further studies show that music therapy reduces the intensity of ongoing pain while alleviating associated emotional distress, such as anxiety and depression. Together, these findings confirm that music does not replace medical treatment but serves as a powerful companion, easing emotional strain,

reducing the perception of pain, and making the hospital environment feel more humane. This effect is especially profound for children, who naturally respond to sound, play and imagination. The Sociology of Music course enabled students to witness how music functions socially: as a bridge of connection, a source of hope and an act of care that extends far beyond the performance stage. The visit taught them how to interact professionally and empathetically with patients and families, choosing suitable music, managing sound levels, observing room conditions, and maintaining the privacy and comfort of each child. One student summed up the experience with poignant clarity: “Today we learned that playing an instrument isn’t just about showing skill. It’s about taking responsibility. Every note can be either noise or a gentle hand on the shoulder of a child in pain.” That Monday did not solve the challenges of illness, but it illuminated a path where artistic expression, scientific research and healthcare practice meaningfully intertwine. For the students, the experience revealed a new academic and human dimension to their musical studies. And for the Department of Music and Musicology, it reaffirmed its mission: to use music not only for performance, but as a form of service, enriching community well-being and bringing moments of light into spaces that need them most. The writer is head of Music and Musicology Department, SQU

FEATURES

MOMENTS THAT BECOME

PORTRAITS

Hervé is not merely a witness to the world; he is a humanist. Through his art, he stands for important causes: the preservation of cultures and minorities, the protection of the planet, and the response to ecological challenges.



SAEED AL MASHARFI

IN THE quiet space where observation becomes emotion and colours evolve into stories, art reveals its truest form — not as decoration, but as a language of presence. Every portrait begins long before the brush touches the canvas; it begins in the pause of a moment, in the unspoken dialogue between the artist and the world around him. It is within this delicate space that Hervé Alexandre finds the essence of his work, allowing each encounter to shape not only his paintings but the narrative he carries across continents.

In a world where light intertwines with memory, the artist emerges as a traveller chasing the spark of first encounters. This is where Hervé Alexandre’s story begins — not merely as a painter, but as a soul reshaping the world through sensitivity and colour.

Alexandre is a citizen of the world who has visited nearly a hundred countries. His art is a journey across nations and cultures, guided by the inspiration of travel. Through his work, he seeks to capture the powerful emotions that arise from discovery — the wonder of a first encounter, the fragility felt when arriving in an unfamiliar place, or the bittersweet feeling of leaving somewhere dear. His paintings, often joyful and vibrant, are born from the bliss of travelling and meeting others.

There is poetry in the moment a newspaper becomes a canvas, and Oman offered Hervé a living landscape of faces, impressions and fleeting encounters that stirred his artistic curiosity. During his residency, this land offered him the atmosphere of both a living studio and a deep well of inspiration. One of his most distinctive practices is painting portraits in local newspapers — an endeavour that can be challenging in certain countries. For Hervé, a newspaper is more than a piece of paper; it embodies a culture, a language, a date and a place. Painting the people he meets in these newspapers transforms each portrait into something truly unique and deeply personal. The exhibition “Portraits d’Oman”, created during his recent 10-day residency in the country, is a clear example of this intimate approach.

His journey in Oman began with a deep desire to discover its people, its rhythms, and the emotions hidden in everyday encounters. “In Oman, during my time in Muscat, I found inspiration everywhere,” he explains, as the city’s vibrant streets and bustling markets unfolded before him, offering countless faces, fleeting moments and stories waiting to be captured. From this immersive experience emerged about twenty-five portraits that he later exhibited at the Franco-Omani Centre, each one shaped by authentic human connection.

He describes his approach with striking clarity: “My process is always the same: to capture the moment of an encounter, to capture the emotion when seeing someone for the first time.” These portraits grew from spontaneous meetings with individuals he crossed paths with “in Oman — Muscat, Nizwa, Muttrah Souq, at the fish market, or at the livestock market in Nizwa.”



And yet, beyond these fleeting exchanges, Hervé’s inspiration deepens in the places where daily life unfolds most vividly. With warmth in his voice, he recalls: “I am particularly fascinated by traditional markets because they embody the life of local communities. They are the best places to meet different people and observe their daily rhythms up close. These spaces ignite passion — they are where culture, customs and traditions are beautifully preserved.”

With a quiet sense of appreciation for the day’s first light, he captures the beauty of moments that spark creativity. “I love these early mornings, the movement, the noise, the energy... moments when I come across faces that later transform into art. I also rely on my imagination, my memory, and sometimes a few photographs.”

Hervé is not merely a witness to the world; he is a humanist. Through his art, he stands for important causes: the preservation of cultures and minorities, the protection of the planet and the response to ecological challenges. He also advocates passionately for art education and the promotion of artistic expression around the world.

