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HM PRESIDES OVER MILITARY PARADE

OMAN CELEBRATES GLORIOUS 54TH NATIONAL DAY

HIS MAJESTY Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, on Monday presided over a military parade staged at Al Sumoud Ground of the Sultan’s Special Force on the occasion of the 54th Glorious National Day.

The event saw the participation of symbolic units representing the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo), the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO), the Sultan’s Special Force (SSF), and the Royal Oman Police (ROP), in addition to the ground and mounted military music bands.

Upon His Majesty the Sultan’s arrival at the parade ground, he was received by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF), and Maj Gen Musallam bin Mohammed Jaaboub, Commander of the Sultan’s Special Force (SSF).

When His Majesty the Sultan ascended the Royal Dais, columns of the parade performed the military salute. The joint corps of military bands played the Royal Anthem, while the Sultan of Oman’s Artillery fired a 21-gun salute to His Majesty the Sultan.

MILITARY MUSIC BANDS

Then, the parade commander stepped forward to the Royal Dais, requesting His Majesty the Sultan to signal the start of the military parade.

The joint corps of military music bands representing the SAF, the RGO, the ROP, and the Royal Court Affairs (RCA) played various tunes as they marched in slow and normal paces before the Royal Dais.

Then, columns of the Protocols Guard joined the parade and performed ceremonial gestures to the accompaniment of melodies from the joint corps of military music bands, performing the military salute to His Majesty, the Supreme Commander.

His Majesty the Sultan watched a musical show staged by mounted bands representing the RGO cavalry and the Royal Cavalry. They passed before the Royal Dais, performing the military salute to His Majesty the Sultan. Later, the columns of the parade performed an ensemble of cheers that proclaimed, “Faith in Allah, Loyalty to the Sultan, Sacrifice for the Nation.” They chanted thrice, “Long Live His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander.”

Then, the joint corps of military music bands played the Royal Anthem, while the columns of the parade performed the military salute, marking the conclusion of the military show.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan left the parade ground.

The military parade was attended alongside His Majesty the Sultan by Royal family members, Sayyids of the Al Busaidy family, ministers, advisers, commanders of the SAF, commanders of military and security services, heads of the diplomatic missions of the Arab and foreign countries accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, members of the State Council and Majlis Ash’shura, under-secretaries, senior military and security officers, retired officers and citizens. — **ONA**

SEE ALSO P2, 4 AND 5

Colourful parade marks National Day



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Military parade marks National Day



Patriotic spirit highlight of fete



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Nakhal welcomes Royal motorcade



NAKHAL: The people of the Wilayat of Nakhal, Al Batinah South Governorate, on Monday held a reception to mark the auspicious passage of the Royal motorcade of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on his way to Al Sumoud Ground of Sultan's Special Force (SSF), for the military parade on the occasion of the 54th National Day.

The citizens, who lined the two sides of the road, expressed their heartfelt welcome and great joy about the national occasion. They reiterated their sentiments of loyalty and gratitude to the leader of the Omani Renewed Renaissance. They waved the flags of the Sultanate of Oman and held banners bearing expressions of pride and allegiance.

His Majesty the Sultan waved back in appreciation for the citizens' sincere sentiments and warm welcome.

The reception saw the participation of horsemen, camel riders, male and female students, scouts and guides from schools, who all formed a tableau depicting the depth of solidarity, while folklore troupes manifested a



The citizens, who lined the two sides of the road, expressed their heartfelt welcome and great joy about the national occasion. — **ONA**

similar spirit by chanting traditional Omani songs to mark the occasion.

The Secretariat-General of National Celebrations valued the gesture of the citizens and appreciated their expressions of joy

over the occasion.

May the Almighty Allah return this precious and similar occasions while His Majesty the Sultan enjoys good health, wellbeing and a long life, and Oman welfare and prosperity. — **ONA**

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

إعلان مزاد إلكتروني
E-Auction Announcement

Announcement of an Online Auction

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology announces its intention to hold a general online auction for the sale of government assets through the website [www.safqauctions.om](#). For those wishing to purchase, the displayed materials are as follows:

MOVEABLES TO BE SOLD	EXAMINING LOCATION	BARCODE	VIEWING DATE AND TIME	AUCTION DATE
Scrapped and Confiscated Shipwreck (Jarallah)	Shati Ghadeiser (Al Jazir Governorate)	 Jarallah Shipwreck: Shati Ghadeiser	Start: 1 - 2 December 8:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Starts: 8:00 AM, Tuesday, 3 December 2024 Closes: 12:00 PM, Wednesday, 4 December 2024
Submerged Confiscated Shipwreck (Reef Elaf)	Fully submerged, 20 km east of Al Jazir Fishing Port	-		
Caravan	Outside Shinas Port	 Caravans: Outside Shinas Port		
Water Tanks	Ministry warehouses in Wadi Kabir (Muscat Governorate)	 Water Tanks: Wadi Kabir Warehouses		

Terms and Conditions for Participating in the Online Auction:

1. Participants must register on the Safqa Auctions website ([www.safqauctions.om](#)).

2. A refundable security deposit of OMR 1,000 must be paid electronically via the website.

3. The buyer must pay for the purchased items within 48 business hours via electronic transfer on the website.

4. A 5% VAT and a 3% commission will be added to the item's value.

5. Purchased items must be moved within 7 days of auction finalization. A 5% penalty per day applies for delays, and the Ministry is not liable for any damage or loss.

6. Items are sold as-is and cannot be returned or discounted. No appeals will be accepted.

7. The Ministry and Safqa Auctions hold no responsibility for the condition of items or discrepancies between images and descriptions. Buyers must visually inspect items during the designated inspection period.

8. The company is not obliged to award the auction to the highest bidder if the bid does not meet the minimum acceptable price.

9. Buyers of the ships must ensure removal and bear all responsibility for marine safety and waste disposal.

10. Buyers of tanks or caravans must dismantle and transport them without any excavation of electrical cables or water connections.

11. The deposit will be forfeited in the following cases:

- If payment is not completed within the specified time.
- If items are not moved within the designated timeframe.

Notes

• All items are sold in their current condition.

• The company reserves the right to cancel the auction without providing reasons.

• For more information, visit the auction website or contact 96916169 during official working hours.

Auction Website:
[www.safqauctions.om](#)

[@mtcitoman](#)

[www.mtcit.gov.om](#)

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

HM GREETINGS TO PRINCE OF MONACO

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Albert II, Prince of Monaco on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to Prince Albert II. His Majesty also wished the people of Monaco further progress and welfare.

OMAN, SYRIA SIGN ANTI-FINANCIAL CRIME MOU



Oman's NFIC signs MoU with Syria's Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Commission

MUSCAT: The National Financial Information Centre (NFIC) of Oman has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Commission of the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the exchange of information related to money laundering, associated crimes, and the financing of terrorism.

The agreement was formalised on the sidelines of the 39th meeting of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Colonel Abdulrahman bin Amer al Kiyumi, CEO of the NFIC in Oman, and Majd Hamad, Secretary-General of the Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Authority in Syria, signed the MoU, marking a significant step towards bolstering regional cooperation in combating financial crimes. — ONA

UNICEF HOSTS DIALOGUE SESSION FOR STUDENTS

NIZWA: The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) organised a dialogue session for students in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Office of the Governor of Al Dakhiliyah. The event brought together students from schools across Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, including representatives of students with disabilities.

Held to commemorate World Children's Day, the session was sponsored by Dr Rashid bin Hamad al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Human Rights Commission, and attended by Shaikh Saleh bin Dhiyab al Rubaiee.

The session provided a platform for students to voice their opinions, seek answers to their questions, and engage in discussions on topics such as education, health, the environment, and climate change.

Participants were also introduced to the Child Law and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including its key articles. The discussions emphasised the role students can play in promoting children's rights and enhancing education within their communities. — ONA

Sultan Qaboos University College earns CIPS accreditation

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

The College of Economics and Political Science (CEPS) at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) achieved a significant milestone. Its Master of Science (MSc) in Operations and Supply Chain Management programme received accreditation from the renowned Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply (CIPS).

The accreditation is valid for the academic year between September 12, 2024 and August 31, 2025, marking a pivotal achievement for the university and Oman's higher education landscape.

This recognition by CIPS, a globally acclaimed organisation based in the United Kingdom, reaffirms the MSc programme's alignment with international benchmarks.

The accreditation was approved by the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAQA), further solidifying its credibility.

The Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply is a global leader in establishing standards and certifying procurement and supply chain management programmes. CIPS accreditation is highly regarded



The accreditation is valid for the academic year between September 12, 2024 and August 31, 2025.

in the academic and professional spheres, indicating that the programme provides students

with the theoretical and practical expertise necessary to excel in the procurement and supply chain fields.

By meeting CIPS' rigorous criteria, SQU's MSc programme has demonstrated its commitment to producing graduates who are both academically competent and industry-ready.

The accreditation assures students and employers that the programme's curriculum reflects current trends, challenges, and opportunities in the global procurement and supply chain industry. Students enrolled in the MSc programme will reap significant benefits from the

accreditation.

The curriculum is designed to meet international standards while equipping students with practical tools and knowledge to address real-world challenges. Graduates will emerge from the programme with skills that are highly sought after by employers worldwide, boosting their employability and professional prospects.

Moreover, the accreditation allows graduates to pursue professional certifications and memberships with CIPS, further enhancing their credentials and opening doors to career advancement in procurement and supply chain management.

BANGLADESH, RUSSIAN ENVOYS BID ADIEU AFTER END OF DUTY



Sayyid Badr with Muhammad Nazmi Islam, Bangladesh Ambassador



Sayyid Badr with Ilya Morgunov, Russian Ambassador

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received here on Monday Muhammad Nazmi Islam, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr expressed his appreciation for the efforts exerted by the Ambassador in boosting relations between Oman and Bangladesh, wishing him

success.

Sayyid Badr also received Ilya Morgunov, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty.

Sayyid Badr expressed his appreciation for the efforts exerted by the Ambassador to promote relations between Oman and Russia, wishing him success in his future assignments. The two meetings were attended by some officials from the Foreign Ministry. — ONA

UAE joins Oman to mark 54th National Day fete

AL AIN: The United Arab Emirates on Monday joined the Sultanate of Oman in celebrating the 54th National Day. The ceremony took place at the Al Madhyef border crossing in Al Ain city.

The ceremony included chanting the national anthems of the two countries.

Abu Dhabi Police Military Music Band presented musical performances, along with folklore formations and popular art displays.

The ceremony was attended by officers from Al Buraimi Governorate Police Command, border centres in Al Ain city and officials from government institutions in Al Buraimi. — ONA



Abu Dhabi Police Military Music Band presented musical performances, along with folklore formations and popular art displays. — ONA

SHORTTAKES



STARMER HAILS STRONG ‘UK-CHINA TIES IN XI MEETING

RIO DE JANEIRO: Prime Minister Keir Starmer hailed the importance of a “strong UK-China relationship” while raising concerns over several contentious issues as he met China’s President Xi Jinping at the G20 summit in Brazil on Monday. In the first bilateral meeting between a British prime minister and the Chinese leader since February 2018, Starmer told Xi the UK would be “committed to the rule of law”. Ties between the UK and China have faltered in recent years. Xi in turn told the British leader, who took power in July, that the two countries had “vast space for cooperation”, according to China’s state media. “China and Britain should uphold their strategic partnership and open up new prospects for China-UK relations,” Xi said. Starmer’s nascent administration sees the opportunity for a reset of relations, as it explores all avenues to boost flatlining economic growth in Britain. “We want our relations to be consistent, durable, respectful, as we have agreed, avoid surprises where possible,” Starmer told Xi. — **AFP**



Russia’s President Vladimir Putin meets with Yevgeny Balitsky, the Moscow-installed head of the Zaporizhzhia region, at the Kremlin. — **AFP**

KREMLIN SAYS BIDEN ‘FUELLING’ THE WAR IN UKRAINE

KYIV: The Kremlin accused US President Joe Biden on Monday of escalating the war in Ukraine by allowing Kyiv to use long-range missiles supplied by Washington to strike targets inside Russia. The comments came as Moscow unleashed a second missile attack in as many days on the Ukrainian city of Odesa on the Black Sea that left 10 dead and more than 40 wounded. President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Monday he had visited the frontline city of Pokrovsk, which Russian forces are closing in on. Ukraine says it needs to be able to carry out strikes in Russia to prevent aerial bombardments that have levelled entire districts of towns near the front line and decimated energy facilities across the country. “It’s obvious that the outgoing administration in Washington intends to take steps in order to continue fuelling the fire and provoke a further escalation of tensions,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. — **AFP**

STREET PROTESTS

Armenia’s top officials, ministers resign



Top Armenian officials stepped down following PM Nikol Pashinyan’s call. Pashinyan’s rule has been unshaken despite the attempts to mount a wave of street protests. Interior Minister Vahe Ghazaryan resigned, as well as the minister for territorial administration, the head of the Anti-Corruption Committee, the head of the Investigative Committee and the chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council. — **AFP**

G20 LEADERS GATHER TO DISCUSS WARS, CLIMATE, TRUMP’S COMEBACK

RIO DE JANEIRO: G20 leaders began arriving for a summit in Brazil on Monday to try reignite deadlocked climate talks and overcome their differences on the Middle East and Ukraine wars ahead of Donald Trump’s return to the White House. US President Joe Biden will attend his last summit of the world’s leading economies, but as a lame duck leader eclipsed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, the

most influential leader at this year’s meeting. Brazil’s left-wing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is using his hosting duties to promote issues close to his heart, including fighting hunger and climate change and taxing the super-rich. But the wars which have bitterly divided G20 members are also set to feature prominently in the discussions. A Brazilian foreign ministry

source said on Monday that some countries wanted to renegotiate a draft summit communique. “For Brazil and other countries the text is already finalised, but some countries want to open up some points on wars and climate,” he said. G20 leaders are also under pressure to try rescue UN climate talks in Azerbaijan, which have stalled on the issue of greater climate finance for developing countries. — **AFP**

Israeli bombs pummel humanitarian zone

ISRAELI military strikes across the Gaza Strip killed 20 Palestinians on Monday, including six people who were killed in attacks on tents housing displaced families, medics said. Four people, two of them children, were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a tent encampment in the coastal area of Al Mawasi, designated as a humanitarian zone, while two were killed in temporary shelters in the southern city of Rafah and another in drone fire, health officials said. In Beit Lahiya town in northern Gaza, medics said an Israeli missile struck a house, killing at least two people and wounding several others. On Sunday, medics and residents said dozens of people were killed or wounded in an Israeli airstrike on a multi-floor residential building in the town. An Israeli airstrike on a house in Gaza City killed seven people and wounded 10 others, medics said. Later on Monday, an Israeli air strike killed four people in the Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip, they added. The Gaza health ministry said Israeli military strikes had killed 76 Palestinians across the enclave in the past 24 hours. In Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, relatives of Palestinians killed in an Israeli airstrike on tents housing displaced families sat beside bodies wrapped in blankets and white shrouds to pay farewell before walking them to graves. The Israeli army sent tanks and soldiers into Beit Lahiya and the nearby towns of Beit Hanoun and Jabalia, the largest of the Gaza Strip’s eight historic refugee camps, early last month in what it said was a campaign to fight Hamas waging attacks and prevent them



Palestinians search for casualties at the site of an Israeli strike on a house, in Gaza City. — **Reuters**

from regrouping. Hussam Abu Safiya, the director of the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya, said the hospital was under siege by Israeli forces and the World Health Organization had been unable to deliver supplies of food, medicine and surgical equipment. Cases of malnutrition among children were increasing, he said, and the hospital was operating at a minimal level. Meanwhile, a convoy of 109 trucks was vio-

lently looted on Nov. 16 after entering Gaza, resulting in the loss of 98 trucks in what aid workers say is one of the worst such incidents in the more than 13-month-old war, an UN-RWA aid official said on Monday. The convoy carrying food provided by UN agencies UNRWA and the World Food Programme was instructed by Israel to depart at short notice via an unfamiliar route from Kerem Shalom crossing, Louise Wateridge, UNRWA Emergency Officer said. — **Reuters**



Farmers on tractors drive along a road during a nationwide protest against EU-Mercosur agreement in Avignon, southern France. — **AFP**

FRENCH FARMERS PROTEST EU-MERCOSUR DEAL

PARIS: French farmers launched on Monday a new wave of action to protest the adoption of a trade pact between the European Union and four South American countries they fear would threaten their livelihoods. Paris is leading resistance against ratification of the trade agreement with the Mercosur bloc of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay that would create the world’s largest free trade zone. On Sunday, French President Emmanuel Macron defended France’s resistance to the proposed blockbuster deal as he

visited Argentine’s Javier Milei, ahead of a G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro. He said France would “continue to oppose” the trade deal. Angry French farmers used tractors to block roads and erected wooden crosses during protests across the country, urging Macron and the government to do more. Farmers also placed a cross next to a mock-up gallows with a message reading “France’s agriculture in danger”. In the eastern city of Lyon, farmers tore off municipal signs and deposited them at the stairs of a museum. — **AFP**

NEW GOVERNMENT

Austrian coalition talks enter formal phase



The three Austrian parties in the so-called “sounding out” phase of talks on forming a new government have agreed to launch full-scale coalition talks, conservative Chancellor Karl Nehammer said. President Alexander Van der Bellen tasked Nehammer, as leader of the second-placed People’s Party. He plans to form the first three-way coalition since Austria’s regained independence in 1955. — **Reuters**

CROSSED WHO LIMIT

New Delhi shuts schools as smog chokes city



India’s capital New Delhi switched schools to online classes until further notice as worsening toxic smog surged past 60 times the World Health Organization’s recommended daily maximum. Government initiatives have failed to measurably address the problem, with the smog blamed for thousands of premature deaths, impacting the health of children and the elderly. Pollution extended across a swathe of northern India and choked residents of Lahore in Pakistan. — **AFP**

OPINION

Traditional modernity is a national inspiration



SANDHYA RAO MEHTA

The writer is Assoc Prof, Dept of English Language and Translation, SQU

AS OMAN celebrates its 54th National Day, there are many reasons to be proud - economic strides, positive educational outcomes, and the development of various sectors make Oman stand proudly in the community of nations. And it does stand proudly, but uniquely. One of the most defining features of Oman is the way in which it continues to successfully straddle the worlds of tradition and modernity. In doing so, it remains one of the few nations in the world which does not depend on imitation but has carved out its own unique identity. Oman's modernity is deeply rooted in its historical openness to the world. Its strategic location meant that the ports were always open to various traders, explorers, and adventurers and Oman welcomed them all. The historical port of Sur and the Muttrah Souq are a testament to the openness of Oman to various cultures at different times in history. Today, this exchange of cultures continues. Oman remains at the intersection of the East and West, but the nation proudly showcases its continuing

history and heritage in multiple ways. For Oman, history is not just a time capsule but a living present. The integration of material culture as seen in the many museums across the country with the non-material manifestations of oral traditions and cultures means that the past continues to impact the present in meaningful ways. This does not mean that the country lives on its past laurels. The rapid strides in infrastructure, tourism, economic diversification, and technological advances suggest that the country is future-ready. But far from shedding its past as irrelevant to its future vision, Oman leverages its mercantile and cultural past as a continuing inspiration to guide its future growth. Whether we see architectural innovations, artistic exhibitions, literary productions, or digital preservation, they are all defined as much by Oman's past as its present and future aspirations. This is also obvious in Oman's focus on sustainable tourism, underlining the need to create revenue through tourism but also maintaining the pristine nature of the environment around us. Efforts

Oman's rapid strides in infrastructure, tourism, economic diversification, and technological advances suggest that the country is future-ready

to promote Oman's natural beauty and historical landmarks cater to global tourists while emphasising authentic cultural experiences. Ancient souqs, forts, and coastal villages can still be visited for traditional crafts like silverwork and pottery, along with the legendary Omani hospitality. Maintaining traditions and creating a modern society is not without its challenges. The digital transformations and material comfort today often come at the cost of preserving our past —whether they are physical landscapes that need to be converted into housing, or providing more efficient forms of transport and energy. But continually looking ahead, with an eye on our history is necessary to create a well-rooted community that can confidently look to its future. Oman today exemplifies the concept of traditional modernity. It is a society where heritage and innovation go hand-in-hand, creating a harmonious and resilient national identity. This fusion defines not just Oman's uniqueness but also its strength in an ever-changing world.

CELEBRATION OF PROGRESS AND UNITY



DR AMANI AL JALBUBI

The National Day, celebrated on November 18, stands as a powerful symbol of nationhood, reflecting the triumphs, unity, and forward-thinking vision of Oman's leadership. This day holds profound significance, showcasing the es-

sence of the Omani people, their rich history, vibrant culture, and aspirations for the future. It also pays tribute to the monumental contributions of Sultan Qaboos bin Said, whose transformative reign ushered in remarkable progress across key sectors such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and social services. These advancements remain enduring milestones in Oman's journey of development.

The National Day celebrations are true to the spirit and essence of Oman. The country is awash with manifestations of patriotic culture as intense emotions are expressed through the presence of the national flag and colourful lights in buildings and spaces. Various bands, dancers, and well-illuminated floats are presented during the parade, enchanting both the Omani people and the guests.

National Day celebrations are most colourful in Muscat. There is hardly any sign of increased security on the streets, and people chant national songs sporting the country's flags.

The National Day is celebrated in towns and villages, including traditional dances such as the Al Razha and Al Azi, which are also symbols of the Oman background.

An important aspect is the recognition of Oman's accomplishments. This is in line with Oman Vision 2040, a long-term development plan that outlines the nation's strategic direction in the generation and utilisation of renewable energy, the tourism sector, and a diverse economy. Environmental conservation and sustainable development define Oman's commitments to global issues, and attempts at the economy's diversification confirm the progressive stance on development.

National Day is also an opportunity to recall emotions as citizens say 'thank you' for a stable life. Oman's foreign policy of neutrality and mediation has been welcomed worldwide, and the nation showcases a symbol of peace in the Middle East. These principles of diplomacy and the commitment to the maintenance of peace are maintained to this day in Oman's foreign policy.

Patriotism rooted in the land we love

OMAN'S 54th National Day marks not just a celebration of its rich heritage, but a reflection on its remarkable journey and our collective role in safeguarding its future.

For me, this day evokes profound memories of representing Oman in some of the most extraordinary corners of the Earth. Whether planting the Omani flag atop mountain peaks or braving the icy landscapes of Antarctica, every moment was imbued with a sense of pride and responsibility - not just to the country, but to the very land that defines us. I recall the biting cold and the haunting silence of my South Pole expedition, where the Omani flag fluttered against an endless white expanse under a sun that never set.

Standing there, thousands of miles from home, I felt an overwhelming connection to Oman's natural beauty and resilience. Memories of the towering Al Hajar Mountains, where I first learned to climb, and the pristine shores of the Arabian Sea, where I spent countless childhood afternoons, flooded my mind.

Similarly, during my mountaineering adventures, raising the flag at each summit was not just a symbolic act but a deeply personal gesture of gratitude to the land that shaped me. These experiences forged an unbreakable bond between patriotism and the environment — a connection that underscores our duty to protect Oman's natural heritage. Oman's biodiversity is unparalleled. Growing up, I spent weekends exploring wadis teeming with life, observing birds, and marvelling at the playful dolphins off our coast.

The knowledge that we are home to the last remaining Arabian leopards fills me with both pride and a sense of urgency. However, the threats posed by climate change and human activity loom large.

I have witnessed the aftermath of severe cyclones that have become more frequent, devastating coastal



RUMAITHA AL BUSAIDI

The writer is an environmental strategist and advocate for sustainable development

My journey across the globe has taught me many things, but perhaps the most important is this: no matter where we go, we must protect the home we carry in our hearts



The 54th National Day marks not just a celebration of its rich heritage, but a reflection on its remarkable journey and safeguarding its future

communities and fragile ecosystems. Walking through villages affected by these storms, speaking with families who have lost everything, the high cost of adaptation became painfully clear. Protection is no longer optional; it is an urgent imperative. In my international convenings and roles as a youth negotiator, I have seen how Oman's efforts inspire others. I remember a moment at a global summit when a delegate approached me to praise Oman's initiative in planting mangroves — a natural climate solution that not only protects our coastlines but also nurtures marine life. From hosting conservation projects that reintroduce native species to leading regional dialogues on sustainability, Oman's initiatives are a testament to its commitment. Yet, these global forums also reveal stark realities. The collapse of global wildlife populations by nearly 69 per cent since 1970 is a sobering statistic that serves as a warning. Even countries like Oman, which take pride in their ecological richness, are not immune. Patriotism, for me, is inseparable

from preserving the land. Oman's deserts, with their rolling dunes, mountains that touch the sky, and seas that cradle abundant life, are not just geographical features; they are living testaments to our history and identity. When I see young Omanis today — whether cleaning beaches on weekends, developing innovative solutions, or championing sustainability in schools — I am filled with hope that our love for this country is best expressed through action. As we celebrate Oman, let us remember the values that have guided our progress: unity, resilience, and a deep respect for the land. Let us honour the legacy of our ancestors who lived in harmony with nature and understood its importance. Together, we can ensure that the natural heritage of Oman continues to thrive for generations to come, a legacy as enduring as the flag that flies proudly over us. My journey across the globe has taught me many things, but perhaps the most important is this: no matter where we go, it is our duty to protect the home we carry in our hearts.

55th year of modern Renaissance begins



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

NOVEMBER 18, 2024, saw everyone getting creative in making the day special. The military parade presided over by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, was held at Al Sumoud Ground of the Sultan's Special Force, marking the 54th National Day. The weather was ideal for the military parade, and the ground was vast. The sounds of bugles, horns and fanfare trumpets always electrify the atmosphere. The bagpipes are an integral part of Oman military music. The units of the Royal Army of Oman, Royal Air Force of Oman, Royal Navy of Oman, Royal Guard of Oman, Sultan's Special Force, Royal Court Affairs, and the joint military music band made the parade an exceptional experience. It is only during the National Day parade when we get to see all the units in their ceremonial uniforms. An enchanting part and a proud moment for all women was the mounted women band led by the woman band master, immediately followed by the two women drummers and then the rest of the Omani mounted band that had a combination of men and women musicians. They were mounted on horses, and it is always amazing to watch them perform while being mounted on horses back. To keep up with the notes in unison with each other is achieved with practice, but to manage music

and the horse is an exceptional skill. Since morning, the activities began with schoolchildren wearing their best to celebrate the National Day. The previous day people were rushing to purchase the tricolour decorations, and we could see people on the road well dressed, sporting shawls of national colours. My friend observed something else: this year most of the girls chose to wear a Suri dress called Al Kidma Al Suriyah. The Suri dress is unique in its style. It is vibrant, and the silk stripe-designed fabric makes it distinct. The thin black cloak with silver embroidery is a priceless possession in every woman's wardrobe in Sur. But this year, the trend turned out to be Al Kidma Al Suriyah amongst school students. OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE The expatriate schools also had school assemblies dedicated to Oman National Day, and this gave students the opportunity to explore culture, heritage, and most importantly, traditional attire of Oman. It is interesting the Suri dress was explored more this year because the Arab Tourism Organisation declared Sur as the Arab Tourism Capital for 2024, bringing into spotlight the wilayat's cultural, historical and geographical significance. So the students seemed to have paid a tribute on their own to this historical place. But the way they

The sounds of bugles, horns and fanfare trumpets always electrify the atmosphere. The bagpipes are an integral part of Oman military music

could have done it, of course, only because of the efforts of their parents. It just goes on to prove how the day has become so meaningful for different age groups. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, as part of an executive programme for Sur as the Arab Tourism Capital for 2024, in cooperation with Muscat Yacht Club, organised two training courses in Sur for open water and flood rescue in October. The youth had also been involved in the process of Sur being the Arab Tourism Capital. A competition was held to choose a design to create a monument commemorating Sur's selection as the Arab Tourism Capital. The winning design was the project by Maryam al Habsi, titled 'The Meeting of Land and Sea'. The team in second place featured the traditional shipbuilding craft of Sur, and the third winner focused on the Ghanjah ship, a distinguished feature of Sur's maritime history and heritage. After the parade, by late evening, the public was keen to find out where the fireworks were going to be. The celebration will continue as the long weekend approaches and until the end of November. And now it is time to look forward to more achievements as part of the renewed Renaissance. Steps taken by each individual to fulfil their own hopes, dreams and aspirations make the nation proud.

CAN A COP29 DEAL CLEAN UP SCANDAL RIDDEN CARBON OFFSETS?

KATE ABNETT AND VIRGINIA FURNESS

A deal at the COP29 climate talks on trading carbon credits could see billions of dollars move into emissions-reduction projects this decade but after a string of scandals, the market will first need to win over wary countries and communities. Carbon trading is seen as one way for richer countries to meet their emissions reduction targets at the same time as helping poorer countries move to greener energy and to improve their resilience against climate change.

A UN-backed global market for creating and trading carbon credits has been discussed for at least 10 years. In its absence, a patchwork of voluntary standards has led to a number of situations where credits were found to not be delivering the climate benefits they claimed.

While an early deal last week saw nations agree on some quality standards, points still to be hammered out include what a global registry

to track trades and label carbon credits would look like, and what information projects will need to disclose.

A UN-backed global market for creating and trading carbon credits has been discussed for at least 10 years

If a deal can be reached this week in Baku, Azerbaijan, "the main impact would be a confidence boost", said Andrea Bonzanni, international policy

director at the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA).

"It would provide both countries and the private sector with the signal that there is consensus on the rules of the game. And that would mean that companies would invest with more confidence," he added.

IETA has said a UN-backed market could be worth \$250 billion a year by 2030, and count towards offsetting an extra 5 billion metric tonnes of carbon emissions annually.

Governments including Bolivia, Singapore and Switzerland have struck dozens of agreements already to do carbon credit trades under the impending UN rules, backing investments in clean cookstoves and solar power.

Others are expected to join in as they face pressure to show progress towards their national emissions-cutting targets.

Private sector buyers could include airlines, under a UN-backed plan to scale up their purchases launching in 2027, as well as companies looking to burnish their green credentials with customers and investors.

The boss of carbon project backer Key Carbon, Luke Leslie, said his firm would look to expand its investments in countries that quickly get their local market up and running. — Reuters

Trouble lurks beneath the surface of ocean

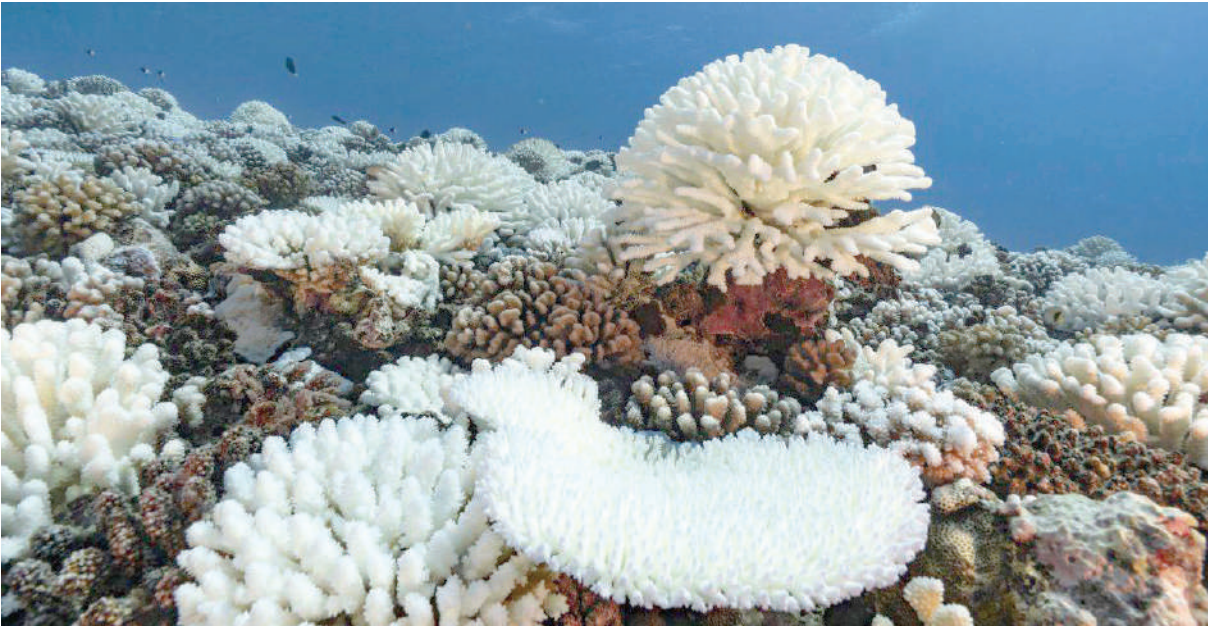
THE OCEAN is our greatest natural resource. It provides half the planet's oxygen, helps to feed half the world's people, and, as the world's largest carbon sink, is one of our best defences against climate change. But it is under attack like never before.

Sea surface temperatures are hotter than ever, which is killing marine life and fuelling stronger hurricanes. Many big-fish populations have been decimated. Half of all coral reefs – which serve as essential habitats for marine life and as vital coastal defences – have been destroyed. This sustained degradation of the ocean is threatening human life around the world. Stopping it is essential, and the good news is that a framework for doing so is already in place.

Two years ago, the world adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which set a target of protecting and conserving at least 30 per cent of the world's land and ocean by 2030. Then, at the COP16 United Nations Biodiversity Conference in Cali, Colombia, last month, representatives from governments around the world took stock of the progress made so far. What stood out is that the host country is an example both of what is possible and of how much work remains to be done.

Over the past decade, Colombia has emerged as a global leader in conservation, and for good reason. Colombia is one of the world's most biodiverse countries, and, as one of only two South American countries with Pacific and Atlantic coastlines, its future is inextricably linked to the bodies of water that surround it. In 2022, the government announced that it had protected 30 per cent of its ocean area, making Colombia the first country in the Western Hemisphere to do so – and prompting other Latin American countries to follow its lead.

A new report commissioned by Bloomberg Philanthropies through the Bloomberg Ocean Fund, and developed in partnership with other major marine-conservation organisations, shows that Latin



Sea surface temperatures are hotter than ever.



CÉSAR GAVIRIA

The writer is a former president of Colombia, is a board member of Oceana



PATTI HARRIS

The writer is CEO of Bloomberg Philanthropies

America is now leading the way on global marine protection. Around 26 per cent of the maritime area surrounding Latin America and the Caribbean is now under some form of marine conservation protection – higher than any other region in the world.

But this statistic only reflects the coverage of official marine protected areas. It does not tell us what is going on underwater. There, unfortunately, the data are much less promising. Only 2.5 per cent of the region's ocean, and a mere 1.5 per cent of Colombia's maritime area, appears to be getting the level of protection necessary to conserve marine life.

The picture is even bleaker in the rest of the world. The United Kingdom, for example, designates 47 per cent of its domestic waters (excluding Overseas Territories) as marine protected areas, but less than 1 per cent have been assessed as effectively protected. Japan, meanwhile, has designated 7.3 per cent of its domestic waters as marine protected areas, with 0 per cent assessed as effectively protected.

The ocean can continue protecting and feeding the world only if governments deliver on their commitments to protect it. Recognising the need for an urgent change in course, the Bloomberg Ocean Fund report lays out a

series of crucial next steps to help governments effectively protect 30 per cent of their ocean areas by 2030. But, as Mike Bloomberg likes to say: If you can't measure it, you can't manage it.

Increased data collection is therefore essential. With more actionable information at their disposal, countries can better track their progress, and key stakeholders – not least local coastal communities – can participate more fully in conservation efforts. For that, we need to get tools that have proven invaluable for fostering transparency and accountability, such as SkyTruth's 30x30 Progress Tracker, into more people's hands.

The report also urges wealthy countries to deliver on their promises. In 2022, Global North governments committed to increase funding for developing countries to at least \$20 billion per year by 2025, and to \$30 billion by 2030. However, little of this funding has been delivered. While the recently announced \$163 million in new pledges from donor countries is welcome, such sums are a drop in the bucket. Far more funding is desperately needed to support conservation efforts across Latin America and other regions, especially in the Global South.

@Project Syndicate, 2024

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



France's forward #14 Adrien Rabiot (L) celebrates with Lucas Digne. — AFP

FRANCE SECURE TOP SPOT WITH WIN OVER ITALY

MILAN: Adrien Rabiot and Lucas Digne combined perfectly to celebrate their 50th international caps, helping France secure a 3-1 away win against Italy in the Nations League Group A2 decider. The victory saw France finish top of the table.

Rabiot scored a brace after being set up twice by Digne, whose remarkable free kick was deflected into the goal by Guglielmo Vicario. Italy's lone goal came from Andrea Cambiaso.

France ended the group phase with 13 points, edging Italy on goal difference. The Azzurri had previously beaten France 3-1 at the Parc des Princes in September. Meanwhile, Israel earned their sole group victory by defeating Belgium 1-0 in Budapest, but they finished last due to their inferior head-to-head record.

"We had a young squad, I wanted to see a lot of players, and winning here against an Italian team full of confidence is a great performance," said coach Didier Deschamps.

Keeper Mike Maignan added, "We wanted to win, we were out for revenge. It was about pride after losing at home to them."

After a disappointing goalless draw against Israel on Thursday, Deschamps's side displayed resilience despite the absence of captain Kylian Mbappe, who was left out of the squad.

France made a dream start as Rabiot netted his fifth international goal with a header from Digne's corner just two minutes into the match.

Italy increased the tempo, but Digne's brilliant 27-metre free kick bounced off the bar and onto Vicario's back, resulting in France's second goal in the 33rd minute. The Azzurri quickly responded, with Cambiaso volleying in from Federico Dimarco's cutback two minutes later to narrow the deficit. Christopher Nkunku tested Vicario with a low shot in the 59th minute as France pushed for a third goal. Digne and Rabiot linked up again, with Digne delivering a pinpoint free kick for the midfielder to score his second header of the match, restoring France's two-goal lead. — Reuters



France's defender #03 Lucas Digne (C) celebrates scoring a goal. — AFP

Oman set to battle Iraq in World Cup qualifier



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

OMAN WILL look to build on the momentum from their previous victory over Palestine to boost their Fifa World Cup 2026 dreams as they take on Iraq in a tight encounter on Tuesday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The match, starting at 8 pm, is expected to draw a full house as all available tickets have been snapped up by Omani fans.

The Red Warriors understand that today's assignment against Iraq will be a crucial step towards climbing the standings, as a victory will bring them closer to the top two teams in the group. Oman are currently fourth in the standings, following their 1-0 win over Palestine, two points behind Iraq and Jordan, who played out a goalless draw last Thursday.

On the other hand, Iraq will aim to recover from their draw in the last match and secure a positive result. Head coach Jesús Casas and his technical staff are working diligently to ensure Iraq's second-ever appearance at the Fifa World Cup Finals.

PRIME MATCH
Oman head coach Rasheed Jaber acknowledged the significance of the match. "This is a crucial game as we begin the second round of qualifiers. Playing at home gives us an advantage, and we



are determined to capitalise on it. Iraq is a strong team with a great history, but we are prepared to fight hard to keep our hopes alive," he said at the pre-match press conference.

Addressing Iraq's line-up, which includes several professional players, Jaber emphasised, "We are facing the Iraq national team, not the individual clubs where their players compete. Respect for the opponent is key, but we will apply pressure with well-thought-out tactics. Mental preparation is just as important as physical readiness. I trust my players to deliver a disciplined and error-free performance."

Omani captain Harib al Saadi highlighted the importance of the match for the team and fans. "This is one of the key matches in the qualifiers. We aim to maximise the home advantage and the incredible support

of our fans to secure three points. The result of this game could be a significant step in our journey," he said.

Strategic approach
On the other side, Iraq's head coach Jesús Casas is equally focused on securing a win. "This is a critical match for us, and our aim is to achieve the dreams of the Iraqi people to qualify for the World Cup. Although we are missing Mustafa Sadoon due to suspension, we have regained Zayed Hussain, and the team is ready to perform," said the Spanish coach.

Casas emphasised his strategic approach, noting that his line-up is carefully selected based on training and match performance. "Each game requires a tailored approach. We have adapted to various tactical setups before, and this match will be no different. Oman is a strong opponent, but we are ready to deliver our best."

Iraqi player Rebin Solaka shared his commitment to the team's ambitions. "We are fully focused on achieving our World Cup dream. The support from our fans and media is invaluable, and we are determined to deliver strong performances in the coming matches," he said.

As both teams vie for a critical three points, the stage is set for a thrilling encounter that could shape the course of the qualifiers. Fans can expect a high-stakes battle as Oman and Iraq fight to keep their World Cup aspirations alive.

Muscat to host first professional wrestling event on Friday

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, NOV 18

PROFESSIONAL wrestling is coming to the Sultanate of Oman for the first time as WrestleFest DXB announced its historic debut in Muscat on November 22. The Oman Automobile Association's Thy Yard Pitstop will stage the event on Friday.

This landmark event marks the first time a Middle Eastern wrestling promotion has ventured beyond its home country, solidifying its position as a trailblazer in the region.

The promotion is committed to nurturing and showcasing home-grown talent, providing a platform for aspiring wrestlers in the Middle East to reach new heights. WrestleFest DXB brings high-flying action,

intense matches, and jaw-dropping moments to the heart of Oman.

The programme for this event includes impressive performances and an atmosphere worthy of Thy Yard in Oman! Fans can look forward to discovering—or rediscovering—wrestlers such as Shaheen, Sam, Oman's own first pro wrestler Anas Rex, Fayez, Johnny Evers, Kuya Burn, Alireza, Cryptid, Roxxy, Jay Lamrod, Zephyr, and Ramsey in the ring.

Tickets are available on the Virgin Megastore website.

Local professional wrestler Anas al Riyami, known as Anas Rex in the pro circuit, is thrilled to perform in front of his home crowd.

"I'm beyond excited for the debut of the first professional wrestling



show in Oman. This event is a dream come true, a moment I've been working toward for years. To be able to step into the ring in front of my home crowd and perform for my family is an indescribable honour. It's a chance to bring the energy, passion, and love I have for wrestling to the people who mean the most to me and to show them what this journey has been all about. I can't wait to share this historic moment with everyone on Friday, November 22, and make history that will last a lifetime."

The young wrestler hopes this event will spark growth for the sport in Oman.

"This event has the potential to be the catalyst for wrestling's growth in Oman, creating a foundation of

excitement and community support for the sport. By bringing a professional wrestling show to the local stage, fans who have only experienced it on screens will finally get to feel the intensity and atmosphere of a live event. This first show will introduce wrestling to a wider audience, showcasing its athleticism, storytelling, and entertainment value, which will likely inspire a passionate fan base and even encourage local talent to explore the sport."

"The show will also highlight Oman as a place capable of hosting dynamic events, potentially drawing regional interest and paving the way for more shows, training programmes, and a lasting wrestling community in the country," he added.

SHORTTAKES



54KM ‘WELLNESS WALK’ IN SALALAH ON WEDNESDAY

MUSCAT: A ‘Wellness Walk’ will be organised from Salalah to Mughsail on National Day holiday on Wednesday for health awareness. The walk will be led by Ishwar Deshmukh, a professional walker and physical education teacher from Indian School Salalah who has served as Head- Physical Education Department in reputed schools in India and Gulf countries for more than two decades. Early registrants can also participate in part or throughout this walk.

The 54 km walk will be organised by Fas Sports and Lifeline Hospital on Oman’s 54th National Day. The walk will be flagged off from the premises of Lifeline Hospital in Hamdan building, at 4 am early morning on Wednesday, November 20, the national holiday. The walk will take about seven hours to reach Mughsail at 11 o’clock.

Those who are interested can start either from Lifeline to Raysut or join at Mughsail Beach or from the middle of the path. Anyone living in Salalah can participate in this walk by pre-registering via Google Forms. Interested may contact on +968 9783555 for further details. T-shirts and necessary drinks will be provided for the participants. The concerned ministries have informed that they would provide their full cooperation for the walk.

Last February, Ishwar Deshmukh, had walked 28.02 km from Salalah to Taqah in 3 hours 54 minutes and 57 seconds. He said that all people should be involved in this effort for health awareness.

Fas Director Jamshad Ali and Lifeline Operations Manager Abdul Rasheed participated in the meeting to plan and organise the Walkathon.



Al Bashayer beat Nizwa 74-50 in Basketball League



PICTURE BY Ammar al Musafir

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

AL BASHAYER Club secured a well-deserved victory against Nizwa Club with a score of 74-50 in the match held as part of the 2024-2025 General Basketball League of Oman. The game took place at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

The match began with high energy from Nizwa Club, which quickly set the pace through sharp shooting by player Agasl Tonian, granting his team an early 5-point lead. However, Al Bashayer quickly regained momentum, leveraging strong defensive organisation and swift offensive transitions. Hadeed Bait Bakhit scored a critical basket, while Selvin Kabakov excelled with points from under the basket. The first quarter ended with Al Bashayer leading 15-10 after a series of well-coordinated attacks.

Nizwa entered the second quarter determined to close the gap. They started

scoring through Musab al Riyami and Hussain al Kindi, narrowing the lead to just one point. For a brief moment, Nizwa took the lead thanks to a three-pointer by Qasim al Qasmi, bringing the score to 17-15.

However, Al Bashayer quickly regained control, relying on the experience of Shaker Smith and the accurate shooting of Mahmoud al Souli. Hadeed Bait Bakhit added another precise basket, gradually widening the gap. The first half ended with Al Bashayer ahead by 13 points at 34-21.

The third quarter saw a strong start from Nizwa, with a notable three-pointer from Mohammed al Ankoudi and a two-pointer from Saif Al Toubi, reducing the gap to 8 points at 26-34. Nevertheless, Al Bashayer capitalised on Nizwa’s defensive errors, with Ahmed al Halhali scoring a remarkable basket followed by a three-pointer from Hadeed Bait Bakhit. Despite Nizwa’s attempts to reduce the gap again with a three-pointer by Musab Al Wahaibi, Al Bashayer maintained their

lead through swift wing movements and fast counterattacks. The quarter concluded with Al Bashayer leading 56-40.

Entering the final quarter with high confidence, Al Bashayer diversified their attacks and penetrated Nizwa’s defences effectively. Early in the quarter, Ahmed al Halhali scored two points, followed by a standout three-pointer by Bassam al Busaidi, extending the lead to 21 points at 61-40. Nizwa tried to respond with a successful shot by Basil al Subhi, but the significant gap remained in favour of Al Bashayer. Strong defensive performance and well-organised attacks ensured Al Bashayer’s control over the game, which ended in a decisive victory at 74-50.

The match was officiated by international referee Ahmed al Balushi as the first referee, Thani al Khalasi as the second referee, and Mazen al Hilali as the third referee. The table officials included Fatima al Harthy, Mahmoud al Ajmi, and Omaila al Hajari.

Sinner, atypical Italian star on top of tennis world

TURIN, ITALY: Jannik Sinner’s reserved public persona belies his status as Italy’s biggest sporting star and the new dominant force in men’s tennis, his convincing victory at the ATP Finals confirming his rise to the top of the game.

An eighth tournament win of the season came in a near perfect year for Sinner who started 2024 by winning his first Grand Slam at the Australian Open and never looked back from there.

Long considered Italian tennis’ great red-haired hope, few could have imagined this year’s sudden burst to the top of the world rankings ahead of Spain’s golden boy Carlos Alcaraz, himself a four-time Slam champion at the age of 21.

The 23-year-old is set to be Alcaraz’s main rival in the years to come, the pair stepping up as Rafael

Nadal retires and Novak Djokovic ends a year without an ATP Tour title for the first time since 2006.

“Jannik hits a faster ball than Novak. He doesn’t let you breathe. With Novak you can play rallies... and not be terrified of Novak ripping, like, a bomb down the line or cross-court,” said Casper Ruud after being destroyed by Sinner in the semi-finals on Saturday.

“Everything in his game improved. I mean, this year it seems like he stepped up with every aspect.”

However Sinner’s status as national hero was in doubt as recently as this time last year, his origins in the German-speaking areas of the South Tyrol and residence in Monaco casting doubt on whether he was Italian at all.

Sinner was born in Innichen,



Italy’s Jannik Sinner lifts the trophy. — AFP

or San Candido, which is a stone’s throw from the Austrian border, his attachment to his home nation has been frequently questioned by former Italian tennis players and local media.

The criticism of a perceived lack of patriotism reached a crescendo in September last year when he dropped out of Davis Cup matches played in Bologna, saying that he didn’t have time to recover from tournaments played in North America.

But those doubts were magically swept aside when he surged to the final of the 2023 ATP Finals — where he fell to Djokovic after beating the 24-time Grand Slam champion in the group stage — and was then key to Italy eventually winning the Davis Cup for the first time since 1976.

RUNNING FROM FAME

Now Sinner’s face can be seen almost everywhere in Italy, where he is universally lauded and is almost omnipresent in advertising for products ranging from broadband internet to coffee brand Lavazza and fashion house Gucci.

However he is far from the more outgoing stars of Italian sport like motorcycling legend Valentino Rossi, World Cup-winning footballer Alessandro Del Piero or alpine skiing star Sofia Goggia.

Sinner is quiet and reserved and keeps his personal life away from the spotlight as much as possible, saying very little about his relationship with fellow tennis player Anna Kalinskaya even after her former boyfriend Nick Kyrgios disparagingly referred to her as “second serve”. — AFP

Stunning fireworks light up skies



A fireworks show was held on Monday evening as part of the 54th National Day celebrations. The fireworks, which were painted with dazzling shapes and bright colours, lit up the sky. The firework shows, held in the Wilayat of Seeb in Mus-

cat Governorate and in the Wilayat of Salalah in Dhofar Governorate, featured dazzling formations enthralled the viewers as citizens and residents expressed jubilation over the auspicious occasion of National Day of Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**



MUSCAT
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BUSINESS

CRUDE OIL
OMAN \$70.50
BRENT \$71.60
LIGHT \$ 67.44



THE DIFFERENCE...
Our History with you
Banking that is proudly human



SHORT TAKES



OQ Base Industries will offer approximately 1.7 billion shares, representing 49% of its capital.

OQ BASE INDUSTRIES IPO TO RAISE OVER RO 180 MILLION

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority has approved the prospectus for the initial public offering (IPO) of OQ Base Industries, a subsidiary of the Oman Investment Authority. As part of its transformation into a public joint stock company, the corporation will offer approximately 1.7 billion shares, representing 49% of its capital, with an expected value exceeding RO 180 million.

The IPO is aligned with Oman Vision 2040’s goals of attracting investments and privatising government assets, providing an opportunity for investors to participate in one of Oman’s leading producers of methanol, ammonia, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) products.

According to the prospectus, shares will be offered across three categories. The first category, comprising institutional investors, will account for 30% of the total offering. Subscriptions for this category will be open from November 24 to December 1, 2024, with a price range of 106–111 baisas per share. Institutional investors will be required to subscribe to a minimum of 200,000 shares, with no upper limit specified.

The second category, targeting individual investors, will represent 40 per cent of the total offering. Subscription for individuals will take place from November 24 to November 28, 2024, at a fixed price of 111 baisas per share.

The minimum subscription for this group is 1,000 shares, with an upper limit of 90,000 shares. The third category, allocated to major investors, will account for 30 per cent of the offering. Major investors must subscribe to at least 90,100 shares in multiples of 100, with no upper limit.

The IPO reflects the Oman Investment Authority’s strategy of expanding the shareholder base and boosting the local stock market. Additionally, it is intended to strengthen OQ Base Industries’ position in domestic and international markets.

Initiatives to fuel new phase of Oman’s growth

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, NOV 18

OMAN IS poised to enter a new phase of industrial development, driven by its ambitious Industrial Strategy 2040 and Local Content Plan (ICV). These initiatives, launched by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, represent a transformative approach to redefining the country’s industrial future. Through innovation, sustainability, and strategic integration of local resources, Oman aims to solidify its position as a leading industrial hub, aligned with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.

Mazen al Siyabi, Acting Director General of Industry at the Ministry, emphasised these ambitions during a recent workshop, describing the strategy as not just a framework for economic growth, but a comprehensive vision to create a competitive, technology-driven, and resilient industrial sector.

The Industrial Strategy 2040 sets a clear road map to establish a technologically advanced industrial ecosystem. The vision emphasises leveraging Omani creativity and adopting cutting-edge technologies to enhance the quality, diversity, and competitiveness of locally produced goods.

By 2040, the Sultanate of Oman aims to elevate its industrial sector to a global stage, fostering innovation and sustainable development.

According to Al Siyabi, the strategy revolves around five key objectives: Diversifying Oman’s manufacturing sector into knowledge- and technology-driven industries; Developing innovative products that enhance societal well-being; Expanding the global footprint of Omani industries;



The Industrial Strategy 2040 sets a clear road map to establish a technologically advanced industrial ecosystem. The vision emphasises leveraging Omani creativity and adopting cutting-edge technologies to enhance the quality, diversity, and competitiveness of locally produced goods.

MAZEN AL SIYABI
Acting Director
General of Industry

Modernising industrial processes with advanced technologies aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution; and Cultivating a culture of innovation as the cornerstone of industrial growth.

These objectives reflect a forward-thinking and integrated approach, designed to foster long-term prosperity and sustainability.

To achieve these objectives, the strategy outlines a series of transformative programmes tailored to address specific challenges and opportunities in Oman’s industrial sector:

HIGH-TECH INDUSTRIES
Oman plans to establish industrial clusters focused on high-tech sectors such as medical devices, solar panels, and recycling. These industries represent the future of sustainable manufacturing and align with global trends towards clean energy and efficient resource utilisation.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION
Recognising the importance of entrepreneurial energy, the strategy seeks to foster innovation through technology incubators and dedicated support for startups. Government procurement will play a catalytic role in promoting innovative solutions while driving sustainable practices in local industries.

MODERNISATION AND SUSTAINABILITY
A critical pillar of the strategy involves upgrading existing industries to incorporate advanced technologies, improving efficiency, and transitioning to green resources. Support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is also prioritised, ensuring their integration into the larger industrial framework.

GOVERNANCE AND REGULATION
Strengthened governance structures will underpin the strategy’s implementation.

This includes updating legal and regulatory frameworks, creating supervisory committees to oversee progress, and enhancing the technical and professional skills of ministry employees.

Integral to Oman’s industrial transformation is the Local Content Plan, a strategic initiative aimed at boosting domestic industries and fostering economic resilience.

By prioritising local products and services in public procurement, the plan seeks to empower SMEs, encourage collaboration with larger corporations, and protect emerging industries. The Local Content Plan also focuses on increasing transparency and efficiency through digital procurement platforms.

This, coupled with efforts to promote Omani products in domestic and international markets, is expected to strengthen the integration of local businesses into the global economy.

“Local content is not just a policy—it is the foundation of our industrial future,” Al Siyabi stated, emphasising the central role of domestic capacity-building in achieving the strategy’s broader goals.

The combined impact of the Industrial Strategy 2040 and the Local Content Plan is expected to drive significant economic and social benefits for Oman, including: Improved quality and global competitiveness of Omani products; Expansion of export markets, enhancing Oman’s industrial footprint; Creation of new employment opportunities, fostering sustainable economic growth; and Strengthening Oman’s position as a leading industrial hub in the region.

Oman plans National Foresight Office to navigate future challenges

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 18

Oman’s authorities are taking steps to set up a centralised unit dedicated to future-proofing the country against potential vulnerabilities and disruptive global developments with far-reaching impacts.

The initiative, dubbed the National Foresight Office, is being spearheaded by the Ministry of Economy with the goal to strengthen the preparedness and response of government authorities to future challenges.

“Foresight enables the Sultanate of Oman to respond strategically and flexibly to factors that may impact the course of its national plans and programmes,” said the Oman Vision

2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit in a brief overview of the initiative.

“In today’s rapidly changing world, three key characteristics stand out: rapid change, the interconnectedness of factors influencing strategic planning and foresight, and the global interconnectedness of events with far-reaching economic, political, and social impacts.”

Significantly, a National Foresight Office underpinned by suitable foresight structures and systems, also aligns Omani governance practices with current international trends and standards. Many advanced economies around the world, as well as regional blocs and an array of multilateral institutions, are equipped with dedicated foresight



The Ministry of Economy has initiated the process of establishing a National Foresight Office. Picture for illustration only.

offices to plan for unforeseen scenarios.

A number of European states have foresight offices operating at the highest levels of government,

either as part of the Prime Minister’s Office or within high-level strategic planning units. The rationale for having foresight offices is primarily to centralise long-range, comprehensive and streamlined planning to address critical emerging developments, related to science and technology, demographic, economic, geopolitical, environmental, social, educational and other challenges and opportunities of pertinence to the country.

According to the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, a National Foresight System is a “pressing need” for the Sultanate of Oman. Among other factors, it will empower “Oman to provide alternative plans and pathways for sectors most vulnerable to future

changes, identify the forces shaping priority national sectors, and leverage its competitive advantage in a dynamic global environment”.

As a first step in the institution of a centralised foresight office in Oman, the Ministry of Economy has undertaken a comparative study of international experiences in establishing foresight systems and their structures.

Additionally, the Ministry has explored the most suitable options for governing a foresight system in Oman and identified the national needs for such a system. Furthermore, a preparatory committee for governing the foresight system has been formed to explore the most suitable options for the system.

ADVERTORIALS



The event featured a number of activities which captivated the bank's employees and guests with its selection of musical pieces.

BANK MUSCAT CELEBRATES GLORIOUS NATIONAL DAY

MUSCAT: In celebration of the 54th National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the country, hosted a series of events at its Airport Heights headquarters. The celebration was graced by the attendance of Shaikh Waleed bin Khamis al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer of Bank Muscat, along with members of the executive management team and employees.

The event featured a number of activities which captivated the bank's employees and guests with its selection of musical pieces. It dedicated sections displaying Omani clothing from various governorates as well as offering both traditional Omani and international cuisines. The event fostered a sense of pride in Oman's achievements, resonating with employees and visitors alike.

As part of the celebration, Bank Muscat also launched a patriotic song titled "Dari Oman", meaning "Oman is my homeland". Embracing a national heritage theme, the song reflects the profound connection between Omanis and their homeland, blending traditional melodies to create a piece well-received by the audience. This national tribute has been shared across traditional media, digital platforms and social networks.

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Bank Muscat takes pride in its role as a pillar of Oman's economic and social development. With a legacy of achievements, the bank reaffirms its leadership within the Omani banking sector and its commitment to sustainable development in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

The bank has actively supported national economic progress by providing financing to various sectors, contributing to financial inclusion through a network of 186 branches and service centres, and deploying nearly 900 self-service devices nationwide, including ATMs, cash deposit machines and multifunctional devices. The bank is committed to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises and adopting innovative banking strategies aligned with the digital age.

As a cornerstone of its mission, Bank Muscat continually enhances the customer experience, offering services tailored to the needs of both individuals and corporates.

In pursuit of excellence, the bank has launched initiatives to strengthen customer relationships and engage communities across Oman's governorates. These initiatives include seminars to raise awareness of digital banking services and events for government and corporate customers to foster dialogue on enhancing their banking experience.

BankDhofar forms strategic partnership with Muscat Bay

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the second largest bank in Oman in terms of branch network, has forged a strategic partnership with Muscat Bay to enhance the banking experience of residents and investors in the vibrant community.

The collaboration aims to provide seamless banking services tailored to the unique needs of Muscat Bay residents, ensuring easy and secure access to essential financial products.

The partnership reflects BankDhofar's commitment to enhance and support the aspirations of residents and investors in this prestigious, modern residential community.

The agreement was signed on behalf of BankDhofar by Amjad bin Iqbal al Lawati, Chief Retail Banking Officer, while it was



The collaboration aims to provide seamless banking services tailored to the unique needs of Muscat Bay residents.

Lulu unveils 'Happiness' loyalty rewards programme

LULU has announced the launch of its Happiness Loyalty Rewards Programme, an ambitious and innovative initiative designed to acknowledge customers' loyalty as well as redefine their everyday shopping experience. The loyalty programme, which was unveiled to coincide with the National Day celebrations in Oman, allows shoppers to register and earn points every time they shop at any LuLu outlet.

A ceremony marking the launch of the programme took place at Lulu Hypermarket, Avenues Mall, Bausher, featuring former Omani professional footballer and legendary goalkeeper Ali al Habsi, Omani tennis champion Fatma al Nabhani, and various senior officials from Lulu.

Al Habsi is the first Omani to play professional football in Europe. His hard work and determination have earned him a spot in some of Europe's most prestigious leagues. Al Nabhani has been playing in international tournaments since the age of 13. She has also played for Oman at the Fed Cup.

Speaking during the launch ceremony, Shabeer K A, Regional Director – Lulu Hypermarkets, Oman, said, "The loyalty reward programme offers customers an array of benefits, adding more happiness to their everyday shopping experience.

"It has always been our endeavour to ensure that our customers deserve the best and this initiative is a token of appreciation to our valuable customers for their love and support all these years.

"The loyalty programme not only rewards our customers, but also creates more opportunities for us to foster a stronger bond with them and engage with and support our



The loyalty programme allows shoppers to register and earn points every time they shop at any LuLu outlet.

Shoppers can earn points on every transaction, with additional bonus points available on a wide selection of Happiness products. The programme also offers an array of benefits through partnerships, providing members with the best value deals on all their needs.

communities in new and exciting ways."

Further elaborating on the initiative, he added, "We're very excited to introduce our loyalty rewards programme Happiness, which is tailored to bring our customers unique privileges and greater value as part of our ongoing dedication to excellence.

"The programme has been developed as part of our commitment to create a customer-centric approach in everything we do. This allowed us to identify what our customers want and how best we can reward them for their loyalty and continued partnership with us."

Through this loyalty programme, members can unlock exclusive deals and discounts, with instant savings, on every purchase as

well as gain access to special member prices. Shoppers can earn points on every transaction, with additional bonus points available on a wide selection of Happiness products.

The programme also offers an array of benefits through partnerships, providing members with the best value deals on all their needs.

Customers can download Lulu Shopping app to access their Happiness points, followed by browsing exclusive benefits and offers.

Registered users can gain exclusive member prices, privileges and offers too.

Shoppers can redeem their Happiness Points at all Lulu Outlets, manage their Happiness points and vouchers through app as well as view all receipts easily.

ISUZU ROADSHOW ROLLS ACROSS OMAN SHOWCASING D-MAX AND MU-X

MUSCAT: Isuzu, a name synonymous with reliability and innovation in the automotive world, is proud to announce the ongoing success of its exciting roadshow featuring the iconic Isuzu D-Max pickup and the versatile MU-X SUV.

Having already made its mark with enthusiastic crowds at Bausher and Maabela, the roadshow continues its journey across Oman, bringing a dynamic blend of fun, interaction and information to various locations.



The roadshow is set to visit Bidiyah, Suhar, Bahla, Nizwa, Ibri, Sinaw and Barka in the coming weeks, happening every Friday at select supermarkets. Designed

to engage communities, the event not only showcases the superior performance, power and utility of the Isuzu D-Max and the MU-X, but also offers a lively atmosphere for families and automotive enthusiasts alike

Visitors to the roadshow can enjoy interactive games, fun-filled activities and the chance to win exclusive Isuzu goodie prizes.

It's a unique opportunity to experience Isuzu's vehicles firsthand, ask questions and learn more about what makes

the D-Max and MU-X leaders in their respective categories.

Stay tuned for updates on the next venue by following us on our social media channels. Don't miss your chance to join the Isuzu experience near you and win exciting prizes!

As the exclusive distributor for Isuzu in Oman, OTE Group boasts an extensive and diverse business portfolio spanning global automotive brands, auto ancillaries, electronics, home appliances, manufacturing financing, and training institutes.

SHORT TAKES



This collaboration will focus on critical commodities.

DEAL INKED TO BOOST RISK MANAGEMENT IN COMMODITIES MARKET

MUSCAT: Fastmarkets, a leading cross-commodity price-reporting agency, is excited to announce their strategic partnership with Gulf Mercantile Exchange (GME). Fastmarkets and GME have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore a strategic partnership aimed at enhancing risk management tools for the regional commodities market. This collaboration will focus on critical commodities and aims to advance commodity risk management, market transparency and educational initiatives.

The GME and Fastmarkets will explore collaboration across areas including new commodity derivatives, indices and hedging instruments tailored to meet the needs of regional markets.

Additionally, the collaboration will focus on promoting education and fostering industry dialogue by organising and co-hosting networking events, seminars and workshops on commodity trading, risk management and pricing strategies. The region is expanding rapidly due to increased investment in infrastructure and diversification of the economy, positioning Fastmarkets as the trusted provider to deliver the essential tools and insights needed to navigate this growth effectively. “We are excited to partner with Fastmarkets to bring innovative solutions to the regional commodities market,” said Ahmad Sharaf, Chairman of GME.

Fastmarkets is at the forefront of innovation, consistently delivering comprehensive solutions that address the evolving needs of the commodities industry, ensuring customers have reliable data and tools for informed decision-making. Raju Daswani, CEO of Fastmarkets, added, “This partnership represents a significant step forward in supporting the growth and development of the regional commodities market. We look forward to working together to achieve our shared goals and deliver value to our stakeholders.”

Muscat’s beach lounge, SiO2 opens at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah

SHANGRI-La Barr Al Jissah, the leading dining destination in Muscat proudly introduces the SiO2 Beach Lounge to redefine the coastal experience in Muscat.

Elegantly set on the edge of the 500m long stretched beach of Al Bandar hotel, opposite the resort’s two dining venues Capri Court and Chow Mee, the beach lounge draws its name from the very elements that make up the sandy shores - quartz, silicon and oxygen. This synthesis of nature serves as inspiration for an authentic place where the elements of earth, breeze and sea converge to create an unforgettable afternoon and evening atmosphere.

Inspired by contemporary island beach lounges and elegantly combined with the beautiful views of the Gulf of Oman, SiO2 boasts a thoughtfully designed space with a thatched roof bar made from palm tree leaves. The combination of beach, sand and contemporary furniture with white tones paired with blue and beige cushions adds a glamour and yet authentic touch to the dramatic sunset setting behind the Hajar mountains. The white drapes around the rattan cozy lounge brings a private, light and cozy sense of place to the venue for a warmer experience. The beach lounge can cater for 70 guests while keeping the venue intimate and exclusive.

The menu is crafted to rejuvenate guests’ senses with a creative blend of cocktails



and mocktails - all inspired by the Omani ingredients and flavours of the region.

SiO2 is home to carefully curated drinks like ‘Hajar’ which reflects the freshness of the season with a spicy twist, while the ‘Incense’ draws its inspiration and flavours from lemongrass.

The Frankincense Spritz is a must-try and symbolic to the resort boasting its own Frankincense Garden and Sommelier. Complementing the beverage selection, SiO2 presents a unique selection of Huqqa, an opportunity to indulge in this cherished tradition right by the beach. Guests are welcomed to revel in the flavours as they unwind in the gentle sea breeze, with their toes in the sand. To top it off, the evening is crowned with a live DJ, spinning afro house beats as well as seasonal entertainment throughout the year.

Oman unveils aluminium cluster in Suhar

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, NOV 18

THE Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has launched the Aluminium Initiative in Suhar, located Al Batinah North Governorate. This ambitious project represents a comprehensive model designed to align with Oman’s Industrial Strategy 2040, aiming to diversify the economy and drive sustainable industrial growth.

The initiative establishes an integrated economic cluster for the aluminium industry, focusing on downstream industries that utilise aluminium products. By fostering domestic production and enhancing value chains, the cluster is expected to strengthen Oman’s position as a regional leader in aluminium manufacturing and processing.

With an anticipated investment value of RO 180 million, the cluster will feature 27 factories in its initial phase. These factories will support a wide range of aluminium-based industries, leveraging advanced technologies and innovative processes to produce high-quality products for local and international markets.

The project is also forecasted to create 3,855 direct and indirect job opportunities, boosting employment and skill development in the region.

The Aluminium Initiative is a key step towards realising the Industrial Strategy 2040, which sets a clear roadmap for establishing



The cluster will feature 27 factories in its initial phase. Image for illustration only.

a technologically advanced industrial ecosystem in Oman.

The strategy emphasises leveraging Omani creativity and adopting cutting-edge technologies to enhance the quality, diversity and competitiveness of locally produced goods. This vision underscores the Sultanate of Oman’s ambition to create a sustainable, innovation-driven industrial sector that contributes to economic diversification and global competitiveness. As part of this broader strategy, the Aluminium Initiative

aims to increase Oman’s industrial output, stimulate export opportunities and attract foreign and local investment into the manufacturing sector. The strategic location of Suhar further enhances the cluster’s potential by providing access to world-class infrastructure.

Through such initiatives, Oman is positioning itself as a competitive player in the global aluminium market, driving long-term economic growth and aligning with the broader goals of Oman Vision 2040.

CBO ALLOCATES RO 43 MILLION WORTH OF TREASURY BILLS

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) announced the allocation of government treasury bills worth RO 43.1 million this week, divided across three maturity periods.

Bills with a 28-day maturity were valued at RO 18.1 million, with an average acceptable price of RO 99.685 per RO 100 and a lowest acceptable price of RO 99.680. The average discount rate stood at 4.11237%, while the average return reached 4.12539%. For the 91-day maturity period, the allocated value was RO 22 million, with an



According to the CBO, the interest rate on repurchase operations (repo) for these bills is 5.25%.

average acceptable price of RO 98.865 and a lowest acceptable price of the same amount. The average discount rate

for this category was 4.55247%, while the average return was 4.60474%. Bills with a 182-day maturity were allocated RO 3 million, with both the average and lowest acceptable price at RO 97.720 per RO 100, an average discount rate of 4.57253%, and an average return of 4.67921%.

According to the CBO, the interest rate on repurchase operations (repo) for these bills is 5.25%, while the discount rate on treasury bill facilities is 5.75%.

Treasury bills, issued by the Ministry of Finance, are a short-term secured financial

instrument designed to provide investment opportunities for licensed commercial banks, with the CBO acting as the issuance manager. These bills offer high liquidity, as they can be discounted with the CBO or used in repo transactions with the central bank or among banks in the interbank market.

Moreover, treasury bills help establish short-term interest rate benchmarks for the local financial market and provide the government with a flexible financing mechanism for its expenditures. — **ONA**

Blending heritage with innovation for a greener future

MUSCAT: For centuries, the people of Oman lived in harmony with nature, taking only as much as they needed to survive while leaving a minimal impact on the environment. This sustainable way of life was reflected in everything from architecture to community practices. Today, forward-looking developers are taking a leaf out of our ancestors’ book to create sustainable living offerings that meet the demands of their residents while keeping in mind the needs of the next generations.

One of them is Diamond Developers, a division of SEE Holding, which is currently developing The Sustainable City – Yiti in the charming seaside of Yiti on the Gulf of Oman coastline near Muscat in partnership with Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran).

Designed with the highest social, environmental, and economic sustainability standards in mind, the ambitious project aspires to become the largest operational sustainable community in the region and the first net-zero-emission city in the world by 2040.

There is more to the story. Oman’s rich heritage as the oldest independent state in the Arab world and one of the oldest human-inhabited countries on earth will be reflected in every aspect of The Sustainable City – Yiti. As a result, the look and feel of the entire city will be in perfect harmony with the environment.



The city weaves a rich tapestry of architectural and urban design inspired by the region’s past while firmly embracing a sustainable future. At the heart of its blueprint are car-free clusters, inspired by the traditional “freej” concept, a hallmark of old Arabian neighborhoods. In these clusters, the sense of community was central, with neighbors connected by narrow pedestrian pathways, called sikkas, and children playing safely outside their homes. This essence is reflected in The Sustainable City – Yiti’s pedestrianized streets, where the absence of cars encourages residents to walk, fostering social connections and creating a space for children to explore freely, just like in the old “freej” days.

Architecturally, the villas and buildings showcase a modern interpretation of vernacular aesthetics.

OPINION

Do modern cars “spy” on you?



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The author is the founder of Knowledge Oman

SAFER easier and connected driving are three of the intriguing features that one would obtain from buying, owning and driving a new car. The feeling and experience are amazing, and some also have amazing looks too. Going from one place to another, turning in one direction to another, avoiding traffic and collisions, while also maintaining the ideal and safe driving speed, is a given possibility, thanks to the GPS (global positioning system) on board and the fitted sensors all around the different components of the car, from mirrors, windows, tires, bumpers, etc.

You could easily connect your smart devices, be it a phone and/or tablet, to the car’s infotainment system to sync, share music, calls, and some of the apps too while commuting from one place to another, giving you all the experience of a truly connected car.

That’s the reality today, and you are a witness indeed. Now I am not talking about the future autonomous or self-driving cars like the ones Tesla, Waymo, General Motors, Uber, Toyota, Nvidia, Ford, Google, Apple, etc. and approximately over 25 other companies are working on.

I’m talking literally about the present cars that you may probably own and would own when purchasing a new car.

What I shared of features is what you would expect to get as a standard package. What you may most probably not know is whether these cars may be “spying on you.”

Yes, and that’s the gist of my article in the coming weeks, starting with today as a base. Let’s face it. We are living in a world enabled by technology from smart homes, smart offices, smart buildings, smart cities, and yes, soon, in an intelligent world.

You may refer to my couple of posts in the past on the “intelligent world,” where I describe some of the interesting things leading ICT solution providers are working on today, along with the progress till date as witnessed from attending both the largest technology conference and exhibition/GITEX (in Dubai) and the Mobile World Conference/MWC (in Spain).

“Intelligent world” simply means everything getting connected on the superinformation highway (the Internet).

Cars are no exception where this simple mode of transportation becomes a complex machine that doesn’t only help you commute from one place to another easily and safely, yet also helps and keeps you connected by gathering all the data that emanates from not only the tech-fitted components within the car but also the other smart devices and wearables

Let’s face it. We are living in a world enabled by technology from smart homes, smart offices, smart buildings, smart cities, and yes, soon, in an intelligent world.

that you own and are paired, connected and synchronised to.

By now you are very aware of the kind of information as a form of data that your smart phone and wearables have and can share — from calls, messages, photos, videos, contacts, logs, and the sheer personal things you create, store, and/or process with them.

This information, coupled with our habits, routes, preferences, and everything to every place we go, is also shared and probably stored in this modern car. Who is in the car, what you talk to them about, and to some extent do you too, is possible data that can also be captured, thanks to the advanced infotainment device, sensors, and all-around cameras as well.

Believe me, everything is possible, and as we have set the basics clear, I will shed light in my future articles on how the spying really works and what kind of information is shared.

To conclude, I am sure you agree that with the technology in place today and inside the modern cars we drive, everything is possible.

What you may, however, not have realized before is the kind of things and information these cars have on us, and where does this information go, to whom exactly, and how they are being used. I will illustrate in my upcoming article how modern cars are spying on us.

Until we catch up again next week, stay safe and enjoy the National Day holidays.

BEIJING CAN SLOW, NOT STOP, THE YUAN’S FALL

Robert Lighthizer. Mike Walz. Marco Rubio. These renowned China hawks are not the names Beijing wants popping up in president-elect Donald Trump’s early cabinet appointments.

Markets agree, as the yuan has fallen about 2% against the dollar since Trump’s victory at the polls. Downward pressure will mount if he follows through on threats to raise American tariffs on imports from China to as much as 60%.

Any additional levies would drag on growth in the world’s top exporter.

Moreover, Trump’s inflationary trade and tax policies are tipped to keep US interest rates high and the dollar strong.

His first round of tariffs on China, for example, resulted in a 5% depreciation of the yuan against the greenback in 2018.

A repeat would be a headache for China’s economic planners, particularly since President Xi Jinping designated a strong yuan as a

priority for making China a “financial powerhouse”.

A weak currency can also worsen deflation and eat into consumer demand at a time of slowing economic growth. Strategists have flagged 8 yuan per dollar as the likely floor Beijing will tolerate, but that may overestimate its ability to control the exchange rate.

rate. Granted, policymakers have plenty levers to pull, such as tweaking the midpoint around which the currency can trade 2% in either direction against the dollar.

That trading band is frequently used to push back against depreciation.

Regulators can also order state banks to buy yuan and sell dollars; raise limits on dollar lending; and instruct currency desks to not trade below a certain threshold.

But the yuan’s exchange rate, though tightly managed, is still subject to market pressures, and such measures have only managed to slow the pace of currency moves in recent years, not fully halt or reverse them.

One obvious alternative is to tap China’s \$3.26 trillion in foreign reserves. But the central bank’s effort in 2015 to draw a hard line in the sand was taken as a challenge by traders shorting the currency, forcing authorities to burn through \$1 trillion of reserves to bring the exchange rate out of a tailspin.

This has made central bankers hesitant to visibly deploy reserves for fear of painting a target on their own back and spooking markets. Intervention might also set back progress on making the yuan an international currency.

So while Xi may not want to see the yuan fall past a certain point, policymakers probably don’t have the means to prevent it — especially if the White House goes full bore on tariffs. — **Reuters**



LEWIS KRAUSKOPF

The writer is a correspondent at Thomson Reuters.



A trader wears a hat in support of Republican Donald Trump, after he won the US presidential election, at the New York Stock Exchange. — **Reuters**

A US stock rally fuelled by Donald Trump’s election victory is stumbling, as investors contend with everything from renewed inflation worries to uncertainty over the impact of the president-elect’s policies.

The S&P 500 fell 2% in the past week, erasing more than half its gains from a post-election surge fuelled in part by optimism over the pro-growth policies that are a key part of Trump’s economic platform.

Though the index remains near record highs and is up 23% this year, some of that enthusiasm has been tempered in recent days.

Bets that some of Trump’s policies could spur a rebound in inflation and cloud the picture for further interest rate cuts helped push the benchmark US 10-year yield to its highest level in more than five months on Friday, a potentially unwelcome development for stocks.

Worries over Trump’s cabinet selections and plans for cutting bureaucratic excess have bruised the shares of pharmaceutical companies and government contractors. Meanwhile, Wall Street has little clarity on when, and to what extent, the president-elect will implement his agenda.

While the market had rushed to price in the positive outcomes from Trump’s economic policies, “I’m skeptical that it’s going to be that easy,” said Paul Nolte, senior wealth adviser and market strategist at Murphy & Sylvest Wealth Management.

Trump has previously said that his trade policies — which call for pricey tariffs on goods not only from rivals such as China

but allies such as the European Union — would revitalise American manufacturing and yield enough revenue to ease concerns about ballooning the deficit or increasing inflation.

EYES ON YIELDS

Rising yields are one of the market’s chief concerns, because they offer investment competition for equities while raising the cost of capital for companies and consumers. The benchmark 10-year yield — which typically moves with interest rate expectations — has surged about 90 basis points since mid-September as investors curtailed bets on how deeply the Federal Reserve will cut borrowing costs in the face of robust growth that could stoke an inflationary rebound.

Until recently, stocks may have been able to shrug off the rise in yields because it had been driven by stronger-than-expected economic data. But many of Trump’s policies — from tax cuts to tariffs — are seen as inflationary, and could keep yields climbing past the 4.5% level that some investors have flagged as a potential trigger for stock market unease. The yield touched 4.5% on Friday before settling lower.

“If yields continue to trend up and they don’t find their ceiling, I think it will become a problem because it will basically translate into a tighter monetary environment,” said Irene Tunkel, chief US equity strategist at BCA Research.

Fed Chair Jerome Powell on Thursday said there was little need for policymakers to rush to cut rates, given solid economic growth and inflation above the central

bank’s 2% target.

The comments weighed on stocks and pushed bond yields higher.

As yields have risen, the relative attractiveness of equities compared with US government bonds, which are seen as risk-free if held to term, has dimmed by some measures.

The equity risk premium, which compares the S&P 500 earnings yield against the 10-year Treasury yield, is at its lowest level since mid-2002, said Keith Lerner, co-chief investment officer at Truist Advisory Services.

POLICY UNCERTAINTY

Uncertainty over the timing and ultimate impact of Trump’s policies has also grown. Shares of Pfizer, Moderna and other drugmakers fell at the end of last week after Trump picked vaccine skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. Defence and government contractor stocks including Leidos Holdings and General Dynamics also fell, as investors fretted about the fallout from a new government efficiency entity led by Tesla CEO Elon Musk.

Kennedy, a cabinet pick, still has to be confirmed by Senate lawmakers, while the extent of any pending cuts stemming from the efficiency entity is unclear.

Nevertheless, the uncertainty has pushed some investors to “sell first, ask questions later,” said King Lip, chief strategist at BakerAvenue Wealth Management.

Meanwhile, strategists at BofA Global Research said the risks to their forecast of 2.3% economic growth next year were “very large in either direction” given the lack of clarity over which aspects of Trump’s policies will be prioritised.

Growth could shoot above 3% if the administration focused on fiscal easing and deregulation, the bank’s strategists wrote on Friday. But a hard pivot to tariffs could spark a trade war and eventually pull the economy into a recession, they said.

Of course, some so-called Trump trades are still sporting huge gains. Shares of Tesla, which have risen on bets that Musk’s close association with the president-elect will benefit the company, are up 28% since Election Day. Bitcoin, lifted by hopes of crypto deregulation, was up over 30% as of late Friday.

At the same time, stocks have tended to perform well at year-end, with the S&P 500 up an average of 3.3% in the last two months of presidential election years since 1952, according to Truist’s Lerner. — **Reuters**

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‘Critically endangered’ African penguins just want peace, food



Mashudu Mashau says it takes about two minutes to catch a penguin, a task he does weekly to investigate sightings of injured or sickly seabirds. “We don’t rush... we go down, sometimes we crawl, so that we don’t look threatening, and when we’re close, we aim for the head, hold it and secure the penguin,” the 41-year-old ranger said. Sometimes, when penguins waddle up from South Africa’s coastline onto nearby streets and hide under cars, it is more of a struggle. “We had one today. They’re not easy to catch because they go from one side to the other side (of the car), but we got it,” said Mashau, who has dedicated the past eight years to working to protect the species. Once caught and placed with care into a cardboard box, the small feathered animals are sent to a specialist hospital for treatment. But conservationists and veterinarians are worried their efforts aren’t sufficient to stop the decline of the African Penguin, listed as critically endangered last month by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). “No matter how much we do, if there isn’t a healthy environment for them, our work is in vain,” said veterinarian David Roberts, who works at the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) hospital. Fewer than 10,000 breeding pairs are left globally, mainly in South Africa, down from 42,500 in 1991, and they could become extinct in the wild by 2035, the BirdLife NGO says. The dwindling numbers are due to a combination of factors including a lack of food, climate change, disturbances, predators, disease, oil spills and more. But the biggest threat is nutrition, says Allison Kock, a marine biologist with the South African National Parks. “So many of the penguins are starving and are not getting enough food to breed successfully,” she said. When penguins do not eat enough, preferably sardines or anchovies, they tend to abandon breeding. Authorities have imposed a commercial fishing ban around six penguin colonies for 10 years starting in January. But SANCCOB and BirdLife say the no-fishing zones are not large enough to have a significant impact, and have sued the environment minister over the issue. — AFP

QUICK FEATURES



FESTIVAL

Children hold candles during the celebrations of the Kalaw fireworks festival in Kalaw township, Myanmar’s Southeastern Shan State. — AFP



FASHION

Anna Wintour arrives for the Burberry catwalk show, during London Fashion Week in London, Britain. — AFP File



ENTERTAINMENT

US record producer Quincy Jones’ daughter, actress and filmmaker Rashida Jones accepts the honorary award for her late father during the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ 15th Annual Governors Awards at the Ray Dolby Ballroom in Los Angeles. —AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Visiting a Historic Site



Waiting for Sunset

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Dinosaur skeleton fetches 6 million euros in Paris sale



The skeleton of a 22-metre-long dinosaur (70 feet) fetched six million euros (\$6.4 million) on Saturday, AFP learned from auction houses Collin du Bodge and Barbarossa.

An anonymous collector snapped up the vegetarian apatosaurus, which was dug up in the United States, for 4.7 million euros rising to 6 million including costs.

The buyer pledged to allow it to be displayed in a museum.

“We are happy that the buyer intends to lend it to an institution,” said Olivier Collin du Bodge.

The skeleton of the giant herbivore is made up of 75 to 80 per cent of the original bones and is roughly 150 million years old.

Auctioneers Barbarossa said on its website that it was “the biggest dinosaur ever sold at auction worldwide”.

Once excavated, the remains were sent to France for two years’ of restoration work at the Paleomooove Laboratory in

Luberon, southeast France.

The giant creature’s skeleton, which weighed around twenty tonnes during its lifetime, spent the summer in Dampierre-en-Yvelines, a chateau some 50 kilometres (30 miles) southwest of Paris, where the sale took place.

The remains of the apatosaurus, nicknamed Vulcan, were discovered in 2018 in Wyoming, the United States, where the law allows individuals to acquire concessions in the hope of excavating prehistoric bones.

Excavations took place between 2019 and 2021, financed by a French investor. The fossil, which includes 300 bones, was then shipped to France to be restored.

Its presale value at auction had been estimated at between three and five million euros.

Under the contract of sale, the future owner undertakes to give palaeontologists access to the dinosaur to study it. — AFP



Late US record producer Quincy Jones appears on screen as he receives an honorary award during the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences’ 15th Annual Governors Awards at the Ray Dolby Ballroom in Los Angeles on Monday. — AFP

Quincy Jones awarded posthumous Oscar

THE LATE Quincy Jones was posthumously awarded an honorary Oscar at an emotional and star-packed Hollywood gala on Sunday that also handed golden statuettes to the producers of the James Bond movie franchise.

US music industry titan Jones died from pancreatic cancer at the age of 91 just two weeks before he was set to receive one of the Academy’s coveted lifetime achievement prizes at the Governors Awards.

His daughter, the actress Rashida Jones, accepted the Oscar, telling the audience that the legendary hitmaker had been “really excited to attend tonight.” “He often said ‘live every day like it’s your last and one day you’ll be right.’ And he did that... the best, most beautiful life,” she said, to a huge ovation.

Jones was best known for producing smash hit records for a who’s who of music industry legends from Frank Sinatra to Michael Jackson.

“Truth is, the man had an equally powerful impact on the world of film,” said actor Jamie Foxx, introducing his award.

Jones produced seminal Hollywood movies including “The Color Purple,” and received multiple

Oscar nominations for film songs and soundtracks including “In Cold Blood” and “The Wiz.” Selena Gomez, Jennifer Lopez and Zoe Saldana were among A-listers holding back tears in the audience as Jennifer Hudson sang a musical tribute.

Hosted by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the swanky black-tie Governors Awards each year honour film industry veterans, many of whom are felt to have not received their dues at the regular Oscars.

The event also offers a chance for stars and studios to court Academy voters — and size up their rivals — as the next Oscars campaigns begin to take shape.

At Sunday’s reception, “Succession” stars Kieran Culkin and Jeremy Strong — campaigning for their news films “A Real Pain” and “The Apprentice” — enjoyed a lengthy catch-up.

Acclaimed Spanish director Pedro Almodovar (“The Room Next Door”) conversed with his exiled Iranian counterpart Mohammad Rasoulof (“The Seed of the Sacred Fig.”) - Bond, James Bond - Daniel Craig -- who stars in this year’s William S. Burroughs adaptation “Queer” -- chatted with friends, his lips firmly

sealed about the identity of his successor as James Bond.

Barbara Broccoli and Michael G. Wilson, the half-siblings who have controlled the beloved 007 espionage franchise since 1995’s “Goldeneye,” were among the honorees on Sunday.

Passed the reins by Broccoli’s film producer father Albert, the duo have overseen several of the Bond series’ biggest-ever movies including the \$1 billion-grossing “Skyfall” in 2012, in which Craig played the suave British spy with a license to kill.

Anticipation continues to swell for the announcement of who will next play the world’s most famous fictional spy.

“Just to get something out the way, we came here this evening to find out who the next James Bond is,” joked Craig, on stage introducing their award.

“Don’t look at me. But he might be in the room,” he added -- before insisting he was joking.

British writer and director Richard Curtis, 68, who created “Notting Hill,” “Bridget Jones’s Diary,” “Love Actually” and “Four Weddings and a Funeral,” received the Jean Hersholt statuette, which is specifically for humanitarian work by a film industry figure. — AFP

‘Red One’ tops N America box office but could end up in the red



AMAZON AND MGM’s new winter holiday film “Red One” opened solidly atop the North American box office this weekend with estimated ticket sales of \$34.1 million, but with a budget estimated at \$250 million analysts say it faces a tricky path to profitability.

“This is a soft opening for a movie that

was designed from the beginning to launch a new Christmas action comedy series,” said analyst David A Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research.

He said the film was a crowd-pleaser but that its \$250 million budget — including a reported \$50 million cost overrun — meant

its opening was “not a disaster but... not enough” to ensure profitability.

The Christmas comedy has Dwayne (“the Rock”) Johnson, as head of North Pole security, enlisting the help of a hacker (Chris Evans) to track down a kidnapped Santa Claus (played by the not-exactly-jolly J.K. Simmons) on Christmas Eve.

“Red One” unseated Sony’s horror movie “Venom: the Last Dance”, which slipped to second, taking in an estimated \$7.4 million in its fourth weekend out.

“Venom,” starring Tom Hardy, has now earned \$127.6 million domestically and \$308 million internationally.

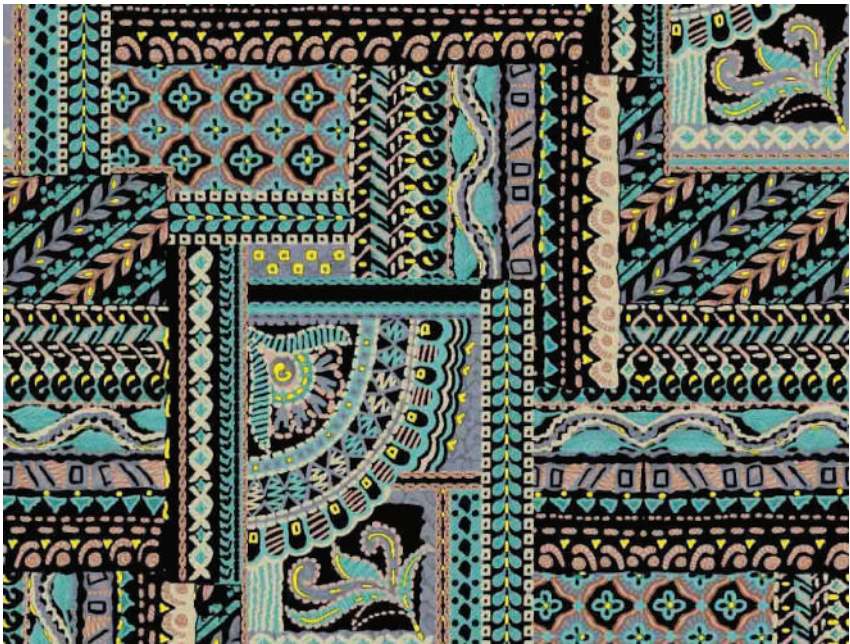
In third place was Lionsgate’s comedy-drama “The Best Christmas Pageant Ever,” at \$5.4 million. Pete Holmes stars in the tale of a notoriously rowdy bunch of siblings who end up giving a surprising performance in a small town’s Christmas show.

A24’s horror movie “Heretic,” which has famous charmer Hugh Grant turning decidedly fiendish, dropped one spot from last weekend to fourth, with ticket sales of \$5.2 million. — AFP



The Fabric Art project is an inspiring entrepreneurial endeavour that merges Islamic architecture with intricate motifs and high-quality artistic fabric designs.

The Fabric Art Initiative: Weaving Heritage into Entrepreneurship



BY SIHAM AL SAIDI

AN AMBITIOUS project is weaving together

heritage, creativity and entrepreneurship. The Fabric Art initiative, founded by art teacher Wujud al Khamisi, brings to life the intricate beauty of Islamic architecture through innovative fabric design. With a team of talented students, Al Khamisi has transformed a classroom lesson into a flourishing business, creating a unique collection of artistic fabrics that reflect Omani culture and resonate with modern design trends.

The Fabric Art project is an inspiring entrepreneurial endeavour that merges Islamic architecture with intricate motifs and high-quality artistic fabric designs. Organised annually by the Fine Arts Department in Al Batinah North, the Creative Industries project nurtures innovative initiatives that transform classroom lessons into real-world applications.

Al Khamisi's project originated from her eleventh-grade Islamic architecture lessons, where she introduced students to the beauty of Islamic motifs, including plant, geometric and calligraphic designs. Building on their growing skills, she encouraged students to leverage these motifs as a means of generating income, inspiring them to transform their artistry into entrepreneurship. Under her guidance, 15 talented students formed a team to create a unique line of fabric products that they promote through a digital platform on social media.

The students developed decorative designs, balancing harmonious and contrasting colours to produce high-resolution digital images using design software. These patterns are printed on various fabrics, including silk, chiffon and cotton, resulting in 150 fabric pieces created thus far. The fabrics have garnered considerable attention for their unique detailing, artistic quality and rarity in the market, making them particularly appealing to modern women.

THE RICH HISTORY OF FABRIC MAKING IN THE ARAB WORLD AND OMAN

Fabric making in the Arab world boasts a rich and diverse history, tracing back thousands of years to ancient civilisations like Mesopotamia and Egypt, which utilised plant fibres and animal hair. During the Islamic Golden Age (8th to 14th centuries), the art of textile production flourished, with innovations in dyeing and weaving techniques. Prominent centres in Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo produced luxurious fabrics adorned with intricate designs, influencing European markets through global trade routes.

In Oman, fabric making has been deeply ingrained in its culture due to maritime trade influences. Traditional techniques, such as Al Bailah weaving, stand out, using vibrant cotton and silk threads to create intricate patterns. Notably, the "Kumma" and the "Bisht" embody



the fusion of textile craftsmanship with Omani identity.

The 18th and 19th centuries saw a rise in the textile industry for both local use and trade as Omani artisans exported handmade fabrics. Today, initiatives to promote traditional craftsmanship alongside modern design are revitalising the sector. Projects like the Fabric Art initiative illustrate how young Omani artisans are innovating while honouring their heritage, continuing the legacy of fabric making in the region.

EMBRACING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Al Khamisi's initiative has received strong community support, propelling her students further into the world of entrepreneurship. The success of Fabric Art has even attracted the attention of renowned Omani textile entrepreneur Sheikha al Khalili, who admired the project's vision and dedication. Impressed by the students' work, Al Khalili offered financial support and proposed purchasing their designs for her textile store.

With robust community backing, Fabric Art continues to design and produce unique fabrics, achieving impressive sales while planning for future expansion, exhibitions and partnerships. Al Khamisi's students' brand is now making its mark in fabric boutiques across Oman. Through this project, Al Khamisi and her students have successfully transformed a lesson into an entrepreneurial venture that celebrates Oman's cultural heritage in every piece they produce.