

O M A N
عمان
D A I L Y

Observer

VOL. 45, NO. 17
PAGES 20 BAISAS 200

SUNRISE 06:31 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR 05:12 AM
DHUHR 12:00 PM
ASR 03:04 PM
MAGHRIB 05:25 PM
ISHA 06:39 PM

Today's edition carries a 4-page supplement, Bangladesh-Oman: Celebrating 50 Years of Friendship and Cooperation

INBRIEF

SAYYID SHIHAB TO PRESIDE OVER MASS WEDDING IN AL SEEB

AL SEEB: A mass wedding ceremony will be held in the Wilayat of Al Seeb on Monday under the auspices of HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, at Al Seeb Sports Stadium. Shaikh Ahmed bin Ali al Shihi, Wali of Al Seeb, said that the mass wedding, supports youth and strengthens the values of solidarity and cooperation among society members. He pointed out that the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to establish the Marriage Fund represent a significant historical milestone in the journey of national development. It is a practical embodiment of His Majesty's wise vision to support youth, facilitate marriage, and build stable families that contribute to strengthening social cohesion.

SHURA, MINISTERS TO DISCUSS DRAFT BUDGET TOMORROW

MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura will host Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, and Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, to discuss the draft state budget for the fiscal year 2026 and the 11th Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030). This was stated by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura. He stated that the council will convene its third and fourth regular sessions of the third ordinary session (2025-2026) of the tenth term on Monday and Tuesday. Al Nadabi added that the minister of finance will review, at the third session, the foundations of the state budget for 2026, estimates of public revenues and expenditures, public debt management, the estimated price of a barrel of oil in the budget, deficit, inflation rates as well as development and investment spending for 2026. **REPORT ON P2**

SRI LANKA FLOODS KILL OVER 150



A man sits on a divider in the middle of a flooded road after heavy rainfall in Kaduwela on the outskirts of Colombo on Saturday. Sri Lanka made an appeal for international assistance as the death toll from heavy rains and floods triggered by Cyclone Ditwah rose to 153, with another 130 reported missing. **REPORT ON P6**

Sayyid Theyazin to lay stone for RO1.7 bn projects

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Monday, will preside over the laying of the foundation stone for the Joud project in Sultan Haitham City and the Yamal city project in Al Manouma.

The move reflects the Sultanate of Oman's attractiveness as a promising regional hub for urban investment. The implementation of these two projects comes within the framework of strengthening investment partnerships and



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth

expanding the presence of international companies in the Omani market. It also reflects the growing confidence of global investors in the Sultanate of Oman's real estate sector.

This trend is in line with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040, which places economic diversification and financial sustainability at the forefront of its pillars. It also focuses on empowering the private sector to lead urban development, expanding the base of quality investments,

and stimulating the construction sector through well-organised urban development projects that enhance the growth of non-oil sectors and strengthen the real estate sector's position as a key contributor to the national economy.

The implementation of the projects comes after the signing of an agreement last May on the sidelines of the 20th Oman Real Estate Conference and Exhibition and Oman Design & Build Week, with an investment value exceeding RO 1.7 billion. **TURN TO P2**

Airbus’ call for A320 check has little impact on traffic

THE SUDDEN requirement to provide software updates for some 6,000 Airbus A320 aircraft has not so far had a severe impact on air traffic, several operators said on Saturday. Some 6,000 Airbus aircraft in the A320 series must be inspected before further operation, the company said on Friday after finding that intense solar radiation may corrupt data critical to the functioning of flight controls.

Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury apologised to airlines and passengers after the surprise recall of more than half of the global A320-family fleet, which recently overtook the Boeing 737 as the industry's most-delivered model.

"I want to sincerely apologise to our airline customers and passengers who are impacted now," Faury posted on LinkedIn.

This was established through an analysis of a "recent event" involving an A320 aircraft, the Toulouse-based manufacturer added in a statement without elaborating.

Airbus worked with aviation authorities to ask airlines to take precautionary protective measures involving software and/or hardware, the company said, adding in many cases, a software update could be carried out quickly from the cockpit.

Some airlines began installing the software update on Friday



A screen displays delays in IndiGo flights at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, India, on Saturday. — Reuters

evening after being notified by the aircraft manufacturer.

Lufthansa began implementing the Airbus measures on Friday evening and a large part of the software updates were carried out during the night and on Saturday morning, a spokesman said.

"No flights are expected to be cancelled by Lufthansa Group airlines due to the situation, but isolated delays over the weekend cannot be ruled out."

British airline Easyjet also said it had already carried out

"the majority" of the updates and that flight operations were running as scheduled, in response to a dpa enquiry on Saturday.

Only three British Airways aircraft were affected, so there should be no restrictions, the PA news agency reported.

British Transport Minister Heidi Alexander said on Friday that only a small number of aircraft were affected and that London airports expected no or only isolated effects on air traffic.

Air France cancelled 35

flights on Friday evening, but expected a quick return to normal operations after a few cancellations on Saturday.

Global airlines scrambled to fix the software glitch that threatened US travel over the busiest weekend of the year.

Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury apologised to airlines and passengers after the surprise recall of 6,000 planes or more than half of the global A320-family fleet, which recently overtook the Boeing 737 as the industry's most-delivered model.

"I want to sincerely apologise to our airline customers and passengers who are impacted now," Faury posted on LinkedIn.

Airlines worked through the night after global regulators told them to remedy the problem before resuming flights.

That appeared to help head off the worst-case scenario and capped the number of flight delays in Asia and Europe. The U.S. will face high demand after the Thanksgiving holiday period. In the United States, however, it came during the day ahead of the busy Thanksgiving holiday travel weekend.

Steven Greenway, CEO of Saudi carrier Flyadeal, said that the recall had hit late in the evening, which had avoided more serious disruption. The airline said it had fixed all 13 affected jets and would resume normal operations by midnight.

— dpa and Reuters

OPEC+ set to hold oil output policy steady amid fears of supply glut

LONDON/MOSCOW: OPEC+ is likely to leave oil output levels for the first quarter of 2026 unchanged at its meetings on Sunday, three delegates from the group said on Saturday, moderating a push to regain market share amid fears of a looming supply glut.

The meeting of OPEC+, which pumps half of the world's oil, comes as oil prices are also under pressure from the prospect of a Russia-Ukraine peace deal. Brent crude closed on Friday near \$63 a barrel, down 15 per cent this year. On

Sunday, eight OPEC+ countries are likely to keep their policy to pause oil output hikes in the first quarter of 2026 unchanged, the three delegates said, following similar comments from others this week. They agreed the pause at their last meeting earlier in November.

PRODUCTION CAPACITY OPEC+, which groups the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies led by Russia, pumps about half the world's oil and has been discussing



for years production capacity figures against which members' output targets are set.

In a separate meeting on Sunday, the full OPEC+ group is expected to agree on a mechanism to assess members' maximum production capacity, sources said this week. OPEC said in May this capacity assessment would be used as a reference for 2027 output baselines.

A series of online meetings is scheduled to begin at 1300 GMT on Sunday. OPEC+ ministers are also expected not to make any changes

to group-wide production targets for 2026, other sources said this week. OPEC+ had been curtailing supplies for years until April when the eight members began to raise production to recover market share. The cuts had peaked in March, amounting to 5.85 million barrels per day, almost 6% of world output, in total. The eight — Saudi Arabia, Russia, the UAE, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Iraq, Algeria and Oman — have raised output targets by around 2.9 million bpd from April to December. — Reuters



Experience Better

Their future starts today!

Change to AWASR, Fastest Internet In Oman

Get Ashel Educational Platform for free!

Unlimited data for all plans





SUBSCRIBE NOW!

WhatsApp

80001000

Website: awasr.om

SHORTTAKES

SHURA TO HOST FINANCE AND ECONOMY MINISTERS ON MONDAY

MUSCAT: *Majlis Ash'shura will host Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, and Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, to discuss the draft state budget for the fiscal year 2026 and the 11th Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030).*

This was stated by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura. He stated that the council will convene its third and fourth regular sessions of the third ordinary session (2025-2026) of the tenth term on Monday and Tuesday.

Al Nadabi added that the minister of finance will review the foundations of the state budget for 2026, estimates of public revenues and expenditures, public debt management, the estimated price of a barrel of oil in the budget, deficit, inflation rates as well as development and investment spending for 2026.

He explained that the Economic and Financial Committee of Majlis Ash'shura studied the draft state budget for 2026 and prepared a comprehensive report on financial and economic indicators, data and forecasts.

The Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura stated that the council will discuss the main pillars of the 11th Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030) during its third session. The minister will review the methodology for preparing the plan, its key aspects, the priorities of economic sectors and development projects, the financial and economic framework and the strategic programmes.

The fourth regular session, to be held on Tuesday, December 2, will be dedicated to discussing and approving the draft law on sports authorities, Al Nadabi said. — ONA

National Day celebrations continue in governorates

FESTIVITIES marking the glorious National Day of Oman echoed across several governorates, as officials, dignitaries and citizens joined together to celebrate the nation's pride, heritage and continued progress under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

In Muscat, Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat, hosted a formal reception attended by their excellencies and highnesses, ambassadors, members of the State and Majlis Ash'shura, senior officials, shaikhs, elders and notable figures of the governorate. Attendees extended heartfelt congratulations on this cherished national occasion, offering prayers for the Sultanate's continued prosperity and stability.

In Dhofar, celebrations took place at the 'Return to the Past' event site in Al Saada, Salalah, under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. The evening featured a national operetta expressing loyalty and unity, alongside artistic performances highlighting the historical journey of the Al Busaid state from its inception to the era of renewed renaissance.

In Musandam, the skies over Khasab were illuminated by a spectacular fireworks display organised by the General Secretariat for National Celebrations. The dazzling colours mirrored the Omani flag, creating a vibrant atmosphere of joy and patriotism as large crowds gathered to witness the festivities.



Gaiety marks National Day celebrations in Muscat. — ONA

In Al Buraimi, National Day activities commenced at Al Buraimi Public Park, attracting enthusiastic public participation. The programme included paragliding shows, traditional arts such as Al Ayyala, theatrical performances, competitions and musical evenings, celebrating Omani identity and cultural pride over four consecutive nights.

Meanwhile, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate observed the occasion through official receptions in various wilayats, including Ibra, Al Mudhaibi, Bidiyah, Al Qabil, Wadi Bani Khalid, Dima W'attayeen and Sinaw. Governors and walis

received well-wishers from government institutions, military and civil sectors, shaikhs, dignitaries and citizens. The celebrations featured speeches, poetry, visual presentations on developmental achievements and traditional Omani arts, along with festive activities such as horse and camel shows.

Across all governorates, the National Day celebrations reflected feelings of loyalty, unity and pride, reinforcing the strong bond between the leadership and the people, and affirming Oman's continued journey towards progress and prosperity. — ONA

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF



7TH EDITION

OMAN

AGROFOOD

Agriculture – Fisheries – Food Exhibition



1 – 3

DEC 2025

Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, Muscat - Oman

11:00 AM – 7:00 PM

REGISTER TO VISIT



ORGANIZED BY

APPROVED BY

GUEST OF HONOR

MAIN SPONSORS

PLATINUM SPONSORS

GOLD SPONSORS

OFFICIAL HOTEL

omanagrofood.com

Investors confidence high in Oman projects

FROM P1

The Joud project spans 2.7 million square metres and offers a smart, sustainable community with over 7,000 diverse residential units. Yamal project occupies 2.2 million square metres with a 1,760-metre beachfront on the Sea of Oman. It features a world-class marina, international hotels, marine activities and more than 6,000 residential and hotel units overlooking the sea and marina. This reflects the confidence of regional and international investors in the Sultanate of Oman's ability to provide an attractive and efficient environment for major urban development projects.

The Joud and Yamal projects represent a significant milestone in the Sultanate of Oman's urban development, achieving a comprehensive economic and social impact by generating direct and indirect job opportunities and boosting investment in the real estate sector through high-quality projects. This partnership embodies the Sultanate of Oman's ability to attract high-quality investments and value-added capital through projects that



The Joud and Yamal projects represent a significant milestone in the Sultanate of Oman's urban development, achieving a comprehensive economic and social impact.



deliver tangible economic and social outcomes. It underscores the Sultanate of Oman's open horizons for global investment and urban development opportunities, underpinned by smart urban planning and a long-term economic

vision.

On Tuesday, Talaat Moustafa Group, the developer of the two projects, in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, will launch sales for the Joud project

in Sultan Haitham City and the Yamal coastal city in Al Manouma. The Joud project offers an integrated residential community featuring diverse housing units, green spaces, integrated service, commercial, recreational, medical and educational facilities as well as social and sports amenities.

Yamal City project is an integrated tourist and residential community that provides a world-class marina, water sports, hotels and various services, and residential units overlooking the sea. — ONA

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الطَّيِّبَةُ اجْعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ ذَاتِ الْإِزَّةِ فَإِنَّ عِبَادِي وَإِعْدَائِي
«صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ»

شكر على تعاز

بقلوب مؤمنة بقضاء الله وقدره
يتقدم

أحمد بن سهيل بن سالم المخيني بهوان
وإخوانه و أولادهم

بخالص الشكر وعظيم الامتنان إلى

المقام السامي لحضرة

صاحب الجلالة السلطان هيثم بن طارق المعظم

حفظه الله ورعا له

وإلى أصحاب السمو والمعالي أفراد الأسرة المالكة الكريمة
وأصحاب المعالي الوزراء والمستشارين والمكرمين أعضاء
مجلس الدولة وأصحاب السعادة أعضاء مجلس الشورى
والعسكريين والولاة والشيوخ وأعيان القبائل والإخوة المواطنين
وكافة من واساهم في مصابهم الجلل من المقيمين من داخل
السلطنة وخارجها سواء بالحضور أو الاتصال أو الإبراق أو النشر بالصحف
او وسائل الاتصال الاجتماعي

وكل من شارك في مواساتنا من داخل السلطنة وخارجها

في وفاة المغفور له بإذن الله تعالى والدنا

الشيخ / سهيل بن سالم المخيني بهوان

سائلين الله العلي القدير ألا يريكم مكروها في عزيز لديكم
وأن يتغمد الفقيد بواسع رحمته ويسكنه فسيح جناته مع الصديقين
والشهداء وحسن أولئك رفيقا.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ إِذَا زَالِيَ إِسْمُكَ يَجْعَلُكَ

SPOTLIGHT

P A R E N T I N G

BALANCING TRADITION AND TECHNOLOGY



SAUD AL ANSARI

PARENTING HAS ALWAYS been at the heart of every Omani home - a reflection of love, responsibility and the values that bind generations together. Nevertheless, as the world changes at lightning speed, raising children today feels like navigating new territory. The digital age, busy lifestyles and changing social structures have redefined what it means to be a parent. In the past, child rearing relied on close-knit families and inherited wisdom. Lessons came naturally through observation - from mothers, grandmothers and the community around them. Today, however, parents find themselves seeking guidance

from countless online sources, parenting blogs and social media advice - a reality both empowering and overwhelming. Fatma al Siyabi, a mother of five, reflects on how parenting has transformed over time. “We learned parenting by watching our mothers and grandmothers. There were no manuals or parenting blogs; we learned through example,” she says with a smile. “Now, we have access to endless information online, but that can also be confusing. Today’s mothers are more informed, but also under more pressure because of social media comparisons and conflicting advice.” Salim al Yarubi, a father of two, says technology is at the centre of modern parenting

“We learned parenting by watching our mothers and grandmothers. There were no manuals or parenting blogs; we learned through example... Now, we have access to endless information online, but that can also be confusing.” **FATMA AL SIYABI,** Mother of five

challenges. “Children now learn from the Internet before they even go to school... They are shaped by influencers we do not know and values we cannot always control. Our role as parents has become more complicated.” He believes that balance is key - not banning technology, but guiding children to use it wisely. “When children understand why we set limits, they’re more likely to respect them out of awareness, not fear,” he says. From the perspective of the younger generation, Farah al Hadi, a university student, sees a shift in the parent-child dynamic. “Our generation doesn’t accept orders without explanation. We want to

understand, not just obey,” she says. “Some parents still use old methods, but we respond better to dialogue and shared understanding.” She believes that today’s strongest families are those built on mutual respect, trust and emotional connection - not strict authority. According to Yasir al Shukaili, a social worker at a public school, the evolution of Omani society has reshaped family life. “In the past, the extended family played a major role in raising children,” he explains. “Today, the families carry that responsibility alone, often under the pressures of modern living and demanding work schedules.” He emphasises the importance of preserving Omani values while adapting

to modern realities. “The real challenge is to raise children who are globally aware yet deeply rooted in their identity,” he says. Between yesterday and today, the tools of parenting may have changed - from bedtime stories under the stars to lessons learned from screens. Yet, the heart of parenting remains the same, to nurture confident, kind and grounded individuals. Parenting in the modern age is no longer just a family duty. It is a shared journey between home, school and community. A journey that requires patience, balance and understanding to raise children who can thrive in a fast-changing world while holding on to the timeless values that define us.

SHORT TAKES



OMAN-TATARSTAN
DISCUSS
COOPERATION

KAZAN: Rustam Minnikhanov, President of the Republic of Tatarstan, received Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, at the Presidential Palace, as part of his visit to the Republic of Tatarstan.

They discussed bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and the importance of advancing development and peace among peoples based on the values of knowledge, understanding and recognition. This comes within the framework of President Rustam Minnikhanov’s chairmanship of the Russia-Islamic World Strategic Vision Group which was established in 2006 with the aim of enhancing Russia’s partnerships with the Islamic world.

The two sides also discussed prospects for cooperation in the fields of endowments and religious affairs, including the care and training of religious human resources, promoting moderate religious discourse, exploring partnerships in endowment investments, and reviewing Omani expertise and opportunities in various fields such as the management of Zakat (Islamic alms), Haj (pilgrimage), mosques, Islamic institutions, among others.

The meeting was attended by Hamood bin Salim al Towaiya, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Russian Federation and non-resident to the Republic of Belarus, and some officials from both sides. — **ONA**

DOCTORS REMOVE
CANCEROUS LIVER
TUMOR FROM CHILD



MUSCAT: An Omani medical team at the Royal Hospital successfully removed an aggressive cancerous tumour from the liver of a three-year-old child in a complicated six-hour operation.

The child had been diagnosed with a large tumour of skeletal muscle cancer type, one of the most aggressive and rapidly spreading types of malignant tumours in children. It originates in muscle tissue and is characterised by its ability to spread to adjacent organs and metastasise to other parts of the body.

In this case, the tumour affected 80 per cent of the liver extending into the abdominal wall and internal organs including the colon.

Dr Al Warith bin Ahmed al Hashimi, Consultant of Liver and Pancreas Surgery and Head of the Organ Transplantation Department at the Royal Hospital, said that preserving the vital functions of the liver and other organs was a top priority in the complex surgery to remove the liver tumour. He added that preserving a small portion of healthy liver tissue was the biggest challenge they faced while preparing for the operation.

He added that the treatment plan began with preoperative chemotherapy to minimise the tumour.

This allowed them to preserve a small portion of the liver, enabling it to regain its functions after the surgery.

He said that during the surgery they relied on meticulous planning using advanced imaging techniques to identify the vital blood vessels supplying the remaining healthy portion. They also closely monitored blood flow and bodily functions in collaboration with the specialised liver surgery anaesthesia team.

Al Hashimi said that advanced techniques were used in the liver resection to minimise bleeding and protect the bile ducts ensuring that the remaining portion of the liver would gradually regain its vital functions after the surgery. — **ONA**

New entry route set for tourist buses at Nizwa souq

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, NOV 29

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has issued a circular informing travel and tourism offices across Oman of a new designated entry route for tourist buses heading to the parking area at Nizwa Souq.

Nizwa Souq, one of Oman’s most visited cultural destinations for both domestic and international tourists, attracts heavy traffic throughout the year. To ease congestion and streamline visitor movement, the ministry has directed tour operators to follow the revised route.

According to the circular, “the new designated route for tourist



The ministry has directed tour operators to follow the revised route.

buses is the road passing beside the Tomb of Imam Al Warith bin Ka’ab.” The southern parking area has now been officially allocated for all tourist buses.

The ministry urged all licensed

travel and tourism offices to comply with the updated route and make necessary adjustments to their tour programmes to ensure smooth traffic flow and prevent congestion at the main entrance of Nizwa

Souq. Located just steps from the iconic Nizwa Fort, the souq comes alive each morning from 5 am with a vibrant mix of sound, scent and colour. It has served as one of the most important trading hubs in Oman — a place where tradition is not only preserved but actively lived.

At sunrise, vendors arrange everything from farm-fresh produce and pottery to pyramids of dates, woven baskets, silver khanjars and jewellery. The souq remains deeply rooted in authenticity, with farmers bringing seasonal harvests such as pomegranates and limes, and craftsmen continuing age-old techniques passed down through families.

New Muscat-Beijing route
boosts tourism prospects

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, NOV 29

OMAN’S Tourism sector is set for a major boost as the first-ever direct flights between Muscat and Beijing launch on Sunday, November 30 — a move expected to significantly increase inbound travellers by cutting flight time by two to three hours.

China Eastern Airlines, one of China’s three major carriers, earlier announced the introduction of the Beijing – Muscat route, marking the first direct air link between the two nations.

The initiative, rolled out in cooperation with Oman Airports, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), and the Chinese Embassy in Muscat, aligns with Oman’s wider strategy to attract more Chinese visitors through targeted campaigns and strengthened partnerships.

The twice-weekly service, operating on Sundays and Wednesdays on an Airbus A330-300 with 299 seats, forms part of Oman’s



The flight will significantly increase inbound travellers by cutting flight time by 2-3 hours.

The new connection will enhance tourism and trade, providing greater convenience for leisure and business travellers

broader 2025 air connectivity strategy.

It complements new routes added this year by Oman Air to European destinations including Rome and Amsterdam.

China Eastern Airlines recently launched a Shanghai-India service, which has already seen strong performance.

Speaking to Observer, Khalid al Azri of MoHT’s Cruise, Golf, Wedding and Charter segment said

the new connection will enhance tourism and trade, providing greater convenience for leisure and business travellers from both countries.

He noted that Oman’s national tourism plan has prioritised China this year, expanding representation through new offices and partnerships with over 80 international travel companies. Promotional efforts include joint marketing campaigns, participation in global tourism exhibitions, and collaborations with regional and international airlines.

Oman welcomed 1.14 million international arrivals in the first half of 2025 — a 9.2 per cent year-on-year increase. The Sultanate of Oman aims to build on this momentum to attract 10 million visitors annually by 2040, generating US\$15 billion in tourism revenue. In 2024, more than 73,000 Chinese tourists visited Oman, according to a report on the country’s global tourism outreach.

“With this new direct route, we expect a strong surge in bilateral travel and for tourism to take centre stage in supporting national priorities,” Al Azri added.

Diplomatic hike marks Oman National Day

MUSCAT: On the occasion of National Day, the Embassies of Nepal and the People’s Republic of China in Muscat jointly organised a ‘Diplomatic Hiking’ event along the scenic Mutrah-Riyam trail. The hike took place on Friday, November 28.

Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal, and Lyu Jian, Ambassador of China, led the group, which included their spouses, embassy officials, media representatives, and Omani friends.

The collaboration highlighted the strong and enduring friendship between the two nations and their deep respect for Oman.

In addition to strengthening diplomatic ties, the event carried an important environmental message.

Participants collected plastic bottles and other waste along the trail, underscoring a shared commitment to environmental conservation.

The Embassies noted that this initiative was a



The collaboration highlighted the strong and enduring friendship between China and Nepal and their respect for Oman.

meaningful way to celebrate National Day — promoting goodwill, tourism, and a collective appreciation of nature.

The Ambassadors expressed their gratitude to all participants for their enthusiastic involvement and conveyed their intention to organise similar activities in the future.

They also extended appreciation to the Foreign Ministry for coordinating with local authorities to ensure the availability of an ambulance throughout the hike.

EMBASSY OF PAKISTAN
MUSCAT

TENDER NOTICE

The Embassy of Pakistan Muscat invites sealed bids for provision of services including typing of various applications, printing and photocopying of documents and supply of food items in the Embassy premises. The bidding process will be based on SINGLE-STAGE, TWO ENVELOPE whereby interested companies will submit their technical and financial proposals in two separate envelopes at the same time. Bidding documents outlining the criteria for technical and financial proposals can be collected from the office of the Head of Chancery, Pakistan Embassy Muscat from 1st December 2025 to 21st December 2025 from 10AM to 4PM upon depositing bid security (non-refundable) of OMR 50/-.

The technical bids will be opened in the office of the Head of Chancery on 22nd December 2025 at 11AM. The financial bids of only technically qualified companies will be opened in the office of the Head of Chancery on 22nd December 2025 at 4PM.

For information and queries: +968-24600186

WORLD

SHORT TAKES



A firefighter steps out of a house that went up in flames after attacks on Kyiv. — Reuters

UKRAINIAN OFFICIALS HEAD TO US FOR PEACE TALKS

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that a delegation headed by security council secretary Rustem Umerov was on its way to the United States to continue talks on an agreement to end Russia’s war. Umerov has been put in charge of the Ukrainian delegation after the previous lead negotiator, Zelensky’s powerful chief of staff Andriy Yermak, resigned on Friday hours after anti-corruption detectives searched his apartment. Zelensky said he expected that the results of previous meetings with the US in Geneva, which took place last weekend, would now be “hammered out” on Sunday. Those meetings allowed Ukraine to present a counter-offer to proposals laid out by US Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll to leaders in Kyiv almost two weeks ago. “Rustem delivered a report today, and the task is clear: to swiftly and substantively work out the steps needed to end the war,” Zelensky wrote on X. Meanwhile, Russia is making incremental gains on the front line and Ukrainian cities suffer hours of blackouts every day due to a rolling bombardment of its power grid. — Reuters

PROTESTS FORCE DELAY TO GERMAN YOUTH CONGRESS



The police use water cannons to disperse protesters in Giessen, western Germany. — AFP

GIESSEN: A meeting to launch the new youth wing of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) was delayed on Saturday for more than two hours as protesters blocked access to the venue. Thousands of anti-AfD protesters began descending on the central town of Giessen near Frankfurt from the early morning, with police also out in force. The meeting had been due to start at 1000 local time but only got underway after 1200, accompanied by audible whistles, drums and chants from the protesters outside. One of the protest organisations, “Resist”, said that it blocked several routes towards the meeting and had gathered 15,000 people. The party’s co-leader Alice Weidel condemned those who had caused “chaos” outside and said those gathered in the hall were “the new generations of the party”. The anti-immigration AfD became Germany’s main opposition at February’s general election in which it won a record score of over 20 per cent and hopes to make further gains at state elections next year in its eastern heartlands. — AFP

MIGRATION CONTROL

Peru declares state of emergency



Peru’s government declared a state of emergency at its southern border with Chile. Under the decree, Peru’s military will reinforce border control in the southern Tacna region for 60 days. The state of emergency will also serve “to address crime and other situations of violence” in the border area. “The Peruvian National Police will maintain control of internal order, with support from the Armed Forces,” according to the order. — AFP

BLACK SEA TANKER THAT SUSTAINED BLAST HIT AGAIN

ISTANBUL: Türkiye’s transport ministry said one of two empty oil tankers hit by blasts in the Black Sea had been struck again early on Saturday, blaming an unmanned sea vehicle. “The Virat, which was previously said to have been attacked by unmanned maritime vehicles approximately 35 nautical miles off the Black Sea coastline, was attacked again by unmanned maritime vehicles early this morning,” the ministry said on X. It said the tanker sustained only

“minor damage” on the starboard side and that none of the 20-strong crew were hurt. On Friday evening, Türkiye’s transport ministry said two empty oil tankers, the Virat and the Kairos, had reported explosions but sustained no casualties, saying they had been struck in Turkish waters but without saying what had caused the blasts. The ministry’s post was the first official confirmation that the Virat was attacked by drones. Türkiye said the Kairos was

en route to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk where a major Russian oil terminal halted operations early on Saturday after being hit by a naval drone attack, the consortium that owns the terminal said. The terminal, part of which sustained “significant damage”, is a major conduit for Kazakh oil, the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) said. The blast struck the Kairos around 1500 GMT on Friay, with rescuers evacuating its 25 crew members after a fire broke out. — AFP

Sri Lanka cyclone toll hits 153 with heavy flooding

SRI LANKA declared a state of emergency on Saturday and appealed for international assistance as the death toll from heavy rains and floods triggered by Cyclone Ditwah rose to 153, with another 176 reported missing. The extreme weather system has destroyed more than 15,000 homes, sending 78,000 people to state-run temporary shelters, the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) said. At least 153 people have been killed in Sri Lanka after landslides and flooding caused by Cyclone Ditwah, officials said, with 191 others missing and more than half a million affected nationwide. More than 78,000 people have been moved to nearly 800 relief centres, mostly set up in schools, the Disaster Management Centre said. Thousands of police, navy personnel and army troops are distributing food, clearing roads and moving trapped families to safety. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake invoked emergency laws, granting him sweeping powers to deal with the devastation after a week of torrential rain across the island. The military rescued 69 bus passengers on Saturday, including a German tourist, who were marooned in the Anuradhapura district after a 24-hour operation involving a helicopter and naval boats. One of the passengers, speaking to reporters at a local hospital, said navy sailors had helped them climb onto the roof of a nearby home after using ropes to help them safely wade through flood waters. “We were very lucky... while we were on



Flood-affected people evacuate after heavy rainfall in Wellampitiya on the outskirts of Colombo. — AFP

More than 78,000 people have been moved to nearly 800 relief centres, mostly set up in schools. Thousands of police, navy personnel and army troops are distributing food, clearing roads and moving trapped families to safety

the roof, a part of it collapsed... three women fell into the water, but they were helped back onto the roof,” Shantha said. A helicopter had to abort an initial rescue attempt as the downdraft from the rotors threatened to blow away the roof they were perched on, he said. They were later rescued by naval boats. Roads in the central district of Badulla remained inaccessible, leaving many villages cut off and relief supplies unable to get through. “We lost two people in our village... others are sheltering at a temple and a house that is still standing,” said Saman Kumara from the village of Maspanna in Badulla, one of the worst-affected districts. Cyclone Ditwah moved away from the island on Saturday and was heading towards neighbouring India to the north. India’s Chennai

Airport has cancelled 54 flights in view of the cyclone’s approach, with the weather department forecasting extremely heavy rainfall and strong winds over the next 48 hours. Fresh landslides hit the central district of Kandy, 115 kilometres east of Colombo, with the main access road underwater at several locations. The flooding in Malwana and other low-lying areas near Colombo has left most homes underwater and without power, authorities said. Meteorological authorities have forecast continued rains over the weekend, raising fears of further flooding in already waterlogged regions. Some residents opted to remain in the upper floors of partially submerged homes, protecting their belongings. Local businesses, including pharmacies, supermarkets and fabric shops are inundated, heightening concerns over financial losses as shop owners worry about long-term recovery. The government has issued an appeal for international help and asked Sri Lankans abroad to make cash donations to support affected communities. Officials said Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya had met Colombo-based diplomats to update them on the situation. India was the first to respond, sending two plane loads of relief supplies, while an Indian warship already in Colombo on a previously planned goodwill visit donated its rations to help victims. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his condolences over the loss of lives in Sri Lanka and said New Delhi was ready to send more aid. — Agencies



ISRAELI ATTACK KILLS TWO CHILDREN IN GAZA

KHAN YUNIS: An Israeli attack killed two children in Gaza on Saturday, medics and relatives said, in violence that has persisted in the Palestinian enclave despite a fragile ceasefire. The children’s uncle said an Israeli drone fired on Fadi and Goma Abu Assi, brothers aged 10 and 12, while they were gathering firewood to help their wheelchair-bound father east of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza. “They are children...what did they do? They do not have missiles or bombs, they went to gather wood

for their father so he can start a fire,” Mohamed Abu Assi said as their funeral took place. At the funeral, the children’s father wept over the body of one of the boys whose white shroud had been peeled back to show his face. At least 354 Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas went into effect on October 10. Israel says three of its soldiers have been killed by militants’ gunfire in that time. The level of violence has reduced since the ceasefire, but Israel has continued to strike Gaza. — Reuters

LOST IN TRAGEDY

Hong Kong mourns 128 blaze victims



Hong Kong on Saturday mourned the 128 people known to have died in a massive fire at a high-rise apartment complex, a toll that is likely to rise with 150 still missing days after the disaster. Authorities have arrested 11 people in connection with the city’s worst blaze in nearly 80 years as they investigate possible corruption and the use of unsafe materials during renovations at the Wang Fuk Court complex. — Reuters

CHRONIC DROUGHT

Greece puts capital on water emergency



Greece has put the greater Athens area and two islands on a water emergency footing, to speed up infrastructure works and address the mounting threat of chronic drought. The environment ministry announced the move, which also covers the islands of Patmos and Leros, as the capital city’s water reserves have been falling by approximately 250 million cubic metres per year since 2022. The decision “prioritises the implementation of critical infrastructure projects”. — AFP

The New York Times

How lunar photography brought heavens down to Earth



JASON FARAGO

The author is writing about culture and its place in the wider world

In the low-grade lens of the TV cameras, between 1969 and 1972, the men who walked the moon were transmogrified into low-gravity Cold Warriors. National heroes, in one view. Interplanetary conquistadors, in another. But the astronauts were not only explorers. They were also photographers. Visual documentation was a central task of the Apollo missions. And the images made by the men on the moon were research endeavours, not mere public relations.

This past summer Jim Lovell — who flew on Apollo 8, the first successful crewed orbit of the moon, and then commanded the abortive Apollo 13 — died at age 97. The number of living men (all men, all Americans) who have reached the moon is now only five. I’ve found myself recently drawn to astronomy — to its models and conjectures, its fuzzy borders. To its millenniums-long marriage of the sciences and the arts. To its photographs, above all. A dozen cameras are strewn, still today, on the lunar surface: abandoned, so Apollo’s astronaut-photographers could lighten their load for the return voyages.

The photos these astronauts produced are astonishing. Also mundane. Some are astonishing because they’re mundane. Images of an alien world that is already familiar. Dust and moondust. And to me they express how art and science, together, in consonance, allow us to reckon with things we haven’t yet seen. Things we don’t understand. Step by step, through models and risks, to new horizons or dead ends.

John Glenn became the first American to take a picture beyond Earth, in 1962 — although, in that early stage of the space race, photography was still just an astronaut’s recreation. Glenn went into orbit with a point-and-shoot Minolta he bought in a Florida drugstore. The very first colour photographs from space, to speak only aesthetically, were not so different from the blurry souvenirs we all shoot from the window of a Boeing 767.

Initially, photography in space was discouraged for geopolitical reasons. Snapping selfies in orbit might be seen as an act of Cold War espionage. But through the mid-1960s, as weather satellites and lunar probes beamed back images of our world and others, photography secured its place as a spaceman’s art. Apollo 13 astronauts Lovell and Fred Haise undertook rigorous testing at the Nevada Test Site and in Hawaiian lava fields. They used custom Hasselblad cameras, functional in extreme temperatures, with extra-large buttons you could push even through a moonsuit glove.

The first photograph taken on the surface of the moon was by Neil Armstrong, for Apollo 11 in 1969. A shockingly well-composed picture. The lunar module Eagle’s leg is near dead centre. A bag of waste is perfectly jettisoned to one side. During their camera training, it became evident that Armstrong had a better eye than Buzz Aldrin. Which meant he was the one taking most of the pictures during the mission. Armstrong took more than 100 photographs. I’d happily

Initially, photography in space was discouraged for geopolitical reasons. Snapping selfies in orbit might be seen as an act of Cold War espionage. But through the mid-1960s, as weather satellites and lunar probes beamed back images of our world and others, photography secured its place as a spaceman’s art

claim, in fact, that he authored one of the last century’s signal works of American portraiture: his head-on view of Aldrin, legs contrapposto like a Greek statue, in the southwest of the Sea of Tranquillity.

For two millennia before blastoff, astronomy belonged as much to the realms of art, philosophy and religion as it did to what we moderns call science. In Greece, in Rome, in classical Arabia, investigations of planets and stars were no dry matters of numbers and vectors. The movement of heavenly bodies manifested a divine or mathematical order.

The proof of that order was its beauty, the elegance of its internal structure. No celestial body had as much cultural and aesthetic significance as the moon: another world, visible with the naked eye, which structured the calendar and the rites of just about every ancient civilisation. In the Renaissance, humanistic scientists brought a new empirical veracity to the study of the heavens. Yet astronomy, even then, did not lose its aesthetic aspect.

Science entwined with art in the early 17th century, when Galileo — Galileo Galilei, an artist! — made historic ink wash drawings of half a dozen moonphases. Like many other Renaissance men, Galileo had been trained in perspectival drawing. He knew the fundamentals of chiaroscuro: the modulation of lights and darks that let him capture the pocked lunar surface he saw with his new telescope. Galileo from his campanile and Armstrong from his lunar module.

France creates military service as Europe faces Russian threat



SÉGOLÈNE LE STRADIC

The writer is a New York Times reporter, researcher covering France

FRANCE Announced the creation of a paid, voluntary military service for young adults, becoming the latest European country to beef up its armed forces in the face of perceived threats from Russia since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The move sharpened a growing debate in France, which has enjoyed decades of stability since the end of World War II, about how to prepare a population no longer accustomed to war for a new era of increased military peril. The announcement by French President Emmanuel Macron came days after the French army chief set off a national uproar for saying that the country must accept the possible loss of its children in a potential future conflict.

“There is a generation ready to stand up for their country, and our military is the natural outlet for this desire to serve,” Macron said in a speech at a mountain infantry base in Varcès-Allières-et-Risset, a small town in the French Alps, in southeastern France. “In this uncertain world where force prevails over law and war is a reality, our nation cannot be afraid, ill-prepared or divided,” he added. France, where military conscription was eliminated in 1997, is following in the footsteps of other European countries that were alarmed by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and that have accused the Kremlin of waging “hybrid warfare” against them.

Croatia restored conscription this year, nearly two decades after abolishing it. In Poland, there are efforts to make a form of military training available for every adult man. Denmark has begun drafting women. In Germany, parliament is set to debate a bill to increase military recruitment. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, former Soviet states, all have variations of a draft. While Macron did not explicitly mention Russia in his speech, he said that “at a time



Residents stand on the sidewalk to honor two fallen Ukrainian soldiers in Lviv, Ukraine.

when all our European allies are moving forward in the face of a threat that weighs on us all, France cannot remain immobile.” A poll published by Odoxa, a polling firm, on Thursday found that 79 per cent of French people approved of the voluntary military service, and some politicians supported the idea. But others are reluctant to push France closer to a war footing, after decades of relative calm and prosperity that have conditioned generations of French to the rhythms of peacetime life.

“The president has nothing better to offer young people than to prepare them to die for his wars,” Manon Aubry, a lawmaker in the European Parliament for the far-left France Unbowed party, said on social media. She criticised the monthly stipend that volunteers will receive — 800 euros, according to French news media — for being “less than the minimum wage.”

The voluntary service is expected to last 10 months,

The announcement by French President Emmanuel Macron came days after the French army chief set off a national uproar for saying that the country must accept the possible loss of its children in a potential future conflict

including one month of training. As well as the stipend, volunteers will receive uniform and gear, Macron said — but they will not be deployed abroad.

He did not give a specific age limit but he said he hoped the bulk of volunteers would be 18 or 19 years old. At the end of their service, volunteers will be able to join the active army or the military reserve. Macron said that parliament could make the service mandatory in the event of a major crisis, but he insisted that would be exceptional.

France’s army, with 200,000 active personnel and about 45,000 reservists, hopes to enrol 3,000 volunteers next year and 50,000 over the next decade. Echoing previous comments by top French military officials, Gen.

Fabien Mandon, the French army chief, warned a gathering of mayors this month that Russia appeared to be preparing for a confrontation as soon as 2030. Local officials should spread the word and encourage young people

to enlist, he added. “We have all the knowledge, all the economic and demographic strength to dissuade the Moscow regime from trying its luck further afield,” he said.

But what France lacks, he added, is “the spirit that accepts that we will have to suffer to protect what we are.” If the country “wavers because we are not ready to accept losing our children,” then “we are, indeed, at risk,” he said.

Some politicians criticised Mandon for being unnecessarily alarmist and belligerent. Macron defended him in a radio interview this week, arguing that his comments had been distorted and that French people were not about to be sent to fight in Ukraine.

Even some of Macron’s critics agreed with that idea. “Suggesting that an entire nation is committed to its defence is an important element of deterrence at a time when deterrence needs to be restored,” Olivier Faure, the head of the Socialist Party, said.

OPINION

The amazing world of twins



DR HAMED AL SINAWI

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at SQU Hospital

HAVE recently travelled on a holiday to Vietnam with my twin sons. It was a great opportunity to enjoy nature, learn about Vietnamese culture and heritage, and equally, get to know my sons a little more. I found myself observing them with renewed curiosity. Who among them was the strategic thinker who immediately came up with a plan B when our programme was interrupted by the heavy rains? And who had the best negotiation skills when buying souvenirs at the local markets?

Psychologists have always been fascinated with twins. They share the same genes, the same home, the same upbringing, and — often — the same school environment.

In many cultures, twins are often treated as one person, starting from giving them rhyming names to dressing them in the same outfit, sometimes even calling them twins instead of using each name, this can have negative impact to the personal development of the twin causing at times sever identity crises, yet many twins are able to carve out their own identities as a way of differentiating themselves and asserting individuality.

During our trip, I noticed small but significant differences. One of my sons was the natural negotiator — he could charm his way through a delayed flight, a missed tour, or a change of plans with surprising social ease. The other was the problem solver — quick to look up alternative routes, rearrange our schedule, and keep morale high whenever things went off track. Watching them navigate unfamiliar streets, bargain in busy markets, and make sense of new cultural experiences made me appreciate how twins often complement one another like two halves of a whole.

Psychologists refer to this as “complementary differentiation” where each twin instinctively occupies a role the other does not. Sometimes one takes on the part of the leader while the other becomes the observer. In other pairs, one may be more adventurous while the other is cautious. Rather than competing, they create a natural balance that strengthens their bond and allows them to function effortlessly as a team.

The trip also reminded me of another fascinating psychological insight: twins

Twins share the same genes, the same home, and the same upbringing, yet they frequently develop distinct personalities and social behaviour

often develop a unique communication style known as cryptophasia, or “twin talk.” Even though my sons are long past childhood, I could still see traces of this special connection. A glance was enough for them to understand each other’s moods; a short phrase, incomprehensible to outsiders, triggered laughter between them. It is as if they share an emotional shorthand built over years of shared experiences.

But perhaps the most meaningful part of this journey was realising how important it is for parents to see twins as individuals, not as a package deal. Travelling allowed me to appreciate their distinct strengths, fears and aspirations. It reminded me that even though twins may share a birthday, they do not necessarily share the same dreams.

Our short holiday gave us beautiful memories, but it also offered something deeper: a chance to understand the psychology of twins in real time and to appreciate the fact that twins have individual dreams and aspirations, and we should encourage them to complement each other rather than compete with one another.

CANADA PM UNDER FIRE FOR ALLEGED CLIMATE U-TURN

GENEVIÈVE NORMAND

Critics accuse Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney of betraying the fight against climate change. Others say he is facing reality and has no choice but to boost polluting sectors that are vital to an economy being punished by US President Donald Trump’s trade war.

But there is no dispute that since replacing former prime minister Justin Trudeau in March, Carney has repositioned his Liberal Party on the environment. Immediately after taking office, Carney scrapped Trudeau’s unpopular carbon tax on individuals.

He then launched a Major Projects Office to fast-track initiatives he said would strengthen Canada’s economic sovereignty, creating a bulwark against the impacts of Trump’s tariffs.

Mining and natural gas projects — criticised by some environmental advocates — were among the early picks.

But the most dramatic development came on Thursday, when Carney struck a deal with the conservative-led energy-producing Alberta province to advance a new oil pipeline, while increasing overall oil and gas production.

“Canada and Alberta are striking a new partnership to build a stronger, more sustainable, and more independent Albertan and Canadian economy,” Carney said.

“We will make Canada an energy superpower, drive down our emissions and diversify our export markets.”

The deal marked a clear pivot for Carney’s Liberal Party and a departure from the policies that defined Trudeau’s decade in power.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, who loathed Trudeau’s policies, said this month that “the tone of federal government has done a 180 in the last year.”

Steven Guilbeault, a member of Carney’s cabinet, who was also Trudeau’s environment minister, agreed.

He resigned on Thursday, hours after the pipeline deal was signed.

Guilbeault said he entered politics “to champion the fight against climate change,” but that key green policies he implemented with Trudeau were being “dismantled” under Carney.

Carney, a former central banker, worked on climate issues before joining politics in January, but has emphasised market-driven solutions to environmental challenges.

In 2019, he became a UN envoy focused on mobilising public and private finance to help achieve the goals of the Paris Accords.

He then joined the massive Canadian multinational firm Brookfield, steering private capital to aid climate action. — AFP

Why schools must train students to question AI

THE INTERNET and AI, now hailed by many as humanity’s greatest tools for knowledge and connection, are quietly eroding our ability to think critically. What was meant to enlighten us has begun to dull our minds.

People, and children especially, are mistaking the consumption of information for genuine learning. It’s easier for children to believe short social media videos containing dubious facts produced by AI than develop the habit of questioning and reasoning for themselves. Today, opinions voiced by celebrities and television pundits are treated as more credible than the carefully considered views of well-qualified experts. This shift is not a harmless trend; it is intentional and is reshaping how societies think.

Many find it more comfortable to follow the herd, to conform rather than to think independently. The result is a generation of unquestioning, unthinking conformists. This outcome is no accident. Large corporations exploit the Internet’s influence, convincing people to buy products they do not need. Extremist groups use the same tools to sow division and manipulate public opinion. In this environment, truth becomes secondary to persuasion and emotional appeal replaces rational thought. Neurological research supports this concern. Scientists have discovered that when people stop engaging in deep, critical thinking, the brain physically rewires itself to accommodate this new, passive way of receiving information. Knowledge alone does not make a person intelligent. True intelligence requires questioning, reflection and the ability to form independent judgements. The Internet, by overwhelming us with endless streams of information, distracts us from developing these essential faculties.

To protect the integrity of human thought, the use of the Internet must be redefined. It should serve



A responsible state should guide citizens towards truth, not by limiting their ability to discover the truth.



KARIM EASTERBROOK

The writer is a Former Cambridge School Principal and Author

only as a tool for genuine research and direct communication through email or text. Certain forms of social media should be banned, as they have become breeding grounds for manipulation and disinformation. Extremist political propaganda that incites division and hatred should be criminalised and it must be a punishable offence to create or share false statements or videos containing medical falsehoods which may be harmful.

In education, the Internet’s role should be carefully limited. Schools should use it solely for accessing information from reputable sources — qualified doctors, scientists and philosophers whose work has been verified and reviewed independently. Children must be taught not merely to absorb information but to question it, to weigh evidence and to think independently. If societies continue down their current path, the consequences will be grave.

A world without critical thinkers will be a world without innovation, without progress and without

freedom. Restricting the Internet may seem drastic, but it may be the only way to preserve what truly makes us human: our capacity to think, to reason and to seek truth. The unrestricted rapid development of AI adds to the serious danger the Internet poses for the future education of our children and mankind. When AI and the Internet put forward “facts”, schools should teach their children to ask, “Who is telling me this and why?”, “What evidence supports this claim?” and finally, “What opposing views exist?” This is the basis of true learning, true education and the development of essential critical thinking.

However, the challenge lies in ensuring that any restrictions do not become another form of control. A responsible state should guide citizens towards truth, not by limiting their ability to discover the truth. This balance depends on transparency, open discussion and the protection of independent voices. Only then can information serve rather than dictate.

The leisure destination, where ‘beauty has an address’



RAY PETERSEN
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

WHERE are the best leisure holiday destinations around the world today? I guess it very much depends on who is going, doesn't it? Maybe just two of you, a couple? Maybe a family? Maybe a group of friends? Or on a hen or stag trip.

Hen and stag trips are when a soon-to-be-married, bride-to-be, or groom-to-be, takes a 'posse' of friends for a trip away, where they let their hair down and do stupid, foolish, and crazy things. It's meant to be a 'last hurrah', of sorts, before they each lose their so-called 'freedom', as a singleton.

They have evolved to going to the next town to 'play up', which usually meant they got a little bit more, well, raucous. However, as the younger set have gotten more footloose, they now tend to go international.

The young men seem to go to Ibiza where they can dance and party all night, sleep most of the day, have a swim and then party again before pressing replay and doing it all again for another couple of nights. One of them will fall asleep and get his eyebrows shaven off or be left to sleep in too late and miss his flight home, either giving the 'lads' a story to tell for years. The more mature stag groups tend to go to Sofia or Prague, where they

will drink and eat to excess, swap age-old stories, and have a great time having spent well, but without the dancing! The girl's hen party destinations sometimes feature Ibiza according to travel agents, but they tend to prefer places with a bit more 'class', with Barcelona, Majorca and Marbella more to their taste. You will know who's on a hen party trip because they usually all dress the same way, with cowgirl outfits, Pink, Mama Mia, Cheerleader, Spice Girls, Barbie, even pyjama themed outfits. While they are away, they party, just like the guys, but without the eyebrows... Again, the more mature set will usually aim for London, Paris, or Dubai. They tend to prefer more 'elegant', more lazy destinations, with more than a touch of class.

Families still get hooked on Disneyland. I guess it must be a 'rite of passage', to do it once, to Disneyland Paris, California, or Florida. If fairground rides, noise and standing in queues are your thing, and happy with how deeply your pockets will be gouged, and you can handle that, go.

Kids love it, trains, merry-go-rounds, Ferris wheels, bungies, popcorn, hotdogs, candy, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Finding Nemo... what's not for them to like. Just remember, it costs a whole lot more to get out

Where else delivers camels, turtles, blue seas, sandy beaches, castles, forts, and sunshine, culture, traditions, and activities like surfing, diving, fishing, mountaineering, dune bashing and so much more...

than to get in, so, take your credit card! And then there's just the two of you.

Couples love Paris of course; it is the most romantic of cities. The old-world charm of Dubrovnik, the beaches of Belize, the Galapagos Islands and the Iguazu Falls are becoming more popular every year, according to leading travel agents.

Or you could step back in time, and take in the sights, sounds and experiences of Oman, dwelling on its history, meeting its wonderful, respectful people, and every night revelling in the luxury accommodation, dining at a table fit for Kings and Queens, safe and secure.

Visit Masirah Island, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Nizwa, trek to Salalah, or take in the Wave in Muscat, among a hundred beautiful holiday destinations in Oman. Where else delivers camels, turtles, blue seas, sandy beaches, castles, forts, and sunshine, culture, traditions, and activities like surfing, diving, fishing, mountaineering, dune bashing and so much more... There is, in my eyes, no other destination with so much going for it, not, of course as a hen and stag destination, but Oman, for couples and families, is the amazing Jewel of the Gulf, where "beauty has an address."

Hong Kong’s bamboo scaffolding under scrutiny after fatal fire

TOMMY WANG AND YAN ZHAO

Dozens of deaths in an inferno at a Hong Kong residential estate have ignited debate over the role the city’s quintessential bamboo scaffolding played in the fire’s spread, as the government promised to phase it out.

Hong Kong is one of the world’s last remaining cities to use the frames for modern construction and building repair, a practice which dates back centuries in China and other parts of Asia.

The eight high-rises of Wang Fuk Court had been undergoing major renovations since last year, and were criss-crossed by lattices of bamboo and green protective netting when the fire took hold on Wednesday afternoon.

Hong Kong’s government said on Friday that falling bits of bamboo had helped spread the fire, after saying the day before that it was “imperative to expedite” a transition to metal scaffolding throughout the city for safety reasons.

Some locals have fiercely defended the practice of using bamboo, accusing the government of scapegoating and taking others to task over what they view as orientalist attitudes towards a long-renowned Hong Kong craft.

“This is a really complicated multifaceted problem,” Anwar Orabi, a civil engineer specialising in fire safety at the University of Queensland, said.

“The bamboo, or rather the entire scaffolding, was on fire... It is not the only contributor... but is very likely a component of it.” Preliminary findings suggest the fire started on protective netting outside the lower floors of one building, and quickly spread upwards thanks to “highly flammable” foam boards, security chief Chris Tang said.The foam boards were attached to windows, shattering the glass and causing the fire “to intensify and spread indoors”, he added.

The intense heat set the bamboo alight, and sticks of it broke off and fell to the floors below, meaning the fire spread further, he said.

Bamboo scaffolding is versatile and sustainable. It is readily available from southern China and can be cheaply transported, set up and dismantled in tight spaces.

Industry representatives estimated in January that nearly 80 per cent of Hong Kong’s scaffolds were made of bamboo, and there are thought to be around 3,000 practitioners in the city.

The city’s number-two official Eric Chan said on Thursday that “despite its long history of use... (bamboo’s) fire resistance remains inferior to that of metal scaffolding”. The government announced plans in March to drive wider adoption of the latter to improve safety.

Surveying the blackened buildings, Ho Wing-ip, an engineering professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, said both metal and bamboo scaffolding could withstand flames for a short time.

Ho Ping-tak, chairman of a bamboo scaffolders’ union, told a morning radio programme that bamboo alone is “hard to ignite”, and called for the government to strengthen requirements for flame-retardant materials. — AFP

A broken reader: How I found way back to books

ANYONE Who’s published a book or tried to has had even indispensable friends and family tell them why they’re not going to read it. Fair enough. We all have our own tastes and daily pressures. Also, the Internet requires our constant attention — it’s not going to unravel human society by itself. Eventually, you only half-listen to the apologies from non-readers, like when a flight attendant explains how a seatbelt works. About 10 years ago, though, someone surprised me.

I had sent a book I’d written to Susan Dennard, a best-selling fantasy writer whose brain, novels and newsletter I envied. We were just acquaintances, and I was fishing for favors, but she emailed back graciously: She’d find ways to support my novel but couldn’t crack it open herself because the ability to enjoy books had deserted her. “I am a broken reader,” she said. It was the first time I saw those words next to each other. In all honesty, my immediate thought was, “She really does not want to read my novel.”

Then, in 2022, the reader in me snapped in half. Over the years, I thought I’d perfectly isolated what I needed from a novel: some insight into why human beings can’t get out of their own way, a plot but not a cop show, and lyrical but not showoffy writing. Something fancy “without being schmancy,” to borrow an old Lorrie Moore line. But suddenly, I couldn’t finish even half a book. Any book. Nothing held me. Everything annoyed me. Cilantro now tasted like soap.

All this was destabilising because my sense of self and my understanding of the world has largely come courtesy of books. When I was a kid I was an introvert, and if I showed you what my hair looked like in my teens, you’d question the existence of a benevolent god. I carried books everywhere: They were a comfort and a shield. At the time I broke, I had a weakness for novels narrated by women — often mothers — who got trampled by life or love. I fixated on the unexpected poetry of the sentences so much that I sometimes wished I could shrink down and walk around inside them. I don’t have the acreage here to quote the entirety of



JEFF GILES

The writer is a novelist and the former executive editor of Vanity Fair

Drive out every other thought before you begin so that you can “grant yourself legitimately this youthful pleasure of expectation.”

Jenny Offill’s “Dept. of Speculation” or “The Friend” by Sigrid Nunez, so here’s a tiny, austere beautiful paragraph from “Loved and Missed” by Susie Boyt: “That summer it rained funerals. ‘They’re not as bad as weddings,’ Jean said. ‘At least the damage is already done.’” Welcome to my vibe.

It took weeks for me to realize that I was a broken reader. I assumed I’d just had a streak of bad luck in the Dept. of Picking. I started taking fewer chances. I bought only books that looked like books I would buy. This backfired in a kind of horror-movie sequence during which I brought a novel home; gave up on it within 20 pages; and then carried it to a bookshelf, where I discovered that — cue the jagged violins — I’d already bought a copy and not liked it. As the months rolled by, I was unable to read more than 50 pages of that year’s most heralded books: “Demon Copperhead,” “Trust” and “Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow.” Two of those novels shared the Pulitzer Prize.

Recently, I texted Susan Dennard to see if our trajectories had been anything alike. She didn’t remember using the phrase that had stuck with me, but she certainly recalled that time in her life: “It started when I hit the hardest point in my career, which was around 2015. I was really struggling on the personal front and also creatively.”

Dennard had been laboring over her intricate “Witchlands” series and found that, in her downtime, her nervous system could handle some nonfiction but no fantasy whatsoever. “A lot of it stemmed from insecurity, where I couldn’t stop comparing what I was trying to produce to whatever I was reading,” she said. “And the thought of adding more words to my brain seemed impossible. I could not focus on words from somebody else and words from myself simultaneously. I was so broken, not just as a reader, as a writer too.

Her dry spell as a reader lasted — even just typing this is painful — five years. Deleting the social media apps on her phone helped more than anything else. But she also began writing less work-intensive novels, her addictive “Luminaries” series about an unlikely monster-hunting society. And instead of trying and

failing to read fantasy, she started bingeing a series of historical romances a friend had suggested. The sun gradually came out.

Writers may be more likely to break than other readers because there’s ego and other occupational hazards involved. But I’ve realized that my troubles weren’t really related to what I do for a living — or even to my 21st-century attention span. They had more to do with the sense of entitlement I’d developed as a reader. Once, begging for book recommendations on social media, I actually listed the kind of stuff I didn’t want to read: reimaginings of Jane Austen; novels with five rotating narrators who have really similar names; novels in which the main character is a city, a decade or an idea; novels about a Nebraska woman who finds a hatbox full of her parents’ old love letters; novels in which an aging man with a toothache weeps for the first time in years when he hits an elk with his SUV. Without realising it, I had put every novelist on probation from word one. I needed to stop thinking that I knew more than the author and give in to whatever ride they had spent years planning. I needed to read slowly and remind myself that if I ended up disliking a book the earth wouldn’t get sucked into the sun.

In my 20s, my favorite novel was Italo Calvino’s “If On a Winter’s Night a Traveler,” which elevates the act of reading to all consuming. In the first chapter Mr. Calvino cheerily lays out detailed instructions for preparing to read. Sit as comfortably as you can, he says. Remove all distractions from the room, adjust the lighting and tell everybody to leave you alone. In short, drive out every other thought before you begin so that you can “grant yourself legitimately this youthful pleasure of expectation.”

I began rereading “If On a Winter’s Night” the other day, and it made me giddy, as it used to, but it’s not my favorite novel anymore. I can think of books by Kazuo Ishiguro, Haruki Murakami and José Saramago that hit me harder because they laid bare so much about alienation, inhumanity, societal collapse — all the good stuff. I wouldn’t say I like any one book the best because there’s so much I haven’t tackled yet, though I’m reading at a steady clip again. My favorite novel: I’m still looking for it. — NYT

SPORTS

SHORTTAKES



Los Angeles Clippers centre John Collins (20) shoots the ball against Memphis Grizzlies forward Jaren Jackson Jr (8). — Reuters

GRIZZLIES OVERTAKE CLIPPERS BUT FAIL TO ADVANCE IN NBA CUP

MEMPHIS: Jaren Jackson Jr scored 24 points and Zach Edey grabbed 19 rebounds to help the Memphis Grizzlies rally to a 112-107 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers in NBA Cup play on Friday at Inglewood, Calif.

Vince Williams Jr. added 16 points and Jaylen Wells and backup Santi Aldama scored 13 points apiece as Memphis recovered from a 16-point third-quarter deficit. The Grizzlies went 3-1 in West Group B play but didn't advance to the knockout round. Los Angeles went 2-2.

Kawhi Leonard scored 39 points on 15-of-24 shooting but couldn't prevent the Clippers from losing for the 12th time in the past 14 games.

James Harden had 23 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds for Los Angeles. Kris Dunn added 11 points, seven rebounds and five steals, and John Collins logged 10 points and seven rebounds.

Memphis outscored the Clippers 62-44 in the second half.

Grizzlies reserves Jock Landale (12 points, seven rebounds), Kentavious Caldwell-Pope (12 points on four 3-pointers) and Cam Spencer (10 points) joined Aldama in double digits as the Memphis bench had a 47-15 scoring edge over the Clippers' backups.

Leonard slammed home a dunk with 19.9 seconds remaining and drained a 3-pointer with 6.5 seconds left to bring the Clippers within 110-107.

Wells then made two free throws with 2.2 seconds left to seal it.

Memphis connected on 44.3% of its shots, including 17 of 40 (42.5%) from 3-point range. The Grizzlies owned a 53-39 rebounding advantage.

The Clippers made 42.7% of their attempts and were 12 of 38 (31.6%) from behind the arc.

The Grizzlies tied the contest at 83 on Jackson's 3-pointer with 11:14 remaining in the contest.

Leonard's 3-pointer gave Los Angeles a 91-89 lead with 8:10 left before Memphis went on a 14-4 surge. Spencer and Landale made treys to end the run and give the Grizzlies a 103-95 lead with 4:18 remaining.

Spencer's 3-pointer made it 106-97 with 2:40 to go. Los Angeles later moved within 108-102 on Leonard's basket with 41.2 seconds left.

Wells made two free throws with 31 seconds left to give Memphis an eight-point lead.

Leonard scored 18 points and Harden added 17 as the Clippers led 63-50 at halftime. Caldwell-Pope had 12 in the half for Memphis.

Los Angeles increased the lead to 16 on two free throws by Harden early in the third quarter before the Grizzlies began whittling away at their deficit.

Memphis pulled within 78-74 on Aldama's trey with 2:54 left in the quarter. The Clippers took an 81-78 lead into the final stanza. — Reuters

Saudi, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar into final four

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, NOV 29

SAUDI ARABIA, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar secured their places in the Final Four of both the men's and women's categories at the Gulf 3x3 Basketball Championship, hosted by the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) at Al Mouj Muscat with the participation of five Gulf nations.

Despite Oman (A) defeating Kuwait 19-15 in the group stage, the national team missed out on qualification as point differential favoured Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

In the women's competition, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait advanced from Group A, while Bahrain and Qatar qualified from Group B.

A THRILLING BATTLE AGAINST KUWAIT Oman (A) delivered one of its best performances in the group stage with a thrilling 19-15 victory over Kuwait. Ahmed al Sinani opened the scoring, followed by points from Osama al Riyami and Ahmed al Halhili to build a 9-3 lead. Kuwait reduced the gap to 9-7, but Oman regained momentum, extending the score to 13-8.

Oman continued to dominate, with Al Sinani adding a crucial point to widen the gap to 18-13 before sealing a deserved 19-15 win. However, point differential calculations prevented the team from reaching the semifinals.

OMAN (B) FALL SHORT IN THE FINAL SECONDS AGAINST SAUDIA Oman (B) lost a dramatic match to Bahrain 18-17. The Omanis started strongly through Hadeed Bait Bakhit and Abdulrahman Al Shuaibi, taking leads of 4-0, 6-3, and 8-5. Bahrain gradually fought back, levelling the score repeatedly at 10-10, 15-15, and 17-17, before scoring the decisive point in the dying moments.

In other matches, Kuwait defeated Saudi Arabia 16-13 after a fast-paced contest with both teams exchanging leads until Kuwait secured the win through strong offensive focus. Meanwhile, Qatar beat Bahrain 17-13, overturning an early Bahraini lead with a composed second-half comeback.



Despite Oman (A) defeating Kuwait 19-15 in the group stage, the national team missed out on qualification as point differential favoured Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. — Photo by Ammar al Musafir

WOMEN'S COMPETITION The women's matches witnessed strong competition. Oman (A) fell to Saudi Arabia 19-10, while Oman (B) lost to Qatar 21-7 in a match where the Qataris displayed excellent structure, quick ball movement, and effective two-point shooting. Saudi Arabia later defeated Kuwait 21-8 with an organised offensive performance, and Bahrain cruised past Oman (B) 21-4 after establishing early control.

In a closely contested match, Oman (A) narrowly lost to Kuwait 15-14 after an intense battle until the final seconds. Bahrain closed the day with a strong 21-9 victory over Qatar, showcasing tactical coherence and high-level teamwork.

With these results, the women's Final Four lineup was completed after a highly competitive opening day.

Abdullatif Nasser Al Fardan, President of the UAE Basketball Federation, praised

Oman's exceptional organisation, noting the strength and competitiveness of the matches and the close level among Gulf teams, which reflects the sport's development in the region. He stressed that Oman's success in hosting both the Arab and Gulf championships demonstrates its readiness to deliver a fully integrated sporting event.

Similarly, Dari Burjas, President of the Kuwait Basketball Federation, commended the high technical level displayed on the opening day and the outstanding organisation in all aspects. He noted that most teams arrived with ambitions to compete for the title and highlighted that Oman's ability to host two major consecutive championships reflects the significant trust placed in the Oman Basketball Association and its capacity to organise events worthy of the participating teams' level.

Oman gear up for opener clash against Saudi Arabia

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, NOV 29

The OMAN national football team shifted full focus towards their opening group B clash against Saudi Arabia on Tuesday in the Fifa Arab Cup Qatar 2025 following their dramatic qualification victory over Somalia on Wednesday. The highly anticipated match will take place at Education City Stadium on Tuesday and it will kick off at 9:00 pm (Oman time).

The Red Warriors resumed their training sessions on Friday night after clinching qualification spot with a tense 4-1 win on penalties following a goalless draw in regulation time. Red Warriors suffered a lot to score during both half of the match against Somalia - a side ranked 200th globally. The coaching staff focused in the latest training sessions to conduct a thorough technical review to reinforce strengths and address areas needing improvement. Head coach Carlos Queiroz and his technical team wasted no time in implementing corrective measures.



All players participated fully in the session, with the coaching staff carefully monitoring workload levels to balance recovery and readiness of the team.

A recovery and warm-up session took place on Thursday morning, ensuring players regained optimal physical readiness following the intense playoff match.

By Friday evening, the full squad returned to the pitch for a comprehensive tactical training session designed to enhance cohesion and sharpen on-field execution. Queiroz divided

the session into several phases, focusing initially on positional discipline, ball circulation under pressure, and defensive transitions including the areas tested heavily during the Somalia match. The technical staff emphasised quicker decision-making in midfield, improved accuracy in the final pass, and stronger coordination among the front

line. The defensive unit underwent targeted drills aimed at refining organisation and strengthening response during counterattacks.

All players participated fully in the session, with the coaching staff carefully monitoring workload levels to balance recovery and readiness of the team.

The atmosphere in camp remained highly motivated, as players understand the demanding challenge ahead in Group B, which featured strongest sides in the competition including Morocco and Saudi Arabia beside Comoros who edged Yemen to attend in Fifa Arab Cup.

Oman will open their group campaign on Tuesday against Saudi Arabia, one of the region's most consistent performers. The second match is scheduled on Friday against Morocco at the same venue and the match will kick off at 6:30 pm (Oman time). The Red Warriors will conclude their group stage journey on December 8 against Comoros at the iconic Stadium 974, with kick off set for 9:00 pm (Oman time).

SHORTTAKES



Ricardo Gouveia

THREE-WAY TIE FOR LEAD AT AUSTRALIAN PGA AS SCOTT STAYS IN HUNT

BRISBANE: Spain’s David Puig, Portugal’s Ricardo Gouveia and Anthony Quayle shared a one-shot lead at the Australian PGA Championship on Saturday with local heroes Min Woo Lee and Adam Scott within striking distance.

LIV Golf’s Puig hit six birdies in an unblemished round of 65 at the Royal Queensland Golf Club to be 13-under for the tournament.

Gouveia sprinkled seven birdies with two bogeys in his 66 with both men bidding for a maiden DP World Tour win at the season-opening tournament.

“I was very consistent off the tee, and then I kept hitting greens which is really important on this course, and holed a few putts, which was great,” said Gouveia.

“I’ve never been in the lead on a Saturday going into Sunday, so it’s going to be a new experience. I’m happy and looking forward to the day.”

They were joined at the top by Australia’s Quayle, who is exuding confidence with Tiger Woods’ former caddie Steve Williams on the bag, snagging birdies at 15 and 17 to stay in the hunt after dropping a shot at the 14th.

“Steve and I were focusing on trying to get in the final grouping (for Sunday),” said Quayle after firing a 67.

“That’s where I want to be, I want to be in that position, I want to be feeling the nerves, I want to be trying to hit big shots under a bit of pressure. So I’m really excited for tomorrow.”

Lee, who secured a maiden PGA Tour win at the Houston Open in March and is the 2023 Australian PGA champion, is a shot further back alongside New Zealand overnight leader Kazuma Kobori.

Two-time champion Scott nailed five front-nine birdies to power up the leaderboard and sank another two before bogeys on 14 and 17 blotted his card.

Scott, an 11-time European Tour winner to go with 14 PGA Tour victories, finished with a 66 to be two off the pace with fellow Australians Marc Leishman and Daniel Hillier, and China’s Ding Wenyi.

“It’s hard to complain about 66,” said Scott, but added that he will need a something special on Sunday to win.

“A strong front nine to put myself in it and then maybe, if I can get my name up the top with seven or eight to go. But I’ll have to close well too.”

Breakout DP World Tour star Marco Penge, second to Rory McIlroy on the European rankings, has his work cut out, five behind the leaders. — AFP



Rashid al Amri finished third.

Oman jockeys shine at camel race in Abu Dhabi

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, NOV 29

OMANI JOCKEYS delivered an impressive performance in the Asian human-rider heats at the Zayed Grand Prize Camel Racing Festival 2025 in Abu Dhabi. Mohammed bin Ali bin Saud al Rubaie secured second place, followed by Rashid bin Mohammed bin Dughmail al Amri, who finished third.

The Asian heats were organised by the Asian Camel Racing Federation, which extended official invitations to its member associations and implemented clear regulations for the human-rider competitions.

The races were held over a distance of 2 km at the Southern Track in Al Wathba in Abu Dhabi, with the federation overseeing

all participation procedures, including visa issuance, registration processing, and verification of camel microchips. All stages were conducted in accordance with technical and safety standards to ensure fair and safe competition. The human-rider races took place on Friday at Al Wathba as part of the wider Zayed Grand Prize Festival, which runs from November 25 to December 1 and features thousands of camels from the UAE and GCC states.

The day’s programme included 15 human-rider heats, two of which were dedicated to Asian participants, reaffirming the festival’s commitment to supporting this category and expanding its participation in traditional competitions.

Omani jockeys continued to demonstrate strong competitiveness across the Asian heats, achieving multiple top-ten positions. Hamad bin Bukhait bin Said al Awisi

finished sixth with his camel ‘Al Shamkha’, followed by Rashid bin Muslim bin Rashid al Sinani in seventh place riding ‘Ma’anand’. Mahmoud bin Khalid bin Said al Housani secured eighth place with ‘Musada’, while Ahmed bin Khamis bin Rashid al Jahwari claimed ninth place aboard ‘Moreeb’.

The third day of the festival was attended by Shaikh Sultan bin Hamdan al Nahyan, Adviser to the President of the UAE and Chairman of the Camel Racing Federation, along with senior officials and camel owners from across the GCC, highlighting the significance of the event and its role in preserving the region is sporting heritage.

The organising committee allocated 36 trophies, including swords and diggers, for which participating camels competed across 217 rounds throughout the festival, marking one of the most competitive and diverse editions of the event.

Ogier wins record-equalling ninth world rally title

JEDDAH: Sebastien Ogier won an “incredible” ninth world rally title on Saturday to draw level with the record haul of his French compatriot Sebastien Loeb.

Ogier, 41, finished third in the season-closing Rally Saudi Arabia to pip Toyota teammate Elfyn Evans to the crown, finishing just four points ahead of the Welshman who came in sixth.

Ogier’s exploit was all the more remarkable as he was competing as a ‘part-time’ driver this year, skipping three of the 14 rallies.

“What an incredible season,” said the Frenchman who won six rallies this season and appeared on the podium in 10 of the 11 in which he competed.

“The battle with Elfyn has been

really superb. There are no great champions without great rivals.”

“He pushed us to the limits until the very last stage of the season,” added Ogier before climbing onto the roof of his car to celebrate with his co-driver Vincent Landais.

THREE DIFFERENT TEAMS

Ogier’s titles have come at the wheel of three different teams — claiming the first of four with Volkswagen in 2013, then two with Ford (2017-2018) and now adding a third to his 2020-2021 wins with Toyota.

“Ten podium finishes in 11 races, six victories: this may be one of the best seasons of my career in terms of performance and consistency,” he said.

Evans had arrived in Jeddah



French driver Sebastien Ogier and his French co-driver Vincent Landais compete in their Toyota GR Yaris during stage 5 of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC) in Jeddah. — AFP

leading the standings by three points, but his hopes of finally ascending to the WRC throne after finishing runner-up four times were scuppered by a costly puncture on Friday.

“It was a tough event obviously,” said the 36-year old Evans, who at least had the consolation of winning Saturday’s final stage.

“We’ve done what we can, that’s it. We’re competitors at the end of the day, we always want better, we always want more.”

It is the third time that Evans has finished as runner-up in the title race to Ogier. In 2020 he was also leading going into the final round at Monza only to miss out after a crash in the snow.

This time it wasn’t the snow but

the loose rocks in this inaugural rally in Saudi Arabia which scuppered his chances, a puncture on Friday giving Evans too much to make up on the final day.

Evans was not the only one to suffer on the course: Martins Sesks, who was leading at the time, had two punctures on the penultimate stage which also saw Takamoto Katsuta rolling in soft sand and two-time world champion Kalle Rovanpera stopping to change a wheel.

With Sesks held up, last year’s champion Thierry Neuville came through to take the honours.

French driver Adrien Fourmaux was second with Ogier completing the podium while celebrating an incredible ninth title. — AFP

SPORTS

SHORT TAKES



McLaren’s British driver Lando Norris (R), McLaren’s Australian driver Oscar Piastri, Mercedes’ British driver George Russell and Serbian tennis player Novak Djokovic pose for a group photo after the sprint race ahead of the Formula One Qatar Grand Prix at the Lusail International Circuit. — AFP

PIASTRI WINS QATAR SPRINT TO TRIM NORRIS’S LEAD TO 22 POINTS

DOHA: McLaren’s Oscar Piastri won the Qatar Grand Prix sprint race from pole position and for the third year in a row on Saturday to trim teammate Lando Norris’s Formula One championship lead to 22 points.

Mercedes’s George Russell finished second, 4.951 seconds behind the Australian whose win was his first of any sort since the Dutch Grand Prix at the end of August, with Norris third and Red Bull’s Max Verstappen fourth.

Norris now has 396 points with Piastri on 374 and Verstappen on 371 with 50 remaining to be won.

Qualifying for the main grand prix was following later, with Norris still in a position to win his first championship on Sunday.

“I think the last couple of weekends has just been things going wrong rather than a lack of pace,” Piastri said after 19 laps of the floodlit Lusail circuit.

“Here, everything’s gone smoothly so far, and the pace has been strong. It’s a track I’ve enjoyed in the past, and I’m enjoying it again, clearly.”

Norris had recognised before the start that overtaking would be a problem and he was not wrong.

“It’s going to be a tough race tomorrow... it’s not easy to pass around here, it’s too difficult, so it’s all about qualifying,” he said.

Yuki Tsunoda finished fifth for Red Bull, after obligingly moving aside for teammate Verstappen on the opening lap, with Kimi Antonelli sixth for Mercedes after a five-second penalty for a track limits violation demoted him one place.

Fernando Alonso was seventh for Aston Martin, after starting fourth, and Carlos Sainz was eighth for Williams.

Piastri’s win was his first in a sprint this season and he was never challenged or troubled from the moment the lights went out, with Russell and Norris almost touching in the race for the first corner but avoiding contact.

Verstappen complained again that the bouncing that had plagued him in qualifying was back but he still made up two places on his starting position. — Reuters



McLaren’s Australian driver Oscar Piastri waves to the fans as he walks to his car before the sprint race ahead of the Formula One Qatar Grand Prix at the Lusail International Circuit. — AFP



The event attracted a strong field of purebred Arabian and Thoroughbred horses, alongside an enthusiastic crowd that enjoyed a vibrant racing atmosphere.

Al Rahba horse track witnesses thrilling races



Race six highlighted the triumph of Al Majur, ridden by Moanis bin Salem al Siyabi and trained by Hassan bin Mohammed al Falahi.

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
BARKA, NOV 29

THE AL RAHBA Horse Racing Track in the Wilayat of Barka hosted the sixth race meet of the season on Saturday, delivering an exciting evening of competition across eight diverse and action packed races, the event attracted a strong field of purebred Arabian and thoroughbred horses, alongside an enthusiastic crowd that enjoyed a vibrant racing atmosphere.

The opening race, dedicated to purebred Arabians, set a strong tone for the event as Moqoot clinched first place under jockey Ghassan bin Yahya al Sahbani, following his victory, Al Sahbani expressed his delight, saying, “Moqoot is a powerful horse with exceptional control, we followed the race plan perfectly, which helped us maintain the lead.”

The horse is trained by Mohammed bin Issa al Balushi, Azzam ME finished second, while SSR Sarab came in third.

Races two and three, allocated for locally



At the end of the event, retired Brigadier Abdulrazzaq al Shahrrouzi, Vice-President of the Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation crowned the winners. — Photos by Asaad al Badri and Mohammed al Balushi

bred purebred Arabians, saw outstanding back to back victories from jockey Al Mutasim bin Saeed al Balushi aboard Al Dhafer SB and Al Shalli SB, both trained by Badr bin Mohammed al Hajri, competition remained strong as Mohareb IZ and Bahr Al Afiyah secured the remaining podium spots in race two, while Aasifat Al Shamal and SSR Al Nayef followed in race three.

The fourth race witnessed the remarkable performance of mare Mutashaddidah, guided to victory by jockey Tareq bin Ibrahim al Azri and trained by Sultan bin Mohammed al Balushi. Hamzah and ZF Al Sagaf claimed second and third places respectively.

In the fifth race for Thoroughbreds, Belardo Joy ridden by Mazin bin Mubarak al Yahyai and trained by Mohammed bin Salem al Rasbi dominated the competition, finishing ahead of Future Vision and Pride of Joy.

Race six highlighted the triumph of Al Majur, ridden by Moanis bin Salem al Siyabi and trained by Hassan bin Mohammed al Falahi, Muhtashim and Al Rabihi completed the top three.

One of the evening’s most thrilling moments came in race seven for Thoroughbreds, where jockey Abdulrahman bin Talib al Farsi delivered a superb performance aboard Dubawi Sand, trained by Othman bin Rashid al Hashmi. Al Farsi said after the race: “Dubawi Sand handled the pace perfectly, It was a tough contest, but his strong finishing kick made the difference” El Patriotta finished second, followed by Prima Summer in third.

The evening concluded with an impressive win in race eight by Nisal Al Sham, ridden by Adam bin Talib al Balushi and trained by Mohammed bin Suleiman al Balushi, who expressed his satisfaction “Nisal Al Sham was in top condition, The team worked hard preparing the horse, and this victory reflects that effort.”

The sixth meet at Al Rahba Track reaffirmed its reputation as a premier venue showcasing the growing depth of Oman’s equestrian talent, as trainers, jockeys and owners continue to elevate the competitiveness of the national racing circuit.

BUSINESS



SHORTTAKES



The company invested more than RO 120 million in development projects this year.

NAMA STRENGTHENS POWER NETWORK NATIONWIDE

MUSCAT: Nama Electricity Distribution Company recorded strong operational and technical gains in 2025, underscoring its drive to modernise Oman’s power distribution network and raise service quality amidst rising demand.

The company invested more than RO 120 million in development projects this year, focusing on grid reinforcement and expansion, network automation and smart management systems. Spending supported new residential, commercial and industrial connections, alongside technologies that enable renewable energy integration and digital control of distribution operations.

Speaking on performance, Engineer Khalfan bin Nasser al Bartamani, Head of Commercial Affairs, said electricity services now reach 100 per cent of all populated areas, reflecting a commitment to safe, reliable and sustainable supply nationwide. Customer satisfaction stands at 85 per cent, with targeted projects under way to reduce outages and further enhance service continuity.

Between January and October 2025, the company implemented 11 kV projects across all governorates at a cost of about RO 60.9 million, in addition to 33 kV projects valued at around RO 19 million. These initiatives have strengthened grid stability, improved efficiency and supported urban and industrial growth.

Total capital expenditure reached RO 120.17 million by end-October, averaging RO 12 million a month, with peak spending in May driven by accelerated grid expansion. Financial discipline, safety performance — achieving 647 days without lost-time injuries — and local value creation remained key highlights, with SMEs and Riyada cardholders accounting for over 19 per cent of procurement spend.

Oman wins investor confidence with reforms drive

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is increasingly being recognised by global investors as a compelling destination for long-term foreign investment, underpinned by deep economic reforms, clear legislation and a business-friendly environment. Structural and legal changes, combined with incentives and a strong focus on sustainability, have significantly eased market entry for foreign capital and strengthened investor confidence.

Central to this shift has been the introduction of the Foreign Capital Investment Law and the Public-Private Partnership Law in 2020, which reaffirmed Oman’s openness to global business. These reforms align with national diversification goals and provide investors with a protected, transparent and predictable legal framework. Business procedures have also been streamlined through digital transformation. The introduction of the Invest Easy system, now fully integrated into the Oman Business platform, has created a

Oman and Botswana sign deals in energy, minerals

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, NOV 29

THE Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Botswana have taken the first step towards a long-term economic and investment partnership, signing four agreements in the energy, mining and financial sectors.

The agreements were formalised during the visit of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) to Botswana as a part of the OIA’s ongoing drive to broaden its strategic partnerships with fraternal and friendly nations, while securing sustainable returns for Oman.

Duma Gideon Boko, President of the Republic of Botswana, expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by the Omani side, represented by OIA, in advancing this strategic partnership. He noted that the recent visit of the Botswana delegation to the Sultanate of Oman, the fruitful meetings held and the swift pace of work all contributed to delivering tangible outcomes. He also added that he sensed a particular harmony with the Omani side, which helped move matters forward rapidly towards the signing of the agreements.

The President stressed that the projects signed carry significant implications for his country, most notably enabling energy self-sufficiency and shifting Botswana from an electricity-importing nation to an electricity-exporting one. The first agreement focuses on cooperation in the energy sector between OQ Group and Botswana Oil. It covers the implementation of joint studies and exploration of investment opportunities in Botswana’s energy infrastructure and storage solutions, as well as capacity-building and the exchange of knowledge on policies, regulations and technical standards.

The second agreement, signed between OQ Trading and Botswana Oil, covers the implementation of joint studies



Duma Gideon Boko, President of the Republic of Botswana, receiving Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), in Gaborone.

related to energy trading and products, in addition to exploring opportunities to supply Botswana with energy products. The agreement also includes considering the creation of a framework for supply, aggregation, marketing and long-term provisioning within Botswana’s regional markets.

The two agreements were signed by Ashraf bin Hamad al Mamari, CEO of OQ Group and Meshack Tshekedi, CEO of Botswana Oil. Their signing underscores OQ’s role as a key strategic player within Oman’s energy landscape and highlights the Group’s ability to forge partnerships that reinforce Oman’s position as a regional hub for energy and economic diversification. It also advances Oman’s shift towards a more sustainable and globally competitive future.

This partnership creates an important platform for promoting and expanding OQ Trading’s footprint across African markets. It also underscores the Group’s growing regional role, as it currently supplies more than 11 African countries with essential energy solutions and products, including crude oil, refined petroleum products, liquefied petroleum gas and

ammonia, to help meet the continent’s core energy needs. The third agreement focuses on developing renewable energy projects between the Omani state-owned O-Green platform and Botswana’s Ministry of Minerals and Energy. It aims to establish integrated projects covering solar and wind power, along with battery-based energy-storage systems, with a planned capacity of up to 3 gigawatts. The agreement was signed by Mustafa bin Mohammed al Hinai, CEO of O-Green and David Tsheole, the Minister assigned to oversee the portfolios of Minerals & Energy and Communication & Innovation in Botswana, highlighting both sides’ commitment to advancing sustainable solutions and strengthening energy security across the region.

The fourth agreement focuses on a partnership between Maaden Investment Group and the Botswana Geoscience Institute (BGI) for the exploration of minerals such as gold and diamonds. It also aims to draw on Oman’s global partnerships in mineral production and processing, as well as promote the exchange of technical expertise in this field.



Invest Easy system has created a single electronic window for government services.

single electronic window for government services. This has reduced processing times, simplified company formation and improved access to incentives such as tax and customs exemptions.

Renewable energy and green hydrogen have emerged as key growth areas, with Oman targeting around 30 per cent of electricity generation from renewable

sources by 2030. Long-term investor certainty has been further enhanced through the provision of 99-year usufruct rights, including in integrated tourism complexes, allowing investors to use, develop and transfer assets over an extended period.

Foreign investors say a combination of 100 per cent foreign ownership, legal clarity,

digital platforms and sustainability-driven policies have reshaped the investment climate. Dr Davis Kallukaran, Managing Partner of Crowe Oman, said the Foreign Capital Investment Law gives investors confidence by clearly outlining government direction and protections, while tax reforms have supported infrastructure development and societal wellbeing. He also highlighted the establishment of Hydrogen Oman and the allocation of vast land areas for green energy as a major competitive advantage.

Syed Fayyaz Ali Shah, Chairman of the Syed Fayyaz Group, described the new laws as a reflection of Oman’s renewed renaissance, noting that they strengthen public-private cooperation and position the country for decades of growth. Ahmed Subhani, CEO of the Falcon Group, said allowing full foreign ownership in special economic zones signals serious intent to open the economy, while digital platforms have made doing business faster and more transparent. — ONA

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



Trading took place over three sessions due to the National Day holiday, generating total turnover of RO 86.1 million from 12,491 transactions.

RETAIL INVESTORS
LIFT MSX TRADING

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange recorded stronger activity last week, with daily trading rising to RO 28.7 million from RO 26.9 million previously. Omani individual investors were net buyers, accounting for 16.3 per cent of total trading value, while local funds and institutions emerged as net sellers.

Trading took place over three sessions due to the National Day holiday, generating total turnover of RO 86.1 million from 12,491 transactions. Activity was concentrated in banking stocks, led by Bank Muscat and Sohar International, which together made up more than 48 per cent of the traded value.

Energy-related shares under OQ Group also attracted strong demand, with OQ Exploration and Production, OQ Base Industries and OQ Gas Networks posting sizable volumes.

MSX indices ended mixed, as gains in financials and industry were offset by declines elsewhere, pushing the main index down 11 points to 5,635 for a second straight weekly fall. Market capitalisation edged down slightly to RO 31.38 billion. Among gainers, Port of Salalah Services rose 10 per cent, while Financial Services led declines. In corporate news, National Mineral Water Company completed an RO 4 million bond issue and Majan College Company announced its AGM with proposed cash and bonus share distributions. — **ONA**

OQBI ORGANISES ICV
FORUM IN SALALAH



The forum aims to reinforce the concept of ICV and promote the implementation of responsible procurement.

SALALAH: OQ Base Industries (OQBI) organised the second edition of the In-Country Value (ICV) Forum under the theme “In-Country Value and Responsible Procurement”, held under the auspices of Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry.

The forum forms part of the company’s efforts to promote its ICV programmes, strengthen engagement with local suppliers and enhance the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in supply chains.

The forum aims to reinforce the concept of ICV and promote the implementation of responsible procurement as a key driver in supporting the national economy and enabling entrepreneurs and SMEs to grow and compete.

It highlights the company’s key achievements from 2023–2025, during which its ICV Index increased from 27.12% to 31%, reflecting the expansion in reliance on local suppliers and the strengthened contribution of local industries to supply chains, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

The forum also showcases the company’s efforts in supporting national products, with total spending on “Made in Oman” products reaching \$6.78 million (RO 2.61 million). In addition, \$34.91 million (RO 13.44 million) was directed to SMEs and \$24.05 million (RO 9.26 million) was allocated to support entrepreneurs holding the “Riyada” Card. This support contributed to the development of their operations and enhanced their readiness to compete.

Furthermore, \$13.04 million (RO 5.02 million) was allocated to support the employment of Omanis through contracting companies.

MUZN
ISLAMIC
BANKING
LAUNCHES
CREDIT CARD
CAMPAIGN

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) Muzn Islamic Banking has launched an exclusive Credit Card campaign combining 25% cashback on eligible transactions with a first-year annual fee waiver. Running until December 31, 2025, the offer is open to both new-to-bank and existing customers.

Commenting on the offer, Salima bint Obaid al Marzooqiyah — Assistant General Manager and Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO — said: “At Muzn Islamic Banking, we take every opportunity to offer our customers meaningful and value-driven solutions that



The offer is open to both new-to-bank and existing customers.

support their financial wellbeing. Our latest offer comes as part of our commitment to make Islamic banking even more accessible and rewarding. The waivers we are introducing reflect our ongoing effort to ease our customers’ journeys and ensure our services remain relevant to their needs”.

To qualify, customers must apply for a Muzn Islamic Banking credit card during the campaign period. Transactions valued above RO 10 will be eligible for cashback, and the first-year annual fee will be waived upon completing at least one transaction within one month of card issuance.

Oman welcomes largest
wind turbines at Al Duqm

THE Sultanate of Oman has marked a major milestone in its clean-energy transition with the arrival of the country’s largest wind turbines at the Port of Duqm, signalling the start of a new chapter in renewable power generation.

OQ Alternative Energy (OQAE), a subsidiary of OQ, celebrated the arrival of the first batch of wind turbines for the Riyah 1 and Riyah 2 wind projects on Tuesday, November 25, 2025.

Still under construction, the two projects will together form the largest wind farms ever developed in Oman.

The shipment includes record-setting components for the Sultanate of Oman’s renewable-energy sector. Each turbine reaches a tip height of 200 metres and is equipped with blades measuring 90.2 metres — the longest ever delivered to Oman — as well as the tallest wind turbine towers installed in the country to date. Each Wind Turbine Generator has a capacity of 6.5 megawatts, producing enough clean electricity to power around 2,400 Omani households annually.

These technical achievements raise the benchmark for wind-energy development in Oman and underline the country’s commitment to deploying best-in-class technologies as it positions itself as a regional hub for clean energy.

During the visit to Port of Duqm, attendees witnessed the complex logistics and handling operations required to manage the oversized components.

Briefings covered turbine technology, installation stages and operational features,



OQAE celebrated the arrival of the first batch of wind turbines for the Riyah 1 and Riyah 2 wind projects on November 25, 2025.

followed by an on-site tour highlighting the scale and sophistication of the projects.

Once operational, the wind farms will supply clean electricity to Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), helping to cut operating costs and significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions, while delivering long-term environmental and economic benefits.

The milestone also reflects the strength of international cooperation, bringing together OQAE’s leadership in renewables and the technical expertise of TotalEnergies. The partnership supports innovation, knowledge transfer and the

acceleration of sustainable development initiatives in Oman.

Eng Ghalib al Maamari, Acting Chief Executive Officer of OQ Alternative Energy, said the arrival of the turbines marked a defining moment in Oman’s renewable-energy journey. “This is more than a logistical achievement.

It is a proud national milestone that demonstrates Oman’s firm commitment to a cleaner and more sustainable future”, he said, adding that the projects would strengthen energy resilience and open new opportunities in renewable energy and green hydrogen.

Sohar International wins two major accolades

MUSCAT: Sohar International has strengthened its standing as one of Oman’s most forward-looking and high-performing financial institutions after securing two distinguished titles — “Bank of the Year — Oman” and “Excellence in Digital Transformation” — at the The Arabian Stories (TAS) Business Awards 2025.

These recognitions reflect the bank’s sustained commitment to operational excellence, customer-centric innovation and its strategic contribution to the national economic agenda.

The bank was awarded “Bank of the Year — Oman”, underscoring its robust financial performance, prudent risk management and effective execution of its long-term growth strategy.

The award was presented by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and received on behalf of the bank by Ali Taqi Jaafar Hassan, Senior Executive Vice President & Head of Commercial Banking. This accolade highlights Sohar International’s continued success in delivering value



These recognitions reflect the bank’s sustained commitment to operational excellence, customer-centric innovation and its strategic contribution to the national economic agenda.

to its customers, partners and stakeholders through disciplined governance and market leadership.

Complementing this achievement, Sohar International was also named the winner of “Excellence in Digital Transformation”, a testament to the bank’s strategic investments in technology and its ongoing efforts to enhance digital adoption

across all customer segments. The award was received by Assad bin Salim al Shabibi, Executive Vice President and Head — Information Technology and Sajeel Bashiruddin, Chief Technology and Digital Officer, recognising Sohar International’s progress in building a seamless, innovative and future-ready digital ecosystem.

Commenting on these

achievements, Abdulwahid bin Mohamed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated: “These recognitions underscore the effectiveness of our long-term strategy and the strength of our transformation journey, driven by a clear vision to elevate banking standards in the Sultanate of Oman. Being named ‘Bank of the Year — Oman’ and receiving the ‘Excellence in Digital Transformation’ award reflect our ability to deliver sustainable value while continuously advancing our digital and operational capabilities”.

They are a testament to the collective effort of our teams, whose commitment and expertise continue to propel Sohar International forward. As we build on this momentum, we remain focused on shaping a future-ready financial institution — one that enhances customer experience, drives innovation across all business lines, and contributes meaningfully to Oman’s economic competitiveness and long-term prosperity”.

SELECTIVEGROWTH



The workshops will act as dedicated platforms for B2B engagement.

OMAN TARGETS CHINA WITH TOURISM ROADSHOWS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism will launch a series of mobile promotional workshops in China from Monday, covering Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, as part of efforts to strengthen the Sultanate of Oman's footprint in Asia's key tourism markets and deepen partnerships across the sector.

Led by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, the official delegation includes representatives from 22 tourism institutions. The programme coincides with the launch of a new direct service by China Eastern Airlines to Beijing Daxing International Airport, developed in cooperation with Oman Airports. The route links Beijing and Muscat, enhancing air connectivity and expected to support higher tourist flows between the two countries.

The workshops will act as dedicated platforms for B2B engagement, showcasing Oman's heritage, landscapes and sustainable tourism offerings to Chinese operators and hotel groups. A series of meetings with major Chinese tourism companies will also present investment opportunities, with a focus on innovative products for new traveller segments and long-term market growth.

Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director General of Tourism Promotion, said China is a high-spending market seeking destinations that blend nature, culture and distinctive experiences — areas where Oman holds strong appeal. Strengthening presence in China, he noted, will expand partnerships with travel agencies and digital platforms while reinforcing sustainable and cultural tourism. The ministry has appointed Dragon Trail as its official China representative, rolling out digital campaigns, media and influencer visits, familiarisation trips and trade training, supported by market insights on Chinese traveller behaviour.

OETC to integrate green hydrogen transmission

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, NOV 29

OMAN Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), the operator of the Sultanate of Oman's power transmission system, has announced that it has been tasked by the authorities with undertaking the Front-End Engineering Design (FEED) of shared transmission assets envisaged as part of the Common User Infrastructure (CUI) supporting Oman's giga-scale green hydrogen industry.

The majority state-owned utility noted in the latest issue of its Omangrid bulletin that it was assigned this responsibility by the Green Hydrogen Infrastructure Steering Committee, which oversees the delivery of the CUI underpinning a sizable portfolio of green hydrogen projects distributed across the Al Wusta and Dhofar Governorates.

To date, nine major projects awarded through Hydrom — the architect of Oman's green hydrogen sector — collectively target annual production of around 1.4 million tonnes of green molecules by 2030, supported by up to 35 gigawatts of renewable generation capacity.

According to OETC, integrating these large-scale projects into the traditional transmission network presents a fundamental challenge. "Estimates indicate that 95% of the energy produced will be consumed directly at production sites, while only 5% will be fed into the grid. This unconventional distribution requires OETC to reimagine its planning strategies, infrastructure and technical support", the utility — part of the



Common user infrastructure to be provided to project developers.

Nama Group — stated.

Dr Rashid al Badwawi, General Manager of Green Hydrogen Projects Support, underscored OETC's role as the national champion for electricity transmission within the government's common-infrastructure programme for hydrogen.

"Green hydrogen is not just an alternative fuel; it is a driver of comprehensive transformation in the energy sector.

We are committed to developing the infrastructure and operational capabilities needed to support this shift, despite the challenges, because we strongly believe in the tremendous opportunities the future holds", he said.

To this end, OETC is adopting advanced technological solutions — including automation systems, digital asset management and storage

technologies — to ensure grid stability given the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources, he added.

"These efforts align with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals' policies to strengthen the hydrogen economy and achieve sustainability goals. OETC's role remains essential not only in building a flexible transmission network, but also in shaping the future frameworks of energy distribution in Oman and the wider region", Dr Al Badwawi noted.

Beyond OETC, several other Omani utilities will play key roles in developing the Common User Infrastructure for the hydrogen sector. OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), the operator of the national gas transmission system, has been assigned responsibility for the hydrogen pipeline network

that will transport hydrogen from production sites to ports or export hubs. Nama Water Services, the national water utility, will handle the desalinated and ultrapure water supply infrastructure required at hydrogen production zones — a critical input for electrolysis-based green hydrogen production.

Hydrom is coordinating with OETC, OQGN, Nama Water Services and other stakeholders in developing the CUI. It manages land allocation, leads the setup of the infrastructure company (provisionally "InfraCo") and liaises with hydrogen project developers.

A shared, state-backed common infrastructure — managed by national utilities — significantly lowers entry barriers for developers and accelerates the growth of Oman's hydrogen industry.

IMF praises Oman's resilience, backs reform momentum

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, NOV 29

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has affirmed Oman's strong economic performance, citing resilience amidst global uncertainty, resilient non-hydrocarbon growth and sustained fiscal discipline. Concluding its 2025 Article IV mission, the IMF said Oman's economy continues to expand, inflation remains low and both fiscal and external positions are solid, while public debt has fallen further.

An IMF staff team led by Abdullah al Hassan held consultations in Muscat between November 9 and 24. In its concluding statement, the Fund noted that growth in 2024 and the first half of 2025 was driven by manufacturing, logistics,



The IMF said the outlook for Oman remains favourable.

construction, trade, agriculture and fisheries, offsetting a contraction in hydrocarbon output due to OPEC+ production limits. Inflation eased to 0.6 per cent in 2024 and stayed contained at 0.9 per cent during January–October 2025. Oman posted

a fiscal surplus of 3.3 per cent of GDP in 2024, while the current account recorded a surplus of 3.2 per cent. Government debt declined to 36.1 per cent of GDP by September 2025.

Looking ahead, the IMF said the outlook remains favourable. Growth

is expected to strengthen in 2025–26 as oil production cuts are unwound and non-hydrocarbon activity continues to expand. Inflation is projected to remain low, converging towards 2 per cent over the medium term. While the current account is expected to slip into deficit during 2025–27 due to lower oil prices, it is forecast to return to surplus as production recovers and non-hydrocarbon exports gain traction. The IMF cautioned that heightened geopolitical tensions and global uncertainty pose downside risks.

The Fund welcomed the authorities' commitment to fiscal prudence, highlighting a narrowing of the non-hydrocarbon primary deficit in 2025 due to spending restraint and improved revenue collection. It said continued

modernisation of tax administration, the rollout of VAT e-invoicing and plans to introduce a personal income tax on high earners in 2028 will be critical for long-term sustainability. Further reforms, including subsidy rationalisation, stronger fiscal frameworks and improved sovereign asset and liability management, were also encouraged.

The IMF said Oman's exchange rate peg remains effective in anchoring inflation. Ongoing monetary reforms and improvements in cash management are expected to strengthen policy transmission. The banking sector was described as strong and well capitalised, with ample liquidity and stable profitability, while deeper capital markets and enhanced supervision were identified as priorities.

POLICY WARNING

China renews crypto clampdown



China's central bank reaffirmed its hard line against virtual currencies, warning of renewed speculative activity and fresh risks to financial stability. The People's Bank of China said crypto trading has rebounded recently due to multiple factors, complicating risk control efforts.

It reiterated that virtual currencies have no legal status, cannot be used as legal tender and that related activities constitute illegal financial operations.

RECORD SALE

Consumers spent \$11.8 bn on Black Friday



American shoppers spent a record \$11.8 billion online on Black Friday, up 9.1 per cent from last year, final data from Adobe Analytics showed. Shoppers may spend \$5.5 billion on Saturday and \$5.9 billion on Sunday, up 3.8 per cent year-over-year and 5.4 per cent year-over-year respectively. Gadgets, home appliances, and fashion items led the sales, with strong participation from both major retailers and online brands.

ENERGY SURGE

US oil hits production record



US oil production rose to a fresh record in September, despite concerns about global oversupply, according to Energy Information Administration data. Output climbed to 13.84 million barrels per day, up 44,000 bpd from August.

Production in New Mexico reached a record level, while offshore Gulf output hit its highest since early 2020, adding further pressure to already weak oil prices.

OPINION

Growing impact of national day holidays on ICV in Oman



DR HILAL
AL SAWAI

The writer is local content, sustainability and innovation expert.

OMAN'S National Day is more than just a public holiday with celebrations, parades, fireworks and cultural activities. It is a time for the public to reflect on what the country has become and what it hopes to become.

Each year the nation's residents and citizens pay tribute to the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and his vision; and update the Oman's National Day celebrations to reflect the country's continued modernisation under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The Oman's National Day celebrations reflect the country's growing unity and spirit of heritage. They provide an opportunity for the public to examine the country's economic plans. One of the plans, In-Country Value, has become the main focus of the country's ICV.

This holiday showcases the country's achievements such as improvements in infrastructure, industry and people. These accomplishments come as a result of the ICV Vision and the efforts to improve and develop the elements of the country.

The ICV has created local impact to develop local talent. With the establishment of training programmes, skill sets and

scholarship initiatives, the workforce in Oman is equipped to fill the skill gaps that exist in numerous sectors.

This phenomenon helps reduce the reliance on the imported workforce and the skill sets that come with it; for the young job seekers, it increases the supply of job openings. While the families gather during the National Day, many think about how the introduced policies impact the career opportunities of young people in the families.

ICV has created impact for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which is the ICV impact on the country's economic diversification. It has also empowered the SMEs economic impact as it persuaded large corporates to spend on local supplies.

The corporates ICV has sponsored and engaged local corporates. Success local businesses due to ICV sponsored and engaged corporate local businesses are promoted during the National Day.

Economic diversification is one of the main pillars of Oman Vision 2040. ICV also influences the diversification of Oman's economy from solely oil and gas.

ICV allows for the construction of Oman's economy from oil, gas and ICV to the construction of Oman's economy from

This holiday showcases the country's achievements such as improvements in infrastructure, industry and people. These accomplishments come as a result of the ICV Vision and the efforts to improve and develop the elements of the country.

oil, gas and ICV to the balance of Oman's economy to become stronger and more competitive.

Growth and balance from ICV also allows for Oman to be more competitive in the region and the world.

Because of these reasons, the National Day holiday is a celebration of the past and of the future as well, with the future being centred around economic sustainability and the present around economic diversification.

ICV allows for Oman's Community Improvement to be in construction and to foster the development of all regions of Oman.

Oman's Social Development and Social Support Integration with the ICV projects grows and it allows the Support Integration of the Social Development and the Protection of the Environment to expand.

The National Day celebration is also a celebration of the impact ICV has made. The National Day holiday is a celebration of the nation and the impact ICV has made on the people of the nation.

The celebration of the nation's identity reminds the people of ICV to develop including and to develop with the nation values.

ACCELERATING
OMAN'S ENERGY
FUTURE THROUGH
SMARTER GRIDS

WAFAL HINAI

Oman stands at a pivotal moment in its energy transition. As the country increases its reliance on renewable sources, especially solar power; it faces a familiar challenge: how to manage natural variability while keeping electricity reliable, affordable and efficient. Recent assessments of renewable energy performance between 2021 and 2024 provide useful insight into how smart grids could reshape this landscape.

Solar generation data from a representative facility show clear year-to-year fluctuations. Output rose dramatically from 2021 to 2022 as the plant reached full operational capacity. In contrast, 2023 maintained nearly the same production level, indicating a stable performance plateau. However, the partial data for 2024 reveal a significant drop, largely tied to reduced operational months and seasonal conditions. These patterns highlight a core issue: renewable systems are inherently sensitive to weather, dust levels, cloud cover and other natural factors that are difficult to predict using conventional grid systems. This is where smart grids become transformative. A smart grid integrates digital monitoring, real-time analytics, automation and advanced coordination with storage technologies. Instead of passively receiving energy, the grid becomes an intelligent system capable of responding instantly to changes in supply and demand. One of the clearest advantages is real-time forecasting. By using sensors, IoT devices and AI-driven prediction models, smart grids can anticipate dips in solar output before they occur. This allows the system to prepare backup generation or activate stored energy, reducing the risk of sudden shortages.

Another benefit is dynamic load balancing. Traditional grids distribute energy in a relatively fixed manner, but smart grids adjust flows instantly, easing pressure on overloaded lines and preventing avoidable outages. This responsiveness is especially valuable during peak demand hours or when renewable generation fluctuates.

The integration of energy storage systems is equally crucial. Batteries can capture excess solar energy during midday peaks when production is highest but demand is moderate and release it during evening hours. This smooths out daily variability and increases the practical value of each kilowatt-hour generated. Perhaps the most overlooked advantage is loss reduction. Oman currently experiences transmission losses that can reach double-digit percentages in some regions. With smart grid diagnostics and automated fault detection, losses could be reduced to below 6%. Improving delivered output without building new plants represents a significant economic gain.

The combined effect of these improvements is substantial. Estimates show that applying smart-grid enhancements could raise annual output potential of similar renewable facilities by up to 180,000 MWh. Even modest efficiency gains accumulate quickly, accelerating progress towards Oman Vision 2040 targets.

Why Oman must rethink
its social-economic path

OMAN IS standing at an important moment in its economic journey. The country has strengthened its social system through the Social Protection Law of 2023 and the establishment of the Social Protection Fund, creating one of the region's most modern and integrated welfare structures. These reforms were designed to protect families, reduce vulnerability and ensure social stability. But as the economy evolves, a more fundamental question is emerging: Can support alone prepare people for the future, or is Oman ready to shift towards genuine empowerment?

Support helps people survive. Empowerment helps them progress. This is the core of the debate — and the future of Oman's development depends on getting it right.

Oman provides essential assistance to vulnerable families, covering basic needs and helping them withstand economic pressures. This safety net is vital and must continue. But support, by its nature, is temporary. It offers relief, not transformation. It helps a family make it through the month, but it doesn't give them the tools to take a bigger role in the economy or lift themselves into a more secure and productive life.

Empowerment is different. It is about building skills, creating opportunities and opening real pathways for people to work, innovate and grow. It turns those who rely on support into active participants in the economy. It strengthens the labour force, expands the private sector and reinforces the foundations of long-term growth.

This shift has already started in Oman, but it needs deeper focus and faster momentum. The Ministry of Labour is expanding training programmes that directly lead to jobs in logistics, industry, energy and port operations. In Dhofar Governorate, for example, young people have been trained and hired through a "Tamkeen" model that links skills directly to employment commitments. It is a promising approach, but it needs to be scaled nationally so more young Omanis can benefit.

At the same time, the Social



Support must continue, because it protects lives. But empowerment must accelerate, because it transforms them.



QASIM
AL MAASHANI

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

Protection Fund is designed not just to deliver benefits, but also to help low-income families move towards economic independence. Its mandate includes connecting families with vocational programmes, micro-business tools and financial inclusion initiatives. This is a structural change, but it requires stronger coordination with industry, banks, educational institutions and local communities to create real impact.

Oman is also making progress in its In-Country Value (ICV) strategy, especially in energy and mining. Companies in these sectors now allocate a significant share of their spending to Omani SMEs, with some operators directing more than 19 per cent of their procurement locally. Cumulatively, more than \$1.8 billion in contracts has gone to Omani enterprises. This is a powerful platform for job creation and entrepreneurship. But these opportunities often go to businesses already established, not to families or jobseekers who need a first step into the market. Here lies the missing link: preparing vulnerable groups to become suppliers and service providers within these fast-growing sectors.

For Oman to fully shift from support to empowerment, three priorities stand out. First, part of the support provided to families should be converted into productive tools — training, equipment, or starter

grants that help people build income-generating activities.

Second, low-income families and jobseekers must be connected more deliberately to supply chains in Suhar, Al Duqm, Salalah, Khazaen and the country's energy and mining zones. These areas require services that micro-businesses and home-based enterprises can provide, from catering and transport to packaging, maintenance and agricultural supply. Third, Oman needs richer, more dynamic data on the capabilities, aspirations and challenges of the families receiving support. The Social Register is a major achievement, but empowerment requires detailed profiles that match people with opportunities.

Oman has the legal frameworks, the digital systems, the industrial plans and the national vision needed to make empowerment the cornerstone of its next economic phase. But real progress will depend on how well different institutions — governmental, private and social — work together to place vulnerable groups inside the economic cycle, not on its edges.

Support must continue, because it protects lives. But empowerment must accelerate, because it transforms them. The true measure of national progress is not only how well we assist those in need, but how effectively we help them rise, participate and contribute to the prosperity of the nation.

Al Dhahirah Forum to spotlight SME partnerships

THE Promising Opportunities Forum will open on December 1 in the Wilayat of Ibri, bringing together more than 25 public and private sector institutions for three days of dialogue and deal-making in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

Organised by the Al Dhahirah branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the forum aims to build practical partnerships between large companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs),



The forum aims to build practical partnerships between large companies and small and medium-sized enterprises.

leveraging available business opportunities to strengthen private sector growth in the governorate.

The opening ceremony will be held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, OCCI Chairman, said the forum reflects the Chamber's strategic focus on improving the business environment, deepening partnerships and broadening the base of economic diversification

across Oman's governorates. He stressed the Chamber's commitment to initiatives that create real linkages between major companies and SMEs.

Saif bin Saeed al Badi, Chairman of the OCCI Al Dhahirah branch, said the forum will feature presentations on ongoing development projects, available business opportunities and institutional initiatives.

It will also host a dedicated exhibition by large companies highlighting opportunities for SMEs. — ONA

CLASSIFIEDS

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIT. VACANT

JOB VACANCY:

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

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

Phone : +96896965333

Email : sultanalhabsi701@gmail.com

URGENTLY REQUIRED FOR CONTRACTING COMPANY

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

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

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (Cockroaches), Public Health Chemicals, Agriculture Chemicals, Snake Repellent, Rodent Baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

WJ Towell Group, Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

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

اوربیت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

FOR RENT/SALE

Fish Plant & Accommodation Building FOR RENT/SALE

LOCATION: MULANDHA INDUSTRIAL AREA

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

1663 sqmt with number of Offices

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

Contact Nos.: 99643760/ 92192020

JOB OPPORTUNITY

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

REQUIREMENTS:

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

Apply Now: muscatjob2025@gmail.com

Job Vacancy

URGENTLY REQUIRED FOR CONTRACTING COMPANY

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

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

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

VACANCY

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

sales@alchemyarabia.com
+968-96654041

FOR RENT

10000 sqm

plus area of

open yard fully

blacktop with

compound

wall, wide gate

& CCTV for

immediate rent

in Jifnain.

Contact

99853040

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels



To advertise

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



ART/LIFE



NO CURE

LETHAL VIRUS HITS LAST RARE BLUE MACAWS IN BRAZIL NATURAL HABITAT



Spix's macaws are seen in the Spix's Macaws Conservation Center at the Sao Paulo Zoo

RIO DE JANEIRO: The only wild specimens of a rare blue parrot, which were recently returned to their natural habitat, have been diagnosed with an incurable, likely lethal virus, Brazil's government said recently.

The disease strikes a major blow to a programme seeking to return the Spix's macaw — featured in the 2011 animated film “Rio” — to its semi-arid natural habitat in northeast Brazil, 25 years after they were declared extinct in the wild. Brazil's conservation agency, ICMBio, saidP that since a first group of Spix's macaws arrived in the country from Germany in 2020, around 20 had been freed, only 11 of which had survived. All of the survivors have tested positive for circovirus, which causes beak and feather disease in parrots but poses no danger to humans. “The disease has no cure and kills the bird in most cases,” ICMBio said in a statement. Another 21 birds of around 90 still in captivity at a breeding center in the state of Bahia also tested positive.

The film “Rio” is about a Spix macaw that is raised in captivity in the United States and returns to Brazil to try to save its species. Real-life efforts to save the parrot are more worthy of a high-stakes drama, marked by institutional conflict, concerns over unscrupulous breeders and sales to private collectors.

The BlueSky breeding center is a partner of the German Association for the Conservation of Threatened Parrots (ACTP), which holds 75 per cent of the world's registered Spix's macaws, according to ICMBio.

Brazil terminated its partnership with ATCP in 2024 after the German organization sold 26 of the birds to a private zoo in India without its consent. Brazil has repeatedly raised concerns at meetings of CITES, the global wildlife trade regulator, over loopholes that allow for the sale of captive-bred Spix's macaws and fuel demand for the fragile species.

Aside from habitat loss, demand from private collectors drove the extinction of the bird in the wild. ICMBio has fined the BlueSky breeding center 1.8 million reais (\$336,000) for failing to implement biosafety protocols to curb the spread of the virus.

Inspectors found “extremely dirty” bird feeders encrusted with faeces, while workers were handling the birds “wearing flip-flops, shorts and t-shirts.”

The breeding center had fiercely resisted efforts to recapture the wild Spix's macaws, which a court ordered them to do in October. — AFP

S H O T T A K E S



FESTIVAL

Balinese women carry offerings during the religious festival of Kuningan at Serangan island near Denpasar on Indonesia's Bali island. Kuningan, the last day of the Galungan celebrations, is believed to be the ascendant day of ancestral holy spirits returning to heaven. — AFP



AEROSPACE

The Marksmen aerobatic team from South Africa performs during the Aero Asia 2025 in Zhuhai, in southern China's Guangdong province. Aero Asia 2025 is an international aviation and aerospace exhibition that runs between November 27-30. — AFP



CHRISTMAS MARKET

A villager dries paddy rice at a village in Congjiang County, in southwestern China's Guizhou province. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Unfurling patriotism



Early bird gets the worm

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

TINY TEETH, BIG IMPACT



DR NIDA RAHMAN

The writer is a dentist

PARENTS cherish that magical moment when the first tiny tooth appears. But soon after, many think, “It’ll fall out anyway”. The truth is, milk teeth play an essential role in a child’s growth. They help children eat comfortably, form clear speech, maintain facial structure and save space for adult teeth. If neglected, children may struggle with chewing, speech difficulties, or crooked permanent teeth later in life. Dental decay is one of the most common chronic diseases in children — yet it’s preventable. Start brushing as soon as the first tooth appears. Use a soft brush and a small amount of fluoride toothpaste. Make brushing fun with songs and colourful brushes. Parents should supervise brushing until age 7–8 and start flossing once teeth touch. These small routines lay the groundwork for lifelong oral health. Many children fear the dentist, imagining bright lights and scary tools. Preparing them gently helps. Speak positively: “We’re visiting the tooth doctor

who keeps your smile shiny”. Avoid words like pain or pulling. Early, friendly visits for routine checkups or fluoride treatments build trust and reduce anxiety. Daily dental care teaches more than hygiene — it builds discipline, responsibility and self-care. A few minutes of brushing and healthy choices can prevent pain, infection and costly treatments later. This simple routine is an investment in a child’s confidence and overall wellbeing. Common childhood dental issues include: Early Childhood Cavities: Often due to sugary snacks or bedtime bottles. Gum Infections: Caused by poor brushing or trapped food. Tooth Injuries: From falls or active play — quick dental care is essential. Thumb Sucking: Prolonged habits can affect jaw alignment. Diet also plays a big role. Limit sugary drinks, sticky candies and frequent snacking. Offer fruits, vegetables, cheese, yoghurt and plenty of water. Adding fruit slices or using colourful water bottles can make hydration fun. Children follow parents’ examples — brush and floss with them, praise good habits and make dental visits a positive experience. This Children’s Day, remember that healthy milk teeth are a true gift. Strong, well-cared-for tiny teeth lead to bright smiles, confident kids and a lifetime of good dental health.

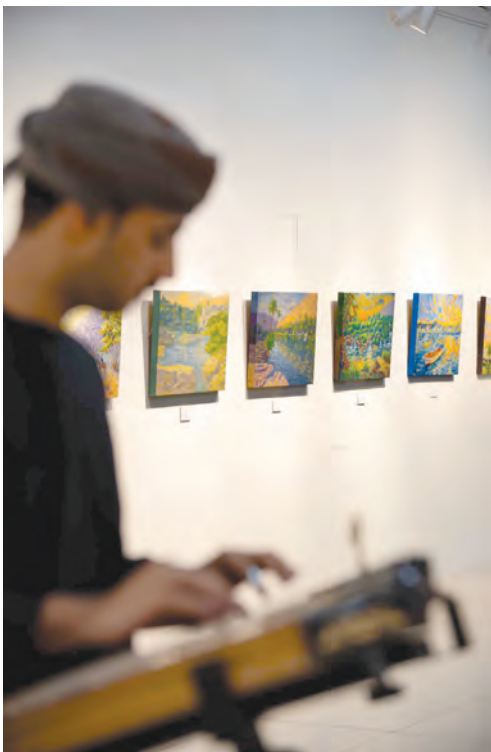
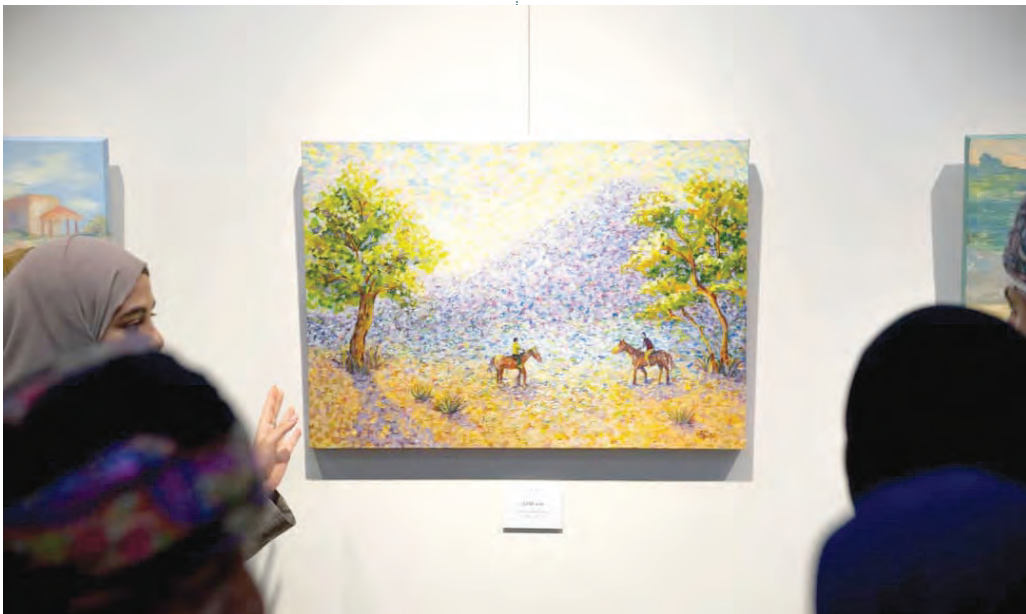
MONET COMES TO MUSCAT



ARWA AL HASHIMI

AT THE Omani Society for Fine Arts in Ghala, Muscat, the art exhibition ‘Monet’s Impressionism’ held recently showcased the works of students from the Fine Arts Group at Sultan Qaboos University, under the supervision of artist Yousuf al Nahwi. The exhibition came as a continuation of a journey that began a year earlier, when the group presented a surrealist exhibition inspired by the works of Salvador Dalí with an Omani touch, an experience that encouraged them to take on a new challenge, this time through the world of Impressionism. According to Al Nahwi, the idea started with the students’ eagerness to keep exploring major artistic experiences, especially after the success of their earlier surrealism project. Although the students initially thought Impressionism was an “easy” school, the workshops and hands-on practice revealed the opposite. They soon discovered the depth of the style and the difficulty of capturing light, colour, texture and the sensitive layering that defines french legend Claude Monet’s technique.

Al Nahwi explains that the main goal was not merely to produce beautiful artworks, but to create a fertile environment where students could experiment freely, make mistakes, learn and rebuild their ideas. Impressionism, despite appearing simple at first glance, requires a sharp sensitivity to colour and a new way of seeing nature. The students eventually realised that it is “easy only for those who have mastered it, and challenging for beginners”, especially as it depends on emotion, spontaneity and a moment-to-moment relationship with the surrounding environment. The preparation for the exhibition went through several phases. It began in the second semester of last academic year with theoretical lessons, discussions and introductory workshops on the Impressionist school. During the summer break, students continued sketching and experimenting with their tools, staying connected through WhatsApp and Instagram. The real transformation, however, began in September when students returned with their initial works. Under Al Nahwi’s guidance, who preferred not to interfere unless the student asked, each painting was refined, adjusted and developed. This method helped students overcome hesitation, understand the method more deeply and build confidence in their artistic decisions. Some students worked boldly and learned through trial and error. Others took their time before finally reaching solid artistic ground. The exhibition featured 36



artworks, each carrying a shared Impressionist spirit but a unique personal expression. Students chose scenes connected to their own environments, landscapes from their hometowns, seascapes, mountains, farms, daily life, sunlight and natural atmospheres. Despite similarities in brushwork, colour layering and tonal movement, each piece stood out through its depth, rhythm and emotional

presence. According to Al Nahwi, this balance between unity and individuality reflects how each student found his or her own path while still honoring Monet’s style. Al Nahwi believes that this exhibition goes beyond being a student project, it is a valuable contribution to the Omani art movement. It is based on solid study, connected strongly to Omani identity and guided by an understanding of one of the world’s most influential artistic schools. Translating Monet’s Impressionism into an Omani context was not an easy task, but it became a meaningful experiment that showcased the passion and skill of young Omani artists. This exhibition is also seen as an extension of their previous Dalí-inspired project, forming a continuous path of artistic experimentation that blends academic knowledge with creative exploration. Al Nahwi concludes with a message to the exhibition’s visitors: “Oman is beautiful, our youth are capable and their art carries the strength of this land. These works are not merely landscapes; they are Omani emotions rendered through a universal artistic language. We hope visitors find in this exhibition a moment of peace, beauty and pride”.

FEATURES

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

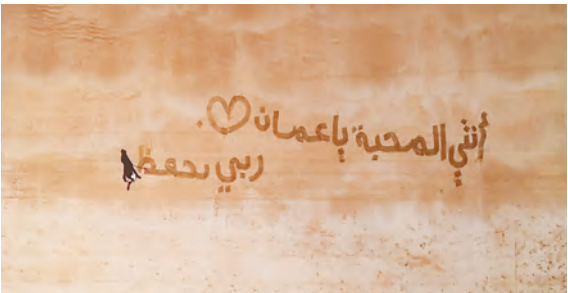
TWO
LENSES
CAPTURE
A SHARED
SOUL



Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, looks at the photographs.



Photo by Ghania al Majrafi



THE DOORS of the Omani Society for Fine Arts opened not to a typical exhibition, but to a quiet kind of enchantment. Soft light filled the hall, each wall lined with photographs that seemed to wait, patiently, for eyes that would bring them to life. This year's joint Omani, Bahraini photography exhibition, organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth under the auspices of Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, was more than a cultural event. It felt like a gentle crossing between two nations, a space where Oman and Bahrain stepped into each other's worlds without leaving their own.

Eight photographers, four from each country, stood at the heart of this dialogue. Their images created a woven landscape of seas, mountains, alleys, markets and people, all bound by the subtle heartbeat of Gulf life. What might have seemed as a simple gallery show quickly revealed itself as a conversation told through light, colour and detail. The exhibition was part of a broader initiative to deepen artistic collaboration across the region, yet inside the hall, such frameworks were

further complemented with a collective vision stitched from heritage and memory.

Bahrain's Ambassador, Dr Juma bin Ahmed al Kaabi, walked slowly among the works, pausing before photographs that seemed to hold him still. He described the exhibition as a bridge built from light, one that reflected the shared beauty, history and emotion of both nations. Around him, the images glowed softly, as if acknowledging his words.

The landscapes drew visitors first. Omani mountains rose in layered silhouettes, washed in the soft gold of morning. Their ridges resembled lines from ancient poetry, steady and enduring. Below them, falaj streams traced delicate silver paths across the earth, while palms leaned over village paths, casting shadows familiar even to first-time visitors. Across the hall, Bahrain offered a contrasting palette: islands drenched in sunset pink, calm waters reflecting the sky, narrow alleys catching the final slivers of daylight. The two landscapes spoke to each other, Oman's rugged permanence meeting Bahrain's gentle shores, earth answering water, rock answering tide.

Among the Omani photographers, Ghania al Majrafi offered an unexpected view. Her macro images of insects revealed tiny, jewel-like universes, wings shimmering under invisible light, bodies patterned with extraordinary precision. She spoke of her work as a bridge between science and art, a way to show that beauty exists even in the smallest creatures, essential threads in Oman's ecosystem. Her work added a delicate rhythm to the exhibition, inviting viewers to linger in the microcosms of life often overlooked.

From Bahrain, Mahdi al Jallawi described the exhibition as a film without dialogue, each photograph a frame in a shared reel of memory. He spoke of



Photo by Ghania al Majrafi

long-standing friendships between photographers from both countries, of a decade of collaboration and the joy of seeing Oman and Bahrain through native eyes. His words seemed to float among the images, complementing the visual dialogue.

Symbols of Gulf identity appeared in every corner. Wooden boats rested in quiet harbors, palm clusters bent over village streets, incense smoke curled above markets and traditional garments glowed under soft light. Children in festive dress appeared in fleeting bursts of motion, blending innocence with cultural pride. Every image felt lived, a celebration of life, memory and presence.

By the time visitors stepped back outside, the exhibition had left its imprint. It had softened borders without erasing identity, allowing Oman to stand in its mountains and palms, Bahrain to shimmer in its islands and alleys; and together forming a single horizon of shared culture. It was not an ordinary exhibition. It was a reminder that the strongest bridges are built not of stone or policy, but of the way a camera captures a fleeting moment and how one nation sees another through light, memory and truth.

