

OMAN
Observer
DAILY

SUNRISE 06:45 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 05:24 AM

DHUHR 12:10 PM

ASR 03:11 PM

MAGHRIB 05:31 PM

ISHA 06:46 PM

10

SSL TEAM OMAN
SAIL SEAL SPOT
IN STAR SAILORS
LEAGUE

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ADDRESSING NATIONAL ISSUES A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

H M M E E T S C H A I R M A N , M E M B E R S O F S T A T E C O U N C I L O F F I C E

HM COMMENDS
COUNCIL'S EFFORTS,
CONTRIBUTIONS

RESPONSIBILITY
IN ADDRESSING
NATIONAL ISSUES

FOCUS ON TACKLING
CHALLENGES AND
DEVELOPING POLICIES

IMPORTANCE OF
IMPLEMENTATION
MECHANISMS

ALLOW CONVERSION
OF PROPOSALS INTO
PRACTICAL STEPS

STEPS TO RESOLVE
ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE
TO THE SOCIETY

HIGHLIGHT NATIONAL
ACHIEVEMENTS
AND GAINS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met at Al Barakah Palace on Monday with the Chairman and the members of the State Council's Office.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met at Al Barakah Palace on Monday with the Chairman and the members of the State Council's Office.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan commended the Council's efforts, contributions, and its collaboration with governmental institutions in advancing comprehensive national development, and in developing the

country's developmental, economic and social aspects. His Majesty affirmed that the responsibility for addressing national issues is a shared one among all state institutions and bodies, requiring their contribution to tackling challenges, developing public policies and backing the approaches of the state to realise the nation's interest and serve citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan also

underlined the importance of establishing effective implementation mechanisms that allow for the conversion of proposals into practical steps. These steps would support resolving issues of importance to society and solidify the integration of state institutions' efforts, thereby ensuring sustainable development, safeguarding national gains and achievements and enhancing public

confidence.

At the end of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan emphasised the importance of engaging with societal issues and existing challenges, disseminating appropriate and accurate messages regarding topics addressed in the media and circulated on social media platforms, in addition to highlighting the efforts made and the national-level achievements and

gains realised, and elevating public awareness.

The meeting was attended by Dr Hamed bin Said al Aufi, Head of Private Office of His Majesty the Sultan, Shaikh Al Fadhl bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, and Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs. — ONA

ROYAL DECREE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO WTO APPOINTED

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday issued Royal Decree No 108/2025 on appointing a permanent representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the World Tourism Organization in Madrid. Article (1) appoints Thamer bin Fayez bin Khalfan al Alawi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Spain as Oman's Permanent Representative to the World Tourism Organization in Madrid. Article (2) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA

OMAN-SAUDI TIES

The Omani-Saudi Coordination Council held its third meeting on Monday in Muscat. The session was co-chaired by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Sayyid Badr highlighted the qualitative progress achieved since the Council's first session. **DETAILS ON P3**

New road projects to be opened in Duqm



The dualiation of the Sultan Said bin Taimur Road (National Road 32/South) aims to improve traffic in the centre of Duqm city.

THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AT DUQM, Governorate of Al Wusta, will see the opening of two new projects on Wednesday, including the dualisation of the Sultan Said bin Taimur Road and the dualisation of the Ras Markaz Road. The ceremony will be held under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy.

The two projects reflect the keenness of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) to boost the attractiveness of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm and to facilitate the movement of citizens, residents and investors.

The dualisation of the Sultan Said bin Taimur Road (National Road 32/South) aims to improve traffic in the centre of Al Duqm and to establish a modern urban environment that keeps pace with projects taking place in the vicinity. Meanwhile, the dualisation of the Ras Markaz dual carriageway aims to connect the oil storage area and new investment zones (in the renewable energy, fisheries and food industries) with different investment zones. It also seeks to enhance the network of transport in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. — ONA

OMAN

HM commends State Council’s efforts

HM AFFIRMS
RESPONSIBILITY IN
NATIONAL ISSUES

TRANSFORM
PROPOSALS
INTO PRACTICAL STEPS

TACKLING CHALLENGES
AND DEVELOPING
POLICIES

IMPORTANCE OF
IMPLEMENTATION
MECHANISMS

STEPS TO RESOLVE
ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE
TO SOCIETY

IMPORTANCE
OF ENGAGING WITH
SOCIETAL ISSUES

HIGHLIGHT
NATIONAL-LEVEL
ACHIEVEMENTS





MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq met at Al Barakah Palace on Monday with the Chairman and the members of the State Council’s Office. At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan commended the Council’s efforts, contributions, and its collaboration with governmental institutions in advancing comprehensive national development, and in developing the country’s developmental, economic and social aspects. — ONA





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SHORTTAKES

The introductory session aimed to familiarise Omani academics and researchers with the Fulbright Programme.

FULBRIGHT
VISITING SCHOLARS
PROGRAMME INFO
SESSION HELD

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, in cooperation with the US Embassy in Muscat, organised an information session on the Fulbright Visiting Scholars Programme at the conference hall of the ministry’s headquarters.

The introductory session aimed to familiarise Omani academics and researchers with the Fulbright Programme, offered by the US Department of State, and to highlight the research and teaching opportunities available in the United States. Participants were briefed on the programme’s benefits, which include travel support, a monthly stipend and health insurance.

The session also covered application requirements and procedures, selection stages, post-acceptance processes and grant conditions. Enrichment activities associated with the programme were outlined, including full-time commitment requirements and the submission of periodic reports.

The event witnessed strong participation and active engagement from academics and researchers, who received practical guidance and tips on preparing competitive applications, enhancing their prospects of selection.

The initiative forms part of the ministry’s ongoing efforts to strengthen national competencies, expand international academic cooperation and support the advancement of scientific research in Oman.

OMAN-SAUDI TALKS FOCUS ON ENHANCED COOPERATION

MUSCAT: The Omani-Saudi Coordination Council held its third meeting on Monday in Muscat.

The session was co-chaired by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The meeting saw the participation of heads of subcommittees and the secretaries of the Council’s General Secretariat, focusing on the strategic partnership between the two neighbouring nations.

At the start of the meeting,

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy emphasised that the Coordination Council serves as the primary framework for exploring and following up on joint cooperation initiatives. He highlighted the qualitative progress achieved since the

Council’s first session, particularly boosting intra-regional trade and joint investments, deepening cooperation in legal and security frameworks, expanding shared initiatives to promote regional travel and heritage and maintaining continuous dialogue

on regional and international issues of mutual concern.

Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud underscored the Council’s role as an effective tool for driving bilateral relations forward. He noted that the Muscat meeting is a direct continuation of the second Council meeting held in Al Ula in December 2024.

In a significant concluding step, both sides signed the minutes of the third meeting. This road map is designed to align the bilateral partnership with the ambitious goals of Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030. — ONA

Hallaniyat housing project
to be complete by 2026 end

YUSEF AL HABSI
MUSCAT, DEC 22

A project for the construction of 52 housing units in the Hallaniyat Islands is in full swing with an implementation rate of 51. The project is expected to be complete by the end of December 2026.

Said bin Ahmed al Batahari, Deputy Wali of Shaleem and Al Hallaniyat Islands, said: “We appreciate the wise directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik regarding the implementation of a package of development projects, including the construction and maintenance of 52 housing units for citizens under the supervision of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. Young people are looking forward to having their requests for additional housing units considered. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is also implementing a project to construct administrative and service buildings at the fishing port. Work on the project began in October 2024 by Ishraq Engineering and Investment Company, with completion

The project aims to provide modern housing that enhances urban development. Photos by Mohammed bin Nasser al Aufi

scheduled for January 2027. It is expected to be completed ahead of schedule. Furthermore, the Dhofar Municipality has implemented a project to construct a recreational area and sports field.” He

pointed out that the establishment of the marine buffer zone reserve around the Hallaniyat Islands in Dhofar Governorate by a Royal Decree enhances the environmental standing.

Eng Mohammed bin Hassan al Fairouz, project engineer at the Directorate-General of Social Housing and Projects, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, said: “In response to Royal directives, the ministry is implementing a project for the construction of 20 housing units and the maintenance of 32 existing units in the Niyabat of Al Hallaniyat Islands in Dhofar Governorate. The project aims to provide modern housing that meets the needs of residents and enhances urban development and essential services.” He added: “Each housing unit covers a total area of 320 square metres and contains five rooms. The service facilities include a small pantry within the kitchen and a large main storage. This is in addition to a parking space and an outdoor courtyard that can be used for various purposes with an effective rainwater drainage system designed.”

Sohar Festival opens with free grand
show and 7,000-seat mega theatre

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, DEC 22

The fourth edition of the Sohar Festival officially kicked off on Monday, marking a major cultural, entertainment and tourism milestone for Al Batinah North.

The opening ceremony was held on the main stage at the Sohar Entertainment Centre under the auspices of Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism.

This year’s festival presents an expanded vision that blends culture, heritage, tourism and entertainment, while introducing new elements highlighting scientific innovation and artificial intelligence. The programme underscores the growing role of Al Batinah North in energising Oman’s cultural and tourism landscape through inclusive events that cater to all segments of society.

A standout feature of the opening night was the grand operetta

This year’s festival presents an expanded vision that blends culture, heritage, tourism and entertainment.

Ibn Ruzayq, a large-scale artistic production that combined Omani literary and maritime heritage with modern technical innovation. The operetta featured prominent Omani artists, including veteran performers Saleh Zaal and Fakhriya Khamis, alongside other distinguished talents.

Through a dramatic musical narrative, the production brought

to life iconic figures from Oman’s history, such as the poet Ibn Ruzayq, philosopher-physician Ibn Amirah, legendary navigator Ahmad bin Majid, and the founding Imam Ahmad bin Said, offering a powerful tribute to the nation’s legacy. The opening ceremony also featured striking heritage performances involving horses, camels and maritime vessels, presenting Oman’s history through a contemporary artistic lens and receiving strong audience appreciation.

In a statement, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North and Chairman of the Main Committee of the Fourth Sohar Festival, welcomed visitors from within the governorate, across Oman, and from GCC countries and beyond. He noted that this edition promises a launch distinct from previous festivals and reflects the richness of Oman’s cultural, artistic, and heritage diversity, while strengthening national identity and supporting domestic tourism.

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OMAN

SHORT TAKES



The initiative aims to highlight Al Wusta’s rich tourism, cultural and heritage potential.

AL WUSTA WINTER 2026 EVENTS ANNOUNCED

HAIMA: Al Wusta Governorate on Monday announced the events for ‘Al Wusta Winter 2026,’ scheduled to take place from January to March 2026. The initiative aims to highlight the governorate’s rich tourism, cultural and heritage potential.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Musallam al Kathiri, Governor of Al Wusta, emphasised in a speech that the Al Wusta Winter events are part of ongoing efforts to stimulate tourism and economic activity within the governorate and to strengthen its presence as a promising tourist destination. He further noted the significance of these events in supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and showcasing the cultural and traditional heritage of the local community.

The Al Wusta Winter 2026 programme includes a diverse array of cultural, entertainment and sports activities, alongside heritage events, traditional markets and artistic performances. Designed to appeal to all segments of society, the program seeks to attract visitors from both within and outside the governorate.

Specific activities will include a shooting competition, an artistic concert, camel racing, a ‘Muzayna’ (camel beauty pageant), as well as specialised events for Ramadhan and Eid Al Fitr, with various activities distributed across the governorate’s different wilayats.

The Al Wusta Winter events will proceed according to an integrated timeline aimed at providing a unique tourism experience that reflects authentic Omani identity and supports the sustainable development process in Al Wusta Governorate. — ONA

AL BURAIMI MARKS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

AL BURAIMI: The Directorate of Social Development in Al Buraimi Governorate organised a ceremony on Monday to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

The ceremony featured visual presentations showcasing various success stories and outstanding achievements of individuals within this community.

It also highlighted qualitative initiatives focused on community integration and skill development. Furthermore, the event recognised the efforts of those responsible for implementing these initiatives and distinguished workers dedicated to supporting persons with disabilities.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi, honoured partners from both the government and private sectors, as well as workers, parents, and high-achieving individuals from this category. — ONA

Session discusses smarter resource management

MANAH: The fourth edition of the Youth Dialogue Session in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate commenced on Monday, focusing on the current state of the agricultural, livestock and water resource sectors.

Organised by the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate in cooperation with the Directorate-General of Agriculture and Water Resources, the two-day event aims to explore ways to develop these sectors and enhance their management efficiency.

Participated in by a group of



The dialogue sheds light on the reality of the agricultural and water sectors in the governorate.

young people, specialists and interested parties, the session is part of ongoing national efforts to strengthen food security and consolidate concepts of sustainable management of natural resources.

The dialogue aims to shed light on the reality of the agricultural and water sectors in the governorate, discussing technical and regulatory aspects of their development. It also reviews successful local experiences and best practices while examining the requirements for the upcoming

stage, primarily raising resource use efficiency, expanding the application of modern technologies, improving productivity levels, and enhancing added value in line with national directives. Khadija bint Said al Khiyariyah, Director of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, stated that these youth dialogue sessions represent an important platform for enhancing youth participation in discussing developmental issues. — ONA

Oman embassy marks World Arabic Language

THE EMBASSY of the Sultanate of Oman in Cairo organised a celebration on the occasion of World Arabic Language Day, under the auspices of Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the Arab League.

The ceremony, held at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation, was organised in partnership and cooperation with the Museum and the Friends of the Civilisation Museum Association.

Organising the event at the Civilisation Museum aimed to provide a broader space for participation and maximise the cultural and cognitive benefit of the occasion. This contributes to spreading awareness about the importance of the Arabic language and its civilisational role, and enhances communication with various segments of society, particularly academic figures and youth.

The celebration was attended by official and cultural figures, the Arab Ambassadors accredited to Egypt, along with a selection of academics, intellectuals, media professionals and notable



The Embassy in Cairo felicitated individuals working in the field of the Arabic language in appreciation of their contributions.



participation from university students, underscoring the interactive and awareness-raising dimension of the event.

The celebration featured

a lecture delivered by Prof Dr Abdel Hamid Madkour, Secretary-General of the Arabic Language Academy, in which he discussed the importance

of celebrating World Arabic Language Day.

Prof Dr Said Tawfik, former Head of the Supreme Council of Culture and Professor of Philosophy at Cairo University, also delivered a lecture addressing the role of the Arabic language in shaping and preserving identity.

SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS

The celebration included poetic segments presented by poets, glorifying the Arabic language and its aesthetics, alongside presentations on the art of Arabic calligraphy, in which a number of Arab calligraphers participated, reflecting the richness and the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of this art.

The Embassy of Oman in Cairo felicitated a number of individuals working in the field of the Arabic language in appreciation of their contributions to its service and dissemination.

An Arabic calligraphy exhibition was also opened, in which the Embassy participated with some artistic works and historical correspondences between the Sultans of Oman and heads of state, written in Arabic calligraphy, as a vivid embodiment of its civilisational, historical and aesthetic value. — ONA

AL BATINAH SOUTH, GUTECH SIGN MOU ON INSTITUTIONAL WORK



Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi and Dr Hussein bin Sulaiman al Salmi at the signing ceremony.

BARKA: The Al Batinah South Governorate and the German University of Technology (GUTech) signed a memorandum of cooperation to enhance areas of collaboration and academic partnership, supporting institutional work and building national capacities.

The memorandum was signed by Eng Masoud bin Said al Hashmi, Governor of Al Batinah South, and Dr Hussein bin Sulaiman al Salmi, Deputy Rector for Administration and Finance of the German University of Technology (GUTech).

The memorandum aims to strengthen institutional cooperation in areas of mutual

interest, build capacities, and launch a series of specialised seminars, training, awareness, scientific, and practical programmes in cybersecurity, computer science, artificial intelligence, logistics management, and other related fields.

This will facilitate the provision of technical consultations and the finding of practical solutions to challenges facing institutions. The memorandum would facilitate joint meetings between the two parties, encourage and support student projects and leverage the expertise of both sides in implementing joint programmes and projects.

Forum prepares Arts, Social Sciences graduates for labour market

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 22

The College of Arts and Social Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), through its Alumni Committee and Department of Tourism, recently organised a forum for final-year students titled ‘Enhancing the Graduates of the College of Arts and Social Sciences to Align with the Labour Market in Line with Oman Vision 2040.’

The event aimed to equip students

with the skills and knowledge needed to enter the workforce, with sessions on employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, and labour market readiness delivered by experts from the Ministry of Labour, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), entrepreneurs, and HR professionals.

An integrated training programme complemented the forum, guiding students through CV preparation, application processes



The event aimed to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to enter the workforce.

and mock interviews to simulate real-world professional scenarios.

Dr Faisal bin Saif al Saidi, Assistant Dean for Training and Community Service, highlighted the importance of linking university learning with employment requirements, urging students to continuously develop specialised skills to gain a competitive edge.

Representatives from the Ministry of Labour emphasised the evolving global labour market and

highlighted initiatives supporting youth employment, while SMEDA and successful entrepreneurs underscored opportunities in entrepreneurship and innovation, including funding, advisory services, incubators and the Riyada Card benefits.

The forum forms part of SQU’s ongoing efforts to enhance educational outcomes, strengthen employability and prepare graduates to contribute effectively to Oman Vision 2040.

SHORT TAKES



Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti honoured healthcare teams and impact-makers.

HEALTH FORUM
REVIEWS PROGRESS
IN HEALTHCARE

SALALAH: The second Health Forum, organised by the Directorate-General of Health Services in Dhofar Governorate, was held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, with the participation of health professionals from across the sector.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, in the presence of senior officials and dignitaries.

In his keynote address, Dr Hani bin Ahmed al Qadi, Director-General of Health Services in Dhofar Governorate, emphasised the importance of fostering a culture of excellence and strengthening institutional performance. He underlined the need to continuously upgrade the healthcare system to meet current demands and enhance the quality of services provided to the community.

The forum featured two visual presentations titled 'From Beginning to End' and 'Health in Dhofar', highlighting the evolution of healthcare services in the governorate and the key milestones that have contributed to improved efficiency and service quality. A lecture titled 'Modern Leadership: Vision and Inspiration' was delivered by Hussein bin Mohammed al Lawati, Member of the Majlis Ash'shura representing the Wilayat of Muttrah. The session focused on contemporary leadership concepts and their role in motivating teams and fostering positive change in the workplace.

At the conclusion of the forum, the Minister of Health honoured healthcare teams, impact-makers, families of distinguished contributors, outstanding personnel from the Directorate, and those involved in organising the event. — ONA

Al Mazyouna Winter events boost tourism, empower entrepreneurs

AL MAZYOUNA: The 'Al Mazyouna Winter' events, organised by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Department in Dhofar Governorate in cooperation with several government and private entities, concluded in the Niabat of Mitán, Wilayat of Al Mazyouna.

The programme featured a variety of activities, including musical performances, a poetry evening, children's programmes, and heritage segments showcasing the rich cultural and social traditions of the



27 craftsmen and craftswomen took part in the heritage exhibition.

governorate.

A heritage exhibition was also held with the participation of 27

craftsmen and craftswomen, displaying a wide range of traditional products. In addition, a special corner was allocated for productive families.

Said bin Muslim Jadad, Head of the Al Mazyouna Entrepreneurship Centre, said that the 'Al Mazyouna Winter 2025' events are part of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority's efforts to support and empower entrepreneurs, SME owners, and craftsmen by providing platforms to showcase products, build partnerships, and exchange experiences. — ONA

Esports gains momentum in Oman as youth drive a rapidly growing industry

MUSCAT: Electronic sports have emerged as a rapidly expanding global industry, driven largely by strong youth participation, with the Sultanate of Oman increasingly investing in the sector through competitions, events and the formation of national teams that compete at regional and international levels.

Asma al Yahyai, a member of the Omani Committee for Electronic Games and Sports, said the esports sector in Oman is witnessing growing interest among young people, alongside a steady rise in participation



Professionalism in esports demands dedication, focus and significant personal sacrifice.

from players, clubs and investing companies.

She said that a key step towards professionalism and sustainable economic returns lies in establishing a national esports centre

equipped to meet the needs of professional teams.

The committee is also working to attract sponsors and investors, while supporting Omani

game developers and those interested in game design.

On talent identification, Al Yahyai explained that the committee relies on data collection, including player numbers, hours of play and game categories. This is complemented by organising local tournaments in schools, universities and institutions, in addition to an annual nationwide championship aimed at identifying professional and talented players.

Addressing social and organisational challenges, she said community awareness remains a priority. — ONA

Showcasing innovative learning, future skills

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, DEC 22

THE General Directorate of Education in Al Batinah North took a proactive step by organising the third edition of the Education and Future Skills Forum, supervised by the Life Skills Unit.

The event brought together Life Skills teachers to spotlight pioneering initiatives that bridge classroom learning with real-world skills and national development goals. The forum reaffirmed the Ministry of Education's commitment to fostering innovative educational practices and equipping students with future-ready skills aligned with Oman's long-term vision.

It saw 73 educational initiatives submitted by educators from across Al Batinah North, with 15 outstanding initiatives selected for presentation.

Five initiatives were showcased as interactive displays in the Initiatives Exhibition, while ten were presented as working papers, reflecting the diversity, creativity and quality of educational practices aimed at enhancing students' life skills.

The main session, 'Educational Initiatives and Future Skills: A Vision for Effective Science Education in Shaping the Future', was delivered by Dr Diaa Al Din Motawea from the College of Education and Arts, Sohar University, and moderated by Badr al Abri.

The session highlighted the pivotal role of educational initiatives in developing teaching practices, fostering innovation, and integrating skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving.

The first working session covered identity, citizenship,



The forum concluded with an award ceremony for participants and the announcement of results.

Al Batinah North Forum featured 73 submissions and 15 selected projects, and included interactive exhibitions and working papers on critical thinking

entrepreneurship, and active learning, featuring presentations like 'The Melody of Identity and Citizenship' by Hajar al Ajmi, 'Our Identity Through Our Culture' by Khalid al Balushi, 'Entrepreneurial Insights' by Nawal al Washahi, and 'The Triple Strategy for Active Learning' by Mohammed al Shibli.

The second session focused on digital transformation and innovative learning tools, including presentations like 'Life Skills Through a Digital Lens' by Hassa al Dhufri, 'The Heritage of the Ancestors' by Maryam al Aisai, 'Digitising Authenticity and Preserving Identity in 3D'

by Maryam al Maamari, and 'My Company, My Idea' by Asmaa al Zaabi.

The session concluded with Nadia al Muqbali presenting practical guidelines for programmes, applications and tools that support the educational process.

The forum concluded with an award ceremony for participants and the announcement of results, underscoring the importance of such platforms in exchanging educational expertise, supporting outstanding initiatives, and steering education towards future skills in line with the Ministry of Education and Oman's national vision.



جامعة السلطان قابوس
Sultan Qaboos University

ANNOUNCEMENT

Sultan Qaboos University announces their desire to sell devices and equipment that used in Technician Service Department and Agriculture Experiment station and their in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used Expired devices and equipment in auction yard and receive the bidding on Sunday and Monday (28 - 29/12/2025). from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (300) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the Expired devices and equipment, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling Expired devices, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items within 3 days from 09:00 am to 03:00 pm.
- The used devices and equipment are sold in their current condition and SQU is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the shifting is not completed until 2/01/2026 and we applied (10) Omani riyals as a penalty for each day after 2/01/2026.

Notes:

- Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- The auction will be in Technician Service Department and Agriculture Experiment station.
- Entering the auction yard through Gate No (3).
- For more information, contact on 24146137 / 95078734.



WORLD

EXERCISE RESTRAINT



Thailand's FM Sihasak Phuengketkeow speaks to press members after attending a special meeting of Asean Foreign Ministers, in Kuala Lumpur. — Reuters

CAMBODIA AND THAILAND TO HOLD TALKS ON RESUMING TRUCE

KUALA LUMPUR: Thailand and Cambodia agreed on Monday to hold a December 24 meeting of defence officials towards resuming a months-old ceasefire, as fierce border fighting between them entered a third week with at least 80 people killed so far. The decision was taken on Monday during a special meeting in Kuala Lumpur of Southeast Asian foreign ministers, who were trying to salvage a truce first brokered by Asean chair Malaysia and US President Donald Trump after a previous round of deadly clashes in July.

Thailand and Cambodia have engaged in daily exchanges of rockets and artillery along their 817-km (508-mile) land border following the collapse of the truce, with fighting at multiple points stretching from forested regions near Laos to the coastal provinces of the Gulf of Thailand. The top diplomats of the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations urged both countries to exercise maximum restraint and take immediate steps to halt fighting, while welcoming the planned meeting on Wednesday of the General Border Committee, a long-established mechanism for bilateral talks. “The Asean foreign ministers expressed hope for de-escalation of hostilities as soon as possible,” said a statement from Asean chair Malaysia, adding discussions would include ceasefire implementation and verification.

The decision to hold talks is the most significant step since fighting re-erupted, with neither Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim nor Trump able to bring the two countries to the table this time after various calls to their leaders. Five days into the conflict, Trump said the premiers of Thailand and Cambodia had both agreed to “cease all shooting”, but the clashes continued the following day, with Bangkok launching more air strikes and vowing to keep on fighting. China has also pressed both sides to step back, with its special envoy for Asian affairs Deng Xijun, holding talks in Bangkok and Phnom Penh in recent days.

Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuengketkeow said his country wanted a “true ceasefire” with a detailed implementation plan and firm commitment from Cambodia. He said neither the US nor China had been involved in the decision on bilateral talks, adding it was about Thailand and Cambodia “working things out”. “A ceasefire cannot just be declared; it needs a discussion,” Sihasak said. “The Cambodians want a ceasefire, let’s have a discussion on a ceasefire. We proposed that our two militaries should meet as soon as possible.” The location of the meeting was not immediately clear, but Sihasak said Thailand proposed the border line in the Thai province of Chanthaburi. Cambodia’s defence ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Cambodia’s defence ministry said Thailand had violated its sovereignty on Monday with more “armed aggression” and vowed to defend what it said was its territory “at any cost”. Thailand’s army said Cambodia had carried out intermittent artillery attacks and used drones to drop bombs, adding Thai forces had responded with air strikes and artillery on military positions. — Reuters

JAPAN’S VOTE MOVES WORLD’S BIGGEST N-PLANT CLOSER TO RESTART

TOKYO: A Japanese regional assembly backed a plan on Monday to restart the world’s biggest nuclear plant for the first time since the 2011 Fukushima disaster, taking it a step closer to resumption. The move came after Niigata prefecture governor Hideyo Hanazumi approved the restart of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant last month.

The plant was taken offline when Japan pulled the plug on nuclear power after a colossal earthquake

and tsunami sent three reactors at the Fukushima atomic plant into meltdown in 2011.

However, the resource-poor nation now wants to revive atomic energy to reduce its heavy dependence on fossil fuels, achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and meet growing energy needs from artificial intelligence.

The assembly in Niigata, where Kashiwazaki-Kariwa is located, voted on Monday on a regional extra budget bill, which included a

supplementary resolution to endorse the governor’s decision. “The measure is approved by a majority vote,” the assembly speaker said as most of the 53-seat body stood to express their support.

With that hurdle cleared, Tokyo Electric Power (TEPCO) is expected to turn to Japan’s nuclear regulator to give final permission for a restart. TEPCO will submit the request to the Nuclear Regulation Authority before the end of the year, Japanese media said. — AFP

Israel demolishes more buildings, evicts residents

ISRAELI

bulldozers tore through a four-storey building in east Jerusalem on Monday, leaving scores of Palestinian residents unsure where to go after their doors were broken down in the middle of the night by authorities enforcing hasty evictions. The building was the latest in a series of residential structures to be razed as Israeli officials target what they describe as unauthorised construction in the city’s annexed east — a campaign that local Palestinian officials characterised as a “systematic policy” to displace residents. “The demolition is a tragedy for all residents,” Eid Shawar, who lives in the building, said.

Located in the Silwan neighbourhood near the Old City, the building comprised a dozen apartments housing approximately 100 people, many of them women, children and elderly residents. “They broke down the door while we were asleep and told us we could only change our clothes and take essential papers and documents,” said Shawar, a father of five. With nowhere else to go, Shawar, 38, said his seven-member family would have to sleep in his car. “They are destroying my bedroom,” lamented one woman, as she watched the heavy machines rip through the building.

Three bulldozers began tearing down the structure early on Monday as residents looked on, their clothes and belongings scattered across nearby streets, a journalist saw. Israeli police cordoned off the



Excavators demolish a building constructed without a permit in the Wadi Qaddum area. — AFP

The building was the latest in a series of residential structures to be razed in the city’s annexed east — an Israeli campaign that local Palestinian officials characterised as a “systematic policy” to displace residents

surrounding roads, with security forces deployed across the area and positioned on the rooftops of neighbouring houses. By midday, a large part of the building had already been razed to the ground. Built on privately owned Palestinian land, the structure had been slated for demolition for lacking a permit, activists said.

Two Israeli NGOs, Ir Amin and Bimkon, said the demolition was the largest carried out in 2025, adding in a statement that “around 100 East Jerusalem families have lost their homes”. Palestinians face severe obstacles in obtaining building permits due to Israel’s restrictive planning policies, according to activists, an issue that has fuelled tensions in East Jerusalem and across the occupied West Bank for years.

The building’s destruction “is

part of a systematic policy aimed at forcibly displacing Palestinian residents and emptying the city of its original inhabitants”, the Jerusalem governorate, affiliated with the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority, said in a statement. “Any demolition that expels residents from their homes constitutes a clear occupation plan to replace the land’s owners with settlers.”

On Sunday, Israel approved the establishment of 19 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, part of a rapid expansion, but considered illegal under international law. The Jerusalem municipality, which administers both west and east Jerusalem, has previously said demolitions are carried out to address illegal construction and to enable the development of infrastructure or green spaces in the area. — AFP



JAPAN’S FLAGSHIP FAILS TO LAUNCH SATELLITE

TOKYO: Japan’s flagship H3 rocket failed to launch a geolocation satellite into orbit on Monday due to engine failure, the country’s space agency said. The second-stage engine “terminated prematurely” after the rocket blasted off at 10:51 am (0151 GMT) from the Tanegashima space centre in southern Japan, according to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). It could not release into orbit the sixth satellite to the seven-unit “Michibiki” system, “resulting in a launch failure”, the space agency said. The agency has begun an investigation into what caused the problem, it said.

The Japanese geolocation system is designed to offer improved data for the country, enabling better consumer services such as car navigation systems and smartphone maps, according to JAXA. However, the space agency announced around 40 minutes after the rocket’s launch that its second-stage engine — which ignites after the first stage of the rocket detaches — had stopped earlier than expected. It came after technical glitches had twice delayed the original launch. — AFP

PARALYSED TOWN

Clashes soar in DRC’s strategic city



Clashes broke out near Uvira in the Democratic Republic of Congo between the M23 group and a pro-government group. The leader of the M23’s political branch, Corneille Nangaa, announced that the group would “unilaterally withdraw its forces from the city of Uvira, as requested by the US mediators.” M23 and a pro-Kinshasa group called the Wazalendo traded gunfire on Monday “that could be heard across Uvira”, Mafikiri Mashimango, a local civil society leader, said. — AFP

ANGRY PROTESTS

Bangladesh journalists rally after attack



Bangladeshi journalists protested against arson and vandalism at the offices of two leading newspapers, attacked last week as anger over a student leader’s death spilled into violence. Dozens of journalists formed a human chain in the capital Dhaka, holding placards condemning attacks on “freedom of the press” and on “democratic values”, as security personnel stood guard. Angry mobs attacked the offices of newspaper buildings, torching parts of them. — AFP

CONTINUOUS HOSTILITIES

Israeli strike hits vehicle in Lebanon, 3 dead



Lebanese state media reported three people killed in an air strike near Sidon that Israel said had targeted Hezbollah operatives on Monday, days ahead of a deadline for Lebanon’s army to disarm the group near the border. Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency said Monday’s strike on a vehicle was carried out by an Israeli drone around 10 kilometres from the southern coastal city of Sidon and “killed three people who were inside”. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



A worker looks down while putting up election campaign signs with a portrait of acting Prime Minister of Kosovo and Levizja Vetevendosje, in Pristina. — Reuters

KOSOVO HEADS TO POLLS FEARING POLITICAL DEADLOCK

PRISTINA: Kosovo will hold elections on December 28 after a year-long political stalemate that led to the dissolution of parliament and left a 1-billion-euro hole in the small Balkan country's shaky finances. Prime Minister Albin Kurti's Vetevendosje party won the last election in February, but failed to secure a majority or find a willing coalition party after an acrimonious campaign. Many fear a repeat could throw Europe's newest state into further crisis, just four months before parliament must vote for a new president and as deadlines loom to ratify international loans.

"These elections will be the most important ones in recent Kosovo history because they are coming after one year of deadlock, but also four months before a new president will be elected," said political analyst Artan Muhaxhiri. "If Kurti wins again with around 42 per cent, all this deadlock will be repeated, because the gap between Kurti and other parties is huge, unbridgeable." It appears unlikely that any of the major opposition parties will be willing to form a government with Kurti, who they say has stoked tensions with Kosovo's ethnic Serb minority in the north, done little to improve living standards, and tarnished Kosovo's reputation abroad. — Reuters

POPE WARNS AGAINST POWER STRUGGLES



Pope Leo XIV on Monday warned against power struggles in the Vatican administration and called for "humility". Leo was speaking to leaders of the Roman Curia as he prepares for his first Christmas as pope. "After many years of service in the Curia, we observe with disappointment that certain dynamics — linked to the exercise of power, the desire to prevail, or the pursuit of personal interests — are slow to change," the pope said. "We then ask ourselves: is it possible to be friends in the Roman Curia? To have relationships of genuine fraternal friendship?" the pope continued. — AFP

SWISS COURT TO HEAR LANDMARK CLIMATE CASE AGAINST CEMENT GIANT

GENEVA: A Swiss court has decided to hear a landmark climate case pitting residents of a tiny Indonesian island being swallowed by rising sea levels against cement giant Holcim, NGOs helping the islanders said on Monday. "For the first time ever in Switzerland, a court has admitted climate litigation brought against a large corporation," said a statement from NGOs including Swiss Church Aid (HEKS). The case is part of a wider international movement seeking to

hold major companies responsible for climate damage that imperils millions, especially in developing countries. Oil companies have typically been the main target, but activists are hoping the Swiss case will highlight the role of the cement industry, which is responsible for around eight per cent of annual carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions caused by human activity. "The court has now made its ruling: the complaint must be admitted in its entirety," the NGOs

said. Both sides received the ruling in advance of Monday's publication and they can still appeal against it. Holcim said in a statement it had "anticipated this as a potential outcome and intend to appeal". Environmentalists have said 11 per cent of the 42-hectare island of Pari has disappeared in recent years, and it could be completely under water by 2050. One of the plaintiffs, Asmania, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, hailed Monday's decision. — AFP

Moscow car blast kills general after US talks

A car bomb killed a senior Russian general in southern Moscow on Monday morning, the latest high-profile army figure to be blown up in a blast that came just hours after Russian and Ukrainian delegates held separate talks in Miami on a plan to end the war. Kyiv has not commented on the incident, but Russian investigators said they were probing whether the blast was "linked" to "Ukrainian special forces".

The attack was similar to other assassinations of generals and pro-war figures that have either been claimed, or are widely believed to have been orchestrated, by Ukraine. Lieutenant General Fanil Sarvarov, 56, head of the Russian General Staff's training department, was killed when the bomb, which had been placed under his parked car, detonated in a residential quarter of southern Moscow.

Reporters at the scene saw a mangled white Kia SUV, its doors and back window blown out. The frame was twisted and charred from the blast. The scene had been cordoned off by security forces, and investigators were sifting through the debris. Eyewitnesses reported a loud bang. "We absolutely didn't expect it. We thought we were safe, and then this happens right next to us," local resident, Tatiana, 74, said. "The windows rattled, you could tell it was an explosion," said Grigory, 70, who also declined to give his surname. "We need to treat it more calmly. It's the cost of war," he added.

Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said it was "working through various lines of enquiry into the murder. One of them involves the possible organisation of the crime by Ukrainian special services." Sarvarov fought in the Russian army's campaigns in the North Caucasus, including Chechnya in the 1990s, according to his official biography on the defence ministry's website. He also commanded Russian forces in Syria in 2015-16.

The Kremlin said Putin had been informed about Monday's killing, which came after three days of talks in Miami as the United States intensifies its efforts to broker an end to the four-year war. Ukrainian negotiator Rustem Umerov and US special



The damaged car lies at the scene after bombed in Moscow. — Reuters

envoy Steve Witkoff hailed "progress" in the negotiations on Sunday.

Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev also met with the US team, which included Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump's son-in-law. Witkoff had also called those meetings "productive and constructive." An initial 28-point plan to end the war put forward by US President Donald Trump adhered to Moscow's core demands, triggering panic in Kyiv and European capitals.

Ukraine and its allies have since been working to refine the plan, though Kyiv says it is still being asked to make massive concessions, such as giving up the entire eastern Donbas region to Russia. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has expressed scepticism over whether Russia really wants to end the war, which has killed tens of thousands and decimated eastern and southern Ukraine. The Kremlin on Monday

also denied that it wanted to recreate the Soviet Union, seize the whole of Ukraine and more land in eastern Europe after Reuters reported that US intelligence had concluded Putin seeks much more than just control over eastern Ukraine.

Since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, Kyiv has been blamed for several attacks targeting Russian military officials and pro-Kremlin figures in Russia and in Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine. A car blast near Moscow in April killed General Yaroslav Moskalik, a deputy of the General Staff. In December 2024, Igor Kirillov, the head of the Russian radiological, chemical and biological defence forces, was killed when a booby-trapped electric scooter exploded in Moscow, an attack claimed by Ukraine's SBU security service. A Russian military blogger, Maxim Fomin, was killed when a statuette exploded in a Saint Petersburg cafe in April 2023. — AFP

Fuming Denmark summons US ambassador over Greenland envoy

COPENHAGEN: Denmark said on Monday it would summon the US ambassador after President Donald Trump appointed a special envoy to Greenland who immediately vowed to make the Danish autonomous territory "a part of the US". Since returning to the White House in January 2025, Trump has repeatedly said the US needs the resource-rich Arctic island for security reasons, and has refused to rule out the use of force to secure it. On Sunday, Trump appointed the governor of Louisiana, Jeff Landry, as special envoy to Greenland.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said that he was "deeply angered" by the move and warned Washington to respect Denmark's sovereignty. In a post on his social media platform Truth Socia, Trump said Landry "understands how essential Greenland is to our National Security, and will strongly advance our

Country's Interests for the Safety, Security, and Survival of our Allies, and indeed, the World." Landry responded directly to Trump in a post on X: "It's an honour to serve you in this volunteer position to make Greenland a part of the US."

The Danish foreign minister told television TV2 the appointment and statements were "totally unacceptable" and said his ministry would call in the US ambassador in the coming days "to get an explanation". "As long as we have a kingdom in Denmark that consists of Denmark, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland, we cannot accept that there are those who undermine our sovereignty," he said. Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen issued a joint statement recalling that "national borders and the sovereignty of states are rooted in international law."

"You cannot annex another



A Danish flag flies outside the foreign ministry in Copenhagen, Denmark. — Reuters

country. Not even with an argument about international security," they said, adding: "We expect respect for our joint territorial integrity."

In a Facebook post addressed to Greenlanders, Nielsen said the appointment of a special envoy "doesn't change anything for us

here at home". "We will determine our future ourselves. Greenland is our country," he wrote, adding: "Greenland belongs to Greenlanders." The European Commission on Monday expressed its firm support for Denmark. "Preserving the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Denmark, its sovereignty and the inviolability of its borders is essential for the European Union," Anouar El Anouni, a spokesman for the bloc's diplomatic service, told reporters.

The vast majority of Greenland's 57,000 people want to become independent from Denmark, but do not wish to become part of the United States, according to a January opinion poll. Leaders of both Denmark and Greenland have repeatedly insisted that the vast island is not for sale and that it will decide on its own future. "The appointment confirms the continued American interest in Greenland," Lokke Rasmussen said in a statement. — AFP

OPINION

Call for clear communication with society



DURING his meeting with State Council members on Monday, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik stressed the importance of effective executive mechanisms to translate proposals into practical action, while underscoring the need for clear communication with society on national issues and ongoing reforms.

This emphasis reflects His Majesty’s commitment to accelerating development and achieving national goals.

He emphasised that the ambitious development plans in Oman require a clear and precise framework that defines responsibilities, sets priorities, and ensures continuous monitoring and evaluation. Executive mechanisms are not just procedural tools; they are the backbone of project success.

Developing these mechanisms and equipping them with qualified personnel and modern technology is essential. His Majesty also called for overcoming obstacles to project implementation and finding innovative solutions to challenges facing development.

His Majesty stressed the importance of effective communication with society

on national issues. Transparency and clarity build trust between the government and citizens and enhance community participation in decision-making.

Omani society is more aware of the country’s challenges and opportunities. Citizens have the right to be informed about development programmes and future plans and participate in national dialogue on relevant issues.

His Majesty emphasised balancing economic and social development. Development is not just about economic figures; it improves Omani citizens’ quality of life and provides equal opportunities.

Investment in infrastructure and productive sectors must be coupled with investment in Omani human capital through education, health, and training.

Omani citizens are the nation’s true wealth and can lead development forward.

As Oman continues to navigate its development journey, the focus on effective execution and societal engagement will be pivotal.

By aligning efforts and communicating clearly, Oman can overcome challenges and seize opportunities for sustainable growth.

Oman is witnessing major transformations under His Majesty’s leadership. Success

Success depends on effective mechanisms and clear communication. Let us work together to turn His Majesty’s vision into reality and be partners in building Oman’s

depends on effective mechanisms and clear communication.

Let us work together to turn His Majesty’s vision into reality and be partners in building Oman’s future.

As Oman is undergoing a significant transformation, moving away from its traditional reliance on hydrocarbon revenues towards a diversified, sustainable, and human-centric economic model, as outlined in Oman Vision 2040 plan, there is a need to adopt the strategic shift that is characterised by measured urban development, fiscal reforms, human capital development, and targeted investments in non-oil sectors such as logistics, manufacturing, renewable energy, and tourism.

Economically, Oman has made substantial progress in fiscal consolidation and diversification.

The economy is making good progress, as the Sultanate of Oman has transitioned from the recovery phase to one of economic growth and expansion.

The government is working to facilitate the business environment and attract foreign investment by simplifying procedures, providing competitive incentives, and strengthening partnerships with investors, which will open doors to new opportunities.

GERMAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS HIT BY FLOOD OF FAKE NEWS

JOHANNA LEHN

Security has been tightened at German Christmas markets after recent deadly attacks. But if some online videos were to be believed, they’ve become barbed-wire fortresses guarded by armoured personnel carriers.

A flood of disinformation has circulated on social media, with some doctored clips also giving the wrong impression that an Islamic cleric called for prayers at one of the festive events, and that markets have been stormed by Muslim men.

Recent images and videos showed what were claimed to be Muslim men or “Islamist immigrants” massing at Christmas markets in the cities of Hamburg and Stuttgart.

But AFP research showed that the footage was from other events: an October 2024 rally by the activist group Muslim Interaktiv, which has since been banned, and Syrians celebrating the fall of president Bashar al-Assad late last year.

Several AI-generated pictures have also shown Christmas markets with exaggerated security measures such as metre-high barbed wire fences or military-style vehicles parked around them. German Christmas markets, a centuries-old tradition, are hosted by nearly every town and city and consist of stalls with merchants selling gifts and decorations as well as sweets and sausages.

But the cosy family atmosphere of the markets has been tarnished by the shock of recent attacks.

Last year, six people were killed and over 300 wounded in a car-ramming attack on the Christmas market in the eastern city of Magdeburg. The man now on trial is a Saudi psychiatrist who adhered to conspiracy theories, held strongly anti-Islam views and repeatedly expressed his fury at German authorities.

That attack recalled a 2016 truck rampage through Berlin’s Christmas market by a Tunisian man with extremist motives that killed 13 people.

The far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) has seized on such attacks and plots as it calls for the “remigration” of foreigners, especially to Muslim-majority countries. Christmas markets are a ripe target for disinformation because of their emotional associations, said Lea Fruehwirth of Germany’s Centre for Monitoring, Analysis and Strategy. “Christmas symbolism stands for joy, a warm feeling of community and security,” said Fruehwirth, a disinformation researcher at the non-profit extremism monitoring agency.

Narratives that “accuse Muslims of wanting to violently destroy this idealised image can therefore trigger a lot of emotion,” she said.— AFP

Ich bin ein Berliner

DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

AS the first part of my fellowship at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin ends, I am reminded of John F. Kennedy’s proclamation in 1963, standing before a divided city and a divided world, “Ich bin ein Berliner.”

I whisper them now for entirely different reasons—not out of political solidarity, but out of a quiet, personal belonging I did not expect to feel in a dark forest on the outskirts of Berlin. I had arrived seeking solitude, but what I found was a cinematic world unfolding before my eyes: fog settling on a bleak lake, wooden cabins standing like sentinels of old stories, and a silence so thick it bordered on suspense.

From the window of my first-floor apartment, I often caught myself behaving like a character in one of those moody novels — eyes lingering on the forest line, inventing stories about the neighbours whose lights flickered through the branches. The atmosphere begged for imagination. It was the kind of setting you read about in bone-chilling thrillers: muted shades, nimbostratus clouds, cold rainy mornings, and theatrical nature.

The sky was a perpetual dream—dreary yet illuminated by the elegance of vintage colours I had only ever encountered in the paintings of Bob Ross: Cadmium Yellow, Phthalo Green, Prussian Blue, Dark Sienna. These shades softened the harshness of the city, painting Berlin in tones of vintage impressionism. People tell me Berlin is bleak, heavy and grey. But to me, that “bleakness” was a blessing. It soothed my eyes, calmed my heartbeat, and reminded me that beauty does not need brightness. Nor loudness.

The houses around me in Nikolassee contributed to this mood: old, creaky structures, with deep basements accessed by lone descending staircases, straight out



Berlin is a living testament to survival.



DR NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The writer is Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

of horror movies, their corridors echoing with stories I will never know. Fog crawled between the buildings at starry nights, and every so often, I was told, a fox would appear, pausing long enough for eager characters like me to wonder whether it, too, was part of the narrative Berlin was crafting for me.

And what does an Omani academic woman need in such a city? Beauty, yes. Style, certainly. But above all else — books.

Berlin gave me books the way a best friend gives comfort: quietly, generously, and without asking for anything in return. This is a city that still worships paper. A city where bookshops surprise you with covers hidden in brown paper sleeves, showcased as blind dates, where stories are treated as gifts rather than commodities. For the first time in my life, I found myself immersed in a paper-and-cardboard culture — beautiful leather-bound notebooks, handmade journals, vintage stationery, festive cards that felt like artwork. I even enrolled in an art-

journal workshop led by a Berliner at Dussmann. The workshop was in German, a language I still stumble through, but art storytelling, I discovered, transcends vocabulary. “Don’t worry,” I told the artist named Elisabeth, “I understand the art even if I do not understand every word.” And I did — because Berlin speaks visually, emotionally, atmospherically.

I made a vow — half in jest, half in sincerity — that if I ever won the lottery of life, I would spend it in Berlin, rummaging through flea markets and vintage fashion stores, collecting relics of forgotten lives.

Above all, Berlin is a living testament to survival.

It is history walking in human and architectural form, history resting in stones that have survived wars, division and rebirth. It holds the nightmares of the past, the mundane of the present, and the dreams of the future in the same hand.

And I am here for it. Because I too am a Berliner.

To the artists I don’t know but know their work



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

The writer is a senior editor of Observer

HAVE you ever wondered what has the biggest influence on you? Most likely, they are your thoughts. If we were to trace what caused how we feel, we could narrow it down to one’s train of thought. The circumstances that one goes through can be a trigger, but if we can be in control of our thought process, we can be like the eagle that can fly above the rain clouds. You can be in any situation but come out unscathed. That space in our mind must be kept sacred because this is where our state of mind is situated. If someone has said something that hurts, instead of lingering with it, we must forgive to forget and move on. If not, our mind space soon becomes bitter- not an ideal place for creativity. Our mind is happiest when we have a purpose to fulfil. To understand that, all we have to do is visit the annual exhibition of Unified Gulf Inmates Week that showcases the artistic and technical skills of prison inmates. My friend insisted that I must visit. And what a treat it turned out to be. This year the theme of the exhibition is ‘Towards the Path of Reform’ and is being held at the Mall of Oman. All the products on display are made by female and male inmates and are organised by the Directorate-General of Prisons. Many vocational skills are being taught in the prison. That is definitely generating hope for a brighter tomorrow, but most

interestingly, when customers buy an item, fifty per cent goes to the artist, and the other fifty per cent goes to the cost of materials. This can support their families too. And the outcome? They become contributing members of the society. The word ‘reform’, is interesting. It is an action or a process of improving something. Maybe they had never thought of painting or sculpting or making silver jewellery or carpentry. But here, their products are in an exhibition. If only they could see how people are admiring their pieces of art and see the reactions. HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said visited the exhibition and said this was the first time he had been to such an exhibition. He said that he came across exceptional pieces of art, and what was even more important was the notion behind the exhibition. More and more people should know about the exhibition. Visitors walk through and ponder at the details in the replicas of architectural structures of Oman. The spaces that featured products were becoming empty because people were buying them. I was eyeing a handmade clock with a yellow butterfly painted on it, and the next moment it was in someone’s hand. I was proud of the artist I didn’t know. I am impressed with this initiative of the Royal Oman Police. And I thought, what if we all bought everything, and then the artists and artisans would be busy being creative. Maybe then they could have a regular outlet for their products. It would be a perfect example of learning,

If someone has said something that hurts, instead of lingering with it, we must forgive to forget and move on. If not, our mind space soon becomes bitter - not an ideal place for creativity

practicing and implementing. From ceramics to crochet, furniture to pottery and sweets and cookies, so many creative concepts are being explored. Maybe the products could be exported. The Omani caps counter was busy because all the caps were handmade here. Appreciation is the best compliment. And one can imagine the satisfaction the artists and artisans must feel when their products are sold. A customer purchased a beautiful portrait, and when I asked her what appealed to her, she replied, “The girl’s eyes.” The detailed work on the eyes that was given by the artist got attention and won the customer’s heart. Some of the exhibitors may not have been born artists. But look at this - given the right opportunity, tools and best teachers, their lives changed, and they became artists who could capture everyone’s imagination. I saw one international customer open the door of a small wooden car and look into the interior, totally silent and intrigued. With the introduction of art, the thought process moved to creativity. Helen Hadsell had said, “The mind creates reality.” Norman Vincent Peale had said, “Thoughts create outcomes.” Changing of thoughts - could it change our world? This group of artists conveys so. Art can help us find our lost rhythm. So, to the artists I don’t know but know your work, participating in the ‘Towards the Path of Reform’ exhibition, I just want to say your work is amazing!

WHEN CAPE TOWN’S HOUSING CRISIS MEETS AIRBNB BOOM

SHAKIRAH THEBUS

The laughter of children echoed against walls lined with dozens of mattresses in a large, dim room of an illegally occupied building in Cape Town’s bustling and touristy city centre. A girl was having her hair braided on a stool near neatly placed plastic bags holding the belongings of people who had moved into the abandoned building from across the city. The property is in the heart of Cape Town, where rental prices are soaring as tourism is booming. “My income doesn’t allow me to pay Cape Town’s exorbitant rent prices,” said one of the residents, Fundisa Loza, 46. She moved in with her two daughters, aged 12 and 18, to be near her night-shift work at a call centre in the central business district, about a 20-minute walk away. Accommodation in the area is listed as starting at around 10,000 rand (nearly \$600) a month for a one-room flat, unaffordable on Loza’s monthly salary of 8,400 rand. Airbnbs nearby - many around the popular District Six Museum dealing with the apartheid-era forced removals of non-white communities to remote and underdeveloped townships - average around 1,500 rand a night. “It’s extreme,” Loza said. Nestled between spectacular mountains and the Atlantic Ocean, Cape Town is a growing tourism destination, topping the Telegraph and Time Out magazine’s 2025 rankings of best cities in the world. It has more short-term rental units than bigger cities such as Barcelona and Berlin, which see up to five times more visitors per year, said Jens Horber from the housing activism group, Ndifuna Ukwazi. In touristy locations like the city centre and the Atlantic seafront, Airbnb listings have increased by 190 per cent since 2022, Horber said. “Long-term rental units have been converted into tourist accommodation, removing units from the housing supply, raising rental costs and pushing out locals from neighbourhoods where they can no longer afford to live,” he said. The growth of offers for tourists and “digital nomads”, including in areas where many locals have jobs, has stirred anger and resentment. Loza’s family lives in one of three occupied buildings on the same street, each home to up to 50 people who are all facing court eviction orders. She has been registered for years on a waiting list for state-subsidised housing that a city official says already holds around 400,000 names. “We cannot access homes, we don’t have property,” Loza said. “Why must the city be reserved for certain people?” — AFP

Ireland’s defence gaps exposed before EU role

SHEEP amble around steel fences skirting Ireland’s largest military base on a grassy plain west of Dublin, a bucolic scene masking an underfunded defence force struggling with outdated equipment. Ireland’s threadbare military and its long-standing policy of neutrality are under heightened scrutiny as the country prepares to assume the rotating EU presidency from July. “Ireland is the only EU country with no primary radar system, nor have we sonar or anti-drone detection equipment - let alone the ability to disable drones,” said former Irish special forces member Cathal Berry.

“We can’t even monitor the airspace over our capital city and main airport,” he said as he surveyed Ireland’s main military base at The Curragh. That was dramatically illustrated during a visit to Ireland by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Several drones of unidentified origin were spotted above Dublin Bay as Zelensky’s plane arrived on December 1, which were detected only by the naked eye and blamed on pro-Russian actors. Russia’s Dublin embassy has denied any involvement. Militarily neutral Ireland is not a Nato member, yet its waters - seven times its landmass - account for around 16 per cent of the EU’s total. Nearly three-quarters of transatlantic subsea cables run close to or beneath them. But the Irish army numbers only a few thousand troops, is focused largely on UN peacekeeping missions and has neither a combat air force nor a sizeable navy. Ireland’s annual defence spending of roughly 1.2 billion euros is the lowest in Europe at around 0.2 per cent of GDP, well below the EU average of 1.3. “Neutrality itself is actually a fine policy. If you want to have it, it must be defended,” said retired Irish army colonel Dorchá Lee. “That’s the whole point.



Cathal Berry, a former Irish army special forces member, stands on The Curragh plain, the location set for Ireland’s largest military base, west of Dublin. — AFP



PETER MURPHY

The writer is a multilingual reporter, journalist and correspondent for AFP

Undefended neutrality is absolutely definitely not the way to go.” Berry points to a long-standing “complacency” about defence in Ireland that has fuelled a vacuum in debate over neutrality and military spending. “If you wanted to squeeze the EU without any risk of Nato retaliation, Ireland is where you’d come,” he said, adding that also applied to US interests in Europe. US tech giants like Google, Apple and Meta have their European headquarters in Ireland, supported by vast data centres that analysts say are vulnerable to cyberattacks. Visiting Dublin days after Zelensky’s trip, European Council President Antonio Costa said he was still “confident” Ireland could protect EU summits during its presidency. Defence Minister Helen McEntee has pledged that new counter-drone technology will be in place by then. Speaking in front of a row of ageing army vehicles at the Curragh military site, she also announced a broader increase in military spending, although the actual details remain unclear. On December 17, the Irish government said it plans to buy a military radar system from France at a reported cost of between 300

and 500 million euros (around \$350-\$585 million). For Paul Murphy, a left-wing opposition member of parliament, “scaremongering over allegedly Russian drones with concrete evidence still unprovided” is giving the government cover to steer Ireland away from neutrality towards Nato. “But it’s more important than ever that we’re genuinely neutral in a world that is increasingly dangerous,” he said. Ireland has historically prioritised economic and social spending over defence investment, he said. “Joining an arms race that Ireland cannot compete in would waste money that should be spent on real priorities like climate change,” he added. Pro-neutrality sentiment still holds sway among the Irish public, with an Irish Times/Ipsos poll earlier this year finding 63 per cent of voters remained in favour of it. And very few voices in Ireland are calling to join Nato. Left-winger Catherine Connolly, who won Ireland’s presidential election in October by a landslide, is seen as a pacifist. “I will be a voice for peace, a voice that builds on our policy of neutrality,” she said in her victory speech. But Russia’s war in Ukraine has prompted a radical reappraisal of European defence priorities. Two of the EU’s long-standing neutral member states, Finland and Sweden, responded by joining Nato. According to Cian Fitzgerald, a security analyst with Dublin-based Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA), Ireland must be alert to “emerging risks”. While Ireland’s geography has insulated it from the worst effects of conflict in Europe, threats such as cyberwarfare and drones are not constrained by distance, he said. “Ireland’s vulnerability is due to its importance to global communications and economic systems - making it a target not only in its own right, but also as a means to target others,” he said.

SPORTS

GHALA GOLF CLUB



The first round results reflected the high level of competitiveness among the GCC teams.

GCC GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP WITNESSES TIGHT CONTENTION

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 22

The first round of the GCC Golf Championship for ladies and junior categories, hosted at Ghala Golf Club, concluded with closely contested results among GCC national teams, as part of the points accumulation and qualification rounds for the final stages of the tournament, highlighting the steady development of golf across the region.

In the Ladies' Championship, the United Arab Emirates topped the leaderboard after round one with a score of +2, followed by Saudi Arabia in second place at +42, Bahrain third with +51, while Oman placed fourth at +117, with several rounds still to be played.

In the Girls' Under-16 category, the UAE continued its strong performance by leading the standings with +1, ahead of Saudi Arabia at +31. Oman finished third with +86, while Kuwait ranked fourth with +87, in a competition that showcased promising technical progress among young players.

Meanwhile, the Boys' Under-16 competition saw Qatar claim first place with +17, followed closely by Bahrain at +19, with the UAE third on +25. Saudi Arabia placed fourth with +37, Kuwait fifth with +64, and Oman sixth with +70, as expectations rise for an even more intense battle in the upcoming rounds.

Ahmed bin Faisal al Jahdhami, Championship Director, said the first round results reflected the high level of competitiveness among GCC teams, "The performances we witnessed confirm the success of junior development programmes across the region, and the current standings promise exciting and competitive rounds ahead," he stated.

He added that Ghala Golf Club is fully prepared to host major regional events, reinforcing Oman's position as a capable sporting destination and a key contributor to the growth of GCC golf.

The championship continues over the coming days, with teams aiming to strengthen their points totals and secure qualification for the decisive final stages of the competition.



The Ghala Golf Club is fully prepared to host major regional events and a capable sporting destination.

SSL Team Oman Sail seal spot in Star Sailors League

SSL Team Oman has achieved a new milestone for Omani sport on the international stage after qualifying for the Star Sailors League (SSL) Gold Cup 2026, scheduled to take place in November next year in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Qualification was secured with a race to spare after the team topped its group with five wins from the first five races in the Asian Qualifiers in Thailand.

Oman won the sixth and final race by a distance of over 400 metres to complete a perfect weekend while the battle for second between the United Arab Emirates and Kazakhstan took place behind them.

The team's qualification followed an impressive performance and a consistently high competitive standard by Oman Sail's sailors, as the team maintained a perfect record, win the decisive fifth race worth double points to confirm qualification, and finish unbeaten at the top of the group.

This achievement earned Oman Sail a well-deserved place at the Gold Cup, which will bring together the world's top 56 national teams from across all continents to compete for the prestigious title of 'World Champion of Nations' in one of the most competitive events in international sailing.

With this qualification, Oman Sail joins six Asian nations — Japan, China, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and India — that had already secured their places at the Star Sailors League Gold Cup 2026 based on national team rankings, which is determined by the results and performance of elite sailors in each country.

The Sultanate of Oman was represented in the qualifiers by a team of elite Omani sailors from Oman Sail, led by team skipper and experienced sailor Nasser al Mashari, alongside Hussain al Jabri, Yasser al Rahbi, Ali al Balushi, Akram al Wahaibi, Haitham al Wahaibi, Raad al Hadi, Abdulrahman al Maashari, as well as female sailors Ibtisam al Salmi and Marwa al Khaifi. Their participation reflected the depth, diversity and strength of national talent competing in one of the world's premier international sailing championships for national teams.

Commenting on the achievement, Abdulaziz bin Salim al Shidi, Oman Sail's Acting Director of Sailing, said: "We congratulate the Sultanate of Oman on this well-deserved qualification to the



SSL Team Oman during the SSL Gold Cup 2025 Asian Qualifiers in Thailand.

NEW INTERNATIONAL MILESTONE FOR OMANI SPORT OMANI TEAM WINS ALL SIX RACES TO QUALIFY SSL GOLD CUP SET FOR NOV 2026 IN BRAZIL

Star Sailors League World Finals 2026. This achievement reflects the continuous efforts and hard work of our sailors, as well as the technical and administrative teams supporting them. It is the result of sustained investment in developing national talent and confirms that Omani sailing is progressing steadily towards global competitiveness. We look forward to a strong and honourable participation in Brazil that reflects Oman's name and sporting stature."

'EXTREMELY PROUD'

For his part, Nasser al Mashari, team skipper, expressed his pride in the achievement, stating: "We are extremely proud of this qualification, which we dedicate to the Sultanate of Oman and to everyone who supported and stood by us throughout the qualifiers. The competition

was tough, but team spirit, collective effort and mutual trust among the sailors enabled us to achieve our goal. Qualifying for the World Finals is a major motivation for us to continue our preparations and work hard to deliver a strong performance in Brazil and raise the Omani flag high."

The Star Sailors League is regarded as one of the world's leading sailing championships for national teams, with all competitors racing on identical SSL47 yachts, ensuring a level playing field. This format places the emphasis on sailors' skill, tactical decision-making, speed of execution and teamwork, making it one of the most demanding events in the sport.

The Asian Qualifiers were hosted in Chonburi, Thailand, from December 20 to 22, 2025, in cooperation with the Thailand Yacht Racing Association, at the Ocean Marina Yacht Club.

Al Nahda eye first victory against Hadhramout

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 22

Oman's Al Nahda arrived in Doha on Sunday as they will face Yemen's Tadhamon Hadhramout in the fourth round of Group B fixtures of the 2025-26 AGCFF Gulf Cup Champions League. The crucial tie is scheduled for Wednesday at Saud Bin Abdulrahman Stadium with kick-off at 7:30 pm (Oman time).

The Al Buraimi-based club is currently placed third in Group B with three points, having drawn all of their previous matches. Al Nahda opened their continental campaign with a 1-1 draw against Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab in Riyadh on October 1, before earning another 1-1 stalemate against Qatar's Al Rayyan in Muscat on October 22. They, then concluded the first-leg fixtures with a third straight draw, again by the same scoreline, against Tadhamon Hadhramout at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on November 5.

Al Nahda remain unbeaten in the tournament but they



Al Nahda are currently placed third in Group B with three points.

target a first win against Tadhamon Hadhramout. Group leaders Al Rayyan currently top the standings by five points and followed by Tadhamon Hadhramout with four points and Al Nahda with three points. Al Shabab are in fourth place with two points. The upcoming fixtures are decisive in the race for the semifinal spots.

Following their arrival in Doha, Al Nahda commenced their preparations with a series of training sessions under the supervision of head coach Naseef al Biawi. The technical staff focused on

tactical discipline, improving transitions between defence and attack, and sharpened finishing in the final third as an area the team hopes will make the difference in the return-leg encounters.

Coach Al Biawi is expected to rely on a blend of experience and youthful energy, led by national team goalkeeper Fayeز al Rushaidi, midfield leader Harib al Saadi, and attacking options include Ahed al Mashakheyi, Hamed al Habsi and the team's professional player Misooki beside other players in the squad.

Al Nahda approach the continental clash with confidence boosted by their strong domestic form. The team recently recorded a 2-1 victory over Sohar in the Jindal League, a result that lifted them to second place in the league standings with 19 points, level with leaders Seeb but separated only by goal difference. Oman team players including Harib al Habsi and Thani al Rushaidi netted the goals for Al Nahda against Sohar. The domestic performance highlights the team's attacking potential and resilience that they will look to replicate on the regional stage.

For Al Nahda, Wednesday's match will represent a vital opportunity to transform their steady performances into a much-needed victory that could significantly enhance their qualification hopes. With the group standings finely balanced, a positive result in Doha would not only strengthen their position but also reaffirm the club's ambition to progress deep into the Gulf Cup Champions League.

FIRSTROUND



AL MUSANNAH
FACE AL SUWAIQ IN
SECOND DIVISION
HANDBALL

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 22

The curtain will fall on the first round of the Oman Second Division Handball League for the 2025-26 sports season on Tuesday, with a decisive encounter bringing together Al Musannah and Al Suwaiq in a highly anticipated match scheduled for at the Indoor Sports Hall of the Rustaq Sports Complex.

This crucial fixture carries significant importance, as it will determine the final two teams to qualify for the second round of the league, alongside Al Amerat Club, who have already secured qualification after topping the standings with eight points, following a series of strong and consistent performances throughout the first round.

The race for the remaining qualification spots remains open among three clubs. Mirbat Club currently sit second with four points, level with Al Musannah, while Al Suwaiq occupy fourth place with two points. As a result, the outcome of Tuesday's match will play a decisive

role in shaping the final standings, with all scenarios possible depending on the result.

Al Musannah enter the match aiming to capitalise on their attacking strength and the experience of their players in high pressure encounters, seeking to secure qualification without relying on complex calculations. Meanwhile, Al Suwaiq face a must-win situation, placing their hopes on fighting spirit and defensive discipline in an effort to overcome the points deficit and spring a surprise.

Elsewhere, Masirah Club have already been eliminated from

qualification contention after failing to collect any points during the first round, leaving them out of the race for the three available qualification places.

According to the competition regulations, teams level on points are ranked based on head to head results, followed by goal difference in those matches, overall goal difference, total goals scored and if necessary, a draw conducted in the presence of club representatives, match points are awarded as two points for a win, one point for a draw and no points for a loss or withdrawal.

Under the league format, the three qualified teams will compete in a single round robin points system in the next stage, the team finishing first will advance directly to the final, while the second and third placed teams will meet in a one off playoff to determine the second finalist.

Al Amerat confirmed their dominance by defeating Al Suwaiq 32-22 in the final round of the first stage. Al Musannah edged Masirah 26-25, while Al Suwaiq beat Masirah 38-36, other notable results included Mirbat's 24-22 win over Al Suwaiq, Al Amerat's victories over Masirah 33-18, Al Musannah 37-18 and Mirbat 40-26, as well as Al Musannah's 31-29 triumph over Mirbat.

All eyes will be on Al Rustaq on Tuesday as the final match promises high intensity and drama, bringing an exciting first round to a close in Oman's Second Division Handball League.



West Indies's Anderson Phillip bats during day five of the third Test match between New Zealand and West Indies at Mount Maunganui. — AFP

Five-wicket Duffy powers
New Zealand to series win

NEW ZEALAND crushed West Indies by 323 runs on Monday to win the third Test at Mount Maunganui and seal a 2-0 series victory, with Jacob Duffy's five-wicket haul proving crucial.

The hosts set a target of 462 and bowled out the tourists for 138, wrapping up the innings four overs after tea following a dramatic collapse either side of lunch.

Duffy finished with 5-42 and was backed up by Ajaz Patel, who claimed 3-23, while opener Brandon King top-scored for West Indies with 67.

New Zealand's Devon Conway scored 227 and 100 in two innings, while captain Tom Latham scored 137 and 101 — the first opening pair in first-class cricket history to score twin centuries in the same match — to set up the win.

The series began with a draw in Christchurch, before New Zealand won the second Test in Wellington.

"It was a pretty clinical performance," Latham said. "Winning the toss, batting first, being able to get close to 600, the perfect blueprint.

"And then obviously doing what we did with the ball... guys sort of playing the way that they did was obviously really pleasing," he said.

Seamer Duffy and spinner Patel posed constant danger to both edges of the bat on a cracked surface that offered uneven movement and bounce.

West Indies collapsed from 87-0 to 112-8



New Zealand's Tom Latham celebrates the series victory after day five of the third Test match between New Zealand and West Indies. — AFP

either side of lunch after starting the day on 43-0.

King dominated early, hitting a flurry of cuts and drives and scoring 53 of his team's first 59 runs.

New Zealand captain Latham's field placements had lacked aggression but that changed after the drinks break when Duffy broke the opening stand, with King gloving a rising delivery to Glenn Phillips at gully.

'BELOW PAR'
Patel struck in the next over, removing John Campbell for 16 after a rash attempt to slog down the ground. Phillips took another good catch in the deep.
Patel soon claimed another, with first-innings centurion Kavem Hodge falling for a duck.

Duffy then dismissed Alick Athanaze for two and Justin Greaves for nought in successive overs, leaving the West Indies reeling.

He struck again two overs later, with Alick Athanaze edging to keeper Tom Blundell for 2, before removing Justin Greaves for nought with an edge to Daryl Mitchell at slip. Duffy then had Roston Chase caught off the gloves by Latham at slip for five, capping a miserable series for the West Indies captain.

Chase scored just 42 runs at an average of seven in three matches, the second-worst figures for a captain dismissed six or more times in a Test series.

"I think I had a tough series, very below par for my standards," Chase said. "I didn't really lead from the front on the field.

"Leading in terms of words and encouraging and inspiring the team, that was all good and well, but in terms of going out there and producing for the team, I thought that I let myself down and the team down as well."

Patel claimed Shai Hope's wicket for three from 78 balls after a controversial lbw review. Hope did not offer a shot but the ball was deemed to be hitting his foot on the full and going on to hit the stumps.

Phillips then took his first wicket of the match by bowling Kemar Roach, who was nursing a hamstring strain.

Rachin Ravindra was introduced in the final session and snared Anderson Phillip's wicket with an lbw, before Duffy wrapped up the innings by bowling Jayden Seales. — AFP

Tien beats Blockx to win Next Gen ATP Finals title

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia: American Learner Tien overpowered Belgian opponent Alexander Blockx 4-3(4) 4-2 4-1 to win the Next Gen ATP Finals on Sunday, the year-ending exhibition tournament between the eight highest-ranked players on the tour aged 20 and under.

The tournament uses a modified format, where a player needs to win four games to clinch a set, and winning one point at deuce is enough to take the game.

Tien, who won his first trophy on the tour at the Moselle Open last month, held his nerve and made only 12 unforced errors while Blockx had 23, as the American won the match in



Learner Tien of the US celebrates with the trophy after winning the final match against Belgium's Alexander Blockx. — Reuters

just under an hour. "I'm really happy. I knew it was going to be a tough match. I don't think (Blockx) missed a serve for the first set-and-a-half. He's been playing great in these conditions all week," said Tien, who lost last year's final to Joao Fonseca.

Blockx, who served seven aces while his opponent had only one, made his intentions clear from the start, attacking the left-handed Tien's backhand with a fast serve and running up to the net to apply pressure.

Tien, ranked 28th in the world, pushed Blockx back with a well-placed lob before winning the point with a drive volley and although Blockx, ranked 116th, saved a break point and pushed

the first set into a tie-breaker, top seed Tien outplayed his fellow 20-year-old.

Tien won the second set with a decisive break, using his powerful forehand to push Blockx back until the under-pressure Belgian second seed hit over the baseline.

The American, who has clinched five victories over top-10 ranked players this year including a straight-set win over world number two Alexander Zverev in February, got another break in the third set to go 3-1 up, leaving Blockx with little chance of fighting back. "What a year you've had," Blockx told Tien at the trophy presentation ceremony. — Reuters

SPORTS

GRAND OPENING



Morocco's forward #20 Ayoub El Kaabi scores a goal during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) Group A match between Morocco and Comoros. — AFP

HOSTS MOROCCO
OFF TO WINNING
START AT AFRICA
CUP OF NATIONS

RABAT: Brahim Diaz and Ayoub El Kaabi scored second-half goals as hosts Morocco got their Africa Cup of Nations bid off to a winning start by beating minnows Comoros 2-0 in the tournament's opening game on Sunday.

Soufiane Rahimi had a penalty saved in a frustrating first half for much-fancied Morocco, but Diaz fired home from inside the area 10 minutes after the interval at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium in the capital Rabat.

Substitute El Kaabi then got the second with a stunning overhead kick, and the victory on a wet and cold night sets the Atlas Lions up for the potentially tougher tests to come in Group A against Mali and Zambia.

The result also allowed Morocco, Africa's best team in the Fifa rankings in 11th place, to extend their world-record winning run to 19 consecutive matches.

"The match went as we thought it would, because the opening game is always difficult for the host nation due to all the expectation," said coach Walid Regragui.

"We have been preparing for this for two years so there was a lot of tension.

"The 2-0 scoreline is well deserved, and we could even have scored a third had we not relaxed a little in the last five minutes.

"It is great for the fans but the objective was not to produce our best possible performance in the first match."

- MOROCCO SECURE
OPENING VICTORY
AFTER NERVOUS START
- DIAZ AND EL KAABI
SCORE SECOND-HALF
GOALS FOR HOSTS
AGAINST COMOROS
- MOROCCO EXTEND
WINNING RUN RECORD
TO 19 CONSECUTIVE
VICTORIES

full-back who has not played since suffering an ankle injury with his club at the start of November.

"We didn't want to take any risk with Achraf. We are being very careful with him," Regragui said.

It looked set to be a long night for Comoros when Morocco won a penalty in the 10th minute as playmaker Diaz was tripped inside the box by Iyad Mohamed. But Rahimi's spot-kick was kept out by the legs of Yannick Pandor as the Comoros goalkeeper dived to his right, and the visitors then succeeded in thwarting their more illustrious hosts for the remainder of the first half.

STUNNING OVERHEAD KICK

However Morocco, who also saw veteran centre-back Romain Saiss come off injured early on, succeeded in breaking down their opponents after half-time.

Comoros, the tiny Indian Ocean archipelago who are 108th in the world rankings, had their resistance ended as the opening goal arrived on 55 minutes.

Manchester United's Noussair Mazraoui, starting at right-back with Hakimi not yet quite fully fit, picked up the ball on the right side of the penalty area and squared for Real Madrid's Spanish-born number 10 Diaz to score.

Morocco, who had seen Neil El Aynaoui almost break the deadlock just before that, then saw space open up although Comoros had a chance of their own as Rafiki Said was denied when clean through on goal.

Mazraoui forced a good save from Pandor before El Kaabi, of Greek giants Olympiakos, lit up the occasion by meeting a cross in from the left by Anass Salah-Eddine with a magnificent overhead bicycle kick to make it 2-0. — AFP



In the Junior Girls' event, Fatima al Suwaidi of the United Arab Emirates claimed first place, followed by Ritaj al Yafai of Qatar in second and Yosr Ben Ammar of Tunisia in third at the National Olympic Shooting Complex in Muscat. — Abdulwadiid al Hamadani

Oman make soild start in
Arab shooting event

RIYADH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 22

THE Arab Shooting Championship for Bullet and Air Weapons 10m Rifle and Pistol got underway at the National Olympic Shooting Complex in Muscat, hosted by the Sultanate of Oman and organised by the Oman Shooting Association, with wide participation from Arab national teams across junior and senior categories for both men and women.

The first day of competition witnessed intense contests and impressive performances. In the Junior Girls' event, Fatima al Suwaidi of the United Arab Emirates claimed first place, followed by Ritaj al Yafai of Qatar in second and Yosr Ben Ammar of Tunisia in third.

In the Junior Boys' category, Omani shooter Khalid al Kalbani secured the gold medal, ahead of Abdulrahman al Sulaity of Qatar, while Sultan Saleh Mohammed of the UAE finished third.

In the Women's Individual competition, Noof al Dossari of Bahrain took first place, with Yasmin Tahlak of the UAE second and Marwa al Amiri of Bahrain third.

The Men's Individual event saw Ibrahim al Ali of the UAE claim the top spot, followed by Omani shooter Hamad al Khatri in second place and Khalid al Sharshani of Qatar in third. In the Women's Team competition, Bahrain secured first place, followed by Kuwait and Qatar.

AL SAEEDI WINS GOLD

Meanwhile, the UAE won the gold medal in the Men's Team event, with Bahrain finishing second and Oman third, Competitions continued on the second day, featuring the conclusion of several events, including the 50m Rifle Three Positions for men and women and the 10m Mixed Team Rifle event.

In the Men's 50m Three Positions, Omani shooter Ali bin Sulaiman al Saeedi won gold, followed by Hamad bin Saeed al Khatri in second and Mahmoud ali Haji of Bahrain in third. In the women's category, Fawzia Mohammed Mousa of Bahrain claimed first place, with Safaa Mohammed al Dossari second, while Amina bint Khamis al Tarshi of Oman finished third. Oman also secured first place in the Men's Team event of the category.

Bahraini coach Abdullah Zaman praised the venue and organisation, stating, "the shooting range in Muscat is beautifully designed, fully equipped and well prepared to host not only Arab championships but also international and world level events."



The Junior Boys' category saw Omani shooter Khalid al Kalbani clinch first place. Abdulrahman al Sulaity from Qatar came in second, and Sultan Saleh Mohammed from the UAE took third place.



The first day witnessed intense contests and impressive performances. — Abdulwadiid al Hamadani

Meanwhile, an Omani national team shooter in the Under-17 category expressed her ambitions, saying "this championship is an important step in my journey, my goal is to continue developing and reach the international and global level while proudly representing Oman."

The championship continues over the coming days, highlighting the growth of shooting sports in the Arab world and reaffirming Oman's readiness to host major regional and international sporting events.



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SHORTTAKES



The average monthly price of Oman crude oil for December delivery was \$65.04 per barrel.

OMAN OIL PRICE
RISES BY \$1.31/BARREL

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman crude oil for February delivery reached \$61.47 on Monday. The price of Oman crude oil on Monday saw an increase of \$1.31 compared to last Friday's price of \$60.16.

The average monthly price of Oman crude oil for December delivery was \$65.04 per barrel, a decrease of \$5.04 compared to the price for November delivery.

Meanwhile, international oil prices rose on Monday after officials said the US had intercepted an oil tanker in international waters off the coast of Venezuela, raising fears of supply disruption.

Brent crude futures gained 52 cents, or 0.86%, to \$60.99 a barrel by 09:18 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude rose by 50 cents, or 0.88%, to \$57.02.

“The market is waking up to the fact that the Trump administration is taking a hardline approach to Venezuelan oil trade”, said June Goh, senior oil market analyst at Sparta Commodities. Venezuelan crude accounts for about 1% of global supply.

“Oil prices have thus been supported by this geopolitical news alongside the simmering Russia-Ukraine tensions in the background in an otherwise very bearish market fundamentally”, said Goh.

The US Coast Guard is pursuing an oil tanker in international waters near Venezuela in what would be the second such operation over the weekend and the third in less than two weeks if successful, officials said on Sunday. — Agencies

Oman and Egypt explore industrial integration

OMAN and Egypt have explored ways to strengthen industrial and investment cooperation, with a focus on expanding bilateral trade and joint manufacturing, during talks held in Muscat on Monday.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, received Kamel al Wazir, Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister for Industrial Development and Minister of Industry and Transport, to discuss revitalising investment flows between the two countries.

The discussions highlighted opportunities to enable Omani products to access African markets by leveraging Egypt's trade links and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) agreement. Both sides agreed that closer cooperation would help expand trade, attract new investments and serve the economic interests of the two countries.

The ministers also examined prospects for industrial integration in several promising sectors, aiming to maximise the benefits of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) and enhance value-added manufacturing.

Both parties commended ongoing efforts to fast-track memoranda of understanding related to the unification of standards and acceptance requirements for goods, products and services.

Talks also covered cooperation on anti-dumping measures,



The discussions highlighted opportunities to enable Omani products to access African markets by leveraging Egypt's trade links and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) agreement.

Omani imports from Egypt rose by 16.6 per cent to RO 44.3 million, while Omani exports to Egypt stood at RO 53.3 million. The number of companies registered in Oman with Egyptian participation reached 4,647 as of November 2025.

subsidies and safeguards, with the objective of strengthening economic and industrial ties.

It was agreed to organise a joint economic forum in coordination with the Chambers of Commerce in Oman and Egypt to support private-sector engagement and explore new partnership opportunities.

The meeting was attended by Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry and Yasser Mohamed Ahmed Shaaban, Egypt's Ambassador to Oman.

Separately, Al Yousef met with a group of Egyptian business leaders to review investment opportunities in Oman, including current and future projects. The discussions focused on expanding

joint commercial activities, deepening industrial partnerships and increasing trade volumes.

Al Yousef stressed the importance of broadening Omani-Egyptian economic relations through joint manufacturing and export-oriented projects, which would raise added value, encourage investment in priority sectors and facilitate the transfer of expertise and modern technologies.

Trade exchange between Oman and Egypt reached around RO 97.6 million in the first half of this year. Omani imports from Egypt rose by 16.6 per cent to RO 44.3 million, while Omani exports to Egypt stood at RO 53.3 million. The number of companies registered in Oman with Egyptian participation reached 4,647 as of November 2025. — ONA

Second desalination plant to be solar powered in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, DEC 22

THE Barka V Independent Water Project (IWP), which entered commercial operation in Al Batinah South Governorate in June 2024, is preparing to integrate a solar photovoltaic (PV) farm that will partially offset its reliance on gas-fired electricity with renewable energy, in line with Oman's energy transition objectives.

The 100,000 m³/day (around 22 million imperial gallons per day) desalination plant is owned and operated by GS Inima Barka V Desalination Co SAOC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Spain-based international water infrastructure company GS Inima Environment.

Currently under construction adjacent to the facility is a 6.3 MW solar PV plant, scheduled to become operational by March 2026.

Once fully commissioned, the solar installation is expected to



Solar farm under construction adjacent to the Barka V IWP.

supply around 11% of the plant's total energy requirements through 2044, corresponding to the term of its water purchase agreement with Nama Power and Water Procurement (Nama PWP).

“This 6 MW facility is a project of vital importance, strategically designed to cover approximately half of the desalination plant's

energy demand”.

“Its integration is crucial for securing a sustainable and reliable energy source for this critical water infrastructure”, said Jacobo Stuyck, Renewable Energy Business Development at GS Inima Environment.

Following a recent site visit, Stuyck highlighted the role of

The 100,000 m³/day (around 22 million imperial gallons per day) desalination plant is owned and operated by GS Inima Barka V Desalination Co SAOC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Spain-based international water infrastructure company GS Inima Environment.

Spanish firm OCA Global as engineering consultant for the solar PV project and Omani clean energy company Nafath Renewable Energy as the EPC contractor.

“With construction progressing, our current target is to have the Barka solar plant fully operational by March.

We look forward to reaching this important milestone soon”, he added.

Abdullah al Saidi, Co-Founder of Nafath Renewable Energy, commented: “We remain fully committed to supporting your net-zero ambitions, enabling wider

adoption of renewable energy solutions and strengthening local capabilities in line with Oman Vision 2040”.

Notably, Barka V will become only the second desalination plant in Oman to integrate solar energy into its operations, underscoring growing efforts by both the public and private sectors to decarbonise water infrastructure and improve energy efficiency.

The first such project was the Sharqiyah Desalination Plant in Sur, which in April 2023 was integrated with a 17 MWp solar PV system developed by Veolia and TotalEnergies.

The installation generates approximately 32,000 MWh of renewable electricity annually, meeting the plant's daytime power demand and significantly reducing CO₂ emissions.

It remains the largest solar PV facility dedicated to desalination in Oman and a benchmark for integrating renewable energy into essential utility infrastructure.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The initiative introduces an integrated, end-to-end pathway that connects youth, freelancers and early-stage ventures.

SOHAR INTERNATIONAL ADVANCES NATIONAL EFFORT TO EMPOWER YOUTH-LED VENTURES

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its role as a key enabler of Oman's long-term economic transformation, Sohar International has signed a series of Memorandums of Understanding to establish a unified national cooperation framework for the creation of the Consumer Cooperative Society.

The initiative introduces an integrated, end-to-end pathway that connects youth, freelancers and early-stage ventures from ideation and incubation through financing, scaling and ultimately potential listing on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

By aligning public and private sector stakeholders under a single, clearly defined framework, the initiative ensures continuity, reduces fragmentation and enables entrepreneurs to progress through each growth stage with clarity, governance and sustained support.

Under these memorandums, the bank will assume the role of the financial backbone by providing tailored financing products and services aligned with each stage of development.

Commenting on the initiative, Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, stated: "Sustainable entrepreneurship is not created through isolated interventions, but through integrated systems that guide talent from ambition to execution and scale.

This initiative reflects our conviction that Omani youth do not lack capability; what they require is a structured, credible pathway that aligns financing, regulation, skills development and market access.

By uniting national institutions under a single cooperation framework, we are enabling entrepreneurs to move confidently from early-stage ideas to commercially viable enterprises and, in time, to capital market participation. At Sohar International, our role extends beyond financing — we act as a catalyst for system-level progress that strengthens the real economy, deepens capital markets and supports the creation of resilient, future-ready Omani businesses".

Al Murshidi signed the agreements with several representatives from government and private sector entities, including: Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development; Brigadier General Nasser al Qattabi, Director of the Strategic and Defence Studies Academy; Zakariya al Saadi, CEO of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Dr Amor bin Nassr al Mattani, CEO of Oman LNG Development Foundation; Saud al Jabri, Director of ICV Development at Petroleum Development Oman.

Designed as a practical execution model rather than a standalone programme, the Consumer Cooperative Society provides Omani youth with access to structured mentorship, technical enablement, tailored banking and financing solutions; and market-readiness support.

OMANTEL AND OUTWARD BOUND OMAN CONCLUDE FOUR TRAINING COURSES

MUSCAT: Omantel, in collaboration with Outward Bound Oman, has successfully concluded four training courses held in diverse outdoor environments, including Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Rimal Al Sharqiya, as part of their ongoing partnership of building the human capabilities within the Omani society for 11 consecutive years.

An initiative that reflects Omantel's commitment to empowering various community groups and enhancing life and

leadership skills among individuals. The courses targeted a wide range of participants, including school students and people with special needs, offering skills development programmes alongside specialised programmes focusing on environmental sustainability and biodiversity.

Among these initiatives was the "Biodiversity Gems" programme, inspired by the exploratory journey "Jewel of Arabia", in which Outward Bound Oman instructors

participated as part of a larger team. The programme highlighted Oman's rich environmental biodiversity and raised awareness about the importance of its preservation.

It emphasised enabling participants to understand their individual role in protecting the environment and adopting responsible daily practices that can make a tangible long-term difference.

Vodafone, SQU conclude innovation hackathon



Oman, in collaboration with the Innovation and Technology Transfer Centre

at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), has successfully concluded a three-day digital innovation hackathon designed to move beyond competition, with a focus on practical, deployable ideas aligned with Oman's national digital transformation strategies.

The hackathon brought together 121 participants from across the Sultanate of Oman, including university students, early-career professionals and technology practitioners. Working in multidisciplinary teams, participants developed innovative start-up ideas across key focus areas, including digital government services, healthcare innovation, smart cities, cybersecurity and digital solutions to support low-income households.

Sayyid Fahad al Busaidy, Chief Corporate Affairs at Vodafone Oman said, "The hackathon was designed to push participants towards solution-oriented thinking, combining technical feasibility, societal relevance and scalability.

Over three intensive days, teams refined ideas through guided mentorship from academic specialists and industry experts, resulting in a set of concepts positioned for further development rather than one-off demonstration".



The hackathon brought together 121 participants from across Oman.

At the conclusion of the programme, three standout ideas were chosen for further exploration and potential development support through government and private entities.

Taking home first prize was Nudhum, a smart platform that turns existing system data into actionable insights which saves time, reduces complexity and enables better decision-making without changing or migrating systems.

The second place went to Rasid, an AI-powered real-time monitoring system that detects unauthorised objects in critical areas to enhance safety and reduce operational risks. While third place went to EnviroSense,

a smart indoor air quality monitor for vehicles and elevators that uses algae to convert carbon dioxide into oxygen in emergencies.

The hackathon is part of a broader strategic partnership between Vodafone Oman and Sultan Qaboos University focused on strengthening national digital capabilities through research, talent development and applied innovation.

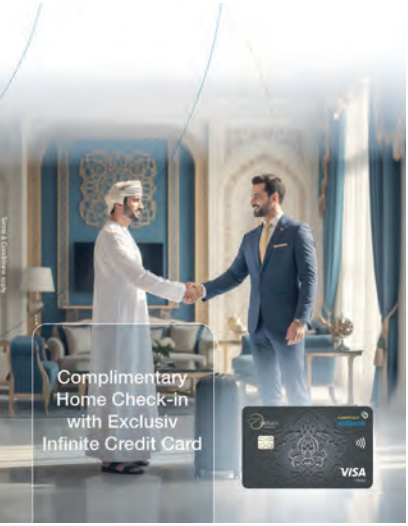
The partnership includes the sponsorship of a PhD scholarship in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, in addition to joint initiatives aimed at translating academic research into practical use cases for industry and society.

ahlibank offers cardholders exceptional travel experience

MUSCAT: ahlibank has announced an exclusive year-end travel offer for its Exclusiv Infinite Credit Card cardholders, providing a complimentary home check-in service through its ongoing partnership with Maraheb, operated by Transom Handling.

The initiative reflects the bank's continued focus on elevating customer experience through thoughtful enhancements that support the evolving lifestyle needs of its premium clients, particularly during the high-travel festive season.

The offer allows customers to benefit from the home check-in service for up to four bags at no additional cost. To take advantage



The offer allows customers to benefit from the home check-in service for up to four bags at no additional cost.

of the offer, cardholders can contact their relationship manager and complete the booking at least 48 hours before the departure time.

Maraheb's home check-in service accommodates travellers departing from Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport, allowing them to finalise flight procedures between 24 and 6 hours before departure.

This includes document verification, baggage drop-off, seat selection, boarding pass issuance and settlement of any additional baggage fees. With these procedures completed in advance, cardholders are able to bypass queues and move directly to the departure gate, significantly enhancing the comfort and ease of their journey.

The Exclusiv Infinite Credit Card is widely recognised for offering one of the richest travel-focused benefits packages on the market.

Cardholders enjoy features such as comprehensive travel insurance when tickets are purchased using the card, unlimited access to more than 1,000 airport lounges worldwide for themselves and a guest; and a complimentary chauffeur service to and from Muscat International Airport and Salalah Airport up to five times a year.

These privileges are designed to complement the home check-in service, creating a holistic, premium travel experience that aligns with ahlibank's commitment to delivering exceptional value.

Bank Muscat participates in Maqshin Culture and Heritage Forum

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, participated in the Culture and Heritage Forum held in the Mandar Al Dhabian, the Wilayat of Maqshin in Al Wusta Governorate.

This participation comes as part of the bank's ongoing commitment to supporting national initiatives and community events that contribute to local development and highlight the cultural and social heritage across the Sultanate of Oman.

The forum was inaugurated under the auspices of Shaikh Hilal bin Ali



This participation reflects the bank's strong dedication to community service.

al Maamari, Wali of Maqshin, in the presence of a large number of officials and attendees.

This participation reflects the bank's strong dedication to community service and its interest in supporting activities that combine culture and heritage while reinforcing Oman's authentic identity. The forum provides an important platform for showcasing local traditions, arts and social activities unique to the region, as well as an opportunity to strengthen direct engagement with local communities and support efforts aimed at developing rural areas in Al

Wusta Governorate.

The Bank's involvement aligns with its strategic priorities to extend the impact of its support across all governorates, including remote areas that deserve attention and offer significant opportunities for growth and development.

Bank Muscat remains committed to being an active partner in the development of local communities through its support for cultural, sports, educational and social events, reflecting its dedication to promoting social integration and maintaining a presence at key national gatherings.

SHORTTAKES



The forum focused on aligning corporate social responsibility with sustainable development goals and the priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

OMAN CSR FORUM PUSHES SHIFT TO INTEGRATED, IMPACT-DRIVEN PROGRAMMES

MUSCAT: The second edition of the Oman Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Forum and Awards underscored the need to move beyond standalone initiatives towards a unified, governance-led national CSR system that delivers measurable social and economic impact.

Organised by United Media Services Company and inaugurated by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, the forum focused on aligning corporate social responsibility with sustainable development goals and the priorities of Oman Vision 2040.

Saeed bin Masoud al Mashani, Deputy CEO of United Media Services, said the forum positions social responsibility as a strategic instrument that supports national policies and strengthens trust between institutions and society. He stressed the importance of governance, coordinated efforts and maximising returns from community investments.

Highlighting global trends, Mubarak bin Khamis al Hamdani, Director of the National Office for Future Foresight at the Ministry of Economy, noted that CSR is increasingly linked to long-term financial performance. He pointed to a shift towards more structured models based on legislation, disclosure, impact measurement and the integration of social and environmental performance within value and investment chains.

Majida bint Sheikhan al Maamariyah, Director of the Sustainable Investment Centre at the Muscat Stock Exchange, emphasised the need to strengthen governance and transparency, unify standards and adopt clear methodologies for measuring impact. She highlighted the exchange's role in encouraging listed companies to adopt sustainability practices and ESG-aligned disclosures. — ONA

Omani–Saudi industrial cooperation showcased at SINP Expo

SAEED AL MASHARFI
MUSCAT, DEC 22

The third edition of the Omani–Saudi Industries Exhibition (SINP Expo 2025) kicked off on Sunday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat, under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. The expo is organised by B.Touch Event and features broad participation from government entities as well as industrial and investment institutions from the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The exhibition showcases opportunities for industrial integration, opening new channels for exports and joint investment; and highlighting industrial and



Dignitaries from Oman and Saudi at the opening of the SINP Expo 2025 on Sunday.

logistics incentives available in both countries. It also features the organisation of direct bilateral meetings between manufacturers and investors, while shedding light on the latest industrial innovations and leading national companies operating in the fields of energy, mining, manufacturing industries and technology, with the

participation of supporting entities and industrial incubators. Ibrahim bin Saad bin Bishan, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, stated that the Saudi–Omani Industries Exhibition reflects the depth of bilateral relations and the growing level of cooperation between the two countries.

TRADE IMPACT

German auto exports hit hard



German car exports to the United States fell nearly 14 per cent in the first three quarters of 2025, making autos the worst-hit sector in President Donald Trump's trade war, a study showed. A 15 per cent US tariff on European cars took effect in August. Meanwhile, engineering exports dropped 9.5 per cent, while chemicals also declined, partly for non-tariff reasons. — Reuters

ENERGY STORAGE

China battery boom accelerates



Reforms to China's power market are improving the economics of energy storage just as global demand surges, driving a boom for Chinese manufacturers. Companies are on track to lift global lithium-ion storage cell shipments by 75 per cent this year. Battery exports have exceeded \$65 billion, strengthening China's dominance in storage and electric-vehicle supply chains. — Reuters

TECH REGULATION

Italy fines Apple over privacy



Italy's competition authority has fined Apple and two units €98.6 million for allegedly abusing its dominant position through the App Store. The regulator said Apple imposed stricter privacy rules on third-party developers from 2021. The probe began in 2023. Apple said it strongly disagrees, defending its App Tracking Transparency system and privacy protections. — Reuters

Oman bets on 3D printing to reshape construction

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, DEC 22

OMAN is steadily positioning itself at the forefront of construction innovation as academia and industry converge to localise 3D printing technologies for the built environment. From cutting-edge materials research at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) to commercially deployed 3D-printed buildings, the Sultanate of Oman is testing how automation can reduce costs, cut emissions and modernise construction practices.

According to Dr Muhammad Bilal Waris, Associate Professor at Sultan Qaboos University, during the Green Build Oman forum, 3D concrete printing can become a cornerstone of Oman Vision 2040 push towards a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy.

Speaking at the forum, Dr Waris outlined how 3D printing of concrete — an extrusion-based process involving mixing, pumping and controlled deposition — offers faster construction, reduced waste and greater architectural freedom.

However, he stressed that the technology is highly sensitive to material behaviour, making mix design the central challenge. “Unlike conventional concrete, a 3D printable mix must satisfy not only strength and durability requirements, but also pumpability and extrusion performance”, he explained.

The SQU-led research focuses on developing 3D printable concrete using indigenous Omani materials, particularly clays and limestone. This approach addresses both sustainability and supply-chain



Oman is testing how automation can reduce costs, cut emissions and modernise construction practices.

resilience. One major concern globally is that many printable concretes rely on high Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC) content, conflicting with carbon-neutral construction goals.

As a solution, Dr Waris highlighted Limestone Calcined Clay Cement (LC3), which significantly reduces emissions while improving rheological and mechanical performance.

“Oman is rich in clays and limestone, which makes LC3-based 3D printing not just viable, but strategically attractive”, he said. The research team identified key clay minerals — kaolinite, illite and montmorillonite — commonly found in Oman and suitable for 3D printing.

While mineral proportions vary by location, advanced characterisation techniques such as XRF and XRD were used to map their properties

and optimise mix designs. A standout feature of the project is its scale and sophistication.

The team developed and tested 287 different concrete mixtures, evaluating printability, rheology and mechanical performance using a small-scale 3D printer at SQU. Unlike traditional concrete, 3D printed concrete is non-isotropic, meaning its strength varies by direction.

“We tested mechanical properties in all three directions to properly understand structural behaviour”, Dr Waris noted.

Building on this vast dataset, the researchers developed machine-learning models with up to 95 per cent accuracy, capable of predicting strength and printability based on clay mineralogy.

“If you tell us the mineral composition of clay from Al

Duqm or any other location, the model can predict performance before printing”, he said. The team also explored enhancements using recycled materials such as carbon nanotubes derived from waste rubber and spent catalysts, improving both mechanical and thermal performance.

From an industry perspective, the research is already finding resonance. Othman al Mandhari, Co-founder and CEO of Innotech, shared how similar principles are being translated into real-world construction.

“We realised early on that importing high-tech 3D printers would double or triple construction costs, which defeats the purpose”, he said.

In response, Innotech designed and built Oman's first locally manufactured construction 3D printer, cutting machine costs by around 60 per cent compared to international competitors.

“Our printer has been running for three years in summer heat and winter rain, with far fewer maintenance issues than imported machines”, Al Mandhari said. The company has since delivered more than 14 3D-printed structures, including prayer rooms, public toilets and pilot buildings for Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). Larger projects are now underway, including mosques, schools and commercial facilities.

While costs remain slightly higher than conventional construction, Al Mandhari is optimistic. “Five years ago, 3D printing was science fiction. With continued R&D and local materials like LC3, I believe it will soon compete directly with traditional construction”, he said.

OPINION

Oil price swings: Implications for renewables and GCC economies



PROF HUSSEIN A KAZEM

The writer is Unesco RCQE Chair in Renewable and Sustainable Energy Emerging Technologies, Sohar University.

Oil price fluctuations are a clear indicator of the depletion of petroleum resources and the shortcomings of global energy policies dominated by the oil industry. The recent volatility in oil prices, alongside the 2014 global economic crisis, whose repercussions are still being felt, suggests that the end of the oil era may come sooner than expected.

Renewable energy sources and technologies such as solar, wind, hydrogen, nuclear power and fuel cells are increasingly emerging as viable alternatives to conventional fossil fuels.

Recent studies affirm that while oil will continue to play a central role in the global energy mix over the next five decades, the share of renewable energy will steadily rise.

Scientific studies reveal that the surge in shale oil and natural gas production has had a significant impact on GCC countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, the region's largest oil exporter. The findings show that the GCC has struggled to decouple economic development from energy demand over the past two decades.

Consequently, the region's economies are among the least energy-efficient worldwide, with energy consumption growing faster than economic output.

Since 2008, sustainable energy has gained traction across the GCC. Initiatives in resource-efficiency, clean technology research, alternative energy projects, green building codes, circular economy strategies and public transport systems have become part of national development agendas. The GCC's growing interest in sustainability reflects both environmental concerns and a desire to diversify economies beyond oil.

Although many such projects remain at the planning stage, their implementation would significantly boost investment and yield measurable environmental benefits.

KEY FINDINGS FROM RECENT RESEARCH

- Fossil fuels continue to dominate global energy markets and will likely do so for several decades as international demand for heating, cooling, electricity and transport energy grows.
- The expansion of shale oil and gas production affects GCC countries to varying degrees, particularly Saudi Arabia.
- Future energy and environmental policies must be aligned to ensure mutual benefits for both sectors.
- Countries that have implemented renewable energy policies have achieved success in improving energy access, distribution, health and sustainability outcomes.

Renewable energy sources and technologies such as solar, wind, hydrogen, nuclear power and fuel cells are increasingly emerging as viable alternatives to conventional fossil fuels.

- Energy transitions must focus on delivering services that enhance quality of life, such as health, longevity, comfort and productivity.
- Improved living standards and the expansion of the petrochemical sector have led to increased electricity demand. Between 2012 and 2035, energy consumption in the GCC is expected to grow by about 1.9% annually. Domestic energy use doubled in Oman and tripled in Qatar between 2000 and 2011.
- Oil revenues have historically shaped the GCC's development path, underpinning economic growth and social welfare.
- The reliance on oil revenues has made GCC economies interdependent and vulnerable to oil price fluctuations. Although efforts to diversify are underway, more robust initiatives are needed.
- The rise of shale oil poses challenges for GCC producers. High social expenditure commitments make these governments increasingly dependent on oil revenues, rendering them vulnerable to price instability.
- Energy sector investments in the GCC face uncertainty due to climate change and global energy security policies aimed at reducing oil dependence.

SURGING BARRELS AT SEA SPOOK OIL MARKETS MORE THAN RUSSIA OR VENEZUELA

RON BOUSSO

Oil prices slumped below \$60 a barrel this week as investors try to make sense of US President Donald Trump's push to end the war in Ukraine and force out Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

Yet the real driver of prices in the months ahead is likely to be far more prosaic: a spike in global crude supplies, both on land and at sea. Global benchmark Brent crude oil futures plunged by nearly 3% on Tuesday to below \$59, their lowest since early 2021, amidst growing optimism that a peace deal was in sight nearly four years after Russian President Vladimir Putin's full-scale war of his western neighbour.

Prices then rebounded by around 2% on Wednesday after Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform that he had ordered a blockade of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela as the US ramps up pressure on Maduro.

Oil is a reliable barometer of geopolitical stress, so it's no surprise to see prices react to events. But the impact of either a Ukraine peace deal or a Venezuela blockade on physical supply is likely to be limited.

The real determinant of oil prices in the coming months may instead be a single data point: 1.3 billion barrels of "oil on water" — crude held at sea, according to Kpler. That is the largest volume since April 2020, when oil consumption cratered due to Covid-19 lockdowns and about 30% higher than August levels.

Meanwhile, the volume of oil stored on tankers for at least 20 days has reached 51 million barrels, the highest since June 2023, according to Kpler.

Slowing tankers provide more evidence that supply is struggling to find a home. The average speed of laden crude tankers, excluding floating storage, fell to 10 knots in December from 10.3 knots in November — the slowest since at least 2017, according to Muyu Xu, senior crude analyst at Kpler.

This spike in supplies on water is partly due to tightening sanctions on Moscow. Seaborne Russian crude in transit this week was about 155 million barrels — roughly 55% higher than in January — as Asian buyers hesitate to bring those barrels onshore after new US sanctions on Russian energy giants Rosneft and Lukoil. — Reuters

Oman–India CEPA: From signature to shared success

Oman and India have signed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in Muscat, a milestone that deserves recognition. But the bigger story starts after the signing. A trade agreement becomes meaningful only when companies use it: when exporters quote new prices, distributors redesign routes, investors commit capital and service firms open local teams.

The next phase is therefore not a policy footnote. It is a business mobilisation exercise.

A familiar comment is, "Oman is a small market". That view is understandable, yet incomplete. CEPA is not only about market size. It is about proximity and platform. Oman sits across the Arabian Sea from India, within short flight time for business travel and within days for shipping.

In today's world, logistics shocks behave like hidden tariffs. When distance and delays rise, costs rise. When routes are reliable and close, trade becomes easier, faster and more competitive.

Oman's strategic location also makes it a practical base. From its ports and free zones, firms can serve not only Oman but also the wider Gulf, East Africa and the Indian Ocean corridor.

For Indian companies, this means a nearby platform for regional distribution and after-sales support. For Omani companies, it means deeper integration into one of the world's largest growth markets, with a partner that can supply scale, skills and technology.

The headline terms of CEPA send a strong signal to both business communities. Oman will provide zero-duty access on 98.08% of its tariff lines for Indian goods, covering 99.38% of India's exports to the Sultanate of Oman by value. India, in turn, will liberalise 77.79% of its tariff lines, covering 94.81% of imports from Oman by value, while managing sensitive areas through exclusions and quota-based approaches.

For the private sector, this matters because certainty changes behaviour. Companies invest when rules are predictable and disputes are less likely.

The first "driver" is tariff certainty and landed cost. Where duties fall to zero, procurement decisions can change quickly, especially



Electronics is one example of how CEPA can become tangible.

in competitive consumer and industrial categories.

Indian exporters are well placed in engineering goods, electrical and mechanical items, healthcare products, selected consumer goods and food and agro-products.

Omani suppliers benefit from clearer access for energy and industrial inputs that India needs at scale, while creating incentives to diversify into higher-value materials and downstream products through joint ventures and new processing capacity.

The second "driver" is services and investment; and it may deliver the biggest multiplier. Oman imports significant services; and India is a global services exporter. CEPA can support new projects in IT and cybersecurity, engineering and project delivery, logistics, healthcare, education and specialised industrial services.

Where mobility commitments make it easier for project teams to work on-site, execution improves. That is not a small detail; it can determine whether a project succeeds, scales and becomes a long-term relationship. With a large Indian community already contributing to Oman's economy, people-to-people links can also speed up partnership building and trust.

Electronics is one example of how CEPA can become tangible. India's electronics manufacturing and exports are rising rapidly. Oman imports a wide range of devices for consumers, industry and infrastructure. With the right



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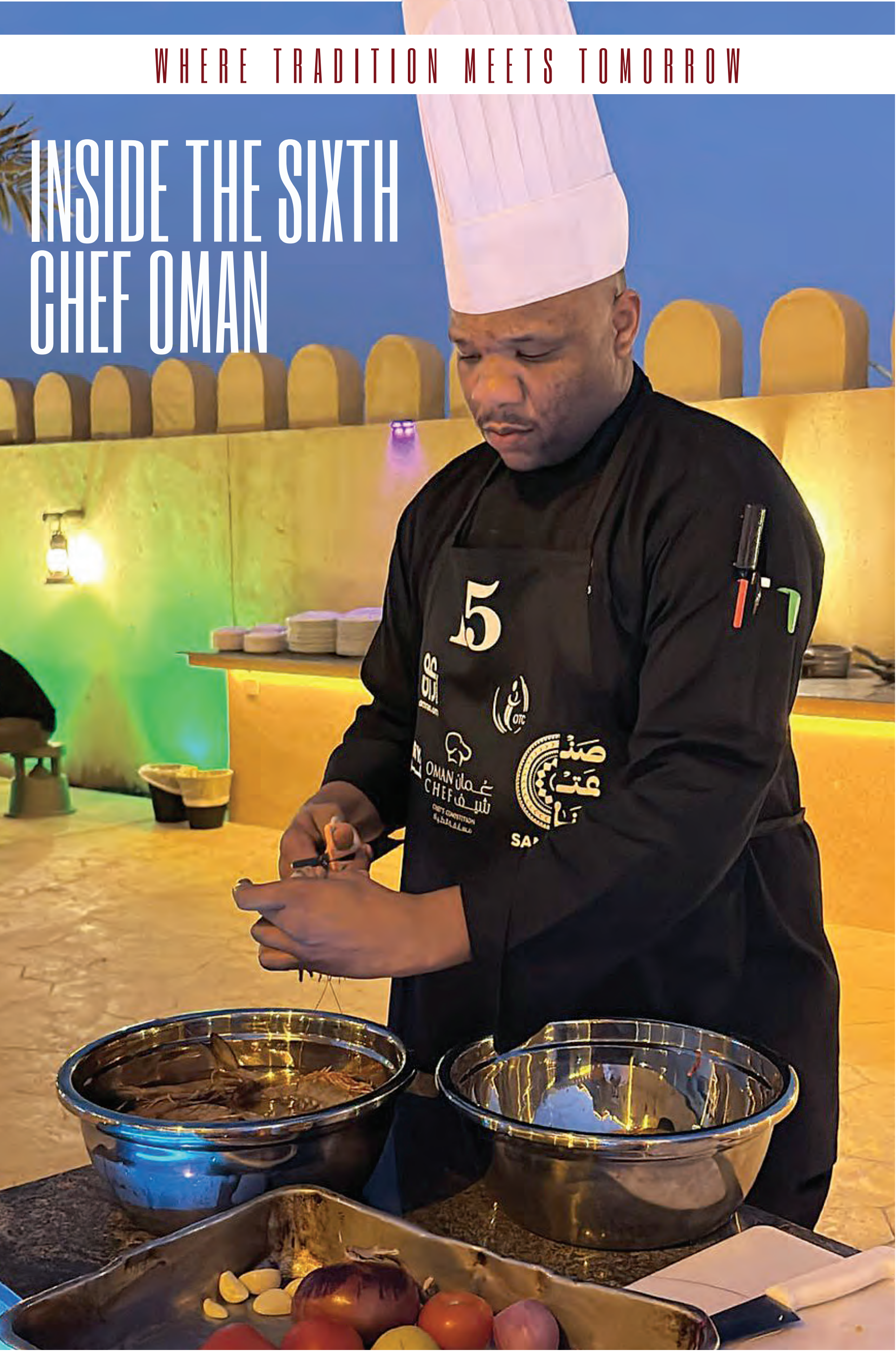
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ART/LIFE



WHERE TRADITION MEETS TOMORROW

INSIDE THE SIXTH CHEF OMAN

ARTEXHIBITION

DIRIYAH CONTEMPORARY ART BIENNALE UNVEILS FULL ARTIST LINE-UP



The curatorial team of the Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale 2026

The Diriyah Biennale Foundation has announced the full list of participating artists for the third edition of the Diriyah Contemporary Art Biennale, which will open to the public on January 30, 2026, at the JAX District in Diriyah, northwest of Riyadh.

Led by Artistic Directors Nora Razian and Sabih Ahmed, the 2026 edition is titled 'In Interludes and Transitions' and brings together more than 65 artists representing over 37 countries.

The Biennale will present more than 22 new commissions, spanning visual art, music, film, architecture and literature.

Set against the backdrop of Diriyah, home to At-Turaif, the Unesco World Heritage Site and birthplace of the First Saudi State, the Biennale takes movement, migration and transformation as its central themes. These ideas serve as a lens through which the exhibition explores the historical and contemporary connections between the Arab region and the wider world.

Taking place in the rapidly evolving JAX District, the Biennale foregrounds artistic practices that reflect continuity, resilience and collective imagination at a time of global uncertainty. With scenography by acclaimed Italian design studio Formafantasma, the exhibition is conceived as a choreographed journey where histories, ancestral memory, sound, movement and landscape intersect.

Artists participating in the 2026 edition include Pacita Abad, Etel Adnan, Samia Halaby, Raven Chacon, Dineo Seshee Bopape, Raqs Media Collective, Elias Sime, Faisal Samra, Thảo Nguyễn Phan, Rajesh Chaitya Vangad and many others, representing a wide range of generations, geographies and disciplines.

Speaking about the upcoming edition, Artistic Directors Nora Razian and Sabih Ahmed said the Biennale arrives at a moment when the role of art feels increasingly urgent. "Participating artists and our curatorial team have immersed themselves in the layered histories of the Arab region and the rapid transformations reshaping it", they noted. "We see the Biennale as an invitation to think rhythmically — to approach time as layered, pulsating and collectively embodied".

Aya al Bakree, CEO of the Diriyah Biennale Foundation, said the exhibition reflects a broad spectrum of voices and practices. "We are proud to convene such a diverse group of artists in Diriyah, representing many generations, regions and disciplines. The Biennale offers audiences a rich experience shaped by a wide range of perspectives and narratives".

QUICK FEATURES



COSPLAY

A cosplayer dressed as Uta from 'One Piece Film: Red' poses for a photograph during the Bengaluru Comic Con 2025 fest in Bengaluru. — AFP



TRIBUTE

Actor James Ransone, known for his role in 'The Wire' and 'It: Chapter Two', dead at 46. — AFP



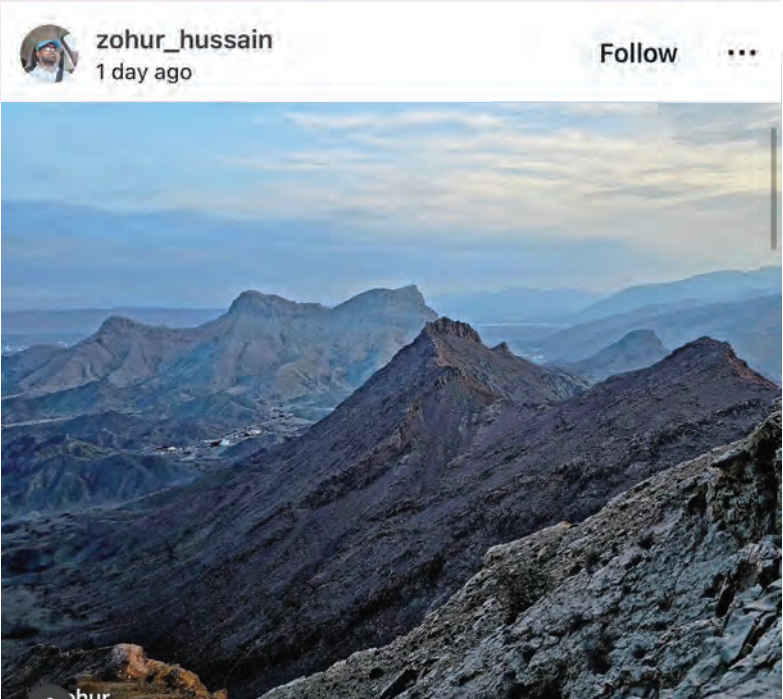
THEATRE

Theatre actors perform on stage during a rehearsal of the comedy 'The Government Inspector' by late Russian writer Nikolai Gogol, at the Comedie Francaise theatre, in Paris. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



Sharpness of beauty



Chasing Peaks

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GUST OF WIND
CHRONICLES HOPE,
LOYALTY AND
DISILLUSIONMENT

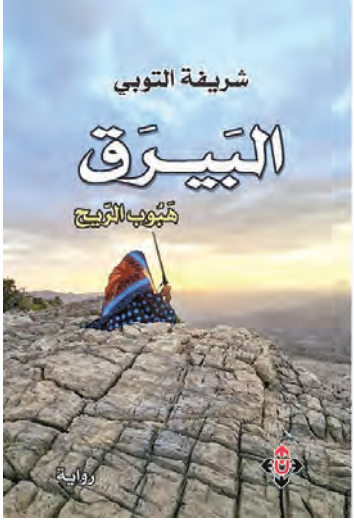
ARWA AL HASHIMI

Al Bayraq or the Gust of Wind, the latest novel by Omani author Sharifa al Toobi, concludes her acclaimed Al Bayraq trilogy with a compelling exploration of Oman’s social and historical transformation. Published in 2025, the novel blends historical insight with deeply human storytelling.

Set in mid-20th-century Oman, the story captures a period of dramatic change, following young people who embrace new political and intellectual currents. These ideas promise reform but also bring complex consequences. Through their experiences, the novel examines political struggles, personal challenges and the emotional costs of hope, loyalty and disillusionment.

At the centre is Hammoud, a young man whose life reflects both personal and collective upheavals. After studying abroad, he returns with a transformed worldview shaped by revolutionary ideas. He is portrayed as conflicted, introspective and deeply human. Supporting characters, including Ahmad Suhail, Abd al Salam and Abu Su’ad, offer diverse responses to the challenges of their time, adding depth and realism to the narrative.

Women in the novel play central and dynamic roles. Basima, active alongside male



comrades; and Tafoul, who challenges restrictive traditions, expand the story’s emotional and ideological range.

Spanning approximately 600 pages, Al Bayraq or The Gust of Wind features a cover designed by Omani artist Badr al Riyami.

Its careful balance of historical context and personal storytelling makes it appealing for readers interested in the intersections of identity, history and societal change.

Ultimately, Al Bayraq or Gust of Wind is a moving exploration of personal choice, collective memory and the human experience in a transforming society. It demonstrates Sharifa al Toobi’s skill in blending historical awareness with deeply engaging narrative, offering readers a journey through Oman’s past that resonates well beyond its borders.

KABEER YOUSUF

A fascinating journey into the depth and diversity of Chinese civilisation — from ancient pottery traditions and the finesse of woven silks to the refined rituals of tea culture — unfolded at the Amazing China cultural exchange exhibition and evening held at Crowne Plaza Muscat in Al Qurum.

Chinese culture, a rich tapestry shaped by thousands of years of history, places strong emphasis on family, harmony, respect for elders and social cohesion, while embracing regional diversity within a framework influenced by values such as ‘face’ — representing reputation and dignity.

The event also highlighted the deep-rooted historical ties between Oman and China, forged through the ancient Maritime Silk Road.

Omani merchants such as Al Qassim and Al Nadhar bin Maymoun are recorded to have travelled to China centuries ago, settling there and contributing to early cultural exchange, including the construction of mosques such as the Grand Mosque in Guangzhou around 1009 CE. These early links, centred on trade in frankincense and silk, have evolved into modern cultural, educational and tourism partnerships.

The exhibition was attended by Liu Jian, Ambassador of China to the Sultanate of Oman, along with diplomats, educators, members of the Chinese community and representatives of Chinese companies operating in Oman.

Organised by Dongfang Geophysical Exploration Company in collaboration with China-Arab Television, the event brought together around 150 participants. Among them were Tian Jianhui, Project Manager of Dongfang Geophysical Exploration Company (BGP) in Oman; Ge Jia, Deputy General Manager of China-Arab Television; representatives from four Omani secondary schools offering Chinese language programmes; and members of the wider Chinese and Omani communities.

The evening offered a kaleidoscopic showcase of Chinese cultural expressions, including dragon and lion dances, traditional Qipao and Hanfu costume displays, Hulusi solo and Guqin performances, martial arts demonstrations, calligraphy, tea art, traditional Chinese

A CULTURAL
BRIDGE BETWEEN
OMAN AND CHINA



An immersive cultural evening in Muscat traced the shared heritage of Oman and China, blending traditional arts, performances and crafts

dances, Sichuan opera face-changing and a special segment featuring Chinese songs.

Complementing the performances were interactive heritage and craft workshops, allowing visitors to experience Chinese paper-cutting, lucky knot making, calligraphy, movable typography, gold painting, opera mask painting and the creation of traditional bracelets and perfume sachets.

“As part of people’s engagement, we arranged surprise gifts for the audience. Visitors could collect participation stamps from

the workshops and exchange them for special gifts”, the organisers said.

Cultural exchanges between Oman and China continue to grow, with Sultan Qaboos University and the Chinese Embassy in Oman regularly hosting language and cultural events, while archaeological cooperation under Unesco’s Silk Roads Programme further strengthens heritage ties.

In parallel, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has been actively promoting Oman as a destination for Chinese tourists through targeted initiatives and digital platforms in Chinese.

FEATURES



WHERE TRADITION MEETS TOMORROW

INSIDE THE SIXTH CHEF OMAN



IDRIS AL BALUSHI

AT Rozna Restaurant, the scent of coconut, spices and slow-simmered ambition filled the air as the sixth edition of the Chef Oman Competition 2025 advanced into its decisive second round. What unfolded was more than a cooking contest, it was a live dialogue between heritage and innovation, tradition and bold imagination.

Round Two brought together 32 qualified chefs, divided into teams of two, each navigating a high-pressure culinary challenge designed to test collaboration, creativity and technical skill. By random draw, every team was assigned a “star ingredient” that had to appear in every dish. Coconut, for example, transformed from a familiar flavour into a canvas for reinvention. Each team produced four dishes, resulting in 64 plates that reimaged Omani cuisine through a global lens.

“The core idea of the competition is innovation within Omani cuisine”, explained Jinad al Balushi, Leader of Chef Oman 2025. “We want to show how Omani flavours can travel beyond borders without losing their identity”.

That philosophy was evident in every detail, from tacos inspired by shuwa to unexpected combinations that mirrored today’s global food trends. Al Balushi pointed out that modern diners are increasingly open to experimentation. “If people can accept a lotus-flavoured burger, why not imagine shuwa or rakhal bread becoming global dishes?” she said. “Omani cuisine deserves to be introduced to the world”.

A defining feature of this round was the emphasis on local sourcing. Nearly all ingredients used were Omani, from eggs supplied by Al Dana, to meat from Muscat Livestock, poultry from Al Safa and produce sourced from Omani markets. Even dairy products such as milk, oil and cheese were locally produced. Some spices, not grown in Oman, were thoughtfully introduced to complement rather than overpower the native flavours.

“This kitchen today represents Oman”, Al Balushi said proudly. “Most of what you taste here is made in Oman”.

The competition’s structure ensured intensity and fairness. Winning teams qualified in full for the final stage, while selected individuals from other teams filled the remaining slots, resulting in eight chefs advancing to Round Three. These finalists will compete individually on December 27, 2025 at Oman Tourism College, preparing a full three-course menu. The journey will culminate in the awards ceremony on January 14, 2026, hosted in collaboration with Muriya.

Presiding over the judging panel was Chef Issa bin Abdullah al Hashmi, Senior Executive Chef at Oman Air and a long-standing pillar of the competition. For him, Chef Oman is deeply personal.

“The name itself carries responsibility”, he said. “Chef and Oman, my profession and my country. Our role is to elevate both”.

Al Hashmi noted a remarkable leap in quality this year. “The competition was incredibly tight. The differences between contestants were minimal, which made judging difficult. But it also shows how much the Omani chef has evolved”.

What impressed him most was the balance between authenticity and modern presentation. “Our cuisine is traditional and



deeply rooted, but that doesn’t mean it cannot evolve. The chefs managed to preserve the soul of Omani food while presenting it in a contemporary, global style”.

Beyond the competition, Chef Oman has become a catalyst for real change. Past winners have received promotions immediately after their victories, some in front of their managers during the closing ceremony. Others have integrated Omani dishes into international hotel menus, subtly introducing local flavours to global guests.

The impact is also visible in education. Interest in culinary careers has surged, especially among youth. According to organisers, over 60 per cent of participants this year were women, a reflection of growing confidence and opportunity within the field. Young men, too, are increasingly entering professional kitchens, with graduates securing positions in luxury hotels such as The St Regis.

For competitor Chef Kalthoum hint Abdullah al Maamariyah, Round Two was both exciting and demanding. “The challenge was beautiful but difficult”, she said. “The judges surprised us and we had to adapt quickly. I loved the Omani theme. We created things we had never done before and met inspiring people along the way”.

Ultimately, Chef Oman is not driven by profit, but purpose. Supported by Omran Group and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, alongside initiatives such as Sanatna and Food Security, the competition aims to leave a lasting imprint on society.

“Our goal is awareness”, Al Balushi emphasised. “To show that cooking is a strong, respected profession, one that can reach the world”.

As the competition moves toward its final round, one message is clear: Omani cuisine is no longer waiting to be discovered. It is stepping forward, confidently plated, ready for the global table.

