

OMAN

دولة عمان

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PAGES 20 BAIAS 200

SUNRISE 06:33 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR 05:14 AM

DHUHR 12:02 PM

ASR 03:04 PM

MAGHRIB 05:25 PM

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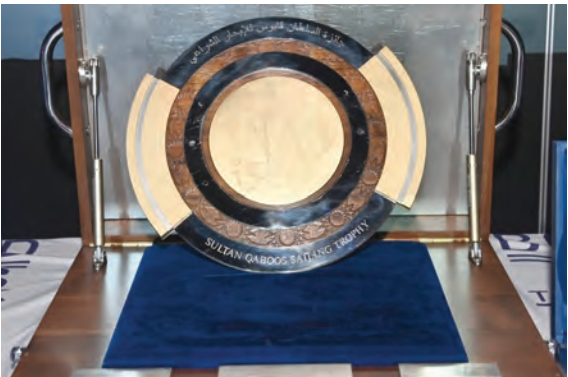
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20

STORIES TOLD THROUGH A LENS

INBRIEF

WINNERS TO GET SULTAN QABOOS SAILING TROPHY



The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) will celebrate the conferment of the Sultan Qaboos Sailing Trophy, in its 13th edition, to winners on Thursday. An official ceremony to this effect will be held in the Governorate of Muscat. The Sultan Qaboos Sailing Trophy serves as one of the most prominent international awards in the field of sailing due to the fact that it propagates the message of peace and coexistence. The trophy stands out as a tribute to Oman’s ancient maritime heritage. It eternalises the journeys of maritime glories maintained by Omani sailors throughout history. It also consolidates cultural relations and revives bonds of amity between the Sultanate of Oman and the countries of the world.

CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT FOR MUTTRAH SQUARE PROJECT



Muscat Municipality has awarded the construction contract for the Muttrah Square project, winner of first place in the inaugural edition of the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design. The project will introduce a vibrant urban character to the Wilayat of Muttrah and provide visitors with enhanced opportunities to enjoy panoramic views of the sea road and Muttrah Fort. Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, stated that the project represents a key pillar of the municipality’s vision to beautify the wilayat and enhance its tourism appeal, while preserving its cultural richness and historic identity.

DETAILS ON P13

HM gives audience to Bhutan Prime Minister



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAITHAM BIN TARIK gave an audience at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday to Dasho Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

The Prime Minister conveyed greetings and best wishes of King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of the Kingdom

of Bhutan to His Majesty the Sultan. The King also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity.

On his turn, His Majesty the Sultan asked the Prime Minister to convey his greetings and best wishes of success to the King. His Majesty also wished the people of Bhutan further growth

and prosperity.

The audience discussed prospects of cooperation between the two countries and touched on opportunities to develop investment partnerships across various economic and commercial spheres, in a manner that serves the interests of their peoples

and enhances the paths of economic diversification and sustainable development.

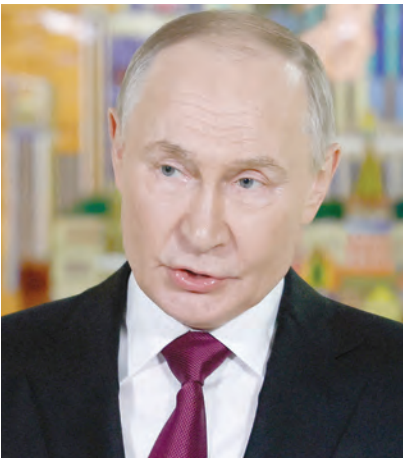
The audience was attended by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Dr Hamed bin Said al Aafi, Head of Private Office of His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA

SEE ALSO P2

Putin, Witkoff talk on ending Ukraine war

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin met US President Donald Trump’s special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner in the Kremlin on Tuesday for talks on a possible way to end the deadliest European conflict since World War Two. Just before the meeting, Putin warned Europe that it would face swift defeat if it went to war with Russia, and he dismissed European counter-proposals on Ukraine as being absolutely unacceptable to Russia.

Trump has repeatedly said he wants to end the war but his efforts



Russian President Vladimir Putin

so far, including a summit with Putin in Alaska in August and meetings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, have not yet brought peace. A leaked set of 28 US draft peace proposals emerged last week, alarming Ukrainian and European officials who said it bowed to Moscow’s main demands on Nato, Russian control of a fifth of Ukraine and restrictions on Ukraine’s army.

European powers then came up with a counter-proposal and at talks in Geneva, the United States and Ukraine said they had created

an “updated and refined peace framework” to end the war. “I am so pleased to see you,” Putin told Witkoff and Kushner when they met on Tuesday.

“It is a magnificent city,” Witkoff told Putin after earlier strolling with Kushner and the Russian leader’s envoy Kirill Dmitriev on Red Square near the mausoleum of Soviet state founder Vladimir Lenin.

Just before the Kremlin meeting, Putin accused Europe of seeking to undermine Trump’s peace efforts by making proposals that it knew were unacceptable to Russia. — AFP

Council of Ministers, State Council Office review cooperation

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, along with some of Their Highnesses and Excellencies, members of the Council of Ministers, received at the Council’s building in Muscat on Tuesday Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, and members of the Council’s Office. This meeting comes within the framework stipulated by the Council of Oman Law, aiming to enhance areas

of continuous cooperation and coordination between the Council of Ministers, the Council of Oman, and all state institutions. At the outset of the joint meeting, HH Sayyid Shihab praised the efforts exerted by the State Council in various aspects, and the views and proposals it presents, which are instrumental in advancing the national work towards further development and prosperity.

For their part, the Chairman of the State Council and the members of the Council’s



A joint meeting between the Council of Ministers and members of the State Council Office on Tuesday.

Office appreciated the government’s continuous keenness to enhance constructive cooperation with the Council. They affirmed their persistent endeavour to present specialised studies, constructive proposals, and enhance joint coordination between the two councils in a manner that contributes to implementing developmental plans and programmes, keeps pace with the aspirations of the upcoming phase, and achieves the desired national objectives.

The meeting reviewed

several topics aimed at unifying joint efforts, enhancing institutional partnership and integration between state institutions to implement the general state policy, achieve the targets of the Eleventh Five-Year Development Plan (2026-2030), and preserve the extended achievements and gains across all parts of the Sultanate of Oman, with the prime aim of serving this dear nation and its loyal citizens under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA

SEE ALSO P2

OMAN

HM, BHUTAN PM DISCUSS TIES



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Oman ranks first regionally in ‘Quality of Life’ rating

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman occupied first place at the level of Asia and the Middle East region, according to the latest report of “Numbeo” Global Quality of Life Index for 2025 (mid-year). The ranking was based on the assessments of the populations within the countries listed in the global platform. The Sultanate of Oman registered the highest score in the regional index, earning 215.1 points, thus significantly outperforming other GCC and Middle East countries.



This advanced ranking affirms the Sultanate of Oman’s status as one of the best destinations in the region. — ONA

Qatar took second place (189.4 points), followed by the United Arab Emirates (174.2 points) and Saudi Arabia (173.7 points). The index is the largest global database that counts the volume of user participation as a measure to assess living conditions in cities and countries around the world. The index does not depend solely on official statistical data. It offers significant weight to opinion polls and direct personal assessment by residents and citizens, based on vital criteria that include the levels of safety and security, the costs of living and their ratio to income, the quality of health services and medical care, climate and environmental conditions and the levels of traffic, infrastructure and pollution. This advanced ranking affirms the Sultanate of Oman’s status as one of the best destinations in the region. It is a direct outcome of sound sustainable development policies and social stability in the country. — ONA

SHORT TAKES



The event was held under the auspices of Habib bin Mohammed al Riyami. — ONA

EVENT WRAPS UP MOSQUE PROGRAMMES

MUSCAT: A celebration was held on Tuesday in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, Muscat Governorate, to mark the conclusion of the Mosque Programmes in their twelfth session, organised by the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science.

The event was held under the auspices of Habib bin Mohammed al Riyami, Chairman of the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science.

Al Riyami stated that the Mosque Programmes represent one of the most important pathways for establishing the role of the mosque as a centre of intellectual and spiritual enlightenment in society. He added that they are an extension of a firm approach based on promoting values and achieving integration between the mosque’s mission and the needs of the individual and society. — ONA

RESEARCH REVEALS MEANS TO RECLAIM SALT-AFFECTED SOIL

MUSCAT: Agricultural land around the world is facing an escalating threat from soil salinity, with more than one million hectares experiencing degradation as a result of this phenomenon. In the Sultanate of Oman, approximately 44 per cent of agricultural land has been affected, particularly in Al Batinah North and Al Batinah South. This poses a direct risk to crop production and, consequently, to national food security.

This challenge did not go unnoticed by Dr Ahmed bin Rashid al Ruba’i, who conducted his PhD research in the Department of Soil, Water and Agricultural Engineering at the College of Agricultural and Marine Sciences at Sultan Qaboos University. His study focused on the synergistic effects of using biochar in combination with elemental sulphur to reclaim saline soil.

Although biochar has previously demonstrated its effectiveness in improving soil quality, its physical and chemical properties vary depending on several factors, including the type of raw material and the temperature used during pyrolysis. Its alkaline nature can also present an additional challenge in the alkaline soils common in Oman. Combining biochar with sulphur, however, offers an effective strategy for controlling soil alkalinity and enhancing physical and chemical properties.

FREE BUS SERVICE BASED ON PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 2

The Royal Hospital, in cooperation with Mwasalat, announced the launch of a free bus service within the hospital grounds. This service aims to facilitate transportation for staff, patients and visitors, providing a comfortable and efficient means of transport between the hospital’s various facilities.

The Royal Hospital stated that the service operates daily from Sunday to Thursday, from 7.00 am to 4.00 pm, with a frequency of approximately five minutes between stops. The routes include the main entrance, the adult emergency department, the National Heart Centre, and the Sultan Qaboos



Sports Complex. This support from Mwasalat embodies the principle of community partnership in serving the healthcare sector.

The healthcare sector in Oman is undergoing comprehensive development towards a sustainable healthcare system that aligns with Vision 2040, which seeks to create a fair, efficient, and sustainable healthcare system that contributes

to the well-being of society and improves the quality of life. Recent years have witnessed efforts focused on enhancing the efficiency of the healthcare system through the development of healthcare infrastructure, the modernisation of legislation, and the adoption of digital technologies and telemedicine services. Oman is working to strengthen government, private and community partnerships, encourage investment in the health sector, and support research, innovation and the localisation of pharmaceutical industries, reflecting a clear commitment to building an integrated healthcare system that keeps pace with the latest global developments.

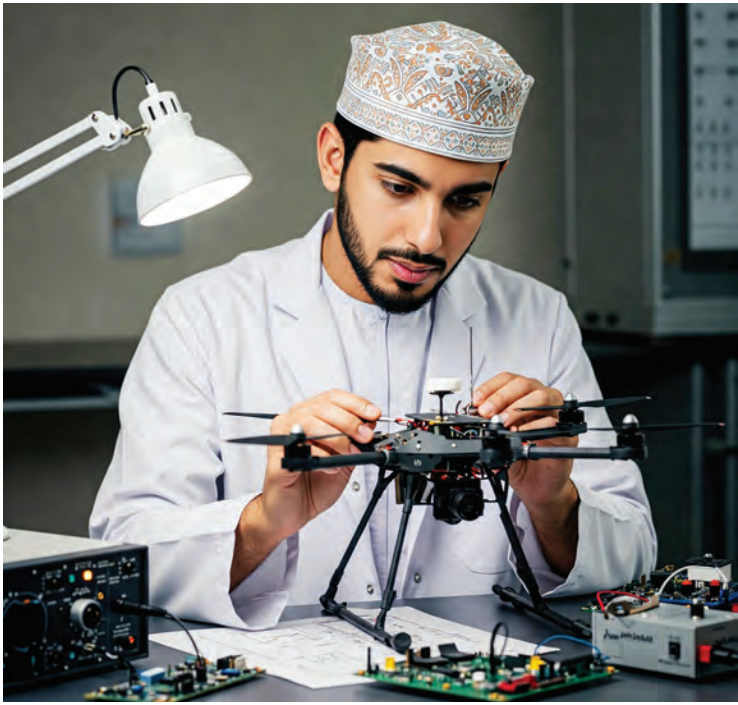
Include entrepreneurial skills in varsity courses

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 2

OMAN Vision 2040 posits entrepreneurship as a strategic driver for economic growth, emphasising its role in creating jobs, fostering innovation, and shifting the economy away from a reliance on oil. Therefore, the curriculum taught at the Omani universities should be tailored to the specific needs of Oman and contextualised to the local business environment to promote entrepreneurship and create jobs in the country. A research study entitled ‘Sustainable entrepreneurship development in Oman: a multi-stakeholder qualitative study’, by Syed Mujahid Hussain and Sami al Kharusi from Sultan Qaboos University, Ahmad Arslan and Obinna Alo from the University of Oulu and the University of Sunderland Business School in the United Kingdom, urged the educational institutions to incorporate practical and entrepreneurial skills in the curriculum.

Published in the International Journal of Organizational Analysis (2023), the findings were drawn from in-depth interviews with policymakers, educationists, and key stakeholders representing entrepreneurial skills development institutes in Oman.

From a skills development perspective, one of the key takeaways from the study is a shift from a traditional approach to a practice-based approach



The findings highlighted the need for cross-sector collaboration with clear benchmarks for effective policy development concerning sustainable entrepreneurship in Oman.

The findings of the study revealed that most educational curricula at the Omani universities generally focus on generic business skills, which have fewer applications for such ventures.

in imparting education with clear benchmarks. Also, the incorporation of context-specific elements (unique opportunities as well as challenges of being a sustainable entrepreneur in Oman) should be part of such skills development initiatives. In this regard, cross-sector partnerships with clear goals and benchmarks between public bodies, universities, firms (entrepreneurs) and the financial sector (particularly FinTech) can be very useful.

The findings of the study revealed that most educational curricula at the Omani universities generally focus on generic business skills, which have fewer

applications for such ventures. An emphasis on practical skills, including opportunity recognition, opportunity utilisation, acquiring and retaining human capital, financial management and marketing for startups, was highlighted as areas that should be significantly supplemented in the skills development initiatives and educational programmes.

The authors note that despite some positive improvements in the business landscape in Oman, several critical challenges remain, which hinder sustainable entrepreneurship development.

The authors further found the role of FinTech to be critical in this concern by all stakeholders, though its usage and acceptance remain low. Additionally, the costs associated with the post-carbon (sustainable) economy and different profitability evolution have resulted in a slow change in policy development in this regard.

From an educational perspective, a lack of context-specific training programmes and culture-based hesitations appeared to be hindering the achievement of sustainable entrepreneurship possibilities in Oman.

The nascent entrepreneurial ecosystem, bureaucracy and lack of human capital (attraction as well as retention) appeared to be significant challenges for entrepreneurs. Finally, the findings highlighted the need for cross-sector collaboration with clear benchmarks for effective policy development concerning sustainable entrepreneurship in Oman.

The Military Technological College wins Net-Zero competition

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
MUSCAT, DEC 2

The Military Technological College (MTC) won the top prize in a contest organised by the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) to develop and design implementable sustainability plans under the theme of “Net-Zero.” This initiative aims to enhance the role of academic institutions in effectively contributing to the national objectives related to sustainability and carbon neutrality.

MTC bagged the award, comprising RO 1,000 and a rolling trophy for recycling e-waste to generate solar power.

The judging panel consisted of Dr Muhannad al Kalbani, Vice-President of the Centre of Excellence in Net-Zero at the National Centre for Net-Zero, Sara al Nabhani, Executive Director of Sustainability and Community Service at National



The Military Technological College team members who won the top prize.

Finance, and Eng Ahmed al Shukaili, Director of the Marine Environment Department. HH Sayyidah Wisam al Said, Head of Marketing, Corporate Communications and Sustainability at the National Finance Company (NFC), stated, “We are proud of

the impressive achievements, innovative ideas and promising capabilities of the participants in the Green Campus Initiative, which are a clear testament to the strong environmental awareness of the next generation of our citizens.

Their enthusiasm and commitment reinforce our belief that the youth are the environmental ambassadors and sustainability leaders of the future. Our support for this initiative reflects NFC’s commitment to investing in opportunities that enable Omani youth to create meaningful and productive change, and contribute to building a more resilient and sustainable future for the Sultanate of Oman.”

The Green Campus Competition represents far more than a contest among academic institutions; it is a leading platform designed to reduce carbon footprints, entrench a culture of sustainability, and cultivate leadership and innovation skills among youth.

The organisers said, “It further seeks to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange, and shared learning between students and universities, while expanding its positive influence beyond

campus boundaries to benefit surrounding communities.” The participating teams presented their proposals before the judging panel, showcasing innovative projects covering waste management, energy efficiency, water conservation and other sustainability solutions.

The Society also expressed its deepest gratitude to the National Finance Company for its partnership and generous support of this initiative and the unwavering support of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, which played a pivotal role in enabling the Society to launch and implement this national initiative.

Dr Amer al Mutaani, ESO Chairman, said, “Last edition we looked at school students, and this year we are looking at university students. We are touched by the energy of the students that can be seen in their projects and the research they have conducted.”

OMAN

SHORT TAKES

SYMPOSIUM ON
FLASH FLOODS
BEGINS ON TUESDAY



The symposium delves into topics related to climate changes in the region.

MUSCAT: The Ninth International Symposium on Flash Floods in Wadi Systems began on Tuesday, organised by the Water Research Centre at Sultan Qaboos University in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the Oman Water Society, and Kyoto University of Japan.

This ninth edition of the symposium, spanning two days, focuses on flash floods and dam management. It includes over 76 scientific papers presented by experts and researchers from Oman and 16 other countries.

During his opening speech, Dr Ali bin Khamis al Maktoomi, Director of the Water Research Centre, emphasised that the growing challenges in this field “require continuous collaborative efforts and purposeful scientific research to achieve desired objectives. Developing plans and programmes that promote integration among measures for managing flood risks, enhancing water resources, and preserving their sustainability is crucial.”

The symposium delves into topics related to climate changes in the region, such as the rising frequency of weather events like cyclones, tropical storms, and low- pressure systems, along with shifts in rainfall patterns leading to floods that impact urban areas, infrastructure, facilities, and ecological systems.

Current indicators suggest that this rainfall pattern will persist, necessitating the formulation of policies and the adoption of innovative methods and technologies to improve flood management and mitigate their effects on cities, water systems, and the environment. The event also aims to leverage international expertise and experiences in this field.

NEW BATCH OF
RECRUITS JOINS ROP



The new police recruits will acquire the fundamental skills and basics of police work.

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences on Tuesday received a new group of citizens holding the General Education Diploma (GED) certificate to begin their training programme before joining service at the Royal Oman Police (ROP). The new police recruits have successfully completed the evaluation process in coordination with the Ministry of Labour. They undergo training at the Police Institute for New Recruits at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences.

During the training programme, the new police recruits will acquire the fundamental skills and basics of police work as well as legal and academic knowledge. The programme also includes various courses on handling different security situations.

Oman joins UAE in 54th
Union Day celebrations

THE Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday joined the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in celebrating its 54th National Day, which falls on December 2, as part of the distinguished relations linking the two countries.

The Secretariat General of National Celebrations organised a joyous celebration on Tuesday at the Al Khatm border crossing in Al Buraimi Governorate. The event included diverse segments, most notably musical pieces performed by the Royal Oman Police Music Band, a visual presentation of the celebration organised in Al Khuwair Square on November 24, followed by a musical piece, a student performance, and various artistic displays.

The Secretariat General of National Celebrations, in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police, also organised a national celebration at the Al Wajajah border crossing amidst participation from citizens.

The celebration began with the reception of a number of officers, officials, and citizens from the United Arab Emirates, and the exchange of congratulations on this occasion. The event witnessed the presentation of many artistic musical displays, and musical compositions performed by the Royal Navy of Oman Music Band.

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The event included diverse segments, most notably musical pieces, visual presentation and various artistic displays. — ONA



Furthermore, the art of “Al Hambal” was performed on the backs of camels in Al Batinah North Governorate. The performance was done while carrying the flags of the two countries. The celebration concluded with a song whose lyrics conveyed the depth of the historical and deep-rooted relations, good neighbourliness, and familial ties between Oman and the UAE.

These celebrations reflect the depth of fraternal relations and good neighbourliness between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, and serve as an exemplary model of cooperation and cohesion between the two countries. — ONA

Oman takes part in Fajr film fest

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, DEC 2

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Omani Film Society (OFS), participated in the 43rd Fajr International Film Festival held in Shiraz from November 26 to December 3, marking a significant presence for Omani cinema at one of the region’s most prominent film festivals.

The Omani delegation was headed by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, OFS Chairman. The delegation included director Mohammed al Kindi, jury member, and Dr

UTAS students Hamad al Rashdi and Habib al Hasani won second place for their short film

Jinan bin Mahdi al Issa, guest of honour. Al Ajmi said that the participation of Oman at one of the region’s popular film festivals reflects the Society’s commitment to enhancing

the international presence of Omani cinema and showcasing its growing development.

He emphasised that the Society’s participation in the Fajr Film Festival represents an important opportunity to strengthen cultural and cinematic ties, highlight the artistic movement in the Sultanate of Oman, and empower young talents by providing them with exposure to international experiences.

A short film by students of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences won second place in the Talent Camp competition held as part of the festival.

PAKISTANI COMMUNITY CELEBRATES OMAN NATIONAL DAY



The event brought together prominent dignitaries, officials and community members.

MUSCAT: The Pakistani community in the Sultanate of Oman marked the Oman National Day with an impressive and dignified gathering recently. The event brought together prominent dignitaries, officials and community members to celebrate the fraternal ties between Oman and Pakistan.

The ceremony was graced by the Chief Guest, Ambassador Dr

Syed Naveed Safdar Bokhari. Dr Bokhari highlighted the deep-rooted brotherly relations between Oman and Pakistan.

He emphasised the importance of enhancing bilateral ties further and reassured that the Embassy remains available around the clock to serve both the Pakistani diaspora and Omani brothers alike.

وزارة الإعلام

Ministry of Information

ELECTRONIC BIDDING ANNOUNCEMENT

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

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

You may acquaint yourself with the terms and sign up through [www.mazad.om](#)

For further details, you may reach us through [info@mazad.om](#)

PRESENTINGCULTURE



The programme involves presenting a series of lectures and holding scientific workshops. — ONA

Cultural platforms programme launched

IBRA: The Cultural Club organised the Cultural Platforms Programme in the Wilayat of Ibra, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, marking the third milestone of the programme.

This programme comes within the framework of the Club's efforts to enhance the cultural presence in the wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman, expand the circle of community participation, and link academic and cultural institutions with knowledge pioneers and those interested in cultural affairs.

The programme involves presenting a series of lectures and holding scientific workshops and discussion sessions featuring an elite group of researchers and academics in the fields of literature, folk poetry, urban heritage and children's education.

The programme of events, held at the University of A'Sharqiyah in the Wilayat of Ibra, included on its first day a lecture on "Urban Features in the Wilayat of Ibra" presented by Dr Nasser bin Saleh al Ismaili. This was followed by a discussion session titled "Al Mazra'ah Village: History and Architecture" with Yaqoub bin Mohammed al Rawahi, and a lecture titled "The Importance of Children's Literature in School Education" presented by Dr Yousef bin Sulaiman al Maamari from Abdullah bin Zaid Basic Education School for Boys.

The programme will continue its activities tomorrow with a workshop on short story analysis presented by Dr Yousef bin Sulaiman al Maamari.

— ONA

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, DEC 2

THE Directorate-General of Health Services in Al Batinah North made a distinguished mark through its active participation in two major national healthcare events, reflecting the governorate's growing role in advancing pharmaceutical services, digital transformation and healthcare quality across Oman.

In Muscat, pharmacists from Al Batinah North took part in the First Pharmacy Forum for Primary Healthcare Services, organised by the Directorate-General of Medical Supplies at the Ministry of Health.

The forum brought together pharmacy professionals from across Oman to exchange experiences and highlight pioneering initiatives aimed at enhancing pharmaceutical care in primary healthcare settings.

The Al Batinah North delegation showcased several key initiatives, including the Model Pharmacy Initiative, designed to standardise high-quality pharmacy practices across the governorate, and the Digital Transformation Documentation Programme, which advances electronic record-keeping and improves service efficiency.

During the event, the Pharmaceutical Care and Medical Stores Department in Al Batinah



The event showcased projects aligned with Oman's vision for high-quality, patient-centred healthcare.

The forum brought together pharmacy professionals from across Oman to exchange experiences and highlight pioneering initiatives aimed at enhancing pharmaceutical care in primary healthcare settings.

North was honoured for its outstanding efforts in improving pharmacy services, underscoring the team's commitment to excellence and innovation.

The event showcased forward-thinking projects aligned with Oman's vision for high-quality, patient-centred healthcare.

Among the highlighted initiatives was a research project by the Quality Management and Patient Safety Department titled 'Evaluating the Quality of Outpatient Healthcare in Primary Healthcare Institutions - Insights

from Practical Experience.'

The study examines service delivery standards and recommends evidence-based improvements to support sustainable quality enhancement.

The governorate also presented 'NAFAS', a groundbreaking mental health support programme selected among the top initiatives nationwide. NAFAS offers confidential, on-demand psychological support for healthcare workers through an AI-powered virtual assistant trained in the Omani dialect and accessible via QR code.

The initiative aims to reduce workplace stress and promote a healthier, more resilient work environment in line with Oman Vision 2040.

In digital governance, Al Batinah North introduced 'Rassd', a project that transitions narcotics and psychotropic drug records from paper to a unified electronic system, strengthening accuracy, transparency and patient safety.

These combined efforts — spanning pharmacy, digital transformation, mental health and quality research — reflect the collaborative work of the Ministry of Health and local directorates, reaffirming their commitment to fostering innovation and delivering healthcare services that meet the evolving needs of communities across Oman.

محافظة مسقط

Muscat Governorate

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Announcement of Public Auction No. (49/2025)

Muscat Municipality, represented by the Auction Committee, announce the establishment of a public auction as per the following details:

	Items	Location
Set No.1	Water coolers-AC's-Windows-Refrigerators-AC's Ducts-Electrical Cables	Auction Yard at Al Wadi Al Kabeer
Set No.2	PC's-Printers-Scanners-Office Phones-Batteries-Office Furniture-Metal Lockers & Racks	MM Store at Gala
Set No.3	Porta Cabins	MM Labor Camp at Al Amerat
Set No.4	Porta Cabins	MM Yard at Quraiyat

Interested individuals for this Auction must comply with the conditions set out here under:

- Those wishing to enter the auction must pay a fee and its amount (=4 OMR) (four Omani rials) which are not refundable, and an amount of (500 OMR) (five hundred Omani rials) as a temporary deposit to participate in the auction (refundable). The payment shall be done electronically to Muscat Municipality's representative on the auction day at site.
- The person who wins the auction is obligated to pay the full price of the items if they were awarded to him plus 5% as value added tax, and the brokerage fees by (=3%OMR) of the total amount of the items. The payment shall be done electronically to Muscat Municipality's representative on the auction day at site.
- Items are sold in their current condition, and Muscat municipality is not responsible for the loss or damage of any part of it once its value has been paid; and it does not bear any obligation regarding the sold items. Those wishing to participate in the auction must inspect the items on the day specify for that purpose.
- The sold item is neither refundable nor devalued, and no appeal will be accepted in this regard.
- The buyer is obligated to transfer the items that have been awarded to him after paying their full value within a period not exceeding two weeks from the date of purchase. In the event of delay, a daily penalty of (=50 OMR) shall be imposed for each day, but not exceeding one month. Muscat Municipality shall not be responsible of the sold items if it were not transferred within the specified period; and it reserve the rights to resell the items on the expenses of the buyers.
- The auction details are specified as follows:

Location	Set No.1: Auction Yard at Al Wadi Al Kabeer Set No.2: MM Store at Gala Set No.3: MM Labor Camp ar Al Amerat Set No.4: MM Yard at Quraiyat
The Date/Time of the inspection	From 09/12/2025 to 11/12/2025 From 08: 00 AM to 12:00 PM
The location for submitting the participation fees	Auction locations as per the above details
Auction date	Set No.1: 14/12/2025 at 8:00 AM Set No.2: 14/12/2025 at 10:00 AM Set No.3: 15/12/2025 at 8:00 AM Set No.4: 15/12/2025 at 10:30 AM
For inquires and coordination	Please contact the Auction Committee representative on (24753487 – 24753694)
Other terms	- The VAT specified in the law will be applied to the successful bidder. - It is not allowed to enter the auction yard without paying the entrance fee and the insurance amount. - Muscat Municipality reserve the rights to cancel or postpone the sale without providing any justification. - The security deposit will not be refunded in these cases: - If the buyer does not pay the value of the sold items. - If the buyer does not transfer the items from the auction yard within the specified period.

QR Codes for Field Locations

Ghala

Al Amerat

Quraiyat

Al Wadi Al Kabir

مركز

NCSI

OBTAINS ISO

CERTIFICATION

The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) has obtained the 'ISO 27701' certificate related to the privacy information management system.

The certificate constitutes an extension of the ISO 27001 certification for the ISMS. — ONA

وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات

Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة

Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tender:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
210/2025/ MTCIT	DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF MARKETING, COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT UNIFIED PLATFORM	1-12-2025	15-12-2025	13-1-2026	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE PROJECT, TENDERS AND LOCAL CONTENT AUTHORITY (All CLASSES)	(25/-) TWENTY-FIVE OMANI RIALS (LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMPANIES) (10/-) TEN OMANI RIALS (SMEs) NON-REFUNDABLE

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- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200, e-mail: etenderhd@gstb.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

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NOTICE

Nama Electricity Supply Company (S.A.O.C)

announces an amendment to the last date of buying the tender:

Provision of Financial Advisory Services for 18 months (NESC/2025/037)

The correct date is 14/12/2025.

نماء

SUPPLY للتزويد

WORLD

PEACE PRAYERS



Pope Leo XIV leads a mass at the Beirut waterfront. — AFP

POPE LEO WRAPS UP LEBANON TRIP, URGES END TO HOSTILITIES

BEIRUT: Pope Leo XIV called for an end to hostilities in Lebanon and said the Middle East needed new approaches for peace as he finished a three-day trip to the country by urging an end to divisions. A 150,000-strong mass at Beirut’s waterfront was the highlight of the trip by the Catholic leader, who arrived on Sunday after visiting Türkiye on his inaugural visit abroad as pontiff. He has received a jubilant welcome in a nation beset by a years-long economic collapse and which is still reeling from a war last year between Israel and militant group Hezbollah, with many fearing renewed hostilities.

Noting that he was unable to visit all of the country, Pope Leo expressed his “aspiration for peace, along with a heartfelt appeal: may the attacks and hostilities cease”. Israel has kept up strikes on Lebanon despite a November 2024 ceasefire with Hezbollah and has escalated attacks in recent weeks — but has not announced any raids during the pope’s visit. Under heavy pressure, Lebanon’s government has committed to disarming the group, which however has rejected the idea. The pope appealed in his mass “to those who hold political and social authority here and in all countries marked by war and violence. Listen to the cry of your peoples who are calling for peace”. He said that “the Middle East needs new approaches in order to reject the mindset of revenge and violence, to overcome political, social and religious divisions, and to open new chapters in the name of reconciliation and peace.” Later, as he prepared to depart from Beirut airport he declared: “While weapons are lethal, negotiation, mediation and dialogue are constructive. Let us all choose peace as a way, not just as a goal!”

Earlier, the pope wound his way through the crowd at the outdoor mass in his popemobile as people offered roses, with senior officials, including President Joseph Aoun, also in attendance. “The pope puts joy and peace in our hearts and strengthens our hope,” said Samira Khoury, among some 150,000 people in attendance. Leo told those gathered, “I especially pray for beloved Lebanon. I ask the international community once again to spare no effort in promoting processes of dialogue and reconciliation.” He also sent a message of encouragement to Christians in the region, whose presence has dwindled.

“Christians of the Levant, citizens of these lands in every respect, I repeat, have courage. The whole Church looks to you with affection and admiration,” he said. Some participants travelled from abroad, including from neighbouring Syria, while migrant workers from countries such as the Philippines and Sri Lanka were also among the crowd. — AFP

RUSSIAN-FLAGGED TANKER REPORTS DRONE ATTACK OFF TÜRKIYE

ISTANBUL: A Russian-flagged tanker loaded with sunflower oil reported a drone attack off the Turkish coast on Tuesday, but its 13 crew members were unharmed, Türkiye’s maritime authority and the Tribeca shipping agency said. The vessel, MIDVOLGA-2, reported coming under attack 130 km off the Turkish coast but did not make a request for assistance and was proceeding towards Türkiye’s Sinop port, Türkiye’s Maritime Affairs Directorate said on X. Tribeca said the ship had

been attacked by a drone. It was not immediately clear who had attacked the ship and Türkiye’s Maritime Affairs Directorate did not provide additional details. The maritime authority said the ship was sailing from Russia to Georgia, while Tribeca said it was bound for Mersin. Both said the ship was now en route to Sinop without assistance. “The necessary messages were conveyed to the relevant parties, including Ukrainian authorities,” a Turkish official said when asked

for comment, but gave no further details. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday that attacks on commercial ships in the Black Sea were unacceptable, issuing a warning to “all related sides”. Ukrainian naval drones last week hit two tankers sanctioned by Kyiv and some of its Western allies in the Black Sea as they headed to a Russian port to load oil destined for foreign markets, as it attempts to pile pressure on Russia’s oil sector. — Reuters

Race to get aid to Asia flood survivors as toll hits 1,300

GOVERNMENTS

and aid groups in Indonesia and Sri Lanka worked on Tuesday to rush aid to hundreds of thousands stranded by deadly flooding that has killed 1,300 people in four countries. Torrential monsoon season deluges paired with two separate tropical cyclones last week dumped heavy rain across Sri Lanka and parts of Indonesia’s Sumatra, southern Thailand and northern Malaysia. Climate change is producing more intense rain events because a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, and warmer oceans can turbocharge storms. Analysis of US weather data showed several flood-hit regions across Asia experienced their highest November rainfall totals since 2012.

The floodwaters have now largely receded, but the devastation means hundreds of thousands of people are living in shelters and struggling to secure clean water and food. In Indonesia’s Aceh, one of the worst-affected regions, people said that anyone who could afford to was stockpiling. “Road access is mostly cut off in flood-affected areas,” 29-year-old Erna Mardhiah said as she joined a long queue at a petrol station in Banda Aceh. “People are worried about running out of fuel,” she added.

The pressure has affected prices. “Most things are already sky-high... chillies alone are up to 300,000 rupiah per kilo (\$18), so that’s



Volunteers help unload dry rations from a helicopter to marooned residents, east of Colombo. — AFP

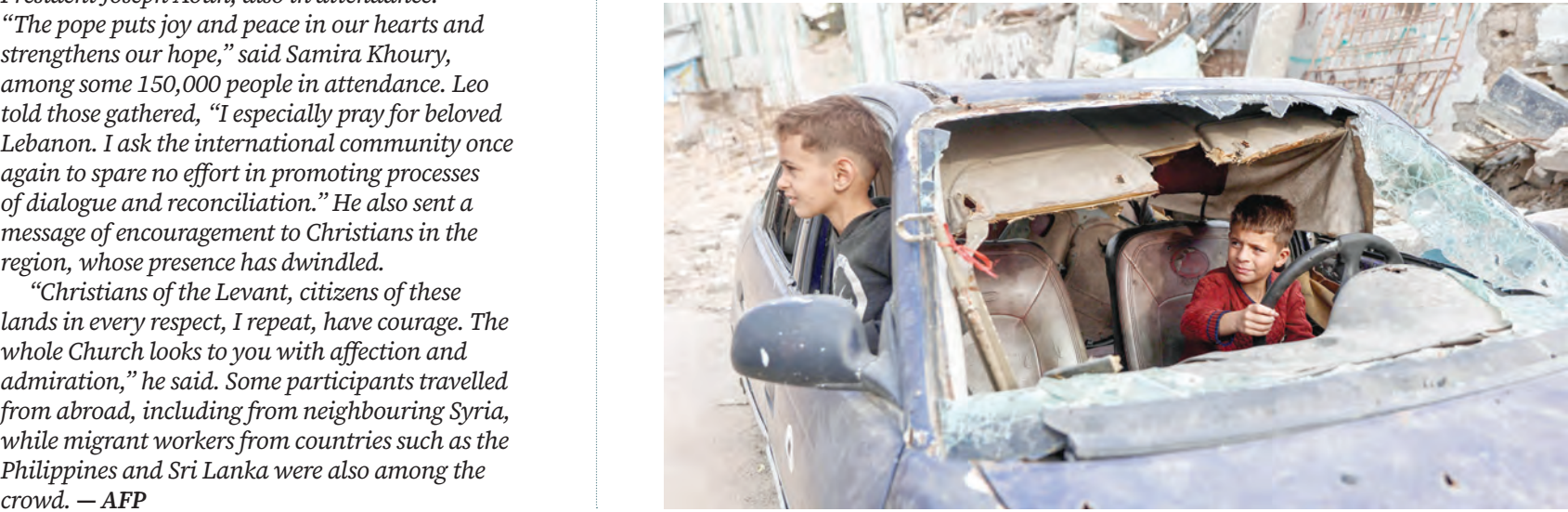
Climate change is producing more intense rain events because a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, and warmer oceans can turbocharge storms. Analysis of US weather data showed several flood-hit regions across Asia experienced their highest November rainfall totals since 2012

probably why people are panic-buying,” she said. On Monday, Indonesia’s government said it was sending 34,000 tonnes of rice and 6.8 million litres of cooking oil to the three worst-affected provinces, Aceh, North Sumatra and West Sumatra. “There can be no delays,” Agriculture Minister Andi Amran Sulaiman said. But Alfian, a resident in Banda Aceh, said the government had been “very slow, especially in ensuring basic necessities”.

Even areas that were not directly affected were seeing shortages because of blocked transport links. In Dolok Sanggul in North Sumatra, one resident said that he had been lining up since Monday afternoon for fuel, and spent the night sleeping in his car. “When we were about to

enter the gas station, the fuel ran out,” he said. Aid groups warned that local markets were running out of essential supplies and prices had tripled. “Communities across Aceh are at severe risk of food shortages and hunger if supply lines are not re-established in the next seven days,” charity group Islamic Relief said. A shipment of 12 tonnes of food from the group aboard an Indonesian navy vessel was due to arrive in Aceh on Tuesday.

By Tuesday afternoon, the toll across Sumatra had risen to 712, but the number of missing was also rising, with 500 people still listed. And 1.2 million people have been forced from their homes, the disaster agency added. — AFP



GRAVE CONCERN

300,000 people displaced in Mozambique



The UN said that it was “gravely concerned” at the number of civilians fleeing violence in northern Mozambique, where it says around 300,000 people have been displaced in recent months. The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said violence had pushed almost 100,000 people to flee the region over the past two weeks alone. And in the last three months, “a minimum of 287,000” people have fled, according to representative Xavier Creach. — AFP

WAR-TORN COUNTRY

Sudan’s RSF claims control of key town



Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) said that it seized full control of Babanusa, a transport junction in the country’s oil-producing south. In a statement, the RSF said its “liberation” of Babanusa in West Kordofan state came as it repelled “a surprise attack” by the Sudanese army in what it called “a clear violation of the humanitarian truce.” The Sudanese army denied that the RSF had taken the entire town. — Reuters

RELEASED FROM PRISON

Trump pardons Honduran ex-president



A former Honduran president convicted of helping to smuggle 400 tonnes of cocaine into the United States has left prison after being pardoned by President Donald Trump, his wife said on Tuesday. Juan Orlando Hernandez was released from a West Virginia prison and was “once again a free man,” his wife announced on social media. The US Bureau of Prisons website showed the release of a man matching Hernandez’s name and age. — AFP

SHORT TAKES



Former EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini. — Reuters

EU DIPLOMATIC
ARM RAIDED IN
FRAUD PROBE

BRUSSELS: Police arrested three people following raids on EU offices and a prestigious graduate school in a probe into suspected fraud linked to the training of future diplomats, prosecutors said. The European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) said searches were carried out at the College of Europe in the Belgian city of Bruges, and the Brussels premises of the European External Action Service — the EU’s diplomatic wing.

Former EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini has been detained in the probe. Mogherini, who was high representative for foreign affairs from 2014 to 2019, now leads the College of Europe graduate school that was raided in the probe along with the EU’s diplomatic offices. She was arrested along with two other people.

The raids were “part of a probe into suspected fraud related to EU-funded training for junior diplomats”, said an EPPO statement, adding that “three suspects were detained.” Carried out by Belgian federal police at the EPPO’s request. An EU official confirmed that “raids took place” and said investigators were “looking at activities that happened under previous mandates”. — AFP

FRANCE’S MACRON HEADS TO CHINA



French President Emmanuel Macron will travel to China this week for his fourth state visit, as Europe seeks to balance economic and security threats during a time of global trade turmoil. Macron, who will start his trip with a visit to Beijing’s Forbidden City on Wednesday, will meet President Xi Jinping on Thursday in the capital and again on Friday during a trip to Chengdu, in southwestern Sichuan province. His visit comes after a tense trip by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in July, when she said ties between the EU and China were at an “inflection point.” — Reuters

White House confirms admiral ordered strike on Venezuelan boat

WASHINGTON: A US admiral acting under the authority of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered a second strike that targeted survivors of an initial attack on an alleged drug smuggling boat, the White House said. The legality of the Trump administration’s deadly strikes against suspected drug traffickers in the Caribbean and Pacific has been questioned, and reports of the follow-up attack on survivors triggered further accusations of a possible war crime.

Venezuela’s leftist leader Nicolas Maduro has accused Washington of using drug trafficking as a pretext for “imposing regime change” in Caracas and rejected a “slave’s peace” for the region, amid mounting fears of US military action. A total of 11 people were killed in the two strikes in early September, the first in a months-long military campaign that has so far left more than 80 dead.

Trump’s administration insists

it is effectively at war with alleged “narco-terrorists,” and the White House said Admiral Frank Bradley, who currently leads US Special Operations Command, had acted legally and properly in ordering a second strike. Bradley “worked well within his authority and the law directing the engagement to ensure the boat was destroyed and the threat to the United States of America was eliminated,” White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told journalists. Hegseth “authorised Admiral Bradley to conduct these kinetic strikes,” she said. With pressure on the Pentagon chief, Hegseth appeared to stress the decision was Bradley’s. “I stand by him and the combat decisions he has made — on the September 2 mission and all others since,” he posted on Monday evening on X, calling Bradley “an American hero.”

Some military personnel under the condition of anonymity told the



Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro waves a national flag during a rally in Caracas. — AFP

SOUTH KOREA’S
LEE CALLS
FOR TOUGHER
PENALTIES
AFTER DATA
BREACH

SEOUL: South Korean President Lee Jae Myung on Tuesday called for increased penalties for corporate negligence in data breaches, saying a massive leak at e-commerce giant Coupang had served as a wake-up call. The breach — resulting in personal data for some 33 million Coupang customers being leaked — was South Korea’s worst in more than a decade. Coupang, which saw its New York-listed stock tumble 5 per cent overnight, is now grappling with a police investigation, potential

hefty fines as well as a possible class-action suit.

Ordering a review of fines and punitive damages in such cases, Lee told a cabinet meeting it was “astonishing” that Coupang did not detect the breach for five months, adding those responsible must be quickly identified and held accountable. “The wrong practice and the idea of not giving necessary care for personal data protection, which is a key asset in the age of artificial intelligence and

digitalisation, must be completely changed,” he said. Coupang’s Chief Information Security Officer Brett Matthes told a parliamentary hearing that the perpetrator obtained a private encryption key, which allowed them to generate a forged token to impersonate a customer. “We do believe that this person, if it is the person, had a privileged role within the organisation that would have given him access to the key that has been taken,” Matthes said. — Reuters

Witkoff, Kushner arrive in
Moscow for Ukraine talks

US President Donald Trump’s special envoy, Steve Witkoff, and son-in-law Jared Kushner met Russian President Vladimir Putin for talks on a possible way to end the war in Ukraine. Trump has said he wants to end Europe’s deadliest conflict since World War Two but his efforts so far, including a summit with Putin in Alaska in August and meetings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, have not yet brought peace. A leaked set of 28 US draft peace proposals emerged last week, worrying Ukrainian and European officials who said it bowed to Moscow’s main demands on Nato, Moscow’s control of a fifth of Ukraine and restrictions on Ukraine’s army.

European powers then gave their counter-proposal for peace and at talks in Geneva, the United States and Ukraine said they had created an “updated and refined peace framework” to end the war. “Ukraine approaches all diplomatic efforts with utmost seriousness - we are committed to achieving a real peace and guaranteed security,” Zelensky wrote on X on Tuesday. “This is exactly the level of commitment that must be compelled from the Russian side.”

Putin, who ordered troops into Ukraine nearly four years ago, has said the discussions so far are not about a draft agreement but about a set of proposals that he said last week “could be the basis for future agreements”. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin would receive Witkoff and Kushner in the Kremlin later on Tuesday, but he would not be drawn on Russia’s “red lines”, saying megaphone diplomacy was not helpful. He said they would be accompanied only by an interpreter.

A White House official said Witkoff would be joined by Kushner for his trip to Russia. A convoy of cars believed to be transporting Witkoff and Kushner arrived in central Moscow from Vnukovo airport shortly after a jet previously used by Witkoff landed from Miami. Putin has said he is ready to talk peace but that if Ukraine refuses an agreement, then Russia’s forces will advance further and take more Ukrainian territory.

A Russian source said the Trump



Vehicles queue in traffic on an embankment near the Kremlin in central Moscow. — Reuters

administration’s attempts to find peace was the best chance to end the war since talks with Ukraine broke down shortly after Russia’s 2022 attack. Conflict erupted in eastern Ukraine in 2014 after a pro-Russian president was toppled in Ukraine’s Maidan Revolution and Russia annexed Crimea, with Russian-backed separatist forces fighting Ukraine’s armed forces. Russian forces control more than 19% of Ukraine, or 115,600 square km, up one percentage point from two years ago, and have advanced in 2025 at the fastest pace since 2022, according to pro-Ukrainian maps.

Putin, in video footage released on the eve of Witkoff’s visit, hailed what his commanders told him was the Russian capture of the city of Pokrovsk in eastern Ukraine as an important victory after a prolonged campaign. Ukrainian forces were still holding the northern part of the city and had attacked Russian forces in southern Pokrovsk, the Ukrainian military said. US officials have put the casualty toll in the war

at more than 1.2 million killed or wounded. Neither Ukraine nor Russia discloses their losses. The conflict has also caused widespread destruction in Ukrainian towns and cities and forced many people from their homes.

Since the US draft proposals emerged late last month, European powers have been trying to bolster Ukraine against what they see as a punitive pro-Russian peace that could open up Russia to US investment in oil, gas and rare earths and return Moscow to the G8. Key Russian demands include a pledge that Ukraine would never join Nato, caps on the Ukrainian army, Russian control of the whole of Donbas, recognition of Russian control of the regions of Crimea, Donbas, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, and protection for Russian speakers and Russian Orthodox believers in Ukraine. Ukraine says those would amount to capitulation and leave it prone to eventual conquest by Russia, though the United States has also floated a 10-year security guarantee for Kyiv. — Reuters

OPINION

What you see is what you project



HYESHA BARRETT

The writer is a Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

MOST people assume they move through life seeing things as they truly are: you look, you interpret, you respond. Yet, neuroscience tells us that the brain is not a passive observer. It is an active storyteller. What we perceive is shaped far more by what is happening inside us, than by what is unfolding before our eyes.

The brain is constantly predicting. Long before we consciously register a moment, the mind has already compared it to thousands of memories, stored impressions, past hurts, and emotional associations. These predictions happen automatically, forming the lens through which we interpret our present reality. This is where perception becomes projection. We are not just seeing life: we are seeing our version of it.

Think of the brain like a pattern-matching machine. If you grew up around criticism, your nervous system becomes trained to anticipate disapproval. If you have experienced abandonment, the brain becomes sensitive to signs of withdrawal. If you have lived in environments where calmness felt unsafe, even peace can feel

suspicious. None of this is intentional. It is the nervous system trying to protect you using the information it has collected over your lifetime.

Imagine two adults entering the same room. A colleague glances at them without much expression. One person immediately feels tension rise in their chest, certain something is wrong. The other person barely notices the moment. Nothing outside changed, yet the emotional experience is completely different. One brain predicted threat; the other predicted neutrality. The projection shaped reality.

Our nervous system plays a powerful role here. When the body carries tension or unresolved emotions, it becomes more reactive. The brain fills in gaps quickly, drawing from old emotional memories to make sense of the present. The story feels true long before we pause to examine it.

Real clarity begins when we start recognising these internal projections. Moments of awareness interrupt the automatic loop between the body and the mind. When you feel a reaction rise, it helps to pause and ask, “What am I

The power lies in noticing. Once you recognise the lens you are looking through, you gain the ability to clean it. You start responding to life as it is, rather than as your past taught you to fear it might be.

actually seeing, and what is my mind adding to this?” That single pause engages the thinking brain, softens the emotional intensity, and brings you closer to what is genuinely happening.

Each time you question a projection, the brain rewires slightly. Old predictions lose some of their authority. New interpretations become possible. This is not about forcing positivity or ignoring your history. It is about creating enough space to see the present moment, without the weight of past experiences distorting it.

Life becomes clearer when we understand that not everything we feel is a reflection of truth. Sometimes it is a reflection of protection. Sometimes, a reflection of the stories we have lived through without fully healing.

The power lies in noticing. Once you recognise the lens you are looking through, you gain the ability to clean it. You start responding to life as it is, rather than as your past taught you to fear it might be. This is where perception shifts, where projection softens, and where inner freedom begins to grow.

MACRON DENIES ‘MINISTRY OF TRUTH’ PLAN IN STANDOFF WITH FAR RIGHT

FRANCESCO FONTEMAGGI

President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday denied having any plan for a “ministry of truth” in France after right-wing and far-right politicians and media charged that his drive against disinformation risked curtailing freedom of press and expression.

Macron has in the last weeks intensified warnings on the risks of disinformation, on Friday calling for changes to French legislation that would allow “false information” online to be urgently blocked. He has also called for “professional certification” of outlets to distinguish sites and networks that provide reliable information according to ethical rules from others that do not.

But at the weekend, the Journal du Dimanche Sunday newspaper, part of the influential media stable of right-wing tycoon Vincent Bollore, accused Macron in a front-page story of a “totalitarian drift” on the issue.

It also denounced “the temptation of a ministry of truth”, referring to the propaganda branch of the totalitarian system in British novelist George Orwell’s dystopian fiction “1984”.

This accusation was then repeated on other Bollore-owned media outlets, including the CNews television channel and radio station Europe 1, whose star presenter Pascal Praud lambasted a “president unhappy with his treatment by the media and who wants to impose a single narrative”.

The leader of the far-right National Rally (RN) party Jordan Bardella chipped in, telling CNews: “Tampering with freedom of expression is an authoritarian temptation, which corresponds to the solitude of a man... who has lost power and seeks to maintain it by controlling information.”

The leader of the right-wing Republicans and former interior minister Bruno Retailleau said on X that “no government has the right to filter the media or dictate the truth.”

In a rare such response to criticism, the Elysee on its X account posted excerpts of various comments by Praud and other like-minded commentators with the title “attention false information”.

Addressing the weekly cabinet meeting, Macron denied that any such moves to limit freedom of expression were afoot, including the state itself awarding any health label to media.

“As the president of the republic noted at the start of the cabinet meeting, there is not going to be a state label, and even less a ‘ministry of truth’, said government spokeswoman Maud Bregeon. — AFP

I’m an AI developer. Here’s how I am raising my son

“DADDY who is that man?” my four-year-old son, Omie,

asked recently, after barging into my office. As a single father who works mostly from home, it’s an interruption I look forward to. On video calls with colleagues who work around the world, I will sometimes put Omie on my lap and introduce him.

But this time I wasn’t on a video call. I didn’t know who he was referring to until I glanced at my screen: It was displaying an ultrarealistic avatar with animated mouth movements, part of a project to create AI actors with their own personalities and performance styles. Omie had assumed it was a new co-worker.

I’ve been thinking about that moment ever since. I’m a developer who has led several AI projects, including Google’s LaMDA, a conversational large language model that preceded Gemini. I think these technologies are important because they can ultimately help us solve some problems more quickly, allowing us to focus more of our time and energy on bigger priorities, professional and personal alike.

Yet even I have trepidations about what kind of future my son will grow up in as AI progresses. And I am far from alone: In a recent survey, 61 per cent of parents said they worry that the increasing use of AI will harm students’ critical thinking skills. Will using large language models (which power tools like ChatGPT) hurt children’s development, or will not using them hinder their future employment prospects?

The future is uncertain, but by fostering critical thinking and creative flexibility in our children now, I think we can help prepare



DR SOULAIMAN ITANI

The writer is an AI expert

I want my son and his generation to still value human-made movies and other art — while also using AI to help tell stories about themselves, where they are agile and inventive superheroes, overcoming future challenges we have yet to imagine.

them for a future with AI.

Someone recently asked me if I would let Omie use ChatGPT when he is old enough to operate a keyboard. As a father, I agree with the concerns that large language models tend to short-circuit a child’s thinking processes with easy, unearned answers. The instant gratification doesn’t encourage children to solve problems or take pleasure in difficult tasks. I further worry about the social effects of AI on them, when a child’s peers and mentors are no longer just their classmates and teachers, but also automated companions and perfectly engineered online personas.

Still, many students are already using tools like ChatGPT. Data suggests that the vast majority of university students worldwide regularly do so. It is inevitable that children like my son will be exposed to these tools and encouraged to use them in some way.

I do think I will allow my son to use ChatGPT and similar tools at some point. But when I do, I plan to show him how to fact-check the sources the AI has provided, and make sure he understands that computers often “learn” the wrong thing from online sources.

When it comes to Omie’s education, I’ve looked to teaching philosophies that encourage students to ask their own questions and design their own investigations. US schools should encourage projects that require students to develop reasoned solutions to real-world problems. Making ethical decisions and navigating situations where there’s no single, correct answer are things only humans can do.

At home, I try to help my son respond creatively to uncertainty. A lot of our play is a type of

improvisation. Omie creates superheroes and villains and their powers, and I challenge them with difficult scenarios. He thwarts my summoned salt water crocodiles by throwing them raw chicken with sleeping pills inside, and blocks my ice attacks with a wall of lava. While I do not support the use of AI as a replacement for creativity, it can be a wonderful complement to a child’s free-form imagination. So we use generative AI programmes to create images and theme songs to accompany our role-play adventures.

Part of my job as a tech developer is to advise institutions on AI ethics. These conversations often sound like bedtime negotiations with my son.

What limits are fair? How much freedom is too much? What happens when the rules conflict with growth? The answers are never final, but the act of answering together matters.

Parents need to be part of these conversations and the shaping of regulation around AI. We should call for companies to add mandatory parental controls to their AI programmes and agents. We should ensure people have control of how AI uses their personal data, especially when it comes to how these models are trained.

My hope is that I am building a future for Omie in which AI helps create a world where we have two varieties of everything: one that is automated and easily created; the other that is painstakingly made only by humans, and is therefore cherished. I want my son and his generation to still value human-made movies and other art — while also using AI to help tell stories about themselves, where they are agile and inventive superheroes, overcoming future challenges we have yet to imagine. — NYT

Agriculture needs more space in climate summits



SAMUEL KUTTY

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who worked in Oman and India

It is a positive development that officials at Belém COP30, for the first time, acknowledged the connection between climate change and socio-economic factors such as poverty and food security. Representatives from 43 nations and the European Union endorsed the Belém Declaration addressing Hunger, Poverty, and Climate Action focused on People. The document emphasises that the consequences of climate change are currently having a significant impact on populations, particularly those most at risk.

The statement advises nations to continue funding mitigation efforts while placing greater emphasis on adaptation — particularly people-centred strategies such as social protection, agricultural insurance and other tools that strengthen community resilience.

“Climate change, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss are exacerbating hunger, poverty, and food insecurity. They are also compromising access to water, worsening health indicators, and increasing mortality rates. These issues are deepening inequalities and threatening livelihoods,” the declaration document.

Additionally, the document emphasises that climate finance must prioritise initiatives that create opportunities, employment, and livelihoods for smallholder farmers, traditional communities, and forest residents. It stresses that investments should be designed to promote an equitable energy transition for these populations.

According to reports, current funding levels account for less than 10 per cent of the

required amount. Projections indicate that transitioning to regenerative and nature-positive agricultural practices will require an annual investment of \$200 billion to \$450 billion over the next ten years.

Nonetheless, the Brazil COP30 summit raises questions about why it failed to achieve meaningful results regarding agriculture, food systems, and food security, despite the sector’s potential to deliver triple benefits for individuals, the environment, and economic growth.

This remains true despite the fact that nearly all nations have incorporated agriculture into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as part of their response to climate change. A 2024 study by the Food and Agriculture Organisation revealed that 94 per cent of NDCs reference agriculture for adaptation, and 91 per cent for mitigation.

Reports indicate that most NDCs emphasise sustainable agriculture but give little attention to post-harvest strategies and consumption behaviours, despite data showing that changing diets and reducing food waste could result in significant annual reductions in CO₂-equivalent emissions.

Unsustainable farming methods are the leading cause of biodiversity loss and account for 70 per cent of freshwater usage. Governments currently acknowledge that emissions from the food system alone could push the planet beyond a 1.5°C temperature increase.

Studies indicate that transforming food systems could achieve at least 20 per cent of the emission reductions needed to meet the

Nevertheless, it is reassuring that the COP30 recognition highlights that climate aspirations cannot advance without addressing agriculture’s dual role in vulnerability and resilience, as well as supporting the communities that sustain the planet

1.5°C target set by the Paris Agreement. In the most recent round of NDCs, 93 per cent of all submissions included at least one measure related to agriculture or food.

From the perspective of climate adaptation, food systems are considered essential, as approximately 500 million people worldwide are smallholder farmers whose livelihoods face increasing threats each year due to extreme weather.

Unfortunately, more than 700 million people experience hunger daily, and over 2.8 billion lack access to nutritious food. Traditional methods of agricultural intensification will not resolve this issue. The system urgently needs transformation.

Nevertheless, it is reassuring that the COP30 recognition highlights that climate aspirations cannot advance without addressing agriculture’s dual role in vulnerability and resilience, as well as supporting the communities that sustain the planet. However, everything depends on how financial resources can be mobilised and how governments and implementing bodies can transform commitments into concrete national strategies and action plans. This is the point at which policy and technical assistance become essential.

What unfolds next will determine whether Belém symbolises the beginning of meaningful change or yet another missed opportunity in the climate era. Climate summits must move beyond setting emissions targets to implementing concrete actions focused on food and nature, recognising their strong interconnections and the potential to repair the system.

INDONESIANS BLAME DEFORESTATION FOR DEVASTATING FLOODS

ANANDA TERESIA AND YUDHISTIRA

Indonesian Reliwati Siregar gestured angrily at deforestation around her home on the island of Sumatra, where landslides and floods brought by a tropical storm killed more than 700 people in its deadliest disaster since a cataclysmic tsunami in 2004. “Mischievous hands cut down trees... they don’t care about the forests, and now we’re paying the price,” Siregar said at a temporary shelter near her home in Tapanuli, the worst-hit area, with about a quarter of the death toll, government data shows. The landslides buried homes and crippled rescue and relief efforts, while floodwaters washed ashore dozens of logs, Siregar said.

“The rain did cause the flood, but it’s impossible for it to sweep away this much wood,” the 62-year-old added, her voice rising in disgust. “Those raindrops do not cause wood to fall.”

Environmental experts and regional leaders said the tropical storm in the Malacca Strait that hit Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand last week, killing more than 800 people, was just one of many worsened by climate change. But deforestation in Sumatra led to a disproportionately deadly toll, they said. “Yes, there were cyclonic factors, but if our forests were well-preserved... it would not have been this terrible,” Gus Irawan Pasaribu, a local government leader in Tapanuli, said by telephone.

Pasaribu said he had already protested to the forestry ministry over licences issued for the use of forest area for projects, but it ignored his pleas. Indonesia’s forestry and environment ministries did not reply to Reuters requests for comment.

The media said the attorney general’s office is leading a task force to check if illegal activities contributed to the disaster, and that the environment ministry would query eight companies in industries such as logging, mining and palm plantations, after logs washed ashore in some areas of Sumatra. They did not identify the companies or projects.

Masinton Pasaribu, another local government official in Tapanuli, blamed the clearing of natural forests to make way for palm plantations, which yield palm oil, one of Indonesia’s main exports.

Authorities in the archipelago, home to many dense tropical forests, have looked to reverse some of the destruction but lean heavily on its vast natural resources to fuel economic growth.

Monitoring group Global Forest Watch says North Sumatra lost 1.6 million hectares of tree cover over the period from 2001 to 2024, or the equivalent of 28 per cent of the tree-covered area.

From 2001 to 2024, Sumatra as a whole has lost 4.4 million hectares (11 million acres) of forest, an area bigger than Switzerland, said David Gaveau, founder of deforestation monitor Nusantara Atlas.

— Reuters

The G20 must follow through on debt relief

AS G20 leaders met in Johannesburg last month, they faced a grim reality: many developing-country governments are spending more than they can afford on debt service. To keep funds flowing to foreign creditors, policymakers have been forced to cut spending on education, health care, and infrastructure. These countries have so far avoided default, but at the expense of their own development.

The fact that governments across Africa, Asia, and Latin America must close hospitals and cancel school-lunch programmes to service their debt is not only a moral failure; it is also a strategic one. A world where countries cannot invest in sustainable growth and development will struggle to achieve stability, prosperity, and climate resilience.

Five years ago, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the G20 launched the Common Framework for Debt Treatment to help heavily indebted countries restructure their debts in an orderly, prompt, and equitable manner. But the promised relief has not materialised. According to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, 37 out of 67 low-income countries eligible for concessional funding are in or at high risk of debt distress, yet only four – Chad, Zambia, Ghana, and Ethiopia – have applied for restructuring under the mechanism. Their experiences have revealed the weaknesses of the Common Framework: it offers far too little relief – and too late.

In response, the G20 has outsourced the problem to technocratic bodies, tasking them with accelerating the process and increasing relief. While this technical work is important, it is not enough. Debtor countries still fear that the policy is half-hearted. Policymakers now talk less about a “debt crisis” and more about a “debt morass” – a world where everyone



The G20 has launched the Common Framework for Debt Treatment to help heavily indebted countries restructure their debts.



OLUSEGUN OBASANJO

The writer is a former president of Nigeria, is a member of Club de Madrid

is stuck, waiting for a change that never comes.

Meanwhile, foreign private creditors have been withdrawing their capital from developing economies since 2022. The message is clear: the risks are too high, and no meaningful solution is in sight. When investors leave, governments are left scrambling to borrow from other sources.

Multilateral development banks (MDBs) and the IMF have come to the rescue. As a result, their share of developing countries’ external debt has soared, exceeding 75 per cent in around 20 countries. This creates a vicious cycle: when multilateral organisations that don’t take a haircut in restructurings hold most of a country’s sovereign debt, private creditors become even more reluctant to invest.

To escape the debt morass, G20 leaders must restore confidence in the Common Framework and act with a sense of urgency. That means reassuring debtor countries that applications for relief will be handled quickly, fairly, and generously. The recent G20 leaders’ communiqué, and their finance ministers’ declaration on debt

sustainability, merely reiterated the technical work and thus fell short of what is needed. Stronger commitments must be backed by tangible action.

First, G20 leaders must reduce the stigma of restructuring. When debt becomes a drag on growth, seeking relief and committing to reform should be seen as responsible economic governance.

Second, relief must be meaningful. A token reduction that leaves countries with still-limited fiscal space only prolongs the crisis. G20 leaders must proactively replenish debt-relief funds. While taxpayers in high-income countries, many with their own ballooning debts, may balk at these costs, continuing to bail out private creditors indirectly through MDBs is also expensive. The sooner debt relief is provided, the cheaper it will be. Third, private creditors should be required to do their part. Based on the comparability-of-treatment principle, every dollar of debt relief from official creditors must be matched by private creditors. G20 leaders must support national legislation that enforces this policy.

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SPORTS

INAUGURAL EDITION



Action from the IDP programme.

155 SAILORS FROM 37 NATIONS GATHER FOR 2025 WORLD INCLUSION SAILING

MUSANNAH: The Wilayat of Al Musannah is set to host on Wednesday, the world’s largest and most significant sailing championship dedicated to persons with disabilities, as the inaugural 2025 World Sailing Inclusion Championships officially opens at the Musannah Sailing School, Barcelo Mussanah Resort.

The ceremony will be held under the patronage of HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Chairman of the Oman Olympic Committee, in the presence of senior officials, sports leaders and participating delegations, and coincides with the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities.



This inaugural edition represents a historic milestone for inclusive sailing and reinforces the message that sailing is a sport for everyone. The enthusiasm from sailors worldwide has been remarkable.

HANNAH STODEL

will join 28 other teams in a fleet racing format competition. In the One-Person Inclusive category, using a fleet of Hansa 303 boats, Omani sailors Ali al Ghusaini, Sultan al Wahaibi and Malik al Qurtubi will compete alongside 35 global athletes.

Over the past three days, World Sailing organised a dedicated Emerging Nations Programme (November 30 – December 2), designed to enhance coaching capabilities, improve sailors’ technical skills and support countries in developing national inclusive sailing structures. It combined theory and practical workshops, reflecting growing global commitment to advancing Para and inclusive sailing.

Hannah Stodel, World Sailing’s Para Sailing Manager, expressed her delight at the launch of the championship, saying: “This inaugural edition represents a historic milestone for inclusive sailing and reinforces the message that sailing is a sport for everyone. The enthusiasm from sailors worldwide has been remarkable. The training programme also highlighted the promising potential of emerging nations, and it will undoubtedly contribute to the long-term growth of inclusive sailing globally.”

Maryam al Jadidi, Senior Project Manager at Oman Sail and the event project manager, emphasised the national significance of the event, stating: “We are fully prepared to launch this historic championship, which carries a powerful human message of empowerment and inclusion. Our teams have worked tirelessly over recent months to ensure the highest organisational and technical standards.”

Thrilling 50m, 200m races highlight disability fest

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 2

AS THE sixth edition of the Annual Festival for Persons with Disabilities draws to a close on Wednesday evening at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher, organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth(MoCSY). The final day features a dedicated marathon for persons with disabilities, alongside the concluding rounds of bocce, goalball for the blind, boccia, wheelchair basketball, badminton and table tennis. Competitions begin at 8 am, followed by the festival’s closing ceremony at 7 pm.

Amid these vibrant activities, the track events, particularly the 50m and 200m races, stood out as some of the most competitive and widely followed contests, showcasing impressive performances from participants representing Wafa Centres, inclusive education schools and associations across the Sultanate of Oman.

50M RACE – FEMALE CATEGORIES
The women’s 50m events witnessed remarkable results. Sadan al Kalbani from the Children Association – Seeb claimed first place in category F1 with a time of 11.61 seconds. In category F2, Saraa al Farsi from the Intellectual Education School secured the top spot with 10.14 seconds.

Meanwhile, Zamorda al Hashmi from Wafa Centre Al Mudhaibi dominated category F3 with an impressive 9.39 seconds, and Noor al Shamli from Wafa Centre Maqniyat recorded one of the day’s best times by winning category F4 in 9.28 seconds.

50M RACE – MALE CATEGORIES
In the men’s 50m races, Abdullah al Hadhabi from Inclusive Schools Al Batinah South won category M1 with 9.65 seconds.

Category M2 saw an outstanding performance from Khalid Beyt Habadhah of the Omani Association – Salalah, who clocked 7.56 seconds.

Another highlight came in category M8, where Younis al Dawoodi from Wafa Centre – Bidbid clinched first place with a time of 7.73 seconds. Additional podium finishes were shared among participants from Wafa Centres in Sohar, Sur, Nizwa, Al Buraimi and other wilayats, reflecting the depth of competition across the short-distance events.



Chief guest and dignitaries during the opening ceremony.



In the men’s 50m races, Abdullah al Hadhabi from Inclusive Schools Al Batinah South won category M1 with 9.65 seconds. — **Abdulwahid al Hamadani**



Action during the disability sports festival.

200M RACE – MALE AND FEMALE
The excitement continued in the 200m events. In the women’s category F1, Reema al Shaibi from the Intellectual Education School took first place with a time of 39.71 seconds.

For the men, Omar al Farji from Wafa Centre – Al Amerat dominated category M1 with 29.54 seconds.

One of the standout performances came from Mishal al Amri from Wafa Centre – Al Suwaiq, who won category M3 after

clocking 25.83 seconds, marking one of the fastest times across all 200m races.

Other winners emerged from Wafa Centres in Bahla, Al Mudhaibi, Sur, Izki and Khasab, highlighting the strong presence and athletic growth of participants from specialised centres and inclusive programmes.

Ahmed al Hashmi, Head of the Programmes and Competitions Committee, said the sixth edition of the festival featured three specialised officiating workshops designed to prepare technical staff for upcoming para-sport events, including the West Asia Championship hosted by Oman next February.

A total of 60 participants from government entities and universities benefited from the training. He noted that the festival aims to enhance technical skills, expand participation and strengthen capacities in disability sports, praising the support of all partners and reaffirming Oman’s commitment to empowering persons with disabilities.

Oman bodybuilders shine at IFBB Worlds in Saudi

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, DEC 2

The Oman national bodybuilding and physique team impressed at the 2025 IFBB World Bodybuilding Championship as they managed to secure seven medals including: two silver and five bronze at the global event in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, which ran for four days and concluded on Monday.

The new achievement reinforced the steady progress of the Omani bodybuilders, who have consistently delivered standout performances in recent regional and international competitions. Recently, they made a remarkable show at the 2025 West Asian Bodybuilding Championship which concluded in Bahrain as the Omani bodybuilders claimed eight gold medals and finished second overall.



Oman’s Ahmed al Hadidi won the silver medal in the Masters category.

Oman bodybuilder Ahmed al Hadidi led the delegation’s medal tally by capturing the silver medal in the Masters Bodybuilding category, adding to his history of podium finishes for Oman. The potential young bodybuilder Abdullah al Amri showed strong momentum with two bronze medals, one in the Junior Physique division and another in the Senior Physique category, underscoring his growing presence in

international events. In the heavyweight divisions, Ahmed al Hasni delivered a powerful performance as he earned a silver in bodybuilding over 90 kg and bronze in the Masters over 90 kg, while teammate Abdulmajeed al Raisi secured a commendable fourth place in Junior Physique. Veteran athlete Fairouz al Alawi also finished fourth in the Masters bodybuilding category, maintaining Oman’s

competitive edge across multiple age groups. The team’s success extended to the physique categories as well, with Muneer al Luwihi taking bronze in Muscular Physique and Ali al Maamari finishing sixth in the 85 kg bodybuilding division. In the super heavyweight class, Salam al Riyami was placed fourth in the over 100 kg category, while Khalid al Shukaili closed Oman’s medal haul with an impressive bronze in the 80 kg bodybuilding division. The recent results at the West Asian Bodybuilding and IFBB World Bodybuilding Championship reflected Oman team’s sustained development and strong competitive spirit, further establishing Oman as a rising force in the bodybuilding world. Furthermore, the participation in Dammam provided valuable experience for the team members.

SHORTTAKES

FORMER ENGLAND
BATTER ROBIN SMITH
DIES AGED 62



Smith scored 4,236 Test runs for England, including nine centuries, at an average of 43.67, and 2,419 runs in 71 ODIs.

LONDON: Former England Test player Robin Smith has died aged 62, hailed by cricket chiefs as a “batter ahead of his time”. The South Africa-born Smith, who played 62 Tests between 1988 and 1996, died on Monday in Australia, where he lived. Smith’s family announced their “profound sense of sadness and loss” in a statement released by Hampshire, his former English county club.

“Robin died unexpectedly at his South Perth apartment on Monday, 1st December. The cause of his death is at present unknown,” they said. Smith had only recently met with the second-string England Lions squad in Perth ahead of the first Ashes Test at the invitation of coach Andrew Flintoff. Smith scored 4,236 Test runs for England, including nine centuries, at an average of 43.67, and 2,419 runs in 71 one-day internationals. “Robin Smith was a player who stood toe to toe with some of the quickest bowlers in the world, meeting spells of hostile fast bowling with a defiant smile and an incredible resilience,” said England and Wales Cricket Board chairman Richard Thompson. “He was a batter ahead of his time, which was typified in that unforgettable unbeaten 167 from 163 balls in an ODI against Australia at Edgbaston in 1993.” — AFP

WEST HAM LEGEND
BONDS DIES AGED 79



Voted the club’s greatest ever player, Bonds has a stand named in his honour at their London Stadium.

LONDON: West Ham’s legendary former captain and manager Billy Bonds has died aged 79, the Premier League club announced on Sunday. Bonds is West Ham’s longest-serving player after making 799 appearances across a 21-year career with the east Londoners. He lifted the FA Cup twice in 1975 and 1980, also reaching the 1976 European Cup Winners’ Cup final, as well as winning the old Second Division with the Hammers.

After moving into coaching, initially with the West Ham youth team, Bonds was appointed manager in February 1990. He secured promotion from the Second Division in 1991 and, after relegation from the top flight in 1992, he led the club to promotion again a year later. “We are heartbroken to announce that we lost our beloved Dad today. He was devoted to his family and was the most kind, loyal, selfless, and loving person,” a statement from Bonds’ family said. West Ham confirmed there would be a period of appreciation to honour Bonds ahead of Sunday’s Premier League home game against Liverpool. — AFP



UTAS claimed the men’s title in the Al Mouj Families 3x3 basketball tournament. — Ammar al Musafir

UTAS, Dunkers champions
of Al Mouj Families 3x3

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 2

THE Al Mouj Families 3x3 Basketball Tournaments for men and women concluded on Monday night, organised by the Oman Basketball Association (OBA) in cooperation with Al Mouj Muscat. A total of 11 teams participated — seven in the men’s category and four in the women’s category. The tournament featured strong competition among all participating teams, with players delivering spirited and skillful performances throughout. Hosting the event in the open-air spaces of Al Mouj Muscat played a key role in attracting spectators and enriching community engagement. The matches reflected a close level of competitiveness and high sporting spirit, adding excitement and enjoyment to the atmosphere while showcasing several promising male and female talents. The competitions concluded with the crowning of the winning teams, with Said bin Ahmed al Habsi, Acting Secretary-General of the OBA, presenting awards as follows: In the men’s category, UTAS Team clinched the championship title after displaying consistent and powerful performances throughout the tournament, rightfully earning the trophy of this year’s edition. Team 007 second place after an intense final in which they remained contenders until the very last moments. Cotton Pickers Team claimed third place thanks to their balanced displays across all stages of the competition. In the women’s category, Team Dunkers captured the championship title after



Dunkers emerged women’s champions at Al Mouj Muscat.

delivering standout performances from the opening matches to the final. Team Shooting Stars finished in second place following a strong battle that extended until the final minutes, while Oman Stars Team secured third place with solid performances throughout the tournament, completing the podium for the women’s division. Said al Habsi praised the high technical level demonstrated during the tournament and the strong cooperation between the OBA and Al Mouj. He stressed that the event succeeded in highlighting new talents and came as part of efforts to enhance community sports activities and promote the

culture of 3x3 basketball. Al Habsi added that hosting the tournament at Al Mouj Muscat aimed to reinforce the partnership between the two sides by offering an open public sporting event that encourages family participation, supports healthy lifestyles, and contributes to spreading the game in line with Fiba’s global direction of organising open-air tournaments. He also noted that the event provided an opportunity for amateurs and new players to showcase their abilities while utilising the modern facilities at Al Mouj Muscat to boost sports and tourism activity in the area.

NZ 231-9 as ‘old school’ Windies exploit pace-friendly wicket

CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand reached 231-9 at stumps on a rain-shortened day one of the first Test against the West Indies on Tuesday after Justin Greaves triggered a middle-order collapse with the wicket of Kane Williamson. New Zealand tumbled from 94-1 to 148-6 on a bowler-friendly wicket after Williamson was dismissed for 52, his 38th Test half-century. Michael Bracewell and Nathan Smith arrested the slide with a 52-run stand for the seventh wicket. Smith eventually fell for 23 and Bracewell for 47. After Matt Henry went for eight, Zak Foulkes and Jacob Duffy were both on four when bad light stopped play after 70 overs of a truncated day. Bracewell rated the day “pretty even” given the nature of the wicket.

“It ebbed and flowed throughout the day and I think we’d be pretty happy with where we got to at the end of the day,” he said. “It was a little bit ‘old school’ West Indies. “You grow up hearing about the fast bowlers of the West Indies and it was certainly that today. It was an exciting challenge.” Bracewell and Smith’s partnership was the second face-saving stand for New Zealand after Williamson and Tom Latham put on 93 following the dismissal of Devon Conway on the third ball of the Test. The green wicket and heavy cloud cover ensured West Indies skipper Roston Chase gave his pace attack first use of the new ball when he won the toss and it revived memories of Calypso quicks



West Indies’ Ojay Shields (2nd L) celebrates the wicket of New Zealand’s Michael Bracewell with his teammates during day one of the first Test in Christchurch. — AFP

from a previous era. But after the immediate success of Kemar Roach, who removed Conway, the West Indies were made to wait 29 overs before again tasting success. In the first session, extended by a 90-minute rain break, Williamson and Latham cautiously inched New Zealand to 17-1 in the 10.3 overs available before a second shower brought lunch. When play resumed, the New Zealand pair batted with more freedom until Williamson celebrated his first Test innings in a year by passing the half-century mark. On 52, a lapse in his normal diligence saw a full delivery from Greaves edged to Alick Athanaze at second slip to ignite the collapse. In his next over, Greaves removed Latham for a patient 24 off 85

deliveries and Rachin Ravindra was then bowled for three by Jayden Seales. In the space of 21 deliveries the West Indies took three wickets for nine runs as New Zealand slumped from 94-1 to 103-4. Will Young and Tom Blundell added 17 for the fifth wicket before Young, on 14, gave Johann Layne his maiden Test wicket. Blundell progressed to 29 before he went early in the final session as debutant Ojay Shields claimed his first Test wicket. Shields, who earlier believed he had the prized wicket of Williamson for 33 only for a no ball to be declared, also removed Bracewell to finish with 2-34. Greaves took 2-35 and Roach has 2-47. — AFP

HIMAM: A Gateway to the Next Generation of Leaders

Introducing the 11th Edition: A New Chapter of Empowerment and Excellence

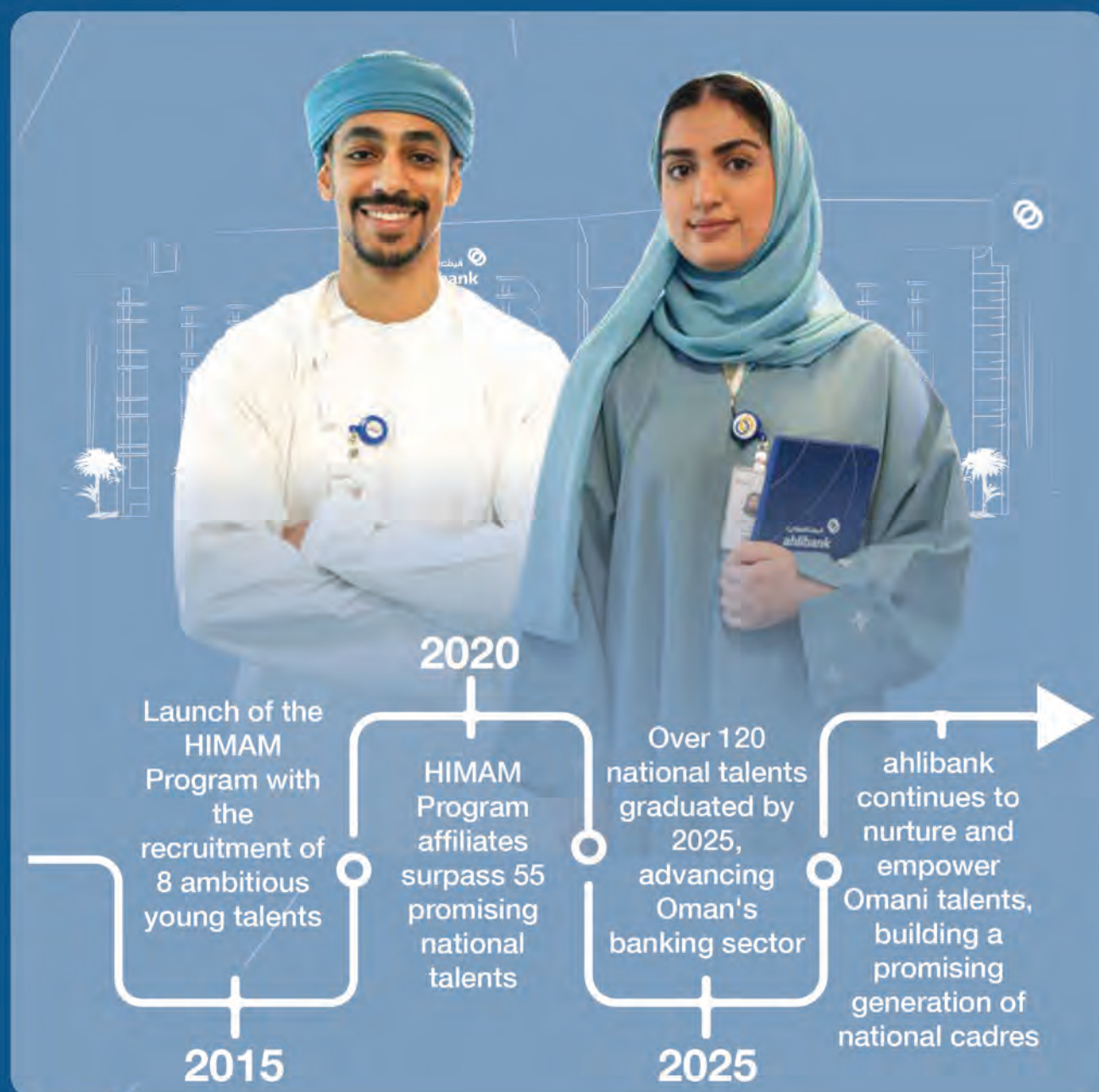
Since its launch in 2015, the HIMAM program has embodied ahlbank's commitment to investing in national talent and empowering the next generation of young Omani leaders. It was founded on the firm belief that human development is the true engine of progress, and that equipping youth with the right skills is essential to building a prosperous and sustainable future. Over the years, HIMAM has evolved into a strategic platform that nurtures capabilities, sharpens skills, and transforms ambition into tangible achievement.

What truly sets HIMAM apart is that it is far more than a training program, it is an integrated on-the-job development ecosystem designed to accelerate graduates' career paths and prepare them for leadership roles across the bank from the very start of their journey. The program blends hands-on, practical experience with fast-tracked career progression, guided by a distinguished group of experts and mentors.

Today, more than 120 graduates stand as a testament to the program's impact. Their stories – shaped by dedication, growth, and vision – serve as a powerful testament of HIMAM's success. Some now lead teams within the bank; others have become specialists in their fields. Yet all share a common experience that laid the foundation for their careers and empowered them to realize their potential.

The HIMAM journey begins when applications open to ambitious graduates who meet the eligibility criteria. Hundreds apply each year, motivated by the desire to embark on an exceptional professional path. A rigorous screening process follows, comprising assessments, interviews, and evaluations, to identify candidates who combine academic excellence with initiative, drive, and leadership potential.

Successful candidates then embark on a transformative year, filled with learning, hands-on experience, and continuous development. They gain direct exposure to the banking environment and the daily realities of professional life, balancing structured learning with practical application under the guidance of highly qualified mentors, supported by an individual coaching system that ensures personal and professional growth.



Year after year, the achievements continue, reinforcing HIMAM's unwavering commitment to empowering Omani youth. The program draws inspiration from the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said – may God protect him – who emphasizes the vital role of youth as the cornerstone of Oman's future economic renaissance.

Today, HIMAM continues to shape a new generation of capable Omani talent, reaffirming its role in transforming ambition into meaningful career opportunities within the banking sector. It is not merely a gateway to employment, it is the first step towards a fulfilling and progressive career built on continuous growth, development, and true excellence.

REAL JOURNEYS, REAL GROWTH



“Through HIMAM, I enhanced my ability to organize my work with greater efficiency and developed the capacity to make decisions with clarity and agility. This experience significantly strengthened my confidence in my performance and responsibilities, and elevated my overall professional readiness.”

Fatima Al Zaidi
Batch Eight



“As part of the HIMAM Program, I gained a clearer vision of my career path and developed my practical skills in a structured and effective manner. The program enabled me to better understand work dynamics, elevate my daily performance, and achieve tangible results that truly reflect the value of the growth and development I experienced throughout the journey.”

Al Ma'mun Al Fahdi
Batch Ten



“The HIMAM Program is dedicated to cultivating leadership skills among youth and empowering them with the knowledge and practical experience needed to create a meaningful and sustainable impact throughout their career journey.”

Sumaya Al Anbouri
Batch Eight



“From the moment I joined HIMAM, new horizons began to open before me, paving an opportunity to translate my ambition into tangible, purposeful progress. The program provided the space to grow and the motivation to invest my talent in shaping a clearer and more impactful career path.”

Hamad Al Balushi
Batch Ten

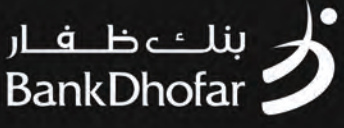


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SHORTTAKES



The discussions covered potential joint projects in crop, livestock and fisheries production.

OMAN AND ALGERIA SEEK FOOD INVESTMENT TIES

MUSCAT: Oman and Algeria have discussed expanding cooperation in agriculture, fisheries and food industries, with a strong focus on joint investments and food security.

During talks between Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority and Algeria's

As part of his visit, the Algerian minister toured Oman's key agri-food trading hubs, including the Central Fruits and Vegetables Market operated by Silal and the wholesale facilities at Khazaen Economic City.

Agriculture Minister Yassine El Mahdi Oualid, both sides explored partnerships across entire food value chains and related industries.

The discussions covered potential joint projects in crop, livestock and fisheries production,

alongside infrastructure development that supports sustainable food systems. The aim is to attract quality investments that strengthen resilience and create shared economic value.

As part of his visit, the Algerian minister toured Oman's key agri-food trading hubs, including the Central Fruits and Vegetables Market operated by Silal and the wholesale facilities at Khazaen Economic City. He was briefed on supply-chain management, digital tracking systems and modern wholesale practices.

The delegation also visited the central fish market in Barka, reviewing advanced handling, cold storage and quality-control systems. The visit underscored both countries' interest in exchanging expertise and deepening cooperation across food and market development sectors. — ONA

Oman and Saudi trade integration gains pace

OMAN and Saudi Arabia continue to advance economic and industrial integration, with tangible progress recorded across trade, manufacturing and regulatory cooperation, officials said during the latest meeting of the Omani-Saudi Coordination Committee in the fields of trade, industry and economy, held in Riyadh.

The meeting reviewed the status of joint integration initiatives under the Omani-Saudi Coordination Council, confirming that six initiatives have been fully completed, while 11 others are in their final stages and expected to be rolled out in the coming period.

The discussions reflected the growing strategic alignment between the two neighbouring economies and their shared focus on building resilient, interconnected value chains.

The Omani side was led by Dr Saleh bin Saeed Masan, Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Trade and Industry, while the Saudi delegation was headed by Engineer Rakan bin Wadhah Tarabzoni, Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Economy and Planning for International Economic Affairs.

In the industrial sector, officials highlighted the completion of the second phase of the Industrial Integration Project as a major milestone.

This phase enables Omani industrial products



The Future Factories Initiative has also been completed, alongside the signing of 12 agreements.

to enter the Saudi market with a recognised certificate of origin, significantly improving market access, reducing logistical and compliance costs, and enhancing competitiveness for manufacturers in the Sultanate of Oman.

Another key achievement was the completion of the Future Factories Initiative, aimed at strengthening links between industrial ecosystems in both countries.

As part of this initiative, 12 agreements were signed to connect supply chains between Omani and Saudi factories, opening the door for joint manufacturing, technology transfer and increased local value addition.

Trade relations continue to show strong momentum, with the volume of trade between the two countries exceeding \$8 billion by the end of 2024.

Officials said this growth reflects increasing confidence among businesses, improved market integration and the effectiveness of facilitation measures introduced under the coordination framework.

On the economic and regulatory side, a memorandum of understanding was signed on competition protection and the prevention of monopolistic practices. Joint technical workshops were also organised to support regulatory alignment, exchange expertise and harmonise legislation, creating a more transparent and investor-friendly environment.

Engineer Jassim bin Saif al Jadidi, Technical Director at the Office of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, presented a detailed overview of implementation progress during the year. He noted

that the launch of the second phase of industrial integration initiatives in Riyadh last July marked a turning point in bilateral industrial cooperation, particularly in areas related to local content and government procurement frameworks.

He added that both sides are making steady progress towards finalising and implementing the proof-of-origin verification agreement, which is expected to further ease the movement of goods and reduce operational burdens on manufacturers.

Officials stressed that the deepening cooperation directly supports the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030, positioning both countries to benefit from stronger industrial partnerships, integrated supply chains and sustained economic growth.

— ONA

Muscat Municipality awards contract for Muttrah Square project

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 2

MUSCAT Municipality has awarded the construction contract for the “Muttrah Square” project, a first-place winner of the inaugural Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design.

The project is set to add a bold new urban landmark to Muttrah, offering panoramic views of the corniche and Muttrah Fort while enhancing the area's tourism appeal.

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, said the project reflects the municipality's commitment to beautifying the wilayat while safeguarding its cultural and historical identity.

He noted that Muttrah Square goes beyond conventional



Covering 7,500 sqm, Muttrah Square will feature an iconic five-metre-wide bridge designed to appear as if floating above the sea.

urban development, aiming to revive Muscat's visual memory by blending architectural

authenticity with contemporary design. Al Humaidi added that the

project supports the goals of the National Urban Development Strategy 2040, which seeks to

create vibrant, liveable and identity-led cities.

Preserving heritage, he stressed, can go hand in hand with innovation to create meaningful public spaces that connect past and future.

Covering 7,500 square metres, Muttrah Square will feature an iconic five-metre-wide bridge designed to appear as if floating above the sea.

Inspired by the sword of Imam Al Salt bin Malik al Kharusi, the bridge will frame Muttrah's landmarks in a sweeping U-shaped view.

The surrounding plaza will include a dancing fountain, sea-inspired lighting, green spaces, pedestrian walkways and family-friendly areas, reinforcing Muttrah's status as a cultural and tourism hub.

ADVERTORIALS

SHORTTAKES



The agreement involves introducing an automated platform that enables real-time communication between MCD's infrastructure and NBO's transaction banking services.

NBO, MCD SIGN PACT TO DRIVE SEAMLESS B2B INTEGRATION

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD) have signed a strategic agreement to integrate NBO's Business to Business (B2B) digital platform with MCD's systems. The collaboration marks a significant milestone in enhancing operational efficiency, streamlining transactions and strengthening corporate relationships through digital innovation.

The agreement involves introducing an automated platform that enables real-time communication between MCD's infrastructure and NBO's transaction banking services. The integration will significantly reduce processing time, improve accuracy and provide business clients with seamless and secure services tailored to their needs.

Commenting on the agreement, Abdullah bin Zahran al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO, said: "At NBO, we view digital innovation not just as a service upgrade but as a strategic commitment to driving value across the financial ecosystem. Our partnership with MCD reflects this vision and reinforces our role as a trusted banking partner for businesses seeking secure, efficient and forward-looking solutions.

From his end, Mohammed bin Said al Abri, Chief Executive Officer of MCD, commented: "This partnership is a natural extension of our mission to advance Oman's financial infrastructure. By working with NBO to implement seamless, compliant digital solutions, we are strengthening the backbone of B2B transactions and deepening our support for the business community".

The solution is fully compliant with the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) and Ministry of Labour (MoL) standards and supports critical use cases such as processing payrolls through the Wages Protection System (WPS) and facilitating payments to Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD).

Built using advanced integration technologies, the platform enables secure and reliable connectivity that ensures real-time data transfer and optimised operational workflows.

By partnering on this initiative, both NBO and MCD reaffirm their roles as frontrunners in Oman's digital transformation, encouraging more corporates to adopt digital-first strategies that prioritise transparency, security and customer-centricity.

BANKDHOFAR WINS EXCELLENCE AWARD IN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

MUSCAT: BankDhofar has been awarded the Excellence Award in Customer Experience at the TAS Awards 2025 – a prestigious honour that underscores the bank's steadfast commitment to service excellence and its leadership in shaping the future of banking in the Sultanate of Oman.

This year, BankDhofar also served as Event Partner of the TAS Conclave, held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry



and Investment Promotion. Hosted by The Arabian Stories – Oman's leading interactive digital media platform – the annual conclave has grown into one of the nation's most influential gatherings of policymakers, business leaders, innovators and changemakers.

Now in its fifth edition, TAS Conclave 2025 provided a high-impact platform for forward-thinking dialogue on the Sultanate of Oman's evolving socioeconomic landscape.

Driving innovation in the banking sector in Oman

GUIDED by its vision "To serve you better every day", Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to strengthen its position as a leading innovator and trend-setter in digital transformation by consistently adopting the latest technologies to deliver more innovative, faster and seamless banking solutions.

From pioneering secure and innovative mobile and online banking solutions to launching integrated digital payment ecosystems, Bank Muscat demonstrates its unwavering commitment to empowering customers with smooth, secure and efficient banking experiences.

Bank Muscat's leadership in digital banking and innovation resonates with the recent strategic agreement signed with National Finance, the leading finance and leasing company in the Sultanate of Oman, to activate Bank Muscat's



Bank Muscat's leadership in digital banking and innovation resonates with the recent strategic agreement signed with National Finance.

E-Mandate solution available on its API Banking Platform within the National Finance's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

This partnership aims to enable National Finance's corporate and institutional customers to execute direct debit transactions seamlessly and securely. The agreement was signed at Bank Muscat's head office by Ilham al Hamaid, General Manager of Corporate Banking at Bank Muscat and Saam bin Abdullah al Habsi, Chief Operations Officer at National Finance.

This collaboration is a key step in enhancing digital payments infrastructure and streamlining receivables management in Oman's financial ecosystem.

The adoption of E-Mandate services is closely aligned with the Central Bank of Oman's directive to reduce the use of physical payment instruments, promote digital alternatives and support financial inclusion; and contribute to the broader national transformation goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

The E-Mandate service allows customers to electronically authorise recurring payments directly from their accounts using the Mobile Banking or Internet Banking platforms, replacing the traditional reliance on post-dated cheques.

National Finance can avail Bank Muscat's E-Mandate digital solution available through the Bank's Application Programming Interface (API) and that operates on the basis of a one-time authorisation called "Direct Debit Mandate".

Sohar International launches auto loan special offers

MUSCAT: Sohar International, together with its Islamic banking window, Sohar Islamic, has announced the launch of exclusive auto loan special offers for retail customers as part of the bank's continued commitment to enhancing customer value, strengthening market competitiveness and driving growth within the automotive financing sector.

The initiative was formalised during an official signing ceremony held at the bank's headquarters in Al Khuwair, marking a strategic partnership aimed at expanding financing opportunities and enriching the overall customer experience.

The agreement was jointly signed on behalf of the bank by Abdulqadir al Sumali, Chief Retail and Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International and Nasser Al Nahdi, Head of Islamic Retail Banking, alongside Steven Tomkinson, Divisional Head –



The initiative was formalised during an official signing ceremony held at the bank's headquarters.

Sales Operations at OMASCO and Riyadh Ali Sultan, General Manager of JW Towell Auto Centre. The joint signing underscores the bank's unified approach to offering comprehensive and competitive solutions across both its conventional and Islamic

banking segments.

Abdulqadir al Sumali, Chief Retail and Premier Banking Officer at Sohar International, stated: "At Sohar International, our focus remains firmly on advancing customer-centric financial solutions that align with market dynamics and support national economic priorities.

The launch of our Auto Loan Special Offers underscores our commitment to enabling greater accessibility, value and choice for our customers through innovative and competitive financing propositions.

Beyond enhancing affordability, this initiative strengthens our strategic partnerships within the automotive ecosystem and contributes to stimulating sector growth, thereby reinforcing our role as an enabler of broader economic activity across the Sultanate of Oman".

Awasr CEO honoured with Outstanding Achievement of the Year award

Awasr is proud to announce that Eng Adnan al Alawi, Chief Executive Officer of Awasr, was honoured with the Outstanding Achievement of the Year Award at the TAS Business Awards, held during TAS Conclave 2025 at Intercity Hotel Muscat. The award was received on his behalf by Eugen Comendant, Awasr's Chief Commercial Officer.

Under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the TAS Conclave brought together policymakers, business leaders and innovators to

celebrate Oman's national achievements and explore the future of its digital development.

The fifth edition of the Conclave, themed "Progressing Beyond Barriers", highlighted Oman's advancements in digital transformation, AI, governance and investment – underscoring its importance as one of the Sultanate of Oman's most influential leadership forums.

Commenting on the honour, Eng Adnan al Alawi, CEO of Awasr, said: "This recognition deeply humbles me. This award is not a



Awasr remains fully committed to driving digital innovation, strengthening national infrastructure and delivering world-class services.

personal achievement, but a testament to the collective dedication of the Awasr team, our partners and our customers who continue to place their trust in us.

As we progress towards Oman Vision 2040, Awasr remains fully committed to driving digital innovation, strengthening national infrastructure and delivering world-class services that enhance the lives of individuals and businesses across the Sultanate of Oman". On behalf of the CEO, Eugen Comendant, CCO of Awasr, accepted the award and stated: "It was a

great honour to receive this recognition for Eng Adnan.

His leadership has been vital in establishing Awasr as a prominent figure in Oman's digital growth. This award underscores our commitment to ongoing innovation, investing in new technologies and enhancing customer experiences as we strive to empower communities and support the nation's digital advancement.

This recognition underscores Awasr's position as a forefront telecommunications innovator and a key player in Oman's digital ecosystem.

SHORTTAKES

Muscat hosts key global meeting of Numbering Agencies



These meetings are an opportunity to exchange information and to bring together a large group of professionals from depository companies and other financial institutions

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, DEC 2

MUSCAT Clearing & Depository Company (MCD), an affiliate of Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), hosted the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Association of National Numbering Agencies (ANNA) in Muscat on Tuesday, December 2, 2025. The two-day event brings together senior officials from central securities depositories and financial institutions from around the world.

Mohammed bin Said al Abri, CEO — MCD, underscored the significance of hosting the gathering: “Welcoming ANNA’s Extraordinary General Meeting in Muscat reaffirms the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a trusted financial hub and reinforces our commitment to transparency and sustainable growth within a promising investment environment.

Since joining ANNA in 2008, MCD has strengthened market readiness by applying international numbering standards and by gaining access to a global network of experts, driving integration and innovation among depositories worldwide”, he said.

Topics presented during the EGM include educational and awareness-related subjects covering the latest developments in financial markets, as well as subjects that relate specifically to the organisation, such as challenges, issues and future projects it aims to pursue with the support of its members in the coming period.

“These meetings are an opportunity to exchange information and to bring together a large group of professionals from depository companies and other financial institutions. It is a valuable chance to share experiences, exchange views and support the capital market sector in the Sultanate of Oman with the best expertise and practices adopted in other regional and global markets”, Al Abri stated.

Earthen architecture for greener construction

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, DEC 2

THE Sultanate of Oman is exploring how traditional building materials, particularly clay, can support more sustainable construction practices, as interest grows globally in low-carbon alternatives for the built environment.

These themes were highlighted during the LC3 Day 2025 — Oman, an international technical forum that brought together experts, researchers and industry stakeholders to discuss advances in low-carbon materials.

Eng Khalfan bin Masoud al Naabi, Director General of Urban Planning at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, said the adoption of environmentally friendly materials is becoming increasingly important as countries seek to reduce the environmental impact of urban development.

He noted that low-carbon materials are gaining global attention for their potential to lower emissions, improve energy efficiency and strengthen the long-term resilience of cities.

Referring to Oman’s experience, Eng Al Naabi highlighted the “Revival of Earthen Architecture” initiative, which is being undertaken by the ministry in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The project focuses on reintroducing clay — a material that historically shaped Oman’s architectural identity — using modern engineering methods that aim to improve performance while maintaining



The “Revival of Earthen Architecture” initiative focuses on reintroducing clay using modern engineering methods that aim to improve performance while maintaining its cultural and environmental value.

its cultural and environmental value.

“Clay is part of Oman’s architectural heritage and today we are looking at ways to redevelop it through modern engineering approaches that ensure efficiency and enhance the cultural and environmental character of the urban landscape”, he said.

According to Eng Al Naabi, earthen and other low-carbon materials offer opportunities to reduce the environmental footprint of construction, particularly in arid climates where thermal performance and energy use are critical concerns.

Clay-based structures are known for their natural insulation properties, which can help moderate indoor temperatures and lower cooling demand.

He also pointed to the role of scientific research and collaboration in supporting the wider use of alternative materials.

Earthen and other low-carbon materials offer opportunities to reduce the environmental footprint of construction, particularly in arid climates where thermal performance and energy use are critical concerns.

Sharing international experiences and research findings, he said, is essential for understanding material properties and improving performance, especially as new technologies emerge for processing and application.

His remarks further noted that the global construction sector is seeing wider uptake of low-carbon materials, driven by advances in manufacturing technologies and growing awareness of environmental challenges.

In this context, technical forums such as LC3 Day provide space for professional dialogue

and knowledge exchange, rather than policy setting.

“A key value of such scientific gatherings lies in bringing experts together to exchange knowledge and showcase experiences”, Eng Al Naabi said, adding that cooperation between the public sector, private industry and academic institutions is increasingly important in addressing environmental challenges facing the construction industry.

By hosting the forum, Oman provided a platform for international specialists to discuss practical and research-based approaches to reducing carbon emissions in construction, while also highlighting local experiences such as earthen architecture.

The discussions, organisers said, are expected to contribute to broader professional learning and innovation in the use of sustainable materials, both in Oman and beyond.

Asyad Group unveils logistics projects to support green hydrogen sector

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 2

ASYAD Group has unveiled a series of forward-looking projects that enhance the readiness of Oman’s national logistics infrastructure to support the green hydrogen economy. The announcement came during the Group’s participation in the Oman Green Hydrogen Summit 2025, held in Muscat from December 1-3 under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and in partnership with Hydrom.

These projects include the development of an AI-driven digital platform that integrates operational data across the logistics network, enabling instant decision-making that enhances transport efficiency and reduces emissions.

The Group is also advancing



Asyad’s initiatives reflect a broader transformation towards a smart, AI-enabled logistics ecosystem that supports the value chain of green hydrogen and clean energy.

digital simulation solutions for routing wind-turbine components. This ensures equipment safety and

precise scheduling, along with the establishment of smart warehouses equipped with IoT systems and predictive analytics to optimise inventory management and minimise waste.

Asyad extends its clean-energy initiatives across Oman’s ports, upgrading their readiness to handle, store and export low-carbon fuels, including green ammonia, methanol and liquid hydrogen.

Furthermore, the Group is developing green-fuel bunkering corridors, positioning Oman as one of the first providers of advanced clean-fuel solutions.

These projects reflect a broader transformation towards a smart, AI-enabled logistics ecosystem that supports the value chain of green hydrogen and clean energy.

Essam al Sheibany, Vice President

of Sustainability at Asyad Group, stated: “For us, green hydrogen is a strategic catalyst that redefines the logistics sector’s contribution to Oman’s economy. We are developing an integrated ecosystem capable of empowering industrial growth, attracting global investment and accelerating Oman’s transition towards a low-carbon economy”.

He added: “Our collaboration with local and international partners paves the way for a new phase in which Oman advances confidently into the clean energy era — one driven by national talent ready leading this transformation”.

During the summit’s panel discussions, Asyad Group leaders shared strategic insights on the logistics sector’s growing role in enabling the hydrogen economy.

Dr Abdullah al Abri, Vice

President of Sustainability at SOHAR Port and Freezone, opened the session by highlighting the port’s readiness and the integration of its industrial ecosystem to support hydrogen projects. He was joined by Reggy Vermeulen, CEO of Port of Duqm, who underscored Al Duqm’s significance as a future export hub for green molecules and a key corridor linking Oman to global markets.

In a subsequent session, Aisha al Balushi, Product Development Analyst at Asyad Group, showcased the Group’s logistics infrastructure and its alignment of ports, free zones; and storage and shipping facilities to enhance Oman’s capacity to build an integrated hydrogen ecosystem that supports the transition towards a clean and sustainable energy economy.

TRADE HEADWINDS

US factories struggle under tariff drag



US manufacturing shrank for a ninth month in November, pressured by weak orders and persistently higher input costs as tariff effects lingered. A survey found some transportation equipment makers linking job cuts to import duties, prompting permanent restructuring.

Despite selective tariff relief, new November levies on medium- and heavy-duty trucks added fresh strain across the industrial sector. — Reuters

RISK PREMIUM

Oil prices steady amidst supply risks



Oil prices steadied on Tuesday as markets weighed geopolitical threats against limited near-term supply shifts. Brent eased to \$63.07 a barrel, while West Texas Intermediate slipped to \$59.27, after both gained more than 1% a day earlier.

Analysts said a risk premium has rebuilt amidst Ukrainian attacks on Russian energy assets and rising US-Venezuela tensions. — Reuters

TRADE LEVERAGE

China clears rare-earth export licences



China issued its first batch of streamlined rare-earth export licences, a move expected to speed shipments to selected buyers, a source said.

The decision follows months of disruption after export controls imposed in April tightened supply. Licensing requirements had stalled parts of the global auto chain, giving Beijing leverage in broader trade negotiations with Washington. — Reuters

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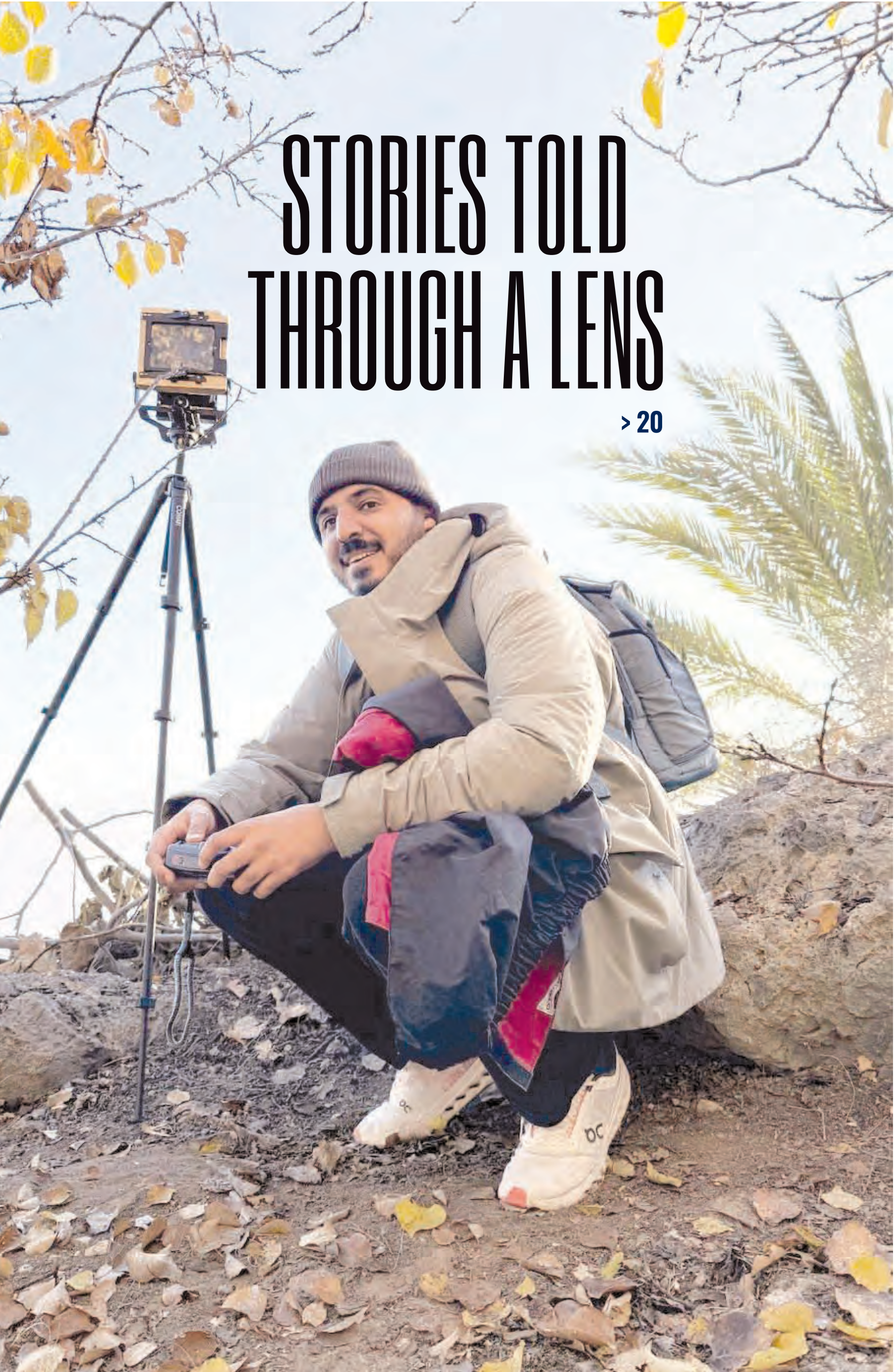


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RICH ART FRENCH PASTRY CHEFS AUCTION CHOCOLATE SCULPTURES



Chocolate artworks by some of France’s most famous pastry chefs sold at auction on Monday for more than 100,000 euros in a charity event that had bidders smacking their lips.

The Paris auction, organised by the pastry chef Pierre Herme, featured such whimsical creations as a chocolate clock, a bouquet of white chocolate roses and a monumental piece made of 495 chocolate eggs — plus one of ritzy Daum crystal.

The event raised 108,100 euros (\$125,500) for a charity that helps children hospitalised with leukaemia, according to auction house Artcurial.

It called the auction the first of its kind worldwide.

“This is truly a first”, auctioneer Arnaud Oliveux said.

The auction featured works by 25 celebrated pastry chefs, including Herme, Patrick Roger, Cyril Lignac and Nina Metayer.

Many of the chefs paired their creations with one-of-a-kind experiences.

Herme’s chocolate and crystal egg masterpiece, for example, came with a private lesson from the chef on making macarons, while a two-metre (six-foot-seven-inch) sculpture by Roger came with a tasting session with the master “chocolatier”.

The auction house did not release the selling price for individual items.

The pieces are all edible, though the chefs created them to be displayed, said Herme.

“When you set your eyes on them, you don’t feel like touching them because they’re so visually magnificent”, said Oliveux, calling top-level pastry creation “a kind of culinary art”. — AFP



Q U I C K F E A T U R E S



LIFESTYLE

A traditionally dressed Chinese woman poses for pictures in the city of Beijing by the flowing river. — AFP



HOLIDAYS

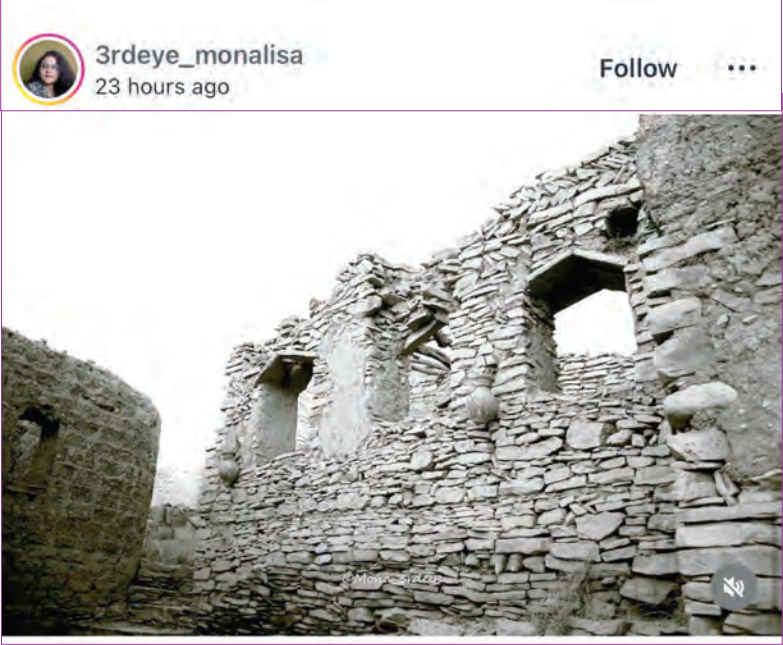
A woman carries an umbrella as she walks past holiday decorations along Sixth Avenue in New York City. — AFP



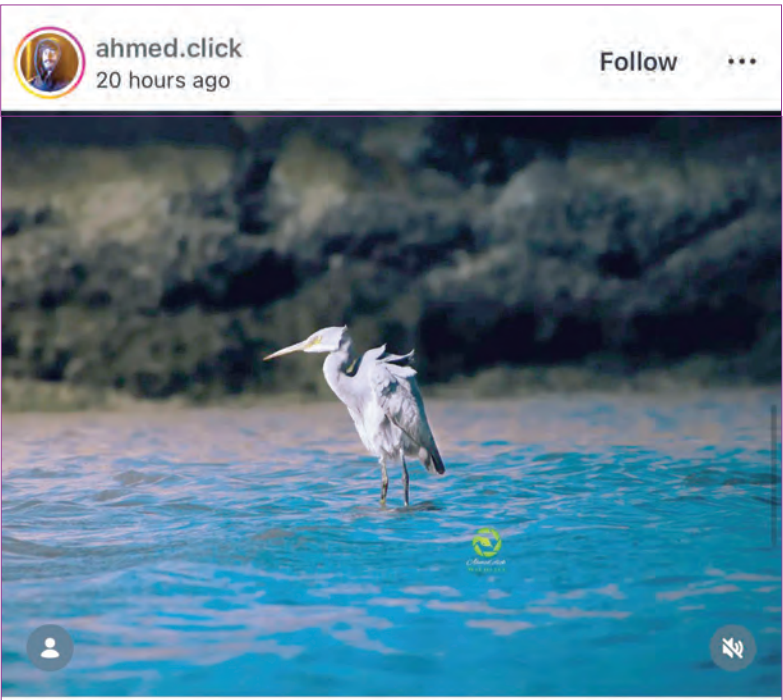
HOLLYWOOD

US singer-songwriter Billie Eilish attends the premiere of Disney’s “Avatar: Fire and Ash” at the Dolby theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

INSTA PICKS



The ancient village of Imti in Izki



A graceful Western Reef Bird

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EXPEDITIONS SEASON
2025-2026 BEGINS



An Italian mission has embarked on exploring archaeological sites in Nakhal and Wadi Al Maawil.

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has announced the launch of Archaeological Expeditions Season 2025-2026. The programme forms part of the ministry's efforts to protect the Omani heritage, document Oman's centuries-old historical evidence and enhance the country's position as a leading regional research centre in the field of archaeological studies. This year's season includes the implementation of surveys and exploration projects, lab-based analytical studies, 3-D documentation and field training programmes aimed at raising the efficiency of national cadres. As part of the programme, an Italian mission from Sapienza University has embarked on exploring

archaeological sites in the wilayats of Nakhal and Wadi Al Maawil. The Italian mission excavated sites dating back to the third and first millennia BC. It also conducted archaeological surveys that have so far documented 77 relics. The findings affirm the historical importance of the newly discovered sites, proving that human activity prevailed in the region during the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. An exhibition featuring the discovered artefacts is scheduled to be held at the conclusion of the Italian mission's activities during this season, with the prime aim of raising public awareness about the importance of Omani heritage and history. — ONA

UNSEEN WORK BY
LUCIAN FREUD
TO BE DISPLAYED

A collection of previously unseen drawings, etchings and paintings by British artist Lucian Freud will be showcased at the National Portrait Gallery early next year in what will be the UK's most comprehensive museum exhibition of his works. "Drawing into Painting" will be part of the National Portrait Gallery's programme in 2026 and is comprised of unseen work by the artist, including childhood drawings, 48 sketchbooks, letters and unfinished paintings which are part of the Lucian Freud Archive at the gallery. Despite being best known as a painter, Freud's exhibition will focus on his drawings, among other mediums, looking at how these highlight some of the most significant changes to his work. The collection includes 170 drawings, etchings and paintings; and highlights include one of Freud's most ambitious figure paintings, "Large Interior, W11" (1981-3), a response to Jean-Antoine Watteau's painting, "Pierrot Content" (1712). Watteau's piece will also be featured in the exhibition and is on loan from the Thyssen-Bornemisza National Museum in Madrid. "Drawing into Painting" will highlight the working process of Freud across mediums and will feature drawings and etchings from the 20th century artist which have a relationship with specific paintings, including his repeated attempts over the years to copy John Constable's "Study of the Trunk of an Elm Tree" (1821), which inspired his painting "After Constable's Elm" (2003). "Drawing into Painting" will also see Constable's painting on display alongside Freud's work. The exhibition is curated by the NPG's senior curator of contemporary collections, Sarah Howgate, in collaboration with artist and director of the Lucian Freud Archive, David Dawson. It is also accompanied by a publication with the same title, which includes the curator's conversations with Bella Freud and David Dawson; and contributions



from Colm Tóibín, Catherine Lampert, Tanya Bentley and Isabel Seligman. Speaking about the upcoming collection, curator Howgate said: "Lucian Freud was one of the greatest observers of the human condition in the 20th century. "Widely known as a painter, this exhibition interrogates his lesser-known work as a draughtsman. "I am excited that 'Lucian Freud: Drawing into Painting' brings together the artist's finest drawings from all over the world, some

seen in this exhibition for the first time, and reunites them with the corresponding paintings." She added: "This exhibition, taking place in London, the city Freud loved more than any other, reveals a less familiar side of his work, a wonderful opportunity to understand his behind-the-scenes workings and day-to-day thinking as an artist." "Drawing into Painting" will be part of the National Portrait Gallery's programme from February 12 to May 4, 2026. — dpa



FEATURES

IDRIS AL BALUSHI

IN a world where skylines change overnight and stars grow fainter behind city lights, Aiman al Ghazali has learned to stand still, with his camera over his shoulder, moving quietly across Oman’s mountains, coastlines and old neighbourhoods, searching not just for the perfect frame, but for the moment when a place reveals its soul.

Aiman is one of Oman’s most distinct emerging visual storytellers, celebrated for landscape, cityscape and astrophotography, yet his journey began in childhood, small hands holding a camera that belonged to his father. “My passion started when I was little”, he recalls, “My father used to take photos when we were young and that planted something in me”. Over time, this passion grew into a disciplined craft shaped by curiosity, patience and a deep bond with Oman’s geography.

Oman’s landscapes are more than backdrops, for Aiman, they are living characters guiding him from one frame to the next. “Our environment is incredibly diverse, from beaches to deserts to mountains”, he says, “Every place feels like a new discovery waiting to happen”. His images reflect this philosophy, capturing the pastel quiet of a Musandam dawn, the vast silence of Rimal Al Sharqiya, or the geometric harmony of old Muscat’s architecture, each crafted with intention.

Planning is central to his work, “Every photo begins as an idea”, he explains, “I visit the location, study possibilities, check the weather, prepare equipment and consider the terrain”. Timing is crucial, a bustling site can ruin a shot, clouds can alter a mountain viewpoint and even slight light pollution can affect astrophotography.

Astrophotography has become one of his signatures, though it comes with challenges, “Light pollution in cities like Muscat is a major challenge”, he says, “But there are nearby spots with clean dark skies if you know where to look”. Armed with specialised lenses, a tripod and sky-mapping apps, he captures celestial arcs, meteor streaks and the quiet architecture of the heavens. His solar eclipse photograph was selected by Fstoppers as one of the year’s best images, earning him recognition internationally and a discussion on their podcast.

When photographing cities, Aiman searches for authenticity, focusing on unpolished details, shadows on an archway, fishermen preparing nets, the warm glow of Muttrah streets. “I try to capture what reflects the spirit of the place”, he says. He also explores under-photographed villages and overlooked corners, believing Oman’s hidden sites can yield powerful images.

One image specifically holds special meaning to him: the apricot blossom season in Wakan Village. He returns yearly, documenting its fleeting beauty. “Every season I discover something new”, he says, “That’s why this image is so close to my heart”. Challenges are part of his journey, forgotten gear, sudden storms, or equipment failures, but he embraces them. “Almost every trip comes with surprises”, he remarks, “But that’s what makes it fun”.

Beyond the field, social media has become his gallery and classroom, connecting him with audiences in Oman and worldwide. Though he has captured much of Oman’s natural beauty, his next focus is the country’s evolving urban identity, including the Muttrah Cable Car, downtown Al Khuwair and Sultan Haitham City. These projects represent a narrative shift, Oman stepping into its future and Aiman is there, framing the story one image at a time.

STORIES
TOLD
THROUGH
A LENS



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